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## NEARBY



### Resume dialogue with agitating farmers: Hooda

CHANDIGARH  
Leader of the Opposition in the Haryana Assembly Bhupinder Singh Hooda has urged the Centre and the State government to resume dialogue with farmers who have been agitating against the new farm laws. He said the Samyukt Kisan Morcha has tried to break the deadlock and sent a proposal to the government for talks.

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### Subodh Kumar Jaiswal is the new CBI Director

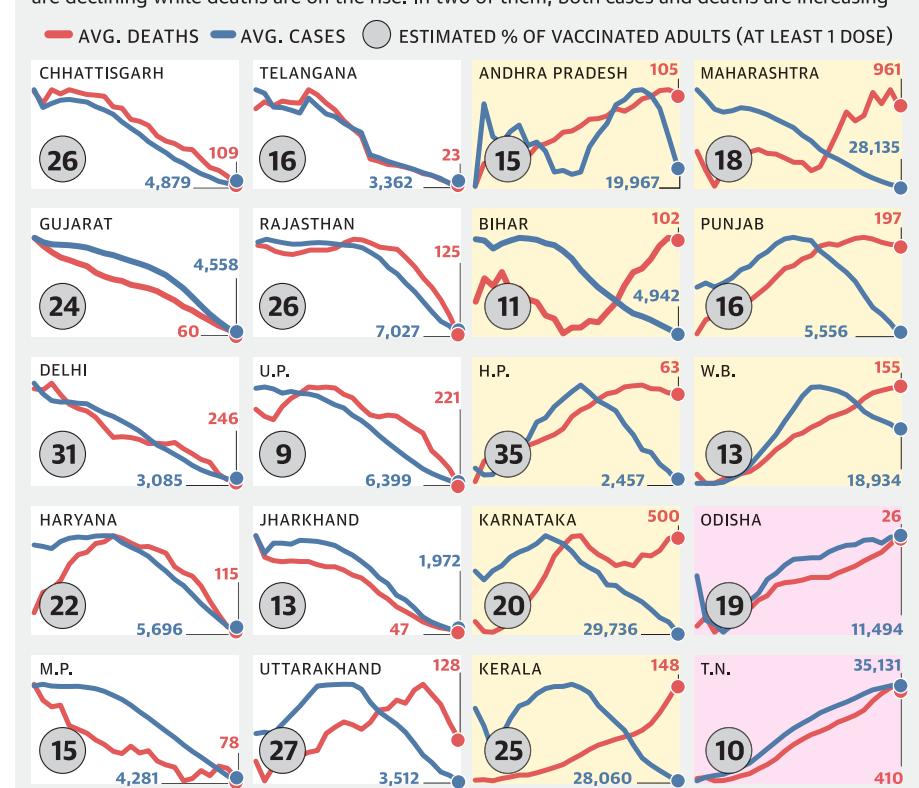
AHMEDABAD  
The Narendra Modi government late on Tuesday night appointed Maharashtra cadre IPS officer of 1985 batch, Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, currently Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force, as CBI Director for two years. Mr. Jaiswal served as Maharashtra DGP before being made the chief of CISF.

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

**Rise and fall** | As on May 24, the 7-day rolling averages of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths are decreasing in 10 of the 20 major States analysed. In eight of them, the cases are declining while deaths are on the rise. In two of them, both cases and deaths are increasing



## New IT rules come into force today; will comply, says FB

Industry bodies have sought more time for compliance



Facebook is committed to allowing people to freely express themselves.

In reply to a query, social media giant Facebook on Tuesday said it "aims to comply" with the provisions of the revised IT Rules and continues to discuss a few of the issues which need more engagement with the government.

Pursuant to the IT Rules,

we are working to implement operational processes and improve efficiencies. Facebook remains committed to people's ability to freely and safely express themselves on our platform," a spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, in an emailed response, instant messaging firm Telegram said it has complied with "almost all the new IT laws" and has informed the concerned authorities regarding the compliance in writing. Indian microblogging platform Koo, has said that it has met the compliance requirements of the new rules.

Twitter and WhatsApp did not comment on the issue.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Cong. wants tweets of 11 Union Ministers tagged

'They posted content similar to Patra's'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress party has written to Twitter asking them to flag tweets by 11 Union Ministers referring to the alleged "Congress toolkit" as "manipulated media".

It argued that all the tweets have content similar to what BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra posted, which has been tagged as such.

Twitter, in response, had sought the URLs of the said tweets.

All the tweets that the Congress has listed out are from May 18 when Mr. Patra first posted a screenshot of the alleged "Congress toolkit". Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala in his letter to Twitter said these tweets were posted with "clear mal-intent to ex-

ploit the social media space to spread lies and malicious propaganda throughout the territory of India".

Tweets of Smriti Irani, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Dharmendra Pradhan, Giriraj Singh, Piyush Goyal, Prahlad Joshi, Thawar Chand Gehlot, Harsh Vardhan, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are listed.

"It is also a matter of fact that people tend to believe 'true' any information that is put up directly by a Union Minister," Mr. Surjewala said, arguing that it becomes even more important that their tweets are classified as "manipulated media".

The Congress has filed an FIR against Mr. Patra in Raipur in connection with the case.

## Shrouds 'removed' from sand burials in Prayagraj

Cleaners seen removing saffron and yellow shrouds from mounds, administration says it's cleaning drive

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

In a curious move, the administration in Prayagraj has allegedly removed the saffron and yellow shrouds from bodies buried in the sand on the ghats of the Ganga days after it was reported that the bodies could be of suspected COVID-19 victims.

Visuals widely shared on social media showed cleaners deployed by the administration removing the shrouds, many of which traditionally also carry the name of Lord Ram, and the wooden stubs from the mounds of sand at Shringverpur Ghat.

A senior official, however, claimed that only shrouds that were scattered on the ghat were being removed while those on mounds of sand where the bodies were buried were not touched.



Cover-up? Bodies buried in the sand near the banks of the Ganga at Shringverpur Ghat in Prayagraj. ■ FILE PHOTO

"We are only cleaning the dirty clothes and shrouds that people leave behind or abandon on the side of the ghats," Soraon Sub-Divisional Magistrate Anil Kumar Chaturvedi told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Chaturvedi said such cleaning drives are not new.

Asked what was the trigger for the present drive, the SDM said the place looked dirty of late and cited the media attention that the ghats

were receiving.

"Bahut gandagi log kar diye hain. Media ke log jaa rahe hain na, kharab lag raha hai dekhne mein (People have left a mess out there. Now journalists are visiting the ghat and it doesn't look good)," he said.

Ever since countless bodies were found floating in the Ganga in different parts of Uttar Pradesh, followed by the discovery of shallow graves on sandy ghats in Unnao, Kannauj, Prayagraj and Raebareli among other districts, the State government announced support money for poor people who could not afford to cremate their dead in order to dissuade them from disposing of the bodies in the river.

At many places, the administration has not allowed any new bodies to be buried on the ghats and set up pick-

ets in several districts and patrolling by police on boats.

In Prayagraj too, Mr. Chaturvedi said they had put a stop to the burials. He said they were concerned that the bodies would rise to the surface during the rainy season.

**Priyanka questions drive**  
Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted a video showing some men removing the shrouds from bodies on a ghat. She questioned the cleaning on the ghats.

"Did not get treatment when alive. Many did not even get last rites with honour. Did not find a place in the government data. Now, even the Ramnami is being snatched from their graves," she wrote.

Ms. Vadra said this was disrespect of the deceased, religion and humanity.



**Survival mode:** Attendants of COVID-19 patients collecting food packets without following social distancing outside Lok Nayak Hospital in the Capital on Tuesday; health workers collecting swab samples of passengers arriving to board trains at the New Delhi Railway Station. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



## Sushil taken to stadium to recreate crime scene

Wrestler was also taken to the property behind the dispute

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The police on Tuesday took Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar to the Chhatrasal Stadium to recreate the crime scene in the alleged property dispute case that led to the death of a wrestler, said officials.

Kumar and his accomplice, Ajay, were arrested on Sunday from outer Delhi's Mundka in connection with the case.

"A team of Crime Branch officials went to the Chhatrasal Stadium in connection with the probe. Kumar was also taken to the spot to recreate the scene of crime and ascertain the sequence of events that unfolded on the day of the incident," a senior officer said. He was also taken to a flat in Model Town and Shalimar Bagh, an official said. A crime team collected fingerprints from cars



Sushil Kumar ■

recovered from the stadium.

The police said one of the cars used during the crime was stolen from Rohini while the other three were found registered in the name of Gurugram-based company, which was not found at the mentioned address.

Kumar was interrogated for almost four hours on Monday during which he was asked to ascertain the sequence of events that led

to the crime. "He was also questioned about his accomplices and friends who helped him to hide," the officer had said.

A 23-year-old wrestler died and two of his friends injured after they were allegedly assaulted by Kumar and others inside the Chhatrasal Stadium on the intervening night of May 4 and May 5 over a dispute related to a property located in the Model Town.

This is the incident in which two-time Olympian Sushil Kumar has been arrested.

### MCOCA invoked against man

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) has been invoked against criminal Sandeep alias Kala Jathedi, who has several heinous cases registered against him.

He had fled police custody in 2020.

Jathedi and his gang members are involved in over 25 cases of murder in different States, the police said, adding that he is suspected to have fled the country.

#### Sushil case connection

Jathedi is said to be a close accomplice of Sonu Mahal – who was allegedly thrashed along with Sagar Dhankar in north-west Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium – leading to Sagar's murder.

This is the incident in which two-time Olympian Sushil Kumar has been arrested.

## Take a relook at COVID-19 ringtone: HC

Govt. told to keep publicising helpline numbers and information to educate public

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said the Centre needs to relook at the COVID-19 ringtone saying it should "cut out the preface and come to the main point" which contains information about the helpline numbers.

"It is like starting a writ petition with 'most respectfully' and nobody is reading it and even not interested. You need to be a little proactive in your approach. People are aware of COVID-19 protocol," a Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeet Singh said.

"It is high time that you updated them with COVID-19 helpline number, which is the most important part of the message. You have to be agile on your feet on this," the Bench told the Central government's counsel.

The court also noted that a corner or column on a page could be dedicated for these helplines in the new-



The court said that a corner or column on a page could be dedicated for helplines in the newspapers. ■

spapers. "In newspapers, one does not find these inserts on a daily basis. These things should be there in the papers every day. Fix a corner or column, may be on page 1 or page 3. Some column on a page should be dedicated to it daily so that people know where to go when they need it," the court said.

#### On lines of campaign

The High Court's observation came while hearing a bunch of petitions related to the COVID-19 situation in the Capital. During the hearing, the court stressed on the need to spread awareness among public about the pandemic through advertisements more frequently on the lines of "hum do hamare do" campaign for family planning.

The court told the government to keep publicising all relevant helpline numbers and information through audio, video and print medium continuously to educate people.

■ In newspapers, one does not find these inserts on a daily basis. These things should be there in the papers every day. Fix a corner or column, may be on page 1 or page 3

HC BENCH  
"We direct the Centre and Delhi government to undertake publication of all relevant helpline numbers and information through all audio, video and print medium on a continuous basis as frequently as possible so as to educate people on facilities created by the State for testing and treatment of COVID-19 as well as other issues like mental health and issues arising in the society on account of the pandemic," the court ordered.

It also said that Doordarshan and All India Radio which are the mediums of Central government should give advertisements daily on the issue.

## Deceased constable's wife asks Kejriwal to pay promised money

He was Delhi Police's first COVID fatality

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Wife of constable Amit Kumar, who died last May and was Delhi Police's first COVID fatality, has written to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to facilitate the money that was promised to her.

In a letter written in Hindi, Ms. Pooja said Amit was posted in Bharat Nagar police station and on May 5, "while serving the people of the city", he contracted the virus and died shortly after.

"In that time of grief, remembering my husband's services, you had announced a sum of ₹1 crore help," she wrote to the Chief Minister.

However, a year has

passed but she still hasn't received the promised amount, she wrote.

"I have a four-year-old son and four-month-old daughter to take care of. I am worried about their future. If a CM does not fulfil a promise he made, then I may never be able to trust anyone ever again," she added.

Amit died hours after he contracted the virus. One of his colleagues roamed around in a car for hours taking him to different hospitals and COVID Care Centres but the official couldn't survive.

The family said their file for compensation have been rejected by the government, citing that Amit was not on COVID duty.

## Plea seeks ex gratia for COVID-19 patient's death due to negligence

Response sought from disaster management authority, govt.

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought response from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Delhi government on a petition seeking compensation for the parents and wife of a COVID-19 patient who died allegedly due to want of medical attention.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeet Singh asked Rao Tula Ram Hospital to respond to the plea, which claimed that the victim's condition was critical and his oxygen level was very low. Still, the doctor of the hospital did not recommend admission and the man died while waiting for an ambulance.

The family sought an appropriate compensation for the loss of life due to mismanagement and criminal negligence of the authorities. The court noted an order of the Supreme Court which said that the authority has fixed a minimum ex-gratia compensation payable to the kin of deceased on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior Advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, said the State government is proposing to give ex gratia relief of ₹50,000 each to families of COVID-19 deceased and this will be placed before the Cabinet next week.

The High Court's direction came on the plea of the parents and wife of Naveen, who died of COVID-19 on the intervening night of April 26-27 allegedly due to want of medical attention and doctor's negligence. The deceased's kin said the oxygen level of patient was recorded in the Rao Tula Ram Hospital to be at 60%, yet medical treatment was denied to him.

The family was asked to take him to a different hospital. The patient died while waiting for ambulance.

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## PIL for change in treatment norms dismissed with cost

It is just a publicity interest litigation: HC

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition seeking change of the existing protocol for treating COVID-19 patients with cost of ₹25,000. The court said the plea was not a public interest litigation (PIL) but rather it was a publicity interest litigation.

The course of treatment was not fixed on some "ipse dixit" and was arrived at after discussions, tests and experiments by experts, a Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said while rejecting the petition filed by two doctors and two research analysts.

The petitioners had claimed that use of antipyretics, like paracetamol, antibiotics and steroids should

be restricted to severe cases of COVID-19 and not at the initial stage of the infection.

"It ought to be kept in mind that COVID-19 treatment protocol for the country is not fixed on ipse dixit [unproven statement]. It is fixed on the basis of variety of experiments, tests and discussions by experts," the high court said.

The court said it was not going to direct the Niti Aayog and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to consider the petitioners' representations as officials of both were busy dealing with COVID-19 and black fungus. "On every whimsical idea of petitioners, we cannot direct the respondents to decide representations, unless the facts of the case warrant the same," the court remarked.

## Kalra's bail plea hearing adjourned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday adjourned to May 28 hearing on the bail application filed by businessman Navneet Kalra in connection with the oxygen concentrator black marketing case.

During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Mr. Kalra. He is in judicial custody till June 3.

Metropolitan Magistrate Swati Sharma deferred the hearing in the matter to May 28 after advocate Vishal Gohri, representing the accused, sought adjournment.

The court had adjourned hearing in the bail plea twice before on May 20 and 22.

## Doctors' prescription: take rest, eat well and watch out for fatigue

Those who have recovered from the virus should not let guard down as they could develop lung fibrosis, blood clotting

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

Even weeks after complete recovery, COVID-19 patients can experience new or recurring mild symptoms ranging from general fatigue, body ache, headache, joint pains, cough, depression, anxiety and difficulty in thinking or concentrating to severe breathlessness, chest pain and painful swelling of the limbs.

However, doctors warn that there can also be serious complications that can lead to re-admission even after full recovery. It includes lung fibrosis, delayed thromboembolic events (formation of clots in blood vessels) and bacterial and fungal infections.



COVID-19 patients getting free oxygen provided by Hemkunt Foundation in Gurugram. ■ PTI

Care Units on mechanical ventilator support.

"We are also witnessing cases of delayed thromboembolic events between three to six weeks of illness as COVID-19. This is being clinically manifested as sud-

den strokes. Apart from these two serious post-COVID symptoms, we also need to look out for secondary infections – bacterial and fungal," said Dr. Mathur.

**Heart attack risk**  
Amit Bhushan Sharma, Unit Head and Associate Director, Cardiology, Paras Hospitals, said that even those who didn't have any pro-cardiac issues could develop heart complications after recovering from COVID-19.

"So it may not be related to pre-existence of any cardiac problem. This can be a new phenomenon. Since the rhythm of the heart is destroyed, there is a high risk of a heart attack. This can happen while being infected and

also after COVID-19 recovery," said Dr. Sharma.

Amitabh Malik, Chief, ENT Department, Paras Hospitals, said that black fungus, also known as mucormycosis, was affecting the lives in a far more serious way than the pandemic and the hospital was getting around 20-30 such cases in a week in COVID-recovered patients.

"Any patient, who had COVID in last 10-20 days, should keep a watch on any left or right side facial pain, excruciating headache, swelling in and around the eyes and brownish or blackish nasal discharge. Such patients should approach an ENT specialist," said Dr. Malik.

Bela Sharma, Additional Director of Internal Medicine

in Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram said black fungus mainly occurred in patients, who were diabetic with poor sugar control, on steroids for COVID and oxygen support. Haryana government has also declared black fungus as a notified disease.

"The patients who are well and at home after COVID and particularly those who required hospital admission for the disease must continue to take rest with good diet and hydration for some more time. They must not rush back to the same level of physical activity as earlier but take it up in a gradual manner," suggested Reshma Tewari, Director of Critical Care in Artemis Hospitals.

civil defence guards outside his residence were not permitting him to go out for even basic essential items and when he tried to get tested at a lab, they declined to test him due to the May 4 advisory of ICMR. The Delhi government lawyer said that the petitioner's area at Sultanpuri here was a containment zone and that was also a reason why people were not being allowed to move out. The petition has contended that the May 4 advisory was "arbitrary, discriminatory and creates a paradoxical situation since a negative RT-PCR report is compulsorily required by several other notifications issued by the respondents".

The lawyer said without a COVID negative report, the

## Revisit advisory on RT-PCR test, ICMR told

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday suggested the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to relook at its recent advisory which said RT-PCR must not be repeated on an individual who tested positive by either Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or RT-PCR.

The suggestion by the court came while hearing a plea by a lawyer who has challenged the advisory claiming that due to it, neither he nor his family could get tested again after spending more than 17 days in quarantine from April 28 when they first tested positive.

The lawyer said without a COVID negative report, the

Timings		
DELHI		
WEDNESDAY, MAY 26		
RISE 05:26	SET 19:12	
RISE 19:15	SET 05:08	
THURSDAY, MAY 27		
RISE 05:26	SET 19:12	
RISE 20:26	SET 05:58	
FRIDAY, MAY 28		
RISE 05:25	SET 19:13	
RISE 21:35	SET 06:56	

**Delhi Weather** max min

Delhi City 39 23

Safdarjung 39 23

Palam 40 23

**Delhi Pilm Today**  
39°C Dry and hot weather would continue. Light winds during day with mainly sunny sky.

**Delhi Pilm Tomorrow**  
38°C Misty winds likely to cover north-west India. Drop in day temperature possible and comfortable night likely.

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**IN BRIEF**

**Delhi BJP's relief campaign assisting needy**

NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Tuesday said it had been assisting the needy with medicines, food and other requirements under its 'Sewa hi Sangathan' over the last 39 days. Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, under the programme, distributed food, dry ration, sanitisers and masks at Dev Nagar and Karol Bagh in the city.

# Doctors say black fungus cases likely to decline in 7 to 10 days

There is shortage of drug required for treatment of fungal infection, they claim

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) in the city seem to have reached the peak and are expected to fall in the next 7-10 days similar to COVID-19, which had triggered a spike in the fungal infection, said doctors on Tuesday.

They also said due to shortage of Amphotericin B, a drug used to treat black fungus, some of them are using another drug, which is the second line of treatment. They said the shortage is hampering the treatment.

**Low admissions**  
Deputy Medical Superintendent of Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Hospital Ritu Saxena said there is a reduction in new admissions of patients with black fungus.

"There is a fall in the number of new [black fungus] cases. Today [Tuesday] only one or two patients were admitted at the hospital. COVID cases spiked in April and when these patients were in the recovery phase, then the black fungus cases had spiked. We are now expect-



Family members of COVID-19 patients outside Lok Nayak Hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ing a fall in the number of these cases too," Dr. Saxena said.

Lok Nayak Hospital is one of three dedicated hospitals the government declared for treatment of the fungal infection. There were 48 people admitted at the hospital with black fungus as of Tuesday evening.

A majority of patients with black fungus are those who recovered from COVID-19 or are infected with the virus, said doctors.

Atul Mittal, director, Otorhinolaryngology, Fortis Me-

morial Research Institute, also said there is a "slight" reduction in new cases at the hospital and cases are likely to fall. "But we will have to wait for a week to come to a conclusion," Dr. Mittal added.

**Secondary disease**  
Ajay Swaroop, chairman of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said: "If the primary disease [COVID-19] cases go down, then the secondary disease [black fungus] will also go down in 10-15 days as that is the time period after which

the patient develops the secondary disease. The black fungus cases are expected to fall in the next 7-10 days."

There were 78 people admitted at the hospital with the fungal infection as of Tuesday evening.

Both Dr. Swaroop and Dr. Mittal said they were giving Posaconazole, a second line of the drug, along with Amphotericin B to reduce the usage of the latter.

"If Amphotericin B is available, then we would not even think about another drug. But since there is a shortage of the drug, we are giving Posaconazole to patients so that we can give them a reduced dose of Amphotericin than required," Dr. Swaroop said.

Another doctor at Ganga Ram said they were forced to choose whom to give Amphotericin B due to the shortage and it was "unfortunate".

"Shortage is there. We are not getting sufficient quantities of the drug and have to wait for it. We have to slightly delay the treatment of new patients with the drug in some cases, as the ongoing treatments cannot be stopped," Dr. Saxena said.

# Hospitals in city record lowest COVID admissions in 50 days

Govt's helpline received over 73 calls every hour this month

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI

In what appears to further indicate the departure of the debilitating second wave of the virus from the Capital, the lowest number of COVID admissions in the last 50 days was reported from city hospitals on Monday.

But in another telltale marker of the severity of the strain this period of virulence wreaked on the city's health infrastructure, statistics related to calls received by the Delhi government's helpline number – 1031 – posit that over 73 emergency calls were made every hour between May 1 and May 23. At least 11 of these were queries about the availability of hospital beds.

According to the Delhi government, 382 patients were admitted against the discharge of 625 on Monday. This is not only the lowest number of daily hospital admissions of COVID patients since April 5 but even lower than one-fifth of the peak of 1,993 single-day hospital admissions recorded on April 29.

On April 5, 406 admissions were recorded against 141 patients being discharged. Seemingly at its most virulent before beginning to abate albeit slightly from the following day, 1,268 patients were discharged on April 29 before the number of admissions began reducing on a daily basis starting April 30.

Over the 54-day period between April 1 and May 24, the Delhi government recorded the hospitalisation of 63,830 COVID patients and the discharge of 46,848 patients.

However, while daily admissions are declining over the last four days, so is the number of patients being discharged after recovering. On May 21, 638 patients were admitted against 1,043 discharges, 482 against 891 on



At a COVID-19 isolation centre which is being managed by Lok Nayak Hospital. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

May 22, 412 against 905 on May 23 and 382 against 625 on May 24.

According to data related to calls received on 1031, a total number of 40,375 calls were received between May 1 and May 23 – a daily average of 1755; of the total number of calls received during the period 6086, or 264 per day, were inquiries about the availability of hospital beds.

According to the Delhi government, 382 patients were admitted against the discharge of 625 on Monday. This is not only the lowest number of daily hospital admissions of COVID patients since April 5 but even lower than one-fifth of the peak of 1,993 single-day hospital admissions recorded on April 29.

However, while daily admissions are declining over the last four days, so is the number of patients being discharged after recovering. On May 21, 638 patients were admitted against 1,043 discharges, 482 against 891 on

'Govt. forcing people to take jabs in private hospitals'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Tuesday said that it was ironic that the Arvind Kejriwal government was making "preparations" to combat the next wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, without addressing the present vaccination crisis.

"Due to severe vaccine shortage, a majority of Delhites are either waiting for their second jab or for the first, as the Arvind Kejriwal government continues to indulge in shadow boxing with the Modi government on vaccine purchases," Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said.

He alleged that the Delhi government was deliberately creating a situation to force people to get COVID vaccination in private hospitals for a higher price, in collusion with the private hospital cartels.

Mr. Kumar repeated his demand that all Delhites should be given free vaccination as people have been severely impacted by pandemic, with financial stress and strain.

He added that the government should also explain why the poor people are being driven to private hospitals for vaccination and asked the government to bear the expenses of vaccination for the poor.

# No free vaccination for 18-44 age group for the second day

Atishi urges Central govt. to approve international vaccines

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 1,568 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,19,986, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Tuesday.

Also, 156 deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 23,565. A total of 73,406 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said.

The test positivity rate was 2.14% which means that about two to three people out of 100 people taking COVID-19 tests are now positive for the virus.

The last time the TPR was less than this was on March 27, when it was 1.7%.

Of the total cases, 13,74,682 people have recovered and there are 21,739 active cases. Of the total 25,035 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in hospitals, 68.5% beds were vacant on Tuesday. At the peak of infection in April, only 5-6% of beds were vacant on many days.

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

There was no free vaccination for the 18-44 age group in Delhi government schools for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, said AAP leader Atishi.

She said the only way for youth to get vaccinated is by paying "heavy prices" in private hospitals.

"Today is the second day for vaccination of youth to have temporarily stopped in Delhi. From today, Covaxin for 45+ is also absolutely finished. This is extremely saddening and worrisome for the people of Delhi, especially the youth. The only vaccination happening for the youth is in private hospitals at unreasonably high rates. One dose of Covishield costs around ₹900-950 in private hospitals while Covaxin costs ₹1,200-₹1,300," Ms. Atishi said.

Also, according to the Delhi government bulletin, there is no stock of Covaxin

left for vaccinating people of 45 years and above, healthcare, and frontline workers. On this, Ms. Atishi said: "If the gap between the first and second one increases, the first dose too becomes ineffective. Shortage of vaccines is a matter of grave concern."

The AAP leader said the Centre must approve vaccines in the international

market at the earliest, the import does on a large scale and also allow an increase in the manufacturing capacity of Indian vaccines as well.

"Humble appeal to the Centre to approve vaccines like Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, and vaccinate the people of India, including Delhi, as soon as possible," she added.

linked bank accounts subject to verification of deaths from local bodies.

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Atishi urges Central govt. to approve international vaccines

## Punjab needs to quicken pace of vaccination: Badal

'CM should give funds to purchase vaccines for next six months'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab's former Deputy Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday hit out at the Congress government, accusing it of failing to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Badal stressed the need for speedy vaccination to win the fight against COVID-19, alleging that Punjab was sluggish in its efforts. He requested Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to make a special allocation of ₹1,000 crore to purchase vaccines for the entire State in the next six months.

He also demanded that families who had lost their main earning members be given a monthly pension of ₹6,000. Free education should be given to the chil-

dren orphaned due to COVID-19, and power and water bills for all should be waived for a six-month period, Mr. Badal said.

Mr. Badal told reporters that the Punjab government should not look to the Centre alone for vaccines but should use State funds to source them quickly on the pattern of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, which had procured Covaxin doses within one week of placing the order.

"If need be, the Chief Minister should call an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to clear the proposal for speedy procurement of vaccine doses," he suggested.

Mr. Badal said the government should make the necessary preparations to cope with a potential third wave of infections.

"The State needs to order at least 2,000 ventilators and install them within three months along with hiring the required staff," he said.

## 'More research on black fungus'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

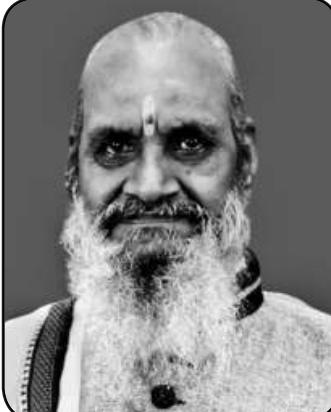
Of the 413 mucormycosis, or black fungus, patients in Haryana so far, 64 never had COVID-19 infection, said State Health Minister Anil Vij on Tuesday. He stressed the need for more research for the cause of the disease. It

was revealed during the analysis of patients admitted in various State hospitals. Mr. Vij, in a tweet, said that 79 of these patients were not diabetic. "...110 have not taken steroids and 213 were not on Oxygen Therapy. Cause of mucormycosis disease needs more research (sic)."

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(Koushika gothram, Kalinganardhana sharma)  
13.07.1936 - 24.05.2021  
Dasasthu on 1<sup>st</sup> June  
V. Shikumar-Bhuvaneshwari  
V.V. Ramanan-Deepa  
Col. V. Shankar, SC (Veteran)  
Sabyasachi Shivkumar  
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#### Government of Jharkhand Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society Department of Health, Medical Education & Family Welfare Namkum, Ranchi

#### Very Urgent E-Procurement Notice under COVID-19

Tender Notice No.: NHM/NAM/20/2021 Date: 24.05.2021

In-Charge Procurement Cell, on behalf of Mission Director, Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Jharkhand, Namkum, Ranchi, invites e-Tender from eligible bidders for Procurement, installation, commissioning and testing of oxygen plants within 45 days on turnkey basis (supply, installation, civil/Mechanical) Electrical work) with one year O&M and two years warranties as defect liability period at designated places in 17 locations of the State (jharkhand) under covid 19.

Blank tender documents with detailed conditions can be viewed or downloaded by the bidders from the website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and bid should be submitted through e-procurement system only. Hard copies of technical bid and financial bid will not be entertained except Tender Fee & Earnest Money Deposit (EMD).

Evaluation and finalization of award of work will be based solely on e-bid submitted by the bidder. It will be sole responsibility of the bidder to scan and upload clear and legible documents for assessment, failing which the tender will be liable for rejection.

Sr.No.	Particulars	Details
1	Name of the work	Procurement, installation, commissioning and testing of oxygen plants (PSA)
2	Date of Publication of Tender on website	25/05/2021
3	Date / time for Pre- Bid Meeting	28/05/2021 via link mentioned in tender document.
4	Date/ Time for opening of Technical bid through website	02/06/2021 up to 12:00pm
5	Email ID/Contact Person for clarifications	jharkhandcovid@gmail.com
6	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Rs-5000/-
7	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs-200000/-

Note: The specified dates and time may change due to abrupt declaration of holidays or any other unforeseen circumstances. The same shall be informed through web-portal as and when required.

PR 246960 Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society(21-22) In-Charge Procurement Cell, JRHMS

Sd/-

## People in some villages resisting vaccination, say U.P. officials

There is a range of misconceptions circulating about its side effects

**OMAR RASHID**  
LUCKNOW

Getting people to take the COVID-19 vaccine shots in some parts of rural Uttar Pradesh is proving to be a tough ask for officials allegedly due to a range of misconceptions circulating about their side effects.

In Barabanki district, when a team of health department officials had gone to a village for vaccination and awareness drive, a group of men and boys fled from the spot after wading through the shallow waters of the Ghagra river or jumping into the stream. Though it is not confirmed if they were even eligible for the dose, a senior official said they fled in fear that they would be forcefully administered the vaccine. The officials then set up an awareness camp in village Sisaua but only 14-15 persons got inoculated on the day,



■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.

said SDM Ramnagar Rajeev Shukla. This was the story in several other villages, he said.

"There is a lot of resistance among the villagers," Mr. Shukla told *The Hindu*. He said there is a standing misconception among people that the vaccine will cause them to fall ill and get fever. To motivate people, the administration has deployed teams in areas with resistance.

In Baudhiya Kalan village

"People come up and flatly say, we won't get the vaccine." The gram sabha has 12,000 residents, but only 100 have got vaccinated while another 500 are registered, said Mr. Guddu.

Lalji Pasi, superintendent of Nighasan community health centre, said they were having to deal with a number of misconceptions and rumours in the villages, such as fever, COVID-like symptoms and death. In village Ganga Behar, when officials reached to vaccinate people, some persons aggressively objected, following which the police had to be called. One person was let off after he promised he would get the dose, said Mr. Pasi. When his team reached the village later, the man was nowhere to be found, the official said.

DM Barabanki said the vaccination percentage in the district had gone up.

## 'Vaccine wastage only 2-3% in Haryana'

Health dept. blames Central figures on data mismatch

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GURUGRAM

The Haryana Health Department on Tuesday clarified that the recent vaccine wastage data released by the Union government for the State was higher than the actual due to data mismatch and was now corrected to just 2-3%. The Union government in a recently released data had pegged the vaccine wastage in Haryana at 6%.

Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Rajeev Arora said that in a data recently released by the Union government, Haryana was shown with 6% wastage of Covishield vaccine and

10.2% of Covaxin, and attributed it to data mismatch. He said the data mismatch was corrected and subsequently the wastage percentage for Covishield and Covaxin dropped to 3.1 and 2.4 respectively from 6 and 10.2. Thus, the average vaccine wastage percentage is between 2-3%, said Mr. Arora.

**Orientation programmes**  
Mission Director, National Health Mission, Haryana, Prabhjot Singh, along with the State immunisation team had held two orientation programmes with the Health officials and the districts with high wastage were

identified as Hisar, Palwal, Nuh, Kaithal, Rohtak and Bhiwani.

The health officials in these districts were given separate consultation to minimise the wastage of the vaccine.

Among the best performing districts with regard to vaccine administration, Gurugram has administered the highest number of 6,34,610 vaccine doses, followed by Faridabad at 5,00,600 and Ambala at 3,94,162.

As many as 53,72,311 vaccine doses have been presently administered in the State.

## Six drown as boats carrying workers overturn in Odisha

They were trying to cross the border at night, fearing lockdown

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK**  
BHUBANESWAR

Six persons drowned and two were reportedly missing after two fishing boats capsized in the Sileru river in Odisha's Malkangiri district on Monday evening.

The incident took place when over 30 members of migrant families were trying to sneak into Odisha in the night fearing lockdown. Three persons managed to swim ashore while the body of a child was fished out later. Five bodies were retrieved on Tuesday.



People being attended to during the rescue operation in Odisha on Tuesday. ■  
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Many people including several children had arrived at the border on Monday evening... they wanted to return to their village Kandha-

guda taking advantage of the darkness," said K. Padmanava Dora, Tahasildar of Chitrakonda. They first reached the bank of Sileru Reservoir (Sileru river) and boarded two fishing boats, he said. Some people managed to cross the reservoir in the first trip. During the next trip, a boat hit a pole and overturned. Those in the boat jumped into the second one, toppling it too.

The ODRI and Fire Service personnel started the rescue operation immediately.

## Sarma flayed for remarks on Akhil Gogoi's health

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GUWAHATI

Raijor Dal, an eight-month-old regional political party, has slammed Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for "disrespectful remarks" on its president Akhil Gogoi's mental health.

The Chief Minister during his address in the State Assembly on Monday cited doctors as saying that Mr. Gogoi had psychological issues.

He also said that if the Raijor Dal president was healthy enough to have come to the Assembly, he should ideally be in jail and not in the hospital.

Mr. Gogoi, one of the most vocal anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act activists in Assam was imprisoned in December 2019 on charges of sedition and inciting violence leading to deaths. But he has been in a paid cabin of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital for the past four months.

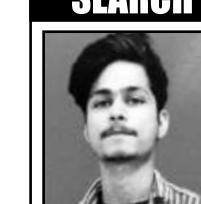
A special court of the National Investigation Agency had granted him permission for the oath-taking ceremony.

"His remark suggesting Akhil Gogoi is mentally unstable is unbecoming of a Chief Minister, who also resorted to lies to prevent our president from attending the inaugural session of the Assembly," Raijor Dal working president Bhasco de Saikia said.

Apart from referring to Mr. Gogoi's mental health, the Chief Minister said the jailed leader did not adhere to COVID-19 protocol and mingled with the other MLAs. "I wondered if he had come to the Assembly just to spread the virus."

On Monday night, the police in Sivasagar district picked up four leaders of the Raijor Dal and organisations associated with it.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Anukul, S/o: Suresh, R/o: H.No. L-258, Dakshinpuri, New Delhi** has been missing/ kidnapped since **06.05.2021** at 6:30 pm. from the area of jurisdiction of P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, South Distt. New Delhi. In this regard a case vide DD No. 61A dated 11.05.2021 has been registered at P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, South Distt. New Delhi. The description of the missing boy are as under: Age: 20 years, Height: 5'10", Face: Long, Built: Thin, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Maroon colour shirt and black colour jeans. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing boy kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail Id - cie@cbi.gov.in  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639  
DP/532/SD/2021  
Tel.No. 011-29051917, 8750870832

## BRIHANMUMBIA MAHANAGARPALIKA PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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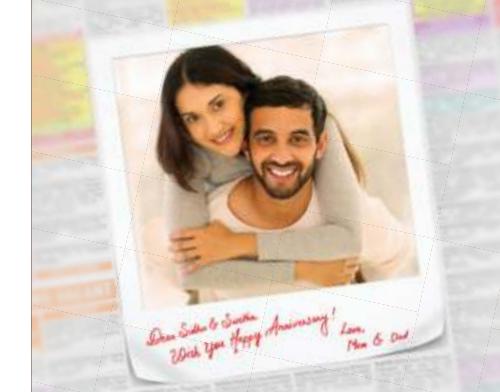
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## Calibrated closures

With no short road to universal vaccination, lockdowns should be precise and painless

**S**everal States have extended the coronavirus lockdowns beyond May 31, while fresh cases appear to show a downward trend, but India's COVID-19 battle lacks strategic focus. Although a cessation of activity has been imposed, there is not much clarity on the future threat from virus variants, notably B.1.617 that now has three sub-types and the dominant one, B.1.617.2, is estimated to be 50% more transmissible than another variant of concern, B.1.1.7. Neither is there a road map for vaccine availability ahead, with direct imports by States hitting a roadblock and vague assurances of a domestic ramp-up from July substituting for firm commitments. Some States are unwisely taking the foot off the testing pedal, making it that much harder to map the course of transmission. A miasma of confusion has come to pervade COVID-19 policy, where the Centre no longer has an appetite for leadership, even if it means shunning responsibility for universal vaccination, and the only tool available with States is a lockdown. But as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has pointed out, a lockdown does not provide a solution, and comes with its own economic side-effects that hit the working class poor the hardest. The time has come for a pandemic policy reset that reflects scientific insight, encourages safe public behaviour through persuasive communication, monitoring, and, importantly, incorporates medical interventions of scale.

The medium-term outlook does not point to a steep rise in vaccination by the end of the year to cover most of the population, making it imperative for States to prepare for potential future surges. Although claims have been made of a large volume of three vaccines becoming available between August–December, the road to universal immunisation is going to be long. The process is complicated by the finding in Britain that it takes two doses of Covishield for 60% protection against the dominant virus variant that is also found in India; the second dose, therefore, should be administered after eight weeks, not 12 or 16. What States can do immediately is to arrive at a good lockdown protocol, sparing people frequent shocks. Tamil Nadu's recent move to intensify the lockdown, and, inexplicably, allow even jewellery and clothing shops to open for a day before that, led to massive crowding triggered by induced demand. Clearly, measures to shut down everyday activity lead to fear and panic, and leave less affluent sections, the disabled, migrant workers and many single individuals unable to cope. The golden mean would be to shut all non-essential shops, encourage remote transactions, open street sales and home deliveries, actively monitor compliance with COVID-19 protocols in public places and vaccinate workers in services, including domestic workers, on priority. Free food distribution must be a central feature of lockdowns.

## Rules and rulers

The Govt. must hear out the social media industry, and shed its arbitrary rule-making

**I**t does seem that most if not all global social media giants will miss complying with the new IT rules of intermediaries, which come into effect today. It would be unfortunate if this non-compliance were to trigger a further worsening of the already poor relationship between some social media players and the Government. The new rules were introduced in February. Among other things, they require the bigger social media platforms, which the rules referred to as significant social media intermediaries, to adhere to a vastly tighter set of rules within three months, which ended on May 25. They require these platforms to appoint chief compliance officers, in order to make sure the rules are followed, nodal officers, to coordinate with law enforcement agencies, and grievance officers. Another rule requires messaging platforms such as WhatsApp to trace problematic messages to its originators, raising uneasy questions about how services that are end-to-end encrypted can adhere to this. There are indeed many problems with the new rules, not the least of which is the manner in which they were introduced without much public consultation. There has also been criticism about bringing in a plethora of new rules that ought to be normally triggered only via legislative action.

But non-compliance can only make things worse, especially in a situation in which the relationship between some platforms such as Twitter and the Government seems to have broken down. The latest stand-off between them, over Twitter tagging certain posts by BJP spokespersons as 'manipulated media', has even resulted in the Delhi Police visiting the company's offices. Separately, the Government has been fighting WhatsApp over its new privacy rules. Whatever the back-story, it is important that social media companies fight the new rules in a court of law if they find them to be problematic. The other option, that of engaging with the Government, may not work in these strained times. But stonewalling on the question of compliance can never be justified, even if it is to be assumed that the U.S. Government has their back. Facebook, on its part, has made all the right noises. It has said that it aims to comply with the new rules but also needs to engage with the Government on a few issues. What is important is that the genuine concerns of social media companies are taken on board. Apart from issues about the rules, there have been problems about creating conditions for compliance during the pandemic. As reported by *The Hindu*, five industry bodies, including the CII, FICCI and the U.S.-India Business Council have sought an extension of 6–12 months for compliance. This is an opportunity for the Government to hear out the industry, and also shed its high-handed way of rule-making.

# One-state solution, the way forward in Palestine

The whole premise of the two-state solution is wrong, providing Israel the immunity to continue its ethnic cleansing



ILAN PAPPÉ

**F**or more than 50 years, well-intentioned and more cynical, local and external actors involved in the attempts to bring peace and reconciliation to historical Palestine have religiously adhered to the two-state solution as the only way forward.

The idea of partitioning Palestine between the settler movement of Zionism, and later the state of Israel and the indigenous population of Palestine is not new. It was first offered by the British in 1937 and rejected by the Palestinians already then. The Zionist movement was hardly 50 years old and was already offered by the new British occupiers of Palestine, a chunk of the Palestinian homeland as a future state. This in the 1930s and 1940s would have been akin to an offer to decolonise India by partitioning it between a British India and local India or to propose the decolonisation of Algeria by dividing it between a French Algeria and a local Algeria. Neither the Indian anti-colonial movement nor the Algerian one would have ever consented to such a post-colonial arrangement; nor did the British and French dare to offer it when they reconciled with the fact that they will have to leave their colonial empires and go back to Europe.

### Catastrophic event

But even when decolonisation was achieved in India in 1947, not only the British but also the so-called civilised world through the United Nations insisted that the Palestinians should give half of their homeland to the settler movement of Zionism. The Palestinians attempted to convince the international community that the problem was not only about dispensing with half of their homeland but that the settler movement of Zionism

would not be content with just half of the country and intended to take as much of it as possible and leave in it as few Palestinians as possible. This ominous prediction turned out to be chillingly accurate and true in less than a year after the UN insisted that partition was the only solution for Palestine. Under the guise of UN support, the new Jewish state took over nearly 80% of historical Palestine and ethnically cleansed almost a million Palestinians (more than half of Palestine's population), and in the way demolished half of Palestine's villages and most of its towns in nine months in 1948; an event known by the Palestinians as the Nakba, the catastrophe.

### Incremental cleansing

In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of historical Palestine, and in the process expelled another 300,000 Palestinians. Like all settler colonial projects, it had to navigate between a wish to take over indigenous territory while downsizing the number of native people living on it. It was impossible after 1948 to repeat a massive ethnic cleansing, so it was substituted by incremental ethnic cleansing (the last stage in this process was one of the root causes that ignited the cycle of violence last week – the proposed eviction of Palestinians from Shaykh [Sheikh] Jarrah, an East Jerusalem neighbourhood, as part of an overall attempt to Judaize East Jerusalem).

Incremental ethnic cleansing is not the only way of achieving the old Zionist goal to turn historical Palestine into a Jewish state. Imposing military rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after they were occupied was another means which enclaved the people there without basic human and civil rights. Imposing a version of an Apartheid regime on the Palestinian minority in Israel is another method and the constant refusal to allow the 1948 refugees to return completes the matrix of power that allows Israel to retain the land and disregard a demographic reality by which the Jews are not



the majority in historical Palestine.

### It is Israel that decides

The two-state solution, offered for the first time by liberal Zionists and the United States in the 1980s, is seen by some Palestinians as the best way of ending of the occupation of the West Bank and at least the partial fulfilment of the Palestinian right for self-determination and independence. This is why the Palestine Liberation Organization was willing to give it a go in 1993, by signing the Oslo Accords. But the Palestinian position has no impact in the current balance of power. What mattered is how Israel interprets the idea and the fact that there is no one in the world that could challenge its interpretation.

The Israeli interpretation, until the rise of Benjamin Netanyahu to power in 2009, was that the two-state solution is another means of having the territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, without incorporating most of the people living there. In order to ensure it, Israel partitioned the West Bank (which is 20% of historical Palestine) into a Jewish and an Arab part. This was in the second phase of the Oslo Accords, known as the Oslo II agreement of 1995. The Palestinians were forced to accept it under American and Egyptian pressure. One area, called area C, which consists of 60% of the West Bank was directly ruled from 1995 until today by Israel. Under Mr. Netanyahu, Israel is in the process of officially annexing this area while at the same time ethnically cleansing the Palestinians living in it. The remaining 40% of the West Bank, areas A and B under Oslo II,

were put under the Palestinian Authority, which optimistically calls itself the state of Palestine, but in essence has no power whatsoever, unless the one given to it, and withdrawn from it, by Israel.

### A Bantustanisation

The Gaza Strip was divided too. But the Jewish part was small and could not be defended from the local national movement's wrath. So, the settlers were taken out in 2005 and Israel hoped that another Bantustan, like the one in areas A and B, would be established there under the Palestinian Authority's rule and under the same conditions. But the people of Gaza opted to support a new player, Hamas, and its ally, the Islamic Jihad, which resisted this offer. They supported them not only because there was a return to religion in the face of the ongoing predicaments but also because there was big disappointment from the compliance of the PLO with the Oslo arrangements. Israel responded by imposing a callous siege and blockade on the Gaza Strip that, according to the UN, made it unbearable.

To complete its strategy that included the partition of the West Bank, its Bantustanisation, and the siege of Gaza, Israel passed in 2018 a citizenship law, known as the nationality law, which made sure that the Palestinian citizens who live in Israel proper (which is Israel prior to the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) and who are supposedly equal citizens of the Jewish state, will in essence become the "Africans" of a new Israeli Jewish apartheid state: living in a permanent regime that discriminates against them in all aspects of life on the basis of their nationality.

The endless negotiation on the two-state solution was based on the formula that once the two states become a reality, Israel will stop these severe violations of the Palestinian civil and human rights, wherever they are. But while the wait continued, more Palestinians were expelled and the Jewish settler community in the West Bank

doubled and tripled and took over the fertile land, leaving no space for Palestinian expansion. The presence of more than 600,000 Jewish settlers, with a very high rate of natural growth, means that Israel will never consider moving them out; and without that, even a soft version of a two-state solution is impossible.

### Decolonise, build a new state

The whole premise of the two-state solution is wrong and that is why it did not materialise. It is based on the assumption of parity and of framing the conflict as one fought between two national movements. But this is not a "conflict" as such. This is a settler colonial reality which began in the late 19th century and continues until today. The late scholar, Patrick Wolfe, described settler colonial movements as motivated by a logic he called "the elimination of the native". Sometimes it led to genocide, as it happened in North America, sometimes it translated to an ongoing ethnic cleansing operation, which is what has unfolded in Palestine. The two-state solution is not going to stop the ethnic cleansing; instead, talking about it provides Israel international immunity to continue it.

The only alternative is to decolonise historical Palestine. Which means that we should aspire to a state for all its citizens all over the country, based on the dismantlement of colonialist institutions, fair redistribution of the country's natural resources, compensation of the victims of the ethnic cleansing and allowing their repatriation. All this will be so that settlers and natives should together build a new state that is democratic, part of the Arab world and not against it, and an inspiration for the rest of the region which desperately needs such models to push it forward towards a better future.

Professor Ilan Pappé is the Director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies and Senior Fellow of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, U.K. He is the author of 20 books

## Slowing the pace of India's mucormycosis threat

The experience of oncologists who rely on steroid-based protocols offers lessons in preventing and managing cases



NIKITA MEHRA

**T**he alarming rise in India recently in the incidence of mucormycosis – a rare fungal infection – in patients who have been diagnosed and treated for COVID-19 has come as no surprise to those of us in the medical oncology community. This outcome was our greatest fear as the administration of dexamethasone and other steroids began to become common. As oncologists who rely on steroids in many of our protocols, and having managed several cases of mucormycosis, we are acutely aware that treatment protocols need to differ from patient to patient due to the complexities in clinical presentation and an individual's tolerance to treatment.

However, we find ourselves in a different position today because of the magnitude of cases being reported, and the inability of treating physicians to create individualised treatment protocols under this burden. Some States, including Tamil Nadu, have declared mucormycosis as a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act. Guidelines and protocols need to be adapted and modified rapidly to arrest this growing epidemic.

Why did the risk of mucormycosis overwhelming us come as no surprise? The estimated burden of mucormycosis in India is 14 per 100,000 in a study published in *Current Fungal Infection Reports* (<https://bit.ly/3oOe4xv>). This is al-

most 70 times higher than what is reported in other countries. In a multi-centre study across several tertiary-care hospitals in India, published in *Clinical Microbiology and Infection* (<https://bit.ly/3fkLzV8>), the rough estimate of proven mucormycosis was around 40 cases on an average over a 21-month period observed at each centre.

### Focus on diabetes

It must be made absolutely clear that mucormycosis is not transmitted from one individual to the other, the way COVID-19 is. The most common cause is uncontrolled diabetes mellitus (raised blood sugars). Other causes include the treatment of some cancers; steroids, chemotherapy or immunotherapy, and solid organ or stem-cell transplants. The common sites of presentation include rhino-cerebral involvement (i.e., the fungus can damage the nose, paranasal sinuses, the eyes and the brain), and pulmonary involvement (i.e., the fungus can cause pneumonia).

Raised blood sugars being a cause is of particular concern for multiple reasons. According to a study in *The Lancet* (<https://bit.ly/3bV2fAC>), the number of people with diabetes increased to 65 million in 2016 in India. The highest prevalence of diabetes was observed in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi. The crude prevalence of diabetes above 20 years of age has increased to 7.7% in 2016, from 5.5% in 1990. Further, there is an underlying higher genetic susceptibility to diabetes in Indians; some of these cases could get unearthed only after exposure to steroids.

The treatment of COVID-19 is, unfortunately, only worsening this situation. In a lab study published in *Nature Metabolism* (<https://go.nature.com/34dEn6L>), SARS-CoV-2 can potentially multiply in pancreatic cells and contribute to increased blood sugar levels in COVID-19 patients. Steroids form a very important aspect of treatment for COVID-19 because they lower death rates by reducing the cytokine storm phase which can develop in some patients. However, steroids when used excessively or prematurely, and without medical supervision can be harmful. Besides causing reduced immunity levels, steroids can also increase blood sugar levels which can cause additional harm if left unchecked. Dexamethasone, methylprednisolone or prednisone are among the steroids used in the treatment of COVID-19.

Surgery for mucormycosis can be debilitating requiring major re-



sections. Additionally, there are limited antifungal drugs available for mucormycosis. The gold standard drug is liposomal amphotericin B, which is priced out of reach for many. Amphotericin B deoxycholate (conventional) is cheaper, but is associated with an unfavourable toxicity profile including kidney problems, abnormalities in electrolyte levels; reduced sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium levels can lead to other toxicities. Some other expensive treatment options include posaconazole and isavuconazole. All these medicines often have to be administered for prolonged durations, making treatment protocols difficult to sustain on a large scale, given the cost implications and difficulty in drug administration due to its side-effects.

When a patient is recovering from COVID-19 infection, it is certainly going to be a challenge to perform debilitating surgeries and administer these antifungal drugs for a prolonged duration. In the case of rhino-cerebral mucormycosis especially, surgery is usually required in addition to antifungal drugs. If these surgeries cannot be performed, the outcome is dismal.

It is also important to keep in mind that treatment for mucormycosis will require prolonged hospital admissions. Given the health-care constraints we are faced with, this infection should be avoided at all costs.

### Monitoring is essential

What can be done to reduce the number of cases and the intensity of mucormycosis?

Steroid use at home for COVID-19 should be only under the supervision of a health-care worker.

The control of blood sugars during steroid intake is cru-

cial to avoiding mucormycosis. When patients are medicating themselves at home, monitoring of capillary blood glucose is essential. If high blood sugars are encountered, a tele-consult with a doctor is advisable. Going a step further, health authorities may consider arranging for blood glucose monitoring for patients at home on steroids, and also promoting awareness campaigns on the importance of controlled blood sugar levels.

Patients on steroids for COVID-19 should report symptoms of mucormycosis at the earliest. Among other symptoms, they should look out for facial swelling on one side, protrusion of the eyeball, new-onset visual disturbances, headache and vomiting, new onset swelling or ulcers with blackish discolouration, and prolonged fever. COVID-19 treatment experts and policy-makers may consider widespread training of health-care personnel including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and nursing professionals to raise awareness on mucormycosis while educating people locally.

The prolonged requirement for hospital admission linked to COVID-19 will also lead to a rise in other hospital-acquired infections necessitating the use of multiple antibiotics. We are staring at the grim reality of managing large numbers of patients with other long-standing side-effects of steroids. Additionally, the concern is the alarming increase in multi-drug resistant bacterial infections for which we are grossly unprepared.

Dr. Nikita Mehra is Associate Professor of Medical Oncology, Adyar Cancer Institute (WIA), Chennai

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Toolkit hunt

The ruling party's obsession, and also the Government of India's, with "toolkits" is absurd. In the midst of a raging pandemic, the urge to engage the police and central agencies to investigate so-called toolkits ends up being a facade to divert an ordinary citizen's attention from the real problems haunting the

country. One wonders how a social media site would have more information about an alleged conspiracy than India's elite investigation agency itself. One hopes that the government gets down to setting the country right rather than look for a toolbox.

ASWIN S.  
Thiruvananthapuram

**Remarks on allopathy**  
Yoga guru Baba Ramdev's derogatory and illogical remarks against allopathy should not stop the central government from initiating legal action against him – even if he did express regret later – for causing fear and confusion besides deeply hurting the feelings of health professionals (Inside pages, "Vardhan

slams Ramdev's view", May 24). The facts and motives behind such utterances by the yoga guru should be exposed. Intellectuals, the

medical world and progressive-minded individuals and organisations must express their strong protest against CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:  
A report headlined "Thousands from Karnal reach Singhu" (May 24, 2021, some editions) talked about farmers from Punjab's Karnal and nearby areas reaching the Singhu border to join a protest against the farm laws. Karnal is in Haryana.

A front-page report titled "Gujarat emerges as hotspot of mucormycosis in India" (May 23, 2021) erroneously referred to the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1857. It should have been Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

To read more letters online, scan the QR code

such remarks.

D. SURINDER S

# Vaccination is our only weapon

It is important to hold manufacturers to account on efficacy data



JOSEPH BRITTO



On May 14, 2021, the Indian government announced that over two billion doses of vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 will be produced in India from August to December. The government can be applauded on its intent: vaccinating a billion Indians with two doses each should in theory give India herd immunity. But while the number 2.1 billion doses makes sense, little else does. Vaccines don't save lives; rapid, mass, repeated vaccinations do.

## Vaccinate on a war footing

In the 2019 general election, in just five weeks, about 610 million Indians voted at one million polling stations that were supervised by 10 million election officials. If the nation can be mobilised every five years for the general election, there is no reason why India cannot vaccinate one billion Indians in five weeks. On a war footing, India needs to vaccinate 75% of the population in five weeks, not five months.

Up to May 23, only 10.9% of the population had received one dose and only 4% had been fully vaccinated with two doses. On average 1.5 million Indians have been vaccinated every day since the vaccination programme started on January 16. If in the 150 days between August and December this year, about 2.1 billion doses are produced, India requires not just the production but the administration of at least 14.4 million vaccines per day. But it lacks the infrastructure to administer the produced vaccines at 10 times the current rate. It will fail in this critical task unless it mobilises the armed forces for logistics. Every health worker not working in a hospital and every medical, paramedical, and nursing student will have to be on vaccine administration duty. Unless every Indian is protected either by vaccination or herd immunity, India will remain unprotected.

Spreading viruses mutate. The only way a host can break the cycle of replication and mutation is if the host's immune system neutralises the virus. Immunity is acquired in only two ways – either by natural infection or vaccine-derived immunity. The problem with the current rate of vaccination is that in

the large population groups which remain unvaccinated or under-vaccinated, the virus is spreading, replicating, and mutating. Unless it resorts to mass, rapid vaccinations, India will be condemned to new variant pandemic cycles that will keep surging and receding with cyclical and devastating consequences on lives and livelihoods.

Like influenza, SARS-CoV-2 is here to stay. There is a high possibility of another wave of infections, with another strain if not this. Many more will get infected. The aim is to downregulate the virus with rapid, mass and repeated vaccinations from an epidemic to an endemic infection that has seasonal outbreaks with lower number of cases, morbidity and mortality, allowing us to safely open up and keep the economy open.

Sadly, many decision-makers forget that vaccinating the nation is not a one-off; we will have to repeat this herculean exercise every season with updated and re-engineered booster vaccines to prevent the next pandemic cycle which will be driven by new and emerging variants.

All vaccines are not equally effective – high efficacy equals high economic benefit. The primary driver of the choice of a vaccine manufacturer is not just the ability to produce large quantities in the time frame required; it is the efficacy of the vaccine following peer reviews, publications and rollout. Equally important is the ability of the manufacturer to quickly re-engineer and produce updated vaccines against the prevalent strains and future 'variants of concern'.

Both the Russian Sputnik V and the Chinese Sinopharm vaccines were rolled out widely and ahead of sufficient phase 3 trial data. Mostly low- and middle-income countries have given emergency use licence to both these vaccines and millions have been vaccinated with them. Both vaccines remain under review by the European Medicines Agency. On May 7, the World Health Organization listed Sinopharm

for emergency use and is expected to do the same for Sputnik V shortly. However, absence of transparency in clinical trial protocols and of the data and its analysis have cast doubts on approval of these vaccines in developed countries with access to other vaccines.

## Surge in the Seychelles

Policymakers and vaccine manufacturers would be wise to pay close attention to what is happening in the Seychelles with respect to the efficacy of vaccines. Despite being the most vaccinated nation in the world, with more than 60% of its population fully vaccinated, the Seychelles is battling a surge of the virus and has had to reimpose a lockdown. In the fully vaccinated population in the Seychelles, 57% were given Sinopharm (donated by the United Arab Emirates), while 43% were given AstraZeneca (produced by the Serum Institute of India). On a per capita basis of reported cases, the Seychelles outbreak is worse than India's. All vaccines do not necessarily demonstrate the efficacy that the manufacturers tout. Manufacturers must be held to account not just on their production targets but on efficacy data. Transparency in clinical trials including post-vaccine rollout analysis is mandatory.

Until all Indians are protected, none of us is protected. The government's announcement that 2.1 billion doses will be provided in five months, without any mention of a central vaccine agency managed by experts to govern the purchase, procurement and production centrally for all States, will create and promote vaccination asymmetry. It will exacerbate the pre-existing healthcare inequity and inequity in India. To the rich-poor, rural-urban, digital divides we now appear to be adding a new vaccination divide.

India has to learn from its colossal mistakes. It must set aside its hubris and exceptionalism. It must on a war footing coalesce behind the only weapon that works – vaccination. The pandemic cycles have left in their wake incalculable but preventable loss of life, human suffering, financial ruin and economic decrepitude. If we fail, generations of Indians to come will ask why we did not come together and do the right thing.

*Joseph Britto is former consultant and honorary senior lecturer in Paediatric Intensive Care at Imperial College at St. Mary's Hospital, London*

# Interpreting deaths in Chennai

Excess deaths data show that COVID-19 causality is being underplayed



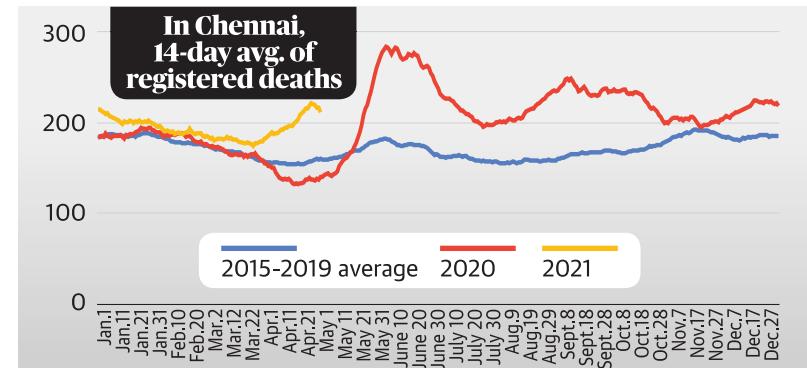
RUKMINI S.

Chennai saw over 12,000 more deaths in 2020 than the average of the five preceding years – a 20% increase over those years and a 10.66% increase over 2019 alone, the highest single year change in a decade. Officially, the city recorded just 4,000 deaths from COVID-19 in 2020. It is unclear how many of these 'excess' deaths were uncounted COVID-19 deaths or were due to other causes including lack of access to health services. This pattern is likely to repeat itself in 2021. More deaths have been reported in the first four months of the year than during any similar period in the last decade. The 'excess mortality' in 2021, which could include other deaths, is also nearly four times the reported COVID-19 death count of 730 deaths for the same period.

## Excess mortality

Chennai's municipal corporation maintains information on every death certificate issued for over a century. The data presented here are based on deaths counted by the date on which the actual death took place, as reported in the death certificate. The city corporation says that it registers virtually every death that takes place within the city corporation limits.

With the rising population, the number of registered deaths has gradually gone up every year. While data since 2010 have been analysed, the five most recent pre-pandemic years (2015–2019) provide the best comparison as their mortality statistics are closest to what a 'normal' year should have looked like. Between 2015 and 2019, Chennai saw 62,457 deaths every year on average (the average was substantially driven up by high mortality in 2019, which registered an increase of 7% from 2018). In 2020, Chennai saw over 74,000 deaths – an increase of 19% over the five-year average and 10.7% over the 2019 figure. From the end of March 2020 through April and part of May, the city was under lockdown. As would be expected for a city that sees over 100 deaths in road accidents alone every month, monthly deaths in Chennai declined in March and April. However, from May to September, there was a large spike in deaths, particularly in June, when more than 50% more



deaths were reported than the previous five-year average. With the decline of the first wave by September 2020, excess mortality in Chennai began to fall too, but remained more than 10% above the five-year average. From February 2021, this 'excess mortality' began to rise too, and in April 2021, deaths were over one-third higher than the five-year average. The data for April 2021 in particular are likely to be an underestimate as people have up to a year to register deaths.

All over the world, cities and countries have accepted that the official toll from COVID-19 does not represent the accurate or full toll. The U.K. and some jurisdictions in the U.S. like New York City report both confirmed and suspected or probable COVID-19 deaths. The latter category includes people who did not test positive prior to death. Despite this being part of India's official protocol on the counting of COVID-19 deaths, it is not being followed in practice. Officials in States including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Delhi have told this author that they only count deaths among people with a positive test prior to death as COVID-19 deaths. Reporting from States including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has indicated similar trends.

To get past this lack of data, some reporters have attempted to collate data from crematoria and burial grounds. However, this method too is fraught with error – crematoria do not maintain complete records; in some cities, a few crematoria are carrying out all COVID-19 cremations giving the impression of a greater increase in cremations than the data warrant; and many cremations and burials are being carried out following COVID-19 protocols even when the death in question is not necessarily from COVID-19.

## Mortality statistics

Given the inadequacy of official data and the loopholes in novel sources, many researchers are turning instead

Rukmini S. is an independent journalist

# Still grappling with online classes

State universities require funding if online education is to continue in India

## MILIND KUMAR SHARMA

A year since the outbreak of COVID-19, online education remains a chimera in India. Notwithstanding their preparedness, higher education institutions were directed by the government to shift from classroom education to online education. This was mandated even though the government spent merely 3.2% of its GDP on education in 2020-21. University administrations too released orders overnight in haste. They instructed teachers and students to move to online classes without taking cognisance of changes needed in infrastructure, training, etc.

## Differences within institutions

The financial health of state universities in the country is an open secret.

While centrally funded elite institutes such as the IITs, IIMs, NITs and Central universities launched video channels and uploaded e-content on institutional websites and digital platforms, a majority of the state universities still struggle without proper Internet connectivity and bandwidth in their campuses. State universities are only able to provide salaries on time.

The move to online learning especially came as a surprise for overburdened teachers given that there are several vacant faculty positions in universities across India. This move also came as a shock for the students, many of whom are distressed by the COVID-19 situation. Many of them also lack the facilities to attend online classes. Teachers and students had a sense of déjà vu as they had a similar experience when the annual scheme of teaching and regular courses was replaced by the semester scheme of teaching and the choice-based credit system earlier.

A transition from conventional classroom teaching and learning to online education needs to be done in a phased manner. State universities should first equip their infrastructure (both hard and soft) with whole-hearted government support. A sledgerammer approach to adapt to a new setting won't serve anybody's interests. On the contrary, it may prove to be a counterproductive exercise. There are 993 universities, 39,931

colleges, 3.73 crore students and 14.16 lakh teachers in India, according to All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19). If such a drastic decision was to be taken, there should have been wider consultation between the government and all the academic stakeholders to find a way forward. With Internet penetration still low in India, it is incumbent on the government to allow suitable financial aids to state universities to obtain appropriate IT tools, platforms, devices, provide training, etc. before initiating such an exercise. Else, given the difference in students' access to digital education, their performances are also bound to differ. This creates an asymmetrical society and leads to anxiety among the students. Most importantly, education is denied to the less privileged student community.

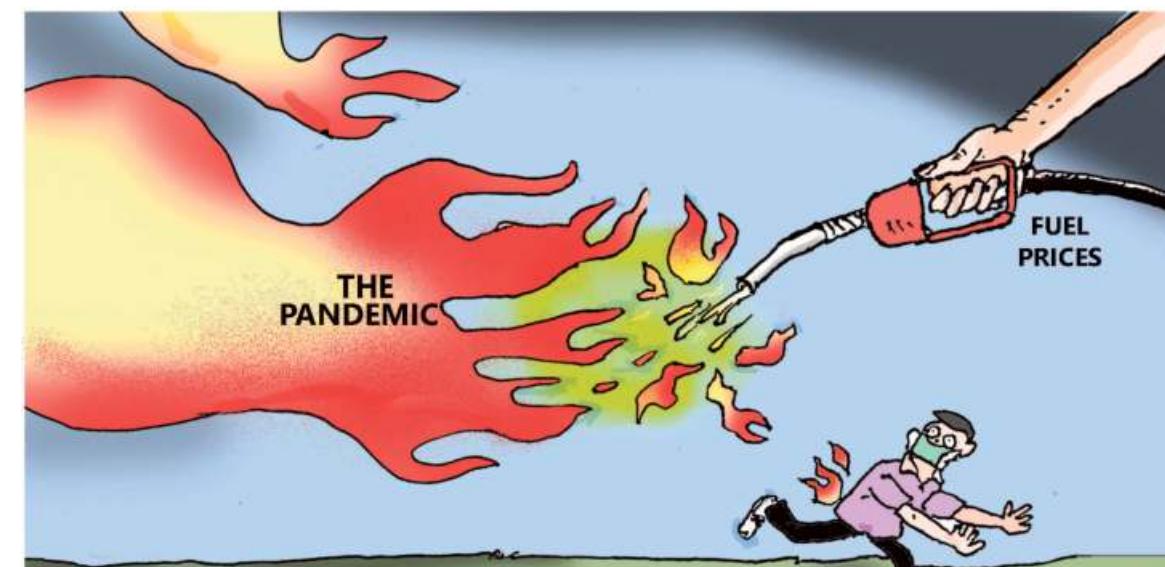
## Study material

Another predicament in online education is the preparation of appropriate study material. Policymakers need to acknowledge that merely uploading scanned lecture notes or power point presentations does not serve any meaningful purpose. There is no imaginative thinking and exploring, no application-based learning for students. For practical field and laboratory-based learning, the whole idea of online education could prove to be a disaster.

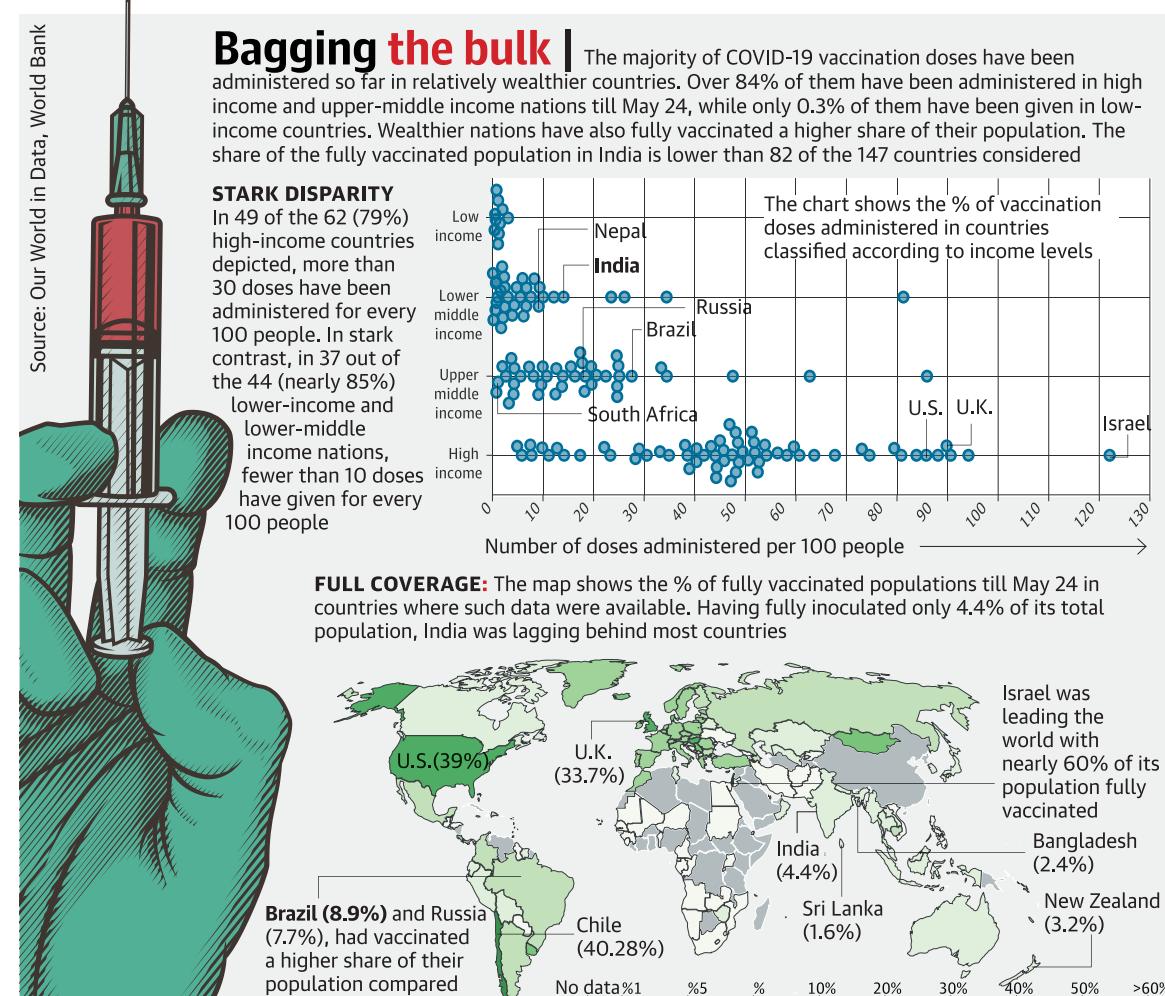
Given that there is talk of more COVID-19 waves, it is imperative for the government to embrace a pragmatic approach by engaging all academic stakeholders and investing generously in online education as suggested by the Fifteenth Finance Commission in its report. Development of massive open online courses (MOOCs), direct-to-home (DTH) content development, digital classrooms and provision of devices (laptop/tablets) for 25 lakh students belonging to the socially and economically weaker sections of society, especially in state universities,

would help.

*Milind Kumar Sharma teaches in the Department of Production and Industrial Engineering, M.B.M. Engineering College, Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur, erstwhile University of Jodhpur. Views are personal*



## DATA POINT



## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1971

### Recognition of Bangla Desh

External Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh declared in the Rajya Sabha to-day [New Delhi, May 25] that the Government had not taken any "fixed position" on the question of recognition of Bangla Desh. "If at any stage we feel recognition is necessary we will not hesitate to do so." Replying to a five-hour discussion on Bangla Desh, Mr. Swaran Singh said the Government would not hesitate to accord formal recognition if it was in the "interest of peace, our national interest and in the interest of the people of Bangla Desh." In the Lok Sabha a strong demand for recognition of Bangla Desh followed by material aid to the freedom fighters was made by several members. Mr. Swaran Singh, however, pointed out that the question had to be viewed from a larger angle. "There were certain norms which have to be carefully weighed such as the extent of the territory controlled, the quantum of support, the extent of writ and the repercussions of recognising a country which till now was part of Pakistan." Mr. Swaran Singh also pointed out that the situation continued to be fluid.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 26, 1921

### The Nankana case

In addition to the oral examination by the Magistrate, Mahant Naraindas of Nankana who has just been committed to the Sessions, put in a lengthy written statement which was read out in the court to-day. The Mahant said that he had been apprehended attack from Akalis and renovated the gates, walls and entrances of the Nankana temple not with a view to attack but for his own shelter and protection. Holes in the doors were made in order that he might watch what was happening outside and not for shooting. He was asleep on the 20th February morning when he was roused by the noise of shots. He stirred out only once to inform the police but Akalis chased him. So he concealed himself in his house for fear of Akalis. It was only when the Deputy Commissioner arrived that he came out and saw Akalis lying dead. More than two cans of kerosene were daily used in the temple. He therefore bought oil in large quantities which cost him cheaper. He denied having shot anybody or ordering firing. He also stated that he had approached the Local Government, members of the Executive Council, Commissioner, Mahatma Gandhi and others for advice and assistance, but without avail.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Over 13 lakh evacuated as Yaas draws closer

More than 4,000 response personnel in 52 units of National Disaster Response Force, 60 Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, 200 fire service team and 86 tree cutting units have been rushed to cyclone affected areas.

Sanjib Bandopadhyay, Deputy Director General Meteorology, Regional Meteorological Centre, Kolkata said that for West Bengal most significant damage will be due to storm surge in Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas districts.

"For Purba Medinipur, the storm surge will be 2-4 meters above astronomical tide and for South 24 Parganas the storm surge will be 2

metres above the astronomical tide level," Mr Bandopadhyay said.

Tuhin Ghosh, director of the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University said that storm surge is a matter of concern because the cyclone will coincide with the full moon tide and the water level in the seas and river may rise further leading to breach of embankments.

The Chief Minister said she will spend the night at the State Secretariat monitoring the situation from a "war room" on real time basis. During the day Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar also visited the State Secretariat and met the Chief Minister.

## Polls have dented BJP's invincibility: Kerala CM

As part of the system, road accident victims would get free treatment in the first 48 hours. Twenty lakh families would get free in-patient treatment for up to ₹5 lakh. He said the rest would be able to avail up to ₹2 lakh through the Karunya Scheme.

Kerala has prepared a blueprint for employing 20 lakh graduates. The Cabinet had broached the matter at its first meeting, the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Vijayan said the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)'s "myopic" criticism

about the Chief Minister assuming the Minority Welfare Department had aroused pity. (The IUML had purportedly said Mr. Vijayan had insulted Muslims by appropriating a portfolio that was rightfully theirs.)

Mr. Vijayan said the government had prioritised minority welfare by bringing it directly under the CM's office adding that Muslim and Christian social organisations had welcomed the move. Moreover, minorities had reposed faith in the LDF in the Assembly elections.

## SC nixes CBI plea for TMC leaders' custody

Mr. Mehta replied, "But they [CM] were doing it for them [accused]."

Justice Gavai observed, "So, therefore, you proceed against the (CM, Law Minister) for attempting to take the law into their hands... You have yourself quoted Lord Denning's 'Be ye never so high, the law is above you,'" Mr. Mehta said, "I used to believe in that".

"Well, we still believe in it" both Justices Saran and Gavai said in unison.

The law officer said the incident suggested a larger malaise in the State. The role of the investigating agency was "reduced to nothing".

"This is an extraordinary situation. There was a complete collapse of rule of law, and this is happening repeatedly... CBI offices with the arrested four men was in a state of siege on May 17. Unruly mobs pelted stones. Officers could not step out to

produce the accused before the magistrate... If these facts cannot move My Lords' conscience, there is nothing more I can say," he expressed his disappointment.

The Bench, which refrained from commenting on the merits of the case, reacted to this by pointing out that a five-judge Bench of the Calcutta High Court was already "examining every factor regarding the case" following a split verdict on the question of bail.

Mr. Mehta submitted that the State had a Chief Minister who has a "track record" to "bring out supporters". He said the bail was granted to the four men earlier by a CBI court in a vitiated atmosphere with the Chief Minister sitting outside in dharna.

Justice Gavai replied, "We don't think our judiciary, even the district judiciary, is weak."

## Facebook says it will comply with new IT rules

While Google did not specify whether it was in full compliance with the new rules, a company spokesperson said, "We respect India's legislative process and have a long history of responding to government requests to remove content where the content violates the local law or our product policies. We have consistently invested in significant product changes, resources, and personnel to ensure that we're combating illegal content in an effective and fair way, and in order to comply with local laws in the jurisdictions that we operate in."

Prasanth Sugathan, Legal Director at Software Freedom Law Centre, India explained that the new rules are a set of compliances which the intermediaries have to abide by in order to keep the safe harbour protection intact.

The primary consequence of non-compliance with the rules could give more ammunition to prosecution agencies in all such cases and could dent safe harbour protection even further.

protection granted to them under Section 79 of the IT Act. This could open up an entire plethora of unpleasant possibilities. It could leave Intermediaries open to incurring liability (civil as well as criminal) for the acts done by third party users," he said.

Mr. Sugathan added that the exact scope of criminal liability that these platforms would have to face, is something one will have to wait and see.

"Since state is the prosecuting agency for criminal cases, it will depend on how the Central government and the State governments will initiate action against SSMIs before the courts. In the past we have seen employees of social media companies being named in FIRs and criminal prosecution being initiated against them," he said.

He added that non-compliance with the rules could give more ammunition to prosecution agencies in all such cases and could dent safe harbour protection even further.

"The wedding party onboard SpiceJet's plane could not have been organised without the full knowledge of the company. It was a pre-planned flight, which in-

## Bay of Bengal, fomenting Yaas, hotter than normal for season

Northern part of the sea experiencing temperatures up to 32°C, says scientist

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Climate scientists say the Bay of Bengal, where Cyclone 'Yaas' has formed, is at least two degrees warmer than what is normal for this time of the year. "The north Bay of Bengal is exceptionally warm with temperatures up to 32 degrees Celsius. Distance to landfall is short, preventing it from drawing that energy and intensifying into an extremely severe cyclone," Roxy Koll, climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, said on Twitter.

Generally, cyclones in the Bay of Bengal are ferocious and cause significant devastation. Amphan was a super cyclone that ravaged West Bengal in March last year. It was the strongest storm that hit India's eastern coast since the super cyclone of 1999, which struck Paradip, Odisha. Before Amphan, Fani in 2019 also hit Odisha, causing immense damage that lasted weeks.

Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal are not unexpected



**Keeping vigil:** Police patrolling the Chandipur beach in Odisha as cyclone Yaas draws closer to the coast. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

in May and result from increased ocean surface temperatures. The formation of storms in this period are favourable for drawing in the monsoon into the Andamans and subsequently to the Kerala coast.

Researchers have pointed to trends that suggest a relative decrease in the number of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and a rise in the Arabian Sea. About 60% of the cyclones that form in these seas make landfall in India causing damage and devasta-

tation, according to data from the Earth Sciences Ministry.

## First warning

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) first warned on May 19 the likelihood of the formation of Yaas, even as Tauktae was still to completely abate after landfall over Gujarat.

The maximum wind-speeds from Yaas, a name furnished by Oman's meteorological agency, are expected to touch 125 kmph,

lower than recorded from Tauktae, which landed at the Gujarat coast earlier this month, and was categorised as an 'extremely severe' cyclone, which is only one category lower than the highest 'super cyclone' grading on the weather agency's cyclone grading scale.

Yaas is expected to heighten into a 'very severe' cyclone by Tuesday noon and make landfall between the Odisha and West Bengal coasts by Wednesday morning.

"It is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal coasts between Paradip and Sagar Island around Balasore (Odisha) during noon of May 26 as a very severe cyclonic storm," said an IMD statement on Monday.

With the advent of the storm, rains and gale force winds are expected in northern Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Sikkim.

Tidal waves up to 4 metres in height are expected over the West Bengal and Odisha coasts as the storm approaches.

## Army, Navy deploy relief teams in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With severe cyclone Yaas set to make landfall on the Eastern coast on May 26, the Army and Navy deployed relief and diving teams in West Bengal in coordination with the local administration. In addition, the Navy and Coast Guard have also kept ships and aircraft on standby.

As part of the preparations in West Bengal, the Navy said two Navy diving teams and five Flood Relief Teams (FRT), comprising specialised Navy personnel with associated equipment and inflatable boats, have been deployed to the State.

"In addition, one diving and two FRT each have been positioned at Digha and Frazerganj on May 23 and 24 respectively. One FRT has been kept on standby at Diamond Harbour, for redeployment as necessary, at short notice," it said in a statement.

The Army said that 17 integrated cyclone relief columns, comprising specialised personnel with associated equipment and inflatable boats, have been deployed in West Bengal.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Telecom infrastructure providers, along with service providers, have taken steps such as readiness of Cell on Wheels, arrangement of spare batteries, adequate amount of diesel and generator sets and ramping up of teams to mitigate the impact of cyclone 'Yaas', the Tower & Infrastructure Providers Association (TAIPA) said on Tuesday.

The Army said that 17 integrated cyclone relief columns, comprising specialised personnel with associated equipment and inflatable boats, have been deployed in West Bengal.

"Columns have been pre-positioned at Purulia, Jhargram, Birbhum, Bardhaman, West Midnapur, Howrah, Hoogly, Nadia, 24 Parganas North and South," the Army said in a statement.

## Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee hospitalised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was on May 25 admitted to a private hospital in the city.

Mr. Bhattacharjee had tested positive for COVID-19 last week and was undergoing treatment at his Palm Avenue residence.

His health parameters, particularly oxygen saturation, started declining from May 24 evening and doctors decided on providing him institutional care. On May 25, he was admitted to Woodlands Hospital.

Mr. Bhattacharjee was West Bengal Chief Minister from 2000 to 2011.

## PNB fraud case: Mehul Choksi goes missing

The fugitive can be detained in any of the Interpol member countries and deported to India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Mehul Choksi, alleged mastermind of the ₹3,578-crore Punjab National Bank fraud case, who is said to have gone missing in Antigua where he has been facing extradition proceedings, already has an Interpol Red Notice pending against him. Therefore, he can be detained in any of the Interpol member countries and deported to India.

Choksi went missing on May 23 and the Antiguan police are trying to locate him, as reported in the local media.

The development comes weeks after the United Kingdom's Home Department ap-



Mehul Choksi

proved the extradition of Choksi's nephew and another key accused, Nirav Modi, following a verdict by the Westminster Court against him in February.

Despite requests from the Indian agencies, the Antiguan authorities have not yet executed the Interpol Red Notice against Choksi.

Having lost the first round of legal battle in the U.K., Nirav Modi has now approached the High Court there seeking permission to contest the decisions of the Home Department and the Westminster Court.

Given that he has not been granted bail even once, after he was arrested in London on March 19, 2019, Indian

agencies are hopeful that his plea would also be dismissed to facilitate his early extradition for facing trial in India.

"We have also been pursuing the case against Choksi diligently. In view of the reports about him having gone missing, we may request the Antiguan authorities for an update on his whereabouts," said a government official.

In the recent past, the Indian agencies have been able to bring two key accused persons in the AgustaWestland case from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Christian Michel and Rajiv Saxena. Lobbyist Deepak Talwar was also brought from the UAE in connection with another case.

## Resume talks with farmers: Hooda

Agitation has been on for six months, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH



**Relentless movement:** Farmers protest at the Tikri border in Delhi on Tuesday. ■ PTI

convince the Central government to accept the demands of the farmers and find a respectful solution," he said.

"The movement has completed six months and a large number of farmers are sitting on protests site near Delhi. In such a situation, we urge the government to hold talks with them in a positive mindset."

Mr. Hooda said the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, umbrella

body of the farmer unions spearheading the protest, has tried to break the deadlock and sent a proposal to the government for talks.

"The government should now also take two steps forward and try to make talks fruitful," he said.

Senior leaders of the Punjab-based political outfit Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukat) said party workers would hoist black flags in solidarity with the farmers on May 26.

The NHRC said the complainant alleged that the situation was likely to worsen with an inflow of protesters. The complainant said farmers have planned to observe Wednesday as a "black day", marking six months of protests.

In the 1971 war, during Operation Cactus Lilly, the 6th Battalion of the Sikh Regiment occupied 13 kms of front on the heights above Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir covering two strategic points, the loss of which would have directly threatened Poonch. Col. Singh,

## Col. Panjab Singh, 1971 war veteran, passes away

He had post-COVID complications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



Col. Panjab Singh

then a Major, commanded a company deployed at Tund, an Army statement said.

Col. Singh was awarded the third highest wartime gallantry award, the Vir Chakra, on December 24, 1971.

## YouTuber booked for slur on MLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The police in Arunachal Pradesh have sought an update from their Punjab counterparts on a YouTuber wanted for a racial slur against a Congress MLA of the State.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said on May 24 that FIRs had been filed against Punjab-based YouTuber Paras Singh for mocking MLA Ningon Ering.

The YouTuber also made a racist remark against the State and its people, the FIRs said.

## Plane wedding: DGCA must take action, say experts

'Not right to make pilots and cabin crew scapegoats'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



**Flight plan:** SpiceJet said that clients who took the chartered trip were briefed on COVID-19 protocols. ■ FILE PHOTO

volved a route that had to be specially programmed, and included manual orbitting over Tenkasi," said aviation safety expert Captain Mohan Ranganathan.

"The special route taken by the pilots indicates they had specific instructions from the operations team in the airline. For the company to say they didn't know there

travel agent in Madurai chartered a plane for a post-wedding "joy ride" and it had denied permission for conducting any activity onboard as well as briefed its client on COVID-19 protocols. The DGCA has de-rotated the plane crew and ordered an investigation into the incident for violation of COVID-19 protocols. The photos viral on social media show the bride and groom exchanging garlands in a packed aircraft, carrying more than 160 passengers.

However, none of the passengers can be seen wearing face visors and PPE suits, which are mandatory for passengers occupying the middle seats.

The ex-DGCA official said, "The DGCA has repeatedly warned airlines that passengers violating COVID-19 protocols must be offloaded and put on no-fly list. If neither the cabin crew nor pilots took action against the passengers, there is a need to probe whether they had special instructions to look the other way."

"The rules and protocols that apply for regular passenger flights are often not enforced for non-scheduled or chartered operations. There are many loopholes. It is likely that the airline will

## Jaiswal is new CBI Director

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
AHMEDABAD  
The Modi government late on Tuesday night appointed Maharashtra cadre IPS officer of 1985 batch, Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, currently Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force, as CBI Director for two years.

Mr. Jaiswal is widely experienced, having served as Maharashtra Director-General of Police before he was made the chief of the CISF and also served in the CBI earlier.

The government has picked him from a panel of three officers who were shortlisted by the Prime Minister-led panel consisting of CJI as well as leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

## Six held in BJP activists' murder case, says Bengal

SC Bench asks State to file affidavit

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The West Bengal government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that FIRs had been registered and several arrests made in connection with the murder of two BJP activists in the violence following the poll victory of the Trinamool Congress.

The State's submission came in a hearing of a petition filed by the family members of two dead men

## CJI made 'statement of law' at CBI panel

'It was not a comment on professional prowess of those who are left out of contention'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana's opinion in the high-level committee to avoid officers with less than six months left to retire for appointment as CBI Director is a simple "statement of law". It was not a comment on the professional prowess of those who now find themselves outside the zone of consideration.

Two senior IPS officers, Y.C. Modi and Rakesh Asthana, went out of contention for the post. Mr. Modi retires in May. Mr. Asthana in July.

The CJI was clear during the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, leader of largest Opposition



party, on Monday that the committee's selection of officers should be able to withstand the "scrutiny of law in the future".

For this, officers with a "few days left" in service should not be considered. In this context, 10 of the senior most officers of the 1984 batch, scheduled to retire soon, were not considered. The six-month minimum residual tenure rule was introduced by the Supreme Court

in a March 13, 2019 order. Though the order in the Prakash Singh case pertained to the appointment of DGPs, it was extended to CBI Director too.

The order, pronounced by a three-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, had clarified that the "recommendation for appointment to the post of Director General of Police by the Union Public Service Commission and preparation of pa-

nel should be purely on the basis of merit from officers who have a minimum residual tenure of six months, that is, officers who have at least six months of service prior to retirement".

The apex court had indicated the possibility that officers with only a few days of service may be in an insecure state of mind. In the Prakash Singh case, the Supreme Court had stressed the point that appointment of DGPs "should be purely on the basis of merit and to insulate the office from all kinds of influences and pressures".

As on date, the CBI has jurisdiction to investigate offences pertaining to 69 Central laws, 18 State Acts and

231 offences in the IPC. The Director is to hold the post for not less than two years as held by the Vineet Narain judgment of 1998. He/she may not be transferred except with the previous consent of the high-level committee. The CJI had also studied a Supreme Court judgment, Union of India versus C. Dinakar, reported in 2004, in the context of the appointment process. In this, the apex court had held that "ordinarily IPS officers of the senior most four batches in service on the date of retirement of CBI Director, irrespective of their empanelment, shall be eligible for consideration for appointment to the post of CBI Director".

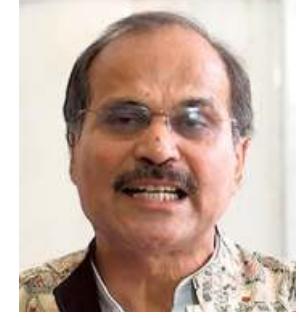
## Adhir faults DoPT in CBI chief selection process

He asked for deferment of panel meet

**SANDEEP PHUKAN**  
NEW DELHI

The conduct of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has been "obnoxious" during the selection process of a new CBI Director and the meeting of the selection panel should be deferred, Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said in a dissent note that was submitted to the high-powered selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana is the other member of the committee that decides on CBI chief appointment.



cy chief Y.C. Modi [Assam-Meghalaya cadre, 1984 batch], both considered favourite officers of the ruling dispensation.

However, as *The Hindu* reported on Monday, they were excluded, as the CJI insisted on sticking to a rule that said a candidate should have six months or more for retirement.

Mr. Chowdhury too is learnt to have strongly argued against these officials.

### Dissent note

The committee eventually shortlisted three officers – VSK Kamudi [Andhra Pradesh, 1986 batch], Kumar Rajesh Chandra [Bihar, 1985 batch] and Subodh Kumar Jaiswal [Maharashtra, 1985 batch].

In his dissent note, Mr. Chowdhury cited the Supreme Court judgment in the Anjali Bharadwaj versus Union of India case concerning the appointment of the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and argued for absolute transparency.

## SC to hear plea on post-poll riots

Petition accuses West Bengal government and police of complicity with goons

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday decided to examine a petition accusing the West Bengal government and the Director-General of Police of complicity with goons who had spread "terror and fear" after the Assembly polls.

A Vacation Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B.R. Gavai scheduled the petition filed by five residents of West Bengal for hearing in the week commencing on June 7.

"Petitioners are aggrieved with the post-electoral violence in Bengal from May 2 causing bombing, murder, gang rape, outraging of modesty of women, arson, kidnapping, loot, vandalism and destruction of public property, which led to a widespread fear and terror in the minds of ordinary residents of the State, ultimately forcing them to leave their homes," the petition, represented by senior advocate Pinky Anand, said. The petition said the State government and the police had "sponsored" the goons.

Th police had threatened people against filing complaints in cases in which cognisable offences were committed. The petitioners sought the constitution of a special investigation team and setting up of a fast-track court to investigate and try the cases. The plea said the court should "protect the State from internal disturbance and ensure that the

government in the State is carried on". It asked the court to direct the Centre to "deploy Central protection forces, including armed forces, for the restoration of law and order in West Bengal".

The court also made the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the National Commission for Protection of Women and Child Rights parties in the case.

## Toolkit: 2 Congressmen get notice

Duo told to join probe into a complaint submitted by the party with Delhi Police



A Delhi Police's Special Cell team visiting Twitter India's Lado Sarai office in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

on Thursday [May 20]. The intention was to ask them to explain the complaint and share necessary reasons,"

said a police officer privy to the probe.

The Delhi Police on May 24 visited micro-blogging website Twitter's office in Delhi and Gurugram to serve them a notice following a 'Manipulated Media' tag on a tweet by BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra on May 18, wherein he had shared a document calling it 'Congress Toolkit'.

On May 20, the Youth Congress submitted a complaint alleging that the document shared was fake.

## Rajasthan HC challenges own order on arrest

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

In a rare move, the Rajasthan High Court approached the Supreme Court against its own single-judge order, directing the DGP not to arrest till July 17 people booked for offences entailing up to 3-year jail term, which was stayed by the top court on Tuesday. The High Court challenged the order on the ground that the direction will "create a situation of lawlessness".

## Rajiv case: Swamy opposes Stalin's proposal

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy has written to President Ram Nath Kovind opposing Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's recommendation to remit the sentences of seven life-term convicts in former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

Mr. Swamy asked the President to "reject the stale and anti-national recommendation of the State government of Tamil Nadu".

The letter said the 18 oth-

ers killed along with Rajiv Gandhi included young police officers whose children were cruelly orphaned.

"Does Shri Stalin mean to suggest to you that the life of such a young national leader in the prime of his political life, and one who had been Prime Minister of India, and who may well have been on his way to once again to become Prime Minister of India, is worth only a certain quantum of years of undergone sentence by these foreign terrorists?"

Mr. Swamy asked.

## OSCs to be set to aid women survivors

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Central government will set up One Stop Centres (OSCs) across 10 missions to provide assistance to Indian women who are survivors of gender-based violence. The missions where the OSCs will come up are Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada and Singapore, an official of Ministry of Women and Child Development said.

### INTERVIEW | M.V. RAJEEV GOWDA

## 'It's a blatant attempt to intimidate Twitter'

The BJP, to cover its own forgery, is using the Delhi Police, says Congress leader



### The Government of India has no authority to censor Twitter

cluding Cabinet Ministers, could go to jail for it, they are panicking.

By your own admission at least one of the documents – the one of the Central Vista – is not fake. How did the leak happen?

■ This is a conspiracy that has been hatched at the highest levels of the BJP to deflect attention from the devastation that India is experiencing. And now that they are exposed and senior leaders, in-

Hold the government accountable for its actions and inactions. We don't know how it leaked. It is not a public document. It was only meant for internal circulation. Maybe, some members who are on the mailing list, defected during the recent polls or the BJP stole it.

The BJP alleges that Twitter is biased towards the Congress. Your comments?

I don't know anybody who knows anybody on Twitter. It is up to Twitter to follow their established policy and practices that are used globally to fact check.

■ The document on the Central Vista is a fairly straightforward summary of the issue critiquing the government. And which is what the Opposition does.

## Panel to define offences of speech, expression

The committee constituted by Home Ministry on reforms to the IPC may propose a separate Section

SOBHANA K. NAIR

M.V. Rajeev Gowda, who heads the Research Department of the Congress, speaks on the alleged 'Congress toolkit' seeking to tarnish India's image, Twitter's alleged bias towards the Congress and raids on the micro-blogging website by Delhi police.

The Twitter offices in Delhi were raided by the police, following the entire Congress toolkit controversy.

■ This is a blatant attempt to intimidate Twitter, by using the state machinery to de-

fend the party. The Government of India has no authority to censor Twitter which, after its own independent fact-checking, put out the tag "manipulated media" on the post by BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra. Their investigations must have thrown up evidence to show that the post was manipulated. Now the BJP, to cover their own forgery, is using the Delhi Police.

What is the truth behind the BJP allegations that the Congress created a toolkit to specifically call out the B.I.617 as 'Indian Strain' or

'Modi Strain' to defame India and specifically Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

■ This is a conspiracy that has been hatched at the highest levels of the BJP to deflect attention from the devastation that India is experiencing. And now that they are exposed and senior leaders, in-

ter laws. The committee was formed in the wake of Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, that provided punishment for sending offensive messages through communication services being scrapped by the Supreme Court in 2015.

In 2019, however, the Ministry decided to overhaul the IPC, framed in 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) after seeking suggestions from States, the Supreme Court, High Courts, the Bar Council of India, Bar Councils of States, universities and law institutes

to comprehensive laws. The committee was formed in the wake of Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, that provided punishment for sending offensive messages through communication services being scrapped by the Supreme Court in 2015.

In 2019, however, the Ministry decided to overhaul the IPC, framed in 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) after seeking suggestions from States, the Supreme Court, High Courts, the Bar Council of India, Bar Councils of States, universities and law institutes

to comprehensive

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**SREE MAHALAKSHMYAI NAMAH SREE CHANDRASEKARA GURUBHYO NAMAH APPEAL**

The MAHASWAMI OF KANCHI ordained this Public Charitable Trust in 1986 for providing financial aid to Archakas who live in poor conditions, upholding our religious and cultural heritage in ancient temples in rural areas. Many of these Archakas do not have any means of sustenance and we should deem it our duty to provide them with minimal financial aid to ensure that they continue to perform their important role in the rural communities.

MAHA PERIYAVA had instructed that the Trust should seek donations primarily from individual devotees, and provide financial assistance from the income derived from investing the donations. He had further desired that those with gross income of over Rs. 4,000/- per month could contribute their one month's gross income, in easy instalments or in a lumpsum according to their convenience.

The Trust currently provides a monthly honorarium to 459 poor Archakas, (145 Poojaries, 148 Bhattacharyas and 166 Sivacharyas) spread over rural Tamil Nadu. The Trust also has a Group Life Insurance Policy for the benefit of eligible Archakas.

The monthly honorarium to each Archaka was fixed as Rs. 100/- when the Trust was founded. By the Grace of MAHA PERIYAVA and the generous contribution from his devotees, it has been possible to enhance the monthly honorarium progressively in the subsequent years. It is now Rs. 2,300/- (Rupees Two Thousand Three Hundred only) per month. However, with the increasing number of beneficiaries and the reduction in the rate of interest, it has become necessary to enhance the corpus fund significantly to maintain the current level of financial aid to poor Archakas.

We earnestly request all the devotees to donate liberally for this noble cause, keeping in mind MAHA PERIYAVA's desire. Online Donations to Corpus Fund can be made through our website: www.kmawt.org. Also, Crossed Cheque or Demand Draft payable at Chennai drawn in favour of 'KACHCHI MOODOOR ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST' can be sent to the Trust office. Please do mention that the donation is towards CORPUS FUND in the covering letter.

Please note that Income Tax Section 80G Benefit is currently NOT available to Donors.

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# Mucormycosis: avoid damp, dusty places

It is affecting COVID-19 patients who are given steroids or those with uncontrolled diabetes: experts

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

It takes around four weeks for the effect of steroids administered to COVID-19 patients to wear off and it is important to keep oneself protected during this time. Patients, especially those in the high-risk category for mucormycosis, should avoid visiting damp and dusty places for a few weeks post recovery, Arun Sharma, Director, National Institute for Implementation Research on Non-Communicable Diseases (NIIRNCD), Jodhpur, and a community medicine expert, told *The Hindu*.

He said if it is unavoidable, they are strongly advised to wear a three-ply mask and gloves and fully cover legs and arms.

“It is vital to keep COVID-19 patients’ oxygen mask and canula sterile to prevent mucormycosis. It is necessary to keep a regular



**Medical care:** A view of a ward with patients infected with Mucormycosis at a hospital in Ahmedabad. ■ AFP

check on water used in oxygenation for any possible contamination.”

Mucormycosis (black fungus infection) is caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes, which are present in the air, water and moist surfaces, in damp places. It appears as black

spots in the nasal cavity, mouth and throat.

A healthy person’s immunity does not allow it to cause infection. However, it can cause severe infection in an immunocompromised person.

The Central government on Tuesday allocated an ad-

ditional 19,420 vials of Amphotericin-B to all States/UTs and Central institutions.

Dr. Sharma said doctors should guide a COVID-19 patient about how to look for its early signs. “At the hospitals, doctors and nurses should check for the symptoms in patients being treated with steroids or other immunosuppressive agents,” he said.

On why so many patients are getting affected, Dr. Sharma said mucormycosis is generally affecting COVID-19 patients who are prescribed steroids or those who have uncontrolled diabetes.

“Though steroids are an effective treatment for some patients who develop severe inflammatory response. But they should always be given under medical supervision. If given too early, too much and for too long, they can make one susceptible to catching secondary bacterial

or fungal infections,” he said.

Doctors say Amphotericin-B is not a commonly used antifungal drug and with a low safety profile it’s used for very severe, life-threatening fungal infection or for mucormycosis, for which cases were low previously.

Vikramjeet Singh, senior consultant, Department of Internal Medicine, Akash Healthcare, Delhi, said: “Now due to COVID infection and some other factors, the incidence of mucormycosis has increased and we have started using Amphotericin-B in these cases. For post-COVID mucormycosis, this is the only drug which can be given.

“Due to the shortage of the drug, it is the patients of mucormycosis who are suffering. But the situation is improving and we are hopeful that patient survival rate will be good,” he said.

# ICMR unlikely to commission new COVID-19 serosurvey

Vaccination drive likely to throw up erroneous inferences

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is unlikely to immediately undertake a fourth national serology survey to estimate the extent of exposure to the coronavirus since January. Officials told *The Hindu* that though discussions were still on, undertaking such a study presented newer logistical challenges and the ongoing vaccination drive could lead to erroneous inferences.

The ICMR has conducted three national serology surveys since May 2020 and found that the exposure to the virus was much higher than that was reported by confirmed cases. The third serosurvey that measured the spread of infection between August and December found that 21% of India’s adult population and 25% of those in the 10-17 age group may have been infected.

However, India’s devastating second wave began around mid-March amidst a vaccination programme that prioritised healthcare, frontline workers and senior citizens.

Serology surveys take blood samples from participants and measure antibodies to check past exposure to the virus. However, because vaccinations also trigger an antibody response after two weeks, they could be misleading. “Serosurveys lose their scientific relevance once vaccination starts in the population,” Samiran Panda, Head, Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, ICMR, said.

**HCWs overburdened**  
Another official said that with hospitals and health-



**Virus alert:** Medical workers collecting blood samples for a serosurvey in New Delhi on September 5, 2020. ■ R. V. MOORTHY

**Serosurveys lose their scientific relevance once vaccination starts in the population**

BALRAM BHARGAVA  
Director-General, ICMR

nation from one in a naturally acquired infection. “A fourth survey would also have to account for the waning of antibody levels and may require an entirely new survey design.”

Independent experts however, said that with vaccinations on, conducting serology surveys on a smaller, defined group was possible.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has surveillance studies done on a section of its employees across constituent laboratories in India.

“This is a defined group that we can easily follow,” said Anurag Agrawal, Director, CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology.

Other than overarching numbers, the serology surveys have also revealed patterns of infection in urban, rural areas, slum and non-slum regions. It also gives an indication of whether a significant fraction within a region had reached threshold immunity levels to keep future outbreaks in check.

## WHO seeks ‘more info’ on Covaxin

**Effective vaccine policy needs to be formulated**



Anand Sharma

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Deputy leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to convene a meeting of Chief Ministers to formulate “an effective vaccination policy” as the current one was in “shambles”.

Mr. Sharma, who recovered from COVID-19 last month, cited his own example to underscore the importance.

“Despite taking both the doses, I got COVID positive

tists and epidemiologists,” he stated.

**People feeling let down**  
People were “suffering and feeling let down” and it was more important to save lives rather than stand on “pride and ego”. India, which was continental in size, could not be micromanaged by centralisation of power in one or two offices without “disastrous consequences”, he said in a statement. “Accelerated universal vaccination, devolution, empowering the States and investing in public health infrastructure alone can meet the challenge.” In a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the States could not be expected to import vaccines, he pointed

but it is the vaccine that prevented it from becoming severe,” he said while speaking with *The Hindu*.

The vaccination drive is in a shambles and people are suffering and despairing. In a democracy questions will be asked and those in authority made accountable. There is no wisdom in denials and challenging scien-

out as import, exports, Customs and trade policy were all Central subjects.

“Democracy is about cooperation and dialogue. Prime Minister has a mandate as an elected leader of the country. So have the Chief Ministers, whose constitutional mandate must be recognised. India is a federal country and the spirit of Constitution must be respected. The path of confrontation between the Centre and the States hurts India’s national interest,” he noted.

“Prime Minister Modi has spoken of cooperative federalism. It is time to walk the talk. I urge him to take the initiative for a sincere and honest dialogue with Chief Ministers.”

Serology surveys take blood samples from participants and measure antibodies to check past exposure to the virus. However, because vaccinations also trigger an antibody response after two weeks, they could be misleading. “Serosurveys lose their scientific relevance once vaccination starts in the population,” Samiran Panda, Head, Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, ICMR, said.

Manoj Murhekar, Director, ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, who has been part of the ICMR surveys, said only in some infectious diseases was it possible to differentiate antibodies from a vacci-

## PM must call meet with CMs: Sharma

Maharashtra registered 1,137 fatalities, followed by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India recorded 1,98,238 new COVID-19 cases and 3,967 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Tuesday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,71,45,906 cases and 31,229 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 34,285 new infections, followed by Kerala (29,803) and Maharashtra (24,136). Maharashtra recorded 1,137 new casualties on the day, followed by Karnataka (588) and Tamil Nadu (468). Maharashtra’s fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand,

Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the health bulletins of the respective States.

More than 20.58 lakh sam-

Sunday. It is also 2.95 lakh more tests than those conducted on the previous Monday (May 17). India’s average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 12% as on May 24 compared with 17.6% recorded a week before.

Nearly 24.3 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Tuesday, which is over 14.8 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. As on May 24, India administered an average of 15.28 lakh doses daily, which is significantly fewer than the average daily doses given as on April 24, which stood at 26.13 lakh.

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If you have verbal skills on paper, do try your digits at our online grids! <https://qrqo.page.link/jjpTn>



SCAN TO PLAY

**Still on a slow lane**



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States submit feedback on Class 12 exams +

CBSE has all-India character, so we need States’ support for any decision: official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Class 12 students of the Central Board of Secondary Education will find out the date and format of their board examinations in a week’s time, with State governments submitting their feedback to the Centre on Tuesday.

Senior Education Ministry officials claimed that the feedback was overwhelming in favour of conducting the examinations, although they said States were split on whether the examinations should be in the regular three-hour format or the reduced 90-minute, multiple choice question format. However, a senior official said no response had yet been received by Tuesday evening

from Maharashtra, which had called for the examinations to be cancelled.

**Call for vaccinations**  
Punjab and Delhi have both called for vaccinations to be conducted before the examinations are held. Punjab Education Minister Vijayinder Singh wrote to the Centre on Tuesday, urging that all Class 12 students be vaccinated before exams, adding that exams be held in selected, essential subjects only, with shorter question papers.

“The examinations should not be conducted until the safety of all stakeholders are ensured,” he said. Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia has already said that if vaccinations could not be done, examinations must be cancelled.

Several other Congress-ruled States, however, are prepared for the examinations, but that it must be done keeping the pandemic situation in mind.

Bihar Education Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said that while the Class 12 examinations play a vital role in students’ lives, they could not be held in the current situation. He suggested that a tentative date be announced for now, and also raised the possibility of an online examination.

Karnataka’s School Education Minister S. Suresh Kumar said that as Class 12 students would be seeking admission to professional courses, holding examinations seemed inevitable.

cation Minister Anil M. M. T. told journalists that the State was prepared to conduct the examinations, but that it must be done keeping the pandemic situation in mind. Bihar Education Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said that while the Class 12 examinations play a vital role in students’ lives, they could not be held in the current situation. He suggested that a tentative date be announced for now, and also raised the possibility of an online examination.

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## SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13256

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# EU-based carriers to shun Belarus airspace

A video 'confession' of the detained scribe released; EU orders to ban Belarusian planes from its skies

REUTERS  
KYIV/VILNIUS

Airlines shunned Belarus's airspace on Tuesday and Belarusian planes could soon be banned from Europe, potentially isolating the landlocked country apart from its border with Russia after it forced down a jetliner and arrested a dissident journalist.

A video released overnight showed 26-year-old Roman Protasevich confessing to having organised anti-government demonstrations. On Sunday, he was pulled off the passenger plane that was forced to land in the Belarusian capital Minsk.

**Protasevich 'tortured'**  
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the video made for distressing viewing and exiled opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya said that the video left no



Belarus police detaining Raman Protasevich, centre, in Minsk, in this file photo. ■ AP

doubt that Mr. Protasevich had been tortured.

"He said that he was treated lawfully, but he's clearly beaten and under pressure. There is no doubt that he was tortured. He was taken hostage," she told a news conference in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius.

Belarus has not comment-

ed on the torture allegation but has consistently denied abusing detainees.

Mr. Protasevich and a 23-year-old student travelling with him were arrested after their Ryanair flight was escorted by a Belarusian warplane while flying from Greece to Lithuania.

Western powers have

widely condemned the incident, which NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg described on Tuesday as a "state hijacking".

Belarusian state media have reported that President Alexander Lukashenko personally ordered the flight to be intercepted. Belarus says it was responding to a bomb scare that later proved to be a false alarm. The UN agency ICAO has said the incident may have violated the foundational treaty governing international civil aviation, the 1944 Chicago Convention.

At least three other people disembarked the flight in Minsk, assumed by Western countries to have been spies who had helped coordinate an operation to capture Protasevich.

European Union leaders at a summit on Monday called for airlines based in the 27-member bloc to halt

flights over Belarusian airspace, which is along a major corridor connecting Europe and Asia and earns hard currency from overflight rights.

Lufthansa, KLM, SAS, Air France, LOT and Singapore Airlines were among carriers that announced they would stop flying over Belarus.

The EU leaders also directed officials to draw up unspecified new sanctions against Belarus, and to work out a way to ban Belarusian airlines from the bloc's skies.

If all such measures are fully implemented, flights may soon be able to reach Belarus only by passing over its eastern border with its close ally Russia.

"If we let this go, tomorrow Alexander Lukashenko will go further and do something even more arrogant, more cruel," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a statement.

# Moderna says its vaccine is highly effective in adolescents

'It is 100% potent in preventing symptomatic infections'

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The possibility of children returning to normal life in the U.S. became stronger on Tuesday with vaccine manufacturer Moderna announcing that its COVID-19 vaccine mRNA-1273 is 100% effective in preventing symptomatic infections in 12-17 year olds after two doses.

The company said that it would approach the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to extend the use of its vaccine to this age group, in early June.



3,732 children aged 12-17 participated in the study by Moderna. ■ REUTERS

placebo group, the company said. A single dose of the vaccine resulted in 93% efficacy

based on the case definition of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is modified, given the lower overall rate of infections in adolescents. The teenagers in the study

will be monitored for a year after their second dose, the *New York Times* reported.

"We are encouraged that mRNA-1273 was highly effective at preventing Covid-19 in adolescents," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel said.

Some have criticised the U.S. for vaccinating children – who are less susceptible to serious COVID-19 infections – while more vulnerable adult populations in countries across the world, including India, are yet to be vaccinated.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was recently approved for emergency use in 12-15 years. Pfizer and Moderna are in the process of conducting vaccine trials on children in the 6 months to 11 years group.

# EU leaders agree to donate 100 mn doses of vaccines

They vow support to COVAX for equitable access to doses

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BRUSSELS

EU leaders agreed on Tuesday to donate at least 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to poorer nations by the end of the year as supplies steadily rise across Europe.

Gathered in Brussels for a two-day summit, the 27 leaders backed a text in which they pledge to continue efforts "to increase global vaccine production capacities in order to meet global needs."

Leaders also called "for work to be stepped up to ensure global equitable access

slow start.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented data to the leaders suggesting that 300 million doses will have been delivered in the region by the end of May, with about 46% of the adult population in the bloc of 450 million getting at least a first dose of vaccine. But as vaccination campaigns continue to progress in the Western world, poorer countries are struggling to acquire supplies.

The leaders also pledged to help countries in need to develop vaccine production locally.

# Blinken promises support for Gaza

U.S. would 'ensure that Hamas does not benefit from the reconstruction aid'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed on Tuesday to "rally international support" to aid Gaza following a devastating war there while keeping any assistance out of the hands of its militant Hamas rulers, as he began a regional tour to shore up last week's cease-fire.

The 11-day fighting between Israel and Hamas killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused widespread destruction in the impoverished coastal territory. The truce that came into effect on Friday has so far held, but it did not address any of the un-



derlying issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, something Blinken acknowledged after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We know that to prevent a return to violence, we have to use the space created to address a larger set of underlying issues and challenges. And that begins with tackling the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and starting to rebuild," he said.

## International support

"The United States will work to rally international support around that effort while also making our own significant contributions." He added

rael and the U.S. consider a terrorist organisation.

## Larger conflict

Mr. Blinken addressed the larger conflict, saying "we believe that Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely, to enjoy equal measures of freedom, opportunity and democracy, to be treated with dignity."

But he faces the same obstacles that have stalled a wider peace process for more than a decade, including a hawkish Israeli leadership, Palestinian divisions and deeply rooted tensions surrounding Jerusalem and its holy sites.

# Crew evacuated from burning ship

Following an emergency request from Sri Lanka, India sends help

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Following an explosion on a ship anchored near Colombo on Tuesday, the Sri Lankan Navy said the crew members were evacuated, while fire fighters tried dousing the flames. Following an emergency request from Sri Lanka, India deployed a Dornier aircraft and vessels to augment rescue operations.

Container ship MV X-Press Pearl, sailing with a Singaporean flag was anchored 9.5 nautical miles northwest of the Colombo Port, when a container caught fire on Friday, the Navy said in a statement.

The vessel, according to media reports, left the Hazira port in Gujarat on May 15, and was headed to Singapore via Colombo. The fire led to an onboard explosion on Tuesday. Intensified by strong winds, the flames spread to other parts of the vessel, officials said.

"India promptly responded to an emergency request by Sri Lanka Navy and deployed assets to douse the fire on MV X-Press Pearl off Colombo on 25 May 2021. This includes Vessels Vaibhav, Vajra and Samudra Prehari by Indian Coast Guard and Tug Water Lilly by Director General, Shipping in ad-

dition to Dornier aircraft for aerial reconnaissance," the Indian High Commission in Colombo said.

In addition, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) formations at Kochi, Chennai and Tuticorin are on standby for immediate assistance towards pollution response.

"Further, ICG aircraft are being brought to Tuticorin from Chennai and Kochi for aerial surveillance and pollution response," ICG Spokesperson stated.

According to a Reuters report, experts from the Netherlands and Belgium were also surveying the ship. Sri Lanka's Shipping Minister

Rohitha Abeygunawardena was quoted as saying: "A special Dutch flight with vital equipment to contain the fire is now expected to reach Sri Lanka."

The ICG said the vessel is carrying 1486 containers of which about 8-10 containers are reported to have fallen overboard post explosion and fire. "The vessel is holding about 325 tonnes of fuel in its tanks, which is likely to pose a threat of oil spill," it said. The ship was manned by 25 crew, including five Indians, all of whom have been evacuated, it said.

(With inputs from Dina-kar Peri in New Delhi)

# + Mali in turmoil as Army detains President, PM

Strongman Goita promises poll in 2022

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BAMAKO

Political turmoil in Mali deepened on Tuesday as the country's interim Vice-President, Assimi Goita, pushed out transitional leaders who had been tasked with steering the return to civilian rule after a coup last August.

Assimi Goita, who headed a junta which seized power less than 10 months ago, said that President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane had been stripped of their powers, and he promised elections in 2022.

In a move that sparked widespread anger, the pair were detained on Monday by Army officers who were disgruntled by a government reshuffle, senior officials said. Mr. Goita said Mr. Ndaw and Mr. Ouane had been stripped of their duties for seeking to "sabotage" the transition, which would "proceed as normally."

# Iran approves 7 presidential candidates

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI

Iran named the hard-line cleric running its judiciary and six others on Tuesday as approved candidates in its June 18 presidential election, barring prominent candidates allied with its current President amid tensions with the West over its tattered nuclear deal.

The announcement puts judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is linked to mass executions in 1988, in the dominant position for the upcoming vote. He is believed to be a favourite of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, had been positioning himself as a pragmatic candidate who would back President Hassan Rouhani's signature 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Ali Motahari, Larijani's brother-in-law, wrote on Twitter that the Guardian Council rejected him because his daughter lives in the U.S.

# U.S. calls for 'transparent' new probe into COVID-19 origins

Intelligence agencies are examining reports

REUTERS  
GENEVA

The United States called on Tuesday for international experts to be allowed to evaluate the source of the SARS-CoV-2 and the "early days of the outbreak" in a second phase of an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus.

U.S. intelligence agencies are examining reports that researchers at Wuhan Institute of Virology were seriously ill in 2019 a month before the first cases of COVID-19 were reported, according to U.S. government sources who cautioned on Monday that there is still no proof the disease originated at the lab.

A WHO spokesman, Tarik Jasarevic, asking about a follow-up mission, told Reuters on Monday that the agency was reviewing the recommendations from the report at the technical level.

China on Monday dismissed as "totally untrue" reports that three researchers in Wuhan went to hospital with an illness before the coronavirus emerged in the city.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that, according to a statement from the laboratory, it "had not been exposed to COVID-19 before December 30, 2019, and a 'zero-infection' record is kept among its staff and graduate students so far".

## GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Middle Cauvery Basin Circle, Trichy - 620 020  
TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No. 3 / 2021 - 2022 / DS / MCBC / Trichy / Dated 25.05.2021

For and on behalf of Government of Tamil Nadu, Superintending Engineer, WRD, Middle Cauvery Basin Circle, Trichy, invites sealed tender as per the tender system noted below for the following works from the experienced relevant class in PWD contractors. The tender will be opened as mentioned below by the Superintending Engineer, WRD, Middle Cauvery Basin Circle, Trichy in presence of the Tenderers or their authorized agents.

Arjanya Basin Division, Trichy

1) Construction of a check dam across the Ayyar river at Senapappalai village of Thurajur Taluk in Trichy District.

2) Construction of check dam across the Thekkamalaiyar river at North Ammapatti of Kumaravadi village of Manapparai Taluk in Trichy District.

3) Construction of check dam across the Thekkamalaiyar river at North Ammapatti of Kumaravadi village of Manapparai Taluk in Trichy District.

4) Construction of check dam across the Thekkamalaiyar river at North Ammapatti of Kumaravadi village of Manapparai Taluk in Trichy District.

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21) Construction of check dam across the Thekkamalaiyar river at North Ammapatti of Kumaravadi village of Manapparai Taluk in Trichy District.

22) Construction of check dam across the Thekkam

## MARKET WATCH

	25-05-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50,637	-0.03
US Dollar	72.77	0.26
Gold	48025	0.02
Brent oil	68.69	0.99

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	764.00	-2.55
Axian Paints	2914.40	95.20
Axis Bank	731.55	-9.60
Bajaj Auto	4150.10	7.80
Bajaj Finserv	11375.85	209.05
Bajaj Finance	5619.65	15.75
Bharti Airtel	526.10	-0.70
BPCL	474.40	1.55
Britannia Ind	3439.50	60.40
Cipla	935.60	4.35
Coal India	147.45	-1.45
Divis Lab	4097.85	0.65
Dr Reddys Lab	5311.20	39.05
Eicher Motors	2625.05	73.85
Grasim Ind	1374.90	4.15
HCL Tech	940.60	7.80
HDPE	2530.50	-10.40
Hero MotoCorp	1478.95	-31.00
HDFC Life	659.15	-11.10
Hindustan Unilever	2929.70	19.25
Hindustan Unilever	391.20	1.90
ICICI Bank	2344.05	7.50
IndusInd Bank	650.30	2.95
Infosys	993.90	-10.85
Indian Oil Corp	1361.60	13.55
ITC	110.30	0.85
JSR Steel	210.90	-0.60
Kotak Bank	1750.50	-6.50
L&T	1450.95	7.70
M&M	811.25	1.25
Maruti Suzuki	6911.80	-40.20
Nestle India Ltd.	17516.10	155.80
NTPC	113.30	0.40
ONGC	114.60	1.55
PowerGrid Corp	232.90	1.90
Reliance Ind	1963.15	-22.50
SBI Life	965.30	2.80
State Bank	412.35	0.30
Shree Cement	27041.45	132.10
Sun Pharma	696.10	5.15
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	649.95	9.85
Tata Motors	315.25	3.40
Tata Steel	1105.20	13.20
TCS	3114.00	32.50
Tech Mahindra	992.65	8.95
Titan	1569.15	48.40
UltraTech Cement	6556.60	-5.80
UPL	796.65	7.30
Wipro	517.55	2.65

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.57	72.89
Euro	88.89	89.31
British Pound	102.80	103.26
Japanese Yen (100)	66.59	66.91
Chinese Yuan	11.33	11.38
Swiss Franc	81.09	81.46
Singapore Dollar	54.75	55.00
Canadian Dollar	60.24	60.51
Malaysian Ringgit	17.51	17.61

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Flipkart hires 23,000 staff for supply chain

BENGALURU  
Flipkart said it hired 23,000 people between March and May to strengthen its supply-chain infrastructure. The new recruits were offered a mix of classroom and digital training. They would be covered under the firm's healthcare and wellness initiatives to ensure safety, said Hemant Badri, senior VP, supply chain, Flipkart.

## Asirvad Microfinance raises \$15 mn in ECBS

MUMBAI  
Asirvad Microfinance, an arm of Manappuram Finance, said it has raised \$15 million in a 7-year external commercial borrowing (ECB) loan from the U.S.-based WorldBusiness Capital Inc. The loan is supported by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, Asirvad said. The proceeds will aid Asirvad to expand its business of providing small loans to low-income women business owners in rural areas. PTI

## 'Use of cloud tech can help boost profits'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU  
Effective adoption of cloud technologies can help add to enterprise profits, a survey by The Infosys Knowledge Institute has shown.

The study, which included 2,500 participants from the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, showed that enterprises in these regions could add up to \$414 billion in net new profits annually with cloud adoption.

A strong profit link was identified when using cloud to rapidly bring new solutions to market. These investments provide a foundation to leverage artificial intelligence and automation, and build cloud-based new sources of revenue, the research arm of Infosys said in a statement.

# Second COVID wave may hit retail asset quality: HDFC Bank

Impact to be highest on those who needed exemptions during first wave: MD

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI  
HDFC Bank expects the otherwise resilient retail segment to report a higher incidence of asset quality stress because of the second wave of COVID-19 infections.

Borrowers who had to avail cover under regulatory exemptions such as moratorium and restructuring after the first wave will be the highest impacted, its CEO and MD Sashidhar Jagdishan said on an investor call.

Terming the near-term expectations as 'tepid' and making it clear that the bank would be 'cautious' in these extraordinary times, Mr. Jagdishan said, "[For the] first time in so many years, we may not have any grip on



**Safety first:** The bank's advice to field staff to prioritise health may affect collections, says Mr. Jagdishan. ■FILE PHOTO

what is going to happen".

"We are reasonably sanguine on the asset quality on the corporate and the SME (small and medium enterprises) side, but from the retail or the segment of people who have or were stressed out in COVID-19, who had ta-

ken moratorium and restructuring, I think they will continue to feel the kind of pain and stress. So, probably, these are the ones which will show a little bit of stress this time around," he said on the call organised by Australian brokerage Macquarie.

## SEBI to appoint forensic auditors for listed firms

Regulator's move to curb frauds

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI  
Markets regulator SEBI is looking to appoint auditors for conducting forensic audits of financial statements of listed companies as part of efforts to curb frauds.

In recent months, SEBI has ordered forensic audits of certain companies.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has invited applications from eligible chartered accountants for empowerment to take up assignments relating to forensic audit of financial statements of listed companies."

"Application shall not be considered where disciplinary action or proceedings



have been initiated against the applicant, its partners or directors, by any regulatory body or court of law," SEBI noted.

In October 2020, SEBI asked listed firms to disclose about the initiation of forensic audit to stock exchanges to address gaps in the availability of information.

On May 19, NCLT had directed the settlement plan offered by Mr. Wadhawan to be considered by the lenders

## Mercedes-Benz India unveils SUV variants

Vehicles to cost up to ₹57.3 lakh

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI  
Bharat Biotech expects to receive regulatory approvals from the World Health Organization (WHO) for Covaxin in the July-September quarter.

It had already submitted an application to the WHO seeking Emergency Use Listing for the vaccine, the company said on Tuesday.

Regulatory approvals for the vaccine are in process in more than 60 countries, the firm said. Emergency use authorisations were obtained in 13 countries with more set to follow.

Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech's partner in the U.S. Ocugen Inc. said it had submitted Master File as part of the process to get emergency use authorisation for the COVID-19 vaccine from the U.S. FDA.

Some delays can be expected in product introductions due to market challenges

cided to offer the products to the customers, it said.

"We are standing firm with our 2021 strategy without any significant alterations at this point," said Martin Schwenk, MD & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India. "However, there can be some delays expected in product introductions due to market challenges and sentiments.

"The new GLA, which has grown to be more aggressive, bold-looking and tech-laden than ever before, has been a much-awaited product for customers," he said. The AMG GLA 35 4M is locally made, he added.

## IBM betting big on hybrid cloud

Critical workloads yet to shift to the platform, says India MD



With almost 75% of enterprise workloads yet to shift to the cloud, IBM is betting on hybrid cloud, which represents a \$1-trillion market opportunity globally, to drive digital transformation for clients.

"Cloud has been there for a long time, but globally, only about 25% of enterprise workloads have actually moved to it and 75% are still to move," said Sandip Patel, MD, IBM India.

He pointed out that according to a recent IBM CEO study, almost 6 out of 10 CEOs in India expected cloud computing to deliver results in the next 2-3 years.

"We are seeing a direct impact of this as we continue to grow our hybrid cloud business. I always say that IBM India is a micro-

cosm of the IBM Corporation and we sort of continue to see some of those [global] trends reflect here as well," he said.

Talking about the Indian market, he said India was one of the largest concentrations of employee population for IBM. "In India, we have our software labs, hybrid labs, which actually serve as global missions. Also a lot of our design centres are based in India, research labs are based in India... a lot of the product announcements that you find, those actually come out of India," Mr. Patel said.

"This gives you an indication of what India is relative to the importance within the IBM ecosystem," he added.

IBM is currently working with close to 1,000 clients in India on their 'digital transformation journey'.

## Fuel prices raised for 13th time in May

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The price of petrol inched towards the ₹100-mark in Mumbai on Tuesday after fuel rates were increased yet again.

Petrol price was raised by 25 paise a litre and diesel by 25 paise a litre, according to a notification.

The increase – the 13th this month – pushed petrol and diesel to record-high levels across the country. Petrol price in Delhi rose to ₹93.44 a litre and diesel to ₹84.32 a litre.

In Mumbai, petrol climbed to ₹99.71 a litre and diesel to ₹91.57. Rates had already crossed the ₹100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, the price in Mumbai, too, inched towards that level.

Admitting that strictures passed by RBI such as banning new credit card issuances were a "blot" on the bank's reputation, he said it had taken the right lessons from the interventions.

"But I don't want to say it will be dramatically high. It will be high, I don't think it will be a loss. They should cover up in coming quarters," he said, adding that he expected things to get back to normal in two quarters.

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# Verstappen shakes up F1's reigning hierarchy

Feisty Dutchman's start to the season suggests Mercedes and Hamilton won't have it all their way after years of dominance

## FORMULA ONE

S. DIPAK RAGAV

For the last two years, Formula One fans have been hoping for a challenger to Lewis Hamilton, who has dominated the sport since 2014 and cruised to titles in 2019 and 2020 with little competition.

The Briton has had an easy time on track, with his Mercedes being the best car on the grid while Ferrari and Red Bull have struggled to close the gap.

Towards the end of last year, Red Bull appeared to catch up with Mercedes' pace. It has continued that form this year with a car capable of being competitive from the first race.

### First time

So when Max Verstappen claimed victory at the recently concluded Monaco Grand Prix, he took the lead in the drivers' championship for the first time in his career.

Ever since he burst onto the scene, the Dutchman has been hoping to be in a title fight and has had to wait seven seasons to have a car to compete with Mercedes and Hamilton.



**King Max:** Verstappen showed his might at the Monaco GP where he left his competitors, including Hamilton, way behind. ■ AP

The minor rule change for the 2021 season, focusing on the floor towards the car's rear, has hurt teams like Mercedes and Aston Martin, which, unlike Red Bull, run their cars on a low-rake con-

cept where the rear of the car is close to the ground.

Red Bull has for years run a high-rake concept to maximise rear downforce, with the car having a slightly higher ground clearance at the

back while the nose dips closer to the ground at the front.

Despite losing some of their advantage, Hamilton and Mercedes managed to win three of the first four rac-

es thanks to their inherent pace and smart strategy in Bahrain, Portugal and Spain, where Verstappen was initially in the lead.

The duo had wheel-to-wheel battles in the first four

races but avoided contact and messy incidents. Ahead of the Monaco GP, Hamilton, who is going for a record eighth title, attempted to put pressure on his championship rival, saying Verstappen had a lot more to prove.

Red Bull was favoured around the streets of Monte Carlo, and on a day when Hamilton and Mercedes were off the pace, Verstappen showed he is more than ready to prove his worth.

The 23-year-old has in the past had crashes at the tight, twisty circuit but was in sublime form on Sunday and ended with a four-point lead over Hamilton.

### Good lesson

After the win, Verstappen did not hold back in his response to the defending champion's attempt at mind games. "Well, first of all, actions always speak louder than words," he said. "I think that's a good lesson after this weekend. You have to talk on the track, that's what I like."

If Red Bull and Verstappen can sustain this form for the rest of the year, the Monaco GP could not only be a pivotal moment for the 2021 season but also herald a new era in the sport.

## BCCI exploring a Sept.-Oct. window

Will discuss it at the SGM on May 29

## IPL 2021

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is contemplating the month-long window, between the end of India's series in England in September and the T20 World Cup commencement in October, to stage the remaining portion of the suspended Indian Premier League (IPL).

The BCCI is set to discuss the rescheduled IPL, moving the T20 World Cup to United Arab Emirates and the forthcoming international series in a Special General Body meeting on May 29. Ahead of the meeting, IPL executives are working overtime to present viable options to the board.

The most practicable option being considered at the moment is to play the remaining IPL matches from September 20 and end it at least 10 days ahead of the tentative beginning of the T20 World Cup from October 22.

**Quarantine issue**  
If both the tournaments are organised in UAE, the BCCI

can save on quarantine requirements.

An IPL franchise official confirmed that the BCCI is in "informal discussion" with the franchises about the re-jigged IPL.

The plan that's being discussed now is to stage the remaining 31 matches in 21 days, including 10 double-headers, starting around September 20.

"If the authorities in UAE relax quarantine norms for cricketers flying in from bio-secure bubbles, only then can the tournament actually be played with a majority of top players being available," said a franchise official.

With the BCCI having been unable to convince its England counterpart in rescheduling the five-Test series, the series in England is scheduled to be over on September 14. The Caribbean Premier League is scheduled to get over on September 19.

The BCCI will also have to consider whether top international cricketers will be made available for the tournament due to extreme toll that the UAE heat will take on the cricketers' bodies ahead of the World Cup.

## Emotional Seifert recounts COVID experience

Says he felt secure in IPL bio-bubble

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AUCKLAND

New Zealand cricketer Tim Seifert's world stopped for a moment and his heart sank when he tested positive for COVID-19 during the now-suspended IPL. The wicket-keeper, however, said he never felt vulnerable inside the bio-bubble.

"I got pulled aside and told I had tested positive. My heart sank straight away when everyone left. I was the only overseas player basically left in India in the whole tournament. That's when things got a little bit real," an emotional Seifert told the *New Zealand Herald*.

"The world stopped a little bit, I just couldn't really think what was next and that's the scary part of it – you hear about things, and I thought that was going to happen to me," said Seifert.

He thanked former Kiwi stars Brendon McCullum



Seifert. ■ FILE PHOTO

and Stephen Fleming as well as KKR and Chennai Super Kings for making life easier for him during his recovery period in Chennai.

"It definitely was hard and I couldn't thank Brendon (McCullum) and (Stephen) Fleming enough, they made everything a lot easier," said Seifert.

## Classy Shiva Thapa assured of a medal

Mohd. Hussamuddin loses in the quarterfinals to Mirzahalilov

## ASIAN BOXING

SPORTS BUREAU  
DUBAI

Shiva Thapa ensured India's first medal in the Asian boxing championships as he defeated Nader Odah of Kuwait in a 64kg quarterfinals bout to enter the last four stage here on Tuesday.

Thapa recorded a comprehensive 5-0 win over Odah to earn his fifth successive medal at the event, and

the first in the 64kg class. The seasoned Indian mixed his jabs with lusty right blows to inflict a standing count on Odah in the first round.

Thapa continued his dominance to walk away with a fine victory.

### Meets Usmonov

Thapa, who beat Kyrgyz boxer Dimitri Puchin 5-0 in a first round bout on Monday night, will take on top seed

and defending champion Bakhodur Usmonov of Tajikistan in the semifinals.

In 56kg, Mohammad Husamuddin's journey ended in the quarterfinals as the Indian lost to top seed and reigning World champion Mirzazbek Mirzahalilov 4-1.

### Combination punches

Hussamuddin moved around the ring to evade the attacks of the Uzbek, who delivered a combination of

straight punches and hooks to get the better of the Indian.

### Sangwan exits

In an 81kg opening round bout on Monday, Sumit Sangwan suffered a 5-0 defeat against Iranian boxer Meysam Gheshlaghi.

Olympic-bound boxers Amit Panghal (52kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg) and Ashish Kumar (75kg) will begin their campaign on Wednesday.

Prasidh Krishna joined the bubble two days back after recovering fully from COVID-19. Kohli, Rohit and coach Shastri have all joined the bubble now," a BCCI source confirmed.

It is learnt that approval for allowing the players' families is still awaited but the BCCI is hopeful it would be done soon.

Negotiations on the quarantine duration once the side reaches England are still on and the hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms)

could be shortened.

Earlier, Bangladesh was in trouble as off-spinner Mehidy Hasan, opening the bowling again, took three for 28 in 10 overs. Left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman bagged three for 16 in six overs while left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan finished with two for 38 in a nine-over spell.

Earlier, Bangladesh was in trouble at 74 for four when Mashfiqur put on 87 for the fifth wicket with Mahmudullah (41).

Mashfiqur, who had scored 84 in Sunday's win, brought up his hundred off

115 balls.

**The scores:** Bangladesh 246 in 48.1 overs (Mashfiqur Rahim 125, Mahmudullah 41, Dushyant Chameera 3/44, Lakshman Sandakan 3/54) bt Sri Lanka 141/9 in 40 overs (Mehidy Hasan 3/28, Mustafizur Rahman 3/16). Target revised to 245 in 40 overs after a rain interruption.

Bangladesh won by 103 runs on DLS method to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series.

Ramkumar progresses, Prajnesh bows out

## QUALIFIERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PARIS

India's Ramkumar Ramanathan advanced to the men's singles second round of the French Open Qualifiers. Prajnesh Gunneswaran, however, crashed out following his first-round defeat, here on Tuesday.

### Fighting back

Ramkumar erased a one-set deficit to beat American Michael Mmoh 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-3 in his opening round that lasted one hour and 54 minutes.

He will next face Uzbekistan's veteran Denis Istomin, who also recorded a three-set win against Bosnia's Damir Dzumhur.

Left-handed Prajnesh, seeded 32nd, suffered a rather tame 2-6, 2-6 loss to Germany's Oscar Otte.

to fight by the World No. 253 before winning in an hour and 40 minutes.

It was Djokovic's first match since losing the Italian Open final to Rafael Nadal nine days ago.

He will next face Argentinian Federico Coria, the younger brother of former Roland Garros runner-up Guillermo Coria, in the quarterfinals.

**The results (second round):** Novak Djokovic bt Mats Moraing 6-2, 7-6(4); Federico Coria bt Pablo Cuevas 6-3, 6-2.



**Battling hard:** Djokovic took an hour and 40 minutes to get past the lucky loser. ■ AP

## BELGRADE OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BELGRADE

Novak Djokovic registered a 6-2, 7-6(4) win over German lucky loser Mats Moraing on Tuesday in his opener in Belgrade where the World No. 1 is warming up for the French Open.

The clay-court Grand Slam starts in Paris on Sunday, and Djokovic opted for extra match practice on home soil this week.

The 34-year-old was made

taken from was published in the 1930s. It feels dated now, but has the best-known report of a cricket match in fiction. Written by A.G. Macdonell, this classic on the quirks and foibles of the English as seen through Scottish eyes, was much anthologised, and even included in some school textbooks. The final catch that tied the match takes four pages to describe, suggesting perhaps that the skier takes as long to descend into safe hands as a reader might take to read about it.

**Wodehouse on the game**  
Cricket is a funny game, and you would imagine that it is a rich field for comic writers. P.G. Wodehouse, a fan who named his immortal butler after the Warwickshire all rounder Percy Jeeves, only occasionally touched upon cricket in his later books.

**What makes such a person carry on**  
*Wodehouse in the City*, where Mike Jackson gets out on 98 because someone walks in front of the sightscreen shows how much fans missed this especially after Wodehouse settled in America and golf supplied the sporting raw material for his comic pen.

Cricket is like sex in the ridiculous postures one gets into. And this is only one aspect of it. But while cricket has been used to comic effect occasionally by the likes of Charles Dickens and Thomas Hughes, it has seldom been given the full-length treatment.

**Funnier genre**  
The most popular and funniest genre is the pitiless description of all-round incompetence – of individual or team – and about the characters whose passion far outstrips their ability. As Marcus Berkman says in his *Rain Men: The Madness of Cricket*, "To be treated with the respect you don't deserve is the dream of every talentless sportsman."

What makes such a person carry on

season after season? "At some cathartic moment in our stunted childhoods," Berkman explains, "this ridiculous sport inveigled itself into our consciousnesses like a virus and never left."

*Rain Men* mirrors the experiences of players everywhere, especially amateurs who take their game seriously. Berkman's team is Captain Scott XI (named after the explorer who is symbolic of the second best, arriving at the South Pole a few days after Roald Amundsen became the first man to get there).

In much the same vein is Gideon Haigh's *Many a Slip*, which the author describes as "a short book about a small cricket club with an unremarkable history and an uncertain future".

Berkman has also written *Zimmer Men: The Trials and Tribulations of the Ageing Cricketer*. Written a decade later, it is about the talentless of the first book who have aged and slipped further.

For matters of doctrinal policy, we can consult God's own representative on earth, the chairman of selectors.... We have no room in cricket for doubt or equivocation. Anglicans may believe that Christ was resurrected after death, but we know that David Gower should have gone to India in 1992-93..."

It is, as one reviewer put it, "a very funny book about some very sad men."

A personal favourite in this genre is A

*La Recherche Du Cricket Perdu* by the marvellous Simon Barnes ("favourite cricket writer: James Joyce"), an anthology of 25 pieces written by him in the style of various writers such as Melville, Lawrence, Dante, Ian Fleming, Boswell, Eliot, Tolkien, Homer, Nabokov, Twain, Beckett, Conan Doyle, Chaucer and Shakespeare himself (*'The Tragedy of Prince Botham'*).

*The Love Song of J. Derek Pringle* by T.S. Eliot begins thus: *"Let us go then, you and me/When the members are spread out after tea/Like patients etherised upon their various tables."*

In book three of Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, (where at one point the Ashes get stolen from Lord's), Ford Prefect tells Arthur Dent, "We can't win against obsession. They care, we don't. They win."

It is useful advice for both players and writers.

## BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

When the Scot Donald Cameron sees the following headlines in newspapers in England, he is almost "numb with the cold of sheer panic." *England Overwhelmed With Disaster*, says one. *Is England Doomed?* asks another. A late edition mentions the *Collapse of England*. Cameron soon discovers the truth. This is not about a war or an attack by aliens. It is the "sad story of England's shame in the second Test match against Australia at Melbourne."

*England, Their England*, where this



**BETWEEN WICKETS**

SURESH MENON

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'Milkha is clinically stable'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement" as he fights COVID pneumonia, the hospital where he is being treated said on Tuesday.

Milkha was on Monday admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Fortis hospital in Mohali. The 91-year-old tested positive for the virus last Wednesday.

"Milkha Singh is clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement," the hospital update read. He was diagnosed with COVID pneumonia on Monday after his admission.

Earlier Milkha's golfer son Jeev had said that the decision to hospitalise him was a precautionary measure. "Though his parameters seemed all right, we thought it was safer to have him admitted where he would be under supervision of senior doctors," Jeev had said on Monday.

## Jeremy finishes fourth

SPORTS BUREAU

TASHKENT

Jeremy Lalrinnunga lifted a total of 300kg to finish fourth in the men's 67kg category at the World junior weightlifting championships, a gold-level Olympic qualifying event, here on Tuesday.

Jeremy, a 2018 Youth Olympics champion in 62kg, did 135kg in snatch and 165kg in clean and jerk to manage six kg less than his best effort. It was 2kg less than his performance in the Asian championships last month.

Jeremy, nursing a knee injury, failed in his first snatch attempt to lift 135kg but managed to do it in his second. He did not succeed in improving it to 139kg in his third attempt and finished as the second best lifter in snatch behind Turkish lifter Muhammed Ozbek (141kg).

The Indian began clean and jerk with 160kg and improved it to 165kg in his second attempt before faltering in his final for 170kg. Ozbek emerged champion with 317kg.

## TV PICKS

**Europa League:** Sony Ten 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Thursday).

## IN BRIEF

**Mohali hockey stadium renamed after Balbir Sr.**  
CHANDIGARH  
The Mohali International Hockey Stadium was on Tuesday officially renamed after the legendary Balbir Singh Sr. on the occasion of his first death anniversary. PTI

## Bopanna and Skugor bow out

BELGRADE  
Rohan Bopanna and Franko Skugor of Croatia lost 6-3, 4-6, [10-8] to Federico Delbonis and Artem Sitak in the doubles first round of the €51,000 ATP tennis tournament here on Tuesday.

**Modric extends Real Madrid contract**  
MADRID  
Veteran midfielder Luka Modric has signed a contract extension which will keep him at Real Madrid until the end of next season, the La Liga giant announced on Tuesday. The 35-year-old Croatian international, who won the Ballon d'Or in 2018, has played 391 times for Madrid since joining from Tottenham in 2012. AFP

# 'US' travel warning not related to Games'

Japan clarifies that the Americans support the effort to host the mega event

## TOKYO OLYMPICS

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TOKYO

The Japanese government on Tuesday was quick to deny that the United States' warning for Americans to avoid travelling to Japan would influence the athletes willing to compete in the Tokyo Games.

U.S. officials cited a surge in coronavirus cases in Japan caused by virus variants that may put even vaccinated people at risk. They didn't ban Americans from visiting Japan, but the warnings could affect insurance rates and whether Olympic athletes and other participants decide to join the Games that begin on July 23.

The U.S. warning from the Atlanta-based Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said: "Because of the current situation in Japan, even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 variants and should avoid all travel to Japan."



**Status quo:** Japan believes that United States' position on the Olympics remains unchanged despite the travel advisory. ■ REUTERS

The State Department's warning was more blunt. "Do not travel to Japan due to COVID-19," it said.

### Rising cases

Most metro areas in Japan are under a state of emergency

and are expected to remain so till the middle of June because of the rising COVID-19 cases that is also putting pressure on the country's medical systems.

This raises concern about how the country could cope

with the arrival of tens of thousands of Olympic participants if its hospitals remain stressed and only a few of its population is vaccinated.

Japan's chief cabinet secretary Katsunobu Kato told a regular news conference

that the U.S. warning does not prohibit essential travel, and Japan believes that United States' support for Tokyo's effort to hold the Olympics is unchanged.

"We believe there is no change in the U.S. position supporting the Japanese government's determination to host the Games," said Kato, adding that Washington has told Tokyo that the travel warning is not related to the participation of the U.S. Olympic team.

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee said it still anticipates American athletes to safely compete at the Tokyo Olympics.

Fans from abroad were banned from the Tokyo Olympics months ago, but athletes, families and sporting officials from around the world and other stakeholders still amount to a mass influx of international travellers.

The Japanese public, in surveys, has expressed opposition in hosting the Games due to safety concerns.

# Jokic sizzles, Nuggets draw level with Trail Blazers

Bucks overrun Heat for a 2-0 lead

## NBA PLAYOFFS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DENVER

Denver Nuggets ace Nikola Jokic served up a 38-point display as the third seed overpowered Portland Trail Blazers 128-109 to level its NBA first round playoff series 1-1, while Milwaukee Bucks produced an exhibition of three-point shooting to crush Miami Heat 132-98 and take a 2-0 lead.

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bounds and five assists as Denver battled back to after being jolted by the Blazers in Saturday's opener.

### Antetokounmpo shines

In Milwaukee, Bryn Forbes erupted for five threes in the first half and Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 31 points to give the Bucks a resounding win over last year's Finals runner-up.

#### The results:

Bucks 132 bt Heat 98. Bucks lead 2-0.

Nuggets 128 bt Trail Blazers 109. Series tied 1-1.



**Dominant:** Nikola Jokic was all over the court in Denver's win over Portland. ■ AP

# PGA apologises to Mickelson and Koepka

## GOLF

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
RIAWAH ISLAND (USA)

PGA of America CEO Seth Waugh has apologised to winner Phil Mickelson and Brooks Koepka for fans rushing onto the 18th hole at the PGA Championship.

After Mickelson's approach landed on the 18th green, spectators rushed past the ropes, marshals and security at the Ocean Course, quickly swarming the competitors as they played the 72nd hole on Sunday.

Waugh said on Monday that the organisation regretted that the scene "made two players and their caddies feel vulnerable".

Waugh's statement, released on social media, said the charge came from "a moment of high elation and pent-up emotion by spectators" and overwhelmed



**Unnerving:** After Mickelson's approach landed on the 18th green, spectators rushed past the ropes, marshals and security, quickly swarming the competitors. ■ AFP

I don't know what the deal was, but it's what it is

— KOEPKA

security.

Mickelson said the scene was a little bit unnerving, but it was exceptionally awesome, too".

Koepka said his surgically

repaired right knee got hit by people as he tried to break through the crowd.

He wondered if someone purposely tried to hurt him. "I don't know, it felt somebody tried to..." he said, cutting off his thought. "I don't know what the deal was, but it's what it is."

Waugh said player safety

was a chief goal and he was glad order was restored.

Fans circled the final green and celebrated when Mickelson finished off the win.

## Mixed day for Indians

## SHOOTING

SPORTS BUREAU  
OSIJEK (CROATIA)

It was a mixed fare in air pistol for the Indian Olympic team, at the European Championship in Osijek, Croatia.

Asian Games gold medalist Saurabh Chaudhary shot 589 out of 600. It was the highest score in men's air pistol.

He had consistent 98 in every series and one 99.

Oleh Omelchuk of Ukraine had shot 586 in topping the qualification in the regular event.

World No.1 Abhishek Verma was not at his best and scored 579 with his scores ranging from 94 to 98.

Interestingly the MQS field also had shooters from Iran and Japan, who like the Indian team were capitalising on the available competi-



Saurabh. ■ FILE PHOTO

tion at this point of time, to prepare their best for Tokyo Games.

Manu Bhaker (573) and Yashaswini Singh Deswal (572) warmed up for the tougher challenges ahead with the third and fourth best scores in the MQS section of women's air pistol.

Goinoush Sebaghatollahi of Iran topped the MQS field with 586, five points better than the topper in the regular field, Vitalina Batsarashkina of Russia.

For rowers Arjun Lal and Arvind Singh who qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, there was huge disappointment with the scheduled trip to Portugal for intensive training ahead of the Games getting cancelled.

With the visa not ap-

## Flick to succeed Loew after Euro 2020

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BERLIN

Outgoing Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick will succeed his former boss Joachim Loew in the Germany dugout after Euro 2020, the German Football Association (DFB) announced on Tuesday.

"It's all gone surprisingly quickly, but I am very happy to be Germany's coach from the autumn," said Flick, 56, after signing a three-year contract to succeed Loew.

"I am hugely excited, because I see the class of players, and especially young players, which we have in Germany."

Flick has long been the favourite to take over from Loew.

## Ready for 'acceptable resolution', East Bengal writes to Shree Cement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

Kolkata giant East Bengal intimated its investor Shree Cement Limited about its readiness for an "acceptable resolution" to settle the impasse over the final agreement which has cast doubts over its participation in next year's Indian Super League.

In a letter to SCEB's CEO Col Shivaji Samaddar, the club management stated that it has already communicated the "points of difference" on October 17, while one of club's longest serving presidents, Dr. Pronab Dasgupta, in his personal capacity, wrote to Shree Cement MD Hari Mohan Banerjee to bring about an "acceptable resolution".

According to a club official, SCL wants "perpetual" rights so that they have the sporting rights over the property, logo, colour, name, everything on a permanent basis.

The executive committee is hopeful that it will be settled amicably. Banerjee is a true gentleman and the matter will be resolved amicably," the official added.

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## Stimac could get extension till September

## FOOTBALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF)'s technical committee could recommend an extension of national team coach Igor Stimac's contract till the playoffs of the 2023 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers in September.

The Croatian World Cupper's contract is up for renewal, having served his two-year tenure after being appointed to the job in May 2019.

The AIFF has summoned its technical committee for a meeting on Friday, when they will discuss a raft of issues, besides Stimac's future.

"The technical commit-

tee has been called on Friday and among other issues, it is likely to discuss Stimac's extension till September," a top AIFF source said on Tuesday.

One of the most high-profile coaches to manage the Indian men's team, Stimac was appointed to the top post in May 2019 for a two-year term, and has had mixed results since.

The AIFF has summoned its technical committee for a meeting on Friday, when they will discuss a raft of issues, besides Stimac's future.

The tournament is due to be held from June 3 to 5 but the organiser from Slovenia, in a letter to the Table Tennis Federation of India, has stated; "Unfortunately our Ministry of Foreign is not able to help you in getting a

visa.

"They tried, but because of the pandemic, the issuance of visas in India is suspended."

A worried TTFI has written to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), the Sports Ministry and others for their intervention in the matter.

The Sports Authority of India has cleared the Indian team for participation.

The team comprises three players, Vaishnavi Sutar, Trivendra Singh and Sohan Patel, coach Jayesh Acharya and two escorts.