



Mamata demands withdrawal of Central forces from poll duty

Page 8



Oxygen cans with armed forces to be released: Bipin Rawat

Page 9



Morgan, Tripathi and bowlers help KKR beat PBKS

Page 13

NEARBY



Kejriwal announces free vaccine for all above 18

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said his government has decided to provide COVID-19 vaccination free of cost to every citizen above 18 years of age. The government has approved the purchase of ₹1.34 crore worth of vaccines, Mr. Kejriwal said, adding that he would appeal to the Centre to give doses to all States at the same price.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

5 dead in Hisar hospital, oxygen shortage blamed

GURUGRAM
Five COVID-19 patients under treatment at a private hospital in Haryana's Hisar district died in the early hours of Monday with the hospital authorities attributing the deaths to the shortage of liquid oxygen. The administration denied the allegations and ordered a magisterial probe into the matter. The five men, aged between 40 and 60, were in critical condition.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4



MHA advises States to impose localised 14-day lockdowns

Guidelines issued; ban on all events and gatherings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has asked the States to impose localised restrictions and implement strict containment measures for at least 14 days to flatten the COVID-19 curve.

In a letter to the States on Monday, Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla said that considering the "unprecedented surge," there is an urgent need for the States and the Union Territories to consider strict COVID-19 management and control measures to bring the situation under control. "States and U.T.s, based on their assessment of the situation, may impose local restrictions at district/sub-district and city/ward level, with a view to contain the spread of COVID-19," the letter stated.

Over the past seven days, new COVID-19 cases averaged around 3.2 lakh daily. The letter said that the Union Health Ministry on April 25 had advised all the States to implement an intensive, local and focused containment framework and the criteria was shared.

"In the recent past, a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases has been observed



Waiting for relief: A patient on oxygen waiting to be admitted to Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

along with high positivity rate. Considering this unprecedented surge, there is an urgent need for States/UTs to consider strict COVID management and control measures, in the surge areas to bring the situation under control," the letter stated.

The Health Ministry had suggested night curfew, closure of malls, shopping complexes and restricting office strength to 50% as some of the measures to contain the spread in areas that required intensive action.

"The spread of the infection has to be controlled through restricting the intermingling amongst people, the only known host for the COVID-19 virus," the Ministry said.

"We used to speak of masking up when leaving home but now, just in case

Mask-up at home, warns NITI Aayog member

No need for panic, says AIIMS head

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Dr. V.K. Paul, Member (health) at the NITI Aayog, involved closely in India's COVID-19 management strategy, has recommended that everyone wear masks even at home.

"The time has come to recommend wearing a mask even if you are at home," said Dr. Paul at the weekly press briefing of the Health Ministry.

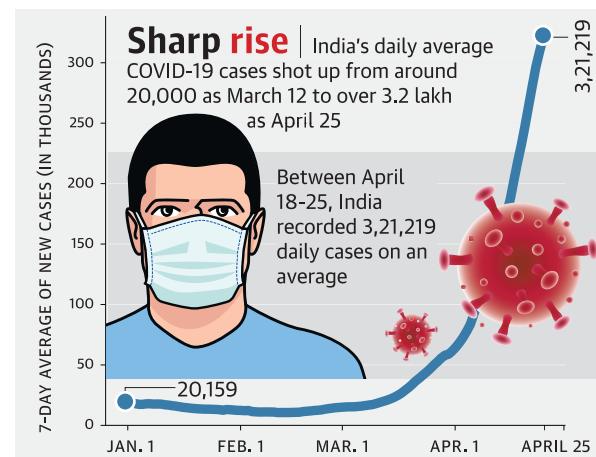
"We used to speak of masking up when leaving home but now, just in case

Modi, Biden discuss U.S. assistance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joe Biden spoke on the phone on Monday to discuss the COVID-19 outbreak in India and U.S. assistance to the country. The conversation comes a day after Mr. Biden and his Cabinet publicly expressed solidarity with India. ▶ PAGE 10

Daily cases may hit 4.4 lakh by May 8, predicts IIT model

Active infections may peak at 48 lakh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Active cases in the ongoing second COVID-19 wave in India may peak at 38-48 lakh between May 14 and 18, and daily new infections could hit a high of 4.4 lakh from May 4-8, according to a mathematical model by IIT

scientists, who have revised their projections upwards.

The scientists from IIT-Kanpur and Hyderabad applied the Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach (SUTRA) model to predict that active cases would go up by over 10 lakh by mid-May.

The latest projection tweaks the time frame and numbers. Last week, the re-

searchers predicted the pandemic may peak between May 11 and 15 with 33-35 lakh active cases and decline steeply by the end of May.

Earlier this month, their model projected that active infections would peak by April 15, which didn't come true. "This time, I have also computed minimum and maximum for predicted values... I am reasonably confident that the actual values will be within the values mentioned," Maninder Agrawal, professor at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, IIT-Kanpur, told PTI.

The scientists from IIT-Kanpur and Hyderabad applied the Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach (SUTRA) model to predict that active cases would go up by over 10 lakh by mid-May.

The latest projection tweaks the time frame and numbers. Last week, the re-

Technology giants pitch in to fight second wave

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai has announced ₹135 crore funding support for India's current pandemic battle, stating that he was 'devastated to see the worsening COVID crisis' in the country, while Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has also extended help.

Promising to support India in the crisis using 'its voice, resources and technology to aid relief efforts', Mr. Nadella thanked the U.S. government for agreeing to help.

The statements from two big tech CEOs of Indian-origin came after Sun Microsystems' co-founder Vinod Khosla on Saturday promised to help with planeloads of oxygen, and e-commerce major Amazon said it would donate oxygen concentrators and other equipment to hospitals.

"I am heartbroken by the current situation in India. I'm grateful the U.S. government is mobilizing to help. Microsoft will continue to use its voice, resources, and technology to aid relief efforts, and support the purchase of critical oxygen concentration devices," Mr. Nadella said in a tweet.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 4, 5, 9 & 10

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

The gloves are on



Safety first: Voters putting on gloves as they wait in queues to cast votes at a polling station during the seventh phase of the West Bengal Assembly election at a village near Balurghat in South Dinajpur district on Monday. ■ PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 8)

Nomadland wins big at pandemic Oscars

Chloe Zhao makes history as first woman of colour to get best director award



Winners: The team of *Nomadland* poses at the press room of the Oscars, in Los Angeles, California, on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

prize for *The Hurt Locker*. "It's pretty fabulous to be a woman in 2021," Ms. Zhao told journalists at a virtual backstage Q&A, adding, "If this win means more people get to live their dreams, I'm extremely grateful." With movie theatres closed all year and blockbuster content delayed, Beijing-born Zhao's film captured the pandemic zeitgeist with its stunning portrait of the isolated margins of society.

Mr. Hopkins' win at 83 for his shattering portrayal of a dementia sufferer in *The Father* makes him the oldest actor to win a competitive Oscar in history. Best supporting actress went to Youn Yuh-jung for the Korean immigrant drama *Minari*.

Ms. Zhao, who is the first woman of colour ever honoured as best director,

thanked "all the people we met on the road... for teaching us the power of resilience and hope, and for reminding us what true kindness looks like".

She is also the second woman to win best director after Kathryn Bigelow, who broke the glass ceiling in 2010 when she won the

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 11

Poll panel draws flak from Madras High Court

MOHAMMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Monday expressed its displeasure with the Election Commission of India (ECI) for having failed to ensure that political parties adhered to the COVID-19 protocol during the recent Assembly election campaign in Tamil Nadu.

It warned the Commission that the counting of votes, scheduled for May 2, would be postponed if appropriate safety measures were not put in place, and the court informed of the same by April 30.

The First Division Bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy said that though polling was, by and large, peaceful in Tamil Nadu, the ECI couldn't ensure that parties adhered to the COVID-19 protocol during the campaign, despite repeated observations made by the court, "like a broken record", in almost every order passed on an election-related case, stressing the need to follow the norms.

"The significance of adhering to such protocol may have been lost on the ECI, going by its silence as campaigning and rallies were conducted without maintaining distancing norms... They were held in wanton disregard for other requirements of the protocol," the judges said, adding that the ECI ought to have come up with strict safety measures at least for the counting of the votes.

The observations were made during the hearing of a petition by Transport Minister M.R. Vijayabaskar for following regulations while counting the votes in Karur constituency, from where he contested. However, the judges expanded the scope of the case.

HC dismisses revision petition filed by the police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday pulled up the police over investigations into the northeast Delhi riots last year, saying there was complete lack of supervision of probes by senior officers of the district.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav made the observation while dismissing the acts of two dates: February 24 and 25.

revision petition filed by Delhi Police against an order by a magistrate court to lodge separate FIRs on the complaint of a person named Nishar Ahmed.

The sessions court noted that instead of filing two FIRs, the police had clubbed Mr. Ahmed's complaint with another plea, which was related to only a single incident that took place on February 25, 2020, without realising that his complaint disclosed the acts of two dates: February 24 and 25.

"I do not find any substance in the present petition filed by the State. The investigating agency has evidently been found to be on the wrong side of law. This court has found in several riot cases... complete lack of supervision of the investigation(s) by the senior police officers of the district," the court said, adding: "All is not over yet. Senior officers should look into the matter(s) and take remedial measures so that justice can be given to the victims."

Court pulls up police for 'lack of supervision' in Delhi riots cases

LIVE/ONLINE Classes Available

VISIONIAS
INSPIRING INNOVATION
7 IN TOP 10 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2019
from various programs of VISIONIAS.in

VISIONIAS
INSPIRING INNOVATION
7 IN TOP 10 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2019
from various programs of VISIONIAS.in

Heartiest Congratulations To All Successful Candidates

JATIN KISHORE (2 AIR), PRATIBHA VERMA (3 AIR), VISHAKHA YADAV (6 AIR), GANESH K BASKAR (7 AIR), ABHISHEK SARAF (8 AIR), RAVI JAIN (9 AIR), YOU CAN BE NEXT (10 AIR)

FOUNDATION COURSE GENERAL STUDIES
PRELIMS CUM MAINS 2022

PREPARATION UNINTERRUPTED Organize all your lectures and study material effectively & access them from anywhere, anytime

LIVE / ONLINE cum Offline classes

English Medium 5 May | 5 PM | 8 April 1 PM
Hindi माध्यम 3 जून | 1:30 PM | 23 नवंबर | 1:30 PM
20th May LUCKNOW JAIPUR: 17th March 7 AM | 5 PM

#PrelimsisComing ABHYAS 2021
ALL INDIA GS PRELIMS MOCK TEST SERIES ONLINE / OFFLINE*
25 APRIL | 9, 23 MAY
Register at: www.visionias.in/abhyas

*Subject to Government regulations and the safety of the students.

ALL INDIA PRELIMS & MAINS TEST SERIES 2021 & 22
GS CSAT Start: 18 Apr PRELIMS 2022: 2 May
General Studies Philosophy
Sociology Essay PS & IR Start: 4 Apr MAINS 2022: 18 April
Start: 18 Apr PRELIMS 2022: 2 May
Start: 18 Apr PRELIMS 2022: 2 May

DELIJAIPURPUNEHYDERABADAHMEDABADLUCKNOWCHANDIGARHGUWAHATI
HEAD OFFICE: Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh | CONTACT: 8468022022, 9019066066
9001942444 8007500096 9000104133 999047040 8468022022
9001942444 8007500096 9000104133 999047040 8468022022
9001942444 8007500096 9000104133 999047040 8468022022

Ramp up testing centres: HC to govt.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday requested the AAP government to ramp up testing centres in view of the rise in COVID-19 cases in the Capital.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh also asked the Delhi government to put in place necessary infrastructure to streamline the sample collection process.

The High Court's direction came after several lawyers said they were facing difficulty in getting tested as labs were saying they will carry out sample collection after 2-3 days. The lawyers claimed that the number of daily tests have gone down to around 60,000 from the over one lakh tests that were being conducted earlier.

The submissions were made during the hearing of a petition seeking directions to the Delhi government to order hospitals not to insist on COVID test reports to hospitalise patients who show symptoms of virus infection.

500 beds available but only 123 admitted at Sardar Patel Centre

Man made to wait for 2 hours dies; relatives allege doctors refused to check him

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Around 2 p.m., outside the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre, two women were crying aloud next to a 45-year-old man, who was lying on the back seat of a car. He was not moving or responding to their calls.

"We have been waiting here for two hours. Now there is no pulse. They even refused to check him even after we said that there was no pulse," Megh Singh, 60, his relative said.

As 500 beds opened on Monday at the Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre, there was a queue of cars and ambulances outside the centre for admission. But only 123 patients were admitted, though 500 beds were installed, as per ITBP. Many went back without getting an admission.

Many people complained of the District Surveillance Officers (DSOs), who are supposed to approve admission to the COVID Care Centre,



An ambulance carrying a patient on oxygen support outside Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre in Chhatarpur on Monday.

• SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

not responding to calls. Some waiting in the queue in ambulances were scared when the oxygen level in the cylinders dipped, as they waited restlessly for more than two hours.

It gave away to heated scenes outside the centre as people argued with security forces for a bed. Despite beds being available, many left without getting admission as they couldn't get a response from the DSO.

"Admission is only through the DSO. Walk-in patients are not allowed. Talk to your DSO. If the officer doesn't attend your call, please message your details to him. Admission is only through DSO's recommendations. There are no ICU beds here," a recorded message from a loudspeaker outside the centre said.

The officials on Sunday had announced that the admissions will be only through

the DSOs. When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson did not comment on the situation.

No oxygen

Mr. Singh was waiting at the crematorium around 9.30 p.m. for doing the last rites of his relative, who died outside the centre. "He was critical, but still responding to us when we reached there. Now he is gone. No hospital attended to him," he said over the phone.

"Sir, please help. No one is picking up the phone. No one is helping. He'll die here," Harshlatha Sharma, wife of a COVID-19 patient, said outside the centre.

The patient was breathing heavily and quivering outside the COVID Care Centre. "We went to multiple hospitals before coming here. There are no beds anywhere," his 16-year-old son said. Finally, the patient was rushed in after complaints were made to the ITBP and the wife broke down in front of the officials.



Arvind Kejriwal •

manufactured soon and can be swiftly administered to the children of the country," he said.

He also appealed to the manufacturers to bring the price of vaccine down to ₹150 for everyone.

Ramping up facilities

He further said that the Delhi government was in the process of ramping up hospital beds across the city. "We are also trying to increase oxygen beds in Delhi. Today morning, I visited the centre that has been created at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas. It has started functioning from 10 a.m. today [Monday] morning," he said.

While there were 150 beds as of now, in the next 2-3 days this number would be increased to 500, then 2,000 beds and finally 5,000, he said. "We are also creating a 200 ICU bed facility at the centre. We are creating several such centres in Delhi and hope they aid the people of Delhi," he also said.

Now was not the time to look for profits, asserted Mr. Kejriwal, but to come together to help humanity. At a time when Central and State governments were capping the rate at which medicines and other facilities should be made available to people, vaccines also needed to be moderately priced, he said.

"Vaccine is emerging as a solution to this pandemic. Those who have been administered the vaccine are either not contracting the virus or contracting only mild forms of it," he said.

Moderate pricing

However, they are differentially priced. "Different vaccine manufacturers have priced the vaccine at ₹400 and ₹600 for State governments and at ₹150 for the Central government. I believe the price should be the same for everyone," he also said.

With 20,201 new cases, Capital's COVID-19 tally nearing 10.5 lakh

380 more succumb to virus; active cases stand at 92,358

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 380 COVID-19-related deaths in 24 hours – the highest since the beginning of the pandemic – taking the total number of deaths to 14,628, according to a health bulletin released by the government on Monday. Moreover, 20,201 new cases were reported, taking the tally to 10,47,916.

A total of 57,690 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. The positivity of new cases was 35.02%. Of



A health worker with the vaccine. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

the total cases, 9,40,930 people have recovered, leaving 92,358 active cases.

Out of the total 20,461

beds for COVID-19 treatment, only 8.4% of beds were vacant at 11 p.m. on Monday while only 12 ICU beds were unoccupied. The number of beds was increased from 20,431 on Friday to 20,461 on Monday. The total number of beds were reduced on Thursday and Friday due to oxygen shortage.

Many hospitals, including Lok Nayak Hospital, GTB Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Hospital, and Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, had no vacant COVID-19 beds.

Civic body data show 3,472 deaths in 6 days

State government has listed COVID deaths at 2,127; BJP alleges lack of transparency

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Almost 3,500 COVID patients were laid to rest in the city during the six-day lockdown by the Delhi government to contain the pandemic's spread between April 19 and April 25, according to official data recorded by the Capital's three civic bodies.

The Delhi government data, however, recorded a total number of 2,127 COVID deaths during the period with the BJP Opposition, which administers the civic bodies, accusing it of attempting to "suppress" the very occurrence of the deaths of 1,345 citizens due to the pandemic.

Left with no other option given the death toll, which rose incrementally every day, the Municipal Corporations of Delhi had to affect an increase of over 50% of the capacity at 28 crematoriums and burial grounds spread across the 11 municipal zones in the city.



Cremation of COVID-19 victims in progress at Antim Niwas ground in Noida Sector 94. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

By the time Delhi entered its second, week-long lockdown on Monday, the total count of cremations and burials undertaken over the six-day period stood at 3,472 and the capacity at such sites, which was 505 on April 19, had been increased up to 773 till the evening of April 25.

Fully stretched
Despite the increase, most facilities were stretched to their limits on a daily basis as the week progressed and, towards the end of the lock-

down, many were performing last rites well over their capacity.

On April 20, for instance, the PK Road Cremation Ground saw 24 cremations opposed to its capacity of 15. Beri-Wala facility, which has a capacity of 12, saw 14, while 27 were performed at the Dwarka Sector 24 facility, which had a capacity of 23.

Three days later, on April 23, 29 cremations were performed at PI Road against a capacity of 15, 18 at Beri-Wala and 40 at Dwarka Sector 24

despite upgrading capacity to 32.

Till 6 p.m. on April 25, the PK Road facility recorded 35 cremations, Beri-Wala 24, and 41 in Dwarka Sector 24.

At Ghazipur, 27 cremations took place against a capacity of 25, 44 against a capacity of 36 at the Seemapuri Cremation Ground and the Paschim Vihar facility saw 57 cremations over three times its capacity.

Spokesperson fumes

"Why is the Delhi government, which claims to be transparent, trying to hide these deaths?" asked Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana.

"The city's cremation and burial grounds are overflowing with the bodies of COVID patients according to official civic body figures. There should be an investigation to ascertain the reason behind the government's clear attempt to hide these figures," he demanded.

Delhi court grants bail to Deep Sidhu in Red Fort violence case

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday granted bail to actor-activist Deep Sidhu, arrested in connection with the violence and resultant damage at the Red Fort during the Republic Day farmers' rally earlier this year.

Mr. Sidhu was arrested on February 9 in connection with an FIR registered on January 27. He was granted regular bail on April 16. However, before he could be released from prison, the police arrested him in connection with another FIR, which was registered on January 28 pertaining

to the same incident.

Metropolitan magistrate Sahil Gupta said, "The need and timing of the arrest is highly questionable because despite knowing that the accused [Mr. Sidhu] has been lodged in JC [judicial custody] since February 09, 2021, he was arrested only on April 17, 2021, when he was granted regular bail."

"This clearly suggests that it was an attempt to defeat the bail order dated April 16...and is a grave affront to personal liberty of the accused and runs foul of rights guaranteed under Article 21," the court

said.
"Such vicious and sinister action of investigative authorities amounts to playing fraud with established criminal process and shows scant regard to constitutional protections enshrined, protected and cherished under the Constitution of India," the court remarked.

Noting that Mr. Sidhu's further incarceration in the present case would bear no fruit and therefore would be unjustified, the court granted bail but ordered him to join the investigation as and when called.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Oxygen cylinders that were seized by the police during a recent raid are now used to meet the requirements of hospitals in South West Delhi following court orders.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Ingit Pratap Singh said: "It was purely my idea and I am proud of it." Recalling the episode, he said that a team from Sagarpur Police Station seized 48 oxygen cylinders on Friday evening.

"Given the acute shortage of oxygen, it was only natural for the oxygen to be used.

Free vaccine to those above 18 years, announces Kejriwal

CM appeals to Centre to ensure price parity; ₹1.34 cr. allotted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the government had decided to provide COVID vaccination free of cost to every citizen above 18 years of age.

In a digital briefing, he told the Delhi government had approved the purchase of ₹1.34 crore vaccines and said he would appeal to the Centre to ensure that all governments got vaccine doses at the same price.

"Sir, please help. No one is picking up the phone. No one is helping. He'll die here," Harshlatha Sharma, wife of a COVID-19 patient, said outside the centre.

The patient was breathing heavily and quivering outside the COVID Care Centre. "We went to multiple hospitals before coming here. There are no beds anywhere," his 16-year-old son said. Finally, the patient was rushed in after complaints were made to the ITBP and the wife broke down in front of the officials.



Arvind Kejriwal •

manufactured soon and can be swiftly administered to the children of the country," he said.

He also appealed to the manufacturers to bring the price of vaccine down to ₹150 for everyone.

Ramping up facilities

He further said that the Delhi government was in the process of ramping up hospital beds across the city. "We are also trying to increase oxygen beds in Delhi. Today morning, I visited the centre that has been created at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas. It has started functioning from 10 a.m. today [Monday] morning," he said.

While there were 150 beds as of now, in the next 2-3 days this number would be increased to 500, then 2,000 beds and finally 5,000, he said. "We are also creating a 200 ICU bed facility at the centre. We are creating several such centres in Delhi and hope they aid the people of Delhi," he also said.

Now was not the time to look for profits, asserted Mr. Kejriwal, but to come together to help humanity. At a time when Central and State governments were capping the rate at which medicines and other facilities should be made available to people, vaccines also needed to be moderately priced, he said.

"Vaccine is emerging as a solution to this pandemic. Those who have been administered the vaccine are either not contracting the virus or contracting only mild forms of it," he said.

Moderate pricing

However, they are differentially priced. "Different vaccine manufacturers have priced the vaccine at ₹400 and ₹600 for State governments and at ₹150 for the Central government. I believe the price should be the same for everyone," he also said.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

Mr. Mehra informed the High Court that the Delhi government was in the process of importing 18 tankers, which shall be arriving soon and that four new tankers are also coming from another supplier.

The court also directed the Delhi Chief Secretary, who was present at the hearing, to hold a meeting with oxygen suppliers, refills and hospitals during the day to work out a distribution plan.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said that strict action would be taken against any persons involved.

During the hearing, several private hospitals objected to the manner in which oxygen supply to hospitals has been handled by the Delhi government. The Hospitals said they are being kept in the dark by the Delhi government with regard to the exact time and amount of oxygen supplied to them. "This anxiety is killing us," said one of the lawyers representing the hospitals.

The court also said it was not in agreement with the SG that there was no shortage of oxygen. "We know there is oxygen shortage on the ground,"

Solicitor General Mehta objected to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal writing to Saj-

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

jan Jindal, Managing Director of the JSW Group, seeking oxygen and tankers. Mr. Mehta said any surplus oxygen produced by the industries in India has to go to the Central corps for disbursement to States according to their needs.

Timings**DELHI**

TUESDAY, APR. 27
RISE 05:45 SET 18:54
RISE 19:17 SET 05:53
WEDNESDAY, APR. 28
RISE 05:44 SET 18:55
RISE 20:28 SET 06:35
THURSDAY, APR. 29
RISE 05:43 SET 18:56
RISE 21:40 SET 07:22

Delhi Weather
max min
Delhi City 40 17
Safdarjung 40 17
Palam 41 20

Delhi Palam Today
40°C A hot and dry day with few clouds and light winds likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
41°C A seasonal dry weather likely. A comfortable morning and very hot day with few clouds.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate inquiries about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THE PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Owner & Publishers of this newspaper does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products or services. The Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company shall not be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

IN BRIEF**IMS Noida organises 6th global virtual meet**

NOIDA
With an aim to disseminate knowledge on the 'Global Impact of Artificial Intelligence in Human Resource in 2030', Institute of Management Studies Noida, conducted its 6th International Conference" on April 23 and April 24. The conference brought together leading academicians, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results related to artificial intelligence and human resource.

Shortage of beds, oxygen, cremation slots leaves Capital in a shambles

Relatives, friends, attendants of COVID-19 patients narrate ordeal, helplessness

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

With the issue of shortage of beds continuing in the national capital, search for beds and then long wait at hospitals have proved to be agonising for attendants and relatives of patients, they rued.

For Veena, one such attendant waiting outside the emergency wing of Moolchand Hospital, battling helplessness and hoping for a miracle is all that goes on throughout the day, she said.

"My husband tested positive around nine days back and he was completely fine all these days. On Sunday his oxygen saturation dipped suddenly and then began our search for hospitals. It was not easy and after facing a lot of difficulties we reached Moolchand Hospital. He has been kept in the emergency ward as there are no vacant beds," she said.

The Jungpura Extension resident added, "This hospital has also asked us to look for beds elsewhere but where do we go now? We



Patients and relatives outside Lok Nayak Hospital in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

have checked everywhere and there does not seem to be any vacancy anywhere. All I have been doing is pray for him. I do not know what else to do."

South Delhi resident Sonam, who admitted her father at Irene Hospital in Kalkaji, said: "His saturation levels were not right so we had to admit him immediately. Finding a bed itself was a huge task and we had to go to several other hospitals before we finally got a bed here."

While a steady stream of cars and ambulances kept visiting the emergency wings

that we need to take the body to a crematorium in Sarai Kale Khan, but it has been two hours and the ambulance has not yet arrived," said Mr. Rajpal.

Recounting his plight over the past few days, Mr. Rajpal added, "My dad did not even get a chance to get shifted out of the emergency ward. He ideally needed a ventilator but none were available and we finally lost him. The situation is terrible as the entire city is in a shambles. There are no beds, no ventilators, no oxygen - the list of issues being faced by patients is endless."

At the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), patients on stretchers bordered the entrance of the emergency wing.

Shariq Khan, a resident of the Batla House area, said: "My uncle met with an accident and when we got him here we found out that he had tested positive. It has been three days that we are waiting outside. We are helpless as we cannot do anything from outside."

Maximum temperature in Delhi crosses 40°C mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature in Delhi crossed the 40 degree Celsius mark on Monday despite a pleasant start to the day.

The maximum settled at 40.2 degrees, which was two degrees above normal for the season, while the minimum settled at 16.7 degrees Celsius

- seven degrees cooler than normal.

The IMD said the maximum temperature is likely to keep rising and stay above 40 degree Celsius over the next few days. The forecast for Tuesday reads "mainly clear sky with the maximum and minimum temperatures settling between 41 and 18 degrees respectively".

One dead, two hurt as bus hits three vehicles

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A speeding bus rammed into a scooter and two e-rickshaws in west Delhi's Subhash Nagar on Monday morning, leaving a 55-year-old man dead and two others injured, the police said.

After receiving information about the accident around 8 a.m., the police

reached Subhash Nagar and found three men lying on the road.

Rajan (32) and Hansa (40) were rushed to a hospital. The deceased was identified as Mandeep Singh (55), a resident of Pratap Nagar. The bus driver, Azad (29), was arrested and a case was registered, Additional DCP (West) Prashant Priya Gautam said.

Relatives of dead patients at a graveyard in Delhi's ITO on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Delhi Gate cemetery diverts bodies citing space crunch

'Letter written to L-G and Chief Minister earlier this month'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In what's claimed to be a first, the Delhi Gate cemetery on Monday said it has started diverting bodies to other cemeteries in Delhi as it is about to run out of space.

Mohammed Shamim, a third-generation grave-digger of Jagid Qabristan Ahle Islam, said that on Sunday and Monday, he has asked people to take bodies to cemeteries in Yamuna Khadar, Mangolpur, and Shastri Park.

Shamim said that they took all the 21 bodies that had come on Saturday, but that from Sunday onwards, they started asking several people to take bodies to other places. "We took 16 bodies on Sunday and 11 on Monday. We are almost out of space



and barely being able to manage," he said.

"Jab tak chalaya jaega tab tak chalaenge, fir bandh kar denge [We will continue till we can...then we will shut it]," he added.

The grave-digger had written to his committee members regarding the space crunch earlier this month and they had written to the

Lieutenant-Governor and the Chief Minister via email regarding the matter, he said.

The committee members demanded that they be allowed to use the space near Millennium Park, which was allegedly shut at the time of the outbreak of the pandemic. However, there is no movement on the issue, he said.

Haryana govt. takes over institute to set up a hospital

Doctors will be deputed from the Indian Army, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Monday said the State government had taken over the Gold Fields Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Faridabad district to set up a hospital with 100 oxygen beds in view of the ongoing pandemic. It had been lying closed for years.

The Chief Minister said this after visiting the medical college.

He said the doctors at Gold Fields Institute of Medical Sciences and Research would be deputed from the Indian

Army and the hospital would be functional in the next two or three days.

Mr. Lal, while interacting with the media persons, said that as the number of COVID-19 patients in the State had increased, undoubtedly the pressure on hospitals too had increased. "There was some difficulty regarding oxygen supply but we are leaving no stone unturned to ensure uninterrupted supply of oxygen. We are going to build two hospitals having a bed capacity of 500 each in Panipat and Hisar with the help of DRDO. Both the hospital sites

have also been inspected," he said.

He also said there is no shortage of medicines in the State. "There is no shortage of Remdesivir injection in government hospitals. There have been some problems in private hospitals. For this, the government has now started supervision of dealers who are supplying the medicine to private hospitals as well," said Mr. Lal.

Haryana Health and Home Minister Anil Vij said that 20 vehicles would be deployed in all districts to be used as ambulances.

पीजीइन्विट
PGInvIT

The power of AAA
ASSETS | ASSURANCE | ADVANTAGE

पावरग्रिड
POWERGRID

Assets

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

Assurance

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

Advantage

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

INDIA'S FIRST
InvIT
SPONSORED BY A
MAHARATNA PSU

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

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

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

Adfactors

5 COVID patients dead, oxygen shortage blamed

Administration denies allegations of pvt. hospital in Hisar, orders magisterial probe

Ashok Kumar

Five COVID-19 patients under treatment at a private hospital in Haryana's Hisar district died in the early hours of Monday with the hospital authorities attributing the deaths to the shortage of liquid oxygen. The administration denied the allegations and ordered a magisterial probe into the matter.

Five men, aged between 40-60 years, in a critical condition, died at Soni Burn

Hospital around 4 a.m. The hospital's owner, Rajat Soni, told *The Hindu* that an ambulance from his hospital went to fetch liquid oxygen from the plant in the city, but there was a long queue and the patients died before he could get the supply.

"A hospital staff went to fetch liquid oxygen around 11 p.m. on Sunday, but he could not get the supply till 4 a.m. on Monday. I also arranged a couple of cylinders from other hospitals, but it was not enough," said Mr.

Soni.

He said the situation was similar on Monday and the hospital authorities had already received a message that the supply of oxygen would be 15% less today and they were told to admit patients accordingly.

"We received a message around 5 a.m. saying five patients had died at the hospital. The cause of death is a matter of investigation, but the family members of the deceased blamed the deaths on lack of oxygen supply and

negligence," said Deputy Superintendent of Police (Hisar-I) Rajbir Singh.

Deputy Commissioner Priyanka Soni denied the allegations, saying that the city had surplus liquid oxygen on Sunday.

"We have ordered a magisterial probe into the matter. The matter has also been referred to Medical Negligence Board. The hospital concerned did not call or inform us about any alleged short supply of oxygen," said Ms. Soni.

Expression of Interest

CONSULTANTS FOR PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES OF PREPARATION OF BID DOCUMENTS

Reference No.: WR/Engineering/Consultancy/EPC Projects/01/2021. Western Railway, intends to prepare Shortlist or Consultants for Preparatory Activities of Preparation of Bid Documents and Associated Documentation / Drawings and Bid Process Management for Inviting EPC and PMC Services and their Finalization for Various Civil Engineering Projects over Western Railway.

The consulting services include preparation of Bids and Bid process Management for EPC and PMC tenders and their finalization for various Civil Engineering Projects over Western Railway as per the scope defined in Indicative Terms of Reference. The Indicative Terms of Reference (TOR) for this assignment can be found at www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in

The shortlisted consultants will be considered for issue of RFP for the above indicated projects separately for each project for selection of consultant.

Western Railway now invites eligible consulting firms ("Consultants") to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:

a. The firm should have Minimum Experience of 3 major similar assignments completed in past 7 years for infrastructure surface transport projects with preference for experience on Railway (includes DFCCIL, RVNL, MRVC projects and similar)/Metro projects.

b. Minimum average annual consultancy turnover of past 5 years should be ₹ 1 Cr.

c. The firm should have qualified and experienced Key Professionals as per requirement given in Terms of Reference.

Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

Consultant will be selected in accordance with the QCBSS method set out in the Railway Board's Guidelines issued vide Letter No. 2017/Trans/01/Policy dated 27/11/2017 for various Civil Engineering projects over Western Railway.

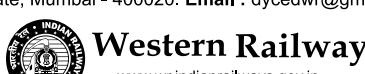
Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours between 10:00 hrs. to 17:00 hrs. on working days.

Expression of Interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person or by email) by 17/05/2021. The Consultant shall submit EOI in not more than 50 pages (Fifty) covering above mentioned relevant required details.

Address for Correspondence :

1) Manjul Mathur, CBE/WR,
Office of PCE Western Railway, 2nd Floor, WR HQ Building,
Churchgate, Mumbai - 400020. Email : cbewrly@gmail.com
Website : www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in

2) Himanshu Sharma, D.Y.CE/Design/WR
Office of PCE Western Railway, 2nd Floor, WR HQ Building,
Churchgate, Mumbai - 400020. Email : dycedwr@gmail.com



www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in

0050

Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly • Follow us on: [@twitter.com/WesternRly](https://twitter.com/WesternRly)

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

12th Anniversary



S. Jaspal Singh Aneja

28.07.1946 • 27.04.2009

Always in our Memories

Fondly remembered by
FAMILY MEMBERS and
Sintron Electronics P. Ltd
Singh Trading Company
MAK Electronics
CHENNAI

12th ANNIVERSARY

In loving memory of

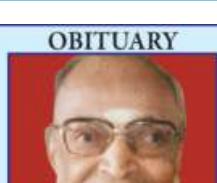


Mrs. KANAKA THOMAS

Fondly remembered by
T. Joseph (Son)
Dr. Hemalatha (Daughter-in-Law)
Rohit, Devina, Harvey & Rohan

DEATH

OBITUARY



Shri N.L. Vaidyanathan

Joint Secretary (Retd.)
Ministry of Law, New Delhi.
(Formerly a leading Advocate from Vadakara, Kerala)

04-03-1922 to 23-04-2021

Deeply Mourned by

Sons, Daughters, Son in law,
Daughters in law, Grand Children,
Great Grand Children,
Family and Friends

G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE) Kosi-Katarmal, Almora - 263 643, Uttarakhand India

Notice for Postponement of Interview

With reference to Institute's advertisement published in *The Hindu* for Walk in Interview scheduled on 30.04.2021 for the position of System Manager (01) and Junior Project Fellow (01) at Kosi-Katarmal, Campus of the Institute, it is informed that due to current situation of Novel Corona virus (COVID-19), as a precautionary measure, the Competent Authority has decided to **POSTPONE** the interview until further orders. The fresh date of Interview will be informed in due course of time.

Administrative Officer

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA PASCHIM VIHAR NEW DELHI-110087

Date: 27.04.2021

NOTICE

Applications are invited along with complete Bio-Data such as EPF/ESI/GST/ PAN NO/ experience and licenses etc. for 2021-22 from registered firms/ dealers who are well reputed, experienced having legal existence, fulfilling all statutory requirements for providing various services/goods for providing AMC of water coolers/ purifiers, Air conditioners, fire extinguishers, CCTV Surveillance System, Computers/computer peripherals, Over head Projectors, Supply and repair of furniture, Sports, Science labs, Exam stationery, Office stationery, Tent and Bedding items, Children's Park equipments, Medical Room Facilities, Securities, Conservancies and Gardening, Bus and transport vehicles, Civil and electrical material/works, Electrical & Electronic goods, Sanitation/Plumbing/Hardware items/works, etc. Interested firms/dealers may apply online for registration from 27.04.2021 to 06.05.2021 till 06:00PM on kvpv87exam@gmail.com with self attested copy of all necessary documents as proof. Tenders will be invited only from the shortlisted firms.

PRINCIPAL

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (U.P.) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

(A) 1. 02/GM/SM/(WC-6)/2021-22, Name of Work - D/o Sector-73, (C/o Balance Drain in front of Park, Raising & Repairing of drain of 30.00m wide road along green belt Sector-73), NOIDA.

Cost- Rs. 42.68 Lacs

Which can be uploaded by date 13.05.2021 upto 5.00 PM.

Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 14.05.2021 at 11.00 AM.

**General Manager
NOIDA**

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Disha D/o Ajay Singh** R/o H.No. 81C, Krishna Block Jain Nagar, Karala, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Begumpur, Delhi since 02.04.2021. In this regard, a case **FIR No. 104/2021 Dated 03.04.2021** has been registered at P.S. Begumpur, Delhi. The description of the missing girl as under.

Age: 14 Years, **Complexion:** Fair, **Height:** 5' 5", **Face:** Oval, **Hair:** Black and long, **Wearing:** Blue colour T-Shirt, Black colour stole and Pink colour lower. Since efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped girl then please inform P.S. Begumpur, Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph: 011-24368368, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- S.H.O.

PS: Begumpur, Delhi

DP/795/RD/2021 PH: 011-27579029, 27579030



CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE:

www.thehinduads.com

011-43579738 • 43579797

For enquiries on

announcements in this

section, please contact our

office at the following number

between 10a.m. and 8p.m.

New Delhi : 011- 43579797

Rate for New Delhi:

(Minimum Rs. 320/- 2 Lines

Extra Line - Rs.160/-)

(B/W Display): Rs.60/Per Sq.cm

(Clr Display): Rs.70/Per Sq.cm

Log on to

www.thehinduads.com

For Placing Advertisements

Online

EDUCATIONAL

ANTHRO

Vaid Sir's Online Batches

Starting May 1 | Few Seats Left

Please Visit YouTube Channel

youtube.com/c/vaidsicsdelhi

& website: www.vaidsics.com

Candidates Facing Interview

Pl. Contact Immediately for

LIVE ONLINE SESSIONS & PERSONAL

DISCUSSION WITH VAID SIR

PI Call Admin on: 0-99999 01938

Punjab left with only 1.9L doses of vaccine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu on Monday said the State was left with only 1.9 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine and oxygen from the Centre. He said that the State government is organising vaccination at all the primary health centers and health wellness centers as well as special camps in the rural areas. He said the health department had written a letter to the Union Ministry of Health on April 22, demanding 10 lakh doses of vaccine.

"Out of this available stock, more than 1 lakh doses expected to be used today [April 26]," said Mr. Sidhu, adding that about 1.5 lakh beneficiaries got vaccinated as on April 25 and Chief Minister Punjab Amarinder Singh

has already raised the alarming situation of Punjab due to increasing cases of COVID and demanded regular supply of COVID-19 vaccine and oxygen from the Centre. He said that the State government is organising vaccination at all the primary health centers and health wellness centers as well as special camps in the rural areas.

"Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced the decision of the Cabinet on Twitter. "Due to continuous and rapid rise of COVID-19 cases in Punjab, Cabinet today has decided to impose daily lockdown from 6 PM to 5 AM and weekend lockdown from Friday 6 PM to Monday 5 AM. Urge you all to stay at home & step out only if absolutely necessary. Seek your full cooperation," he said a tweet.

The Cabinet also gave approval to allow the recruitment of 473 posts of staff nurses in Rajendra Hospital, Patiala, and Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, Amritsar, attached with Government Medical Colleges of Patiala and Amritsar respectively by taking these posts out of the purview of Subordinate Service Selection Board to Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot through the written test on the basis of merit, according to an official statement.

Bed scarcity

The number of beds to treat COVID-19 patients at the government hospitals is close to saturation in Chandigarh, forcing the administration on Monday to make a clarion call to various groups and associations to come forward in scaling up the capacity.

On April 26, the total number of dedicated COVID-19 beds at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) was 337 of which 286 were occupied – among these 222 patients were occupying the non-ICU oxygen beds while the

IN BRIEF



Class 10 exams as per schedule: A.P. Minister

KADAPA

Andhra Pradesh Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh (in picture) on Monday said that the public examinations for Class X students would be held as per the schedule from June 7.

Plus Two practical exams put off in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM With calls from students, parents and teachers for postponement of the Plus Two higher secondary vocational higher secondary practical exams growing more strident in the wake of the COVID-19 situation in Kerala, the General Education Department has decided to put them off for the time being.

Oxygen dip kills three in A.P. hospital

Karnataka offers free vaccination for those between 18 and 44, announces partial lockdown for 14 days

STAFF REPORTER

VIZIANAGARAM

Three COVID-19 patients at the Maharaja Government Hospital in Vizianagaram died on Monday due to disruption in oxygen supply. While two persons died in the hospital, another died after being shifted to a private hospital.

Opposition parties alleged that the toll was over 10, but officials said there were only three deaths. Fifteen patients who were in a critical condition among the 290 admitted to the hospital, were shifted to various private hospitals between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m.

MR Hospital Superintendent Gowri Sankar said the administration acted to shift the patients to nearby private hospitals after observing the sudden drop in oxygen levels at around 3.30 a.m. Vizianagaram Collector M. Hari Jawaharlal told the

media that oxygen was brought from industries in Pydibhimavaram of Srikrishna district and Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Karnataka on Monday announced free COVID-19 vaccination for all those aged 18 to 44 years in government hospitals and centres from May 1. Health Minister K. Sudhakar said ₹400 crore had been allocated for this.

The government had been providing free vaccination to all aged above 45 in government facilities, but there were complaints of vaccine shortage. Asked about vaccine availability, the Minister said stocks based on orders were yet to come.

The Karnataka Cabinet on Monday announced a partial lockdown for 14 days starting 9 p.m. on Tuesday. Only shops providing essential services would be open from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., said Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.



Checking the lifeline: Officials inspecting oxygen supply at the Maharaja Government Hospital in Vizianagaram on Monday.

There would be no public transport and no metro trains in Bengaluru. All industries, except manufacturing, would remain closed. The garment industries would also be shut.

The Chief Minister said all agriculture activities would be allowed in rural areas, but agricultural markets in cities would be closed.

Mr. Yediyurappa said the Centre was supplying 800 tonnes of oxygen and shortage would not occur. Karnataka recorded over 34,000 cases on Sunday, 20,000 of them from Bengaluru urban.

Kerala stopped short of imposing a total Statewide lockdown, but clamped down to rein in COVID-19 cases. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said exotic and virulent virus variants had spurred the second wave.

"Kerala's current epidemic situation is similar to that of New Delhi in early April. The government is constrained to impose tough containment measures. It could not allow the outbreak to intensify, and overrun the State's healthcare resources," he said.

The government ordered shut bars, liquor shops, cinema halls, malls, gyms, clubs, sports complexes, swimming pools, and entertainment parks, and prohibited social, political, cultural, and religious functions and gatherings.

The police would allow only election officials, candidates, political agents, and mediapersons into counting centres on May 2.

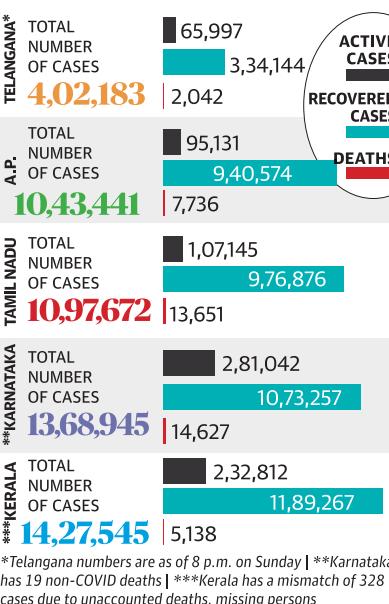
(With inputs from Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram bureaus)

Case surge continues in Kerala; 51 deaths in A.P.

In demand | With rising COVID-19 cases, many people are seeking hospital care and there is a huge demand for ambulances. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States.



Ready to roll: Ambulances parked along the Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad on Monday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA



Karnataka records 29,744 cases; drop in tests in Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

For the sixth day in a row, Kerala reported over 20,000 new COVID-19 cases. Of the 96,378 samples tested in 24 hours on Monday, 21,890 tested positive.

COVID-19

On Monday, the State added 28 deaths, taking the cumulative fatalities to 5,138.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh reported 51 deaths and 9,881 new cases in the 24 hours ending Monday morning.

The cumulative case tally

increased to 10,43,441 and the toll reached 7,736.

Four districts reported more than 1,000 new infections.

In Telangana, the total COVID-19 cases crossed 4 lakh on Sunday. With 6,551 cases and 43 deaths on Sunday, the total cases from March 2 last year have reached 4.01 lakh and the fatalities stand at 2,024.

Comparatively less number of cases were detected in Telangana on Sunday as the number of tests dropped.

Karnataka reported 29,744 new cases on Monday, a significant drop from the 34,804 cases recorded

the previous day.

Bengaluru urban had reported 16,545 new cases. The total number of active cases in the State stand at 2.81 lakh.

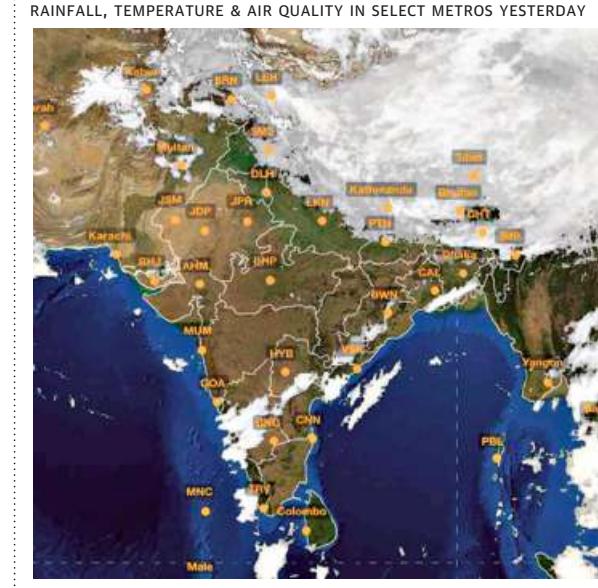
As many as 201 deaths were reported, taking the total fatalities to 14,627.

Tamil Nadu recorded 15,684 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Monday, taking its tally to 10,97,672. As many as 1,07,145 persons are currently under treatment in Tamil Nadu.

As many as 94 persons succumbed to the infection.

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

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim, Odisha, Telangana, central Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Gujarat, Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 39.5...	24.4		Kozhikode	... 1...	25.2	
Ahmedabad	... 42.9...	25.1		Kurnool	... 40.0...	28.0	
Aizawl	... 31.8...	18.2		Lucknow	... 40.0...	20.7	
Altahabali	... 41.2...	20.5		Madurai	... 38.2...	27.0	
Bengaluru	... 33.6...	23.0		Mangaluru	... 35.0...	25.4	
Bhopal	... 40.3...	20.6		Mumbai	... 34.5...	27.8	
Bhubaneswar	... 42.5...	26.4		Mysuru	... 33.0...	21.8	
Chandigarh	... 35.4...	19.2		New Delhi	... 40...	16.7	
Chennai	... 35.4...	27.4		Patna	... 38.8...	17.8	
Coimbatore	... 35.4...	25.4		Port Blair	9.4...	32.3...	24.7
Dehradun	... 36.8...	16.5		Puducherry	... 34.4...	26.4	
Gangtok	... 29.9...	14.1		Pune	... 39.6...	23.9	
Goa	... 34.5...	26.3		Raipur	... 40.5...	22.5	
Guwahati	... 38.1...	22.8		Ranchi	... 37.6...	25.1	
Hubballi	... 35.0...	24.0		Shillong	... 27.2...	17.4	
Hyderabad	... 38.9...	26.5		Shimla	... 28.2...	15.5	
Imphal	... 33.5...	15.1		Srinagar	... 25.6...	7.6	
Jaipur	... 40.4...	20.7		Tiruchi	... 40.0...	27.4	
Kochi	... 32.6...	26.4		Vijayawada	... 37.2...	26.2	
Kohima	... 28.0...	18.2		Visakhapatnam	... 40.2...	27.8	
Kolkata	... 40.2...	28.0					

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	41	70	47	110	144	...
Bengaluru	...	36	63	111	91	...
Chennai	15	5.1	36	54	54	...
Delhi	48	77	34	325	305	...
Hyderabad	4	60	38	64	55	...
Kolkata	19	20	73	115	121	...
Lucknow	19	59	68	177	156	...
Mumbai	8	20	17	212	171	...
Pune	6	30	43	104	88	...
Visakhapatnam	18	41	6	56	82	...

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 400, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Panchkheda, Haryana recorded a healthy AQI score of 37.

NO_x: Sulphur 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. 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 and premature death in people with heart disease.

Man's timely action controls gas leak

NAVI MUMBAI
A gas leak from a dairy company in Turbhe MIDC on Monday was controlled on time by an Indira Nagar resident. Around 10 a.m., an 18-year-old girl fell unconscious after inhaling ammonia. "Shailesh Tayade, who was a former employee of the dairy, closed the particular valve," the Shiv Sena head of Turbhe said.

TO ADVERTISE
PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Cong. unhappy at NCP leader's announcement of free vaccines

Matter under CM's consideration: Thorat; Fadnavis targets Aaditya over his tweet



Patient and eager: An elderly woman waits outside a vaccination centre at Dharavi in Mumbai on Monday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

State sets daily vaccination record

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Monday set a record by vaccinating five lakh



Unfair and dangerous

Vaccine inequity will make containment measures more difficult

In the midst of a raging second wave, which is touching new peaks each passing day, the Central government has abdicated its responsibility to ensure vaccine equity through free vaccination for the poor across all age groups. While State governments were never consulted or given prior notice about the change in vaccination policy, giving the two vaccine manufacturers a free hand to decide the price at which vaccines will be sold to State governments has made universal COVID-19 vaccination a difficult task to achieve. A large percentage of those aged 18-44 years does not have the resources to pay for vaccines and hence will fall through the cracks. So, the States will have to take a leading role in the free immunisation programme. While nearly two dozen States have already committed to vaccinate for free the target population, it remains to be seen if they use any criteria to identify the beneficiaries. Never before has universal immunisation of nearly 600 million people been left to State governments and the private sector while the Union government restricts itself to vaccinating for free just 300 million. With this precedent, States will probably be required to vaccinate children too, when vaccines become available, thus burdening them even further and thereby actively promoting vaccine inequity. If making States pay for vaccines is an ill-conceived idea, forcing them to shell out more than what the Union government pays for the same vaccines is a sure recipe for exacerbated vaccine inequity. With vaccination being the only safe way to end the pandemic, undertaking any exercise that leaves a large population unprotected will cost the country enormously in terms of lives and livelihoods.

While the Union government has already allocated ₹35,000 crore for COVID-19 vaccination in this Budget and also committed to provide further funds if required, it will spend less than ₹10,000 crore to vaccinate for free all above 45 years. While the sudden change in policy is therefore not due to lack of financial resources, the State governments, which have not factored in funds for vaccination, will now be required to garner funds for the same. There is hence a great compulsion to make pricing more transparent and allow States to collectively bargain for a lower price and assured timelines to receive supplies. The current policy, which has earmarked 50% supplies to State governments and private hospitals, takes the States and the companies to a completely uncharted territory leading to competition among States, and between State governments and private hospitals. Vaccine shortage from both manufacturers is likely to last a few months. The combination of policy pandemonium, profiteering by vaccine manufacturers in the thick of the pandemic and vaccine shortage is unlikely to result in a smooth roll-out of vaccines for the target group. This could lead to a dangerous situation where containment and mitigation measures become even more difficult.

A stream of awards

Oscars this year saw many firsts, and also a fair amount of continuity and predictability

After last year's Oscar sweep by *Parasite*, there were those who peddled the myth that lightning will not strike the same place twice. It kind of did in the 93rd Academy Awards, when the Best Supporting Actress award went to South Korean Youn Yuh-jung, for her role as granny Soon-ja in the heart-warming *Minari*, beating off competition from Glenn Close's mad-haired Mamaw in *Hillbilly Elegy*. Anthony Hopkins winning his second Best Actor Oscar (he first won for *The Silence of the Lambs*) was disappointing, even if deserving. The sentimental favourite was the late Chadwick Boseman, who turned in an incendiary performance as the mercurial trumpeter, Levee Green, in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. As expected, *Nomadland* won big with Best Picture, Best Director for Chloé Zhao and Best Actress (Frances McDormand). It is a historic win for Zhao as she is only the second woman to win the award and the first woman of colour to do so. While elegiac in its beauty, *Nomadland* should have looked at privilege. Only a white person can feel safe enough to drop off the grid. Wandering white people, even if they are hulking ex-military policemen, are enlightened and definitely not lost, while a homeless black person will always be looked at with suspicion.

In this year of pandemics and lockdowns, the old rules of movies playing for a certain amount of time in theatres to be considered for the awards was relaxed. Movies directly released on streaming platforms made the cut. David Fincher's *Mank* got 10 nominations and won two – for cinematography and production design. Other favourites such as *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Sound of Metal*, *Pieces of a Woman*, *Hillbilly Elegy*, *One Night in Miami* and *The Trial of the Chicago 7* were also streamed. One gem of a film was *Two Distant Strangers*, which won for Best Live Action Short. The film effectively marries two burning issues – violence against black Americans by white policemen and being caught in a time loop. Black graphic designer, Carter James, just wants to get back to his dog and he is shot every time by a white policeman, Merk. The film brings alive memories of police brutality at home as well. Every time Carter wakes up after being shot, to live the day again, it is a reminder of the year of blurs that passed by. One should, however, be thankful for blurs – if one cannot distinguish one day from the next, it means nothing hideous happened to make the day stand out. That, in these days of shock and dread is definitely something to be grateful for.

Undermining 'vaccination for all'

The new vaccine strategy raises questions, beginning with the Centre giving up its control over the market for vaccines



BISWAJIT DHAR &
K.M. GOPAKUMAR

Just when the spread of COVID-19 has reached catastrophic proportions, with the daily case-load rising faster than that seen anywhere in the world since the beginning of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Government of India has acted by unveiling a completely revamped vaccine strategy. Two key elements are the hallmark of this new strategy, which will be implemented from May 1. First, the phased roll-out of the vaccination drive initiated on January 16 under which the vaccine-eligible sections of the population were gradually increased, has now been extended to the entire adult population, namely, to those above 18 years. Second, and more importantly, a significant deregulation of the vaccine market has been effected and vaccine manufacturers have the freedom to sell 50% of their vaccine production to State governments and private hospitals, and at prices that can be substantially higher than that hitherto fixed by the government. A third element of the vaccine strategy, which was not announced formally, is a grant of ₹45 billion to the two vaccine manufacturers, the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech, to boost their capacities.

Handing over the reins

The new vaccine strategy raises a number of questions, not the least from the manner in which the central government has given up its control over the market for vaccines, a key feature of the vaccine roll-out plans thus far. This issue assumes further significance since the Government of India is well

aware, as all public authorities around the world are, about the significance of vaccinating every citizen in the country; "none of us will be safe until everyone is safe". It is, therefore, vitally important that public health authorities in the country take an objective view of the realities of the country before adopting strategies for vaccine availability, for this is absolutely critical for resetting lives and livelihoods disrupted by the pandemic. Several facts suggest that this has not done while re-jigging the extant vaccine strategy.

Vaccine exports

The phased roll-out of the government's ambitious vaccination drive, beginning with health-care and frontline workers in January, followed by the gradual inclusion of senior citizens and people above 45 years in March and April, respectively, was in sync with the availability of vaccines in the country. Although SII, the largest vaccine producer, had initially promised to supply 100 million doses of vaccines a month, in reality it could provide between 50 million to 60 million doses. But, given that India too saw a degree of "vaccine-scepticism", the Government of India found itself in a situation where it could promise exports of vaccines to 95 countries, mostly in Africa and Asia. As of April 26, these countries have received more than 66.4 million doses of vaccines from India (<https://bit.ly/3eAvGYW>).

Until now, nearly 142 million vaccine doses have been administered in the country, the third highest in the world. However, in terms of population share, less than 2% has received both vaccine doses, while less than 9% has received one dose (<https://bit.ly/3afvO8A>). But there is one worrying facet, which is that a demand-supply mismatch has begun to appear as the coverage of the vaccine-eligible population expanded. The largest supplier, SII, gave two expla-

nations for its inability to meet its commitments. The first was that the United States Government had used a Cold War piece of legislation, the Defense Production Act, to restrict exports of vaccine culture and other essential materials. Second, the company complained that it lacked the financial capacity to expand its production, requesting a grant of ₹30 billion from the government (<https://bit.ly/2S8z3iB>).

Onus on States

It is the face of this vaccine supply-crunch that the government has announced the new vaccine strategy, by opening vaccination to all adults in the country, and allowing vaccine producers to sell 50% of their production directly to State governments and private hospitals. The new strategy shifts the onus onto the State governments, which have to take decisions regarding free vaccination for people above 18 years, while the central government would continue to support vaccination for people above 45 years, and health-care workers and frontline workers. The government has not fixed the vaccine prices and has allowed the producers to pre-declare the prices they would charge from the State governments and private hospitals, a sharp departure from the extant strategy.

Thus far, government facilities have provided vaccines free of cost, while private facilities are allowed to charge no more than ₹250 per dose. The central government played the role of a sole procurement agency that helped in

driving down prices, thus addressing the issue of affordable access to vaccines. However, the new strategy abandons this mechanism and fragments the market into three layers namely, central government procurement, State government procurement and the private hospitals. This layering of the market would allow the producers to charge high prices from the State governments and private hospitals. In fact, both SII and Bharat Biotech have immediately announced their intentions to raise vaccine prices. SII will sell Covishield to State governments and private hospitals would have at ₹400 and ₹600 per dose, respectively (<https://bit.ly/3gFCPmf>), while the corresponding figures for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin are ₹600 and ₹1,200 per dose (<https://bit.ly/3t1sb3j>).

The new strategy would shift the burden of vaccination of the young population, namely, those between 18-44 years, entirely on the State governments. This implies that the vaccination of a significant section of the population depends on the financial health of each State government, resulting in inequitable access to vaccines across States. Moreover, given their poor state of finances, most State governments may not be able to procure the required number of vaccine doses to meet the demands of the targeted population. In such a situation, a large share of the vaccine quota (50% of domestic production) earmarked for the State governments and the private hospitals could end up with the latter.

In the U.S.

The decision to substantially deregulate the vaccine market raises serious questions in view of the reported advance of ₹45 billion made by the Government of India to the two vaccine producers in India for expanding their production capacities (<https://bit.ly/3eveFzr>). The Federal government in the

United States has done similarly, providing financial support to vaccine producers, who are now set to rake in billions by charging high prices. Several public interest groups in the U.S. have asked questions as to why the tax-paying public should bear the high prices of vaccines when Federal taxes have been used to beef up the vaccine producers. This question is more pertinent in India, where access to affordable vaccines is critical for ensuring "vaccination for all".

More open licensing needed

It is somewhat ironic that the new vaccine strategy, which could undermine "vaccination for all", comes from a country that has long championed the cause of access to affordable medicines in international forums. Rather than hand over the reins of price determination to the duopoly in the vaccine market, the government should have urgently addressed the serious doubts over affordability of vaccines by ensuring a competitive market for vaccines. According to recent estimates, existing producers in India will be unable to meet the country's vaccine requirements by some distance, and therefore, India needs more vaccine manufacturers to ensure uninterrupted supply. One positive step that the government has taken in this direction is to increase production of Bharat Biotech's vaccine through the involvement of three public sector undertakings, including Haffkine Institute. We would argue that there is a need for more open licensing of this vaccine to scale up production. This would enhance competition in the market, enabling the vaccines to reach every citizen in the country.

Biswajit Dhar is Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. **K.M. Gopakumar** is Legal Adviser, Third World Network (TWN). The views expressed are personal



Another wave spells more nutrition loss

The inability of those already on the brink of subsistence to absorb a second economic shock cannot be overlooked

KARAN SINGHAL,
ADVAITA RAJENDRA &
ANKUR SARIN

The political and social handling of the COVID-19 pandemic have added to the persisting issues of food insecurity faced by millions in India even prior to the novel coronavirus pandemic. India consistently has ranked poorly in all international rankings on hunger (ranking 102 among 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2019). With the second, more vigorous wave of COVID-19, the inability of those already on the brink of subsistence to absorb a second economic shock cannot be overlooked even as the current health crisis is creating havoc. Rural distress specifically needs closer examination and urgent policy attention.

Data collection, findings

The Rapid Rural Community Response, or RCRC (<https://bit.ly/3etWSsE>) to COVID-19, a collective of over 60 non-governmental organisations has collected three rounds of data since the lockdown. The data provide crucial evidence of the nature and persistence of food and financial insecurities among the poor residing in rural areas.

The third round conducted between December 2020-January 2021 has collected data from 11,766

households across 64 districts, in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

Cutting down on food

The most recent data suggest a persistence of cutting down on food even nine months after the first lockdown, during the seeming "revival" period. While 40% of the sample cut down on food during the first lockdown, an alarming 25% reportedly continued to cut down on food during the most recent survey conducted between December and January 2021. Households reported cutting down on nutritious food – 80% cut down on milk, vegetables, pulses and oil (around 50% reported cutting down on pulses alone). Disaggregating the figure, we find that the poorer, socially marginalised Dalits, and those with lesser access to food security schemes (such as migrants) faced more severe food insecurity. Comparing similar households, we find households in Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand were faring among the worst performing States. These reductions will undoubtedly further accelerate the impending effects on children's nutrition, as highlighted in the National Family Health Survey or NFHS-V (2019-20) and the Global Food Policy Report, 2021.

The loss in nutrition may have



come as a consequence of people losing their jobs and/or being pushed into lower income brackets over time due to the nature and handling of the pandemic.

Reduction in incomes

Pew Research Center has indicated that the middle class in India has shrunk by over 32 million households in the past year (<https://pewrsr.ch/2R3J3sU>). We find an indication of a downward shift in incomes even among a much poorer sample of households. Our survey suggests an over 70% reported reduction in incomes post the pandemic, with many falling into significant precarity. While 55% of households recalled earning less than ₹5,000 per month prior to the pandemic, around 74% reported doing so in December 2020-January 2021. It is thus unsurprising that around 30% households were also seeking loans, and among them, at least half of them reported needing loans for food, all indicative of the debilitating food and financial insecurities that poor

households continue to face.

Migrants on the margins

The second wave of the pandemic comes on the back of an uneven recovery and persistence of crippling food and financial insecurity among the poorest households, especially migrants. Migrants who have travelled to cities only months ago are again travelling back to their villages. In our sample, 74% households had migrant members who had returned to the village during or after the lockdown (in mid-2020); 57% among them had gone back to the destination city by December-January, with 59% of those remaining also wanting to go back. It was the relatively disadvantaged who had not been able to find their way back to the cities. There was limited support for migrants even in existing social protection schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). For example, among the poorest, households with migrants were more likely to seek work than those without (43% versus 32%), but less likely to get work (49% versus 59%) under the scheme.

It is clear that households have not had a chance to rebuild, and with many completely exhausting their savings and facing massive debt, they are bound to be more severely hit than last year. In the

face of such a threat, including high unemployment that is steadily rising again, the state must ensure immediate, sustained action.

Food security is a must

The Government has promised to restart the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) with 5 kg of rice/wheat per person per month for the next two months (<https://bit.ly/3gE4xqQ>). The government needs to provide similar support for stabler longer periods; expand the current offering to include nutritious foods like pulses; address issues faced in existing schemes such as MGNREGA (like delays in wages and rationing); and new schemes such as a potential urban employment scheme should be explored. Food security schemes such as ration provided to children through anganwadis, Public Distribution System and mid-day meal scheme in primary schools need to be ramped up systematically and urgently. For migrants stuck in cities without work, community kitchens (such as Amma canteens) are required. The most vulnerable will need more predictable and stable support than ever before.

Karan Singhal is a researcher, Adyava Rajendra is a PhD student and Ankur Sarin is a faculty based out of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. The views expressed are personal

meticulously to the service rule of confidentiality even this far in time.

M. JAMEEL AHMED,
Mysuru

Oxygen from Sterlite
The decision by the Tamil Nadu government to augment oxygen production utilising the facilities at Vedanta's Sterlite copper plant in Tuticorin should only be seen as a pragmatic wager, when the nation is gasping for oxygen. However, the terms and conditions for this 'ad hoc' arrangement have to be laid out clearly to avoid any misunderstanding later between the government, Vedanta and the people of Tamil Nadu.

SAM VIJAY KUMAR J.,
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



Issue of equity
The ongoing medical and human health crises should be the incontrovertible argument, if ever one was needed, for all health services to be public and free (Page 1, "18-44 age group may get jabs only through private facilities", April 26). Moreover, the wide-scale distress and profiteering from distress through hoarding and exorbitantly-priced selling of essential items and services also make clear the virtue of having an equitable and decentralised health-care system. For those, including governments, who may point out the high public costs or the impossible nature of such an institution, the present public costs, which have

merely been made tragically visible due to the pandemic but were always being borne by the masses of this country, and the fact that many countries do have a fully public funded health care system, should be a sufficiently robust answer. Finally, only a morally debased and criminally irresponsible polity allows private profiteering out of people's tragedies and medical services, which are the first of universal human rights and a matter of dignity.

FIROZ AHMAD,
New Delhi

■ A straightforward strategy of vaccinating everyone over the age of 18 has become the subject of political football. Dual pricing, with free

vaccines at government hospitals for the poor and a market price at private hospitals for people who are willing to pay, would have enabled vaccine makers to recover lost profit from supplying to the state. Who would have thought this fiasco will happen in a country which is one of the largest producers and exporters of COVID-19 vaccines?

Ds. THOMAS PALOCAREN,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Help for India
Though some form or other of a lockdown has been imposed in the best interests of the health and safety of the common man, there is otherwise a dire need to ramp up medical facilities to meet the needs of both symptomatic and

asymptomatic patients. It is appreciable that some countries have come forward to support the nation's needs (Page 1, April 26). The world should note that it was India that took a lead in supplying vaccines to other nations.

VARUN DAMBAL,
Bengaluru

History and Bangladesh
One cannot but praise the writer's extraordinary skills in telling off the

An idea on taxation that is worth a try

The proposal for a minimum global corporate income tax could be a game changer



ARUN KUMAR

United States Secretary of the Treasury Janet L. Yellen's proposal for global coordination of corporate taxation has huge implications. She has proposed a global minimum tax rate. If the major world economies agree and the U.S. Congress approves the increased tax rates, it would constitute a reversal of the trend in tax policies since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc 30 years back. Would Ms. Yellen succeed in convincing OECD countries and the U.S. Congress? David R. Malpass, President of the World Bank, representing the interest of global capital, has voiced his opposition. He was shooting from the shoulders of the poor countries when he said the proposal "...would hinder poor countries' ability to attract investment".

The initiative which has been long overdue is being forced on the rich countries by the impact of the pandemic. Presently, governments need resources to help people through transfer of incomes, provision of more public services and also prevent business failures. But their resources have been adversely impacted by the economic downturn. Consequently, fiscal deficits have reached record high levels. In the pre-pandemic era, such levels of deficit would have led to the tanking of the stock markets but now they are booming in anticipation of demand being pumped in by these high deficits. The result is a massive increase in inequality between those who have gained in the stock markets and those who have lost employment and incomes.

Massive deficits in the budget
The Joe Biden administration is proposing a massive \$3 trillion package to boost the economy. A large part of this will be spent in 2021 but some of it will be staggered. This will be in addition to the \$1.9 trillion package of relief already approved soon after the Biden administration took office. This package came after former President Donald Trump signed on the



\$900 billion stimulus package in end December 2020 and more than \$2 trillion in mid-2020. Thus, in addition to the pre-existing deficits in the budget an additional 15% of GDP is being added in both 2020 and 2021. These are unprecedented levels.

Additional tax collections can help reduce these large deficits and that is the reason for the U.S. administration's current proposal. But businesses and conservative legislators will resist. However, some rich Americans like Jeff Bezos have supported the idea of taxing the rich more. Such proposals have been around since 2011 when many of the rich in the U.S. and Europe had supported higher taxation on the rich. Warren Buffet had floated this proposal to strengthen capitalist economies after the global financial crisis of 2007-09. Subsequently, this proposal has come up several times. But, instead of raising the tax rate on corporations, the Trump administration cut the highest marginal tax rate from 35% to 21% with effect from January 1, 2018. This gives a hint as to why it is both difficult to raise corporation tax rates and why Ms. Yellen has proposed a global agreement on corporate taxation.

When the Soviet Bloc collapsed in 1990, nations in east Europe were badly hit and needed capital infusion to overcome their economic woes. To attract global capital, they cut their tax rates sharply. This resulted in a 'race to the bottom'. Nations in Europe were forced to cut their tax rates one after the other to not only

attract capital but also to prevent capital from leaving their shores. This had global implications.

Nations became short of resources and cut back expenditures on public services and encouraged privatisation. Governments lacked resources for education, health and civic amenities. The developing countries followed suit even though private markets do not cater to the poor. Thus, disparities increased within nations.

BEPS and loss of revenue
The world experienced Base Erosion Profit Shifting (BEPS). Namely, companies shifted their profits to low tax jurisdictions, especially, the tax havens. For instance, many of the most profitable companies like Google and Facebook are accused of shifting their profits to Ireland and other tax havens and paying little tax. EU has levied fines on Google and Apple for such practices. Former U.S. President Barack Obama in 2009 had said that the U.S. was losing \$100 billion in taxes due to such practices.

Since all the OECD countries have suffered due to cuts in tax rates and BEPS, initiatives have been taken to check these practices. But they will not succeed unless there is agreement among all the countries. Any country facing economic adversity can cut its tax rates to attract capital and force others to follow suit. India has also cut its tax rates since the 1990s. Most recently in 2019 the corporation tax rate was cut drastically to match those prevailing in Southeast Asia. Such cuts have implica-

tions for both inequality as well as for funding the schemes for the poor and the quality of public services.

The regressive tax structure

Another implication of the reductions in direct tax rates has been that governments have increasingly depended on the regressive indirect taxes for revenue generation. Value-Added Tax and Goods and Services Tax have been increasingly used to get more revenues. This impacts the less well-off proportionately more and is inflationary. Direct taxes tend to lower the post-tax income inequality. The rising inequalities result in shortage of demand in the economy and to its slowing down which then requires more investment and that calls for more concessions to capital. However, that does not guarantee revival because investment in response to a tax cut is uncertain. Instead, increased government expenditures are sure to raise demand.

Global financial capital which is highly mobile has effectively used tax havens and shell companies to shift profits and capital across the globe. This mobility has enabled it to extract concessions from countries by making them compete with each other to match the concessions given by another – that is the 'race to the bottom'. So, without global coordination, corporation tax rates cannot be raised.

The U.S. is crucial to this coordination – without its cooperation and agreeing, other countries cannot raise the rates. Now that the U.S. is taking the lead, perhaps this will happen even though it will not be easy given the cloud of global capital in the corridors of power in all countries. There will also have to be cooperation among countries to tackle the lure of the tax havens by enacting suitable global policies. The impact of all this will be far-reaching impacting inequalities, provision of public services and reduction of flight of capital from developing countries such as India and that will impact poverty. So, a global minimum tax rate is worth a try in spite of the objection raised by the World Bank President.

Arun Kumar is Malcolm Adiseshiah Chair Professor, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, and author of 'Indian Economy's Greatest Crisis: Impact of Coronavirus and the Road Ahead'

COVID-19's triage challenge

This time-tested, effective strategy could help tackle COVID-19 but poses unique challenges in India



SANJAY NAGRAL

The second COVID-19 wave has hit India with great ferocity. It's déjà vu and more. Family, friends and colleagues are infected, hospitals are flooded with patients, there is a shortage of beds, and ambulances are screaming through the streets. There are curfews and lockdowns, and death is in the air. But there is something different about this wave. Apart from the difference in the disease pattern (infectivity is higher and younger people are being affected), a larger proportion of the elite has been infected. In Mumbai, high-rises have been more affected than slums. The elite have been rudely exposed to the dysfunctionality of our healthcare system which the poor have endured for years. The secure world of the privileged has been exposed. Imbalance between demand and supply of healthcare facilities is not peculiar to India. But there is something in our social DNA that could be making it worse.

Categorising patients based on severity
A time-tested, effective strategy to face the challenge of a sudden large load on the healthcare system is the concept of 'triage'. This means that when there are a large number of people needing urgent care and there are limited resources, the victims are divided into multiple categories based on severity of disease. The most severe are treated first as any delay will cost lives. The rest are treated later as per their level of severity. This idea was first introduced by Napoleon's military surgeons to treat battlefield injuries and showed immediate impact. It is now standard practice in many countries when treating mass casualties. It has also been used effectively during COVID-19.

But triage is not a sterile, mechanical protocol insulated from its surroundings. Its wide acceptance and implementation are based on the powerful but complex principles of justice and solidarity. It is where the interests of everyone are put above the interest of an individual; where those who need care first are prioritised over those who can wait, irrespective of who they are. It works when there is social consensus on a level playing field.

Right from the first wave, Mumbai has witnessed a rather unique effort by the Municipal Corporation to set up a single-window portal of helplines for hospital beds. For the

first time, this includes both the public and private sector. There is, of course, an inherent bias in that the public beds are free but the private ones are paid though the charges are capped. A tiered system of observation, oxygen and ICU facilities is in place on paper. However, a few weeks ago, a rather exasperated Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai said that the system is under strain because people are insisting on private hospital beds.

It would be unfair to fault a new Commissioner for a duality that has been cultivated over the years. I doubt whether many of us would easily use a public hospital today. After all, by design or habit, the sanitised world of private medicine is what the privileged have inhabited for years. Moreover, it is hard to remember any senior bureaucrat, politician or even doctor who has chosen to be treated in a public hospital in Mumbai for COVID-19. Even as the Municipal Commissioner was complaining, asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic people such as Sachin Tendulkar, Akshay Kumar and Rashmi Thackeray were admitted to large private hospitals as "abundant precaution". There are many individuals admitted to private hospitals because they fear that they won't get a bed if they need one suddenly.

Serious triage doesn't only prioritise the sickest over the less sick. It also discourages futile treatment for the very sick who are unlikely to benefit from the treatment. Thus, a 90-year-old who maybe otherwise bedridden could be refused admission or someone with an advanced untreatable cancer who develops COVID-19 may be put lower in priority. It's the same principle of justice applied in the reverse. Executing triage in its truest sense is a big collective leap and needs a certain social sanction. It needs to be perceived to be fair and transparent. The person who gives up a bed does it with the understanding that as and when she really needs it, she will get it. Everyone falls in line towards a greater common good.

Challenges

In an unequal world, however, the challenges to this idea are immense. In India, a social triage based on class, caste and other hierarchies is everyday practice. Also, whatever the severity of the crisis, it is hard to imagine a determined neutral state implementing a strict triage. Finally, given the current dominance of the private sector, especially in intensive care, triage has to involve state control over the private sector. But if there was ever an opportunity moment in this nation's history to muster courage to implement genuine triage, it is now.

Sanjay Nagral is a Mumbai-based surgeon

Protecting the police

The special insurance cover of ₹50 lakh must be revived and extended to all front-line workers

R.K. VIJ

Before the police could get fully vaccinated, the second wave of COVID-19 hit India more severely than anyone could have expected. Curfews and lockdowns have been imposed again in some regions to break the chain of transmission, but the challenges for the police are more varied and serious now.

Challenges for the police

Last year, most of the problem was limited to migrant labour following the nationwide lockdown – providing them ration, transport, and inter-State passes. The pandemic being the first of its kind for the current generation, the police faced a tough time enforcing the rules that came with various lockdowns. The punishment for violating COVID-19 protocols and lockdowns was kept mild.

The police had other challenges too: there was a spurt in cases of cyber-fraud, particularly those relating to online purchases and phishing. The Supreme Court, in pursuance of a suo motu petition, 'In Re: Contagion of Covid-19 Virus in Prisons' (2020), instructed High Courts to decongest prisons in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak by releasing convicts on parole and under-trial prisoners (charged with offences punishable with maximum punishment up to seven years) who were in jail for three months or more on temporary bail. Except for a few instances of criticism here and there, the police received appreciation for its perseverance and sympathy for others.

The situation appears to be more fearful and grimmer this time. With the steep spike in cases in just a fortnight, the number of hospital beds, ICU beds, medical oxygen, and drugs seems to be short of the rising demand. Though the administration is trying its best to defuse the situation by coordinating with various stakeholders, panic in certain pockets doesn't appear to subside. The role of some mediapersons and social activists needs special mention here as they have kept the hopes alive for many desperate people by extending a helping hand in time.

Another area of concern has been the disposal of bodies by the State

authorities as per COVID-19 protocols. This is sometimes delayed due to the limited capacity of cremation grounds. Relatives are not able to bid adieu to their loved ones and perform their last rituals. Their agony is beyond redemption.

Facing the brunt

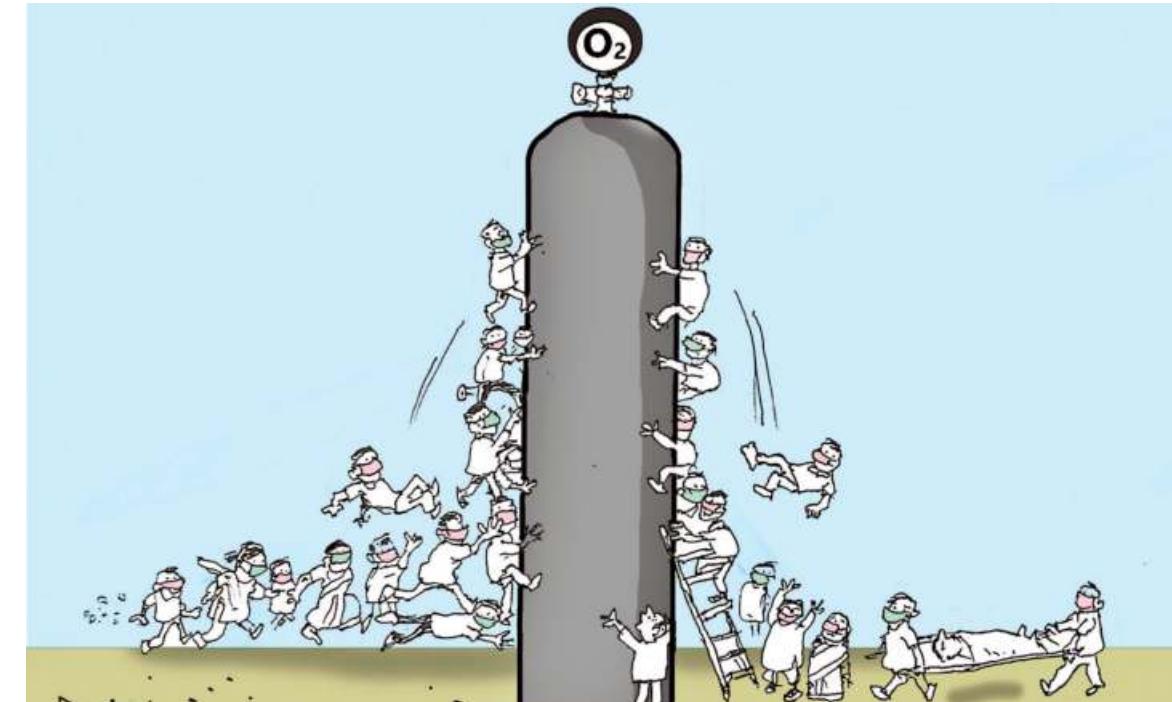
Needless to say, apart from healthcare workers of course, the brunt is being faced by the police, whether it is in tackling the menace of people hoarding scarcely available medical products or maintaining public order in front of hospitals. In addition to enforcing lockdowns and maintaining order, the police continue to perform their regular duties as well. In case an apprehended criminal is found COVID-19 positive, he needs to be quarantined before being produced before a magistrate. In heinous offences like murder and rape, arrests cannot be deferred. According to the prevalent jail protocol, criminals are permitted entry only if they test COVID-19 negative.

The probability of policemen who are effecting arrests catching the infection is very high. So, for a policeman, being safe while being on duty is becoming difficult. Many policemen have succumbed to COVID-19 and numerous others are getting infected while helping others. According to a tweet on March 16, 2021 by the Indian Police Foundation, 1,207 security men (including policemen of the State police and Central Armed Police Forces personnel) have died of COVID-19 and more than 2 lakh have been infected. Their families also remain at a higher risk.

The scheme of special insurance cover of ₹50 lakh, notified for the medical fraternity last year for a limited period of three months, must be revived and extended to all front-line workers (including the police) this time.

The challenges during the second wave of this pandemic have increased manifold. But despite facing various hardships, the police consider themselves fortunate enough to have been entrusted with the solemn duty to serve the needy and poor in difficult times.

R.K. Vij is a senior IPS officer in Chhattisgarh. Views are personal



DATA POINT

Positivity peaks

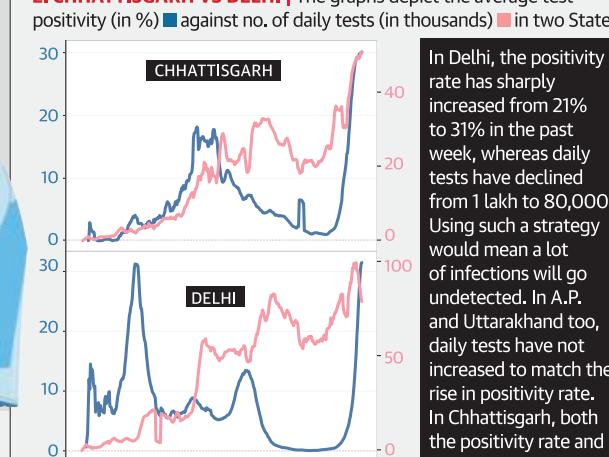
In at least 13 States, the positivity ratio (detected cases/tests) during the second wave has exceeded what was seen in the first wave. In 10 States, the positivity ratio crossed 20%, which means one in five tests is positive. Such a high positivity rate indicates an urgent need to increase the number of tests. While most States have scaled up their testing levels, some like Delhi, A.P. and Uttarakhand have brought it down.

By Suman Sen, Naresh S and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

1. LATEST POSITIVITY RATE | The table groups States according to the seven-day average positivity rate as on April 25. Goa, Chhattisgarh and Delhi recorded more than 30 positive cases for every 100 tests, while States such as Gujarat and Telangana registered less than 10.

Range (%)	States and average positivity (in %)
>30	Goa (38.5); Chhattisgarh (30.8); Delhi (30.2)
20-29	W.B. (28.6); Nagaland (27.9); Haryana (23.4); M.P. (23.02); Maharashtra (22.9); Kerala (22.5); A.P. (20.1)
10-19	Rajasthan (19.8); Karnataka (19.7); Chandigarh (19.7); Jharkhand (19.5); Himachal (19.1); Puducherry (18); Uttar Pradesh (14.7); Meghalaya (14.5); Odisha (14); Bihar (12.7); Tamil Nadu (12.4); Punjab (12); Uttarakhand (11.6)
<10	Gujarat (8.5); Manipur (7.8); Telangana (7.5); Assam (5.5); J&K (5.4); Mizoram (4.6); Arunachal (2.6); Tripura (2.4)

2. CHHATTISGARH VS DELHI | The graphs depict the average test positivity (in %) against no. of daily tests (in thousands) in two States



3. POSITIVITY RATE IN MAHARASHTRA | In the past week, in Maharashtra, tests have gone up, while the positivity rate has gone down. This is the ideal strategy. Despite the positivity rate going down, tests need to be scaled up or maintained at a certain level. In general, the more the tests, the better, regardless of the positivity rate



The Hindu
FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 27, 1971

Detecting super heavy elements

Indian scientists have found evidence confirming the existence of super heavy elements, so far unknown to scientists. This was stated here [New Delhi] to-day [April 26] by Prof. M. G. K. Menon, Director of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay and Chairman of the Electronics Commission who was delivering the founder memorial lecture of the Shri Ram Institute for Industrial Research. Prof. Menon said a group of scientists led by Prof. Dr. Lal of the Tata Institute made this discovery by studying extra-terrestrial materials such as meteorites and lunar samples using the fossil track technique. He said the group found evidence for the existence of plutonium-244 and also of extremely heavy elements of charge 115 and mass 300 in both lunar and meteorite samples. Such super heavy elements had not yet been synthesised in the laboratory, he said. Prof. Menon said beyond the heaviest element uranium with a charge of 92, only extremely unstable transuranic elements of charge upto 105 had been discovered by scientists so far. He said studies by the Tata institute group suggested that super heavy elements that went even beyond these transuranic elements could have been produced in appreciable quantities during nucleo-synthesis or the "stellar cooking" of elements. The studies were of "remarkable interest" for both nuclear physics and astrophysics, he added.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 27, 1921

"Mahatma Gandhi-Ki-Jai" on the brain

The "Tribune" writes:- Thus "New India" in a recent issue:- "One of the worst disservices done by Mr. Gandhi to India is the demoralisation of Indian youth, by encouraging in them irreverence and courtesy, as he has done by his campaign against schools, parents and teachers. The Indian boy used to be a gentleman, and by his home training was very courteous in his manners. Now he behaves like a western street-boy, has no reverence for age, authority or knowledge, no gratitude for services done to him or to his country and takes a pleasure in silly insult, presumptuously thinking that his elders will be troubled by it. When Lady Willingdon attended a lecture at Gokhale Hall, an impudent small boy, whose treble voice showed his youth, yelled at her, "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai." So the lads outside Gokhale Hall last night called out jeeringly the same silly words as Mrs. Besant and Mr. G.S. Arundale passed."

FROM PAGE ONE

States asked to impose localised lockdowns

"Social/ political / sports / entertainment / academic / cultural / religious / festival related and other gathering and congregations shall be prohibited. Marriages (attended by up to 50 persons) and funerals/ last rites (attended by up to 20 persons) may be allowed," the Ministry said, adding that such localised restrictions should continue for 14 days.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also issued a clarification to the Sunday's (April 25) order issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 on liquid oxygen. The order specifically excluded industries manu-

facturing ampules and vials, the pharmaceutical sector and the defence forces from its ambit. The order had said all liquid oxygen including the existing stock with private plants shall be made available to the government and will be used for medical purposes only.

Earlier on April 18, the MHA had written to the States prohibiting supply of oxygen for industrial purposes, except for exempted nine industries.

The fresh order issued on Monday, however, reverses the April 18 letter exempting only three specified categories.

Mask-up at home, says NITI Aayog member

Dr. Guleria said that 85% of those afflicted by the virus would recover without need of any medication and not everyone needed to rush to a hospital. "There is unnecessary panic all around and this is causing more harm than good. This is causing hoarding of drugs and misuse of valuable medical resources. An oxygen level of 94-95 doesn't need an oxygen concentrator and you shouldn't try to raise it at those levels. Above 94 means your organs are getting adequate oxygen."

"Before the pandemic, we've managed patients with these machines at 88-90. If it's below 94, consult with your doctor. For hospitals, it's important to prevent leakage. The benefits of

(antiviral) remdesivir aren't well established," he added.

Nearly 87% of registered healthcare workers and 80% of frontline workers had been administered at least one dose of vaccine, Mr. Agrawal said. However, only 36% of those 60 and above had received at least one shot, he added.

If no one wore masks, there was a 90% risk of an infected person transmitting the disease to someone else whereas everyone to wear one, that risk went down to 1.5%, Dr. Paul said. He added that other than tocilizumab and remdesivir, for managing mild COVID-19, the guidelines recommended hydroxychloroquine, paracetamol and ivermectin.

Daily cases to reach 4.4 lakh by May 8'

On Sunday, Prof. Agrawal shared the new peak values for active and new cases in a Twitter thread. "Peak timing: May 14-18 for active infections and May 4-8 for new infections. Peak value: 38-48 lakhs for active infections and 3.4 to 4.4 lakhs for new infections," he said.

The IIT Kanpur professor noted that the SUTRA model uses three main parameters to predict the course of the pandemic. The first is called beta, or contact rate, which measures how many people an infected person infects per day. It is related to the R-

nought value, which is the number of people an infected person spreads the virus to over the course of their infection, Prof. Agrawal said. The other two parameters are 'reach', which is a measure of the exposure level of the population to the pandemic, and 'epsilon', which is the ratio of detected and undetected cases.

Independent calculations by Gautam Menon and his team at Ashoka University in Haryana had predicted that the peak of the ongoing wave could be between mid-April and mid-May.

Tech giants pitch in to fight second wave

In another major gesture, Australia and Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Pat Cummins contributed \$50,000 to the PM Cares Fund. E-commerce giant Amazon too is working with industry partners and NGOs, including ACT Grants, Temasek Foundation, Pune Platform for COVID-19 Response, to airlift over 8,000 oxygen concentrators and 500 BiPAP machines from Singapore to India.

Amazon India is also procuring over 1,500 oxygen concentrators and other critical medical equipment that will be donated to hospitals and medical facilities. Most

of these are expected to land in India by April 30.

In a statement on Twitter, Mr. Cummins said, "As players, we are privileged to have a platform that allows us to reach millions of people that we can use for good. With that in mind, I have made a contribution to the PM Cares Fund, specifically to purchase oxygen supplies for India's hospitals."

"I encourage my fellow IPL players – and anyone else around the world who has been touched by India's passion and generosity – to contribute. I will kick it off with \$50,000," he wrote.

Sterlite can operate plant for 4 months: T.N. parties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

An all-party meeting convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Monday unanimously resolved to temporarily allow Vedanta's sealed Sterlite copper smelter plant in Thoothukudi to reopen to produce oxygen for four months, under certain conditions.

Considering the need

for oxygen and the prevailing COVID-19 situation, it was resolved that the permit may be extended later on, an official release said. The meeting decided that production of copper or the operation of any other units would not be allowed in the plant under any circumstances.

"Tamil Nadu should be given priority in the [usage of] oxygen produced at the plant...," it said.

Peaceful voting in West Bengal

Kolkata sees low turnout; polling in 35 seats to be held in last phase on April 29

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Polling for 34 Assembly seats across five districts in the seventh and penultimate phase of elections in West Bengal on Monday was peaceful.

The polling percentage till 5 p.m. – one hour before closure – was 75.06% and the four seats in Kolkata South recorded the lowest (about 59.91%). About 81 lakh voters were eligible to choose from 268 candidates. Polling was also held for nine seats in Paschim Bardhaman and Murshidabad districts, six in Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda districts and four in Kolkata.

Chief Electoral Officer Aariz Aftab said the polling was peaceful. Addl. DGP, Law and Order, Jagmohan, said



Making it count: People waiting outside a polling station in Kolkata on Monday. ■ PTI

have been recovered – 22 from Murshidabad and 35 from Kolkata," he said.

742 persons detained

During the day, 11 persons were arrested for violating prohibitory orders and 12 in specific cases. About 742 persons were taken into preventive custody. There were a few instances of altercations between the candidates of

the Trinamool Congress and the personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces both in Kolkata and the districts. These altercations were on whether or not to allow the candidates into the booths.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee cast her vote at a booth in Mitra Institution located in the Bhawanipur Assembly constituency. Former Chief Minister Buddhadeb

Bhattacharjee could not vote because of his ailing health.

Monday was the last day of campaigning for the eighth and final phase for 35 seats in Malda (6), Murshidabad and Birbhum (11 each) and Kolkata (7).

Ms. Banerjee and BJP president J.P. Nadda were among those who campaigned during the day. Polling is on Thursday.

Withdraw Central forces: Mamata

'Many of them may be COVID patients'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday demanded withdrawal of Central forces in the next phase of polling in a bid to contain the COVID-19 spread in the State, while welcoming Madras High Court's observations that the Election Commission could not avoid blame for the spread of the pandemic.

She also accused the Prime Minister of insensitivity, alleging "while mass pyres were lit at crematoriums, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was busy delivering speeches".

"I am requesting please withdraw the around 2 lakh-strong Central forces drawn from COVID-hit States, who are camping in schools and colleges and safe homes hampering COVID management operations. 75 per cent of them may be infected by the virus. Please with-



Mamata Banerjee leaving a booth in Kolkata on Monday after casting her vote. ■ PTI

draw them in the last phase," she said.

Ms. Banerjee said the Trinamool Congress would move the Supreme Court after the elections against the Election Commission on the manner in which the body was conducting polls in West Bengal. "We will tell Supreme Court. The EC did not club the poll phases despite the spike in COVID-19 cases," she said.

CJI, judges pay tributes to Justice Shantanagoudar

SC suspends day's hearings as a mark of respect

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday suspended its hearings as a mark of respect for Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar, who passed away in a private hospital at Gurugram on Sunday.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, judges of the Supreme Court Collegium flanked by a few other judges paid a short tribute to Justice Shantanagoudar. The judges then observed a two-minute silence. After this, the CJI said: "There's an important announcement. The judicial business of today will remain suspended as a mark of respect and all matters listed today will be taken up tomorrow."



Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and senior advocate Vikas Singh, who is the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, were seen on the virtual screen.

Several High Courts, including Allahabad and Hima- machal, have also suspended work for the day in show of respect for Justice Shantanagoudar.

Vacation issue to go to Full Bench

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Monday took note of the representations of Bar bodies seeking advancement of summer vacation in view of the COVID-19 surge, and decided to put them before the Full Bench for consideration.

Earlier, Supreme Court Bar Association led by its president Vikas Singh, and the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association said it had been decided that instead of May 14, the summer vacation in the apex court would commence on May 8 and end on June 27.

The forest fires that ravaged several parts of Lunglei district and the adjoining areas in Mizoram have been contained, an Assam Rifles official said on Monday evening.

The Assam Rifles had deployed personnel and firefighting equipment to the district, while the Indian Air Force had deployed two Mi-17V5 helicopters, equipped with Bambi Buckets, to douse the fire, which started on April 24.

The fires that engulfed forested areas in several parts of the district also spread to populated areas. The fires in the residential areas were contained in the morning, while the forest fires continued, the official said. Later, a helicopter carried out aerial firefighting

using a Bambi Bucket with a capacity to hold approximately 5,000 litres of water, the official said.

"In Lawngtlai district, 14 houses in S. Bungtlang village were gutted," Joseph Lalhmingthanga, assistant general secretary of the Central Young Lai Association, a

local non-governmental organisation, told *The Hindu*. The cause of the fire was unknown, but was believed to have been triggered by the dry season, he stated.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Chief Minister Zoramthanga and took stock of the situation.

Webinar on vaccination for children tomorrow

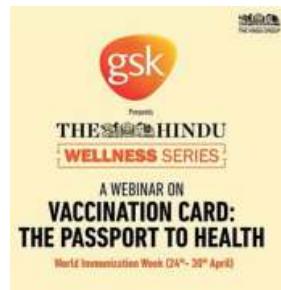
STAFF REPORTER

CHENNAI

To mark World Immunization Week, GSK Pharma, along with *The Hindu*, will organise a webinar on 'Vaccination Card: The Passport to Health, A public awareness initiative' on April 28, Wednesday. It will be held from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. and is a part of *The Hindu* Wellness Series.

Dr. Radhakrishna, paediatrician, Visakhapatnam, and Dr. Kishore Kumar, paediatrician, Bengaluru, will participate in a discussion moderated by Zubeda Hamid, Special Correspondent, *The Hindu*.

The panelists will speak on understanding the vaccines and how they work, the contribution of vaccination to humanity and the importance of timely vaccination for children, given



the current situation. They will also discuss the important vaccines recommended by IAP for children, adolescents and vaccination for women – pre-pregnancy and during pregnancy. The paediatricians will shed light on the benefits of combination vaccines.

To register for the webi-

nar, visit

<http://bit.ly/GSKTHW> or



scan the QR Code given below.

India ranked 49th in CGGI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India has been ranked 49th in the Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI), which classifies 104 countries in terms of government capabilities and outcomes. Reuben Abraham, CEO of IDFC Foundation and IDFC Institute, and CGGI Advisory Panel Member, said: "Civil service innovation and capacity building is a key focus for the Indian government. The CGGI shows the importance of investing in governance capabilities."

Finland topped the CGGI list. The index focuses on seven pillars: leadership and foresight; robust laws and policies; strong institutions; financial stewardship; attractive market place; global influence and reputation; and helping people rise.

DRDO develops crystal blades for aero engines

60 such blades supplied to HAL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

In a major technological breakthrough, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Monday said it has developed single crystal blade technology and supplied 60 of such blades to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) as part of their indigenous helicopter development programme for helicopter engine application.

"It is part of a programme taken up by the Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory (DMRL), a laboratory of the DRDO, to develop five sets, 300 in number, of single crystal high pressure turbine (HPT) blades using a nickel-based super alloy," the DRDO said in a statement.

The supply of the oth-

er four sets would be completed in due course, it said.

Critical component

Very few countries such as the U.S., the U.K., France and Russia have the capability to design and manufacture such single crystal components, it said. The DRDO has been working for a long time to develop this technology which is a critical component in aero engines.

Helicopters need compact and powerful aero-engines for operating at extreme conditions and to achieve this, state-of-the-art single crystal blades having complex shape and geometry, manufactured out of nickel-based super alloys capable of withstanding high temperatures of operation are used.

Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds likely in isolated areas

Puducherry and Karaikal on Monday.

Heat wave in Gujarat

Heat wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over Gujarat and coastal Odisha, the IMD added.

On April 27, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kmph) are very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, central Maharashtra, Maharashtra, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe.

Lightning is also likely at isolated places over Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Konkan, Goa, coastal A.P., Yanam, Rayalseema, south interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Villagers on their way to collect water in Nagpur. ■ PTI

On April 28, thunderstorms with lightning are likely over Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, coastal A.P., Yanam, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe and with lightning at isolated places over J&K, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura, Rayalseema, coastal Karnataka, Lakshadweep and T.N. and Puducherry on April 29.

Kerala on April 28.

According to the IMD, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty wind (speed reaching 30-40 kmph) are likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, coastal A.P., Yanam, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe and with lightning at isolated places over J&K, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura, Rayalseema, coastal Karnataka, Lakshadweep and T.N. and Puducherry on April 29.

IN BRIEF



Auto

Centre may put onus on States to import COVID-19 vaccines

'Govt. to support domestic manufacturers by guaranteeing purchases from them'

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided to leave the import of COVID-19 vaccines to State authorities and companies, two government officials told *Reuters*, a decision that may slow the acquisitions of shots as a second wave of the pandemic rips through the country.

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government would instead aim to support domestic vaccine-makers by guaranteeing purchases from them, they said.

The government this month paid Indian producers in advance, for the first time, for vaccine doses. Under fire for his uneven handling of the world's worst COVID-19 surge, Mr. Modi has opened vaccinations for all adults from next month, but supplies are already running short.

After cases began soaring this month, the Centre had urged Pfizer, Moderna and



Long wait: People waiting to be vaccinated at a PHC in Vijayawada on Monday. - V. RAJU

Johnson & Johnson to seek permission to sell their shots in India, and relaxed rules for them.

But the sources said New Delhi was now leaving it to the States and firms to sign deals with foreign drug makers, while it buys half the output of Indian producers – the Serum Institute of India (SII), which manufactures AstraZeneca's vaccine Covishield, and Bharat Bio-

tech, the maker of Covaxin.

India's new COVID-19 caseload hit a record daily peak for the fifth day on Monday as countries, including U.K., Germany and the United States, pledged to send urgent medical aid to help tackle the crisis overwhelming its hospitals. "The situation is desperate," the government official told *Reuters*. He added that India would allow the import

of vaccines by local partners of drug companies, but the Centre "won't buy". "I don't think the government will be buying foreign vaccines," the other official added. Both officials have direct knowledge of the matter, but declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue. The Ministries of External Affairs, Health and Commerce did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Official stalling oxygen supply: Agra hospital

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A private hospital at Agra in Uttar Pradesh on Monday sought permission from the administration to shut its COVID-19 facility after accusing an official of obstructing the supply of oxygen to the centre. The tahsildar concerned denied the allegations and said the hospital owner was trying to pressure her to fill his cylinders from a plant that had temporarily run dry.

In a letter to the District Chief Medical Officer, Chauhan Hospital and Eye Care sought permission to shut down its COVID centre, accusing tahsildar Preeti Jain of confiscating 15 filled cylinders of its stock of 30.

Bhupendra Chauhan, owner of the hospital, said a vehicle sent by him had gone to an oxygen plant to refill cylinders that had run out of gas the night before. However, he alleged the tahsildar snatched the cylinders and despatched them for storing at a local school.

"After media pressure, she later returned five filled cylinders and 10 empty ones," Mr. Chauhan told *The Hindu*. Ms. Jain, however, termed Mr. Chauhan's allegations as "false".

India likely to receive oxygen, drug supplies from 15 nations

Consignments coming in are commercial supplies: govt.

SUHASINI HAIDAR
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

India expects to receive supplies from about 15 countries, including Australia, China, Germany, Russia, UAE, U.K. and the United States, in the next few days, to help tide over the current crisis for oxygen at hospitals and pharmaceuticals needed to treat COVID-19 cases.

On Monday, an Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 aircraft transported six cryogenic oxygen containers from Dubai, and is expected to airlift six more on Tuesday for the Adani group. A German company is expected to ship 24 more containers later this week.

The Australian government said it hopes to send oxygen supplies, non-invasive ventilators, pharmaceuticals and PPE kits as well, and a decision on further aid will be made at a meeting on Tuesday.

"India is literally gasping for oxygen," Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said, speaking to presspersons in Canberra.

"And while we can assist with the national medical stockpile, their particular request is for assistance with regards to the physical sup-



An operator filling oxygen cylinders in an industrial area in Bhopal. - A.M. FARUQI

ber of shipments expected from China.

Meanwhile, Chinese state-owned Sichuan Airlines said it would review its decision to suspend cargo flights to India due to the risk from the pandemic, which would have disrupted exports from China, *Global Times* reported.

"If India raises specific demands, China is ready to provide help and support to the best of its capability," Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, but refused to comment on the airline's decision.

Indian officials said the priority at present was to fly in as much oxygen-related equipment, including containers, concentrators and generators, as well as COVID-treatment drugs remdesivir and tocilizumab, which were running in short supply.

While Russian authorities have reportedly said international patent issues with the U.S. developer of Remdesivir, Gilead Sciences Inc., may delay their plans to export about 3,00,000 injections, New Delhi is hopeful of procuring stocks of the drug from the American company directly.

As many as 800 oxygen concentrators were also flown in from Hong Kong for Spice Health, a healthcare equipment manufacturing company, amongst a num-

India and Japan resolve to jointly fight the pandemic

Modi, Japanese counterpart hold telephonic conversation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India and Japan on Monday resolved to fight the pandemic jointly, a press release from the Ministry of External Affairs announced.

The observations on COVID-19 featured during a telephonic conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart, Yoshihide Suga. The two Prime Ministers also reviewed the status of ongoing initiatives like the Quad, involving Australia, India, Japan and the U.S., and pledged to complete bilateral developmental schemes.

'Overcome challenges'
"They highlighted the importance of close India-Japan cooperation to overcome these challenges, such as by working together to create resilient, diversified and trustworthy supply chains; ensuring a reliable supply of critical materials and technologies; and developing new partnerships in



Yoshihide Suga

kyo's commitment to a "rules-based free and open international order".

Bilateral cooperation

"The two leaders confirmed the importance of Japan-India bilateral cooperation and multilateral cooperation, including the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. quadrilateral cooperation, towards realising a free and open Indo-Pacific," said a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan. Mr. Suga also expressed "serious concerns" about China's movements in the East and South China Sea.

The two leaders discussed possible cooperation in areas like 5G, submarine cables, strengthening of industrial competitiveness, diversification of supply chains and development projects in the northeastern States of India. The two Prime Ministers also took note of the "steady progress" made regarding the construction of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail.

A statement from the Japanese side highlighted To-

KERALA IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.

T.C. 36/1, NH66 Bypass Service Road, Eanchakkal Jn., Chakkal P.O., Thiruvananthapuram-695024

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

DESILITATION OF CHULLIYAR DAM IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT

Tender No.: KIIDC/AUCTION/03/2021-22

KIIDC a Government of Kerala PSU invites offers through two cover e-Tender system from eligible bidders for "DESILITATION OF CHULLIYAR DAM" Quantity: 11.34 Lakh m³. Last date of submission of Tender is 24.05.2021 up to 16.00hrs. Tender details are available in www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kiidc.kerala.gov.in.

Tender ID: 2021_KIIDC_421900_1

Sd/- Managing Director

इनीशिया खोलने की ओर से निलंबित कार्य के लिए इ-टेंडरिंग द्वारा ऑनलाइन मद्दद निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

Centre controlled truth not pandemic, says Rahul

Cong. pitches for uniform price of vaccines across country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that though the Narendra Modi government had failed to contain the pandemic, it had managed to control "the truth of the pandemic" by manipulating the data regarding COVID-19.

"As in the case of employment and development, the government is not allowing the actual data about corona to reach the people. They may have not been able to control the pandemic but managed to control the truth about the pandemic," Mr. Gandhi tweeted.

"Ahead of the May 1 rollout of vaccines for every adult in the country, Mr. Gandhi, in a separate tweet, said "All citizens of the country should get vaccine for free" and India should not become "a victim of the BJP's system".

Speaking to the *The Hindu*, former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot said the Central government had failed to make State governments stakeholders in the fight against the second wave of COVID-19 and suggested that Mr. Modi convene an all party meeting to prepare a concrete road



The govt. is not allowing the actual data about corona to reach the people. They may have not been able to control the pandemic but managed to control the truth about the pandemic
RAHUL GANDHI,
FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT

map to fight the pandemic.

Mr. Pilot said the current crisis was a result of bad planning by the Central government and alleged that "after centralised decision-making during the first wave, it has left the States to fend for themselves as things spiralled out of control".

He said the Central government needed to take blame for the ongoing "chaos", unavailability of oxygen and life-saving medicines, and the lack of capacity-building since October last year, when COVID-19 cases were coming down.

"They should introspect and think what is going on. Crematoriums are full, people are burning [bodies] on the road and what you see simply wrenches your heart... History will judge which leaders are spending tax payers' money on advertisement and self-promotion

as opposed to building capacities, getting medicines, hospital beds and oxygen beds for the sick," Mr. Pilot said. "For all these months, should we not have stocked all these vaccines in such quantities where we could have covered the entire country in a few weeks..."

This is a national crisis and we should have a stakeholder approach where scientific inputs are taken. State governments should be brought on board in terms of deciding, allocating and combating," he added.

Arguing for a "one nation-one vaccine price" fixed by the government instead of pharmaceutical companies, Mr. Pilot said, "If there is a clamour on May 1 and people don't get it, it would not only create frustration and disappointment, but can add to the prevailing sense of chaos."

'Govt.'s move an attack on free speech'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera, who had sent a legal notice to Information Technology and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and social media giant Twitter for taking down his April 12 tweet on the COVID-19 situation, on Monday said the Centre's direction to Twitter is an "attack on his right to free speech".

Mr. Khera told *The Hindu* that his tweet only highlighted the "double standards" with regard to attacking the Tablighi Jamaat congregation last year when there were 6,000 COVID-19 cases and the "collective silence" about the Kumbh Mela and election rallies at a time when India witnessed lakhs of cases.

"Where am I violating the IT Act or spreading panic or fake news?" he asked. "This, indeed, is an attempt to muzzle any voice that questions the government. It is an attack on my right to free speech," he said.

Twitter had reportedly taken down 50-odd posts after the Narendra Modi government complained that such posts were spreading "fake news" and "panic" about its handling of the second wave.

Oxygen cans with armed forces to be given to hospitals'

Rawat, Modi review preparations taken by the armed forces to tackle pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



iminity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

In addition, nursing personnel were also being employed in large numbers to complement the doctors at various hospitals, the statement said, adding that the services were creating medical facilities in large numbers and, where possible, military medical infrastructure would be made available to civilians.

Mr. Modi also reviewed the operations being undertaken by the IAF to transport oxygen and other essentials in India and abroad.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

In addition, nursing personnel were also being employed in large numbers to complement the doctors at various hospitals, the statement said, adding that the services were creating medical facilities in large numbers and, where possible, military medical infrastructure would be made available to civilians.

Mr. Modi also reviewed the operations being undertaken by the IAF to transport oxygen and other essentials in India and abroad.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mr. Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at the command headquarters of the Command, Corps and Division levels and similar headquarters of the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) would be employed at

various hospitals.

retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in COVID facilities within prox-

ity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines," a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said.

<p

Modi, Biden discuss COVID-19, U.S. aid

Talks stressed importance of smooth, efficient supply chains of vaccine raw materials, medicines: PM

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joe Biden spoke on the phone on Monday to discuss the COVID-19 outbreak in India and U.S. assistance to the country.

The conversation comes a day after Mr. Biden and some of his Cabinet members publicly expressed solidarity with India and the U.S. government promised assistance to India in its fight against the pandemic.

"Had a fruitful conversation with @POTUS @JoeBiden today. We discussed the evolving COVID situation in both countries in detail. I thanked President Biden for the support being provided by the United States to India," Mr. Modi said on Twitter.

Their conversation "also underscored the importance



Essential supplies: A shipment of oxygen concentrators from New York being unloaded at the Delhi airport. ■ PTI

of smooth and efficient supply chains of vaccine raw materials and medicines," the Prime Minister said.

TRIPS initiative
Significantly, a readout of the call from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) also said

that Mr. Modi informed Mr. Biden of "India's initiative at the WTO for a relaxation in the norms of the Agreement on TRIPS to ensure quick and affordable access to vaccines and medicines for developing countries".

A group of 10 Senators

had written to Mr. Biden earlier in April asking him to support a temporary waiver of intellectual property rights at the WTO that would enable the production of COVID-19 therapeutics, diagnostics and vaccines around the world.

The White House readout of the call does not mention the TRIPS initiative.

"The President pledged America's steadfast support for the people of India who have been impacted by the recent surge in COVID-19 cases," the White House readout said.

"President Biden conveyed solidarity with India and affirmed that the United States was determined to support India's efforts by quickly deploying resources such as therapeutics, ventilators and identifying sources of raw materials to be made available for the manufac-

ture of Covishield vaccines," the PMO readout said.

The Prime Minister "mentioned India's commitment to contain the COVID-19 pandemic globally through Vaccine Maitri, and its participation in COVAX and the Quad Vaccine Initiatives", as per the PMO.

Mr. Modi and Mr. Biden agreed to remain in touch and directed their officials to coordinate closely on the COVID-19 issue, the PMO said.

Lack of resources

The telephone call came in the background of not just flagging of supply chain issues with the U.S. with regard to vaccines but also the lack of certain resources in India to fight the pandemic, as the country has been hit by exponentially rising cases and deaths.

(With inputs from New Delhi)

'U.S. govt. orders for vaccine filters diverted to India'

Will help Indian manufacturers, says White House official

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

The Biden administration has diverted its pending orders of vaccine filters to India's vaccine manufacturers, according to White House's COVID-19 Supply Manager Tim Manning.

"Now here's what we did yesterday: we diverted our pending orders of vaccine filters to India's vaccine manufacturing effort. This will help India make more vaccine. And it's only one effort among many to help the their COVID-19 response (e.g. therapeutics, PPE, and oxygen)," Mr. Manning said on Twitter.

The U.S. National Security Council had outlined the country's assistance to India's COVID-19 battle on Sunday, which included vaccine

raw materials. "The United States has identified sources of specific raw material urgently required for Indian manufacturer of the Covishield vaccine that will immediately be made available for India," spokesperson Emily Horne had said.

Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Covishield manufacturer Serum Institute of India, had publicly appealed to U.S. President Joe Biden to lift embargoes on vaccine raw material exports. The U.S. had denied that outright embargoes existed. However, the Defence Production Act (DPA), which former U.S. President Donald Trump and Mr. Biden had invoked, meant that federal government orders had to be prioritised over other orders.

Mr. Manning, in his

tweets, said there had been "a lot of confusion" around the DPA and its relationship to global supply chains and that the world was working on producing 14 billion vaccines this year, rather than the usual 4 billion. "DPA doesn't even mean a 'de facto' ban. Companies are able to export. In fact, companies that supply our vaccine manufacturing export their product all across the world. We are just one 'client' of the raw material companies," Mr. Manning said.

However, Indian manufacturers, some of whose inputs come from the U.S., had experienced shortages of inputs such as filters, bioreactor bags, microcarrier beads and cell culture media, according to reports in the Indian press.

Ashoka Hotel to be used as COVID-19 facility for judges

Delhi govt. acts on High Court request

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following a request from the Delhi High Court, the city government has ordered that 100 rooms of the Ashoka Hotel here be used for setting up a COVID-19 Health Centre for High Court judges, other judicial officers and their families.

Primus Hospital will run the facility. The hotel staff will be provided with protective gear and given basic training. As per the April 25 order, all the services, including rooms, housekeeping, disinfection and food for the patients, will be provided by the hotel.

In view of the rising number of COVID-19 cases and to augment the hospital bed capacity, the Delhi government had, on April 14, issued another notification converting several hotels in

the national capital as extended COVID-19 Hospitals. The medical services in these hotels will be provided by the linked hospitals.

"The linked private hospital shall admit positive patients in their extended COVID-19 hospitals as per the patients' medical condition and in case such patients turn severe at any point of time during their stay in the hotel, he/she shall be transferred/admitted to the linked private hospitals at its scheduled rates," the Delhi government circular said.

"The hotel shall provide regular hotel services including rooms, housekeeping, disinfection and food for the patients at a price not greater than ₹5,000 for five star hotel and ₹4,000 for four/three star hotel per day per person," the circular said.

India records 2,762 fresh fatalities

Country reports over 3.19 lakh new COVID-19 cases; test positivity rate jumps to 21%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India registered 3,19,329 new COVID-19 cases till 11 p.m. on Monday.

As many as 2,762 new deaths were also recorded. The country has so far reported a total of 1,76,25,749 cases and 1,97,880 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 48,700 infections, followed by Uttar Pradesh (33,574) and Karnataka (29,744). Maharashtra also recorded 524 casualties, while Delhi saw 380 fresh deaths and Uttar Pradesh 249.

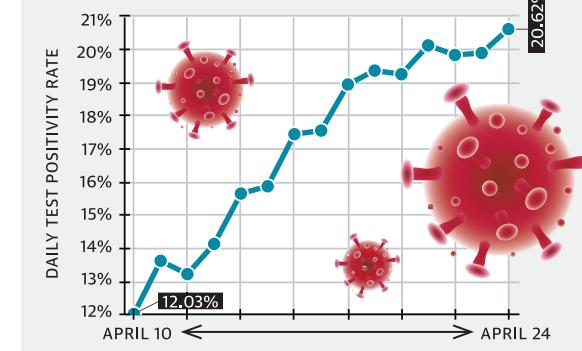
The figures do not include cases and deaths from Ladakh.

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

The country recorded a significant drop in the number of tests, with just over 14 lakh conducted on Sunday

Spike in positivity

| The daily share of positive COVID-19 samples among those tested increased from around 10% on April 10 to nearly 21% on Sunday



(results of which were made available on Monday). This is over 3 lakh fewer than the number of samples tested the previous day. However, compared with the previous Sunday (April 18), this marks a jump of 46,234 tests.

The daily test positivity rate (percentage of positive samples tested) in the coun-

try shot up to nearly 21% on Sunday from around 12% on April 10.

During the peak of the first wave in mid-September, the average daily test positivity rate was around 9%.

Dip in vaccinations

Only 9,95,288 vaccine doses were administered in the

country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Monday, the lowest in nearly a month. On March 29, 5.83 lakh doses were given.

It is also about 15.4 lakh doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. The daily vaccination rate has been on a declining trend in the second half of April compared with the first.

Between April 1 and 12, India administered an average of 36.18 lakh doses every day. However, between April 13 and 25, the average daily doses given fell to 25.68 lakh.

As many as 2,48,644 new recoveries were recorded on Monday, taking the total to 1,45,45,347.

Globally, India's average daily deaths (2,336) was the second highest, with Brazil continuing to record the most fatalities (nearly 2,500).

Maharashtra, Centre spar over oxygen plants

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

After the row over supply of COVID-19 vaccines and remdesivir, an anti-viral drug, Maharashtra and the Centre have now locked horns over the allotment of money to construct oxygen plants in the State.

The Congress, a coalition partner in the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, on Monday said the Central government-affiliated Central Medical Services Society was to set up 10 Pressure Swing Absorption plants in the State according to the January 2021 announcement.

"It was a Central government scheme and not a single rupee was given to the State government. The Centre was going to construct those plants. Even though 10 districts had been chosen as sites for the plants by the Centre but no actual work took place on the ground."

"BJP is spreading the misinformation that the money was given to State government and that it was not utilised. Money was never meant for State government as the project was to be set up by an organisation working under Central government," he added.

The BJP, while not responding to the Congress's allegations, repeated the charge that the State government had failed to set up the plants. Union Minister of

State and former State BJP chief Raosaheb Danve said it had become the habit of the Maharashtra government to blame the Centre for everything.

"Maharashtra is getting the lion's share in all the allotment from the Central government like 1,784 MT oxygen which is highest in the country," Mr. Danve said. On Sunday, former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had made similar claims.

The Congress also questioned the allotment of 1,784 MT of oxygen, saying 1,250 MT of this came from the in-house capacity of the State.

Hurriyat worries about jailed political leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

The Hurriyat, headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, on Monday expressed concern over the deteriorating health conditions of "political leaders" lodged in prisons outside Jammu and Kashmir and the threat posed to them by COVID-19.

A Hurriyat spokesman said the Mirwaiz's spokesman, Advocate Shahid ul Islam, who is lodged in Tihar Jail in New Delhi, was showing symptoms of the virus.

"Mr. Islam is very ill and

is showing all symptoms including high fever. However, the jail authorities are neither getting him tested nor taking him to the hospital," the spokesman alleged.

He said the Hurriyat was extremely worried about the scores of jailed "political prisoners". "Silence, especially of the human rights organisations, is worrying," the spokesman said.

The Hurriyat asked the government "to release these political prisoners in view of the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases in jails".

FAITH

Subtle shades of dharma

Draupadi raised a legal point that had to be settled when she heard that Yudhishtira had lost her in the wager and that she was henceforth a slave to the Kauravas. Throughout, Draupadi maintains that she has not been won legally by the Kauravas and that she is not bound by the outcome of the game of dice, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. First of all, the entire game was not valid on many counts. It was a plot to entice Yudhishtira to play against the warrior Sakuni, instead of Duryodhana. Everyone knew that Yudhishtira had no chance of winning. She could not understand how anyone could have pledged his wife in the game. So she wanted to know if Yudhishtira had lost himself first and then offered her or whether he pledged her first and then offered himself as the bet. But before she could get an answer, she was dragged to the court. Even in that desperate situation, Draupadi put forth her arguments to the entire assembly fearlessly and appealed for basic justice. How can the assembly allow such a dishonour to be perpetrated against women who are to be treated with respect? Is there one present to put a stop to this atrocious act that forebodes disaster for all?

She proclaimed that when the elders in the assembly, who are the custodians of truth and righteousness, fail to uphold justice, they lose their right to be honoured and venerated. She then asked Bhishma, well known for his wisdom and learning, to clarify whether she was a slave. Bhishma said that he was at a loss to give a proper answer to her question since the subtle shades of dharma are difficult to analyse. One cannot gamble someone after he has already lost himself. But there is also the fact that a man has right over his wife.

CROSSWORD + 13232
(set by Afterdark)

Display keystrokes of genius.
Type your answers into our online grids.
<https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

second position (7-2)
15 Fry lightly, remove bone, add cold dressing (5)
16 Chase channel idly to print perhaps (7)
19 A new king is suppressed by others. most disgusting (7)
20 A bath in USA unable to furnish (5)
21 Fifteen spread out to flank hundred and one? Well-organised (9)
25 New space, it is sterile (7)
26 Openly ended final judgment disheartened Larry (7)
28 Nurse is behind insurers these days to get authorisation (7)
29 Final cut, lady hugged by a lover in picture (7)

■ DOWN

1 Keep quiet in emergency room with a black eye perhaps (6)
2 Shrug's new; robed (6)
3 Intelligence on nonconformist leader fleeing taking some money to hideaways (4)
4 Data on America's eminence (6)
5 Fooling with split eggplant (8)
6 Ironic, fans making inaudible sound (10)
7 Evacuated city on news, opposition leader certain to be the centre of attention (8)
8 Advocate in Teheran dances holding date (8)
14 English number; singing is lovely (10)
16 Asha is in West Bengal, getting some linen sheet, essentially which can be cleaned (8)
17 Work with uncle, struggling to gain energy to make wealth (8)
18 Cut some elephant foot yam and radish on the carving board (8)
22 Fair story to be rewritten? Cool (6)
23 Gist of thesis; hotels exempt judge (6)
24 Right time to get you in, to follow team leader for test (6)
27 Rebel fights crossing river? Yes, river (4)

■ ACROSS

9 People quarantined, vaccine distributed outside after hospital basically urged camp (7)
10 One new ball yields odd runs; hassled (7)
11 A mathematical term, in a nutshell gets distorted after deleting Planc's constant (7)
12 A music entertainment system in Korea to dance having a cocktail (7)
13 Work's super, fantastic after induction of new leader; competitors in

SUDOKU

4	7					6		
9	3	8	6	</				



'Ancient Greek meets Fantasia'

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Gareth Coker has been gaming since he was three years old. The British composer, now 36, has his name attached to landmark video games such as *Ori and the Blind Forest*, *Ori and the Will of the Wisp* (for which he was nominated for a BAFTA Games Award for Best Music), as well as 2020's *Immortals Fenyx Rising*.

Speaking over a video call from his Los Angeles home on the game's score and how it helps tell the story for the player, Coker starts with why his favourite parts to score were the boss fights.

"I guess they are like mini-climax," he laughs. "In the case of Immortals, when I would send something to Ubisoft, they would respond, 'we love it, but can you make it louder?' (laughs) The game does not have too many epic boss fights, there is a lot of exploration and puzzle-solving. The standard combat is also not like the boss fight combat, so when you hear the boss fight music, it really stands out."

Immortals Fenyx Rising is one of Ubisoft's more quirky releases, following a winged demi-god Fenix who embarks on a journey to save her brother who

From commissioning lyrics to writing 'chicken music', games composer Gareth Coker chats about how Ubisoft's *Immortals Fenyx Rising* does not take itself too seriously



Larger than life Screenshots from *Immortals Fenyx Rising*; composer Gareth Coker ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has been turned to stone, and faces off with evil god Typhon.

Coker says *Immortals Fenyx Rising* is certainly one of the less serious games he has worked on since he came on board in April 2019, after *Ori and the Will of the Wisp*. He also believes in coming on board with a game quite early on to gain a rapport with the storyline. "It also gives you time to fail, which is helpful not just to me in finding what doesn't work but also to the team working on the game itself."

For the saga-like action-adventure game, Coker, a Royal Academy of Music alum, scored more than an hour worth of music, each piece within that identifiable by the region to which Fenix travels. "From *Ori and the Will of the Wisp* that is generally very dark in tone, to *Immortals* was refreshing. If you take out the light-hearted banter such as that between Zeus and Prometheus, it is still a fun game which informs how I write the music. When I do hear the voices, it does add to that."

Speaking of voices, Coker experienced something with *Immortals Fenyx Rising*'s dialogue music that was also new in his career. "In each area,

there were different suites of music that each had positive, neutral and negative layers. Based on the contour of the conversation, the music changes on the fly. I remember wondering how this would work, but the benefit of being on board early is, I was able to tweak the parameters to suit these needs," he recalls.

Coker was surprised when the developers said there would even be music during dialogue which he initially considered almost "a dirty word," and this was prominent during old school games. This custom-cut method for *Immortals Fenyx Rising* works especially well during positive cut-scenes, including one of the fan favourites where players meet Ares, god of war, for the first time – and he has been turned into a chicken. He laughs, "I thought 'oh, it is time to make chicken music, whatever that is!' It is almost like you are playing a Dreamworks game."

For Greek sounds

Though it is rooted in Greek mythology, Coker points out the game does not take itself too seriously. "It is high contrast and high saturation. The animation is much more exaggerated, so the overall look of the game is not photo-realistic. If Immortals were so, the score would not work; it is too much and over the top."

It was integral that he get immersed into Greek sounds, he says. So he commissioned two lyrics from a Greek luthier and had the fragile instruments shipped all the way to the United States.

"It was necessary. We did not want a hardcore authentic Greek soundtrack. The most ubiquitous ancient Greek instruments are the lyres – many different kinds which I commissioned because



Coker commissioned lyrics and an aulos from Greece to create authentic sounds, while using the same musical scales as the Greeks

an ancient reed woodwind instrument, for one of the musicians for the game. "It is horrendous and not hugely pleasant sounding," he grins. "It does have a mysterious and frenetic sound to it."

Coker used the same musical scales as the ancient Greeks. "I didn't use them exclusively but rather the flavours of those scales," he adds, pointing out he was still mindful of not going all-out authentic. "Otherwise the player's brain is going to switch off as that music would not be accessible and this would not align with the tone of the story and look of the experience. I would describe it as 'ancient Greek meets Fantasia' and a soundtrack was born."

Player in mind?

Coker says as a composer, he wants the player to "spend as much time in the game as possible" and music is certainly part of that strategy. "One way I would describe *Immortals Fenyx Rising* is that it is inviting. It has that feel of 'what's around the corner?'. It does well with visual landmarks with this custom-built landscape and world that creates space for lots of exploration. I wish there was a book on how to do that – it would sell really well (laughs)."

Do all video games composers come from a point of empathy for the player? Coker considers there to be two schools of game composers out there – one that is very hands-on with a game, and the other that is not. "Both work," he insists. "The composers who aren't, and this is key, usually work with amazing music supervisors and audio team, taking that composer's work and maybe rearranging it and putting it into the game. But the music will still be beautiful."

they each play a limited number of notes but they really have a unique sound." Did Coker get to keep the lyrics? In response, he spins in his seat and points towards the back of his studio space, "There it is!"

Coker got his hands an aulos as well,



Snowden makes it rain

An NFT (Non-fungible token) artwork by NSA (National Security Agency) whistleblower Edward Snowden has been sold for more than US\$5.4 million (about 2.224 ETH). The NFT is of an artwork titled *Stay Free* showing an image of Snowden's face made from pages of a US appeals court decision that ruled the mass surveillance programme Snowden exposed had violated US law. The funds won't go to Snowden; it will benefit the Freedom of the Press Foundation, where Snowden is the president. Its board includes actor John Cusack, whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, and the writer Glenn Greenwald.

Snowden tweeted after the sale, "Emerging applications of cryptography can play an important role in supporting our rights. This auction will drive the development of valuable and privacy-protecting uses of encryption, to safeguard press freedom and serve the public."

Other NFT mediums...

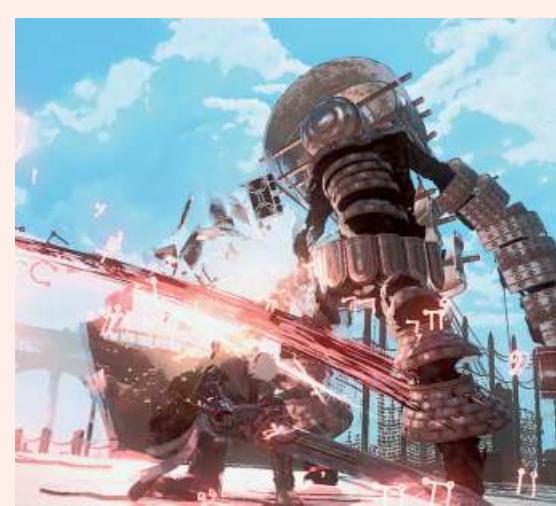
A number of popular celebrities and luminaries are minting non-fungible token collectibles like actress Lindsay Lohan, businesswoman Paris Hilton, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Rob 'Gronk' Gronkowski's NFTs, Tom Brady's Autograph project, Annoying Orange NFTs, and NFT collectibles by Kenyan filmmaker Rich Alleta.

Now rapper Eminem is dropping some Slim Shady NFTs, created by artist D.O.M., for his fans. Eminem's NFT sale kicked off on Monday on marketplace Nifty Gateway. There are 50 editions of the NFTs called Tools Of The Trade, Still D.G.A.F., and a limited edition single copy Stan's Revenge. The first two NFTs will be a flat rate of US\$5,000 per Eminem NFT.

Over the weekend, marketplace Rarible hosted an Oscars special auction featuring the works of artists Jack Butcher, Osnachir and Daniel Popper. The drop includes a tribute piece in honour of the late *Black Panther* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* actor Chadwick Boseman. Proceeds from the tribute will be donated to the Colon Cancer Foundation, helping to raise awareness, screening, and testing in under-served communities.



A decade of waiting Screenshots from the video game ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Nier, far, wherever you are

After more than a decade, we get the Japan-only *Nier Replicant* Ver.1.22474487139..., completely overhauled, but missing that Platinum magic

JULIAN ALMEIDA

If your knowledge of the *Nier* series is limited to just *Nier Automata* or less, you would not be missing much. This cult RPG from the biggest Japanese Roleplaying Game (JRPG) publisher Square Enix, was an obscure title until the runaway success of *Automata*.

Nier Replicant was only launched in Japan on April 22, 2010, and what made it overseas was *Nier Gestalt* – basically the same game but with an older protagonist saving his daughter, instead of a

young protagonist saving his sister. Now we finally get to play *Nier Replicant* Ver.1.22474487139... the way its enigmatic director Yoko Taro intended.

A mysterious disease has engulfed all of humanity. Spinning off as an alternate timeline from the Drakengard series, the game drops you a thousand years later and the Black Scrawl disease is still rampant and monsters known as Shades have manifested on the ravaged Earth. You play as Nier, a boy who has gained powers through a Grimoire with one mission,

to find a cure for his sister Yonah, who suffers from the Black Scrawl.

As a big fan of *Nier Automata*, playing through *Replicant*'s story is almost a holy experience. Being a prequel

NIER REPLICANT VER.1.22474487139

DEVELOPER: Toylogic Inc.

PUBLISHER: Square Enix

PRICE: Rs. 3,499 on PS4, Xbox One, and Rs. 2,999 on PC.

there are so many little threads that connect; the fact that your quest is to save a loved one is so much more amplified and heart-wrenching. In true JRPG fashion you are joined by a party of colourful characters, including a lingerie-donning intersex warrior and an aristocratic boy who wields powerful magic.

Nier Replicant is a fantastic story, however it does take time to wind up. Chances are you will drop off early in the game out of frustration as a lot of the mechanics

take time to catch on. A

lot of this is familiar in *Automata*, but vastly improved upon. While the characters are well designed, the *Nier* games sort of veer into a bit of risqué territory. If you can overlook those scantily-clad Anime tropes, and the slow start, *Replicant* pays off well.

As you journey across this strange world with little stories hidden off everywhere for you to find.

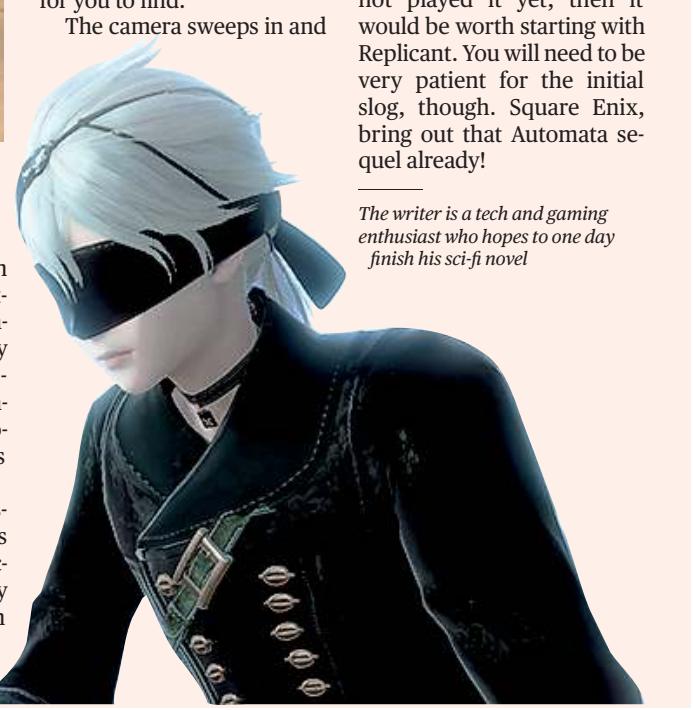
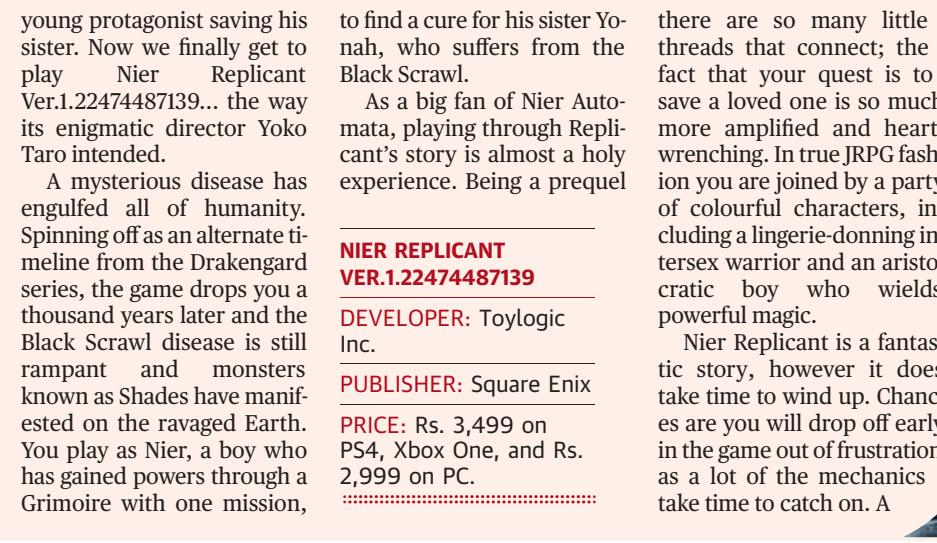
The camera sweeps in and

out, moving from third person in the world, to a traditional side-scrolling view and a top-down isometric perspective. The entire experience is fluid and if you have played *Automata*, you will feel at home here. The fighting happens in real time, making it an action game. Yet the game breaks off into a shooter with the enemies attacks makes it feel like a bullet storm game.

Replicant's fighting system is real-time with some interesting magical attacks. In comparison to its sequel, it feels a bit basic. *Automata* was made by the masters of the fighting game genre Platinum games, the people behind *Bayonetta*, the original *Devil May Cry*, *Metal Gear Rising* and more. Yet, there is satisfaction in taking down the screen filling monsters, and levelling up your party thankfully in part to the game-play overhaul that has bridged the gap between *Replicant* and *Automata*.

Nier Automata is one of the best action JRPGs of the last decade, and if you have not played it yet, then it would be worth starting with *Replicant*. You will need to be very patient for the initial slog, though. Square Enix, bring out that *Automata* sequel already!

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





See the wild beauties bloom

The Orchid park near Kaziranga National park is a treat for the eyes and a paradise for flower lovers



Meghalaya. The air inside the greenhouse is muggy, as orchids need humidity but the scent of the nearly 700 species of orchids growing in coconut husk, tree barks, bamboo hollows and pots makes up for it. A guide explains, "There are 35,000 species of orchids in the world, of which approximately 1,314 are found in India. Interestingly, about 850 of them can be found in the Northeast. Around 402 species are found only in Assam."

PRABALIKA M BORAH

As children, one of the most exciting things about making a roadtrip to our maternal grandparents' home, was the drive through Kaziranga National park on the National Highway. As the Barapahar mountain range becomes visible, we would sit up from our sluggish postures in the backseat. At the sight of the signboard reading 'animal corridor', I was always hopeful of spotting a wild animal other than the grazing rhinos or elephants that crossed the road. Another favourite activity was to squint attentively at the treetops at the wild orchids.

Established in 2015, it is designed as a mini-themed village, and encompasses a natural history museum, rice museum, a cultural centre, a handful of handicraft shops and a restaurant. The main attraction however is the Orchid display museum.

I wasn't expecting much from the Orchid museum, but once inside, I was pleasantly surprised. I noticed the visitors being stunned the moment they enter the enclosed area. The museum, roughly the size of a hall that can accommodate about 1,000 people, is designed to suit the growth of the orchid, the State flower of Assam and

unreal and we are encouraged to touch gently. The team inside explains the orchid species to everyone, especially children. "Owing to its wild nature, it is difficult to grow orchids at home. Only a few common varieties like the ground orchid/pineapple orchid, the garland orchid can be grown with proper care."

Orchids named Joker face and Dancing Lady appear to be the highlight until the guide points out the tiniest species, blooming silently in one corner. This orchid needs a magnifying glass and the flower measures 1.2 millimetres. "The scientific name for it being *Taenio-phyllo glandulosum*. The world's tiniest orchid, it is a leafless epiphyte (a plant that requires another object or plant for physical support)," he informs.

While at the park, don't miss the butterfly orchid, pineapple orchid, rabbit orchid, starfish orchid, the joker face and dancing lady orchid.

The best time to visit Kaziranga Orchid National Park is between March and November. Entry ticket is priced at ₹250

As we proceeded, still in awe at the variety, some of the flowers with their fascinating colours look

A wild collection The collection at the orchid museum has some very rare varieties including the world's smallest orchid
■ PRABALIKA M BORAH

PUBARUN BASU

As children, one of the most exciting things about making a roadtrip to our maternal grandparents' home, was the drive through Kaziranga National park on the National Highway. As the Barapahar mountain range becomes visible, we would sit up from our sluggish postures in the backseat. At the sight of the signboard reading 'animal corridor', I was always hopeful of spotting a wild animal other than the grazing rhinos or elephants that crossed the road. Another favourite activity was to squint attentively at the treetops at the wild orchids.

This year, when I drove the 350-odd kilometres on that familiar route, my focus was on the road rather than thinking of playing 'spot the orchid' with my cousin and

niece. Instead I made a surprise stop at the Kaziranga National Orchid Park, a couple of kilometres from the Kaziranga National Park. This was my first visit there.

Established in 2015, it is designed as a mini-themed village, and encompasses a natural history museum, rice museum, a cultural centre, a handful of handicraft shops and a restaurant. The main attraction however is the Orchid display museum.

I wasn't expecting much from the Orchid museum, but once inside, I was pleasantly surprised. I noticed the visitors being stunned the moment they enter the enclosed area. The museum, roughly the size of a hall that can accommodate about 1,000 people, is designed to suit the growth of the orchid, the State flower of Assam and

unreal and we are encouraged to touch gently. The team inside explains the orchid species to everyone, especially children. "Owing to its wild nature, it is difficult to grow orchids at home. Only a few common varieties like the ground orchid/pineapple orchid, the garland orchid can be grown with proper care."

Orchids named Joker face and Dancing Lady appear to be the highlight until the guide points out the tiniest species, blooming silently in one corner. This orchid needs a magnifying glass and the flower measures 1.2 millimetres. "The scientific name for it being *Taenio-phyllo glandulosum*. The world's tiniest orchid, it is a leafless epiphyte (a plant that requires another object or plant for physical support)," he informs.

While at the park, don't miss the butterfly orchid, pineapple orchid, rabbit orchid, starfish orchid, the joker face and dancing lady orchid.

The best time to visit Kaziranga Orchid National Park is between March and November. Entry ticket is priced at ₹250

Tales of light

Pubarun Basu recently won the Youth Photographer of the year 2021 for his work, No Escape from Reality



SUSAN JOE PHILIP

In the past two years, not a day has passed in Pubarun Basu's life without him working on his photography skills. "I would either click or process pictures. It not only kept me engaged during the pandemic but also kept me sane."

The 20-year-old photographer from Kolkata recently won the Youth Photographer of the Year 2021 at the Sony World Photography Awards. "There were 3,30,000 entries from around 220 countries. I am the first Indian to win this title. I am humbled by the recognition," he says.

The process

Pubarun submitted his award-winning photograph, No Escape from Reality, in July 2020. "It was during the lockdown and I had to find something from my surroundings for the competition. One evening, I was in my parents' bedroom when I noticed the bright sunlight seeping through the window. The shadows of the iron bars fell on the curtain, and it made an illusion of a cage. I asked my mother to stand behind the curtain with her hands stretched out to touch the fabric. For me, it represents the feeling of being trapped in a moment or one's reality."

Pubarun was informed about the award in March. But he had to keep it a secret till the official announcement came out last week. "No one apart from my family knew and that was the toughest part." The prize includes a certificate and photography equipment. "My work will also be featured in the annual photo book published by the organisation. Usually, there is a felicitation ceremony followed by an exhibition in London. It did not happen this year due to the pandemic."

This is his second time participating in



the competition. "My first attempt was in 2019. Though my photograph was selected as a highlight by the editor, I did not win any award. That experience gave me a push to participate this year."

Early days

Pubarun's love for photography started at the young age of four. "My father, Pranab Basu is also a photographer, and I would experiment with his camera as a child. He gave me my first camera when I was 10. It was a basic model. I have been using my dad's full-frame camera for the past five years," he says.

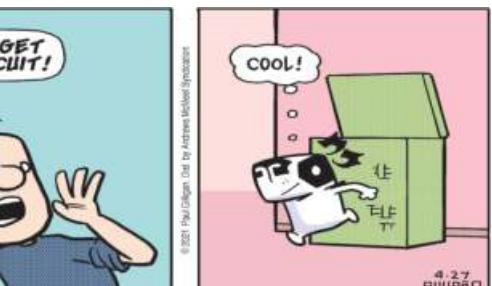
Most of Pubarun's learning happened through trial and error. "I always had my father's guidance. He has a collection of photography books that I have access to. Social media also helped. It gave me exposure to the works of photographers from around the world." During the lockdown, he undertook an online photography course organised by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. "It was very intense, and I learnt a lot about art photography from it." His favourite photographers are Henri Cartier Bresson, Steve McCurry and Raghu Rai. "Their photographs make an impact and are also beautiful. I hope to narrate stories of the people in my area through my works. I also have plans to try my hand at film making in the future."



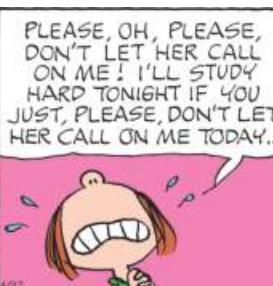
Life through a viewfinder

(Above) Award winning photograph No Escape from Reality, Pubarun Basu and (left) Flying Colours ■ PUBARUN BASU AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



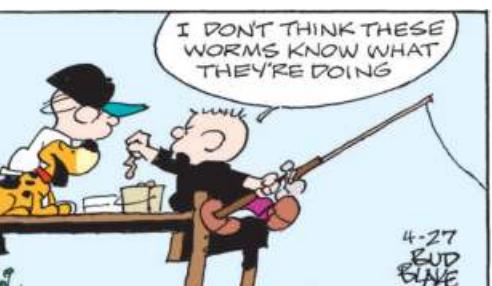
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



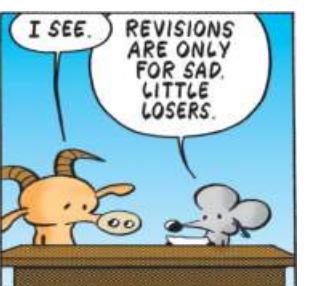
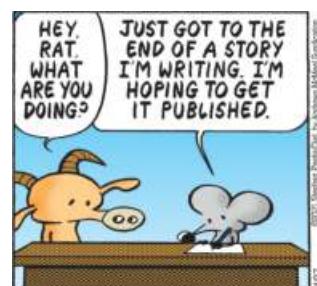
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Russia suspends Navalny group's activities

Prosecutor's move comes as court begins proceedings into designating his foundation as 'extremist'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russian prosecutors on Monday suspended the activities of Alexei Navalny's regional offices, in a move his team said would essentially shut down the jailed opposition figure's movement.

The move comes after Mr. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most outspoken critic, ended a hunger strike last week that he had launched to demand proper medical treatment in prison.

A court in Moscow on Monday began proceedings into designating Mr. Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and its regional offices "extremist" after prosecutors requested they be added to a list run by Russia's Anti-Terrorism Committee.

"The activities of Navalny's offices and FBK were immediately suspended," FBK's director Ivan Zhdanov wrote on Twitter, attaching screenshots of a prosecutor's decision.



Support pours in: People staging a rally in support of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Moscow on April 21. ■ AP

The Moscow City Court confirmed that the activities of the group's regional network were suspended, but clarified that prosecutors had the power to make the decision and said a final decision designating the group as extremist was due.

Mr. Navalny's office in Moscow said in a statement the group will already "no longer be able to work" as usual.



PM is increasingly facing criticism over his coronavirus policies, financial dealings

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a call to resign on Monday after claims he dismissed the prospect of thousands dying from COVID-19, as a row over government "sleaze" escalated.

In a front-page headline, the *Daily Mail* newspaper reported Mr. Johnson had said he would rather see "bodies pile high in their thousands" than impose a third coronavirus lockdown.

Ultimately, Mr. Johnson did order a new round of res-

trictions in January. But he is now locked in a damaging war of words with his former top aide Dominic Cummings over his coronavirus policies last year and financial dealings.

Asked if he made the remark, Mr. Johnson told reporters: "No, but I think the important thing I think people want us to get on and do as a government is to make sure that the lockdowns work."

The main opposition Labour party wants an urgent inquiry into Mr. Cummings'

claims made in an explosive blog post.

"We cannot go on like this day after day with the drip, drip, drip of allegations," said Labour leader Keir Starmer.

"We need to get to the bottom of it because I think for a

order, with Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Stefan Seibert saying that "using the instruments of fighting terror against politically undesirable opinions is in no way compatible with the principles of the rule of law".

Prosecutors on Friday said they had requested the extremism label for FBK and its regional offices because they are actively "creating conditions for the destabilisation of the social and socio-political situation."

Routine arrests

It also accused them of working to alter "the foundations of the constitutional order".

There are currently 33 organisations on Russia's extremism list, including the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda.

The groups are banned from operating in Russia and participating in their activities can result in lengthy prison terms.

FBK's members had already

faced routine police searches and arrests for their activism, with the pressure ballooning since Navalny returned to Russia in January from Germany where he had been recovering from a poisoning attack.

The 44-year-old was arrested on his return and is now serving two-and-a-half years in a penal colony for violating parole terms on old fraud charges he says are politically motivated.

Most of his top allies have since been placed under house arrest or left the country, with several announcing publicly their were quitting FBK after prosecutors requested the extremism tag.

Earlier this month, a Russian court jailed FBK cameraman Pavel Zelensky for two years on charges of inciting extremism online.

It cited two tweets saying that he hated Mr. Putin, among other officials, adding they did not deserve to be alive.

"I keep it simple. Just learn the lines and show up," was how the 83-year-old described his method of acting, preferring to endlessly go over his script so he could "do it without thinking".

On Sunday, he added another shiny award to his trophy case – his second Oscar for best actor. Mr. Hopkins was not present in Los Angeles or at a separate London venue to accept the golden statuette.

But with it, he became the oldest actor in Oscars history to win a competitive award, surpassing the late Christopher Plummer, who won at age 82.

But increasingly the Prime Minister is facing questions over his wider judgement and integrity, following weeks of stories about alleged inappropriate lobbying and special favours.

Mr. Cummings, the strategist behind the 2016 campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, quit Downing Street in December under a cloud of acrimony.

AP

For Hopkins, a second Oscar cements legacy of greatness

He creates history by becoming oldest actor to win the award

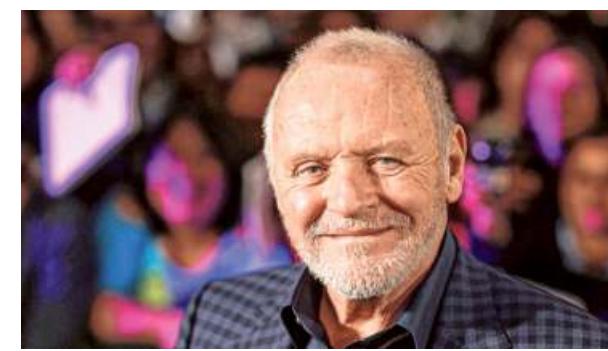
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Anthony Hopkins has spent a glittering career exploring the full depths of human experience, whether playing the sadistic Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* or a frail and frightened dementia sufferer in *The Father*.

But long before making the transition from psychopathic cannibal to a weakened man facing his own death, the Welsh-born naturalised American had earned his place in acting's halls of fame with decades of stage and screen performances.

"I keep it simple. Just learn the lines and show up," was how the 83-year-old described his method of acting, preferring to endlessly go over his script so he could "do it without thinking".

On Sunday, he added another shiny award to his trophy case – his second Oscar for best actor. Mr. Hopkins was not present in Los Angeles or at a separate London venue to accept the golden statuette.



Top honours: A file photo of Anthony Hopkins. ■ AP

China mutes Oscars success of Chloe Zhao

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

Beijing-born Chloe Zhao was scrubbed from Chinese social media on Monday as a nationalist backlash airbrushed out her remarkable achievement of becoming the first woman of colour to win the best director Oscar.

who stands alone at the pinnacle with four Oscars.

She also shared the best picture Oscar for the film, as she was one of its producers.

"I have no words. My voice is in my sword. We know the sword is our work. And I like work. Thank you for knowing that. And thanks for this," Ms. McDormand told the limited audience at Union Station in Los Angeles.

Daniel Kaluuya won best supporting actor for his portrayal of slain 1960s Black Panthers leader Fred Hampton in *Judas and the Black Messiah*, which also won best song for multiple Grammys.

Ms. McDormand becomes only the seventh actor with triple Academy Awards, and the fourth woman after Meryl Streep, Ingrid Bergman and Katharine Hepburn and

Ms. Zhao on Sunday night became the second woman ever to win the coveted award at the Oscars for *Nomadland*. Ms. Zhao became the target of a nationalist backlash after social media users dug up old interviews, in which she appeared to criticise her country of birth.

References to racism and police violence were threaded throughout the show's speeches, starting with actor-director Regina King's opening monologue, in which she mentioned the conviction of a former police officer for the murder of African-American man George Floyd.

Promising Young Woman won best original screenplay, the night's first award.

Soul became Pixar's latest Oscar winner for best animated feature, and also picked up best score while South African aquatic wildlife feature *My Octopus Teacher* won best documentary.

ELSEWHERE



Thailand PM fined for not wearing mask

BANGKOK Thailand's Prime Minister was fined for not wearing a mask on Monday after new COVID-19 restrictions came into force. Wearing masks is now compulsory in public spaces in 49 provinces and the capital Bangkok. After a picture of a maskless PM Prayut Chan-o-cha attending a meeting emerged on social media, the Bangkok Governor said the premier had been fined 6,000 baht (\$190). ■ AFP

Iranian-British woman gets another year in jail

DUBAI Iranian-British Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been sentenced to another year in prison. Ms. Zaghari-Ratcliffe has already served a five-year prison sentence in the Islamic Republic. Her lawyer said that she received the second sentence on a charge of spreading "propaganda against the system". ■ AP

Myanmar activists call for non-cooperation campaign

People urged to stop paying electricity bills, farm loans

REUTERS
NAYPYIDAW

Activists opposed to Myanmar's military junta called on people to stop paying electricity bills and agricultural loans from Monday, and to keep their children away from school, scorning the top general's pledge at a regional summit to end the post-coup crisis.

Scattered protests took place in Myanmar's big cities on Sunday, a day after Senior General Min Aung Hlaing reached an agreement at a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia.

The junta chief did not submit to calls for the release of political prisoners, including the leader of the ousted civilian government, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the ASEAN accord lacked any timeline for ending the crisis.

Pro-democracy activists have called for an intensification of their effort from Monday by refusing to pay electricity bills and agricultural loans, and for children to stop going to school.



On the move: Protesters showing the three-finger salute as they take part in a demonstration in Yangon on Monday. ■ AFP

been killed by security forces.

"All of us, people in townships, wards and then regions and states must work together to make a successful boycott against the military junta," activist Khant Wai Phyoe said in a speech at a protest in Monywa on Sunday.

"We don't participate in their systems, we don't cooperate with them."

A spokesman for the junta did not answer calls seeking comment.



Ramping up: A file photo of a medical worker collecting swab from a resident for COVID-19 test in Colombo. ■ AFP

containing the pandemic's spread, with a stringent lockdown. However, subsequent clusters emerged, posing a huge challenge for the government, which is also faced with a severe economic blow since the pandemic.

"We are carrying out research to see if these [recent cases] are of a new variant," the country's Chief Epidemiologist Dr. Sudath Samaratheera said. "Hospitals are reporting that they are receiving many younger pa-

tients who are in need of oxygen support or ICU beds," he told *The Hindu*.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Sunday said "the only solution to the pandemic is vaccination", while appearing to rule out lockdowns or curfews that "developing countries such as Sri Lanka cannot take," as the economy would be obstructed.

It is with the aim of reviving its economy and boosting foreign earnings that Sri

Lanka opened its borders earlier this year. Earlier this month, Sri Lanka began a "travel bubble" with India that authorities said will continue despite the raging wave in India, despite earlier announcing a postponement of the arrangement.

Vaccination drive Sri Lanka has so far administered the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine to 925,242 people, the President's office said in a statement. Sri Lanka commenced its vaccination drive in late January, after India gifted 5,00,000 doses of Covishield vaccine. Sri Lanka has placed further orders with India, and is sourcing the Russian made 'Sputnik' vaccine, Sino-pharm from China. In addition, the State Pharmaceutical Corporation has already signed the preliminary agreements required for the importation of the Pfizer vaccine and the Government is in the process of importing the vaccine as soon as possible," the statement said.

An activist monitoring group says 751 people have

Somali opposition fighters cordon off parts of capital

Clashes erupt with government troops over the President's bid to extend his mandate by two years



In turmoil: Military personnel supporting the opposition leaders on a street in Mogadishu, Somalia, on Sunday. ■ AFP

known by his nickname Farmajo, has faced harsh criticism from foreign allies after signing a law approved by parliament which extended his mandate by two years.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, best

bursts of heavy gunfire rang out across the capital after fighting broke out between government forces and soldiers allied to the various opposition leaders.

The clashes – mainly in the northern neighbourhoods of Sanca and Marriyana and the busy KM4 crossroads in the centre – began after dozens of opposition supporters marched in protest against Mr. Farmajo's term extension.

There were no immediate reports of casualties. "Stop the fighting."

Tensions remained high on Monday, with some people trying to leave their homes in tense neighbourhoods.

"People are starting to flee from Bermudo area where the pro-opposition fighters have taken positions last night, the situation is tense and there can be an armed confrontation anytime if the situation remain the same," Fadumo Ali, a resident of one of the tense neighbourhoods told AFP.

Mogadishu residents urged both sides to stop fighting, and complained that electricity and water had been cut.

"We need both sides to stop the fighting, have sympathy with the children and elderly," said Farah Hassan.

Witnesses elsewhere reported roads blocked by sand and logs.

Video emerges of crew of Indonesian submarine

Vessel with 54 crew sunk last week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BALI

A poignant video has emerged showing the crew of a sunken Indonesian submarine singing happily together on board their vessel.

The video, filmed a few weeks before the *KRI Nanggala 402* went down with all hands lost, shows some of the 53-strong crew singing "Sampai Jumpa", whose title means "Goodbye".

Submarine commander Heri Oktaviany is among those gathered around a seaman strumming an acoustic guitar.

"Even though I'm not ready to be missing you, I'm not ready to live without



A screen grab shows crew members singing a hit song "Sampai Jumpa". ■ AFP

you," the sailors sing.
"I wish all the best for you."
The video was recorded as a farewell for the outgoing commander of the Navy's submarine corps, Indonesian military spokesman Djawara Whimbo said.

Romania to expel Russian Ambassador

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BUCHAREST

Romania said on Monday it will expel a Russian diplomat, the latest European country to do so in solidarity with the Czech Republic which is involved in a diplomatic row with Moscow.

The deputy military attaché at the Russian Embassy in Bucharest, Alexei Grichayev, would be declared "persona non grata," the Foreign Ministry said.

The Czech government has accused the Russian secret services of being behind an explosion that killed two people in Czech Republic in 2014.

Somali opposition fighters took up positions in parts of the tense capital on Monday, a day after clashes with government troops erupted over the President's bid to extend his mandate.

Witnesses reported that armed men and vehicles mounted with machine guns were stationed in opposition strongholds, while key roads in Mogadishu were blocked.

Both the Somali security forces and the pro-opposition fighters have taken positions along some key roads, witness Abdulla Mire told AFP.

Somalia, already fragile af-

ter decades of civil war and

known by his nickname Farmajo, has faced harsh criticism from foreign allies

MARKET WATCH

	26-04-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	48,387	1.06
US Dollar	74.73	0.37
Gold	46,976	-0.63
Brent oil	65.79	-0.20

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE	
Adani Ports	730.75	5.40	
Asian Paints	2557.90	39.95	
Axist Bank	700.45	29.10	
Bajaj Auto	3738.85	66.35	
Bajaj Finserv	10001.75	85.10	
Bajaj Finance	4736.55	68.75	
Bharti Airtel	527.55	4.95	
BPCL	418.90	-4.15	
Britannia Ind	3539.20	-111.10	
Cipla	905.40	-30.20	
Coal India	126.95	0.80	
Divis Lab	3784.35	4.60	
Dr Reddys Lab	5066.70	0.00	
Eicher Motors	2369.85	52.55	
Grasim Ind	1312.35	34.25	
HCL Tech	928.80	-26.85	
HDFC	2509.80	12.45	
HDFC Bank	1404.80	-9.35	
HDFC Life	704.45	18.10	
Hero MotoCorp	2864.55	0.50	
Hindustan	348.35	-1.15	
Hind Unilever	2360.65	52.90	
ICICI Bank	591.10	21.15	
IndusInd Bank	859.55	9.55	
Infosys	1343.55	9.75	
Indian Oil Corp	88.20	0.15	
ITC	205.30	-0.05	
JSW Steel	655.80	20.40	
Kotak Bank	1759.65	25.45	
L&T	1335.90	13.00	
M&M	780.50	2.60	
Maruti Suzuki	6638.90	-37.20	
Nestle India Ltd.	16870.60	244.90	
NTPC	102.40	-0.15	
ONGC	102.80	0.40	
PowerGrid Corp	215.80	4.65	
Reliance Ind	1937.85	33.50	
SBI Life	942.50	19.65	
State Bank	344.30	7.85	
Shree Cement	28062.60	-43.70	
Sun Pharma	634.70	-3.25	
Tata Consumer	Products Ltd.	670.20	5.60
Tata Motors	295.40	1.40	
Tata Steel	940.75	15.15	
TCS	3100.80	-8.70	
Tech Mahindra	962.20	12.00	
Titan	1479.85	18.40	
UltraTech Cement	6275.90	208.00	
UPL	590.65	5.25	
Wipro	480.30	4.60	

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.52	74.84
Euro	90.05	90.45
British Pound	103.50	103.98
Japanese Yen (100)	68.99	69.31
Chinese Yuan	11.49	11.54
Swiss Franc	81.35	81.74
Singapore Dollar	56.18	56.43
Canadian Dollar	59.88	60.14
Malaysian Ringgit	18.18	18.26

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Natco seeks CDSCO nod for COVID-19 drug trials

Natco Pharma has applied to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) seeking approval for Phase-III clinical trials of COVID-19 drug candidate Molnupiravir capsules. Natco said it is expecting CDSCO to give emergency approval for the drug based on 'compassionate use' for patients. Natco is ready to introduce the product this month, a statement said.

Paytm starts interactive platform on investments

Digital financial services platform Paytm announced a new video-based wealth community wherein users can interact with experts on topics such as stocks and mutual funds, among others. "Paytm Wealth Community will enable users to attend live sessions conducted by subject-matter experts across topics like stocks and personal finance," the company said in a statement.

LEAD School raises \$30 mn to boost growth

LEAD School, a K-12 EdTech player, has raised \$30 million in a Series D funding round led by global VC fund GSV Ventures along with WestBridge, an existing investor, the firm said. The funds would be used by the firm to accelerate growth by building a pan-India brand, roll out of new products, strategic acquisitions and hiring top talent across domains, LEAD School said.

DGFT sets up COVID-19 help desk for trade

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), an arm of the Commerce Ministry has set up a 'COVID-19 Helpdesk.' According to a statement, with trade facing difficulties due to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the help desk would look into issues related to import and export licensing, customs-clearance delays, import or export documentation, banking matters, etc.

'Hasten vaccination, boost health infra'

If not contained, COVID-19 resurgence risks supply-chain disruptions, inflation pressures: RBI article



Gasping for breath: Healthcare infrastructure and vaccine supplies are strained, say the authors. ■ KOMMURI SRINIVAS

AMID a massive rise in COVID-19 infections during the second wave, the only way forward is speedier vaccination, ramping up of health infrastructure and observance of pandemic protocols, an RBI article said.

In an article on the state of the economy, an RBI bulletin said India is battling a spurt in new infections and mortalities, perhaps the fastest for any country of continental dimensions.

Observing that healthcare infrastructure and vaccine supplies are strained, financial markets are reeling and earnings forecasts face downgrades, the article said, "Yet this too shall pass. We have seen off the first wave, and have largely adapted.

"Pandemic protocols,

speedier vaccination, ramping up hospital and ancillary capacity, and remaining resolutely focused on a post-pandemic future of strong and sustainable growth with macroeconomic and financial stability is the way forward," said the article auth-

ored by RBI Deputy Governor M.D. Patra and other officials.

The article said as India battles the ferocious rise of new infections, a strong policy response is building. Economic activity in India is holding up against CO-

VID-19's renewed onslaught.

Apart from contact-intensive sectors, activity indicators largely remained resilient in March and grew beyond pre-pandemic levels. The resurgence in COVID-19, if not contained in time, risks protracted restrictions and disruptions in supply chains with consequent inflationary pressures," it said.

The central bank said views expressed in the article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the RBI.

The article also said early results of corporate performance in January-March indicate strong growth in revenue and net profit. Unlike in preceding quarters, this was driven by a pick up in demand and order inflows.

"Rising digitalisation is the engine powering a stellar

performance of IT companies in the quarter. Capacity utilisation is steadily rising, and the latest round of the RBI's Industrial Outlook survey envisages further expansion through the first three quarters of 2021-22," it said.

The authors said electricity consumption, a real-time indicator of economic activity since it cannot be stored, has risen sharply in April on the top of steady growth in preceding months.

Also, merchandise exports have posted a robust uptick in the first week of April. "It is not out of place to hope that these positive monthly developments reinforce each other and extend into a continuum that spans the medium-term.

The outlook for the economy is bright by any projection, it added.

'Logistics is key to easing oxygen crisis'

'Situation to improve in coming weeks'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD/MUMBAI

The oxygen shortages at hospitals treating COVID-19 patients leading to multiple deaths, which has turned the spotlight on the production and supply of the life-sustaining element, may start easing in the coming weeks, challenges notwithstanding, officials in the logistics and gas production industries said.

The Centre, for its part, has ordered stopping supply of oxygen for non-essential industries, advised producers to enhance output, taken measures to speed up road movement as well as explored rail and air movement. It has also sanctioned funds for setting up PSA oxygen plants at hospitals.

Transporters have been working 24/7 to reach oxygen to hospitals on time, said P. Senthil Kumar of Nammakkal-based Kongunadu Road Lines, which operates a fleet of cryogenic tankers. These vehicles are being operated with two drivers so that they are always on the move, he added.

With an estimated 1,000, 1,200 such oxygen tankers in operation and any addition to the fleet being slow given the limited market they cater to and the high investment required, the emphasis has been on managing with existing resources.

Ahishik Gupta, joint secretary of the All India Transporters' Welfare Association said the government should task a central team to monitor cylinder availability as the requirement will be high over the next few months.

LNG tanker operators had also been advised to repurpose their vehicles, Mr. Kumar said, signalling that the sector was now on a war footing to help boost supply.

RIL-BP starts gas output at KG-D6 field

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) and BP on Monday announced the start of production from the satellite cluster gas field in block KG-D6 off the east coast, aiding the country's gas production.

RIL and BP have been developing three deep-water gas developments in block KG-D6 – R-Cluster, Satellite Cluster and MJ – which together are expected to produce about 30 mm scmd (1 billion cubic feet a day) of natural gas by 2023, meeting up to 15% of India's gas demand.

The gas fields would each utilise the existing hub infrastructure in the KG-D6 block.

Regulator fixes upper limit of 15 years for the tenures



considered necessary and desirable by the board, after a minimum gap of three years, subject to meeting other conditions," it said.

It added that during this three-year cooling period, the individual shall not be appointed or associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity, either directly or indirectly.

With regard to upper age limit for MD & CEO and WTDs in the private sector banks, the RBI said that no person can continue in such positions beyond the age of 70. The maximum age limit for chairman and non-executive directors has been fixed at 75 years.

upGrad raises \$120 million from Temasek

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

upGrad, an online higher education firm, said on Monday that it has raised \$120 million from Temasek, a Singapore-based investment company.

This is the first external funding raised by the firm.

upGrad said it will use the fresh capital to further strengthen its team, scale up its global market operations, bolster technology and product capabilities, pursue M&A opportunities, expand graduate and post-graduate degree portfolio in India.

"This capital will further fuel our commitment towards global expansion as well as deeper India penetration," said upGrad co-founders Ronnie Screwvala, Mayank Kumar and Phalgun Kompaali in a joint statement.

The purchase consideration would vary between ₹15,200 crore and ₹21,000 crore (about \$2-\$2.8 billion).

"We believe Blackstone's sustained strategic partnership will help the company

Rise in cases to hit mobile shipments'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Smartphone shipments in India grew 23% year-on-year in the January-March quarter to over 38 million, the highest ever first-quarter shipments.

However, the resurgence of COVID-19 case is likely to impact recovery of the smartphone market that has seen three successive quarters of record-breaking shipments, as per Counterpoint Research.

"India's smartphone market registered a third consecutive quarter of record shipments in Q1 2021. But these numbers should be taken with caution as a more virulent wave of COVID-19 is currently on," said senior research analyst Prachir Singh.

Further, poor management practices alone may lead to global losses of \$1 billion, that is 11.4% of the total investments of \$98 billion. India's individual share in the losses would be \$81 million, based on data shared by the professional body. The global failure rate of 55% was applied to India as well, as there was no comparable data available for the country as of now, said Srini Srinivasan, MD, PMI South Asia.

Global enterprises are

expected to invest \$98 billion in artificial intelligence (AI) by 2023 and India's share in it will be about \$1 billion, said Project Management Institute (PMI), a Philadelphia-based non-profit organisation with about 28,000 individual members in India.

However, some \$54 billion – 55% of this proposed global investment – may go waste due to lack of familiarity or understanding of newer practices, technologies and tools and inability to optimise data. Consequently, the corresponding wastage in India will be \$484 million, as per PMI's estimates.

India's smartphone market registered a third consecutive quarter of record shipments in Q1 2021. But these numbers should be taken with caution as a more virulent wave of COVID-19 is currently on," said senior research analyst Prachir Singh.

Further, poor management practices alone may

SHRINE Series

HISTORY Series

PREMIUM Series

BOOK YOUR COPY ONLINE

<h2

Collective bowling effort sets up facile KKR win

After limiting PBKS to 123 for nine, Morgan's men suffer early setbacks in the chase before getting it done with 20 balls to spare

IPL 2021

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Kolkata Knight Riders came up with a spirited performance when it desperately needed one.

The men from the eastern metropolis had arrived at Ahmedabad after losing their last four matches. On Monday night at the Narendra Modi Stadium against Punjab Kings, they redeemed themselves in some style.

They had to survive some anxious moments, though, before chasing down a modest target of 124. They won with five wickets and 3.2 overs to spare.

Second win

It was KKR's second win at IPL-14, the first having come over a fortnight ago, in its opening fixture against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The way it started its chase, a fifth straight defeat wasn't entirely out of the question.

KKR lost three wickets inside the first three overs. But just when it seemed as if the batsmen might fail their bowlers, who had given a splendid display earlier in the evening, Eoin Morgan put his hand up.

The captain, who has struggled for runs this season, played a fine innings under pressure. He remained 47 not out (40b, 4x4, 2x6).

It was his fourth wicket stand of 66 with Rahul Tripathi (41, 32b, 7x4) that led his team towards victory.

In dire straits

KKR was in dire straits, at 17 for three, when Morgan joined Tripathi.

Nitish Rana was out off the fourth ball of the innings, hitting a full toss from Moises Henriques to cover, where a



Knight Riders' night out: Jordan's cameo ends as he is castled by Prasidh while Morgan finally found his touch to steer the team home. ■ SPORTZPICS/PL

grateful Shahrkhan Khan dove to his right and took a two-handed catch.

In the next over, Mohammed Shami ensured that Shubman Gill would have to wait longer to return to form, trapping him lbw, the opener missing the line.

Out came Sunil Narine,

but KKR's move didn't work – thanks largely to a superb catch from Ravi Bishnoi, who covered some distance running from deep mid-wicket and timed his dive to perfection.

Earlier, the KKR attack justified its captain's decision to bowl first.

It was a disciplined effort from seamers Pat Cummins, Shivam Mavi and Prasidh Krishna as well as the spin duo of Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine, as they choked the PBKS batsmen.

Cummins provided the breakthrough in the last over of the PowerPlay, with K.L.

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS

K.L. Rahul c Narine b Cummins 19 (20b, 2x4, 1x6), Mayank Agarwal c Tripathi b Narine 31 (34b, 1x4, 2x6), Chris Gayle c Karthik b Mavi 0 (1b), Deepak Hooda c Morgan b Prasidh 1 (4b), Nicholas Pooran b Varun 19 (19b, 1x4, 1x6), Moises Henriques b Narine 2 (3b), Shahrkhan Khan Morgan b Prasidh 13 (14b, 1x6), Chris Jordan b Prasidh 30 (18b, 1x4, 3x6), Ravi Bishnoi c Morgan b Cummins 1 (4b), Mohammed Shami (not out) 1 (2b), Arshdeep Singh (not out) 1 (7b); Extras (lb-1, w-1): 5; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 123.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-36 (Rahul, 5.4 overs), 2-38 (Gayle, 6.3), 3-42 (Hooda, 7.4), 4-60 (Mayank, 11.2), 5-75 (Henriques, 13.1), 6-79 (Pooran, 14.2), 7-95 (Shahrkhan, 17.2), 8-98 (Bishnoi, 18.1), 9-121 (Jordan, 19.4).

PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

Henriques 1-0-5-1, Shami 4-0-25-1, Arshdeep 2.4-0-27-1, Bishnoi 4-0-19-0, Jordan 3-0-24-0, Hooda 2-0-20-1.

Toss: KKR; MoM: Morgan.

Knight Riders won by five wickets with 20 balls to spare.

Innings scan

PBKS	KKR
60	Dots
5	Fours
8	Sixes
37/1	PP
6.15	RR

Next assignment

KKR: April 29 vs. DC
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.
PBKS: April 30 vs. RCB
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Chennai Super Kings	5	4	1	8	1.612
Delhi Capitals	5	4	1	8	0.334
Royal Challengers	5	4	1	8	0.096
Mumbai Indians	5	2	3	4	-0.032
Kolkata Knight Riders	6	2	4	4	-0.305
Punjab Kings	6	2	4	4	-0.608
Rajasthan Royals	5	2	3	4	-0.681
Sunrisers Hyderabad	5	1	4	2	-0.180

After the PBKS-KKR match on April 26

Rahul – after a six over third-man – skyed a catch to a patient Narine at mid-off.

Then Mavi had Chris Gayle caught behind for a golden

duck and Prasidh removed Deepak Hooda. It took an 18-ball 30 (1x4, 3x6) from Chris Jordan down the order to lift the asking-rate over six.

"We do understand these are tough times and we will try and facilitate travel of players who are leaving for various reasons and their replacements, if any, in consultation with the franchises," the official said.

So far, R. Ashwin (Delhi Capitals), Andrew Tye, Liam Livingstone (Rajasthan Royals), Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa (Royal Challengers Bangalore) have left because of either biosecure-bubble- or COVID-related concerns.

With the IPL caravan having moved from Mumbai and Chennai to Ahmedabad and Delhi, the authorities are hoping that the list of departures doesn't grow substantially and the teams aren't weakened too much. RR, for instance, doesn't have a back-up overseas player at the moment.

IPL to continue 'at least for now': BCCI official

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

Despite at least five cricketers choosing to return home midway through the IPL and a growing chorus calling for the tournament's postponement because of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided against suspending the league.

PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

Henriques 1-0-5-1, Shami 4-0-

25-1, Arshdeep 2.4-0-27-1, Bish-

noi 4-0-19-0, Jordan 3-0-24-0,

Hooda 2-0-20-1.

Toss: KKR; **MoM:** Morgan.

Knight Riders won by five wickets with 20 balls to spare.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah didn't respond to a query by *The Hindu*, but a Board official privy to developments said on condition of anonymity that "the tournament will continue as planned, at least for now".

It is understood that the BCCI is tracking developments on a daily basis but with the authorities having granted permission, the Board will not voluntarily call the IPL off.

With the IPL caravan having moved from Mumbai and Chennai to Ahmedabad and Delhi, the authorities are hoping that the list of departures doesn't grow substantially and the teams aren't weakened too much. RR, for instance, doesn't have a back-up overseas player at the moment.

WITHDRAWALS

Ashwin pulls out of IPL to support his family



NEW DELHI

India spinner R. Ashwin withdrew from the IPL on Sunday to support his family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My family and extended family are putting up a fight against #COVID19 and I want to support them during these tough times," Ashwin tweeted.

"I expect to return to play if things go in the right direction. Thank you @DelhiCapitals." Delhi Capitals said it supported Ashwin's decision.

"Extending our full support to you in these difficult times, @ashwinrav99 Sending you and your family all the strength and prayers from all of us at Delhi Capitals," it tweeted.

Zampa and Richardson decide to return to Australia

BENGALURU

Citing personal reasons, Royal Challengers Bangalore's Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa have withdrawn from the IPL to return to Australia, RCB announced on Monday. They join Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals) in the list of Australians who have pulled out, as the Australian government reportedly considers a ban on all flights from India amid a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country.

Tire of coming second in Super Overs: Williamson

Tye predicts an exodus of Aussies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHENNAI

Be it the World Cup or IPL, Kane Williamson says he is "getting tired" of finishing second in Super Overs.

The New Zealander's latest tryst with the Super Over came on Sunday night when Sunrisers Hyderabad lost to Delhi Capitals in the tie-breaker.

"It is really uncanny in the game of cricket that things can end in a tie, but I suppose it is very, very exciting," said Williamson.

The Kiwi skipper has been a part of a few Super Overs, the most famous being the 2019 World Cup final, which England won on a boundary-countback rule.

"I am getting tired of coming second in the Super Overs," Williamson said at the tie-breaker.

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"I just thought I should try and get on the front foot and get home before I got locked out of the country," said Tye. "I think I've had 11 days at home since August."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

"There are definitely concerns. A lot of guys got in touch once they realised I was leaving. Some of them were very interested in what route I took home. I'm not sure if I'll be the only one (returning), but that's too early to say."

QUICK SINGLES



We are in the 'safest' bio-bubble: Ponting

CHENNAI
The IPL has created the "safest" bio-hub for its participants but Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting says he is also well aware of the "grim" COVID-19 situation outside the bubble in India. While admitting that IPL can be a welcome distraction in these tough times, Ponting said COVID-19 has dominated the conversations within his team. "This IPL has become more about what's happening on the outside rather than what's happening here. We are probably the safest people in the country probably because of the bubbles we are in."

Royals seek to loan players

NEW DELHI
Rajasthan Royals have approached fellow IPL teams to loan players after the departure of their four foreign players due to various reasons that include injuries, bubble fatigue and COVID-19 fear. IPL rules state that a player who has played less than two matches in the season can be loaned and cannot play against his home franchise. PTI

Feel safer in bubble than travelling home'

NEW DELHI

Australian pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile understands why some of his compatriots decided to leave home midway from the IPL but he feels safer being part of the Mumbai Indians' bio-bubble.

"I spoke to Zamps [Adam Zampa] a little while ago and he made a

TV PICKS

IPL: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
UEFA Champions League: Sony Ten 2 & Ten 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday).

IN BRIEF



Sarah Gamal set to create history

CAIRO When 3-on-3 basketball makes its debut at the Tokyo Olympics, referee Sarah Gamal will also be making a breakthrough, as an Arab and African woman officiating at the Games. "Being the first Arab and African woman refereeing 3 on 3 games at the Olympics is a positive. I am confident that this step will pave the way for other Arab and African women referees," she said. AFP

Bopanna & Bublik lose

ESTORIL (PORTUGAL) Rohan Bopanna and Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik lost 6-2, 7-6(1) to British pair Luke Bambridge and Dominic Inglot in the first round of the €481,270 ATP tournament here on Monday. **The results:** €481,270 ATP, Estoril, Portugal. First round: Luke Bambridge & Dominic Inglot (GBR) bt Alexander Bublik (Kaz) & Rohan Bopanna 6-2, 7-6(1).



Berrettini clinches Belgrade title

BELGRADE Italy's Matteo Berrettini won his fourth career title on Sunday defeating Aslan Karatsev, who had stunned Novak Djokovic in the semifinals, in the Belgrade clay court final. The World No. 10 Berrettini triumphed 6-1, 3-6, 7-6(0) over the Russian. AFP



Ashleigh Barty claims Porsche Tennis GP

STUTTGART World No.1 Ashleigh Barty earned her third WTA singles title this year by beating Aryna Sabalenka 3-6, 6-0, 6-3 in the final of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix here on Sunday and then became the first champion in 20 years to also win the doubles event, when she partnered Jennifer Brady to victory. AFP



Cirstea wins second WTA title, 13 years after first

ISTANBUL Romania's Sorana Cirstea beat top-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium 6-1, 7-6(3) to win the Istanbul Cup, her second WTA career title 13 years after her first at Tashkent in 2008. "I'm very, very happy...I did not expect it, to be honest, so probably I'm twice as glad!" she said. AFP

Nets' Durant, Jazz's Conley win Oscar

LONDON Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant and Utah Jazz guard Mike Conley Jr. were part of a group of executive producers awarded an Oscar for the short film *Two Distant Strangers* in the Best Live Action Short Film category on Sunday. REUTERS



Manchester City retains League Cup

LONDON Manchester City beat Tottenham 1-0 to claim a fourth consecutive League Cup in front of 8,000 fans at Wembley on Sunday. Aymeric Laporte's header eight minutes from time ended Tottenham's resistance as its 13-year wait to win a trophy goes on. AFP

Atanu and Deepika clinch gold

The former beats Castro while the latter pips Brown via tie-breaker

ARCHERY WC

SPORTS BUREAU
GUATEMALA CITY
It was a family affair as Atanu Das and his wife Deepika Kumari won the men's and women's individual recurve gold medals in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 here.

Atanu beat Daniel Castro of Spain 6-4, while Deepika defeated Mackenzie Brown of the USA 6-5 (9-9), via the tie-breaker, in the gold medal matches.

Atanu, who was trailing 4-2 in the third set, restored parity in the fourth before claiming victory in the fifth.

Hard work paying off
"It feels amazing. Dreams are coming true. I've worked so hard for so many years, and now this is paying off," Atanu told www.worldarchery.org.

After taking a 2-0 lead, Deepika saw Mackenzie equalise in the third set.

The Indian regained her lead before the American made it 5-5 to force a tie-breaker.

Deepika's shot was closer



Champion couple: Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari showed their prowess in the individual recurve finals. ■ WORLDARCHERY

to the centre than her opponent's as the two scored a nine each.

"It has been a long time since I shot in the finals. It feels great and, at the same time, I'm happy and nervous. It gives me confidence and pushes me to give better performances," said Deepika.

It was Atanu's first gold medal in the event, while it

was Deepika's third individual gold in a World Cup. She had triumphed previously in 2012 (China) and 2018 (USA).

Prolific

Deepika, who earlier claimed the team gold with Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari here, had been part of triumphant teams in 2011 (China), 2013 (Colombia and

Poland), and 2014 (Poland). Till date, she has collected 32 medals (eight gold, 16 silver and eight bronze) in World Cups and World Cup Finals.

Atanu also won a mixed team bronze with Ankita.

Indian recurve archers finished with three gold and one bronze medal to boost their morale ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

Women players, staff test positive

All are asymptomatic and in isolation

HOCKEY

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

After the men last year, it's the women's hockey team members who have tested positive en masse for COVID-19 this time around.

Seven players have tested positive at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru following their return from respective hometowns two weeks back.

The seven players are Rani Rampal, Savita Punia, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur and Sushila Chanu.

Two staff members – video analyst Amrutanprakash and scientific advisor Wayne

Lombard – have also tested positive. The players and staff were tested on April 24, post a mandatory quarantine period, on their return as per the SAI protocol.

Under observation

All players and staff are asymptomatic and are in isolation and under observation at the National Centre of Excellence, Bengaluru, SAI said in a statement.

Orlando 112 lost to

Nets eclipse Suns in clash of top two

Bogdanovic spurs Atlanta to a come-from-behind win

NBA

REUTERS
NEW YORK

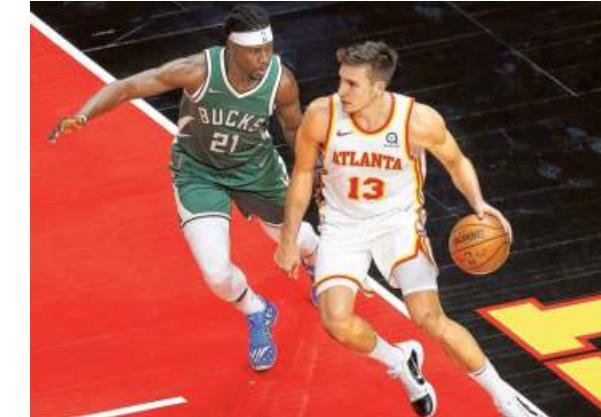
Kyrie Irving had 34 points and Kevin Durant scored 33 after a brief time away as the Brooklyn Nets earned a 128-119 victory over the visiting Phoenix Suns on Sunday in a showdown between two of the top teams in the NBA.

Blake Griffin scored 16 as the Nets backed up their standing as the top team in the Eastern Conference.

Bogdan Bogdanovic matched his season high with 32 points to spark Atlanta to a come-from-behind 111-104 win over Milwaukee.

Charlotte guard Devonte' Graham scored 24 points in the defeat of Boston 125-104.

Draymond Green assisted



Top-scorer: Bogdan Bogdanovic, right, racked up the most points as Atlanta rallied to down Milwaukee. ■ AFP

on a go-ahead hoop by Kelly Oubre Jr. with 1:42 to play and then followed in a Stephen Curry miss 34 seconds later, helping Golden State out-finish Sacramento 117-113.

The results: Orlando 112 lost to

Indiana 131; Atlanta 111 bt Milwaukee 104; Golden State 117 bt Sacramento 113.

Washington 119 bt Cleveland 110; Brooklyn 128 bt Phoenix 119; Portland 113 lost to Memphis 120; Charlotte 125 bt Boston 104.

Tough day for Vidit, Praggnanandhaa

NEW IN CHESS CLASSIC

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

A day after punching way above their weight, Vidit Gujrathi and R. Praggnanandhaa hit the canvas a few times in the New in Chess Classic rapid online chess on Sunday.

After 10 rounds, Vidit (5 points) was 10th while Praggnanandhaa (4.5) was sharing the 11th spot. Favourite Magnus Carlsen led with seven points, half a point ahead of Firouzja Alireza and Hikaru Nakamura.

On Sunday, Vidit stretched his unbeaten run to eight rounds when he drew with Alireza, beat Jan-Krzysztof Duda and missed

a win late in the game against a determined Praggnanandhaa. However, in the last two rounds of the day, Vidit lost to Wesley So and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

Praggnanandhaa could not add to his overnight tally, of three points, after losing to Le Quang Liem and Leinier Dominguez Perez. He matched wits with Vidit for over 50 moves and managed to survive a third straight defeat after Vidit missed a possible win.

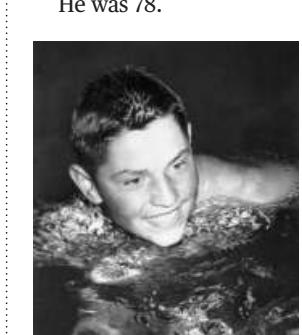
The gritty teenager went on to upset 2019 World Cup winner Teimour Radjabov and looked good to beat Aryan Tari until 41 moves. However, two successive blunders from Praggnanandhaa turned the tide in Tari's favour.

Swimming great Konrads passes away

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Latvia-born John Konrads, who set 26 individual freestyle swimming World records and won the 1500m freestyle Olympic gold medal along with two bronze medals in 1960, has died, the Sport Australia Hall of Fame announced on Monday.

He was 78.



John Konrads. ■ FILE PHOTO

A learning experience, says Ankita Raina

Player recalls exploits with Rutuja Bhosale at the Billie Jean Cup

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

The health of Indian women's tennis has often been reflective of Ankita Raina's game, especially in the Billie Jean King Cup. It is no surprise that the 28-year-old Ankita played the best tennis of her career, in the World Group play-off tie against Latvia in Jurmala.

Chatting with Olympian Vishnu Vardhan on Instagram, Ankita, along with teammate Rutuja Bhosale, raved about the enriching experience of the 'historic tie'.

Historic because India reached this stage of the Cup for first time ever. It was an inspiring performance by Ankita, as she tormented former World No. 5 and French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko, before letting



Perspective: Ankita Raina feels that the Latvians played the crucial points better. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

her escape to victory.

A win, very much possible as Ostapenko served to stay in the match at 4-5 in the decider, would have catapulted Indian women's tennis to a different sphere. Ankita put things in perspective.

"During crucial points or

games, they played very solid and produced the winners. That is the reason why they are, where they are," said Ankita.

Ankita also had an opportunity to extend the fight against former world No. 11 Anastasija Sevastova.

"There is so much to learn.

"It was a great experience," said Ankita.

Acknowledging Sania

Sania Mirza has been a beacon for Indian women's tennis with six Grand Slam titles, world No. 1 in doubles for long and reaching a career best No. 27 in singles and multiple Asian Games medals.

Both Ankita and Rutuja, who paired up with debutant Zeel Desai to record a morale boosting doubles victory in the dead rubber against Latvia, heartily acknowledged Sania's splendid role.

"When I got into the team in 2013 as a 16-year-old, I was in awe of Sania. I still feel the same. When Ankita and Karman were playing, Sania used to explain things to us on the sidelines," said Rutuja.

"Anastasija Sevastova.

"During crucial points or

games, they played very solid and produced the winners. That is the reason why they are, where they are," said Ankita.

Ankita also had an opportunity to extend the fight against former world No. 11 Anastasija Sevastova.

"There is so much to learn.

"It was a great experience," said Ankita.

Henry and Shearer in PL Hall of Fame

They are the first inductees into this exclusive club



Thierry Henry. ■ AFP



Alan Shearer. ■ AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Thierry Henry and Alan Shearer were on Monday named as the first players inducted into the official Premier League Hall of Fame in recognition of a combined 435 goals and seven Golden Boot awards.

Arsenal's all-time top scorer Henry won two Pre-

mier League titles under Arsene Wenger and was part of the "Invincibles" team that went unbeaten throughout the 2003/04 title-winning campaign.

Shearer, who won the title with Blackburn in 1995, is the Premier League's record goalscorer, netting 260 goals in 14 seasons for Blackburn and Newcastle.

Spectator limits to be decided by month-end

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto said on Monday that she will decide the upper limit of spectators for the Olympic and Paralympics by the end of April.

"As for the upper limit of spectators, we will make a decision on that regard by the end of April. In order to flexibly address the virus situation including the state of emergency, we will work closely with the IOC, IPC, the central government and the Tokyo metropolitan government in order to gain consensus," said Hashimoto during a Tokyo 2020 executive board meeting held in the capital.

"I was surprised how fast the time flies as there are less than 100 days. There are still many obstacles we need to get over with including the virus. I won't waste a day to prepare to hold a safe and secure Olympics," Hashimoto said.

a win late in the game against a determined Praggnanandhaa. However, in the last two rounds of the day, Vidit lost to Wesley So and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

Praggnanandhaa could not add to his overnight tally, of three points, after losing to Le Quang Liem and Leinier Dominguez Perez. He matched wits with Vidit for over 50 moves and managed to survive a third straight defeat after Vid