



Centenarian freedom fighter H.S. Doreswamy passes away

Page 5



Liquidate Devas Multimedia: National Company Law Tribunal

Page 8



Quad 'targeting' China, claims Consul General Tang Guocai

Page 13



Mithali says she will work with coach Powar to build a strong team

Page 15

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NEARBY



Centre can't leave it up to States to get vaccine: CM

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday likened the "acute shortage" of COVID-19 vaccine to a war-like situation that all governments, from the Centre to the States, had to confront as 'Team India'. The Centre cannot leave vaccine procurement to the States, he said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Rajasthan govt. to audit COVID-related deaths

JAIPUR
The Rajasthan government has ordered an audit of deaths caused by COVID-19 amid allegations that fatalities were being under-reported. The audit will also help in taking a decision on social security measures for families which have lost their earning members.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

IMA demands action against Ramdev

NEW DELHI
The Indian Medical Association has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his help to stop the misinformation campaign on COVID-19 vaccination and demanding action against Baba Ramdev for his alleged remarks on allopathy.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Cyclone Yaas makes landfall in Balasore, triggers heavy damage

4 killed in Odisha, 1 in Bengal; many areas inundated

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
SHIV SAHAY SINGH
BHUBANESWAR / KOLKATA

The 'Very Severe Cyclonic Storm' Yaas that made landfall south of Balasore in Odisha on Wednesday tore into the border regions of West Bengal and Odisha and weakened into a cyclonic storm, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake on the eastern coast.

Five persons were killed – four in Odisha and one in West Bengal.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said one crore people had been affected, and about 15 lakh people had been evacuated.

National Disaster Response Force and Army personnel joined the rescue and relief operations.

In Odisha, 128 villages in Balasore and Bhadrak districts were inundated following seawater ingress. The cyclone caused extensive damage to power transmission lines in coastal areas. Hundreds of thatched houses were ravaged.

Yaas battered the tree cover while passing through Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts. Thousands of big trees



Rushing in: Sea water entering through the boundaries of a house as Cyclone Yaas made landfall in Chandipur area of Balasore, Odisha, on Wednesday. ■ PTI

were uprooted.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the storm crossed the north Odisha coast about 20 km south of Balasore between 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. with estimated wind speeds of 130-140 kmph. The cyclone hit the coast with far less intensity than what was predicted.

By afternoon, the cyclonic storm had moved away from Balasore and had entered Mayurbhanj district, triggering heavy rain.

The system is expected to enter Jharkhand as a cyclone.

6.5 lakh evacuated

In Odisha, the coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur and northern Mayurbhanj district were affected. The State had evacuated about 6.5 lakh people, including 1.52 lakh in Balasore, 1.2 lakh in Bhadrak and 1 lakh in Mayurbhanj district.

Special Relief Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena said the damage was being assessed. Collectors of Balasore and Keonjhar had confirmed two deaths, he said.

As predicted by the IMD, tidal surge was observed above 4 m in Balasore and Bhadrak.

"Inundation was reported in the Dhamra area of Bhadrak district and Bahanaga, Remuna, Balipal and Balasore town of Balasore district. People had cut roads at several places to discharge water. The embankments would be repaired soon," said Mr. Jena.

CM ANNOUNCES RELIEF ▶ PAGE 9

Major lapse in giving vaccines in U.P. village

20 persons given wrong second dose

OMAR RASHID
JACOB KOSHY
LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

In a major lapse, 20 villagers in Siddharthnagar district of eastern Uttar Pradesh were administered the Covishield vaccine in their first dose but given Covaxin in the second shot.

The incident took place during the vaccination drive at a primary health centre in Barhni block.

Ramsurat Varun, a resident of Audahi Kala village, said he received Covishield on April 1. However, he was given a shot of Covaxin on May 14 during his second dose. "They did not check anything. The ASHA [worker] was standing elsewhere," he told reporters. Mr. Varun said he is now afraid of possible side-effects.

While 18 persons were from his village, two others were from another.

Radhe Shyam Shukla, 61, another villager administered the two vaccines, said though he did not face any side-effects, he was anxious for many days. "It is an act of negligence. It should not have happened. But now many days have passed [since May 14], nothing adverse has happened. We appear to be healthy," he told *The Hindu* when asked if he would want the administration to monitor him.

A probe is being carried out. Chief Medical Officer, Siddharthnagar, Sandeep Chaudhary said a clarification was being sought from officials on the ground and action would be taken accordingly. "It is a lapse because there is no guideline by the Government of India that a cocktail [of vaccines] be administered," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Country reports 2,02,570 new COVID-19 cases, 3,577 deaths

T.N. reports 33,764 infections, followed by Kerala with 28,798

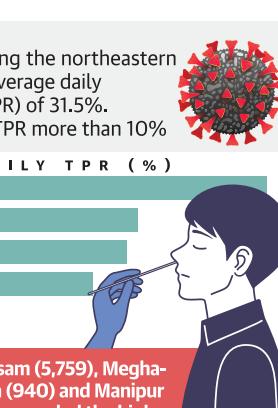
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 2,02,570 new COVID-19 cases and 3,577 deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Wednesday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,73,59,230 cases and 3,14,999 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 33,764 new infections, followed by Kerala (28,798) and Karnataka (26,811). Maharashtra recorded 992 casualties on the day, followed by Karnataka (530) and Tamil Nadu (475). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Ladakh. The data is sourced from the States' health bulletins.

As many as 22,17,320 samples were tested in the coun-



NOTE: DATA UNTIL MAY 25 | SOURCE: COVID19INDIA.ORG

try on Tuesday (the results for which were made available on Wednesday).

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

WhatsApp approaches Delhi HC to challenge new IT rules

'Breaking end-to-end encryption infringes on citizens' rights'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Instant messaging app WhatsApp has approached the Delhi High Court challenging the Central government's new Information Technology Rules, 2021, which include a requirement for social media platforms to compulsorily enable "the identification of the first originator of the information" in India upon government or court order.

The Facebook-owned company argued that this provision forces it "to break end-to-end encryption on its messaging service, as well as the privacy principles underlying it, and infringes upon the fundamental rights to privacy and free speech of the hundreds of millions of citizens using WhatsApp to communicate privately and securely".

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, was notified on February 25 this year amidst concerns raised by various experts over its impact on privacy, freedom of expression and security of users online.

While this is the first major tech company to challenge the new IT rules, the Foundation for Independent Journalism, over its attempt to regulate digital news me-

'Violation of rights'

■ WhatsApp has filed a plea contending that the new IT rules violate the fundamental right to privacy, and the right to freedom of speech and expression. It highlighted the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in K.S. Puttaswamy case where it held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right

■ "Requiring intermediaries to enable the identification of the first originator of the information in India on end-to-end encrypted messaging services constitutes a dangerous invasion of privacy," WhatsApp said

■ "Privacy is inextricably intertwined with the right to freedom of speech and expression because it protects people from retaliation for expressing unpopular but lawful views," it argued



Centre seeks compliance report from all

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has written to all significant social media intermediaries, who have over 50 lakh registered users in the country, requesting details of compliance. ▶ PAGE 9

'Unfortunate attempt to stop new norms'

WhatsApp's last moment challenge to the new guidelines is an "unfortunate attempt" to prevent them coming into effect, the Centre said. Established judicial dictum is that no fundamental right is absolute, it said. ▶ PAGE 9

dia. The petitions claimed that the new rules seek to regulate online news portals by imposing a vaguely worded "Code of Ethics".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

More fiscal support imperative: Uday Kotak

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India's economy urgently needs increased fiscal spending from the government to support businesses that have suffered stress from COVID-related disruptions, as well as households and individuals hit by the pandemic, CII president Uday Kotak said.

"I think the time has come

for the fisc [fiscal authorities] to do a lot more in terms of supporting very specified, well-defined segments of the economy, including individuals and households," Mr. Kotak said in an interview.

"The government in its budget planning... has done a very conservative revenue estimate for 21/22 in terms of its targets, so I think they should

do better in many areas." Arguing that the risks of not increasing fiscal spending were far greater than a possible overshoot of the government's budgeted fiscal deficit target of 6.8%, he said, "At a time like the pandemic, we need to support the economy to at least a base level."

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 14

Forum IAS

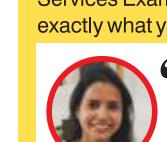
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Panel to probe removal of shrouds from graves

Bodies were buried on banks of Ganga



REMAINS OF BURNED SHROUDS
SEEN ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGA. ■ PRABHAT KUMAR VERMA (REPORTS ON PAGES 2 & 8)

A two-member committee of ADM (administration) and ASP (Gangapur) Prayagraj would probe the matter.

In a joint statement, DM Bhanu Chandra Goswami and Prayagraj DIG Sarvashresth Tripathi said the matter was "extremely serious and sensitive".

The panel has been asked to probe all angles, including which "elements" were involved in the act of removing the shrouds from the

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Farmers mark 6 months of stir with 'Black Day'

Neither police nor extreme weather conditions could break us...will intensify agitation if laws are not repealed: protesters

SHINJINI GHOSH
SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

A raging pandemic, extreme weather conditions and "intimidation" from authorities on several occasions had not been able to break the movement, protesting farmers at the Singhu border said as they marked six months of the agitation on Wednesday.

Thousands of farmers from the Capital's neighbouring States had reached the city's borders in November last year, demanding a complete repeal of the three controversial farm laws brought in by the Centre.

Amid sloganising, hoisting black flags and burning effigies, the protesting farmers maintained that their demands of a repeal of the three laws and legal guarantee of minimum support price, remained the same as on the first day of them reaching the borders of the national capital.

Brief ruckus

At Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, hundreds of farmers, led by Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU)



Resolute in their fight: Protesters burn an effigy of PM Narendra Modi during the protest at the Singhu border; farmers raise slogans while observing 'Black Day' at Ghazipur border on Wednesday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, R.V. MOORTHY



leader Rakesh Tikait, converged into groups as they burnt an effigy of the Centre in protest. A ruckus briefly ensued between protesters and the local police, donning anti-riot gears, who had tried to stop them from burning the effigy at the UP Gate below the Delhi-Meerut Expressway.

Amardeep Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district, who has been camping at the Singhu border since the initial days of the agitation said, "Sitting somewhere far away from one's family is difficult for anyone. To

add to it, the government also tried to pressurise us in all sorts of ways. At times they create panic about COVID-19 and at other times, they disrupted water and electricity supplies. They even tried to torture youth by bringing up some 'Toolkit' issue. But we have the Almighty's blessings and we have managed to resist all kinds of threats."

"Trolleys have been modified and harvest season managed without a glitch. People are back to the border in large numbers. This agitation will continue and we will follow whatever our leaders

say," said Mr. Singh. Referring to an instance of police action which took place after people claiming to be locals staged a protest at the Singhu border in January, Gurmeet Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Moga district said, "Neither the police nor the extreme weather conditions could break us. We are as determined as ever. The protest is on and will continue till our demands are met. We will not accept anything lesser than a complete repeal of the laws."

"This movement is a fight for our identity. Agriculture

is our livelihood and if the laws are implemented then we will anyway have to die. We might as well die while fighting for our rights. We will continue the struggle and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have to take back the laws," said Mr. Singh.

Sukhwinder Singh, a farmer from the Roopnagar district said that the movement will be intensified if the laws are not repealed and groups of youth will be sent to different parts of the country including, election-bound States, to raise awareness.

"If the government with-

4 accomplices of Olympic medallist arrested in wrestler murder case

They are members of Kala Asauda, Neeraj Bawana gangs

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Four accomplices of Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar, involved in the alleged property dispute case that led to the death of a 23-year-old wrestler at the Chhatrasal Stadium, have been arrested, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused have been identified as Bhupender (38), Mohit (22), Gulab (24), residents of Haryana's Jhajjar district and Manjeet (29), from Rohtak district.

They are active members of the Kala Asauda and Neeraj Bawana gangs and were arrested from Delhi's Kanjhawala area on Tuesday

night, the police said.

The arrests were made by the team of Special Staff of Rohini district of the Delhi police on a tip-off. All the four arrested are accomplices of Mr. Kumar and were involved in the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl. Non-bailable warrants were also issued against them in connection with the incident.

Wrestler Sagar Rana died and two of his friends were injured after they were allegedly assaulted by Mr. Kumar and others inside the stadium. The incident occurred on the intervening night of May 4 and May 5 over a dispute related to a property in Model Town.

The four arrested narrated the sequence of events and details of other persons involved in the crime. They also said that they abandoned their vehicles and weapons at the crime spot, the DCP said.

DCP (Rohini) Pranav Tayal, said the Special Staff of the district received information that four members of the Kala Asauda and Neeraj Bawana gangs, involved in the case, were coming to Gherwa village to meet their accomplice Kala.

"Acting on the tip-off, our team laid a trap near Gherwa railway crossing and apprehended all the four persons," he said.

The four arrested narrated the sequence of events and details of other persons involved in the crime.

They also said that they abandoned their vehicles and weapons at the crime spot, the DCP said.

Two held for duping on pretext of oxygen supply

Key accused runs a social media group

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The national president of a social media group and his accomplice were arrested for allegedly cheating families of COVID-19 patients by promising to provide oxygen cylinders at the doorstep, police said on Wednesday.

The accused have been identified as Ritik Kumar Singh (21) and Sandeep Panday (28), both residents of Greater Noida, they said.

Singh claimed that he is the national president of a social media group called 'India Youth Icon Team', headquartered in Greater Noida, which has 18 lakh youth as active members or

followers across eight States, the police said.

On May 2, a PCR call regarding online fraud was received at Vivek Vihar police station. During inquiry, complainant Sanchit Aggarwal, a resident of Vivek Vihar, stated that his mother was ill and needed oxygen cylinder. He contacted a number available on social media and paid ₹14,000 for two cylinders. But no oxygen cylinder was provided.

The alleged number was also switched off, an officer said. The police analysed the bank statement and e-wallet details of the complainant and zeroed in on the accused.

Three arrested for slaughtering cows in separate incidents in Outer Delhi

Five teams worked to nab the culprits, who targeted strays

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three men were arrested for their alleged involvement in three separate incidents of cow slaughter in Outer Delhi, the police said on Wednesday. The accused to target stray cows and slaughter them in abandoned properties, the police said.

Asif (36) and his brother Mohinsh (24), carrying a reward of ₹50,000 each, were arrested along with their relative and accomplice Naeem (20) on Tuesday from their hideouts in Jamia Nagar, they said.

Five teams were constituted to nab the culprits who would slaughter cows and

sell the meat for ₹100 per kg, police said.

According to the police, the first incident was reported at Ranholi Police Station on May 16 wherein carcasses of cows were found at an empty plot in Baprola village. The second incident was also reported from the same village on the same day while the third incident was reported from Nihal Vihar on May 20, police said.

Inspection of the three spots showed a common link, they said.

A post-mortem was conducted and separate cases were registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, Delhi Agricultu-

ral Cattle Preservation Act and Prevention of Cruelty of Animals Act, police said.

As part of investigation, suspects previously involved in such acts were searched for and several meat traders were enquired for any clues about the probable suspects but police did not get any breakthrough, a senior police officer said.

DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh said over a week, footage of over 600 CCTV cameras installed at various vantage points was analysed.

The team was able to identify the vehicle used in the commission of crime. This led to the arrest of the accused.

'Numb' Sushil Kumar celebrates birthday in lock-up

Victim's father demands he be stripped of medals

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar celebrated his 39th birthday in lock-up on Wednesday. He is in six-day police custody after being arrested in a wrestler's murder case.

A senior officer said that Mr. Kumar has stayed numb since the time of arrest. "His

family members approached us as they wanted to meet him but they were denied. We passed on the birthday wishes to Mr. Kumar, however, he didn't react. His body language shows that he is regretting his action," said the officer.

The officer added that Mr. Kumar had asked for 'wrestler's diet' during the custody period but that too was turned down. He was only given food from the police mess and has been under round-the-clock

monitoring. He remains quiet all day and answers only a few questions.

Meanwhile, Ashok Dhankad, father of 23-year-old wrestler Sagar who died after he was allegedly brutally assaulted by other wrestlers inside Chhatrasal Stadium, asked the government to take back awards from Mr. Kumar.

"We demand fair probe in the case and strict punishment should be given to him for the offence. No guru [teacher] should do this to

his disciple. The government should also take back the awards which were given to him," said Mr. Dhankad, who is in the Delhi police force.

Mr. Dhankad said that his son's wrestling career started from Pratap School in Kharkhoda and since 2013, he was practising in Chhatrasal Stadium.

Sift competition

He had participated in the world championship in Finland and Asian Champion-

ship in Taiwan.

"Sagar, a former junior national champion, wanted to go to Georgia for practice as he told me that there was stiff competition in the senior category and he needed to prepare, but due to COVID-19, he could not go there. He has 10-12 medals, including, four to five gold medals," Mr. Dhankad said.

Police said they have information that a day before the brawl, there was an argument between Mr. Kumar and Sagar at the stadium.

Remove links to verdict in drug case, HC tells Google

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has ordered search engine giant Google to remove links to a judgment passed by an Indian court acquitting an Indian-origin American citizen in a drug case noting that it may cause irreparable prejudice to the man's social life and his career prospects.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also directed web portal, Indian Kanoon, to block access to the judgment till the next date of hearing on August 20.

"Prima facie this court is of the opinion that the petitioner is entitled to some interim protection, while the legal issues are pending adjudication by this court," the HC noted.

The man, in his plea, stated that he is a professional of Indian-origin but an American citizen by birth.

When he travelled in 2009 to India, a case under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was lodged against him. However, he was acquitted by a local court here in April 2011.

Thereafter, the man travelled back to the U.S. and pursued law at the University of San Diego School of Law.

He then realised that he is facing a huge disadvantage due to the fact that the court judgment was available on a Google search to any potential employer, who wanted to conduct his background verification before employing him.

Inoculate pregnant women: Mahila Cong.

'Delhi should follow Mumbai model'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress on Wednesday demanded that the Delhi government set up vaccination centres immediately for pregnant and lactating women, as the Central government had made changes in the guidelines on May 19 to include these two categories of women for inoculation.

Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress president Amrita Dhawan said that Mumbai has started vaccination centres for pregnant and lactating women without registration, and Delhi should do likewise to boost immunity of such women.

"With Delhi running short of vaccines, and CM Arvind Kejriwal making no earnest efforts to buy vaccines

directly from the Indian/foreign companies on time, it is unlikely that these special categories of women would get their vaccine shots any time soon, as there is a severe vaccine crunch now," Ms. Dhawan said.

Rinku, leader of the Congress party in the East Delhi Municipal Corporation alleged that the Kejriwal government did not make use of the municipal hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients, despite people struggling to get beds with ventilator facilities.

She said that the Congress party had suggested a united front against the COVID-19 pandemic but the Delhi government and the BJP-ruled municipal bodies chose to indulge in a public spat to score political points.

BJP slams AAP govt. for lying, politicising crisis'

'Kejriwal has been creating negativity'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Delhi government of lying, politicising and making U-turns on various aspects of COVID management in the Capital, ranging from the availability of oxygen and medicines to vaccination, creating an atmosphere of fear.

"Ever since the vaccination drive started in January this year, he [Arvind Kejriwal] has been creating negativity about the vaccines. Before that, he would say that one has to be cautious and

KMF Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited

KMF Complex: Dr. M. H. Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bangalore-560 029.
Tel: 080-25536625 / 26096888, e-mail : engg@kmf.coop

IFT No: KMF/ENGG/PIBoS_EPR_PWM/2021-22 Date: 24-05-2021

TENDER NOTIFICATION
[TWO COVER SYSTEM] [THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY]

Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd; Bengaluru invites tenders from the eligible Recyclers/ Waste Collection Agencies/ any other eligible companies who are in the similar business through E-procurement for the works mentioned in the table below. The interested Waste Collection Agencies & any other eligible companies who have executed similar kind of works may participate in the tender as indicated below, by logging on to website www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in and also contact Help desk E-mail: helpdesk.bir@ntarvo.com and helpline no. 080-22371090, 080-22340060, 080-22340948.

SI No.	Name of the work	Tender Quantity (MTPM)	EMD (Rs)
1	Plastic Waste Management by way of Collection, Segregation & Recycling of Post-Consumer Plastic Waste generated by KMF & its Member Milk Unions & Units Across PAN India. The entire activities shall be managed in confirmation to Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (LDPE/LLDPE/PE/MLP/Tetra Pak paperboard Cartons/ waste Film of Milk, Curd, Ghee, Butter Milk and Lassi etc – Pouch Milk, UHT Milk & Fresh Products Packaging Waste)	Approx. 870	8,07,300/-

❖ For Union /Units wise EMD Amount please refer Tender Document

1. Tender schedules may be downloaded from dated 26-05-2021 to 28-06-2021 up to 4-00 pm.
2. Pre Bid Meeting on date: 03-06-2021 at 12.00 pm.
3. Last date for Tender submission on date: 28-06-2021 up to 4.00 pm
4. Tender [Part 1] to be opened on date: 30-06-2021 at 11.30 am.

For Karnataka Co-Op. Milk Federation Ltd.,
Sd/-
Director [Engineering]-1

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure - Bommanahalli Division, #207, 2nd Floor, Annex Buildings-3, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560002

No.: EE/RB/TEND/01/2021-22 Date: 25.05.2021
INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)
(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Road Infrastructure – Bommanahalli Division invites tenders from eligible Tenderers for the construction of works detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Amount put to tender (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	Improvement to drain and road of Gottigeri-Kengeri Road and Vasantha Main road in South Constituency.	245.41
2	Improvements to Drain, Footpath & Asphaltating to balance portion of Akshaya Nagar Main Road	125.42

EMD (Rs. in Lakhs): EMD Declaration as per FD Order No.: FD 675 EXP-12/2020 D: 22.12.2020.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of the Government of Karnataka from 26.05.2021 onwards. (2) Pre bid meeting will be held on 16.06.2021 at 3:00 P.M. in the Office of the Executive Engineer (Road Infrastructure-Bommanahalli division). (3) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 4:00 P.M. on 25.06.2021 and the opening of tenders will be as per the e-procurement portal guidelines. (4) Technical Bids will be opened on the website <a href="https

Centre can't leave it up to States to get vaccine: CM

'Huge mistakes have been committed in immunisation effort'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday likened the "acute shortage" of COVID-19 vaccination in the country to a war-like situation that all governments, from the Centre to the States, had to confront as 'Team India'.

The Centre cannot abdicate its responsibility and leave vaccine procurement to the States, he said, adding that this akin to Delhi being asked to arrange its own weapons and Uttar Pradesh its own tanks if Pakistan declared war on India.

"Vaccines for the 18-44 age group are finished in Delhi. For the past four days, vaccination centres for the young have been shut. Covaxin for the elderly is also finished. We have written to the Centre but the vaccines have not yet arrived," he said in a video message.

In a pandemic situation, new vaccination centres should ideally be opening every day but that is not happening, he added.

Mr. Kejriwal said "certain huge mistakes" had been committed in the vaccination effort.

"If the people in India had been vaccinated at the right time, then possibly the effect of the second wave could have been reduced,



Sputnik V makers willing to supply doses: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the Delhi government was in touch with the manufacturers of Sputnik V vaccine. "Yesterday [Tuesday], our officials had a meeting with people making Sputnik V vaccine. They are willing to give vaccines but talks are on about the quantity," he said at the launch of a drive-through vaccination centre in Dwarka.

CM Arvind Kejriwal launches a drive-through vaccination centre in Dwarka on Wednesday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

several lives could have been saved, several homes could have been saved from destruction," he added.

"India's response to the situation was delayed by six months. We made a huge mistake. Instead of vaccinating our own citizens, we began exporting vaccines. Scientists of India made the world's first vaccine. We should have started producing vaccines on a war footing right then and begun vaccinating our citizens on a mass scale. I am particularly saddened that we are still not operating with a level of urgency," he added.

In the last two months, every State has been working towards arranging vaccines but not a single State has been able to arrange one extra dose, leave alone the vaccine doses provided by the

Centre, Mr. Kejriwal said.

Vaccine manufacturing companies have clearly stated they will deal directly with the Centre, he said. Many State governments had issued global tenders and failed. "Why is the country not buying vaccines? Currently, India is battling the pandemic, and in such a situation, State governments cannot be asked to look out for themselves," he said.

Act in unison'

He said it's time they acted in unison. "I would like to assure the Prime Minister that all the CMs, rising above petty party politics, are working along with you like soldiers of the nation. You procure the vaccines and distribute them to States – administering them is our duty, which we will fulfil," he added.

Drive-through vaccination facility in Dwarka comes in handy for many

Walk-ins not allowed, Aadhaar card must, says hospital

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

People who were unable to get an appointment on the government portal and those who were too scared of going to a hospital were among the ones who came to get their COVID-19 vaccine at a drive-through facility in Dwarka on Wednesday.

The facility is run by Aakash Healthcare, a private hospital, and people have to pay ₹1,600 for a dose.

Citizens can get vaccinated without stepping out of their car. Before coming for vaccination, they have to get an appointment through 8800015999.

As you drive in, there is a counter where the hospital officials will check whether you have done pre-registration and payment.

At the second counter, the person will be inoculated and at the third, further details are verified. The person is then asked to wait at the parking area for 30 minutes before leaving.

"If you feel any dizziness or discomfort, then blow the horn and our team will check on you," an official told one of the people who got vaccinated.

No walk-in registration will be allowed for drive-through vaccination and Aadhaar card as an identity proof is a "must", the hospital said in a statement.

"Fifty employees from Aakash Healthcare will operate the centre that plans to administer a minimum of 250 to 300 doses a day. The centre will also run a mobile vaccination unit called 'Vaxi Van', to vaccinate people in residential housing societies and corporate offices," the statement said.

Karthik Bharadwaj said he had also been trying to get a slot via CoWIN for the last two weeks, but was unsuccessful. "Here, we got the slot very easily, but it is expensive. One shot is ₹1,600 and we had to wait sometime before getting the shot as the Chief Minister's visit was going on," he said. Mr. Bharadwaj said the authorities should reduce the rate.

Puneet Nayyar (41), who came to vaccinate his 81-year-old father, also complained of the waiting time. "We came at 11.30 a.m. and got the shot at 12.45 p.m. They should streamline the process," he said.

Hardeep Kaur Chatrath,

(41), said she and her husband had been trying to find a slot through CoWIN for the last two weeks. "We kept checking several times during the day, but did not get any slots. Finally, we came to know about this facility and booked it over the phone. We didn't want to go to hospitals to get vaccinated," she said.

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Mixed reaction

Naresh Singh (22), a college student who got his first shot, said: "The process was easy and comfortable and there was social distancing as I didn't have to step out of my car."

Hardeep Kaur Chatrath,

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Hardeep Kaur Chatrath,

Notice Inviting Tender

Reliance Industries Limited ("RIL") and BP Exploration (Alpha) Limited, (collectively as the "Sellers", and individually as the "Seller") have entered into a Production Sharing Contract for the Block KG-D6N-98/3 (KG-D6) dated 12 April 2000 entered with Government of India. Sellers intend to sell Crude Oil produced from the Block.

On behalf of the Sellers, RIL invites bids from eligible bidders having the necessary capability and requisite statutory & regulatory clearances, for purchase at Sellers' option of approximately 30,000 to 40,000 barrels initially followed by approximately 11,000 barrels per month. The Crude Oil will be available Ex-Works/FCA at KG-D6 Onshore Terminal (OT), Gadimoga, Tallarevu Mandal, East Godavari District, State of Andhra Pradesh or at such other point as agreed between the Parties in writing (the "Delivery Point") during the period 25th June 2021 – 24th June 2022.

Prospective bidders are requested to visit www.ril.com/eB2B/RIL-KG6-Crude.aspx and download the detailed Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) Document, which includes instruction to bidders and Draft Crude Oil Sale Agreement (COSA). Prospective bidders are requested to follow instructions as detailed in the NIT Document to participate in the process.

Inviting bids does not constitute any commitment to supply KG-D6 Crude Oil. Please also note that absolute right to award rests with the Sellers and the NIT Document does not impose or create any legally binding obligation whatsoever on the Sellers.

The bid should be submitted / sent only at e-mail mentioned in NIT by 15:00 hrs IST on 10-June-21 ("Bid Due Date") and the same will be opened at 16:00 hrs IST on 10-June-21.

Head FC&A – E&P Domestic Business,
Reliance Industries Limited
Reliance Corporate Park, Bldg. No. 10, A-Wing, 2nd Floor,
Thane-Belapur Road, Ghatkopar, Navi Mumbai - 400 701



Reliance
Industries Limited

Growth is Life

Delhi Palam Today
39°C Moist winds likely to cover the area. Drop in day temperature possible and comfortable night likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Moist winds would prevail. Day would remain hot with mainly sunny sky.

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THE HINDU
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Positivity rate dips to 1.9%; for third day, no free jabs for youth

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 1,491 new COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, taking the tally to 14,21,477 on Wednesday. A total of 130 deaths were also registered in a single day, pushing the toll to 23,695.

A total of 77,103 tests were also conducted and the test positivity rate (TPR) was 1.93%. The last time, the infection rate was this low was on March 27, when it was

1.7%. The TPR had reached a peak of 36% on April 22.

"These are the lowest numbers in the last two months. We still need to take all precautions and follow COVID-appropriate behaviour," Health Minister Smt. Jyoti Patel said.

Of the total cases, 13,78,634 people have recovered and there are 19,148 active cases. Out of the total 25,106 beds available for COVID-19 treatment, 71.2%

were vacant on Wednesday.

No vaccine for youth

There was no free vaccination – either Covishield or Covaxin – for the 18-44 age group for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, and the only way for youth to get vaccinated is by paying in private hospitals, said AAP leader Atishi.

There is also no stock of Covaxin for people above 45 years of age as well as

healthcare and front-line workers, said a government bulletin.

"On May 25, 43,824 vaccines were administered. Out of this, nearly 33,320 were first doses and about 10,504 were inoculated with their second dose. The repeated decline in numbers has been due to the shortage of vaccines. For those between 18 and 44 years of age, the entire vaccination programme has been tempor-

rily halted. Moreover, around seven days ago, the numbers were as high as 1,20,000-1,40,000," Ms. Atishi said in a statement.

"Vaccination of youth is now being done only in private hospitals. One dose costs between ₹800 and ₹1,350," she said, adding vaccines are available in the international market that are not approved by the Centre but are approved by the World Health Organization.



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THE IMPACT RANKINGS

2021

AMRITA UNIVERSITY RANKED AMONGST THE TOP 100 IN THE WORLD, AND NO. 1 IN INDIA.

THE Impact Rankings – the only global indicators to assess universities' progress towards the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), has ranked Amrita, 1st in India and 81st in the world. It's an acknowledgement of the University's commitment to remain an exemplary institution that creates Global Impact on society through

Compassion-driven Research and Education for Life. It's an education that harmonises both, scientific knowledge and spiritual learning, to create a sustainable tomorrow for all. We thank our students, faculty, staff, alumni and partners who are influencing change, both nationally and globally, as we build for the future.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS' RANKING:

World Rank 5



32 Lac Learners
12,000+ Schools
54,000 Teachers Trained
4,500 Colleges

World Rank 8



Over 3,00,000 Women Empowered
6,300+ Vocationally Trained
4,500 Colleges

World Rank 37



₹630 Crores for Charitable Medical Care
47 Lac Patients Received Free Treatment

World Rank 52



₹100 Crores in Funding
5,000 Villages
10 Lac Targetted Beneficiaries

World's Top 200



184 Start-ups Incubated
100+ Patents Awarded / Published
₹350 Crores in Research Income

World's Top 200



3,25,000 Beneficiaries
10,00,000+ Field Hours
50+ International Partners

"

"Today, universities are ranked mainly based on funding, the number of papers they publish, and their intellectual calibre. But we should also consider how much their research can serve the lowest and most vulnerable strata of society. Only by strengthening the base of the society, does the entire edifice grow healthy and strong."

- Chancellor Amma at United Nations Academic Impact

"



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U.P. Minister's brother quits after row over appointment

He had landed a job under EWS quota

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Following the controversy surrounding his appointment under the Economically Weaker Sections quota, the brother of a Minister in the Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has resigned from the post of Assistant Professor in a university in Siddharthnagar.

Arun Kumar said on Wednesday that efforts were being made to tarnish the image of his elder brother and State Basic Education Minister Satish Chandra Dwivedi through a "baseless and offensive" allegation linking him to the appointment.

'On merit'
Mr. Kumar was appointed as an assistant professor in the psychology department by the Siddharth University, a State university, on May 21. While the University and the Minister maintained that the appointment was made on merit and was valid, questions were raised about his securing the job under the EWS quota.

Both the Minister and the University, however, have said they were ready for a probe.

"There is no intervention by me in this matter. Nor do I want to say anything. It is a misfortune that he is my brother. If anyone has an objection, he can get it probed," Mr. Dwivedi had said on May 23.

Vice-chancellor Surendra Dubey said Mr. Dwivedi's resignation had been accepted.

"He has said it was due to personal reasons. It is one-line [resignation letter],... it does not mention any reasons," Mr. Dubey told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Kumar, announcing his resignation, said he wanted to protect the social and political honour of his brother. "Because of me I don't want any baseless allegations to be levelled against my elder brother who is honest, diligent and has a clean political image."

Probe demanded
Lucknow-based social activist Nutan Thakur said the matter did not end with the resignation.

He has written to the Chief Minister demanding an "independent probe" into how the Minister's brother secured a job under the EWS quota in the first place.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely Nutan, D/o Sandeep, R/o No. 946/1, Gali No. 20, Harijan Colony, Libaspur, Delhi, Age: 19 years, Height: 5'. Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Built: Medium, Wearing: White Colour Top and Black Colour pant and Chappal in her feet has been missing from her home since 05.05.2021 at 10.00 am. In this regard a vide DD No. 63A dated 06.05.2021 has been registered at P.S. Samaipur Badli, Delhi.

Nutan

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

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641

SHO
PS Samaipur Badli, Delhi
Ph. : 011-27854757/27854799
DP/1045/ON/2021

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

In Fond Memory



Prof. Dr. P.V. Rajender Kumar
M.S. (ENT), FRCS (England),
FRCS (Glasgow), FRCS (Edin)

Husband of late Prof. Dr. Swarnalatha Rajender Kumar sadly passed away on the 25th of May 2021.

He will be fondly remembered by his family as a loving father and grandfather, and dearly missed by his peers and friends. He has left an indelible mark on all our lives and a legacy of true friendship. A loving, caring and compassionate man, loved by all.

We will miss you Daddy.

Deepak, Divya, John, Caity and Abby WhatsApp:
John & Divya: +44 77238 07025
Deepak: +44 79306 20657

OBITUARY



L Rajammal
Daughter of S Narayana Iyer and Lakshmi Ammal of Jawahar Nagar, Kowdiar, Thiruvananthapuram
Retired from AG's Office, Thiruvananthapuram

Her independence, curiosity and quiet friendliness were an inspiration.

She passed away in Chennai on 25 May 2021 after a brief illness.

Mourned by family and friends

N MURUGAN (60), Retired Assistant Engineer - Printing, The Hindu, Coimbatore passed away on 26-05-2021. Address: B-45, Brindavan Nagar Civil Aerodrome Post, SITRA, Coimbatore - 641014. Mobile No: 9620900378

With deep grief, we inform the demise of



Sri. K. Venkatesan
Age 68
Retd. Sr. Manager, Bank of Baroda on 23rd May 2021 Family & Friends



Smt. Chandra Mani

Dob: 23-10-1930 – Ddo: 18-5-2021

It is with sadness to announce the demise of our Mother, Grandmother & Great Grandmother.

Family members:

C.Ramesh & Fly

Venkatesh & Fly

(LATE) C. Mahesh & Fly

R.Ganesh & Fly

Anusha & Fly

And all near and dears

0126

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Rajasthan govt. to audit COVID-19 deaths

Order comes amid allegations levelled by the Opposition BJP that fatalities were being under-reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Congress government in Rajasthan has ordered an audit of deaths caused by COVID-19 infection amid allegations levelled by the Opposition BJP that the fatalities were being under-reported.

The audit will also help in taking a decision on social security measures for the families which have lost their earning members during the pandemic.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said here on Wednesday that the State government was not hiding the number of COVID-19 related deaths and was fighting against the disease with "complete trans-



A doctor attends to a patient suspected to have been infected with mucormycosis in Ajmer on Wednesday. ■ PTI

parency" and with the cooperation of all sections of society.

While the State's COVID-19 death toll climbed to 8,018 on Wednesday with

the virus infection. The active cases reported in the State were 78,126.

Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma has ruled out the possibility of under-reporting of COVID-19 related deaths and said every death was being recorded meticulously in the dedicated health facilities.

He said it would be wrong to connect the deaths owing to diseases, accidents, age and other reasons in a big State like Rajasthan with the virus infection.

Mr. Gehlot also accused Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan of misleading the country on the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, when the vaccination centres across

the countries were being closed down. "Amid the shortage of vaccines, Dr. Vardhan says there are enough one crore vaccines in the country. But this number will be finished in just one day," he said.

Disposal of bodies

The Chief Minister urged the Centre to issue guidelines under the COVID-19 protocol on how the bodies should be buried along the banks of Ganga and Yamuna rivers and on immersion of ashes to prevent further spread of virus. The pandemic could become more serious if the infection spreads from the bodies during the rainy season, he said.

Assam MLA dies of virus complications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Bodoland People's Front (BPF) legislator Majendra Narzary passed away on Wednesday morning due to post-COVID-19 complications. He was 68.

The MLA, who represented the Gossaigaon Assembly constituency in the Bodoland Territorial Region four times in a row, was on ventilation at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital.

Assam Health Minister Keshab Mahanta had visited the ailing legislator at the hospital late on Tuesday night after doctors said his condition was deteriorating.

Jharkhand dismisses Centre's charges on vaccine wastage

Focused on utilising doses in most prudent manner, it says

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A day after the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare put Jharkhand at the top of a list of States wasting COVID-19 vaccine, the Hemant Soren government has said wastage was only 4.65%.

"About 48.63 lakh vaccine doses were supplied to all districts while 42.07 lakh doses have been utilised. Vaccine coverage across all districts is about 40.12 lakh,

updated to the Central Co-Win server or platform due to technical difficulties and the updation is in process," said the Office of Jharkhand Chief Minister on Twitter on Wednesday.

'Wastage at 4.63%'

"About 48.63 lakh vaccine doses were supplied to all districts while 42.07 lakh doses have been utilised. Vaccine coverage across all districts is about 40.12 lakh,

The percentage of wastage is estimated at 4.63%," it pointed out. Vaccines available in the State are 6.56 lakhs

"The Jharkhand government is fully focused on utilising its available vaccine doses in the most prudent manner possible, ensuring minimal wastage. We hope to minimise it further with more focused awareness campaigns in forested and other rural areas," the Chief Minister's Office said.

Digvijaya hoists black flag at his residence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Bhopal

Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh on Wednesday hoisted a black flag at his official residence here to mark the completion of six months of protests by farmers at Delhi borders.

"In a protest against Modi government's anti-farmer laws and to extend support to the ongoing agitation which is completing six months today, a black flag is put up in favour of farmers and in protest against the BJP government," Mr. Singh tweeted.

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IN BRIEF



Kerala to impose 52-day trawling ban from June 9

KOCHI
The Kerala government has decided to impose a 52-day ban on trawling operations from June 9 midnight to July 31 midnight. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian with various stakeholders on Wednesday. The curbs on trawling are in force since 1994.

3 children orphaned in pandemic get ₹10 lakh

KAKINADA
East Godavari Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy on Wednesday gave away ex gratia of ₹10 lakh each to three children whose parents died of COVID-19, as per an earlier announcement made by the Andhra Pradesh government. "It has been deposited in banks. They can withdraw it when they attain the age of 25," an official said

2 vaccine firms respond to Karnataka's tender

BENGALURU
In response to the global tender floated by Karnataka to procure two crore COVID-19 vaccines, two firms have come forward to supply Russia's Sputnik V and Sputnik Lite vaccines. The firms are Mumbai-based Bulk MRO Industrial Supply Pvt Ltd and Bengaluru-based Thulasi Systems. The tender was closed on Monday. PTI

One killed in elephant attack in Andhra Pradesh

CHITTOOR
An 65-year-old man was killed and a woman was critically injured when a wild elephant attacked them at Bommaparipalle village of G.D. Nellore mandal, 15 km from here, in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. The 55-year-old woman was admitted to a Chittoor hospital and her condition was said to be stable.

Veteran freedom fighter passes away

Doreswamy was a voice for freedom of expression

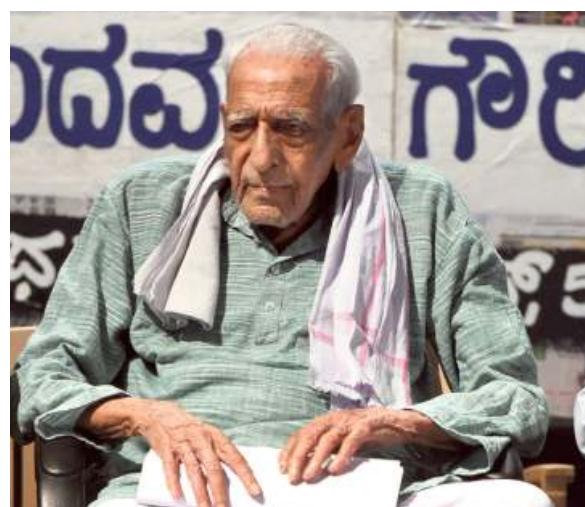
STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

H.S. Doreswamy, freedom fighter, citizen activist and Karnataka's noted voice for freedom of expression, passed away on Wednesday in Bengaluru. He was 103.

He breathed his last at the Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research after he suffered cardiac arrest. He had recently beaten COVID-19 but was readmitted due to post-COVID-19 complications.

"While the primary cause of his death was his heart condition, the precipitating cause was COVID-19," said Dr. C.N. Manjunath, Director, Jayadeva Institute.

Born on April 10, 1918, in Harohalli on the outskirts of



One-man army: H.S. Doreswamy remained a committed Gandhian and activist till the end. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

Bengaluru, he joined the freedom struggle at a young age and was jailed during the Quit India Movement.

He came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and remained a committed

Gandhian till the end.

Post Independence, he disassociated himself from the Indian National Congress and was a part of almost all major national and social movements. He was also

jailed during the Emergency. He edited a magazine, called *Poura Vani*, with nationalist aspirations in pre-Independence times. He continued to work as a journalist through his life, writing his last column for the magazine *Nyaya Pathak* two weeks ago. He was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism in 2019. In 2018, he was awarded the Basava Puraskara by the Karnataka government.

Mr. Doreswamy remained a committed activist till the end, and a vociferous voice against any effort to suppress freedom of expression. He was against communalisation of politics, and one of his last campaigns was against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa condoled the death of Mr. Doreswamy and de-

scribed him as "a man who lived his life like the conscience of Karnataka".

Inspiration to millions'

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah tweeted that Mr. Doreswamy was an inspiration to millions for his truth and honesty. "He never hesitated to hit the streets to protest against anything he felt was wrong. His absence will be felt," he said.

Those close to him recalled that during the last few days, Mr. Doreswamy had insisted that his bed be given to a youth. "I have not wasted my time on earth, so I have no regrets going nor am I scared," he told several of his well-wishers, and reportedly also to the doctors as he was wheeled into the ICU on Wednesday.

He was cremated with State honours in the city on Wednesday evening.

Lakshadweep: experts urge Kerala Governor to intervene

Implement changes only after consultations'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Social and environmental scientists, social activists, ecologists and geographers have appealed to Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan to intervene to stop the reforms that are under way in Lakshadweep and to review them urgently.

Lakshadweep administrator Praful Patel has been accused of unilaterally lifting restrictions on the use of alcohol in the islands, banning beef products, and demolishing fishermen's sheds built in coastal areas saying they violated the Coast Guard Act.



Calm shattered: Activists feel the new policies are a threat to the culture and traditions of Lakshadweep.

"The programmes being planned should have a long-term vision and follow a regional, need-based, consultative approach," they said in a letter to the Governor on Wednesday.

The signatories include D. Nandakumar, former Professor of Geography; S. Santhi, environmental researcher

and scientist; Radha Gopalan, environmental scientist; Gopakumar Pillai, ocean hydrographer; Usha P.E., social activist; Ashok S., human resource consultant; Jolly Varghese, geographer; Renu Henry, environmental activist, and Anita S., ecologist, subject expert on ecology of Lakshadweep.

WEST

'Centre, State must clarify stance on Maratha quota'

Sambhajiraje urges community not to agitate on the streets

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Stating that the Maratha community was growing increasingly restless after the Supreme Court scrapped the Maratha reservation law, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Rajya Sabha MP Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati, a direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji and an influential community leader, urged both the Central and State government to clarify their stance on the issue and take steps to reassure the community.

The Kolhapur royal, who is on a tour of Maharashtra in a bid to find a way of resolving the quota imbroglio, said there was no need for further street agitations on part of the Maratha community in the midst of the

COVID-19 pandemic.

"The time has come for both the State and Central government to stop pointing fingers at each other and instead say what they propose to do for the Maratha community... since the Supreme Court's unfortunate verdict, the community is growing increasingly restless by the day. I urge the State government to strongly advocate giving a separate quota for the community," he said in Aurangabad on Wednesday.

Mr. Raje further said that he would be meeting Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and the BJP's Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday to discuss the issue.

"About 70% of the community is poor and it is high

NCP demands probe into issue of faulty ventilators

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

A day after the Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court took cognisance of defective ventilators supplied to Maharashtra under PM-CARES Fund, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has demanded an inquiry into the incident.

"This issue needs to be investigated end to end. Questions have risen about the process of procurement of these ventilators by the Union Health Ministry. Why wasn't the proper mechanism followed? People with vested interests behind it should be immediately identified," NCP State president and Irrigation Minister Jayant Patil said.

This is the first time since the issue was brought to the fore by ally Congress that the NCP has raised questions on supply of allegedly faulty ventilators.

Maharashtra Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant said that he had been flagging the issue for the last few weeks.

time they were given justice. I am not speaking from the vantage point of my position as a Maratha royal, but as a community member. Also, if the issue of Maratha reservation can be resolved by my resignation, then I am ready," he said.

Appealing to the Maratha community not to agitate on the streets in view of the pandemic, Mr. Raje also exhorted political parties to stop politicising the reservation issue.

"It is not right to take to the streets and hold people hostage with protests... But, if governments prove ineffectual in solving the problems of the Maratha community, they will have no alternative but to resort to desperate measures," Mr. Raje said.

Shortage of vaccines has hampered drive: officials

Only 3 districts have completed 10 lakh doses

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Only three of the 18 districts considered red zones by the Maharashtra government for higher positivity rate than the State's average have completed more than 10-lakh vaccine doses. The other districts are among the worst performing in the State in terms of doses.

According to sources within the Public Health Department, shortage of vaccines has hampered the drive and once the vaccines are available,

the government will speed up the process.

The government on Tuesday announced the decision to stop home quarantine in 18 districts which show higher positivity rate than the State's average.

Among these, except Pune, Thane and Kolhapur, none of the other districts have crossed the 10-lakh dose mark. The number of citizens inoculated with two doses is even less.

The Hindu contacted the Collectors of seven districts on the condition of anonymity accepted that the vaccine shortage is damping government's efforts to fight the pandemic.

The petition is seeking to quash the portions that pertain to reinstating suspended assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze.

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

Cyclone Yaas spares north coastal Andhra

Rain likely for a couple of days

STAFF REPORTER
SRIKAKULAM / VIZIANAGARAM

People of north coastal Andhra Pradesh heaved a sigh of relief on Wednesday as cyclone Yaas weakened and spared the region of devastation.

Itchapuram, located on the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha border, witnessed cloudy weather on Wednesday. The Uddanam region, which had been badly affected by the previous cyclones, also saw pleasant weather.

Srikakulam District Collector J. Nivas directed the officials to be alert for a couple of days since rains were likely to occur under the influence of the cyclone.

"People are already reeling under the impact of COVID-19 and the consequent

partial lockdown. Fortunately, the cyclone has weakened.

Otherwise, the Uddanam region, which has many cashew industries, would have suffered badly," said Malla Srinivasa Rao, president of the Palasa Cashew Manufacturing Units' Association.

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Bhadravati, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 120, indicating unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 12.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

#राजस्थान_सतर्क है

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over east Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, north interior Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over east Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Karaikal and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	25...	32.0	25.1	Kozhikode	41...	31.2	24.1
Ahmedabad	—	37.8	27.7	Kurnool	—	38.7	26.6
Aizawl	—	28.5	18.9	Lucknow	—	37.3	26.3
Aligarh	—	36.2	26.3	Madurai	—	35.6	26.0
Bengaluru	—	30.1	20.4	Mangaluru	—	32.2	22.4
Bhopal	—	40.8	27.0	Mumbai	—	33.4	28.1
Bhubaneswar	40...	27.4	22.7	Mysuru	—	32.0	21.6
Chandigarh	—	41.4	22.6	New Delhi	—	39.5	22.6
Chennai	—	40.3	28.2	Patna	—	30.8	25.0
Coimbatore	—	31.7	23.2	Port Blair	15...	30.5	24.2
Dehradoon	—	36.0	19.5	Puducherry	40.4	35.3	21.3
Gangtok	6...	21.5	16.1	Pune	16.2	35.3	23.4
Goa	2...	32.8	26.7	Raipur	—	39.6	28.4
Guwahati	10...	35.0	26.2	Ranchi	24...	23.0	21.6
Hubballi	—	31.0	22.0	Shillong	0.5...	26.2	18.0
Hyderabad	—	39.8	27.0	Shimla	—	30.5	18.6
Imphal	14...	27.5	20.7	Srinagar	—	30.6	10.5
Jaipur	—	40.9	28.0	Thiruvananthapuram	165...	27.1	22.9



Naturally, selection

Prioritising the vulnerable in COVID-19 vaccination for 18-plus group is essential

When supply is finite, it is a no-brainer that a burgeoning demand will not be met. Tailoring supply for optimal effect would then be the prudent way ahead, a strategy that the Centre would do well to employ in its COVID-19 vaccination programme. Though the ideal, distant at this stage, is to achieve vaccination of the entire population or enough to create herd immunity, supply considerations will necessarily mean prioritisation of groups for vaccination. While the vaccines have been shown to be effective in preventing death or severe disease by and large, the vaccine's effect on interrupting or reducing transmission is also an important consideration in deployment. Studies have shown an inverse correlation between vaccinations and infections; a study in Tamil Nadu showed that the percentage of people over 60 years infected in the second wave had come down by 7%, even as the numbers in other age groups rose. This age segment was among the early priority groups for vaccination. With the government opening up vaccinations for all adults, it is imperative that some line list of priority be readied, on the basis of vulnerability and societal role.

Primary among them are people in the services sector – those whose jobs mandate interactions with multiple people. This would include those in banks, delivery agents, transportation staff, store workers, vendors, lawyers and journalists. As States begin free vaccinations for the 18-plus age group, it will be prudent to draw up a priority list even in the 18-44 age category, as Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have done, for instance. While Kerala seeks to prioritise those with comorbidities, disabilities and 43 categories of field staff of various departments, Karnataka has included 18 categories of people in its priority list for the 18-plus age group – including bank workers, forest department staff and construction workers. Tamil Nadu has determined a broad list of categories including the disabled, vendors, e-commerce staff, pharmacy and grocery store staff, those in the transportation sector, and school and college teachers, besides mediapersons. The Centre, which has assumed a *sutradhar's* role in this entire pandemic, must draw up a list of priority categories that each State can then adapt to its local requirements. While lockdowns, in force in most States, will slow down the pace of transmission and give health-care resources a much-needed break, the way ahead is certainly vaccination – and prioritised vaccination. Once vaccine supply picks up, a more expansive first-come, first-served basis, as in the private sector now, can be adopted. Until then, it is the government's bounden duty to ensure an equitable coverage among vulnerable groups of people who are most at risk, and carry a higher risk of transmission, because of the sheer number of people they interact with daily.

Imperious missteps

The Centre should recall the Lakshadweep Administrator and drop his ill-conceived plans

Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands totalling 32 square kilometres in the Arabian Sea, has had an idyllic existence as a Union Territory. But no longer, it seems, as the long arm of Delhi is rummaging around the islands these days. Praful K. Patel, a BJP politician from Gujarat, who arrived as Administrator in December, appears determined to upend the landscape and recast the lives of the islanders, around 70,000 of them, all according to his authoritarian imagination. The draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 gives sweeping powers to the Administrator to take over land and forcibly relocate people, and proposes harsh punishment to those who resist. In other measures, proposed or implemented, the consumption or sale of beef, a part of the food habits of many, could be an offence punishable by seven years in prison; those who have more than two children cannot contest panchayat elections. Anyone could be held in prison without reason up to a year, under a new Goonda Act, in a place that has a very low crime rate. The traditional livelihood of fishing communities has been impeded by mindless regulations that deny them access to coastlines. Their sheds on the coastal areas have been demolished, saying they violated the Coast Guard Act. Dairy farms run by the administration have been shut.

Development, as it is coming, is not a promise, but a serious threat to the people of Lakshadweep and the fragile ecosystem. Mr. Patel is no stranger to controversies. In March, the Mumbai police named him as an accused in a case related to the death by suicide of seven-time Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar. Mr. Patel was named in the suicide note. He is the first politician to become the Administrator. In the last five months, he has demonstrated a unique disregard for the people's concerns and priorities. In the absence of any administrative rationale or public good in these blatantly arbitrary measures, there are fears of other motivations. Commercial interests could be at play, and the land that inhabitants are forced to part with could be transferred to buyers from outside. There could also be ill-advised political plans to change the demography of the islands. People have risen in protest, but far from listening to them, the Administrator seems insistent on his plans. Rajya Sabha Members from Kerala, K.C. Venugopal of the Congress and Elamaram Kareem of the CPI (M) have in separate letters urged the President to recall the Administrator. The rationale for carving out Union Territories as an administrative unit is to protect the unique cultural and historical situations of their inhabitants. The Centre is inverting its responsibility to protect into a licence to interfere. It must recall the Administrator and reassure the islanders.

The long shadow of political turmoil in Nepal

With uncertainty set to continue, India needs to remain actively engaged with all the political actors



RAKESH SOOD

Politics in Nepal entered another phase of uncertainty last week. The country's President, Bidya Devi Bhandari, dissolved the House of Representatives (lower house) late night on Friday, at the suggestion of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli (*picture*), in a partisan move that disregarded the Constitution. Fresh elections were announced for between November 12 and 18. Announcing elections was just to ensure that Mr. Oli continues in office and controlling the state machinery, even as Nepal battles a second and deadlier COVID-19 wave.

Oli's opportunistic politics

Mr. Oli came to power after the 2017 elections, the first undertaken in the federal republic of Nepal, established under the 2015 Constitution. He led his party, the CPN(UML), to an impressive tally of 121 seats and together with the Maoist Centre's 53 seats, enjoyed a near absolute majority in the 275-strong House. In May 2018, the two allies merged to cement their alliance and created the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Relations with India saw positive movement. New Delhi was willing to overcome its reservations about Mr. Oli's anti-Indian nationalist tirades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Nepal in May 2018, shortly after Mr. Oli's victory.

However, Mr. Oli's autocratic tendencies soon began to surface. The power sharing arrangement worked out with former Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' started fraying. The original idea that both would take turns at being Prime Minister and run

the NCP as co-chairs became irksome for Mr. Oli. While he weaned away the Maoist cabinet members, senior disgruntled UML leaders led by former Prime Ministers, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, gravitated towards Prachanda. Differences emerged in the open and a growing demand surfaced for honouring the 'one person one post' policy. Prachanda was willing to let Mr. Oli continue the full term as Prime Minister, provided he gave up his role as co-chair of the party. Mr. Oli decided otherwise.

Mr. Oli needed a distraction and by end 2019, found one in the Kalapani boundary issue. India issued new maps showing the division of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. While 98% of the India-Nepal boundary was demarcated, two areas, Susta and Kalapani, had remained pending.

Though the new Indian map did not affect the India-Nepal boundary in any material way, it was an opportunity for Mr. Oli to don his nationalist mantle. He expanded the Kalapani area dispute from one covering approximately 60 square kilometres on Nepal's northwest tip with Uttarakhand and China by raising the demand for restoring an additional 335 sq. km. The boundaries were fixed in 1816 by the British, and India inherited the areas over which the British had exercised territorial control in 1947.

Domestic politics takes over

Caught up in the first COVID-19 wave, India kept deferring bilateral talks, perhaps not realising the domestic political pressures on Mr. Oli. In May 2020 when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 75 km road through Kalapani that linked to the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route, Mr. Oli tipped the ante by whipping up nationalist sentiment, getting a



new map of Nepal endorsed by the House and adopting a constitutional amendment to sanctify Nepal's new territory. While this did not alter the situation on the ground, it cramped the prospects of any dialogue with India. It was a short respite and Mr. Oli's political troubles soon returned to haunt him.

President Bhandari has been Mr. Oli's close comrade since she entered active politics after the untimely demise of her husband Madan Bhandari, a charismatic UML leader, in a car accident in 1993.

Mr. Oli was her political mentor and backed her elevation as President. She reciprocated by ignoring constitutional propriety and approving dubious ordinances including amending the Constitutional Council Act that enabled Mr. Oli to pack constitutional positions with his loyalists.

Amid rumours that Prachanda and Mr. Nepal were planning to move a no-confidence-motion against him after he had studiously ignored the meetings and decisions of party's Secretariat and the Standing Committee, Mr. Oli got President Bhandari to approve dissolution of the House on December 20, paving the way for elections in April-May. The President's decision was uniformly criticised as unconstitutional as the NCP enjoyed a near-absolute majority.

India decided to steer clear of the mess, calling it an 'internal matter' while the Chinese Ambas-

sador continued to actively push for a rapprochement between the NCP factions. A five-judge constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously called for a restoration of the House on February 23 strengthening the Prachanda-Nepal faction but on March 7, delivered a bombshell by overturning the UML-Maoist merger of May 2018, against which an appeal had been pending for two years.

Mr. Oli took over the reins of the old CPN(UML), reviving prior structures but now excluding Mr. Nepal and his supporters. Some were served suspension notices. The NCP faction was reduced to a minority; under the law, a split in the party requires a 40% of both the parliamentary party and the central committee. Prachanda, heading the Maoist Centre with 49 members since four had joined hands with Mr. Oli, needed new allies to wage his battles.

Though Mr. Oli had lost majority in the House as Maoist Centre was no longer supporting him, he challenged the Opposition to file a no-confidence-motion, certain that the Maoists, Nepali Congress (NC) and the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) would fail to reach an agreement on a new Prime Minister. He was proven right but overtaken by hubris, he took another gamble. He called for a trust vote on May 10 that he lost as 28 UML dissident members were absent and half the JSP voted against him while the other half abstained.

Presidential improprieties

The Opposition again failed to present an alternative. In a questionable decision, Mr. Oli was sworn in by President Bhandari on May 14 as Prime Minister under Article 76 (3) that permits the leader of the largest party to be sworn in and given 30 days to demonstrate majority. Within a week, Mr. Oli announced that he would not seek another vote of confidence. Without resigning, however, he advised

the President to explore other options. Within a day, as rumours gained ground that NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba had managed to gather support from 149 members, including 49 Maoists, 26 UML dissidents and 12 from the JSP, Mr. Oli rushed to the President and gave her a list of 153 supporters that included all 121 UML and 32 JSP members, including UML dissidents and JSP members who voted against him on May 10. Without bothering to verify, President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections, justifying that the rival claims exceeded the strength of the House.

Since 2008 when a new Constituent Assembly was elected to prepare a constitution for a federal republic, Nepal has seen three NC Prime Ministers (G.P. Koirala, Sushil Koirala and Deuba), two Maoist Prime Ministers (Prachanda twice and Baburam Bhattarai), three UML Prime Ministers (Nepal, Khanal and Oli sworn in thrice) and a Chief Justice as caretaker Prime Minister in 2013. None has damaged the Constitution and the political fabric of Nepal as much as Mr. Oli, together with an obliging Ms. Bhandari. Opposition leaders have challenged the House dissolution in the Supreme Court but its outcome is uncertain. Meanwhile a raging COVID-19 puts a question mark on the election. In case an election is held, Mr. Oli will campaign on a nationalist anti-Indian platform.

It is clear that political uncertainty will continue. India has traditionally supported constitutionalism and multi-party democracy in Nepal. At this juncture, it needs to remain actively engaged with all the political actors, and equally importantly, avoid being perceived as partisans.

Rakesh Sood, a former diplomat who served as Ambassador to Nepal, is currently Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

The varying power of Hindutva beyond the heartland

Provincial politics resists Hindutva more strongly than Hindi belt caste politics, but there is nothing inevitable about it



VARGHESE K. GEORGE

The second victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam must be juxtaposed with its failure to win power in West Bengal in the recent Assembly elections to understand the varying potency of Hindutva in States beyond its heartland in the north and the west of India. In Assam, the BJP managed to subsume all identity politics, including Bodo and other tribal variants, and Assamese nationalism, under a Hindutva umbrella; in West Bengal, a surge of Bengali nationalism countered Hindutva paratroopers, cornering them as invading aliens.

Opportunistic engagement

Hindutva's engagement with regional politics has been opportunistic, historically. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's politics in Gujarat had a strong dose of provincialism, situated adversarial to what he used to call 'Delhi Sultanate'. The administrative state at the Centre was portrayed as alien to the nation by Hindutva then; now, its control taken over by Hindutva, the same apparatus is venerated as the sole custodian of the national interest.

The Hindu right has allied with all kinds of regional forces to weaken the Congress. This, despite the former Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief M.S. Golwalkar's vision of "one country, one legislature, one executive Centre running the administration throughout the country – an expression of one homogeneous so-

lid nation in Bharat". State autonomists had it good during the National Democratic Alliance regime led by A.B. Vajpayee – the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Telugu Desam Party, the National Conference, and Trinamool Congress (TMC) sat well with it at various points. A committee appointed by the Vajpayee government to review the working of the Constitution said strong States and a strong Centre could coexist. The Vajpayee government added more languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution; and oversaw the birth of the Bodoland Territorial Council in Assam.

Assembly election outcomes

In 2014, many observers wondered whether the Hindutva model in Gujarat could be replicated where caste, class and subnational politics were influential. Unlike many other parts of the country, in Gujarat, only one out of 10 people were Muslims; and caste and tribal grievances were overrun by a sedative mix of religious and provincial resentment and supremacism. As it turned out, the BJP under Mr. Modi swept the Hindi belt in 2014 and 2019. The party got more than 230 Lok Sabha seats from the northern and western States, against the halfway mark of 272. This is excluding the seats won by Shiv Sena, then a BJP ally.

Hindutva's success in articulating the bonding and grievances of the collective in terms of religion rather than caste, language, tribe, class or gender appears successful in the Hindi belt. The absence of linguistic sub-nationalism has been an enabling factor. But Hindutva faces a more rigorous test elsewhere as the recent Assembly



election outcomes among Assamese, Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam speakers who make up a third of India's population suggest. It is not that these areas are impenetrable. In 2016, the BJP won Assam; and in 2018, Tripura. In 2019, the BJP crossed the 40% vote share in West Bengal. In 2021, it has become the principal Opposition in Bengal.

Turning point

When the BJP began to use its parliamentary majority won largely from the heartland States, to undermine State autonomy elsewhere, provincial elites sensed danger. The dismemberment of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 caught many regional parties by surprise though many of them supported the move in Parliament. The TMC and DMK opposed. Within months, however, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra parted ways with the BJP. Provincialism could break the bonding of Hindutva. The Shiv Sena and the BJP had a long ideological partnership. Those who visualise Indian politics as a duel of secularism against Hindutva may not grasp this dynamic of Maharashtra's ruling coalition, which is held together by two platforms of regional assertion, the Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party.

In West Bengal, the anti-incum-

bency against the two-term TMC government was unmistakable, this year. But, a considerable segment of those voters who said the TMC was corrupt and inefficient voted for it nevertheless because they loathed the BJP. As the BJP raised the pitch, more Bengalis turned against it, and late deciding voters largely turned in favour of the TMC. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the BJP was a factor, despite not being a contender for power. In Kerala and the Left Democratic Front competed to convince the electorate on who fights the BJP better. Among other factors, the winning LDF scored better on this count. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK, which supported the BJP's Kashmir policy, allied with it and paid a price for doing so.

The cultural elites of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal resist Hindutva, though Assam might be a different story. In its present form, Hindutva is incapable of negotiating with the claims of exceptionalism of these States. Friendly gestures of BJP leaders such as speaking in their languages and references to their myths and folklore, have often been counterproductive. In West Bengal, elite mobilisation against the BJP contributed to its defeat. In Assam and Bengal, the Muslims consolidated against the BJP. The determinant factor was Hindu consolidation in Assam, which did not happen in Bengal.

Slide of the Congress

The BJP's growth in non-Hindi areas is happening at the cost of the Congress, Odisha and Telangana being examples. In West Bengal, it has replaced the Congress and the Left. Pan-Indian politics of other types are being replaced by Hindutva, while provincial politics

remain strong. In fact, while the slide of the Congress continues, regional leaders who seceded from the mothership are thriving – Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, and now Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. Even K. Chandrashekhar Rao in Telangana can be counted as an ex-Congressman. Here again, Assam is an outlier – Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma decamped from the Congress to join the BJP rather than trying to build any regional politics.

Provincialism within the Congress cannot have the same potency as autonomous outfits. In Assam, the Congress tried to appropriate Assamese sentiments but failed. In Karnataka, former Congress Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought to add Kannada pride as a component of the party's politics. Tolerance of sub-nationalisms within an overarching Indian nationalism has been the familiar strategy of Congress politics for long. The BJP has appropriated that framework, with additional Hindutva characteristics. What makes Hindutva more effective is its conception of a pan-India unionism alongside a pan-India unifier, both defined in terms of religion.

If the West Bengal results, alongside the experiment of the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi, is proof that provincialism is a bulwark against Hindutva, the Assam result is proof that there is nothing inevitable about it. The BJP customised itself for Assam, carried out local recruitment and built a politics that has endured for two Lok Sabha and two Assembly elections. The BJP's capacity to adapt to regional particularities, however, remains limited.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Palestine and peace

There is no doubt that everyone yearns for durable peace in West Asia. The fact is that wherever colonial powers set foot, they have almost always left the place behind in doldrums. History is standing proof of this. Peace has to be given its due chance and Palestinians deserve this. World leaders need to play a catalytic role in enabling Israel and Palestine in

reaching an accord that should be formidable and promotes harmony.

R. RAMANATHAN,
Coimbatore

Biomedical waste

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is posing numerous challenges before India on multiple fronts – health care, the economy and the environment. In the last category, the main issue is the exponentially

increasing volume of biomedical waste. Data suggest that the average generation of COVID-19 related biomedical waste during May has been 203 tonnes per day. While there are guidelines to handle medical waste with utmost care, the addition of biomedical waste due to the pandemic and the lack of general awareness on safe disposal has made the task difficult. COVID waste is not only being generated in

hospitals but also at home. Essentially, biomedical waste is being dumped with normal municipal waste. One only hopes that the 'Biomedical Waste Management Rules' are being followed. One also wonders whether new disposal technologies such as plasma torch technology in handling waste are being introduced. Contamination of water bodies is a concern. District administrations across

India need to raise awareness. The ultimate goal should be to reduce environmental damage.

The end of the road for India's GST?

The fundamental problem is the erosion of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' between the States and the Centre



PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY

The 43rd meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is to be held on May 28. Representatives of 31 States and Union Territories are expected to attend. They belong to 16 different political parties. Of the 31 representatives, 17 members are from the ruling BJP or its alliance partners. Ideally, this nugget about political affiliations should not matter in a Council set up to decide indirect taxes. But in today's India, 'the economic is political', to paraphrase the American saying.

States are dependent on GST collections for nearly half of their tax revenues. The GST Council was mandated to meet at least once every quarter, but it had not met for two quarters, ostensibly due to the pandemic. Several of the 14 members of the non-BJP group implored the Finance Minister to convene the GST meeting to help them manage their finances but none of the 17 members of the ruling group deemed it necessary. Even the need for a meeting to determine tax revenues for States is evidently a political decision.

Spirit of cooperative federalism
The representative from West Bengal will attend the meeting against the backdrop of the Centre using investigative agencies to selectively target and incarcerate some of the State's ministers, soon after their election victory. The Kerala representative will attend the meeting in the knowledge that his predecessor complained bitterly about the Centre renegeing on its promise to pay guaranteed GST compensation to the States. The Chhattisgarh representative will attend this meeting aware of how the Centre imposed sudden and stringent policy conditions to grant approval to States for extra borrowing in the middle of the pandemic last year. The Maharashtra minister will attend the meeting with a feeling of betrayal over how the States have been forced to pay a much higher price for COVID-19 vaccines than the Centre. The Punjab Finance Minister will be cognisant of how the Centre legislated new farm laws unilaterally



ISTOCK PHOTO

that affected Punjab's farmers deeply. The Rajasthan representative will be aware of how a sudden lockdown imposed by the Centre with no consultations with the States threw millions of Rajasthani migrant workers in disarray. The Tamil Nadu representative will be wary of the Centre's duplicity in levying cesses that garner significant revenues for the Centre without sharing them with the States. The Delhi representative will be suspicious of the Centre's motives after it stealthily passed legislation to strip the elected Delhi government of its governance powers. The list is endless. These are not acts in the spirit of 'cooperative federalism'.

The catchy phrase 'cooperative federalism' was introduced into India's political lexicon to justify the transition to GST in 2017. Sadly, like other catchy phrases such as 'Minimum government, maximum governance' and 'Make in India', this too has turned out to be hollow. Cooperative federalism has a larger meaning beyond just fiscal federalism. It also entails cooperative political, administrative and governance federalism between the States and the Centre.

The Trust Game

The GST Council is not an inanimate economic body. It is a compact of trust between the States and the Centre, set in the larger context of India's polity. Behavioural economists, such as the Nobel Laureate, Daniel Kahneman, have articulated the critical role of the twin attributes of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' among heterogeneous participants in an economy. Using a tool called 'The Trust Game', they have demonstrated that the motive of 'altruism' leads to the most optimal economic outcome for everyone in the group while a motive of 'spite' leads to the worst outcome for all. The tragedy of

the GST Council is that it is afflicted with spite and forced to function under the prevailing cloud of vendetta politics.

The 17 members of the ruling dispensation and the 14 members of the non-BJP dispensation in the GST Council represent exactly one half of India's population each. However, the non-BJP group contributes a higher share of 60% of overall GST revenues and accounts for 63% of the country's GDP. With elections to another seven States due next year, these numbers could change dramatically again. If the functioning of the GST Council is subject to the vagaries of elections and consequent vendetta politics, GST will continue to be just a caricature of its initial promise.

The 15th Finance Commission report formally acknowledges that GST has been an economic failure that did not deliver on its early promises.

GST, as postulated by technocrats, was supposed to be the panacea for India's throttled economy to deliver enormous economic efficiency gains, improve tax buoyancy and collections, boost GDP growth and usher in greater formalisation of the economy. Three years after its launch and even before COVID-19, GST had failed on all those promises.

Problems underpinning GST

Economists and commentators point to the multiple rates structure, high tax slabs and the complexity of tax filings as the problems underpinning India's GST. These were indeed the initial problems in the way GST was implemented, leading to some of its current woes. But now, GST has a more fundamental problem – the erosion of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' between the States and the Centre. Technical fixes such as simplification of GST rates and tax filing systems to restore GST to its initial

promise is akin to applying a pain balm to an injury that needs surgery.

The States paid a huge price for GST in terms of loss of fiscal autonomy. The promised economic gains are invisible, and India's federalism has been ruptured. GST in today's politically acerbic, hate-ridden and divided India is an unviable and unworkable proposition.

GST has endured so far primarily because the States were guaranteed a 14% growth in their tax revenues every year, which minimised their risks of this new experiment and compensated for their loss of fiscal sovereignty. This revenue guarantee ends in July 2022. This can lead to a crumbling of the precarious edifice on which GST stands today.

In a situation where the States have no taxation powers, their GST revenues are uncertain, the supposed economic benefits seem phantom, and the hypocrisy of 'cooperative federalism' looms large, what is the incentive for States to continue in a GST regime? When the Prime Minister can impose a draconian lockdown in a ham-fisted manner without consultation or play favourites with critical oxygen supplies during an emergency, there seems very little motivation for the States to cooperate in a chase for an elusive economic goal by sacrificing their significant economic powers of taxation.

Technocratic cheerleaders of GST failed to factor in India's unique political economy and its ramifications. Striking a balance among diverse interests of India's numerous parties in a larger political climate of spite and suspicion to arrive at a uniform tax policy for the nation is a near impossibility. Tamil Nadu's new Finance Minister P.T.R. Thiagarajan and I had warned of these exact issues in an article in 2017 in this newspaper.

The tapestry of India's GST was stitched on a fabric of implicit trust and painted with vibrant economic colours. The fabric is now torn and the colours have faded. The loose thread of guaranteed revenues that holds this together is about to snap. The end of India's grand GST experiment seems inevitable unless there is a radical shift in the tone and tenor of India's federal politics, backed by an extension of revenue guarantee for the States for another five years.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and Chairman of the Data Analytics department of the Congress party

Losing the way with a map

A cultural mapping project proposed in 2015 is now all but dead



VAISHNA ROY

around a declining crafts village. When the European Capitals of Culture programme picked Glasgow, the city was rife with crime and poverty. The programme built and renovated its cultural facilities, created a garden festival, and constructed a museum. Today, Glasgow has among the highest per capita culture budgets in Britain.

The mission document

The possibilities are endless. But what do we find when we study this project's mission document? After a lot of platitudinous rambling, it finally states that it will identify, collect and record cultural assets and resources. It correlates this to planning and strategising. It mentions a portal and a database listing organisations, spaces, facilities, festivals and events. It also states that this database can be used to preserve culture and provide or ameliorate livelihoods.

But beyond this, it descends into la-la land. From a childish SWOT analysis to expecting arts to curb anti-social elements to roping artists into the Swachh Bharat and Namami Ganga schemes, the plan loses its way inside a jungle of homilies and acronyms. There's a Hamari Sanskriti Hamari Paanch Abhiyan for "cultural awareness", which suggests an ideological slant. There is a project with an indecipherable title – 'Design for Desire and Dream'. There is hollow jargon such as "Create holistic thinking in artists to make them job creators rather than job seekers". From pontification, it hops on to talent hunts, to digital literacy, to training online teachers. Why should a mapping exercise organise competitions or train teachers? Its job is merely to record and collate.

This might still be meaningless twaddle, but it becomes harmful when it proceeds to talk of using art to "preserve family values"; of quizzes and contests to "revive tribal traditions"; of a "grading process" for artists in which apparatchiks decide which artist is "good" or "not so good". And, as always, this government displays its obsession with surveillance and control, proposing yet another Unique Identification Code for every artist/institution, ostensibly to facilitate schemes.

Where does hand-holding stop and meddling begin? That's the question the MoC must answer. A cultural map could be a vital tool in the bedlam that reigns the space, and the idea cannot be abandoned because many bureaucrats and ministers don't understand its meaning or scope. Even this blueprint can help unravel the MoC's budgetary challenges, provided its irrelevancies, absurdities and overreach are removed, and the focus kept on a deeper survey and understanding of the diversity of the cultural base, without caste, communal and regional hierarchies. To be a cultural leader, official India must look at its own face in a clearer mirror.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1971

English terms: Compromise formula

The compromise formula of using both the English and Hindi expressions for designations of Central Ministers has been put into effect although the leader of the D.M.K. Party in Parliament, Mr. K. Manoharan, continued to maintain that his party has not agreed to this. The Lok Sabha Secretariat has amended its earlier order through a "corrigendum" under which the English expression will be used for the Minister's designations with their Hindi equivalents in Roman script within brackets. The D.M.K. leaders had expressed their reservations on this at the Opposition leaders' conference yesterday but a fresh effort was made to-day [New Delhi, May 26] to make them agree to it. The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Om Mehta, called on the D.M.K. leader, Mr. K. Manoharan at the latter's residence this morning for this purpose. He took with him the C.P.I. leader, Mr. Indrajit Gupta, who had made the proposal for simultaneous use of both the English and Hindi expressions at the Opposition leaders' conference. M. Manoharan, however, expressed his inability to accept the compromise formula without consulting the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He sent a letter to Mr. Karunanidhi through Mr. G. Viswanathan, M.P., who left for Madras this morning seeking his advice on the stand the party should take. The compromise formula, it is stated, also envisages the use of English version in Devanagiri script within brackets along with the Hindi version in the Hindi records of proceedings.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1921

Japanese crown prince

London, May 24: Prince Hirohito's visit to Scotland concluded with the height of Highland hospitality. At a farewell banquet at Blair Athol Castle toasts to the King, Emperor of Japan and Prince Hirohito were drunk with Highland honours, the guests standing with one foot on the table. This so impressed the Japanese that the latter also stood on chairs and sang and banzai. Subsequently a Highland dance was held in the ball-room, the Duke and Duchess of Athol participating. The ball was terminated by the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" and "Will Ye Na Come Back Again". It was after midnight when Hirohito's party arrived at the station where further cordial farewells took place. Prince Hirohito told the Duke, "I will never forget my stay with you."

Tackling rural economic distress

There is an urgent need to strengthen the public distribution system and the MGNREGS

DEBMALYA NANDY

Several States are under lockdown again. This will have severe implications for the livelihoods of those in the informal sector. There is adequate evidence that migrant workers and the rural poor have been facing great distress over the past one year and the crisis for food and work is only going to intensify further.

Hunger and distress

A few months ago, the Right to Food campaign and the Centre for Equity Studies published a 'Hunger Watch' report which compared the pre-lockdown situation last year to the situation in October 2020 to assess the impact of the nationwide lockdown. The survey involving 4,000 respondents across 11 States exposed the life and livelihood uncertainties of people belonging to low-income categories in the informal sector. In October 2020, 27% of the respondents said that they had no income; 40% respondents said that the nutritional quality of food had become "much worse"; and 46% of the respondents said they had to skip one meal at least once in the day in October 2020.

The migrants have again become vulnerable due to the lockdown in different cities. While many have once again headed to their villages, a large population has got stranded in different parts of the country without work. The Stranded Workers Action Network, a group of individuals helping distressed migrant workers since last year, has been reaching out to workers for providing essential help. According to them, 81% of the people whom they reached out to said that work had mostly stopped since April 15, 2021 and 76% of the workers said they are short of food and cash and require immediate support.

In this context, there is an urgent need to strengthen the public distribution system (PDS) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The government announced 5 kg free foodgrains for individuals enlisted under the National Food Security Act (NFS), for May and June 2021. The government

should expand PDS coverage immediately and include all eligible households under the schemes. According to an independent study, about 100 million people are excluded from the ration distribution system owing to a dated database based on the 2011 Census.

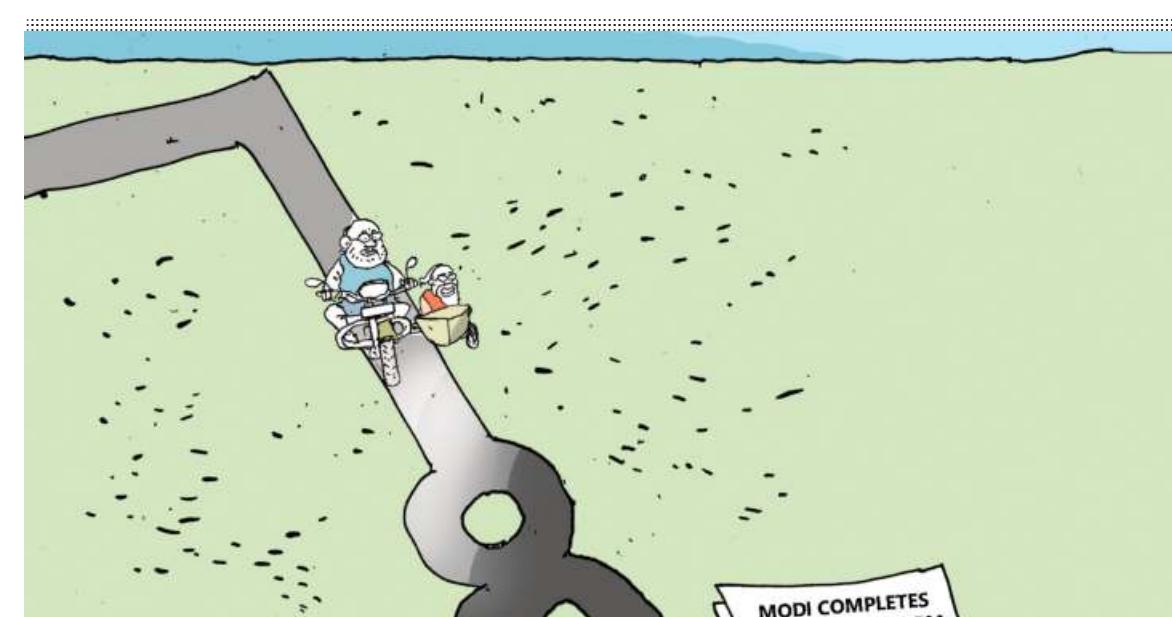
The Centre should also extend the free foodgrains programme to a year instead of limiting it to two months. The economic crisis is likely to last for a long time. It is being reported that India procured record amounts of rice and wheat last year through mandis. The total procurement is way more than the current requirement for PDS. It is thus quite possible to expand the safety net of the NFS.

Inadequate provisions

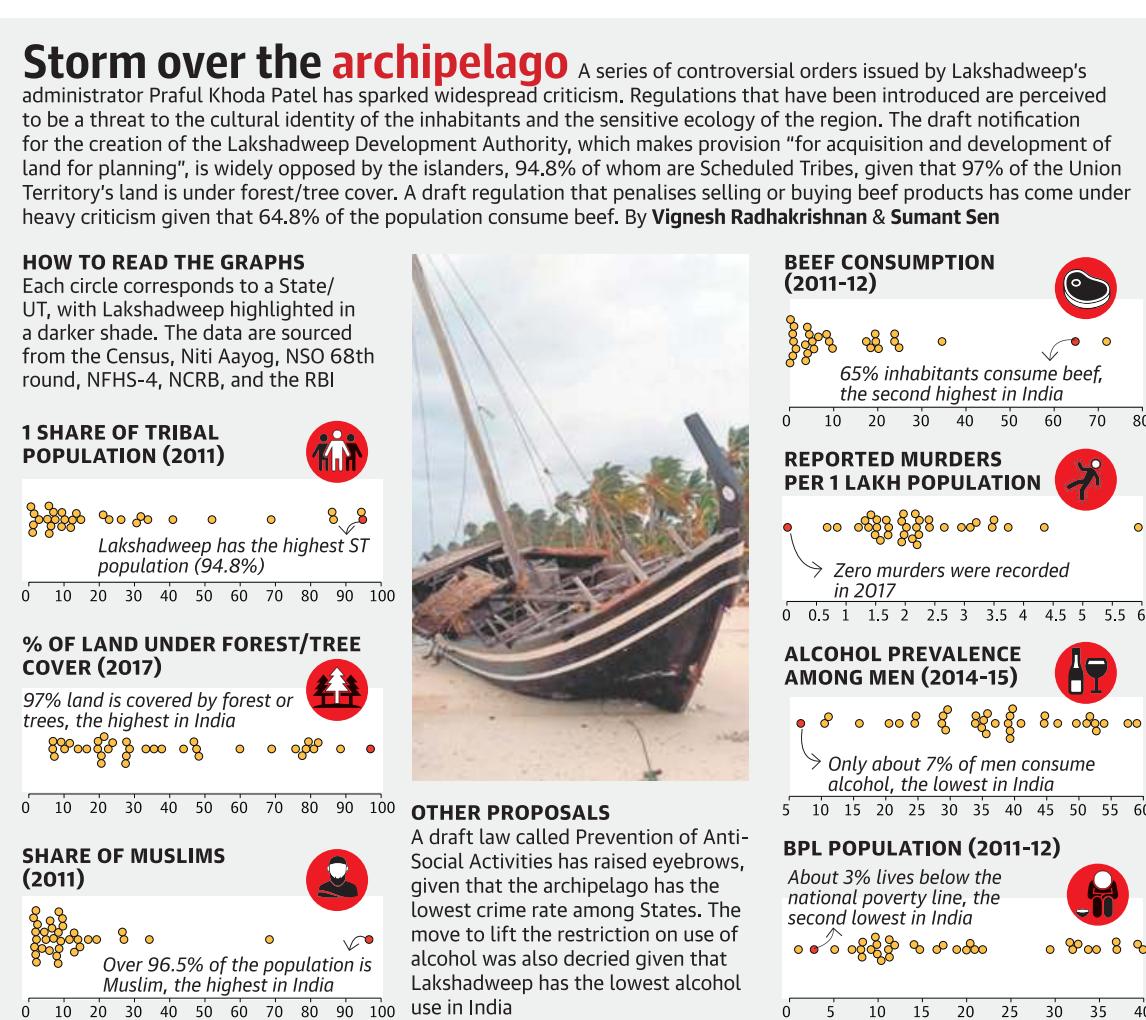
The Centre had allocated ₹73,000 crore for 2021-22 for MGNREGS and notified an annual increment of about 4% in wages. Both these provisions are inadequate to match the requirements on the ground. The central allocation for MGNREGS is about ₹38,500 crore less than last year's revised estimate. Of the 7.56 crore households which worked in MGNREGS in 2020-21, even if 1 crore households opt out of the scheme this year, the Centre should still budget for 75-80 days of employment in the year for 6.5 crore families given the current scale of economic distress. By this rationale, at the current rate of ₹268/day/person, at least ₹1.3 lakh crore will have to be budgeted. The government should also re-consider its decision of a mere 4% increase in MGNREGS wages and hike it by at least 10%. This will mean another ₹10,000 crore. Therefore, at least ₹1.4 lakh crore will be required to ensure uninterrupted implementation during the year.

A large population is facing hunger and a cash crunch. The situation is only becoming more dire as the pandemic continues to rage on. Therefore, the Union government should prioritise food and work for all and start making policy reforms right away.

Debmalya Nandy is member of NREGA Sangharsh Morcha



DATA POINT



Storm over the archipelago

A series of controversial orders issued by Lakshadweep's administrator Praful Khoda Patel has sparked widespread criticism. Regulations that have been introduced are perceived to be a threat to the cultural identity of the inhabitants and the sensitive ecology of the region. The draft notification for the creation of the Lakshadweep Development Authority, which makes provision for acquisition and development of land for planning, is widely opposed by the islanders, 94.8% of whom are Scheduled Tribes, given that 97% of the Union Territory's land is under forest/tree cover. A draft regulation that penalises selling or buying beef products has come under heavy criticism given that 64.8% of the population consume beef.

By Vignesh Radhakrishnan & Sumant Sen

HOW TO READ THE GRAPHS

Each circle corresponds to a State/UT, with Lakshadweep highlighted in a darker shade. The data are sourced from the Census, Niti Aayog, NSO 68th round, NFHS-4, NCRB, and the RBI

1 SHARE OF TRIBAL POPULATION (2011)

Lakshadweep has the highest ST population (94.8%)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

% OF LAND UNDER FOREST/TREE COVER (2017)

97% land is covered by forest or trees, the highest in India

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

SHARE OF MUSLIMS (2011)

Over 96.5% of the population is Muslim, the highest in India

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

OTHER PROPOSALS
A draft law called Prevention of Anti-Social Activities has raised eyebrows, given that the archipelago has the lowest crime rate among States. The move to lift the restriction on use of alcohol was also decried given that Lakshadweep has the lowest alcohol use in India

FROM PAGE ONE

WhatsApp approaches Delhi High Court

The High Court has sought a response from the Centre on the pleas.

WhatsApp, in its plea, has contended that the new IT Rules violate the fundamental right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It highlighted the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in the K.S. Puttaswamy case, where it held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right guaranteed under the Constitution. More recently, the Supreme Court affirmed that the right to privacy included the right to anonymity, it argued.

"Requiring intermediaries 'to enable the identification of the first originator of the information' in India on end-to-end encrypted messaging services constitutes a dangerous invasion of privacy," WhatsApp said.

"This would require Petitioner [WhatsApp] to build the ability to identify the first originator of every communication sent in India on its platform, as there is no way to predict which mes-

sage will be the subject of such an order seeking first originator information," it said.

This eliminates the right of the hundreds of millions of Indian citizens using WhatsApp to maintain the privacy of their messages, which is antithetical to end-to-end encryption and the core privacy principles underlying it, the plea argued.

It further said enabling the identification of the first originator of information in India results in significant harm, including "breaking end-to-end encryption and chilling lawful speech".

The new IT Rules also violate the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. WhatsApp argued as "privacy is inextricably intertwined with the right to freedom of speech and expression because it protects people from retaliation for expressing unpopular, but lawful, views".

"With end-to-end encryption, users feel safe to communicate freely," WhatsApp said.

Major lapse in giving vaccines in U.P. village

While he said the 20 people administered the wrong vaccine shots did not face any problems, he was monitoring them.

"They are healthy," he said.

Scientists at the Oxford Vaccine Group, United Kingdom, have been studying if mixing the Pfizer and AstraZeneca doses could confer longer-lasting immunity, better protection against emerging variants or allow hospitals to switch jabs if stocks were scarce.

Though the study is ongoing since February, the BBC this month reported preliminary findings that said of one in 10 volunteers given two AstraZeneca jabs four weeks apart reported feverishness – but if they received one AstraZeneca jab and one Pfizer, in any order, the proportion rose to about 34%. The Oxford group, which developed the AstraZeneca vaccine, is also testing combinations of the Moderna and Novavax vaccines.

The AstraZeneca vaccine, sold as Covishield, and Covaxin are made differently. The former contains a piece of the coronavirus DNA wrapped in a kind of virus, that's known to trigger an infection in chimpanzees but not in people. Covaxin is an inactivated whole virion

vaccine. However, their purpose is the same, which is to stimulate the immune system into producing a targeted response that will protect against disease from a future coronavirus infection.

The AstraZeneca vaccine has been reported to trigger rare cases of blood clot and lowering of blood platelets in some people, but similar specific associations haven't been reported in the case of Covaxin, though the number of Covaxin doses administered in India are about 10% of the Covishield jabs.

Both vaccines are known to trigger mild side effects in the days immediately following vaccination.

During phase-3 trials of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the United Kingdom, some participants were accidentally given half the intended dose due to a manufacturing error. This led to differing interpretations of the vaccine's efficacy, with the subset of those getting differing doses actually appearing to be better protected than those who got two full doses.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the case was an abominable example of negligence by the BJP government and demanded that the affected persons be monitored by doctors.

Panel to probe removal of shrouds from graves

Many of the shroud bore 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.

"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* on Tuesday.

Country reports 2,02,570 new COVID-19 cases

This is the first instance when the daily tests have crossed the 22-lakh mark. India's average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 11.4% on May 25 compared to 16.9% recorded a week before.

About 20.39 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Wednesday, which is 4.48 lakh doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. However, it is 7.27 lakh more doses than what

Yediyurappa calls for meeting today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa will hold a meeting on Thursday to decide the future legal action in the wake of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), Southern Zone, appointing a joint committee to look into allegations of unauthorised construction activity taking place in Mekedatu, where the Karnataka government had proposed to construct a dam across the Cauvery River.

Acting *suo motu* based on a media report, the NGT has directed the panel to submit a report on or before July 5.

"If the project is to be implemented without conducting any environmental impact assessment study and without obtaining necessary clearance, if any required, then it will be an unauthorised act affecting the environment," the NGT said, adding that it would get the

Panel to investigate charges of illegal construction in Mekedatu

NGT appoints joint committee, directs it to submit a report on or before July 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Southern Zone, has appointed a joint committee to look into allegations of unauthorised construction activity taking place in Mekedatu, where the Karnataka government had proposed to construct a dam across the Cauvery River.

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Matter of concern: The NGT directed the panel to assess the damage caused to the environment. ■ SUDHAKARA JAIN

jurisdiction of intervening on the issue.

Considering the allegations made in the news report, it said, "We are satisfied that there arises a

substantial question of environment, which requires the interference of this Tribunal."

The NGT also directed the joint committee to assess the

NCLT orders liquidation of Devas

Incorporation of company itself was with a fraudulent motive, tribunal says

KRISHNAPRASAD
BENGALURU

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has ordered the liquidation of Devas Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. while declaring that the company was not only incorporated in a fraudulent manner to carry out unlawful purposes but also its management continued to resort to fraudulent activities in relation to its 2005 controversial contract to get bandwidth from Antrix Corporation, the Indian Space Research Organisation's commercial arm.

The NCLT has directed the Official Liquidator (OL) to take expeditious steps to liquidate the company in order to prevent it from perpetuating its fraudulent activities and abusing the process of law in enforcing the award passed in 2015 by the arbitration tribunal of the International Chamber

Game over | The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has ordered the liquidation of Devas Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. Following is a timeline of events that led to the order:

December 17, 2004: Devas incorporated

January 28, 2004: Devas and Antrix sign agreement

February 12, 2011: Antrix terminates agreement with Devas

June 29, 2011: Devas invokes arbitration against Antrix as per International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) rules

September 14, 2015: ICC arbitration awards \$1.2 billion in favour of Devas

2015-2017: Probe against



Devas by CBI and ED; Antrix questions arbitration award in Bengaluru court

November 4, 2020: Supreme Court keeps arbitral award in abeyance, transfers Antrix plea to Delhi HC from Bengaluru court

January 18-19, 2021: Centre grants sanction for Antrix to seek winding up of Devas; plea filed in NCLT; provisional liquidator appointed

May 25, 2021: NCLT, Bengaluru Bench, orders winding up of Devas

of Commerce (ICC), and submit a report by July 7.

"The incorporation of Devas itself was with fraudulent motive and unlawful object

to collude and connive with the then officials of Antrix and to misuse/abuse process of law, to bring money to India and divert it under du-

bious methods to foreign countries," the Bengaluru Bench of the NCLT said in its verdict delivered on May 25.

A Bench comprising Rajeshwara Rao Vittanala (Member-Judicial) and Ashutosh Chandra (Member-Technical) delivered the verdict while allowing a company petition filed by Antrix on January 19, 2021, after obtaining sanction from the Central government to liquidate Devas.

The NCLT found that "Devas failed to show any cogent reason as why it should not be wound up and to keep its name on the Registrar of Companies (RoC), Karnataka. The only reason apparent on record, by perusal of various pleading raised in the instant petition is that it wants to prosecute enforcement of award in question, in the name of the company in the courts."

Choksi captured in Dominica

The diamantaire recently fled from Antigua and Barbuda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, who had recently fled from Antigua and Barbuda, was captured in neighbouring Dominica after an Interpol Yellow Notice was issued against him, the local media reported on Wednesday.

The police in Dominica captured Choksi on Tuesday night (local time) after an In-

terpol Yellow Notice was issued by Antigua and Barbuda.

Choksi had been living in Antigua and Barbuda since 2018 after taking the citizenship, Antigua News Room reported.

The Yellow Notice is issued by the Interpol to track missing persons.

Efforts are on to hand him over to the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbu-

da, the local media reported stated.

Choksi, who is wanted in a ₹13,500-crore loan fraud in Punjab National Bank, was last seen going for dinner in his car in Antigua and Barbuda on Sunday.

His staff had reported him missing after his car was found. His lawyer Vijay Agarwal had confirmed that Choksi had been missing since Sunday.

Efforts are on to hand him over to the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbu-

Dissolution an internal issue of Nepal: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The dissolution of the House of Representatives of the Nepal Parliament was an "internal" issue of Nepal, the External Affairs Ministry said on Wednesday. This is the first remark from India after Nepal's President Bidhya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House on Saturday night.

Panel to probe removal of shrouds from graves

bodies were buried were not touched.

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Many of the shroud bore 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

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Online meet on science and hands-on learning

Webinar will be conducted on May 29

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

A webinar on 'Importance of Experiential & Hands-On Learning in Science' will be held as part of the SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021 on May 29 at 11 a.m.

The webinar series has been organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu Group.

The series spotlights science, engineering and technology courses and their relevance to the 2020s workplace.

Various speakers

Dr. Maneesha V. Ramesh, Director, Amrita Center for Wireless Networks & Applications (AmritaWNA); Dr. D. John Thiruvadigai, Professor & Chairperson, School of Applied Sciences, College of Engineering & Technology, SRMIST; Dr. Sridhar Krishnaswami, Deputy Dean & Professor of Journal-

ism & Mass Communication Faculty of Science & Humanities, SRMIST; and G. Jagadeesh Kannan, Founder & CEO, Vaayusatra Aerospace will speak as a part of the webinar.

Q&A session

The discussion will be moderated by R. Sujatha, Deputy Editor (Reporting), *The Hindu*, and will conclude with a Q&A session with the speakers. To register for the free webinar, visit <http://bit.ly/SRM> or scan the QR code.



Farmers hold nationwide protests, reiterate demands

They mark six months of the sit-in at Delhi's borders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Nationwide demonstrations were held on Wednesday, with farmers burning effigies of the Modi government and hoisting black flags on their rooftops and vehicles to mark six months of their sit-in at the Delhi borders seeking the withdrawal of the three farms laws.

The demonstrations were held in response to a call by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of hundreds of farmer unions, to observe May 26 as a "Black Day". Twelve Opposition parties had on Sunday issued a statement in support of the call.

Though Haryana and Punjab witnessed spirited demonstrations across almost all districts, there were reports of protests held in several parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.

The protest sites at Delhi's borders saw the numbers swell, with hundreds of

farmers joining the protest. The demonstrators hoisted black flags on their tents, trolleys, cars, tractors and temporary structures at the Singhu border. Led by All-India Kisan Sabha national president Ashok Dhawale, several leaders of the outfit held "Black Day" demonstrations in New Delhi. Balbir Singh Rajewal, who heads his own faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union in Punjab, said creating awareness about the farmers' issues was the biggest achievement of the movement.

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Black day: Farmers protesting at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Odisha CM announces seven days' relief

Three lakh houses damaged in cyclone in Bengal, agriculture hit, says Mamata

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
SHIV SAHAY SINGH
BHUANESWAR / KOLKATA

As Cyclone Yaas made landfall in Odisha on Wednesday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced seven days of relief for all families of 128 marooned villages and directed restoration of all major roads and 80% restoration of electricity supply in affected districts in 24 hours.

Special Relief Commissioner, Pradeep Kumar Jena, said 295 roads out of 305 belonging to the Public Works Department and 200 out of 300 roads of the Rural Development department were restored by evening.

As per the IMD, heavy to very heavy rainfall has been predicted at a few places over Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Dhenkanal, with isolated, extremely heavy fall likely over Jajpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Dhenkanal on Thursday.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said three lakh houses had been damaged. Large parts of Digha, Tajpur and Haldia town in Purba Medinipur district (district bordering Odisha) along with several



Swinging into action: NDRF personnel removing an electric pole in the Bahanaga panchayat in Balasore district. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

areas in the Sunderbans were inundated. Experts and the Chief Minister said the combined effects of the full moon tide and the cyclone led to breaching of embankments in South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur districts. Ms. Banerjee said there were reports of breach of embankments at 134 places in the State. "There has been extensive damage to agriculture due to ingress of saline water. Allied sectors such as fisheries, horticulture have suffered damage, but we will be able to estimate the complete situation

in 72 hours," she said.

Several villages in the coastal areas of West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district lay submerged. At Sagar Island, seawater reached the Kapil Muni temple, a few hundred metres away from the coast. The rural areas of Purba Medinipur district in Nandigram and Contai were waterlogged.

In Howrah, several villages were submerged. While the damage was less in Kolkata and the city was largely spared, roofs of resorts were blown off, trees were uprooted, and massive waves swept

over the coastal areas.

One death was reported in Purba Medinipur due to accidental drowning. According to the State government, people were housed at 4,000 flood centres.

During the day, along with the State administration, over 35 teams of the National Disaster Response Force helped in rescuing people stranded in waterlogged areas of Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas. Seventeen columns of the Army, deployed in 10 districts of the State, also lent a hand in rescue work.

No loss of life or property at sea, says CG

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

No loss of life or property at sea was reported due to the extensive pre-emptive measures undertaken on the Eastern seaboard and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, commencing as early as May 19, the Coast Guard said.

Almost 700 people were rescued from flooded areas in East Midnapore in West Bengal by the Army, while about 100 people at Nayachara were rescued by the Coast Guard air cushion vehicle.

"It may be recalled that as part of the cyclone preventive measures, Coast Guard had already ensured safe return of 265 fishing boats which were out at sea. Further, as advised, ships at anchorage off Odisha and West Bengal coast had taken safe shelter and single point mooring operations were suspended," the Coast Guard said. "Nil reports of any damage or loss has been received from any merchant ships," it stated.

Amid second wave, Modi completes 7 years as PM

The pandemic poses new questions for the BJP and the govt.

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi completes seven years in the top job of the country this week amid what he himself has termed a "once-in-a-century pandemic". In the midst of the deadly second wave of COVID-19, his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), despite investing much political capital, lost to the Trinamool Congress in the West Bengal Assembly election.

This, many have conflated, was a comment on the handling of the pandemic in its second avatar, especially in the later phases of polling. Will the seven-year itch, that scourge of office and other partnerships, affect Mr. Modi as it did his predecessors, from Indira Gandhi in 1973-74 to Mammo Singh in 2011 onwards?

Or will his dream run at the hustings continue?



Turning point: Supporters of the BJP during an election campaign rally in Kolkata in March. ■ AP

"promises to become a referendum on the BJP".

"The pandemic has exposed the widening gaps between the government and the party, denting the party's reputation as a social service organisation and carrier of social capital. In short, the government needs to unveil an Indian variant of national reconstruction – a people-centric Marshall plan to modernise, upgrade well-being infrastructure in the various States, revamp the architecture of federal governance and extend the arch of individual liberties in times of existential crisis. And most important, perhaps urgently, the nation needs a healing touch, reaching out to grieving families and individuals, no matter how poor or rich, how isolated or well-connected they are. This is where the future of the national BJP government resides, at least in the immediate future," he said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

According to political scientist Ashwani Kumar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the pandemic is no less than a "tsunami", disrupting existing models of governance and living, centred on health resources.

"Though I hesitate to predict, the future of the ruling BJP government hinges on how quickly and effectively it addresses the issue of mass vaccination of people, especially [those] belonging to marginalised and poorer sections of society.

The pandemic has threatened to test the march of the BJP from an ideological movement, then party and now the government," he said, speaking to *The Hindu*.

The Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh in February-March next year, he added,

"Reconstruction, not in the traditional sense in the aftermath of a natural disaster, but in a different conceptual framework is what the pandemic-ravaged country requires – a big ask for any government, with the first test being in March when Uttar Pradesh will go to the polls.

Focus on healthcare

Badi Narayan, the author of a biography of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) founder Kanshi Ram (*Kanshi Ram: Leader of the Dalits*) and a new book on the RSS titled *Republic of Hindutva: How the Sangh is Reshaping Indian Democracy*, said Mr.

"The future of the national BJP government resides, at least in the immediate future," he stated.

Shashi Tharoor writes to IT Ministry on Twitter tag

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a face-off between BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, member of the Parliamentary Committee on Information and Technology, and panel chairperson and Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, the former has sought the latter's ouster for alleged misuse of his office. Mr. Tharoor had asked for clarification from the Ministry of Elec-

tronics and Information Technology on Twitter's "manipulated media" tag.

In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Mr. Dubey on Tuesday wrote, "The Standing Committee is the extension of Parliament but ... Shashi Tharoor has made this committee an extension of the Congress party..." where he is more concerned about his party's and Rahul Gandhi's agenda..."

Modi govt. first to create social media police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The new IT rules are draconian, the Congress said. "The Modi government is the first to create a social media police and make the committee and the IT Ministry the principal police station for social media platforms," said party leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi at a press conference.

Centre seeks compliance report from intermediaries

They were given three months' time

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has written to all significant social media intermediaries who have over 50 lakh registered users in the country, requesting details of compliance with the new guidelines that came into effect on Wednesday, despite several requests for extension from the industry.

"The Government reserves the right to seek any additional information, as may be permitted within these Rules and the IT Act. Please confirm and share your response ASAP and preferably today itself," the letter stated.

Over the past two months, various industry bodies have written to the government seeking up to a one-year compliance window in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. They stated that transition to the new rules required extensive capacity building, new operational models, product redesign, and personnel on-boarding.

WhatsApp, however, has

IN BRIEF



Modi govt. has delivered only misgovernance: CPI

NEW DELHI
The Modi government started out with the promise of "minimum government and maximum governance" but has only delivered "misgovernance", CPI general secretary D. Raja said on the seventh anniversary of the BJP government. Referring to the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, he said, "When thousands of farmers were committing suicide they ran the "Indian Shining" campaign. They got a fitting reply in the elections. The Narendra Modi government is doing just the same."

CJI Ramana notifies Vacation Benches

NEW DELHI
Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana nominated the Vacation Benches for the second part of the summer holidays. They will sit from May 26 to June 2. The first Bench will comprise Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Aniruddha Bose. The second Bench will have Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant. Justice Gavai would sit in combination with Justice Krishna Murari for the third Bench. Further Benches, to function from June 3 to 10, would be notified later.

Tejpal case: court says some facts create doubt

It questions the victim's truthfulness

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

While recently acquitting former *Tehelka* editor Tarun Tejpal in a 2013 sexual harassment and rape case filed by a junior colleague, the Mapusa District and Sessions Court in Goa said, "There are many facts that have come on record, which create a doubt on the truthfulness of the victim."

Special judge Kshama Joshi said, "The allegations made by the prosecutrix [victim] cannot be said to have been proved beyond reasonable doubt. There is no medical evidence on record on account of delay in lodgment of FIR and as the prosecutrix had refused to go for medical examination."

'Benefit of doubt'

Mr. Tejpal was acquitted on May 21. However, the physical copy of the 527-page judgment was given to the defence and prosecution on the present case.

Mr. Tejpal was accused of raping his colleague in an elevator of a five-star hotel. He was arrested on November 30, 2013, by the Goa Crime Branch and granted bail on July 1, 2014, by the Supreme Court.

made by the prosecutrix. Her deposition also shows improvement, material contradictions, omissions and change of versions, which does not inspire confidence. Hence, the prosecutrix has failed to discharge the burden of proving guilt of the accused beyond reasonable doubt and thus [the accused] is acquitted."

Pointing out several lapses by the investigating officer (IO), the court said, "A duty is cast on the IO to conduct a fair investigation in the matter to bring out the truth. The IO has collected the CCTV footage of the ground, first and second floor but the footage of the first floor cannot be found which is a material lapse by the IO. The IO has committed omissions and commissions while conducting the investigation in the case and has done no investigation on crucial and vital aspects of the present case."

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ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER PHED NCR REGION ALWAR					
Manu Marg ALWAR(RAJ.) E-Mail- acc.alw.phed@rajasthan.gov.in					
No- 722-737 Date- 19/05/2021					
NOTICE INVITING BID (Nit No. 08-14/2021-22)					
Bids for Work of construction of Sources, rising main pipelines, CWRs, Pump houses, ESRs, internal village distribution pipeline and FHTC including one year Defect Liability period of Various Villages under Subdivision Umrain / Kotkasm / Khairthal / Mundawar / Tijara / Tehsil Thanmagazi / Tehsil Narayanpur under JJM in the jurisdiction of PHED Rural Division NCR 1 st / NCR 2 nd / Bhawadi NCR Alwar are invited from interested bidders upto 05:00 PM on Date 24/06/2021. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in , http://sppr.raj.nic.in) of the state and https://phedwater.rajasthan.gov.in departmental website.					
UBN- PHE2122WLO UBN- PHE2122WLO UBN- PHE2122WLO UBN- PHE2122WLO UBN- PHE2122WLO UBN- PHE2122WLO BO2355 BO2356 BO2357 BO2351 BO2352 BO2353 BO2354					
DIPR/C/4937 Aditya Sharma Additional Chief Engineer					

Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited			
In front of Ram Mandir, Convent Square, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar-751001			
Tel.: (0674) 2380660; Website: www.osmcl.nic.in ; Email: logistics.osmclod@nic.in			
NOTICE INVITING BID			
Bid Reference No.: OSMCL/2021-22/SHORT-PREDNISOLINE/20			
Online Bids through e-Tender portal (https://tendersodisha.gov.in) are invited from eligible bidders for Supply of D05023 - Inj. Methylprednisolone 40 mg as per the particulars mentioned below:			
SI. No.	Particulars	Date and time	
1.	Date & time of release of bid	25/05/2021, 5 PM	
2.	Date & time of Online bid submission	Start Date & Time	End Date & Time
		26/05/2021, 11 AM	02/06/2021, 11 AM
3.	Date & time of Online Technical bid Opening	02/06/2021, 11:30 AM	
4.	Date of opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the qualified bidders	

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

SD/- Managing Director, OSMC Ltd., Odisha OPR-1012/11/0015/2122

CAD-337

HLL Lifecare Limited (A Government of India Enterprise) CIN : U25193 KL 1966 GOI 002621	
KANAGALA, BELGAUM DIST., PIN-591225, KARNATAKA, INDIA PH: 9449057244, email: purchsekfb@lifecarell.com	
HL: BG: PS: TENDERS: 2021-22 DT: 27.05.2021	
TENDER NOTICE	
HLL LIFECARE LIMITED, a Mini Ratin PSU under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India, invites Bids from competitive suppliers for: 1. Supply of Fluff Pulp, Glue, Perforated Poly, Pouches & Nonwoven sheet 2. Supply of Lactose IP, AL, foil & PVC for Tablets 3. EOI for manufacturing of Hormonal injectable contraceptives & Non Hormonal anti-driovulatory injectable on lease basis. 4. Providing Housekeeping Services Please refer our website www.lifecarell.com for further details of Tender documents & GM (Operations) & Unit Chief	

स्वास्थ और सेवा के लिए ज़रूरी उपकरण | Innovating for Healthy Generations

BERHAMPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, GANJAM
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

Letter No. 6308 / Invitation for Bids Date :17/05/2021

COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT

Bid Identification No.BMC (BAM) 239 / 2020-21

1.	The Municipal Commissioner, Berhampur, invites percentage rate bids in ONLINE MODE only, as per annexure "A".
2.	Nature of Work Civil Works
3.	No. of work 100 Nos.
4.	Bid Cost The bidders shall remit online the cost of bid document for amount through the process as mentioned in the DTCN as per Annexure "A"
5.	E.M.D. The bidder shall remit online the Earnest Money Deposit/ Bid Security at the rate of 1% of the estimated cost put to tender as mentioned under DTCN. Bidders desirous to hire machineries or equipments from outside the State or owned but deployed outside the State are required to remit online 2% of the amount put to tender as Bid Security. Exemption from EMD is permissible as per codal provisions of

22 crore vaccine doses provided to States, UTs

Another 1 lakh doses to be given in the next 3 days: Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

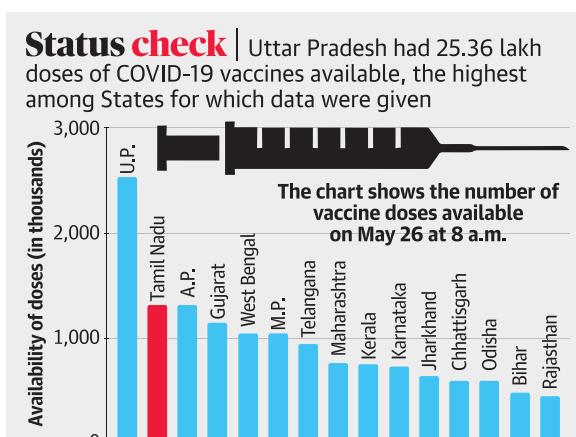
The Central government has so far provided, both through the free of cost category and through direct State procurement category, more than 22 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses (22,00,59,880) to the States and the Union Territories, the Health Ministry said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

More than 1.77 crore vaccine doses (1,77,52,594) were still available with the States and the Union Territories to be administered.

Of this, the total consumption, including wastage, was 20,13,74,636 doses (as per data available at 8 a.m. on Wednesday).

Further, 1 lakh vaccine doses were in the pipeline and would be received by the States and the Union Territories within the next three days.

The Ministry announced that as per the latest available data with it, over 34% population above 45 years



had received at least the first dose of vaccine till date. Similarly, over 42% of 60+ years of population had received at least the first dose.

20 crore milestone

The country had achieved a significant milestone in the vaccination drive. "On 130th day of the drive, the cumulative COVID vaccination coverage crossed the 20 crore mark (with 20,06,62,456 doses including 15,71,49,593 first dose and 4,35,12,863 se-

cond dose), as per data available at 7 a.m. today," a release from the Ministry noted.

India is the second country after the U.S. to achieve this coverage in just 130 days, it said. The U.S. took 124 days to reach the 20 crore mark. According to reports, the U.K. had reached the 5.1 crore mark in 168 days, Brazil reached the 5.9 crore mark in 128 days and Germany 4.5 crore in 149 days, the release added.

Experts seek to dispel vaccine fears

Alarm set off by French scientist's claim that the jabs could create virus variants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Antibody dependent enhancement (ADE), when antibodies to an infection can sometimes aggravate infection or trigger a respiratory disease, is something that vaccine developers must watch out for. However, there is no scientific case that such ADE may actually trigger newer virus variants, say experts.

The controversy was triggered by a much-shared article in the last few days, that claimed the French 2008 Nobel Laureate, Luc Montaigner, 89, to have said vaccination in a pandemic was lethal and there was an association between rising vaccinations and death rates. While it emerged that he did not explicitly say so, he did say that vaccinations were an "enormous mistake" as they were creating "the variants".

The interview is in French and a translation is available on the website of the RAIR Foundation, which describes itself as an "activist grassroots" organisation "to combat threats from Islamic supremacists, radical leftists and their allies".



Continuous research: Doctors say that it is crucial to study the long-term protection offered by vaccines. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

In an excerpt from the interview, Dr. Montaigner, who in 2008 was co-winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovering the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), says, "It is the antibodies produced by the virus that enable an infection to become stronger. It's what we call Antibody Dependent Enhancement (ADE), which means antibodies favour a certain infection."

Gagandeep Kang, microbiologist at Christian Medical Centre, Vellore, in a series of tweets on Wednesday, laid out why Dr. Montaigner's assertions were incorrect.

Vaccination was a method to teach the immune system

to trigger the antibodies and specialised immune-system cells in case of a future infection by an actual virus. There were both neutralising and non-neutralising antibodies produced.

ADE was identified as a "potential problem" in vaccine development, Dr. Kang said, adding an example of it was in the case of infection with dengue virus. There were four types of dengue virus and an infection or vaccination against one could trigger enhanced disease if someone were subsequently infected with a type to which there were not enough neutralising antibodies produced.

"All (SARS-CoV-2) vaccines were being evaluated to see that they made

high amounts of neutralising antibodies. And they are," said Dr. Kang.

However, it was important to continue studying long-term protection and immune response in vaccine breakthrough cases (infection after vaccination) to understand what was happening with immunity and safety. But so far there wasn't any (concerning) signal, she added.

In an earlier interview with *The Hindu*, Vineeta Bal, immunologist and professor at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune had said that neutralising antibodies were "good antibodies" but that didn't make non-neutralising ones automatically bad until proven.

"Their utility may be limited. Some antibodies on binding to their targets lead to ADE [Antibody Dependent Enhancement of viral infection] and they can be labelled as 'dangerous' or 'bad' in your parlance. But in an immune individual amongst a large number of antibodies, such ADE causing antibodies are pretty much impossible to identify," she said.

Stop police brutality: HC to Bihar govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

The Patna High Court on Wednesday directed the Bihar government to stop police brutalities, if any, in the name of lockdown violation.

In one incident on May 25, a man and his son were brutally beaten up allegedly by a trainee Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) in Paliganj of Patna district.

"Later, I wrote to senior police officials of the district and the Chief Minister to take action against the trainee Dy SP for beating us up," said Bhushan Verma, the father. Senior district police officials later said that a probe was on and only after investigation could anything be said on the issue.

In another incident, a video of which has gone viral on social media, a student, Shivendu Kumar, was seen being beaten up allegedly by a Circle Officer of Teghra in Begusarai district. Mr. Shrivendu stated in the video that he had been going for his first dose of vaccination.

PM pays tribute to frontline workers

On the occasion of Buddha Purnima, Modi calls for nations to work together

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic would change the planet with events in future to be remembered as either pre- or post-COVID. He grieved with all those who were suffering in the pandemic and had lost close relations to the disease, he noted.

Mr. Modi, who was delivering the keynote address on the occasion of "Vesak Global Celebrations" on Buddha Purnima, pointed out that the pandemic had impacted every nation. There had been many developments that strengthened the country's strategy to

We have the vaccine which is absolutely important to save lives and defeat the pandemic. India is proud of its scientists for developing vaccines

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER



and co-existence. There are still forces whose existence depend on spreading hate, terror and mindless violence. Such forces do not believe in liberal democratic principles," he said.

Climate change

Referring to climate change, he said the "reckless lifestyle of the present generation is threatening future generations".

"Our planet should not remain wounded," he said. Buddha's emphasis was on a way of life where respect for mother Nature was paramount, he said, highlighting that India is among the few large economies to be on track to achieve their Paris targets.

workers for risking their lives to save others.

With the Prime Ministers of Nepal and Sri Lanka and the secretary-general of the International Buddhist Confederation in attendance at the virtual event, Mr. Modi gave a call for all those who believed in humanity to come together and defeat terrorism and radicalisation. "The life of Gautama Buddha was about peace, harmony

Jaishankar, UN chief discuss ramping up supply of jabs

Climate change and resilience also featured in the dialogue

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN



Key talks: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, left, with U.N Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in New York. ■ PTI

and terrorism in the region, according to the official statement from the Indian side. The two leaders also discussed the situation in Myanmar, the statement noted.

Peace efforts

"He [Mr. Jaishankar] underlined our strong development partnership with Africa, Small States and Small Island Developing States. They "agreed that greater ambitions required more resources and greater commitment from the developed world," the statement said.

Mr. Jaishankar highlighted India's priorities for its Presidency of the Security Council (August 2021) – this included a discussion of events on maritime security and on technology and peacekeeping.

Afghanistan – and protecting the gains of the last two decades – was discussed at the meeting as was countering radicalisation.

Mr. Jaishankar also con-

veyed India's support for Mr. Guterres's candidature for re-election for a second term as Secretary-General.

The Hindu reported last week that Mr. Jaishankar would discuss the procurement of vaccines with Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson officials.

Pfizer declined to comment on the specifics of the discussions as they were confidential and ongoing but a spokesperson of the company told *The Hindu* that Pfizer was "committed to continuing our engagement with the government of India towards making our vaccine available for use in the country." Moderna and Johnson & Johnson declined to respond despite multiple attempts to reach out to their representatives.

IMA demands action against Ramdev

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his help to stop the misinformation campaign on COVID-19 vaccination and demanding action against Baba Ramdev for his alleged remarks on allopathy and allopathic doctors.

"Misinformation campaign on vaccination by Patanjali owner Ramdev should be stopped. In a recent video he claimed that 10,000 doctors and several people have died despite taking both doses of vaccine. Action under sedition charges should be taken against him," the two-page letter

second wave also couldn't take their vaccine for various reasons. Now deceitfully attributing that several people have died in spite of two doses of vaccination, is a deliberate move to stall the efforts of vaccination to reach our masses and it needs to be curtailed immediately," said IMA president Dr. J.A. Jayalal.

"IMA respects, acknowledges and compliments all systems of medicine especially our Indian system of Ayurvedic Medicine, as each

system is helping our people differently. We are not against any medicine promoted by the Ministry and are happy to share in most of our public health treatment centres the drugs promoted by the AYUSH Ministry. We opposed certain drugs promoted without the approval of the Ministry as a curative drug."

Those who propagate fear of vaccination should be booked immediately, the IMA has said.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13257

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	6	4	7	8	3	1	9	2

<tbl_r cells="9" ix

Now, login for dabbawalas

Mumbai's popular office lunch delivery system collaborates with restaurants to serve the city

PRABALIKI M BORAH

Mumbai's well-loved *dabbawalas* are back in action. Only this time, instead of delivering home cooked lunches to office goers, their bicycles are loaded with cheeseburgers, tiramisu and frappes.

The many lockdowns since March 2020, to combat COVID-19, combined with most people working from home, had left them out of work.

A unique lunch box delivery system, the network transports freshly cooked meals from homes to offices in Mumbai, via bicycles and trains. What makes the *dabbawalas* special is the fact that the empty boxes are returned in the afternoon, and despite serving 2,00,000 people with a network of about 5,000, mistakes are rare.

Recently, Mumbai-based Impresario Handmade Restaurants launched a collaboration with Mumbai's *dabbawalas*, recruiting them as delivery partners to facilitate direct ordering from restaurants. The company has 57 restaurants across 16 cities across the country, including SOCIAL, Smoke House Deli and Salt Water cafe (in a total of 20) Mumbai.

In the first week of its pilot project, about 30 *dabbawalas* were engaged to make between 600 and 1,000 deliveries every day from the group's restaurants in the Lower Parel, Bandra (West), and BKC (Bandra Kurla Complex) areas.

On the phone from Mumbai, Riyaz Amlani, CEO & MD Impresario Handmade Restaurants says, "Dabbawalas are the original backbone of Mumbai's food delivery system. The food industry has now come together with the *dabbawalas* to form a symbiotic partnership to empower and enable each other over the next few months. The association will roll out more phases over the next few months, each employing more *dabbawalas*."

Ulhass Muke, president, Nutan Mumbai Tiffin Box Suppliers Charity Trust, a part of the Mumbai Dabbawala Association, says, "When the first lockdown was introduced, it was the toughest time we've ever faced; our members were left with little to no money in their bank accounts. Although there are many restaurants and hotel chains in our city, in the past we've only catered to office-goers at their workplace. Now that work from home has become the norm, it's important to go where the customer is."

Food on its way
Mumbai's dabbawalas to be roped in for food delivery from restaurants • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Warriors against wastage

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI AND NAHLA NAINAR

Mahabaleshwar's farmers harvest strawberries in February. In Himachal Pradesh, apple farmers fill their baskets with glossy red, orange and green globes to be shipped across the country.

This year, gripped by the second wave of the pandemic and strict lockdowns, vendors are struggling to reach customers.

Wastage is a concern; especially in searing summer months. Vendor GV Murthy in Kondapur, Hyderabad, was forced to dispose of nearly 40 kilograms of tomatoes and 10 kilograms of lady's fingers in the second week of Telangana lockdowns alone. "Usually I sell produce worth ₹8,000 on a good week. But now I am barely making ₹2,000. I can't refrigerate all of this produce and so much is going to waste," he says.

This issue has been on the minds of Bengaluru-based qZense's team: Rubal Chib, an electronics engineer, and Srishti Batra, a PhD scientist, who met at Entrepreneur First's first cohort. Srishti has always been fascinated by olfaction, and Rubal combined this interest with an Internet of Things

(IoT) sensor to create Q-scan. This handheld device identifies a fruit and then detects if it is edible. It also predicts, using algorithmic data, how much longer a given fruit will stay fresh.

Soon, Rubal and Srishti got numerous requests from retailers to bring in Q-scan and Q-log – olfactory loggers for storage – to prevent food loss. Rubal believes that investment into such technology has to happen at the grassroots level.

"Retailers and sellers have been early adopters of qZense's tech on a large scale. Farms use it in clocking harvest times." qZense is operating largely within metro cities, but their tech has been adopted in Himachal by apple farmers and suppliers, as well as orchards in and around Maharashtra and Bengaluru.

"Though the agrarian community has been resilient (during the pandemic), the food value chain needs to be more agile," AgNext's CEO Taranjeet Singh Brahma insists, "so the demand for low-cost and real-time AI assessment has been high."

AgNext's Artificial Intelligence platform Qualix offers instant and on-field chemical, physical and

ambient assessments for food safety, security and quality from farm to store. As an example, he points to the frequent problem farmers need to resolve – that of moisture in grains. The quality of grain reduces if the moisture content is too high, whereas if the humidity is too low, it leads to excessive drying.

The Punjab-based company is currently testing a low-cost cold storage solution that is in line for a patent. "We can give it to farmers as a corporate social responsibility or as a rental to prevent wastage from the start," says Taranjeet.

Meanwhile, Pune-based Ecozen has been mobilising to leverage green energy for cold storage for



With lockdowns in place across the country, these startups offer innovative solutions to fresh produce vendors, preventing wastage and revenue loss

the agrarian community, especially during restricted transportation during lockdowns across India. "Lockdowns pushed us to work at a larger scale," shares Vivek Pandey, Chief Technology Officer and co-founder, adding, "and leasing cold storage became a demand all of a sudden. We ramped up production to adapt."

Despite being so agriculturally diverse, Indian farming is hampered by an antiquated and inefficient supply infrastructure that leads to the wastage of at least 25-30% of fresh produce. "It happens at three points: the farm, inefficient supply-chain management where produce can get damaged during handling or transport, and

at the retail level," says Shobhit Gupta, co-founder, and CEO of Superplum, the Silicon Valley-backed startup based out of Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Currently working with 230 farms in over 15 states, Superplum has more than 320 stores in Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru. "Cold transport plays a big role in our operations. We don't store much, except in the farms, but our whole transport system is refrigerated, right up to the distribution level. That's how we ensure freshness and quality," says Shobhit.

Its low-cost Fresherer cold chain transport solution controls high-temperature, humidity and ethylene levels of fresh produce, by automatically adjusting to ideal settings depending on the fruits being carried from point A to point B. "While cherries and strawberries are traditionally the most perishable, mangoes are most difficult to transport because they keep ripening, and we have to manage the process until delivery," he says.

For companies like Superplum, data science is invaluable; quality supervision, prediction models and using more advanced technology such as IoT is mandatory. Superplum's cloud-based management system enables shoppers to cross-check lab test reports, the temperature the fruit was transported at as well as farm-level quality parameters.

Similarly, analytics tech has been integral to Ecozen. "In Shimla, it is cherry season and they are typically sold off to a middleman," says Vivek.

"But with our cold storage transportation and shelf-life prediction tech, farmers can aggregate good quantities and send directly to a market, making the most out of the produce's lifetime."

Microbes and men (From far left) French scientist Louis Pasteur; the main building of the Pasteur Institute of India, Coonoor, built circa 1906; and a lab on the premises • SATHYAMOORTHY M, DEEPA ALEXANDER AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

an Englishwoman in India infected with rabies died because she could not get the anti-rabies vaccine (ARV) in time. It set in motion a series of fundraisers and events that led to the establishment of the institute in 1907.

Set up with ₹1 lakh donated to Viceroy Lord Curzon by American philanthropist Henry Phipps, the vaccine manufacturing unit was opened in Coonoor on April 25 as the Pasteur Institute of Southern India. In 1977, it became the autonomous Pasteur Institute of India.

The world of labs

With a staff strength of 303 and a sprawling campus of 16 acres scattered across the hill with enviable views of tea gardens, PII is presently helmed by veterinarian Dr S Sivakumar.

"Initially PII manufactured ARV from inactivated sheep neural tissue. In 2001, it was replaced with in-house developed inactivated, highly purified vero cell-derived ARV. From 1982, the DPT [protects against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus] DT and TT vaccines were manufactured," says Dr Sivakumar, the Director, as we walk down a winding road to where the state-of-the-art labs, which are under qualification, are located. PII has mice and guinea pigs to test vaccine safety and potency.

"There are seven new and two

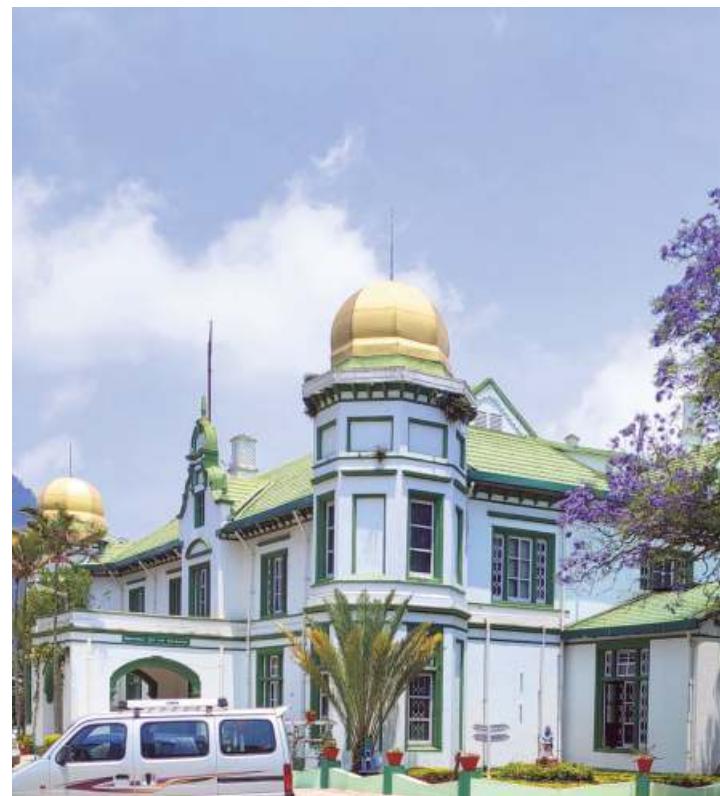
modified GMP facilities equipped with automated and semi-automated equipment established with a budget of ₹137.02 crore funded by the Union Government and taken over by PII in 2019," he adds.

"PII can produce 80 to 100 million DPT group of vaccine doses per annum once the facility, equipment and process is validated. The Government has recently approved 30 acres in Coimbatore for PII to set up new BSL-2 and BSL-3 (Bio-Safety Level) facilities for the manufacture of viral, bacterial, conjugate and r-DNA vaccines to strengthen the nation's health and vaccine security," he says.

As we climb back up, the main building with its green-gabled roof and gold topped Baroque domes stands framed by PII's beautiful garden flush with lilies, bougainvillea, roses and a jacaranda tree. It lends the modern facility an old-fashioned charm. The pioneering research inside its walls inspired many like my great-grandfather to pursue Genetics and work on newer trends in Veterinary Science.

"The building, designed by Government architect GTS Harris, now has the Director's chamber, the library where rare books are housed in glass cabinets, purchase and quality assurance departments and a host of administrative offices. Earlier, it also had the production facility of neural tissue ARV and the quality control division," says Dr Sivakumar.

The building bears the plaque 1906 on its portico and is well preserved with an impressive teak staircase and taciturn portraits of every man and woman who has contributed to PII. In the foyer, also hangs a framed banner of the institute with words from Tennyson's poem, Ulysses emblazoned on it – *To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield* – that have inspired its work for over a century.



Vials of hope

With the focus now on vaccination, a look at the history and work of the Pasteur Institute of India in Coonoor, one of the country's oldest producers of vaccines



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Across

1 Alaska's most populous city (9)

2 Clatter (5)

3 Leader of several independence movements by Spain's South American colonies, d. 1830 (7)

10 Place where entry is dangerous or forbidden (2,4)

11 Bargain (4)

13 Stingy person (informal) (6)

14 Italian sausage (a kind of tactics?) (6)

16 Central London or Manhattan district (4)

17 Contrite (8)

19 Collection of public records (7)

20 Grieve (5)

21 Make aware (9)

Down

1 Prayer to the Virgin Mary (3,5)

2 Give birth to little lions, perhaps (6)

3 Oleaginous (4)

4 Beneficial (12)

5 Painfully loud (3-9)

6 Without any doubt (3,2,7)

7 Relating to the facts of someone's life (12)

12 Charm that brings good luck (8)

15 Misrepresentation (6)

18 Get-up-and-go (4)



The solution will appear on June 3, 2021.

Solution No. 13413

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DEEPA ALEXANDER

Over the course of the pandemic, many family historians have unearthed old albums filled with sepia-tinted photographs that unveil an assortment of personalities and experiences. These photographs cut a swathe through time; like the one of my great-grandfather, a veterinarian in a tie and sola toppee examining a cow sometime in the 1930s, in a livestock hospital in a hill station. My search took me to the Pasteur Institute of India (PII), Coonoor, one spring morning in April before lockdown closed the narrow window of travel in Tamil Nadu.

An autonomous institute under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, PII stands near Sims Park, reminiscent of the British Raj. Outside its main gate is a statue of Louis Pasteur, the French scientist who developed the principles of vaccination and pasteurisation, holding aloft a replica of the jar containing the spinal cord of a rabbit infected with rabies, which he used to develop a vaccine against the disease.

At a time in the 19th Century when viper's venom and the liver of a mad dog were considered cures for rabies' fatal symptoms in Europe, Pasteur's vaccine earned him a place in history and the gratitude of generations to come, when in 1885 it saved the life of young Joseph Meister who had been bitten by a rabid dog.

In 1902, Lily Pakenham Walsh,

AN-DOE

The challenges of the pandemic trigger a spurt of cathartic, creative short films, many created at home with minimal frills

A camera in the kitchen

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

Recently released film *Bloom* has a scene that is reflective of the times we live in. A doorbell rings and a girl rushes to see who it is. "Aye, mask potutu po," her aunt says. As she pulls it on and opens the door, a surprise awaits: the boy she has been secretly texting is standing outside. Masked.

Though they live in the same street, this is the first time they are seeing each other, after communicating virtually every day, all through lockdown. There's romance in how they lock eyes. This 35-minute Tamil-English short film based in Chennai gives an insight into the minds of the two leads, showcasing how romance plays out among millennials in the times we live in.

Even as we brace to survive the relentless second wave of COVID-19, and yet another lockdown, theatres are shut and big film releases have paused. However, in this space, an encouraging new trend is emerging: a spate of realistic and sensitive, hence powerful, short films set in these unnerving times. And though escapism will always be popular in times like this, it is also cathartic to watch these stories unfold.

Since March 2020, directors have started thinking up projects that are easy to execute, keeping in mind pandemic-appropriate behaviour and protocol. Leading Tamil



director Sudha Kongara did not just ensure the release of her Suriya-starrer feature film *Soorarai Pottru* on an OTT platform but also did two short films: *Ilamai Idho Ido* (part of Amazon Prime's *Putham Pudhu Kaalai*) and *Thangam* (part of Netflix's *Paava Kadhaigal*).

"As filmmakers, we have started thinking of more contained, smaller, location-safe subjects," she says. These are usually between a few minutes to half an hour, have just a few characters and are mostly shot within an apartment space or a street.

Established filmmakers including Gautham Menon, Karthik Subbaraj, Venkat Prabhu and Vijay tried their hands in the short film format. Gautham's *Karthik Dial Seytha Enn* featuring Simbu and Trisha released in May, kickstarting a bunch of shorts. With *Kutty Story*, released earlier this year, Tamil cinema acknowledged the short film storytelling format on

the big screen. Sometimes, these shorts are also bunched together with a common theme, like *Paava Kadhaigal*. "It was most exciting as it meant four different voices saying the same kind of story," says Sudha, who collaborated with Vetti Maaran, Vignesh Shivan and Gautham Menon on the project.

The new wave

Now young, amateur filmmakers are also riding the wave. *Bloom*, released on the Madras Talkies YouTube channel last week, is the latest. A love story set during the 2020 pandemic in Chennai, this short attempts to explore two young minds.

"There are a lot of things about the phase that were unsettling, but I wanted to document the little joys that life threw at us. I felt that the structure in the love story was similar to what I felt about the pandemic," says its director Richard Anthony, who has earlier assisted Mani Ratnam in *Katravu Velyidai* and *Chekka Chivana Vaanam*.

This 35-minute short features just two actors, Mitra Visvesh and Ashwin Raam, and was shot with a limited crew in two apartments.

"Most films that represented lockdown felt very claustrophobic. So, my DOP (Niketh Bommi) and I used lenses specifically to show the spaces inside the small house as an expanse, to represent the liberation that the characters felt."

Making the short film was the best decision I took in 2020

VARSHA VASUDEV



2020," says the 29-year-old, who gave up her career as an engineer to become a filmmaker.

Ente Narayanikku revolves around two characters, Ann and Aravind, quarantined in adjacent flats in an apartment complex during the pandemic. They communicate without seeing each other, calling each other by the names Narayani and Basheer, characters from Vaikom Mohammed Bashir's *Mathilukal*, which was made into a classic of the same name by auteur Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

Sooraj Tom, who had already directed two Malayalam features, *Pava* and *Ente Mezhuthiri Athaazhangal*, [before lockdown] chose to produce his short film, *Sarbach*, on his own. He spent about ₹1 lakh on it. "It was dubbed in five Indian languages as well," says Sooraj about his short that revolves around a non-resident Malayali, who is on quarantine following a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Lockdown shorts captured the essence of what many people were going through. Bangalore-based Harish Gowda's recent Kannada short *Lockdown Phoenix* deals with what filmmakers themselves undergo: its protagonist is a filmmaker who gets a big break but has to cancel shoot due to lockdown.

"We need to look within ourselves and draw strength," says Harish, who joined hands with cinematographer Shivakumar to release the film on YouTube channel Signature Studio. When we look at these films two decades from now, they will surely serve as a reminder for the times we lived in.

(With inputs from Athira M, Shilpa Nair Anand and Shilpa Anandraj)

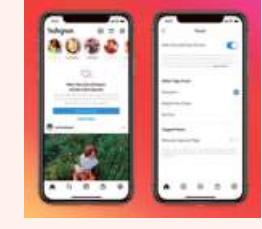


Shot at sight Stills from *Ente Narayanikku*, *Bloom*; (below) Richard Anthony and Varsha Vasudev ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Away with the likes!

It has been a long-anticipated move but, last night, Facebook and Instagram finally rolled out a feature where netizens now have the option to hide their public like counts across both social media network sites. There is also the option to hide like counts on your own posts, so others cannot see how many likes your posts get. But why? Instagram, in an official blog post, claims this feature will "de-pressure people's experience," adding that "not seeing like counts was beneficial for some, and annoying to others, particularly because people use like counts to get a sense for what's trending or popular. So we're giving you the choice."



They'll be there for you

The highly anticipated *Friends: The Reunion*, a special episode celebrating the iconic American sitcom, *Friends*, is brought to India by Zee5, announced the streaming platform. While the special is scheduled to be streamed on HBO Max in the US today, the date of its Indian première is yet to be revealed. The episode, which was shot earlier this year, marks the coming together of all the six original star cast of *Friends*: Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc, Matthew Perry and David Schwimmer. Directed by Ben Winston, the special features a host of names including David Beckham, Justin Bieber, BTS, James Corden, Cindy Crawford, Cara Delevingne, Lady Gaga, Elliott Gould, Kit Harington, Larry Hankin, Mindy Kaling, Thomas Lennon, Christina Pickles, Tom Selleck, James Michael Tyler, Maggie Wheeler, Reese Witherspoon and Malala Yousafzai. First aired in 1994, *Friends* had a decade-long run and became a pop culture phenomenon for all the right reasons.



Hungama 2 to skip theatrical release

Filmmaker Priyadarshan's upcoming *Hungama 2* is all set to release on a streaming platform, said the makers recently. A sequel to the 2003 film of the same name, *Hungama 2* marks Priyadarshan's return to Bollywood after eight years. Starring Meezaan, Pranitha Subhash, Paresh Rawal, and Shilpa Shetty Kundra, the film's OTT release comes due to the ongoing second wave; although the makers have not decided on the release date nor the platform. Produced by Venus Records and Tapes LLP, the film also stars Ashutosh Rana, Rajpal Yadav, and Johnny Lever in supporting roles. Meanwhile, Priyadarshan awaits the release of his massive *Marakkal: Arabikadalinte Simham* starring Mohanlal, which won three National Awards earlier this year. To be released in Malayalam, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada, the film is slated to release on August 12, 2021.



Unlocking Loki

Ahead of *Loki*, the series creator Michael Waldron chats about Marvel's favourite troublemaker finally harnessing his true power and wit

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

"Everyone has been asking 'when are we going to see Loki's real power?'" starts Michael Waldron, as he animatedly dives into the upcoming *Loki* miniseries, starring Tom Hiddleston. "To have six episodes to explore his power has been so liberating because just from a 'pure superhero abilities' perspective, we wanted to explore the awesome stuff he can do, and also dramatically too."

Last we saw the Norse trickster god, he had a giant purple hand wrapped around his neck. The shocking demise of Loki at the hands of the mighty Thanos in *Avengers: Infinity War* broke the hearts of millions everywhere. What would the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) be without his quick-witted jests and pranks and devilish smile?

In 2019, the announcement of *Loki*, fans already speculated that it would take place in one of the Marvel Universe's alternate timelines – and they were right. Dis-

secting and peeling back the layers of the multiverse has been "thrilling" for Waldron, director Kate Herron and the series cast and crew. "It's a new sandbox, a new corner of the universe to play in. It was certainly a challenge to define the rules of these spaces, the Time Variance Authority and how these branching timelines work. It wasn't just about going 'anywhere' it was about going 'anywhen'."

In the series, Loki is seen tumbling into the hands of the regulation-body Time Variance Authority, headed by Mobius (played by Owen Wilson). Explaining that "it was a blast" to tip the scales for Loki while



A new take Tom Hiddleston and Owen Wilson in a scene from *Loki* ■ MARVEL STUDIOS

making room for his inevitable naughtiness, Waldron says, "It was a chance for our writers' room to delve into some therapy, if they ever had to go to the DMV (US Department of Motor Vehicles). While we were writing the show, I was in the process of getting a new passport. And you go back to work and go 'ugh, you'll never guess the bureaucratic red tape I have had to deal with!' But we got excited, too, and were like 'That's the TVA!' so we used that. Taking an organisation that is so soul-crushing by-the-book, so to speak, in their managing of time and dropping the most chaotic character in all of the MCU smack-dab in the middle of that is just amazing juxtaposition."

Waldron, who has worked on projects such as *Rick and Morty*, and is set to produce MCU's *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*, has nothing but high praise for Hiddleston and his versatility as an actor and storyteller. It was integral that he pushes Hiddleston's boundaries.

"That's where the collaboration between writers and actors is such a joy...when you push one another," he explains, "and my goal from day one was to tell a story of Loki that had never been told before. Now we are starting with this version of Loki at the end of the first *Avengers* film. So it was our responsibility to not retrace old ground. Tom was more than game for that, in fact, he wanted to do that and go deeper into Loki's shapeshifting identity."

Probably one of the best surprises is Owen Wilson thrown into the mix. So what about Wilson struck a chord with Waldron? "I love Owen and he is so great in this show; his energy and vibe is so different from Loki's. They [Owen and Hiddleston] both have natural comedic abilities and they can have a purely dramatic conversation and they could play off one another's energies and make certain the right moments funny and right moments dramatic. I didn't even have to set up punchlines to get laughs in this show!"

Loki streams on Disney+Hotstar Premium from June 11.

SANDEETHA DEVI DUNDOO

You cannot change the world with a song, but you can resist through a song, exclaims Shadi Zaqtan, a songwriter, singer and composer from the old city of Ramallah, Palestine, in the documentary series *Occupied*.

The five-part series is the only Indian film to be selected for the Athens International Film and Video Festival, and will have its global premiere on October 24.

Directed by Hyderabad-based filmmaker Pranav Pingle Reddy, *Occupied* was filmed in 2016-2017. The trailer of *Occupied* was unveiled by actors Rana Daggubati and Shruti Haasan on May 24.

The ongoing crisis in Palestine has once again brought the land and the plight of its people into focus. Pranav looks at *Occupied* as an attempt to go beyond the news headlines. "What does it mean to live in Palestine? I wanted to look at the daily lives of people," he says.

Celebration of life

Each episode focusses on a young artist who uses art – music, calligraphy, poetry, dance and craft – as a form of resistance, as a way of celebrating life within the restrictions, and questions what freedom is all about.

"Everyone in Palestine has a story to tell; it is up to you if you want to listen," says Pranav. *Occupied* was filmed in sync sound in different locations in Palestine over 35 days by the three-member crew of Pranav, Prithvi Chahal and Arvind Menon, who took on multiple tasks while filming.

The 30-year-old recalls what it meant to ideally embark on the project in his mid-20s. The inherent interest in art and



A celebration of the everyday

Hyderabad-based filmmaker Pranav Pingle Reddy's five-part documentary *Occupied* focusses on young Palestinians using art as tools of resistance

history stemmed from his father and aunt. His father, writer Pringle Ramesh Reddy, and aunt, Anuradha Reddy, have actively engaged in art, history and heritage conservation. Pranav was keen to study in a university that had history to it, and was not just a building. He pursued Masters in Film and Television production at the University of Bristol, United Kingdom, specialising in cinematography, production and direction. "I worked on documentaries that narrated stories of women empowerment, refugee crisis... subjects that moved me," he says.

Signs from the universe

"I was keen on exploring stories

from the Middle East, particularly Palestine. I didn't have much money back then and didn't want to borrow from my family. The universe, however, inspired to make things happen when someone paid me dues for a two-year-old commercial project and another corporate film came up. I pooled in the amount, spoke to like-minded people in Hyderabad such as Mahnoor Yar Khan (who has worked extensively in Palestine as an artiste and drama therapist) to get an idea of what to expect in Palestine."

Mahnoor warned him to go with minimal equipment to not attract too much attention. The instruction



was to not take the drone, but Pranav was adamant: "She thought I was crazier than her," he laughs. He made sure the three-member crew would use smaller cameras, but could not ignore the drone.

Art for resistance

Pranav says Palestine is an experience, not a mere place to take in the sights. He was moved by the indomitable spirit of the people who endure checkpoints each day as they commute, and try to smile through it all: "They go through a lot – houses being damaged and neighbours providing shelter as long as it takes to rebuild the house, only to be destroyed again. Yet, they carry on."

His team filmed as much as they could, returning with a huge volume of footage, which he says will require three years of editing and post production.

In Pranav's words, *Occupied* is a celebration of life and hope in Palestine, set against the backdrop of persecution and marginalisation, with a singular belief – in the end, love always wins.



A-NDE

U.S. peddling conspiracies, says China

It is 'disrespectful' to WHO probe to revive the theory that coronavirus emerged from Wuhan lab: Beijing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China on Wednesday accused the U.S. of "spreading conspiracy theories and disinformation" as the theory resurfaced that the coronavirus emerged from a Wuhan laboratory, while urging Washington to open its virology facilities to scrutiny.

Led by the U.S., pressure is mounting for a new probe into the origins of COVID-19 after a World Health Organization (WHO) mission to China, beset by delays and dogged by political baggage, returned inconclusive findings.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology has returned to the spotlight after a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, citing U.S. intelligence, said three



Under suspicion: Security personnel keeping watch outside the Wuhan Institute of Virology. ■ REUTERS

laboratory workers there were hospitalised in November 2019 with coronavirus-like symptoms, a month before the pandemic's first declared case.

The newspaper also said researchers had collected

jian, spokesman for China's foreign ministry, accused the U.S. of "spreading conspiracy theories and disinformation such as a laboratory leak".

The theory that the killer virus leaked from a Chinese laboratory was originally fuelled by, among others, the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mr. Zhao said it was "disrespectful" to the WHO probe to revive the theory, and risked an "undermining of global solidarity to fight the virus".

Since infecting its first victims in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, the pathogen has struck almost every country in the world, killing more than 3.4

million people and eviscerating national economies.

"If the U.S. really wants full transparency then it should, like China did, invite WHO experts to visit the U.S. and investigate," Zhao added.

"Open up Fort Detrick military base as early as possible, and all the bio labs the U.S. has around the world," he said, referring to a U.S. research facility in Maryland.

The long-delayed report, by the team of international experts sent to Wuhan and their Chinese counterparts, drew no firm conclusions on the origins of the pandemic.

Instead, the WHO-led team said the virus most likely jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal.

More scrutiny of Israel rights record sought

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

'the group of four' (Quad) advocates so-called democratic alliance, and targets certain specific country in an attempt for containment."

He said China's experiences in poverty reduction, particularly its rural revitalisation strategy, offered lessons for India, with the government last year announcing the eradication of absolute poverty. Poverty eradication was premised on the idea that "China does not simply 'transfuse blood' to the poor, but to encourage them to work hard and 'make blood' themselves".

He also slammed the West for hindering China's development and said "under the pretext of the so-called democracy and human rights issues, they disrupt the agriculture industry of developing countries". For instance, the West has been fabricating the so-called "cotton human rights" issue in Xinjiang, China," he said referring to allegations of forced labour and human rights abuses in the cotton industry.

"In fact, India's cotton-spinning and agriculture also suffered likewise," he said. "They are actually trying to create racial divisions politically and stifle the foundation of national rejuvenation economically, so that China and India will remain poor and weak forever."



Tang Guocai

criticised India's recent moves to not include its telecom firms in 5G trials and to place more stringent curbs on FDI coming in from countries that share a border with India, seen widely as being aimed at Beijing.

RCEP deal

On calls to accelerate decoupling from China, Mr. Tang said "Western 'hawkish strategy' and 'wolf pack tactics' will eventually shoot themselves in the foot", as he drew a contrast between the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade deal, which India withdrew from, and the Quad, describing RCEP as bringing in "a new wave of multilateralism and free trade".

"The integration and development of East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia are unstoppable," he said. "RCEP has always opened its door to India," he said. "On the other hand,

"rus". "As a matter of fact, China is providing the vast majority of oxygen concentrators and other medical supplies India needs," Mr. Tang said. "China is the first country to get out of the pandemic and resume development, offering India and the region huge opportunities. We are glad to find the second wave of COVID-19 here is melting down. As two of the world's largest vaccine producers, China and India have every reason to join hand and work for the final victory against the pandemic in our region and the world."

Since early April, Chinese firms had received orders for more than 60,000 oxygen concentrators from Indian firms, of which around half have been exported, in addition to more than 5,000 ventilators. India has asked China to keep supply chains open to ensure smooth movement of goods after Sichuan Airlines last month announced a 15-day suspension in cargo flights. The airline later said it would resume services. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said earlier this month companies had been encountering difficulties in logistics, but following his April 30 conversation with his counterpart Wang Yi, approvals had been expedited and the logistics chain was flowing.

China's government has

been encountering difficulties in logistics, but following his April 30 conversation with his counterpart Wang Yi, approvals had been expedited and the logistics chain was flowing. China's government has

Don't allow U.S. bases, Taliban tells neighbours

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

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Mr. Blinken has vowed to "rally international support" to rebuild Gaza while promising to make sure that none of the aid reaches Hamas. He is instead trying to bolster the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority.

Washington is in the final stages of withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, and a flurry of diplomatic calls between the U.S. and Pakistan in recent days has fuelled speculation the Pen-

tagon is scouting for new bases to use against the Taliban. "We urge neighbouring countries not to allow anyone to do so," the Taliban said in a statement. "If such a step is taken again, it will be a great and historic mistake and disgrace." It would "not remain silent in the face of such heinous and provocative acts", the statement added.

Pakistan on Tuesday dismissed local media reports that it had struck a new deal with Washington.

Blinken turns to Egypt to calm West Asia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAIRO

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken jetted to Egypt on Wednesday as he pressed ahead with a diplomatic mission aimed at shoring up a ceasefire that ended an 11-day war between Israel and the Gaza Strip's ruling Hamas militant group.

Mr. Blinken landed in Cairo a day after holding talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders. In Egypt, he met President Abdel Fattah el-

Sissi and other top officials. Meeting with American diplomatic staff afterwards, he described Egypt as a "real and effective partner" that helped end the Gaza war and is helping "build something positive."

Mr. Blinken has vowed to "rally international support" to rebuild Gaza while promising to make sure that none of the aid reaches Hamas. He is instead trying to bolster the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority.

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Dhaka clears currency swap for Lanka

Gotabaya's request to Modi for a \$1.1 billion currency swap is pending since 2020

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Bangladesh on Tuesday cleared a \$200 million currency swap facility for Sri Lanka, becoming the first South Asian country to extend crucial financial assistance to the island nation this year.

Dhaka-based *The Daily Star* newspaper reported on Wednesday that Bangladesh was extending "a lifeline of sorts to the beleaguered Sri Lankan economy", offering to top up its depleting foreign reserves. "The board of the Bangladesh Bank has decided in principle to lend \$200-250 million from Bangladesh's reserves to Sri Lan-

ka for three months," Mohammad Sirajul Islam, a spokesman for the Bangladesh Bank, the country's central bank, told AFP in Dhaka.

With Sri Lanka's main foreign exchange-earning sectors – tourism, export of garments and tea – badly hit due to the pandemic, the country has been struggling to maintain its reserves in the face of a daunting debt repayment schedule.

Foreign reserves
In April 2021, Sri Lanka's foreign reserves stood at \$4.5 billion, about the same amount that the country is due to settle this year in ex-

ternal loan repayments.

So far this year, Colombo has obtained financial assistance from China, through a \$1.5 billion currency swap arrangement, and a \$500 million loan, in addition to the \$500 million extended last year. Sri Lanka also inked a \$500 million loan-agreement with the EXIM Bank of Korea a fortnight ago. India, which extended a \$400 million currency swap facility from the Reserve Bank of India – it was settled in February 2021 after an extension – is yet to respond to Sri Lanka's year-old request for an additional \$1.1 billion currency swap facility.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa made the request during a telephone conversation with PM Narendra Modi in May 2020. New Delhi is also yet to approve Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's request for a debt moratorium, which he sought before the pandemic hit the region.

Meanwhile, Dhaka clearing the request – discussed during PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's visit to the capital in March – brings some relief to Colombo, senior officials said, although the decision is yet to be formalised in a bilateral agreement. Despite the pandemic, Bangladesh's foreign reserves hit a record high in April, crossing the \$45 billion mark.

Defiant Lukashenko defends plane diversion, blasts critics

I acted lawfully to protect our people, says Belarus President

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MINSK

A defiant President Alexander Lukashenko on Wednesday defended Belarus' diversion of a European flight and arrest of a dissident on board, lashing out at critics at home and abroad.

"Open up Fort Detrick military base as early as possible, and all the bio labs the U.S. has around the world," he said, referring to a U.S. research facility in Maryland.

The long-delayed report, by the team of international experts sent to Wuhan and their Chinese counterparts, drew no firm conclusions on the origins of the pandemic.

Instead, the WHO-led team said the virus most likely jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal.



Alexander Lukashenko

now accusing authorities in Minsk of essentially hijacking the passenger flight, and they agreed this week to cut air links with Belarus and told airliners to avoid the country's airspace.

The Belarusian Opposition has called for further and stronger measures, and the UN Security Council was set to meet behind closed doors later on Wednesday.

The Athens-to-Vilnius flight was diverted over a supposed bomb scare, with Mr. Lukashenko scrambling a MiG-29 fighter jet to accompany the aircraft.

Belarus has released a transcript of communications between Minsk air traffic control and the Ryanair flight, in which the crew was told "you have a bomb on board" and urged to land in Minsk. Mr. Lukashenko denied that the fighter jet had forced the airliner to land, calling such claims an "absolute lie".

Los Angeles Mayor may be next U.S. Ambassador to India: report

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden is reportedly preparing to name Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti as the next Ambassador to India. Mr. Garcetti is a long-time political ally of the President. News of his imminent nomination was reported by Axios, which had, earlier in May, reported that Mr. Garcetti was being considered for the New Delhi job.

Mr. Garcetti, a co-chair for the Biden campaign, was

considered for a Cabinet post, according to Axios, but did not make it due to sexual harassment allegations against his former aide Rick Jacobs came to light.

Two-term Mayor

Mr. Garcetti is now approaching the end (December 2022) of his second term as Mayor of the country's second largest city, a post he has held since 2013.

Mr. Biden is expected to send the Senate a number of Ambassadorial nominations next week.

trade, defence and the COVID-19 response growing across the Trump and Biden administrations. The two countries have also had to navigate their relationship in the context of growing Chinese assertiveness and aggression. The next U.S. Ambassador to India will inherit these issues as well as having to work with India in other forums – such as the Quad.

Mr. Biden is expected to send the Senate a number of Ambassadorial nominations next week.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY	
e-Tender Notice	
Tender No : SE/PHC/MMP/5 to 7/2021-22.	JJM - providing FHTCs to Muthuvallur, Pallikkal and Palamthone Panchayats and allied works.
EMD : Rs. 20000 to 50000.	Tender fee : Rs. 11800 to 17000.
Last Date for submitting Tender : 17-06-2021 03:00:pm.	Superintending Engineer
Phone : 0483-2734871	PH Circle
Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in	Malappuram
KWA-JB-GL-6-133-2021-22	

NMDC Limited	
(A Government of India Enterprise)	NMDC Iron & Steel Plant, Post - Nagarnar (Bastar) C.G. PIN 494001
Email: srinivaspratap@nmdc.co.in, jaliidass@nmdc.co.in	
CIN-L13100TG1958G010674	GSTN: 22AACT7325A323
OPEN TENDER ENQUIRY Date: 27.05.2021	
NMDC Iron & Steel Plant, Nagarnar, invites sealed tenders in two bid system with last date & time for submission of offers as 25.06.2021 by 02.30 PM for the following:	
1) Name of Work:	Supply of Fittings for HP Steam Line from CDPC to PBS for Packages-20A at NMDC Iron & Steel Plant, Nagarnar, Chhattisgarh 494001. Tender No & Date: No. NISP/MM-SP26/FITTINGS/5370 DL. 27.05.2021
2) Name of Supply:	Supply of Valves AND Steam Traps for HP Steam Line from CDPC to PBS for Packages-20A at NMDC Iron & Steel Plant, Nagarnar, Chhattisgarh 494001. Tender No & Date: No. NISP/MM-SP427/VALVES & STEAM TRAPS/5371 DL. 27.05.2021

Tender documents can be obtained from office of the HOD (M&C), NMDC Iron Steel Plant Nagarnar or can be downloaded from websites www.nmdc.co.in or www.eprocure.gov.in in tender section.

GM(Materials & Contracts)

MADHYA PRADESH PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.	
Tilhan Sangh Bhavan, 01, Arera Hills, Bhopal	URL : www.mpphscl.in, Phone : 0755-2578915
Publishing Date : 26.05.2021	

GLOBAL NOTICE INVITING OFFER FOR SUPPLY OF DRUGS FOR COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

In view of the recent cases of *Mucormyc*

MARKET WATCH

	26-05-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51,018	0.75
Gold	48,589	1.17
Brent oil	68.87	0.26

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	758.30	-5.70
Asian Paints	2941.60	27.20
Axis Bank	735.10	3.55
Bajaj Auto	4166.30	16.20
Bajaj Finserv	11906.40	530.55
Bajaj Finance	5771.15	152.50
Bharti Airtel	525.75	-0.35
BPCL	472.20	-2.20
Britannia Ind	3416.00	-23.50
Cipla	945.15	9.55
Coal India	145.70	-1.75
Divis Lab	4098.60	0.75
Dr Reddys Lab	5285.20	-26.00
Eicher Motors	2633.50	8.45
Grasim Ind	1409.40	34.50
HCL Tech.	945.80	5.20
HDFC	2567.55	37.05
HDFC Bank	1477.05	-1.90
HDFC Life	658.50	-0.65
Hero MotoCorp	2964.70	35.00
Hindalco	381.00	-10.20
Hind Unilever	2354.00	9.95
ICICI Bank	652.50	2.20
IndusInd Bank	998.45	4.55
Infosys	1397.25	35.65
Indian Oil Corp.	112.00	1.70
ITC	210.60	-0.30
JSW Steel	682.20	-18.60
Kotak Bank	1740.65	-9.85
L&T	1472.90	21.95
M&M	821.20	9.95
Maruti Suzuki	7034.30	122.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17541.30	25.20
NTPC	111.10	-2.20
ONGC	113.35	-1.25
PowerGrid Corp.	225.60	-7.30
Reliance Ind	1970.05	6.90
SBI Life	971.75	6.45
State Bank	413.55	1.20
Shree Cement	27077.40	35.95
Sun Pharma	703.80	7.70
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	641.90	-8.05
Tata Motors	315.50	-0.25
Tata Steel	1082.15	-23.05
TCS	3158.50	44.50
Tech Mahindra	1007.80	15.15
Titan	1582.95	13.80
UltraTech Cement	6580.90	24.30
UPL	812.60	15.95
Wipro	527.25	9.70

IN BRIEF



Infosys CEO pay package rises to ₹49.68 crore

NEW DELHI
Infosys CEO Salil Parekh saw his annual pay package jump to ₹49.68 crore in 2020-21, with more than half of the total amount coming from the exercise of stock options. Mr. Parekh's compensation was at ₹34.27 crore in 2019-20. Rajesh Gopinathan, CEO and MD, TCS drew a pay package of ₹20.36 crore in 2020-21. PTI

Garware Polyester is now Garware Hi-Tech

MUMBAI
Garware Polyester Ltd. has changed its corporate brand name to Garware Hi-Tech Films Ltd. The name change has been updated on the BSE, it said in a statement. "The new identity and name is a reflection of our commitment and focus to grow in different product categories and geographies," said CMD S.B. Garware.

Hinduja Global to hire 250 staff in Canada

BENGALURU
Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) said it would hire 250 remote customer service representatives in Montreal and Quebec City to support the ongoing growth of its Canadian entity. In addition to these frontline workers, the business process management (BPM) firm was looking to fill management positions, the company said in a statement.

Second wave threatens start-ups, MSMEs: survey

'59% of firms may shut shop or sell off'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Hit hard by the second wave of the pandemic, about 59% of start-ups and MSMEs are likely to either scale down operations, sell off, or completely shut in the next six months, according to a survey by LocalCircles.

The survey saw participation from more than 6,000 start-ups and MSMEs located in 171 districts of India. When asked where they saw their business future in the next six months given the impact of the second wave of COVID-19, 37% said they would scale down their operation, while 14% said they might shut down, and 8% said they would sell off their business. "Only 22% of start-ups and MSMEs see growth

Amazon to gain Bond films via \$8.45 bn deal to acquire MGM

This is the e-tailer's largest acquisition after \$14-bn deal for Whole Foods in 2017

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

Online shopping giant Amazon is buying MGM, the movie and TV studio behind James Bond, "Legally Blonde" and "Shark Tank," with the hopes of filling its video-streaming service with more stuff to watch.

Amazon is paying \$8.45 billion for MGM, making it the company's second-largest acquisition after it bought grocer Whole Foods for almost \$14 billion in 2017.

The deal is the latest in the media industry that's aimed at boosting streaming services to compete against Netflix and Disney+. AT&T and Discovery announced on May 17 that they would combine media companies, creating a



Viewer interest: The acquisition will enable Amazon to compete better against Netflix and Disney+.

powerhouse that includes HGTV, CNN and HBO.

Prime membership

Amazon doesn't say how many people watch its Prime Video service. But more than 200 million have access to it because they're signed up

for its Prime membership, which gives them faster shipping and other perks. Besides Prime Video, Amazon also has a free streaming service called IMDb TV, where Amazon makes money by playing ads during movies and shows.

GST levy on COVID-19 relief imports challenged

Delhi HC to hear plea against tax on supplies from abroad

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

An NCR-based firm that imported oxygen cylinders and regulators and donated them to the Delhi government has challenged the Centre's exclusion of such imports from the 'ad hoc' GST exemption for COVID-19 relief material received from abroad.

The Delhi High Court is expected to hear the writ petition against the Finance Ministry, the GST Council and the Delhi government's Finance Department on Thursday. Oxygen regulators imported for personal use is 'unconstitutional'. The Finance Ministry had told the



carrying the regulators for them are liable to 18% IGST.

Last week, a bench of the HC had held that the 12% Integrated GST (IGST) levied on oxygen concentrators imported for personal use is not eligible for this GST relief," Abhishek A Rastogi, partner at Khaitan & Co. said.

Court that the issue would be placed before the GST Council that meets on Friday.

On May 3, the Ministry had exempted imported COVID relief material from IGST levies, provided it was received free and donated to State-approved entities for free distribution.

"Several Indian corporations and other entities pitching to help with pandemic relief by importing critical supplies not available locally, at their own cost, are not eligible for this GST relief," Abhishek A Rastogi, partner at Khaitan & Co. said.

BPCL turns ₹10,642-cr. net as fuel sales improve

Board declares ₹58 as final dividend

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) reported fourth-quarter consolidated net profit stood at ₹10,641.9 crore following a sharp recovery in business during the last quarter.

The firm had recorded a net loss of ₹1,819.7 crore in the year-earlier period. Revenue increased almost 22% to ₹99,733.2 crore.

For FY21, the company posted an almost fivefold rise in consolidated net profit to ₹17,319.83 crore. Revenue decreased almost 8% to ₹3,04,266.3 crore.

Gross refining margins (GRMs) for FY21 stood at ₹4.06 per barrel and for January-March, it was ₹6.64 per barrel. The board declared a final dividend of ₹58 per equity share, including a one-time special divi-



dend of ₹35 per share.

"We witnessed a V-shape recovery in the second half of the financial year resulting in a robust growth in fuel sales," said N. Vijayagoopal, director (finance).

"In an unprecedented year that began with a lockdown across the country and subdued business activities, the fourth quarter was a stand-out quarter that helped the company to report its highest ever growth in bottom-line," he added.

Young workers can drive extra \$1.9 tn profits'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Young workers can drive an extra \$1.9 trillion in corporate profits if given support to adapt to new realities of work, shows a study titled 'The Born Digital Effect' conducted by Citrix Systems.

Comprising millennial (born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (born after 1997) workers, Born Digital is the first generation to grow up in an entirely digital world and now account for most of the global workforce.

"To shore up their future business success, companies must understand their values, career aspirations and working styles and invest in their development," said Donna Kimmel, executive vice president and chief people officer, Citrix.

Exempt micro enterprises from GST'

Raise turnover threshold to ₹5 cr: CII

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Consortium of Indian Associations (CIA) has urged the Centre to increase the turnover threshold limit for micro enterprises to facilitate their exemption from the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The second wave has wiped out more than 40% of MSMEs involved in various sectors, said CIA convenor K.E. Raghunathan, adding that the need of the hour was to save micro enterprises from the hassle and help them to survive the present crisis by increasing the turnover threshold limit to ₹5 cr for FY22.

Secondly, COVID-related materials such as hand sanitizers, masks, medicines,

oxygen cylinders, medical treatments and PPE kits must be exempted from all forms of GST, both for input and output, till March 2022, Mr. Raghunathan said.

"If the above two requests are not considered, it would amount to killing the goose that lays golden eggs in one stroke," the CIA convenor added.

in their business during this period," the survey said.

On a question related to the months of cash they had on hand, 33% of small businesses said they had only less than a month of cash remaining, whereas 8% were already out of funds. About 37% said they had funds for 1-3 months, 22% have more than 3 months of runway and 11% said they had it for more than 6 months.

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"If the above two requests are not considered, it would amount to killing the goose that lays golden eggs in one stroke," the CIA convenor added.

INTERVIEW | UDAY KOTAK

July-Sept. period will be key'

CII chief says lot will hinge on States' approach to reopening

SURESH SESHAJRI

After recommending stringent curbs on economic activity to contain the 'suffering' from the pandemic, CII president Uday Kotak earlier this month urged companies to take 'voluntary measures' to break the COVID transmission chain by minimising all in-person work. Mr. Kotak, who completes his term at CII's helm on May 31, said the coming months would require careful calibration to revive the economy. Excerpts:

More recent productions

include reality TV staples

'Shark Tank'

and 'The Real

Housewives of Beverly Hills,'

as well as the upcoming

James Bond movie 'No Time

to Die.'

Amazon already has its

own studio but has had

mixed results.



You have earlier stressed that saving lives was far more important. What do you see as the way forward?

We are really caught in a cleft. On the one hand, if you look at all the analysts...

most of them are saying that

with a reasonable lockdown

kind of situation, the total

positive COVID cases should

come down to about 50,000

IN BRIEF



Archer undergoes elbow surgery

England fast bowler Jofra Archer has undergone surgery on his right elbow to address a long-standing injury, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Wednesday, without specifying any time-frame on his return to action. "England and Sussex seam bowler Jofra Archer had surgery to address his long-standing elbow issues on Friday," the ECB said in a statement.

"Archer will now commence an intensive rehabilitation period working with the ECB and Sussex medical teams. His progress will be reviewed by his consultant in approximately four weeks at which point further guidance will be provided as to when he can return to bowling." PTI

Kohli, Rohit keep second and third spots in ODIs

DUBAI India skipper Virat Kohli and his deputy Rohit Sharma held on to their second and third positions respectively in the batting chart, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah remained static at No. 5 in the bowling list of the latest ICC ODI player rankings issued on Wednesday. Kohli and Rohit were sitting pretty with 857 and 825 points respectively in the batting list headed by Pakistan's Babar Azam (865). In bowling, Bumrah was fifth with 690 points, while New Zealand's Trent Boult was atop with 737 points. PTI

England-NZ second Test to have 18,000 fans

BIRMINGHAM As many as 18,000 fans will be allowed on each day of the second Test between England and New Zealand at Edgbaston after it was selected as the first of the UK government's pilot events that will gauge the risk of COVID-19 transmission at events that attract mass gatherings. The said number of fans means 70% of the stadium's capacity. PTI

We will work in tandem: Mithali

She dismisses any talk of issues with coach Ramesh Powar

CRICKET

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

India women's Test and ODI captain Mithali Raj says it is time to formulate a shared vision and build a team for the future.

The 38-year-old Mithali, who is quarantining with the team in Mumbai before flying out to England next month, said that when you represent the country there is no room for personal likes or egos.

"The past is gone by. You cannot go back. I am sure he (Ramesh Powar, head coach, who had issues with Mithali the last time he was the coach) will come up with plans and we together will steer the ship," Mithali said in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"We will work in tandem and build a very strong team for the future, especially with the World Cup scheduled next year."

Welcome feature

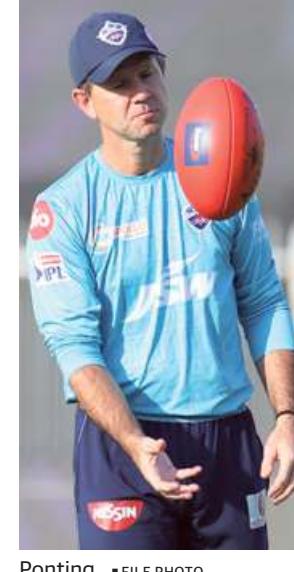
Mithali said it was a welcome feature that the England itinerary had all three formats. She will lead the side in the Test and three ODIs before Harmanpreet Kaur takes charge for the three T20Is,

"For all the youngsters in

"We can't say how good or well-equipped a young player is for these conditions unless she gets the exposure. But, this team has players with plenty of experience by way of ODIs and T20Is," Mithali added.



Fresh guard: Mithali says she will bury the past and look towards building a strong team with coach Powar. ■ FILE PHOTO



Ponting. ■ FILE PHOTO

Australia better off with fewer Tests: Ponting

ANI MELBOURNE

Former Australia captain reckons that the Tim Paine-led side would not be physically drained out before the Ashes as the side would not be playing not many Tests before that.

"I honestly don't think it matters that much. If they get a bit of First Class cricket in and they get that one Test match against Afghanistan, are you better off going into the Ashes series with not a

lot or going in with a lot of Tests," *cricket.com.au* quoted Ponting as saying.

"Ashes series are so physically and mentally draining; you might be better off going in with less. But it doesn't matter what you're going in with, it's about what you do in those big moments, as we saw with the India series," he added.

Ponting also believes that Travis Head has it in him to make a comeback into the Australian Test side.

You will always have racism: Holding

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LONDON

It is impossible to completely wipe off racism from the world, feels fast bowling great Michael Holding, who would "bruise his knee" to the grave if he was still an active player but doesn't want anyone to take the gesture as "a tick-in-the-box exercise".

Holding was speaking on Sky Sports' *The Cricket Show* on the first death anniversary of African-American George Floyd, who died at the hands of a white police officer in the Minnesota last



Michael Holding. ■ FILE PHOTO

year. "You will always have racism, always have racists. Getting rid of racism totally

is like saying you are going to get rid of crime totally. It is impossible," Holding said during a panel discussion that also had former England captain Nasser Hussain and woman international Ebony Rainford-Brent.

"The less crime you have in your society, the less racism you have in your society, the better off the world is as we go ahead," he added.

"I don't want people to take it as a tick-in-the-box exercise. You must want to support the cause, you must be willing to understand and see that something is wrong and this is the worldwide accepted way of showing support for the cause," he said.

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UEFA reads the riot act

Opens disciplinary cases against Super League backers

FOOTBALL

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

UEFA has opened disciplinary cases against Super League rebels Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus that could lead to bans from the Champions League.

Proceedings are now active for "a potential violation of UEFA's legal framework," UEFA said on Tuesday.

The European soccer body's statutes include a section on "prohibited groupings" of clubs or leagues forming without UEFA's permission or outside its control.

The three clubs now being prosecuted by UEFA are the remaining holdouts among 12 founders of the failed Super League project who refused to renounce it.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin warned the clubs last month that "if they



Stern statement: UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin had warned clubs last month that if they say 'we are a Super League', then they won't play Champions League. ■ AP

say we are a Super League, then they don't play Champions League, of course."

No timetable

UEFA gave no timetable for the expected disciplinary cases against the three which have all qualified on merit for the Champions League next season.

Any bans for the clubs –

and elevation of other Spanish and Italian teams to replace them – would likely lead to appeals at the Court of Arbitration for Sport and pressure to resolve the cases before next season's European competitions.

The Champions League group-stage draw is on August 26 and matches start on September 14.

Riya beats Akgul

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
LIEPAJA (LATVIA)

Sixth seed Riya Bhatia beat former World No. 50 Akgul Amannurodova of Uzbekistan 6-4, 6-4 in the first round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old Riya converted four of 10 break-points that she forced to get past the 36-year-old Akgul.

In the \$15,000 ITF men's event in Heraklion, Greece, Rishab Agarwal lost to Thailand's Wishaya Trongcharoenchaikul 6-4, 7-6(5) in the first round.

Woods pops up on young girl's Instagram post



Woods and Perrone.

■ TWITTER

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOS ANGELES

Tiger Woods popped up on Instagram on Monday as a Florida girl who is fighting cancer posted a photo of herself with the golf superstar after meeting him at a soccer park. Woods, who suffered severe leg injuries in a car crash in California in February, was on crutches with a compression stocking but no walking boot on his right leg.

The photo was posted by 10-year-old Luna Perrone, who calls herself in her Instagram profile "One tough girl battling Ewing's Sarcoma (rare bone cancer)" and a "soccer legend."

Former Mumbai player Ranjita passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Former Mumbai player and scorer Ranjita Rane died here on Wednesday after battling cancer. She was in her mid 40s.

An all-rounder, who bowled medium pace, Ranjita played 44 First Class matches for Mumbai from 1995 to 2003.

Meanwhile, another cricketer Prabhulal Parmar, who had represented Saurashtra in domestic cricket, died due to COVID-19 on Tuesday. The 76-year-old had played four Ranji Trophy matches for Saurashtra in 1968-69.



lifted 166kg, 169kg and 172kg in three successful attempts to finish second.

Rizki Juniansyah of Indonesia totalled 349kg to win gold.

Targets CWG

"It feels good to get a medal. I will go back and train as my next target is to qualify and do well in the Commonwealth Games next year," Howrah boy Sheuli told *The Hindu* about his first big medal.

The 19-year-old began with 137kg in snatch, failed to lift 141kg in his second attempt before doing it in his third. In clean and jerk, he

Sheuli wins silver in World juniors

Sets three new National records enroute to his first big medal

WEIGHTLIFTING

SPORTS BUREAU
TASHKENT

Achinta Sheuli smashed three National records as he took the silver medal in the 73kg category at the World junior weightlifting championships here on Wednesday.

Sheuli created new National records of 141kg in snatch (old: 140kg, N. Ajith, 2020, National championships, Kolkata), 172kg in clean and jerk (old: 170kg, Sheuli, 2019, Asian junior championships, Pyongyang) and 313kg in total (old: 310kg, Ajith, 2020, National championships, Kolkata).

Sheuli's previous overall personal best was 309kg, achieved in the Asian championships at the same venue last month.

The 19-year-old began with 137kg in snatch, failed to lift 141kg in his second attempt before doing it in his third. In clean and jerk, he

Europeans best Indians in mixed events

SHOOTING

SPORTS BUREAU
OSIJEK (CROATIA)

The Indian shooters had a taste of Europe's might in the mixed team competition in air rifle and air pistol, as they came behind Norway and Russia in the preliminary stage of the European championship here on Wednesday.

In mixed pistol, Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary shot 580. Manu shot 286 out of 300, while Saurabh hit 294 with a series of 99, 98 and 97.

But they were pushed to the second place by Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina and

Artem Chernousov who shot 583 to top the first stage. With the medal qualification set in the second stage, India was ineligible to compete.

Yashaswini Singh Deswal (287) and Abhishek Verma (288) placed ninth, with 575, among 43 pairs.

In mixed air rifle, Elavenil Varalaru (315.8) and Divyansh Singh Panwar (314.8) placed second behind Norway for which Jeanette Hogg Duestad and Henrik Larsen put up an European record of 632.0.

Anjum Moudgil (310.1) and Deepak Kumar (312.1) placed 38th among 51 pairs.

Mavericks take 2-0 lead

NBA

REUTERS
LOS ANGELES



Luka Doncic blew past Los Angeles Clippers defenders for 39 points, seven assists and seven rebounds to lead the visiting Mavericks to a 127-121 victory on Tuesday and a 2-0 lead in the Western Conference first-round playoff series.

Doncic's second straight 30-plus-point game leaves the Mavericks in a commanding position as the best-of-seven series heads back to Dallas for two games.

Kevin Durant scored 26 points and Joe Harris added 25 as Brooklyn Nets seized control early and cruised to

Swiatek serene as questions linger over French Open rivals

TENNIS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Iga Swiatek heads into the French Open trying to become the first player since Serena Williams at Wimbledon in 2016 to successfully defend a women's Grand Slam singles title, with injuries and poor clay form clouding the hopes of several of her chief rivals.

Following her victory in Rome, culminating in a ruthless 46-minute take-

down of Karolina Pliskova, Poland's first Grand Slam singles champion returns to Roland Garros just seven months on with a far greater weight of expectation.

Swiatek, who turns 20 next week, was the lowest-ranked woman, then 54th in the world, to win the French Open, shifted from its traditional May-June slot last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like Jelena Ostapenko in 2017, it was her first title at tour level. Unlike the Lat-

vian, who has struggled to reproduce her best tennis regularly, Swiatek appears better equipped to stay at the top. She entered the top 10 for the first time last week, and has cited the consistency of Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer as a goal for which she can strive.

"I'm really proud of myself that I'm actually starting to be more consistent, because that was my goal from the beginning," said Swiatek.

It's a dream to be in the CL final: Berrada

SHYAM VASUDEVAN
CHENNAI

Manchester City is on the brink of unparalleled success. After clinching its third Premier League title in four seasons, City will look to lift its first Champions League crown when it takes on Chelsea in Saturday's final.

Omar Berrada, the Chief Football Operations Officer of the City Football Group, calls it a dream.

"It's a dream to be in the Champions League final. It's been a journey that started

with the FA Cup win in 2011 and we have been able to clinch many domestic trophies since. The Champions League brings in the best clubs from the world and gives you that additional element of prestige if you win it," Berrada told select media on Wednesday.

"We have worked so hard to get here that I believe we will continue to be in the knockout stages in the years to come because the groundwork has been done to put us in that position."



"On the 57th Death Anniversary of India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Punjab Government rededicates itself to harnessing the power of modern science and medical institutions, whose foundations he had laid, to free our people from the pain and suffering caused by the deadly Covid pandemic."

Capt. Amarinder Singh
Chief Minister, Punjab

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS, PUNJAB