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## NEARBY



### Highest-ever 24-hour rainfall in May in Delhi

NEW DELHI  
The Capital received a record 119.3 mm of rainfall for May in 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Thursday due to the impact of cyclonic storm Tautkai and a western disturbance, the IMD said. It added that this was double the previous record rainfall of 60 mm on May 24 in 1976. The IMD has said that the sky would remain clear and the temperature will slowly rise to normal again.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

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## Help comes knocking



**Reaching out:** Health workers of Chennai Corporation checking the oxygen level of COVID-19 patients under home isolation in the Mogappair West locality on Thursday. ■ M. VEDHAN

## Delhi HC asks hospitals to install oxygen plants

'COVID-19 has left a bitter experience'

### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked big hospitals in the capital, with 100 or more beds, to install Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen plants, noting that the recent surge in COVID-19 cases had left a "bitter experience" for everyone due to the acute shortage of medical oxygen.

A Bench of Justices Vibin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said a lesson had to be learnt, particularly by hospitals, to be prepared for future eventualities.

"Considering that the pandemic is once in a century

## Aerosols can travel up to 10 m; ventilation is the key, says govt.

Better air circulation is a community defence that protects all, it points out

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

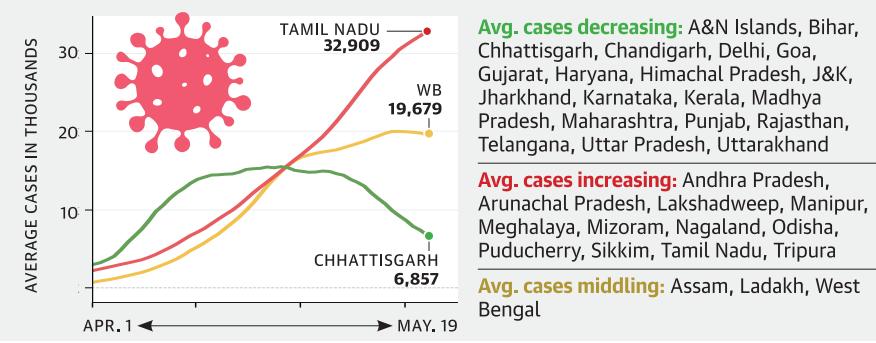
NEW DELHI

Aerosols can be carried in the air for up to 10 m and improving the ventilation of indoor spaces will reduce transmission, a government advisory on stopping the spread of COVID-19 said on Thursday.

The advisory, issued by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, said there was a need to remember the simple measures that could reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

"Ventilation can decrease the risk of transmission from one infected person to the other. Just as smells can be diluted from the air through opening windows and doors and using exhaust systems, ventilating spaces with im-

**Rise and fall** | While India's second COVID-19 wave is on the wane, the decrease in cases is not uniform across all States. For instance, while Chhattisgarh's cases have been on a decreasing trend, infections are trending up in Tamil Nadu and middling in West Bengal



proved directional air flow decreases the accumulated viral load in the air, reducing the risk of transmission. Ventilation is a community defence that protects all of us at home or at work," it stated. It recommended adding

outdoor air in offices, homes and public spaces. Droplets and aerosols were the key transmission modes of the virus. While droplets fell up to 2 m from an infected person, aerosols could travel up to 10 m.

Ventilation in huts could be improved by adding "jaali" or other simple air outlets", apart from installing exhaust fans, the advisory said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## 23 more bodies recovered from barge off Mumbai

Toll rises to 49, 26 personnel still missing

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Twenty-three more bodies were recovered from barge P-305, which sank off the Mumbai coast, taking the death toll to 49, while 26 persons are still missing as search and rescue efforts continued for the fourth day on Thursday.

"So far, 186 survivors have been rescued and 49 bodies recovered. INS Beas is at Mumbai harbour, disembarking the remains," a Navy



Anxious wait: Relatives of missing persons waiting outside a mortuary of a hospital in Mumbai on Thursday. ■ AP

spokesperson said. Accommodation barge P-305 sank 35 nautical miles off Mumbai on May 17 due to Cyclone Tautkai. Three construction barges of Afcons Infrastructure, working on a project of

the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, and one drilling rig of ONGC deployed for exploration off Mumbai coast were impacted.

WRONG CALL: OWNER ▶ PAGE 8

## CMs humiliated at Modi's meet: Mamata

'No one was allowed to speak'

### SHIV SAHYA SINGH

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday took strong exception to Chief Ministers allegedly not being allowed to speak at a virtual meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

She said she thought she would be allowed to raise issues relating to the pandemic, but was shocked at not being allowed to speak.

She said she had listed several points she wanted to raise. "It was just a casual, super flop meeting. We, the CMs, felt insulted and humiliated," she told journalists at the Secretariat after the conclusion of Mr. Modi's meeting with 54 District Magistrates from 10 States in

'VACCINES NOT GIVEN' ▶ PAGE 8

## Stalin urges President to release Rajiv case convicts

Tamil Nadu CM says they have already spent 30 years in prison, suffered untold hardship and agony'

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind requesting him to accept the State government's recommendation in September 2018 and pass orders to remit the life sentences of all the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

Mr. Stalin said the convicts – S. Nalini, Murugan, Santhan, A.G. Perarivalan, Jayakumar, Robert Payas and P. Ravichandran – be released immediately.

DMK Member of Parliament T.R. Baalu handed over the letter from Mr. Stalin to the President's Office on

Thursday.

In his letter, copies of which were released by the government to the media, Mr. Stalin pointed out that the convicts had spent three decades in prison.

### 'Prison decongestion'

"These seven persons have already suffered untold hardship and agony in the past three decades and have paid a heavy price. There has already been an inordinate delay in the consideration of their pleas for remission. In the present circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, courts are also recognising the need to decongest prisons," he said.

He recalled that Nalini's



of life imprisonment. "The majority of the political parties in Tamil Nadu have been requesting for the remission of the remainder of their sentence and for immediate release of all the seven convicts as they have been incarcerated for about three decades. It is also the will of the people of Tamil Nadu," Mr. Stalin said.

### State's plea to Governor

On September 9, 2018, the State government had recommended to the Governor for the remission of the rest of the sentence for all seven convicts and their early release. The purported obstacle for exercise of the power of remission was the

pendency of the investigation by the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency of the CBI.

"It has been clarified by the respective stands of the Union government and CBI before the Supreme Court that there is no connection between the remission of the sentence and investigation," the Chief Minister pointed out.

The Governor had decided that the President was the competent authority to decide on the plea of remission of sentence of these seven persons and had forwarded the State government's recommendation to the President's Office, the Chief Minister added.

## Govt. extends I-T filing deadline

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The government has extended deadlines for various Income Tax law compliances citing the hardships being faced amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The due date for furnishing income tax returns for the Assessment Year 2021-22 has been extended from July 31 to September 30.

Employers have also been granted a month's extension for furnishing Form 16 that reflects tax deductions at source from employees' salaries, from June 15 to July 15.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 12

## Doctors felled by the virus they fight for their patients

329 of them have succumbed to COVID-19: IMA

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

It is on the shoulders of these frontline workers that the bulk of the burden of fighting this pandemic falls. Doctors put themselves in harm's way to help their patients.

The Indian Medical Association released its latest list on Thursday, stating that 329 doctors succumbed to the COVID-19 infection. This is probably a conservative figure, but an occasion to record the lives and work of these people, sometimes un-

til the very last breath they drew.

### Gone too soon

Anas Mujahid, 26, died on May 9 within hours of being admitted to the very hospital he was serving in. The young doctor, a junior resident at Delhi's Guru Tegh Bahadur (GBT) Hospital, a designated COVID-19 hospital, lost his battle to the disease. The doctor was reporting to duty till Saturday (a day before he passed away).

A rapid antigen test showed that he was positive. He collapsed while still in the fever clinic and died by 2.30 a.m., said Dr. Mohammad Anas, the deceased doctor's



Call of duty: Doctors and nurses interacting with a COVID-19 patient at a hospital in Sanand, near Ahmedabad. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

junior at the college and hospital. He added they were told it was a rare case of rapid progression of COVID-19. Hospital records show he suffered from "intracranial bleeding" (bleeding

within the skull, including the brain). "Shock is an inadequate word to describe how and what we are feeling," said Dr. Mohammad

Anas. "He was a hard-working, humble person who

kept to himself. He was known to be very polite and helpful. He is missed."

Officials from the hospital administration said Dr. Mujahid, who completed his internship after MBBS in January, was working at the hospital as a junior resident and is survived by his parents, two brothers, and a younger sister. "The thought that we lost a young soldier does hit even the bravest among us. There is a sadness that we can't ignore. But we serve because it is our only motivation, it is our purpose in life that we opted for," said Dr. Mohammad.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Eminent sculptor, 2 sons succumb to COVID-19 in a span of 12 days

Raghunath Mohapatra died at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, on May 9.

Bhubaneswar, on May 9. His second son Prasanta Mohapatra, 48, who had represented the Odisha Ranji Trophy team and was a match referee for the Board of Control for Cricket in India, succumbed to COVID-19 on Wednesday. He, too, was admitted to AIIMS, Bhubaneswar.

The sculptor, a Padma Vibhushan awardee, had three sons and two daughters. He passed away while undergoing treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences,

Thursday. According to SUM COVID Hospital sources, Jashobanta was shifted from AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, to SUM in a critical condition on Wednesday.

Four years ago, Susanta Mohapatra, the youngest of the three brothers, had died of a heart attack.

Raghunath Mohapatra's mortal remains were cremated with full State honours at his Girala village in Puri district. Susanta's death coincided with the 11th day rituals of his late father.

AN-NDNE



# 'Don't let guard down despite dip in cases'

Capital reports 3,231 fresh COVID-19 infections, 233 deaths

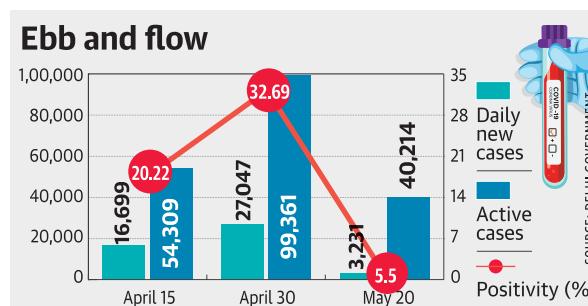
STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 3,231 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours and 233 deaths, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

This is the lowest number of daily new cases in about 50 days. The last time new cases were less than this was on April 1, when 2,790 cases were reported. The bulletin added that 58,744 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 5.50%.

Commenting on the fall in the number of cases that has been sustained for over two weeks, experts said that Delhi has passed the peak of the current wave of infection but warned that preparations need to be made for a possible third wave of infection.

Head of the community medicine department at Safdarjung Hospital, Jugal Kishore, said that people are going to come from other cities and countries to Delhi and will bring different variants of the virus. "We don't know how the virus will change and we should be careful when dealing with it. There are around 400 variants of concern and 1,000 variants



of interest. Also, we don't have any study showing lifelong immunity against the virus," Dr. Kishore said.

#### Vaccine production

Delhi Medical Council president Arun Gupta also said that the peak is over in Delhi and that the situation is better in hospitals and admissions are also decreasing. He stressed on the importance of vaccination to combat the virus in the backdrop of the Delhi government closing down 100 vaccination centres last week due to shortage of vaccines.

Gupta said. The ferocity of the virus has ebbed and flowed in the Capital, first peaking in November after falling in the next three months. On January 27, the number of new COVID-19 cases had dropped to 96, the lowest in nine months and on February 16, dropped even further to 94. However, on February 24, the number of new cases hit 200, and started increasing thereafter.

The situation that started in mid-April when people started finding it difficult to find beds in hospitals started when the positivity rate peaked at 36.2% on April 22. On Thursday, the positivity was 5.5%, the lowest since April 6. The number of vacant beds in hospitals have also increased from 5-6% on many days in April to 48% on Thursday.

## 3 govt. hospitals to treat black fungus

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by CM Kejriwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

To tackle the rising cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) infection in the Capital, the Delhi government has dedicated three hospitals for its treatment.

Treatment centres, it said on Thursday, will be established at Lok Nayak Hospital, GTB and Rajiv Gandhi Hospital with teams of specialised doctors constituted at each centre for efficient functioning. They will pre-

pare a detailed plan and issue special SOPs on how to raise awareness amongst COVID-recovered people for the prevention of the disease.

The decision to dedicate three hospitals as well as to ensure adequate management of medicines used in its treatment was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In a statement released after the meeting, Mr. Kejriwal said: "Delhi is the Capital of

the country and so, people from outside also come here for treatment. We should have a sufficient quantity of medicines to cater to everybody who is coming for the treatment of black fungus."

The Chief Minister stressed on the need to prevent the growing number of black fungus cases, and also the need to provide better treatment to those who are infected. He added that the government would soon release SOP details.

## Ramp up production of black fungus medicine'

HC directs Centre to submit report

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to bridge the gap between production and demand of Amphotericin B, the medicine used for treating black fungus which is primarily affecting COVID-19 recovered people.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeet Singh asked the Centre to act quickly to ramp up the production of the drug or import it from foreign countries noting that the "issue is time and human life".

The court said it appears

that the domestic production is far less than the requirement on an all-India level. It directed the Centre to submit a status report detailing the production capacity, producers licensed to produce and enhanced capacity by next date of hearing on the issue.

"Looking at the requirement, we are afraid that doubling may not suffice...Centre should consider import from wherever in the world," the HC remarked.

The court was informed by Delhi govt.'s counsel that currently Delhi has around 200 cases of Mucormycosis

**Timings**  
**DELHI**  
FRIDAY, MAY 21  
RISE 05:28 SET 19:09  
RISE 13:37 SET 01:58  
SATURDAY, MAY 22  
RISE 05:28 SET 19:09  
RISE 14:39 SET 02:33  
SUNDAY, MAY 23  
RISE 05:27 SET 19:10  
RISE 15:45 SET 03:08

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 31 19  
Safdarjung 31 19  
Palam 31 20

**Delhi Palam Today**  
35°C Mainly dry weather and rise in day temperature likely. Day would turn very warm and mainly sunny.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
37°C A comfortable morning and hot day likely to prevail with mainly sunny sky.

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## 40% of ration shops were found closed: rights body

'Only 44 of 110 shops were functioning'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

According to an audit of ration shops conducted by the Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan, 40% of the shops visited by volunteers were found closed during working hours. Of the 110 shops visited by the volunteers, only 44 were found to be distributing grains to ration cardholders.

The audit of the ration shops was conducted between May 14 and May 20 across the city.

"Nearly 40% ration shops that were visited [43 out of 110] were closed during working hours. Only 44 shops were found to be distributing grains to cardholders."

ers. Over 23 ration shops at the time of our visit claimed that they were awaiting the full stock of ration," the report said.

**No notice board**  
The DRRAA also said that in 100 of the 110 shops visited, no notice board or banner was found displaying the category-wise entitlement of rations.

"This is despite the fact that the orders dated May 14 by the Delhi government stipulate that a board detailing total entitlement of beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act is to be mandatorily displayed prominently at all ration shops," the report said.

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# 150 jab centres shut from today: Atishi

Vaccine stock for the age group of 18-44 years will last less than a day: AAP leader

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

About 150 vaccination sites for people belonging to the age group of 18-44 will be shut from Friday due to shortage of vaccine, said AAP leader Atishi on Thursday.

"Our Covaxin stock for the age group of 18-44 has been finished for the last one week. Covishield's stock is also available for less than a

day. This means that in 99 schools, the 368 sites that are operating, half of them i.e. more than 150 vaccination sites will close down for the age group of 18-44 from Friday," Ms. Atishi said in a statement.

#### Cause for concern

She said that this is a matter of "great concern" for the people of Delhi as a lot of

young people in the age group of 18-44 want to get vaccinated.

"And as we have seen in the second wave, the youth has been affected in large numbers. Not only have they been infected, but also hospitalised, and many deaths too have occurred. That's why it is important that Delhi gets its vaccination stock at the earliest," the AAP lead-

er said.

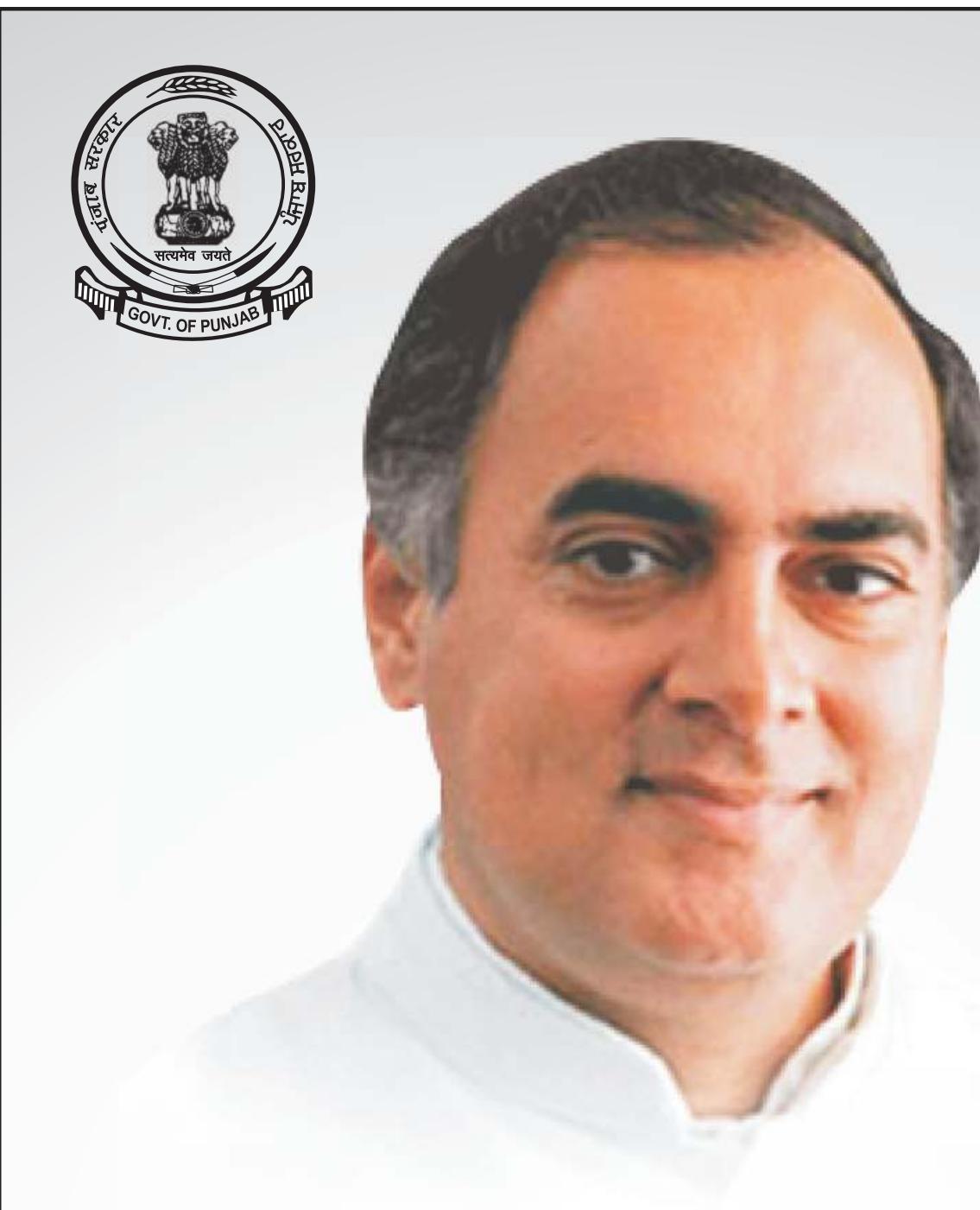
She said that walk-in vaccination for people above 45 years of age are open and requested senior citizens to come forward to get vaccinated.

"Delhi's total vaccination count has reached 48,69,640 and the number of people who have gotten both the doses stands at 11,01,742," she added.

## IN BRIEF

'Pvt. schools should waive fees during pandemic'

GURUGRAM Local MLA Sudhir Singla on Thursday suggested that private schools should not collect any charges from the parents when the schools are shut during the lockdown period. He also made a request to Chief Minister Manohar Lal and Education Minister Kanwar Pal Gujjar to look into his suggestion. Mr. Singla appealed to the private schools to take a positive initiative in this regard and waive the fees.



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on his  
**30<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary**

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**Capt. Amarinder Singh**  
Chief Minister, Punjab



Department of Information & Public Relations, Punjab

# Provide protection to live-in couple, HC tells Haryana police

'Ensure that no harm comes either to the lives or liberty of the petitioners'

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Allowing a petition filed by a 'live-in couple', the Punjab and Haryana High Court has directed Haryana police to provide appropriate protection, if found necessary, and ensure that no harm comes either to the lives or liberty of the petitioners.

Justice Sudhir Mittal in an order on May 18 observed that the Constitution of India is the supreme law of the land. "Right to life and liberty is enshrined therein and is treated as a basic feature. The said right includes the right of an individual to full development of his/her potential in accordance with his/her choice and wish and for such purpose, he/she is entitled to choose a partner of his/her choice," he noted.

The individual also has the right to formalise the relationship with the partner through marriage or to adopt the non-formal approach of a live-in relationship. The concept of live-in relationships has crept into our society from western nations and initially, found acceptance in the metropolitan cities, probably because, individuals felt that formalisation of a relationship through marriage was not necessary for complete fulfilment.

Education played a great role in development of this concept. Slowly, the concept has percolated into small towns and villages also as is evident from this petition. This shows that social acceptance for live-in-relationships is on the increase," he added.

The petitioners had approached the High Court after the family of one of the petitioners opposed the relationship and was threatening to cause physical harm.

The counsel for the State submitted that "live-in-relationships are not legal and are frowned upon by society. Thus, no protection can be granted to the petitioners."

#### \*Not an offence\*

Justice Mittal added "In law, such a relationship is not prohibited, nor does it amount to commission of any offence and thus, in my considered view such persons are entitled to equal protection of laws as any other citizen of the country. The law postulates that the life and liberty of every individual is precious and must be protected irrespective of in-

dividual views...The Constitutional Courts grant protection to couples, who have married against the wishes of their respective parents. They seek protection of life and liberty from their parents and family members, who disapprove of the alliance. An identical situation exists where the couple has entered into a live-in relationship. The only difference is that the relationship is not universally accepted. Would that make any difference? In my considered opinion, it would not. The couple fears for their safety from relatives in both situations and not from the society. They are thus entitled to the same relief. No citizen can be permitted to take law into his own hands in a country governed by Rule of Law," he said.

# Odisha government gears up to face possible cyclonic storm

It may hit the State's coastal region by May 26, says official

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Thursday started the process of pre-positioning man and machine for rescue and relief operation for a possible cyclone hitting the State.

"We have received information from India Meteorological Department that a low pressure area which is likely to form over north Andaman Sea could take the shape of a cyclone by May 25. But, details of the possible cyclone have not emerged," said P. K. Jena, Special Relief Commissioner of Odisha, on Thursday.

"Although it is expected that the cyclone could hit the coast by May 26, no clear picture about the eye of the storm has come through" Mr. Jena pointed out.

He said the government

had started preparations from Wednesday to face the cyclone.

"We held a discussion with Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force, National Disaster Response Force and Director General of Police (Fire). We have assessed their manpower and equipment availability. We have chalked out a preliminary deployment plan," said Mr. Jena.

cial Relief Commissioner said.

"Moreover, we held a discussion with all departmental heads on Thursday informing them about deployment of manpower and machine during the cyclone. All departments have already started the ground-work," he informed.

#### Assessment started

Energy department has already started assessing manpower requirement and mobilisation of machines to the possible affected areas.

Awareness campaign has been launched in fishing villages and fish landing centres to bring back fishermen who are already deep in the sea.

"We are trying to bring them back to the mainland by May 22," said Mr. Jena.

**Former CM Pahadia dies of COVID-19**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Former Rajasthan Chief Minister Jagannath Pahadia died of COVID-19 infection late on Wednesday night. Mr. Pahadia, 89, breathed his last at a private hospital in Gurugram. He served as the first Dalit Chief Minister of the State in 1980-81 and was later the Governor of Haryana and Bihar.

The State government announced a one-day mourning on Thursday, during which the government offices remained closed and the national flag flew at half-mast.

The veteran Congress leader was elected an MP four times and later an MLA in 1980, 1985, 1999 and 2003. He also served as a Union Minister of State three times after being elected to Lok Sabha from Rajasthan's Sawai Madhopur and Bayana seats.

# Rights group asks PM for probe into graft in tribal councils

'No headway in investigation into nexus between extremists and members of six councils in Manipur'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

A Manipur-based rights group has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi into large-scale corruption in the State's tribal councils with the police investigation into the nexus between members of these councils and extremists making no head-

way.

Attaching relevant documents, the Movement for People's Rights Forum, Manipur (MPRFM) had a few days ago written to the Prime Minister underlining the misappropriation of ₹143.77 crore across six autonomous district councils (ADCs).

These ADCs are Chandel, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Senapati, Tamenglong and Utkhrul in as many hill districts.

#### \*Funds misappropriated\*

The MPRFM said the Centre had been providing funds to these ADCs for the all-round development of districts. But ₹143.77 crore sanctioned in 2017-18 by the 14th Finance Commission was

"misappropriated and wrongfully utilised by the public servants in connivance with the elected members" of the respective ADCs.

The projects such as inter-village roads, water reservoirs, public toilets, street lighting, playgrounds and improvement of primary schools awarded to a coterie

were never executed, the MPRFM said.

The memorandum, signed by MPRFM convener Gonmei Kiropu and secretary P.R. Amos, cited several instances of corruption and sought an investigation by agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation since the Centre directly funds the ADCs.

Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division, Thunag Distt Mandi 175006  
Sd/- Secretary  
Madani Welfare Association,  
HIM SUCHAN AVAM JAL SAMPAK  
HP / 0922/21-22

001/2021 08/05/2021  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MADANI WELFARE ASSOCIATION AT/PO - PIPLI, PURI**  
Sealed quotation are invited from Contractors/Sub Contractors/Individual having PAN Card & Valid documents for supply of medical equipment such as ventilators, bipap machine, oxygen concentrator, ppk kits, surgical masks, medicines for covid 19 related sanitizers and distribution of food packet, Nutritious food packs and installation of borewell & well for the year 2021-22. The details are available in the office. The quotations are to be submitted before 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in the office at plot no-1928, Binorinagar, Jharapada, Bhubaneswar - 751006.

DEATH  
OBITUARY  
OBITUARY  
Shri. S.V.Nagarajan  
BHEL Trichy (Retired)  
13th April 1938 - 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
Dearly missed by beloved:  
Wife, Daughters, Sons-in-law  
and grand children  
Ph: 95665-61353

DEATH  
OBITUARY  
Born : 15.11.1929 Died : 19.05.2021  
**N.C.SUNDARAJAN**  
Chartered Accountant  
Senior Partner  
N.C.Rajagopal & Co.,  
Past President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (1992-93)  
attained the lotus feet of the Lord.  
Deeply mourned by :—  
N.C.Prabhakar - Son  
N.C.Sandhya - Daughter-in-law  
N.C.Sreevats - Grandson  
Hosts of Relatives & Friends  
Partners Staff & Apprentices of  
N.C.Rajagopal & Co.,

OBITUARY  
1922-2021  
We regret the demise of our mother on 14<sup>th</sup> May at Coimbatore.  
**Smt. Rajalakshmi Viswanathan**  
A life well-lived - with indomitable spirit, grace, enthusiasm and keen interest. She will be dearly missed by her large affectionate family and friends.  
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Hema & V.V. Ramani  
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# Help bring back scholar caught in Israel-Palestine conflict: MP

Cong. leader Gaurav Gogoi writes to Foreign Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi has asked the External Affairs Ministry to help bring back an Assam scholar caught in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In a letter to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Thursday, Mr. Gogoi sought "appropriate action" to ensure Nazila Tarannum returned safely to her home at Dergaon in eastern Assam's Golaghat district.

Ms. Tarannum is a che-

mistry scholar at the Ben Gurion University stuck in Negev, Israel, due to the country's conflict with Hamas in Palestine.

She is from Mr. Gogoi's Lok Sabha constituency Kaliabari.

On May 16, the body of Sowmya Santhosh was brought back to her hometown in Kerala from the conflict zone in Israel. She was killed in a Hamas airstrike in Israel's Ashkelon on May 19.

In another letter to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Mr. Gogoi hoped

the state government would heed certain recommendations of the Congress for protecting the Assamese language and culture.

These included non-implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and adherence to the clauses of the Assam Accord of 1985.

The MP also sought enhancement of daily wages of tea plantation workers to ₹365, a monthly stipend of ₹2,000 to all homemakers in Assam, and free electricity of up to 200 units to the most vulnerable families.

Mission work expedited for water supply

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

The technical work under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) are being expedited in Rajasthan to ensure the supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household by 2024. The proposals for providing tap water connections in all the remaining households will be sent shortly for approval of the State Level Sanctioning Committee.

The Congress government in the State has sought changes in the norms for Central assistance for the JJM in order to reduce financial burden on the States. The flagship Central scheme at present stipulates the share in 50:50 ratio.

The State has a huge task lying ahead to meet the target of water supply, as only 12% of the households are currently getting piped water supply. Additional Chief Secretary (Public Health Engineering) Sudhanshu Pant said here on Thursday that action would be taken to sanction the functional household tap connections by this month-end.

#### \*Tenders issued\*

Mr. Pant said the technical approvals for 5,451 of the 9,101 villages, in which the plans were earlier sanctioned, had been released and tenders issued for 3,671 works. All the technical works were approved in Bundi and Churu districts, while over 90% approvals were made in Bilhara, Jaipur and Baran districts.

Rajasthan, which has only 1.01% of the country's surface water, has been trying hard to supply drinking water to geographically difficult areas and expects more assistance from the Centre to achieve the targets of JJM. The Public Health Engineering Department has coordinated with other wings of the State government to get the water allotted from different sources.

HIMACHAL PRADESH IRRIGATION CUM PH DEPARTMENT CORRIGENDUM									
Due to technical reasons, the Key dates for the on line tender fixed vide this office NIT No. EE-I-IPH-Thunag-E-Tender/2020-1492-1553 dated 04/05/2021 to be opened on 19/05/2021 is hereby extended as under:-									
	Already fixed dates	Extended dates							
1. Bid Submission start date	04/05/2021 at 5:00 PM	04/05/2021 at 5:00 PM							
2. Bid Submission end date	18/05/2021 at 5:00 PM	22/05/2021 at 5:00 PM							
3. Physical submission of Earnest Money Deposit, Cost of tender form if not paid online	19/05/2021 at 10:30 AM	24/05/2021 at 10:30AM							
4. Opening of cover	19/05/2021 at 11:00 AM	24/05/2021 at 11:00 AM							
5. Opening of financial bid	Date and place to be notified separately	Date and place to be notified separately							
Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division, Thunag Distt Mandi 175006									
Sd/- Secretary Madani Welfare Association, HIM SUCHAN AVAM JAL SAMPAK HP / 0922/21-22									

DEATH OBITUARY									
001/2021 08/05/2021 <b>OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MADANI WELFARE ASSOCIATION AT/PO - PIPLI, PURI</b> Sealed quotation are invited from Contractors/Sub Contractors/Individual having PAN Card & Valid documents for supply of medical equipment such as ventilators, bipap machine, oxygen concentrator, ppk kits, surgical masks, medicines for covid 19 related sanitizers and distribution of food packet, Nutritious food packs and installation of borewell & well for the year 2021-22. The details are available in the office. The quotations are to be submitted before 25 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 in the office at plot no-1928, Binorinagar, Jharapada, Bhubaneswar - 751006.									
<b>OBITUARY</b> Shri. S.V.Nagarajan BHEL Trichy (Retired) 13th April 1938 - 19 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 Dearly missed by beloved: Wife, Daughters, Sons-in-law and grand children Ph: 95665-61353									
<b>OBITUARY</b> Born : 15.11.1929 Died : 19.05.2021 <b>N.C.SUNDARAJAN</b> Chartered Accountant Senior Partner N.C.Rajagopal & Co., Past President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (1992-93) attained the lotus feet of the Lord. Deeply mourned by :— N.C.Prabhakar - Son N.C.Sandhya - Daughter-in-law N.C.Sreevats - Grandson Hosts of Relatives & Friends Partners Staff & Apprentices of N.C.Rajagopal & Co.,									
<b>OBITUARY</b> 1922-2021 We regret the demise of our mother on 14 <sup>th</sup> May at Coimbatore. <b>Smt. Rajalakshmi Viswanathan</b> A life well-lived - with indomitable spirit, grace, enthusiasm and keen interest. She will be dearly missed by her large affectionate family and friends. Sundari & V.R. Chander Hema & V.V. Ramani Geetha & R. Sitaraman Loving grandchildren & great-grandchildren Ph: 9843017500, 7598558356.									

DEFENCE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY (Deemed to be University u/s 3 of UGC Act, 1956) Category 'A' declared by MHRD, Govt. of India and Accredited by NAAC & NBA Girinagar P.O., Pune - 411 025, Maharashtra, India   www.diat.ac.in									
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In addition to the above, Project Staff/JRF/SRF/PA working under the sponsored projects & Candidates with CSIR-NET, DST, UGC-NET or any other National fellowship/scholarship available to them are also eligible to apply for Ph.D admission.									
Aspiring candidates may apply online for admission from 24th May 2021 to 23rd June 2021. Hard copy of the online application along with relevant documents must reach to Joint Registrar (Academics), DIAT (DU) Girinagar, Pune-411025 latest by 1730 hours on or before 30th June 2021.									

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# LDF government begins new innings in Kerala

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's 21-member Cabinet is sworn-in

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) Politburo member Pinarayi Vijayan assumed office after a 21-member Cabinet was sworn-in at the Central Stadium here on Thursday at a function under the shadow of COVID-19-induced lockdown.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office and secrecy to Chief Minister-designate Mr. Vijayan and 20 members of his Cabinet at the stadium, located behind the Secretariat.

Mr. Vijayan, who was sworn in as the Chief Minister for the second time was the first to take the oath, followed by K. Rajan of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and senior Ministers representing other parties in the LDF. The others followed in alphabetical order.



**Second term:** Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administering the oath of office to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

the Minister-designates to the Governor.

All except the 77-year-old Mr. Vijayan, Mr. Radhakrishnan, Mr. Krishnankutty and Mr. Saseendran are making their debut as Ministers. The youngest Minister is 44-year-old mediaperson-turned-politician Mrs. George.

This is the third LDF Cabinet to be sworn in outside the Raj Bhavan. It was done when V.S. Achuthanandan-led government of the LDF

assumed office in 2006, and later when the government under Mr. Vijayan assumed office in May 2016.

The 1 hour-20 minute-long function was held in accordance with COVID-19 protocol.

#### Video album

A video album "Naveganthanjali" by 52 leading singers and musicians was played on the 140-feet giant video wall behind the podium before

No role in Cabinet formation, says Yechury

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday scotched reports that the party's central leadership was at odds with the State unit for not including former Health Minister K.K. Shailaja in the

second Left Democratic Front (LDF) Ministry.

"The question of who will be a candidate in the Assembly election and which elected candidate will serve as Minister in the government is solely in the domain of the respective State committee," Mr. Yechury said.

the ceremony commenced.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, party Polit Bureau member Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, CPI(M) acting Secretary A. Vijayaraghavan, CPI state Secretary Kanam Rajendran, leaders of LDF coalition partners, legislators, members of the outgoing Cabinet, religious heads, heads of religious organisations and top civil and defence officials were present at the ceremony.

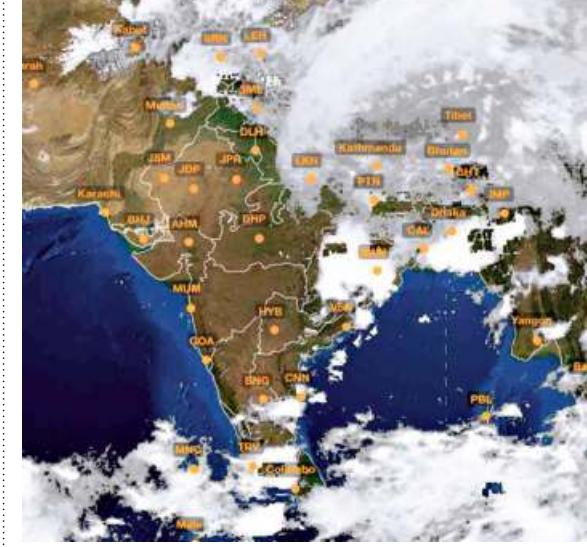
Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Mr. Vijayan in a tweet for assuming charge for the second term.

"Congratulations to Shri @vijayanparyaji on taking oath as CM and commencing his second term in office," the Prime Minister tweeted.

After the swearing-in, the Chief Minister and the Ministers assumed charge at the Secretariat and this was followed by the maiden Cabinet meeting.

#### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Friday:** Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Sikkim, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalseema, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Punjab, Uttarakhand, Nagaland, Manipur, Vidarbha, Konkan & Goa, Yanam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and Lakshadweep.

**CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN**

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...37.2...	28.6	24.5	Kozhikode	24...	31.8...	24.5
Ahmedabad	37.8...	22.2	25.7	Kurnool	3...	37.2...	25.7
Aizawl	28.0...	18.3	13.6	Lucknow	10...	31.8...	23.6
Altahabad	30.3...	23.8	20.0	Madurai	9...	38.6...	25.0
Bengaluru	1.2...	30.8...	22.2	Mangaluru	...29.8...	24.2	24.2
Bhopal	0.1...	34.7...	21.8	Mumbai	2...	33.2...	24.2
Bhubaneswar	...38.6...	28.4	21.3	Mysuru	...32.9...	21.3	21.3
Chandigarh	...35.0...	22.7	19.3	New Delhi	119...	31.4...	19.3
Chennai	...38.0...	27.5	22.8	Patna	40...	26.6...	22.8
Coimbatore	34.0...	25.4	22.8	Port Blair	5...	31.9...	25.8
Dehradun	48...	27.3...	17.9	Puducherry	...36.4...	25.4	25.4
Gangtok	0.1...	19.0...	16.8	Pune	7.5...	35.0...	21.4
Goa	56...	28.7...	24.4	Raipur	...40.0...	29.0	29.0
Guwahati	...35.0...	26.4	23.9	Ranchi	...36.0...	23.9	23.9
Hubballi	...28.0...	22.0	18.9	Shillong	...25.0...	18.9	18.9
Hyderabad	13...	34.9...	23.6	Shimla	...25.0...	14.9	14.9
Imphal	9...	28.2...	21.7	Srinagar	...25.2...	12.2	12.2
Jaipur	43...	33.0...	19.4	Thiruvananthapuram	37...	32.6...	23.2
Kochi	27...	32.4...	24.4	Tiruchi	13...	36.5...	23.4
Kohima	...26.4...	14.2	14.4	Vijayawada	0.4...	37.8...	27.8
Kolkata	...37.5...	28.9	27.2	Visakhapatnam	...37.4...	27.2	27.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	-	-	19	-	-	-
Bengaluru	.6	60	35	18	42	■
Chennai	.9	5.40	40	12	67	■
Delhi	.3	19	38	40	144	■
Hyderabad	.5	34	29	37	54	■
Kolkata	10	19	15	44	50	■
Lucknow	-	28	72	47	75	■
Mumbai	.1	13	29	138	117	■
Pune	.6	12	52	62	85	■
Visakhapatnam	15	40	29	25	57	■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 200 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 13

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

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

#### IN BRIEF



##### 16 evacuated after fire in Kerala hospital

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A fire outbreak in a private hospital in the city prompted the evacuation of 16 patients, all non-COVID-19, on Thursday. No casualties were reported. The incident occurred at SP Fort Hospital. There were 32 in-patients in the hospital when the fire broke out. Fire broke out in the two-storey canteen after cooking oil fell on the gas stove flame. Three fire units brought the fire under control within 10 minutes.

## Walayar mother to resume protest today

She lost her daughters four years ago

**STAFF REPORTER**  
PALAKKAD

The mother of the two minor girls of Walayar who had been found hanging in mysterious circumstances four years ago will resume her agitation in front of her house at Attappallam, near here, on Friday.

She has chosen to resume her agitation a day after the swearing-in of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, demanding punitive action against two police officers who had originally investigated the case four years ago.

She alleged that the government was protecting police officers M.J. Sojan and P.C. Chacko, who, according to her, had been responsible for scuttling the case.

Walayar Action Council chairman Vilayodi Venugopal and patron C.R. Neelakandan said here that the mother would take a pledge at 12 p.m. on Friday to carry on with her agitation until the two police officers are expelled from service. Members of the Walayar Action Council will also take the pledge online.

The estimated revenue and fiscal deficits were ₹5,000.05 crore and

as much as ₹64,031.68 crore allotted for their development

**STAFF REPORTER**  
VIJAYAWADA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy presented the annual State Budget for the financial year 2021-22 in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday with an expenditure of ₹2,29,779.27 crore and a revenue expenditure estimated at ₹1,82,196.54 crore. The capital expenditure were pegged around ₹47,582.73 crore.

The estimated revenue and fiscal deficits were ₹5,000.05 crore and

₹37,029.79 crore, accounting for 0.47% and 3.49% of the GSDP respectively.

Mr. Rajendranath Reddy said Andhra Pradesh was ranked the third in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and they continued to be the government's foremost priority.

Women and child development has got a massive allocation of ₹64,031.68 crore (₹47,283.21 crore for women and ₹16,748.47 crore for children) while the BC

Sub-plan got ₹28,237.65 crore. The health, medical and family welfare sector has been given ₹13,830.44 crore.

A sum of ₹24,624 crore has been allocated for school and Intermediate education, ₹17,403.14 crore for SC Sub-plan, ₹6,131.24 crore for ST Sub-plan, ₹3,840.72 crore for the welfare of minorities, ₹3,306 crore for the uplift of Kapu community and ₹1,973.16 crore for higher education, he said.

## WEST

## Tauktae: Despite assurance, MVA govt. politicising relief issue, says Fadnavis

He alleges State is yet to complete compensating people hit by Cyclone Nisarga

**SHOURMOJIT BANERJEE**  
PUNE

Stating that the Centre would give aid to all eight States, including Maharashtra, which had been hit by Cyclone Tauktae, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday accused the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government of needlessly and deliberately politicising the relief issue.

Mr. Fadnavis, who is on a three-day tour of the Konkan region, which was ravaged by the cyclone, also alleged that the State government had yet to complete the relief and rehabilitation of citizens who had been afflicted in June last year.

"Instead of pointing fingers at the Centre each time something happens, I urge the

State government to take its own relief efforts seriously. They [the MVA] have to ensure whether their announcements are being implemented on ground...I find that several people who were afflicted by Cyclone Nisarga have not yet received compensation," the former Chief Minister said in Mahad in Raigad district.

He was reacting to state-

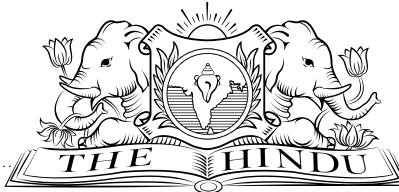
ments made by some MVA leaders that while Prime Minister Narendra Modi had personally visited and declared help for Gujarat, Maharashtra was being given stepmotherly treatment and ignored.

Raigad, along with Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts in the Konkan have been the worst-hit in Maharashtra, with the cyclone damaging around 10,000 houses, 5,000 hectares of fruits and cropland, nearly 200 school buildings, and scores of medical establishments.

Mr. Fadnavis said that in a release issued on Wednesday, the Central government had clearly stated that it would provide assistance to all the eight States affected by the cyclone.

The landfall of the cy-

clone happened in Gujarat which bore the brunt of its onslaught. As many as 45 people died on the spot and a large number of villages have suffered destruction. So, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister visited the spot, inspected the damage, and



## Circumvention

The Centre has a duty not to bypass political leadership in dealing with States

**W**ielding power at the Centre comes with great responsibility. A major responsibility in a federal country with strong centralising features is to maintain the balance, as well as mutual respect, between political structures at the central and State levels. In particular, it is an obligation of the Centre to refrain from bypassing the elected leadership while dealing with States. Two recent developments have raised concern that the Centre wants to give instructions to officials functioning under elected State regimes. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held two virtual meetings with district magistrates and State officials to review the COVID-19 situation. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal held a virtual meeting to discuss the National Education Policy, and related matters such as the conduct of Class XII examinations with State Secretaries in charge of education. While such meetings may help the Prime Minister or any Union Minister get some feedback from the field across India, it is quite unusual for leaders in the central political executive to bypass their counterparts in the States. The Tamil Nadu Minister for School Education, Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, took the right stand by not deputing any official to represent the State in Mr. Pokhriyal's virtual interaction. The idea was not to boycott the meeting, but to say the Minister ought to have been included in a discussion on the NEP.

The Prime Minister addressing district magistrates, or collectors, does have a precedent. Rajiv Gandhi addressed the heads of the district administration in Uttar Pradesh, when it was under Congress rule, on the issue of Panchayati Raj. The defence then was that such direct interactions were permissible under the Constitution, citing Articles 256 and 257. These provisions stipulate that the States are obliged to comply with laws made by Parliament and also allow some directions from the Union government. If the Prime Minister belongs to one party, and the officials addressed are from a State run by another, there is bound to be resentment that the elected representatives of the State are being bypassed. In the present case, it is true that the Centre has a major role in the pandemic response. The Disaster Management Act has been invoked to specify guidelines on lockdowns, restrictions and relaxations and to ensure smooth medical supplies. However, it would be in the larger interest of the country if events and discussions are held in such a way that the political structures at the State are not seen to be undermined. There ought to be no scope for complaints, such as the one made by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, that Chief Ministers felt humiliated when all of them were not allowed to speak to the PM in a virtual interaction.

## Balancing act

India should oppose indiscriminate attacks on Israel and disproportionate bombing on Gaza

**A**t the open UN Security Council session on Sunday on the Gaza conflict, India, a non-permanent member, attempted a delicate balancing act by reaffirming its traditional support for the Palestine cause without abandoning its new friend Israel. T.S. Tirumurti, India's Permanent Representative at the UN, expressed concern over the violence in Jerusalem and the "possible eviction process" of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah and warned against "attempts to unilaterally change the *status quo*" in Jerusalem. He also reiterated India's "strong support for the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-state solution". But India was careful not to upset Israel's sensitivities. There is a direct condemnation of the rocket attacks from Gaza but no direct reference to the disproportionate bombing Israel has been carrying out on the impoverished Gaza Strip since May 10. India also did not make any reference to the status of Jerusalem or the future borders of the two states, in line with a recent change in its policy. Until 2017, the Indian position was that it supported the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestine state based on the 1967 border and with East Jerusalem as its capital that lives alongside Israel. The balancing did not appear to have gone down well with the Israeli side. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has a good rapport with Narendra Modi, thanked 25 countries that he said stood with Israel, there was no reference to India.

For India, which voted against the creation of Israel in historic Palestine in 1947 in the UN General Assembly, ties with Israel have transformed since the early 1990s. In 2017, Mr. Modi became the first Indian PM to visit Israel and Mr. Netanyahu travelled to India in 2018. While Israel ties are on a strong footing, India cannot ignore the Palestinians for historic, moral, legal and realist reasons. Historically, India, which went through the horrors of 1947, opposed the partition of Palestine. Throughout the Cold War, it remained a strong supporter of Palestinian freedom, taking a moral and legal position against the Israeli occupation, in line with international laws and norms. It established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, in the context of improving Israel-Palestine ties after the Madrid Conference and the changes in the global order following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but never abandoned the Palestinians. India's Palestine policy had realist underpinnings too. India has been energy dependent on the Arab world. It cannot alienate the Arab voices or be isolated in the General Assembly, where most member-countries oppose the occupation. These factors should have driven India to take a more emphatic position against both the indiscriminate rocket attacks into Israel, in which 12 people were killed, and the disproportionate bombing of Gaza, which has claimed at least 230 lives, including over 60 children.

# A gear shift to pull India back from tipping point

The ruling dispensation will need dexterity in handling the pandemic and managing the shifting democratic scenario



M.K. NARAYANAN

**C**rises are of many kinds and come in different shapes and sizes. The current COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis that is one of a kind, but it is at such times that the true qualities and grit of a nation and its leaders manifest themselves. It demands a mindset very different from carrying out surgical strikes or indulging in bombing expeditions on terror targets inside Pakistan. Today, when India looks to those in authority to provide the necessary kind of leadership, unfortunately, this is nowhere in evidence. If this continues for much longer, it could prove highly detrimental. The leadership must not evade its responsibility and should brace itself for the difficult period ahead. The transition will not be easy.

What is, perhaps, proving rather problematic is that during this time of human travail, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership is confronting another crisis which could have a more direct impact on the party's future. This crisis centres around whether the BJP needs to make changes and adjustments to what it has been accustomed to do in conducting the affairs of the country since 2014. Triumphalism, which has been the BJP's stock-in-trade for many years now, having met its Waterloo in the recent Assembly Elections in the States of West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu may need a reset. For a party that seemed to carry everything before it till now, effecting a change may not be easy. What kind of an impact it might have on the affairs of the nation is also a matter of conjecture.

### Still no complete plan

Coming first to the novel coronavirus pandemic and its impact – COVID-19 has now been with us for nearly 18 months. As yet, the na-

tion has not seen a comprehensive strategy emerging from Delhi to deal with the situation. Numerous statements have been issued at different levels, and several meetings have been held from the Prime Minister downwards, but it is evident that all these are a poor substitute for a well-thought-out strategy.

Most glaring is the flip-flop on the policy concerning vaccination – which is the nearest substitute for a strategy – for the nation is still trying to come to terms on how the authorities will conjure up even the several million doses needed to vaccinate the vulnerable sections of the population in the 18-44 age group. The situation is further muddied by reports of cover-ups regarding 'missing deaths' – a damning indictment of all those responsible – considering that ours is a civilisation that treats death and the dying with the same veneration as the living. Distorting statistics can hardly take away the pain of those who have lost their loved ones.

### Fault finding has grown

In the meantime, as the facts and statistics surrounding deaths become grimmer, fault finding between the Centre and the States on how to manage the pandemic has only intensified. Anyone familiar with India's democracy would find it difficult to believe that we function under a federal Constitution (which has no doubt many unitary characteristics). Harmony between the Centre, and specially those States headed by Opposition parties, is conspicuous by its absence.

Finding the right strategy may not be akin to nuclear science, but it could prove difficult for those in authority – mainly those in Delhi – to effect a metamorphosis in their thinking, and adjust to methods needed to implement suggestions, which involve taking the States into confidence and incorporating their suggestions and ideas. This is, perhaps, the biggest stumbling block today, and given the current style of functioning of those in authority, it may be diffi-



cult to envisage such a metamorphosis taking place. It is, however, imperative that this is done before it becomes too late.

### Election results and fallout

While the pandemic rages, what is perhaps of greater concern to the BJP leadership in Delhi is that the aura of electoral invincibility that had existed since 2014 seems to be dissipating at this time. Predictably (from their point of view), the consequences of this could prove to be dire, and this, possibly, is the main priority for the party's high priests. It is difficult to believe that the BJP's leaders would take kindly to the trouncing that the party has received in West Bengal, despite putting everything into its campaign in that State – with the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the party President spending days campaigning in that State – and allow Mamata Banerjee to enjoy the spoils of victory. The defeats in Kerala, where the party failed to win a single seat, and in Tamil Nadu, where it won a handful of seats, are, perhaps, less galling but would still hurt. Retaining power in Assam and a win in the Union Territory of Puducherry provide little comfort. One can only envisage what has greater priority for the BJP today: dealing with the pandemic or redesigning its strategy to win elections in the future.

The defeat in West Bengal does convey a certain message, but it is uncertain whether the BJP, in its present frame of mind, would heed the message. It is more likely

that the party may seek to reinforce the tactics it had employed, which had enabled it to raise its tally of seats from 3 to 77 (now 75), in the belief that more rather than less, would produce desired results. This would be a mistake.

The history of Bengal is replete with instances where attempts to capture power, ignoring the ethos of Bengal, have hardly produced results and at best has led to a pyrrhic victory. Bengal has not forgotten either the tactics adopted by the East India Company – or the role of Mir Jafars – and, hence, suitably adjusting electoral tactics to prevailing winds are more likely to yield results. Consequently, it would be best if the BJP were to introspect on the reasons why it failed so conspicuously in West Bengal, despite having nursed a desire to capture power in that State since 2014. Otherwise, it would indeed be a sad day for democracy and India.

### A misreading

Polarising politics, accentuating the communal divide, employing the idiom of Hindu majoritarianism, etc., are electoral tactics that could, and have succeeded in certain States and in certain situations. It has often been observed that what might well succeed in certain States in the northern parts of the country may not be the recipe for States such as Bengal or many of the southern States. To cite a quotation, "But could sacrifices or soldanelas gemming a pasture in the High Alps thrive if planted in Egypt?" The extent to which Delhi misread the Bengali mind in the recent election is a sad commentary on Delhi's understanding of Bengal and its politics. Even a fleeting acquaintance with Bengal's electorate would confirm that Bengal did not fit into any kind of political straitjacket. For decades now, its politics has revolved round underdevelopment and related aspects.

Among other misjudgements made by the BJP on this occasion, which are best avoided in the future if it hopes to do better or cap-

ture power in Bengal, is to appreciate that Bengal's politics contain a mixture of cultural exclusivism, a certain eclecticism, and a belief in their superiority. A far more nuanced approach, rather than muscular tactics are, hence, likely to produce positive results.

Among other misjudgements best avoided in the future is that Bengal – in common with Kerala – give women an exalted status. The demigration of women leaders such as Mamata Banerjee, hence, created an adverse reaction and widened a chasm that existed already.

### There is unity in diversity

If the ruling dispensation in Delhi fails to heed the lessons that require to be learnt from the handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic and the outcome of the elections in West Bengal, the country may have to pay a heavy price. Bengal is not India, but it is a microcosm of India in miniature. Dealing with the pandemic at one level and managing the shifting democratic scenario at another level will demand dexterity of a certain kind which is not evident in the ruling dispensation so far. Image managing will certainly not be enough, nor for that matter, exaggerated claims to having achieved success. Neither of them is a substitute for real progress. The handling of the pandemic nationwide and the resort to a blame game has already created a divide and damaged relations between the Centre and the States. The current bias in the exercise of power has to be eschewed for the nation is truly in a serious crisis.

Above all, if India is to be retrieved from what many believe is a perilous state of affairs, there are many miles to go in which the Centre and the States must decide to go hand in hand. The 'unity in diversity' slogan must be adhered to in its true spirit if India is to survive and succeed.

*M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal*

## The fault line of poor health infrastructure

As and when India emerges on the other side of the pandemic, bolstering public care systems has to be the top priority



ASHWINI DESHPANDE

**A**s the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic ravages India, many bitter home truths and fault lines have been starkly exposed. One of these is the abysmally poor state of the country's health infrastructure.

World Bank data (<https://bit.ly/3u4cHfg>) reveal that India had 85.7 physicians per 1,00,000 people in 2017 (in contrast to 98 in Pakistan, 58 in Bangladesh, 100 in Sri Lanka and 241 in Japan), 53 beds per 1,00,000 people (in contrast to 63 in Pakistan, 79.5 in Bangladesh, 415 in Sri Lanka and 1,298 in Japan), and 172.7 nurses and midwives per 1,00,000 people (in contrast to 220 in Sri Lanka, 40 in Bangladesh, 70 in Pakistan, and 1,220 in Japan).

### Stagnant expenditure

This situation is a direct result of the appallingly low public health expenditure. The latest data narrative from the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA), Ashoka University, shows that this has been stagnant for years: 1% of GDP 2013-14 and 1.28% in 2017-18 (including expenditure by the Centre, all States and Union Territories) (<https://bit.ly/3bw3O7Y>).

Health is a State subject in India and State spending constitutes 68.6% of all the government health expenditure. However, the Centre ends up being the key player in pu-

blic health management because the main bodies with technical expertise are under central control. The States lack corresponding expert bodies such as the National Centre for Disease Control or the Indian Council of Medical Research. States also differ a great deal in terms of the fiscal space to deal with the novel coronavirus pandemic because of the wide variation in per capita health expenditure.

**Inter-State variation**  
CEDA has prepared an interactive graphic that allows users to see the inter-State variation in per capita health-care expenditure in 21 major States and how this has changed from 2010-11 to 2019-20 (<https://bit.ly/3bw3O7Y>). Kerala and Delhi have been close to the top in all the years.

Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, States that have been consistently towards the bottom of the ranking in all years, are struggling to cope with the pandemic, as a result of a deadly combination of dismal health infrastructure as well as myopic policy disregarding scientific evidence and expert advice. Odisha is noteworthy as it had the same per capita health expenditure as Uttar Pradesh in 2010, but now has more than double that of Uttar Pradesh. This is reflected in its relatively good COVID-19 management.

Given the dreadfully low levels of public health provision, India has among the highest out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditures of all countries in the world, i.e. money that people spend on their own at the time they receive health care. The World Health Organization



estimates that 62% of the total health expenditure in India is OOP, among the highest in the world. CEDA's analysis shows that some of the poorest States (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha) have a high ratio of OOP expenditures in total health expenditure.

This regressive nature of OOP health expenditure has been highlighted in the past (<https://bit.ly/3RpYXq>). Essentially, this means that the poor in the poorest States, the most vulnerable sections, are the worst victims of a health emergency. The surreal and tragic visuals of bodies floating in the Ganga serve as a grim reminder that the poor have no dignity in life or in death. Families that have been stripped to the bone trying to save the lives of their loved ones cannot even afford a decent final farewell for them.

**Government's role critical**  
The inter-State variation in health expenditure highlights the need for a coordinated national plan at the central level to fight the pandemic. The Centre already tightly controls major decisions, includ-

ing additional resources raised specifically for pandemic relief, e.g. the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund. The early declarations of victory over COVID-19 were very clearly credited to the central government. CEDA has shown that the first round of vaccinations, where the vaccines were procured by the Centre and distributed to the States, was marked by considerable inter-State variation, which was neither explained by the case load nor by the share of eligible (45+) population (<https://bit.ly/3bx9Gh5>).

Now that the disease is ravaging the country and the need for a coordinated strategy on essential supplies of oxygen and vaccines is acute, the central government has shifted most of the responsibilities on to the States, including that of procuring vaccines from the international market. This is inefficient, as the Centre can bargain for a good price from vaccine manufacturers in its capacity as a single large buyer (like the European Union did for its member states) and benefit from the economies of scale in transportation of vaccines into the country. Once the vaccines arrive in India, these could be distributed across States equitably in a needs-based and transparent manner.

Another benefit of central coordination is that distribution of constrained resources (medical supplies, financial resources) can internalise the existing disparities in health infrastructure across States. A decentralised management, on the other hand, exacerbates the existing inequities, as

better-off States can outcompete others in procuring resources. This is evident in the vaccine procurement with various States floating separate global tenders.

**A policy brief**  
In April 2020, CEDA came out with a policy brief, where among other measures, it recommended the creation of a "Pandemic Preparedness Unit" (PPU) by the central government, which would streamline disease surveillance and reporting systems; coordinate public health management and policy responses across all levels of government; formulate policies to mitigate economic and social costs, and communicate effectively about the health crisis (<https://bit.ly/2Rv4ywh>). We had not foreseen the ferocity of the second wave; but knowing how deadly this is, our suggestion acquires even greater urgency.

Indians were already "one illness away" from falling into poverty (<https://bit.ly/3oxXvWq>). Families devastated by the loss of lives and livelihoods as a result of this pandemic will feel the distress for decades to come. The central government needs to deploy all available resources to support the health and livelihood expenses of COVID-19-ravaged families immediately. As and when we emerge on the other side of the pandemic, bolstering public health-care systems has to be the topmost priority for all governments: the Centre as well as States.

*Ashwini Deshpande is Professor of Economics and Director, Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA), Ashoka University*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Treatment guidelines

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has again found itself on the back foot for not being proactive and dropping convalescent plasma therapy from its COVID-19 treatment guidelines in time. When existing evidence had debunked the use of antibiotics, convalescent plasma, other adjuncts like chloroquine and ivermectin a while ago, the ICMR has finally woken

out of its slumber to assess evidence and make this specific recommendation quite late in the day after public health professionals appealed to it. The emergency approval of 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) without published data, could, most likely, meet the same fate as convalescent plasma. Unnecessary and non-scientific drug regimens can cause difficulties to COVID-19 patients and their relatives.

The ICMR has to get its act together to ease the pressure on doctors and improve trust in systems during this raging pandemic.  
**Dr. THOMAS PALOCAREN,  
Vellore, Tamil Nadu**

**Foreign contributions**  
One fails to understand why the Union government has brought in a rule insisting that all non-governmental organisations receiving contributions

from abroad must open a bank account with the main branch of State Bank of India. Now that the branches are connected by the 'Core Banking System' it is possible to get the information from any branch in India. The government could have said that all contributions should be through SWIFT of the SBI New Delhi main branch which is more convenient, and over which the government can

maintain surveillance.  
**V. SASTHAMANI,  
Coimbatore**

**School examinations**  
It is no doubt a very difficult time for all students in an exam year, especially those who are ready to write their board examinations (Inside pages, "Class 12 exams next week", May 20). All Class 12 students are sure to be at least 16 or 17 years of age. Let the

government arrange for vaccination for them on a priority basis. The first dose can be administered within two weeks and the

# Can the economy survive the second COVID-19 wave?

PARLEY

While there won't be economic contraction, growth this year will be on a slow burner

*As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the State-level lockdowns batter the economy, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das this week noted that the impact of the second wave is likely to be less severe than the first one. He said that businesses and people have started to adapt to lockdowns and that the hit to demand would be much lower this time. In a conversation moderated by Prashanth Perumal J., Radhika Pandey and Vivek Kaul discuss the two COVID-19 waves and how they have impacted the economy. Edited excerpts:*

**How do you see the RBI governor's assessment of the current economic situation compared to last year?**

**Radhika Pandey:** The nationwide lockdown last year in response to the first wave of the pandemic resulted in a severe supply shock. What we are seeing now is not a severe supply shock but a demand shock. The second wave, because it is highly transmissible and ferocious as compared to the first wave, has created a lot of uncertainty, pessimism, and loss of confidence among households and businesses. It will take time for people to start recovering because it has created a lot of uncertainty. So, that's the key difference between the first and second waves. The second wave also affects supply to some extent, but it is primarily a demand shock. Last year, what we saw was that during the first quarter, savings increased as people were not able to spend because of the lockdown. But in the second quarter, we saw that savings declined and consumption spending picked up. It is difficult to say whether that will repeat this time. So, we might not see a steep V-shaped recovery that we saw last time.

**How do you see the impact of the second wave in terms of the magnitude of the economic slowdown?**

**RP:** Unlike last year, there won't be economic contraction this year. In fact, there will be positive growth, but most forecasters agencies are

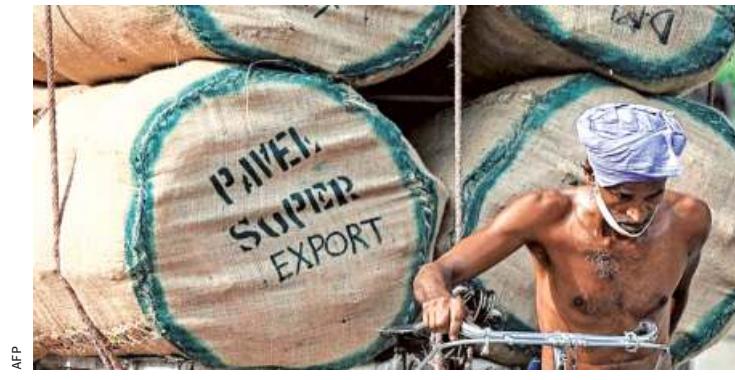
paring down their growth forecast because nobody anticipated the severity of the second wave. If we look at the GDP level, we won't be able to reach the pre-pandemic level this year, but as compared to last year, there will definitely be growth.

**Vivek Kaul:** The key difference is that growth this year will essentially be on a slow burner. We will not see a contraction because last year was really bad, but growth will be extremely slow. And economists will have to keep revising their numbers. One key thing is the fact that almost all governments in India missed the second wave and they had to hurriedly put lockdowns in place. I don't see governments opening the economy up very quickly due to the fear of a third wave. Before the second wave, all economists were saying that FY 2021-22 GDP should cross the pre-pandemic 2019-20 GDP. I don't think that will happen now.

**Would you agree with the assessment that we are looking at a prolonged slowdown?**

**RP:** Yes, if you look at the U.S. and the U.K., they have already vaccinated a considerable chunk of their population, and now they are opening up. That is not happening here in India as only 3-4% of our population is fully vaccinated. Even under the most optimistic scenario, it's not possible to reach the pre-pandemic GDP level this year. We may see progress on vaccination only in the initial months of 2022. That's why the economic recovery will be a protracted affair. In terms of magnitude, the decline won't be too steep. But in terms of duration, it will take a lot of time because of all the uncertainty.

**VK:** A significant section of the population has spent a large amount of their savings to fight COVID-19. A lot of people have also ended up in debt. There is no agglomerated data on this, but there is enough evidence going around if you keep your eyes and ears open. These families will find it difficult to spend. Then there is this great fear of a third wave. Even if people have the



money, whether they are in the psychological state to go out and spend is a question well worth asking.

**Does the Indian state possess the capacity to effectively deal with pandemics through vaccination, testing, etc.?**

**VK:** If you leave out the few southern States, much of India doesn't really have a health system. And the inequality across States is simply mind-boggling. One example that I often use is a comparison between Kerala and Jharkhand. And I do that because the population of Jharkhand is slightly more than that of Kerala. Kerala has close to 60,000-65,000 doctors while Jharkhand has around 5,000-6,000. If you go into other numbers such as the number of nurses and beds, you will realise that there is a great deal of inequality across the country. This is not something that can be set right overnight. It's not just about spending more money. There is a whole host of other supply-side issues and this obviously cannot be set right overnight.

There are two issues here. One is whether the Indian state has the capacity to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. No, it doesn't and that has become very obvious by now. The second question is whether it has the capacity to give vaccines. The situation is not as bad on that front. The vaccination problem can be taken care of even in the short term, as long as the vaccine supply becomes available.

**How have the monetary and fiscal responses been this time as compared to last year?**

**RP:** I don't see any response, especially from the monetary side. They

**C** The nationwide lockdown last year resulted in a severe supply shock. What we are seeing now is not a severe supply shock but a demand shock.

RADHIKA PANDEY

don't have much space given that we are seeing bouts of inflation as well as growth slowdown and we are out of the global business cycle. In advanced economies, growth is picking up and as a result, inflation is picking up as demand comes back on track. As a result, we are seeing global commodity prices surge and we are seeing the impact of that on India's domestic inflation. Last time the RBI cut the repo rate by 115 basis points, but today it is hard for the RBI to cut interest rates because inflation is going to rise even though there is a demand slowdown. It will be mostly cost push inflation where inflation is driven by crude oil prices and input costs. What the RBI can do is incentivise banks to lend to sectors which have been hard hit. But again, it all depends on whether banks are willing to lend because if we see the credit growth over the last few months, it has not actually been picking up as banks have become risk averse. There is greater scope for fiscal policy. Apart from free foodgrains distribution as was the case last year, one can allocate more funds for MGNREGS [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme] given that there has been an increase in the demand for work. But given that India's debt-to-GDP ratio has risen to somewhere around 90% and there has been a collapse in revenues, the ability of the government to spend is limited.

Also, urban workers are moving back to their villages. That has caused the increase in unemployment and MGNREGA is not able to absorb workers, which has resulted in a huge mismatch between demand and supply. In some cases, we also find that, even though work is offered, people are not taking it up because of fear surrounding the virus.

**VK:** If you look at the monetary policy, it hasn't been able to do much

over the last five to six years. They talk about cutting interest rates and people borrowing and all that. All that works in theory, but if you look at numbers, it doesn't work. One of the things that the RBI has been talking about is how lending to small and medium enterprises needs to go up. Now, if you look at the lending to micro and small enterprises, it has not moved and the overall lending has been the same for the last six years. This is despite offering all kinds of incentives, lower interest rates, so on and so forth. Secondly, it also tells you about the state of the small and medium enterprises in the country. They have been struggling over the years. They have faced everything from demonetisation to the Goods and Services Tax. And now the lockdown. Also, the main purpose of the bank is not to revive the Indian economy, which is why monetary policy has not worked for quite some time now.

**How do you see the migration of workers during the second wave when compared to the mass migration that happened during the first wave?**

**RP:** What we saw during the first wave was an abrupt lockdown. This time it's not so. Workers this time are taking a conscious decision to go back [to their homes]; it's not just an abrupt response. That's a key difference. The other point is that as compared to the first wave, this time the rural sector has been affected much more severely. That's visible in the employment numbers. What we see from CMIE data if we look at the April numbers is that total job loss was somewhere around 7.35 million and out of that, 2.35 million people lost jobs in the rural sector. Last time, rural employment was in a much better position as compared to urban unemployment.

Also, urban workers are moving back to their villages. That has caused the increase in unemployment and MGNREGA is not able to absorb workers, which has resulted in a huge mismatch between demand and supply. In some cases, we also find that, even though work is offered, people are not taking it up because of fear surrounding the virus.

**VK:** Also, a lot of people who went back last year never really came

back. That has probably also added to the unemployment pressure in the rural areas. Obviously there is no way to measure this. But I think that is another factor at play. And, as Radhika pointed that, the question is even if you increase the allocation to MGNREGA, and create more jobs, will people turn up because the chances of infection go up? This is a tricky situation. Last year we were able to spend our way out of trouble by spending to create economic activity. This time around it is a little difficult to implement.

**What should the government do to put a permanent end to the pandemic and help the economy recover fully?**

**RP:** There are some short-term measures to be taken and then there are some medium-term and long-term measures that are within current state capacity. One is to ramp up the supply of vaccines and ensure that more people get vaccinated. We should increase the daily pace of vaccination which has recently slowed down due to shortage. Unless that is done, the recovery will be protracted. The other thing is to seriously think about structural reforms, especially in healthcare. The pandemic has exposed the limitations of the healthcare system. There has to be some way of building medical infrastructure, which is not going to happen overnight. But there has to be careful and serious thinking.

**VK:** I think the only way to prevent another lockdown is to concentrate on providing the number of vaccines that the nation needs. You have a lot of these influencers going around who have all kinds of opinions on the disease. It has to be ensured that this kind of rubbish doesn't go around. It is also important to ensure that the right messaging goes to the country. Another big fear is that even though there is huge demand for vaccines, this is largely from the cities. Once that demand is exhausted, one needs to ensure that vaccination continues. It might make sense to incentivise people who come and get vaccinated with rice and wheat or by depositing some money into their Jan Dhan account. These issues need to be thought about, and right now, nobody is thinking about them.



**Radhika Pandey**  
is an economist and consultant at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy



**Vivek Kaul**  
is a business journalist and author of 'India's Big Government: The Intrusive State & How It's Hurting Us'



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

## The outdated nature of bureaucracy

The public sector, private players and civil society should all work together for public service delivery

ZUBAIR NAZER

COVID-19 has tested the resilience of all public institutions. Despite its efforts, bureaucracy has emerged as a major concern for the ineffective response to the COVID-19 crisis. This inadequacy is the reflection of the outdated nature of public bureaucracy.

In the 21st century, democratic countries are still relying on traditional bureaucracies to perform public policy formulation and implementation roles. These bureaucracies have outlived their relevance. Weberian bureaucracy still prefers a generalist over a specialist. A generalist officer (IAS and State civil service officials) is deemed an expert and as a result, superior, even if the officer works in one department or ministry today and in another tomorrow. Specialists in every government department have to remain subordinate to the generalist officers. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed this weakness. Healthcare professionals who are specialists have been made to work under generalist officers and the policy options have been left to the generalists when they should be in the hands of the specialists. The justification is that the generalist provides a broader perspective compared to the specialist.

### Weberian bureaucracy

Traditional bureaucracy is still stuck with the leadership of position over leadership of function. Leadership of function is when a person has expert knowledge of particular responsibility in a particular situation. The role of the leader is to explain the situation instead of issuing orders. Every official involved in a particular role responds to the situation rather than relying on some dictation from someone occupying a particular position. Weberian bureaucracy prefers leadership based on position. Bureaucracy has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Further, the rigid adherence to rules has resulted in the rejection of innovation. It isn't surprising to see COVID-19 aid getting stuck in cumbersome clearance processes even during the pandemic.

The reform often suggested in India is new public management. This

as a reform movement promotes privatisation and managerial techniques of the private sector as an effective tool to seek improvements in public service delivery and governance. But this isn't a viable solution, not the least in India where there is social inequality and regional variations in development. It renders the state a bystander among the multiple market players with accountability being constantly shifted, especially during a crisis. Further, COVID-19 has shown that the private sector has also failed in public service delivery.

### Collaborative governance

The most appropriate administrative reform is the model of new public governance. This model is based on collaborative governance in which the public sector, private players and civil society, especially public service organisations (NGOs), work together for effective public service delivery. There is no domination of public bureaucracy as the sole agency in policy formulation and implementation. As part of new public governance, a network of social actors and private players would take responsibility in various aspects of governance with public bureaucracy steering the ship rather than rowing it. During the pandemic, we see civil society playing a major role in saving lives. As part of new public governance, this role has to be institutionalised. It needs a change in the behaviour of bureaucracy. It needs flexibility in hierarchy, a relook at the generalist versus specialist debate, and an openness to reforms such as lateral entry and collaboration with a network of social actors. All major revolutions with huge implications on public service delivery have come through the collaboration of public bureaucracy with so-called outsiders. These include the Green Revolution (M.S. Swaminathan), the White Revolution (Verghe Kurien), Aadhaar-enabled services (Nandan Nilekani) and the IT revolution (Sam Pitroda). New public governance is the future of governance, especially public service delivery.

Zubair Nazeer is Assistant Professor (Public Administration) at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi



### NOTEBOOK

#### The way the CPI(M) works

There is mutual distrust between sections of the media and the party in Kerala

S. ANANDAN

"Are you shooting the messenger?" I asked the Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader who told me a few days ago that the party would not allow the media to set the agenda for it.

His reference was to reports about the public outcry over the exclusion of popular Health Minister K.K. Shailaja from the new Kerala Cabinet headed by Pinarayi Vijayan. "The public sentiment is perfectly understandable. But see how the media tried to leverage it to create a narrative of the party being anti-women and undemocratic," he said firmly.

An exemption to Shailaja Teacher alone would have had you [the media] crying foul that 'the Kannur lobby' was at work," said another leader.

The leader said that a few years ago, at a State plenum, the party decided that the perceived permanence attached to parliamentary positions should end. "We have the examples of Tripura and West Bengal in front of us. That's why we chose not to field

anyone who's had two consecutive terms in the Assembly, in the polls. The State Committee also decided that all CPI(M) members in the Cabinet would be talented freshers, to bring about a generational change," he said.

He added that there were excellent Ministers in the last Cabinet who did not contest the election. Of the ministers who got re-elected, none was given an exemption. The party would not fall for "media propaganda," he said firmly.

"Reporting on the CPI(M) in Kerala willy-nilly puts reporters in a spot when the leaders start wondering why a particular issue, a controversy or development was treated by the media in a certain way. To be sure, the media is not a monolith; those with the values of journalism intact are unremitting in questioning the establishment."

And the cloak of secrecy covering the CPI(M)'s proceedings hasn't helped matters either. I told the

tions which he accused of working in concert, like a 'syndicate', to destabilise the party. Locked in a factional fight with veteran leader V.S. Achuthanandan then, Mr. Vijayan spared no occasion to go hammer and tongs at a section of the media for its "concerted leakage of inner party happenings". With the ascent of the Bharatiya Janata Party nationally, the media was also accused of furthering a "right wing agenda".

Reporting on the CPI(M) in Kerala willy-nilly puts reporters in a spot when the leaders start wondering why a particular issue, a controversy or development was treated by the media in a certain way. To be sure, the media is not a monolith; those with the values of journalism intact are unremitting in questioning the establishment.

Given the shared scepticism between the media and the party, it's hard to know what actually happened in the party then or what has driven the policy shift now.

leader that it is only natural for the media to wonder if the exclusion of Ms. Shailaja had anything to do with cutting her down to size, similar to what happened to the legendary leader K.R. Gouri.

He responded that the party has several talented youth, many of them women, at all levels, including in the Cabinet. "And there's a mechanism to oversee the functioning of the government, to prevent concentration of power," he said.

Gouri Amma wasn't officially projected by the party as its chief ministerial candidate in 1987; going by party seniority, E.K. Nayanar was the natural choice. The media got it all wrong, another leader said.

Given the shared scepticism between the media and the party, it's hard to know what actually happened in the party then or what has driven the policy shift now.

### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1971

Tragic death of gallant mountaineer

Major Bahuguna, the only Indian member of the International Everest Expedition, died under tragic circumstances on April 18. And ever since the news appeared of how he lost his life, while descending from the expedition's third high-altitude camp pitched at 7000 metres, a big controversy has been going on as to whether his death could have been avoided with a little more care and alertness. Bahuguna was a veteran mountaineer who was also a member of the successful 1965 Indian expedition to Everest led by Commander Kohli. He was also a member of the successful Indian expedition to Nanda Devi earlier and, only last year, he led the Saser Kangri expedition with distinction. He was specially selected to join the International Himalayan Expedition and he was aspiring to fulfil the ambition of his life of getting to the top of Everest, a distinction which narrowly eluded him in 1965.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1921

UP administration  
(From an editorial)

Great indeed are the efforts made in the Administration Report of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh for the year 1919-20 to proclaim the fancied failure of the Non-Co-operation movement and to revile the activities of the "extremist papers" that are described as carrying on a "campaign of hate." It is also stated that the policy of "forbearance" followed by the Government has weakened the influence of the "extremist leaders" and strengthened the position of the Government. If the Non-Co-operation movement has met with "little success" and if the position of the Government is really strengthened by the noble policy followed, one fails to see the need for the series of proclamations, prohibitions and arrests launched all over the country. It is obvious that the nightmare of Non-Co-operation presses so heavily upon the bureaucratic bosom that it has been considered expedient to seek relief at least at the pronouncement of its failure and try to put down, if possible, the mighty movement by a series of repressive measures. This only shows how ignorant some people are as to the actual state of affairs and the penetrating power of the peaceful propaganda. The report after briefly describing the general economic conditions of the year refers to the work done with regard to the improvement of agriculture, industry and education.

## FROM PAGE ONE

**Aerosols can travel up to 10 m, says govt.**

"It is advised that *jaali*/air outlets with exhaust fans are installed by gram panchayats in homes where there is no cross-ventilation," the advisory said.

For workplaces, it recommended keeping doors and windows open while air-conditioners were on.

Hospitals should ensure that vaccinations were carried out in well-ventilated areas and public transport

**Doctors felled by the virus they fight**

"What happened to my *akka* (elder sister) should not happen to any other woman," said P. Prabu, brother of P. Shanmugapriya, who was eight months pregnant when she succumbed to COVID-19.

A medical officer of the Primary Health Centre (PHC) at Anuppanadi in Madurai, 32-year-old Dr. Shanmugapriya continued to work in the midst of the raging pandemic. "She sought maternity leave when she was seven months pregnant but it was not sanctioned, citing the increase in the number of patients with COVID-19. She texted me that there was a regular flow of patients with COVID-19 symptoms to the PHC," he said.

Two years ago, she was posted at the Anuppanadi PHC. "She loved her job. But being the only doctor at the PHC, she had a heavy workload. During her pregnancy, she had to go on street visits too," he said.

Dr. Shanmugapriya contacted her brother on May 1, saying that she had developed symptoms of COVID-19 and would be getting admitted for treatment. "She sounded very weak. She told me to text and not call as it was difficult to speak. She was treated in a private hospital for four days, and was told to shift to the Government Rajaji Hospital as the foetal heartbeat was poor," he said.

Her foetus could not be saved and she succumbed to COVID-19 on May 8. Her death was a shock to her colleagues at the PHC. "She was quick to make friends, and that is how she treated those working at the PHC too," he noted.

**Source of inspiration**  
The doctor advised his fraternity to wear goggles in view of the greater probability of the virus entering through the eyes, suggested to them to remain clean shaven as facial hair could become "transmitters", and even tonsured his hair. That he succumbed to COVID-19 after all these precautions is what disturbs his family and colleagues.

B.V. Raja Rao, a renowned neuropsychiatrist of Tirupati, fell victim to the second wave. It was a common sight for the residents of Tirupati to watch him wield a microphone and deliver messages from his four-wheeler, dwelling on mental fitness, suicidal tendency and depression.

"He was a source of inspiration for us," recalls P. Krishna Prasanthi, Vice-President (Andhra Pradesh chapter) of the Association of Physicians of India (API).

After being diagnosed with COVID-19, he remained bedridden in a private hospital for almost a month. The signs of brain haemorrhage slowed down his recovery rate and finally took a toll.

All of Telangana was shaken to hear of the death of a 31-year-old paediatrician who had COVID-19 on May 12, a week after giving birth to a baby girl.

Dr. Farah Niloufer was in the frontline of COVID-19 management at the Government Area Hospital, Gajwel, despite being in the third trimester of pregnancy, till she tested positive in the

like buses should keep windows open and use exhaust fans.

For rural or semi-urban areas, the advisory said every person entering the area should undergo a Rapid Antigen Test before entry for which ASHA and Anganwadi workers should be trained and protected. These workers should be given N95 masks even if they are vaccinated, it added.

**Doctors felled by the virus they fight**

first week of May.

Her husband Syed Abdul Majid, too, consults at the ESI Hospital in Nacharam. He is consumed by his grief.

Her close friend Dr. Nazia Tabassum said that though they had urged Dr. Farah to take leave from work, the paediatrician wanted to fulfil her duty and that she would anyway have to stay away from work for some months after her delivery.

59-year-old Chief Medical Officer Dr. G. N. Ganesh Kumar, who was in home isolation in Mysuru after contracting COVID-19 and was shifted to a hospital in Mysuru after he developed complications, did not respond to treatment.

Dr. Chidambar, Mysuru District Vector Borne Disease Control Officer, said, "The deaths of doctors are fewer this year when compared to the last wave since doctors and other healthcare workers are vaccinated."

Mysuru IMA president Dr. Anand Ravi said there had been no reports of private practitioners succumbing to COVID-19 in the district but the number of doctors becoming infected was higher this time.

**Affable, very caring**  
It was in September last that COVID-19 claimed its first victim among healthcare workers in Kerala.

M.S. Abdeen, a 73-year-old retired general practitioner, who was running a clinic at Attakulangara in the capital, was the first doctor in the State to have fallen victim to COVID-19. He had been seeing patients in his extremely busy clinic till the day he developed symptoms.

He was one of those popular doctors, quiet, affable and very caring about his patients. He ran a full and active practice and most of his clients were people from the near by slums. He took good care of them, often not taking any fee from them," said Mohammed Yusuf, a doctor himself and a friend.

Dr. Yusuf said that Dr. Abdeen had kept away from the clinic, confining himself to his residence for a while in those initial days of COVID-19. But then, every day, he would get hundreds of calls from his patients. "He thus resumed his practice saying that during COVID-19 time, people with other illnesses will find it difficult to get care in big hospitals," said Dr. Yusuf.

Ajith Bhasker, a functionary of IMA's Kerala north zone, said that healthcare workers now seem to be more at risk from the high level of disease transmission in the community rather than their high-risk work environment.

"Most of those who are getting infected now are getting it from their family members at home. If healthcare workers continue to fall sick, no amount of capacity building will be enough to save people's lives," Mr. Bhasker said.

(With inputs from Bindu Shajan Perappadan in New Delhi, Serena Josephine M. in Madurai, A.D. Rangarajan in Tirupati, K. Shiva Shankar in Hyderabad, Shankar Bennur in Mysuru, C. Maya and Abhinaya H. in Thiruvananthapuram)

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

While ordering larger hospitals in the national capital to install pressure swing absorption (PSA) oxygen plants, the Delhi High Court on Thursday said that since their installation would need some space, the Municipal Corporation and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) could offer some relaxations to building bylaws. It said the direction should

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI

The government is responsible for the records at the National Archives and will store them safely during the Central Vista redevelopment project, Union Culture Minister Prahpal Singh Patel said on Thursday.

Mr. Patel told *The Hindu* that the historic National Archives building, housing all the "important" records, would not be touched during the revamp, in which the annexe building had been proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new one.

"Talk of this project is premature. There will be no change to the old building. All the important records are kept in the old building. Besides, it is the government's responsibility to maintain the archives and it will continue to keep the records safely," he said, when asked about the public outcry against the proposal.

The National Archives was shifted from Kolkata to the present building in 1926 and the annexe was added post-Independence.

As a part of the Central



**History matters:** The National Archives was shifted from Kolkata to the building in 1926.

Vista redevelopment project, the National Archives annexe building was proposed to be replaced with a new building meant for use by researchers, according to the draft master plan prepared by the Centre's consultant for the project, HCP Design, Planning and Management Ltd. in 2019.

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) was on April 13 granted environment clearance for the project that includes the demolition of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Shastri Bhavan, Krishi Bhavan, Vigyan Bhavan, the Vice-President's house, National Museum, Jawahar Bhavan, Nirman Bhavan, Udyog Bhavan, Raksha Bhavan and hutsments in the area and construction of new secretariat buildings at the sites. The CPWD then

floated a tender on April 20 for the construction of three of the secretariat buildings at the IGNCA plot.

The National Archives annexe building was not mentioned in the environment clearance. A Culture Ministry official said the project was proposed in the "latter stages" of the redevelopment, which is expected to take until 2026 to complete, and the plan could change.

The construction of a new Parliament building and the revamp of the Central Vista Avenue has continued during the lockdown imposed in Delhi due to the second wave of the pandemic and has been challenged in court. The Delhi High Court has reserved its judgment in the matter.

**Yet to be taken up'**  
In response to the Congress's criticism of the government for continuing with the project in the pandemic, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri said in a series of tweets on Wednesday that other components of the project were yet to be taken up, apart from the Parliament and Central Vista Avenue.

Currently, 2,800 workers are toiling to ensure that Central Vista Avenue is ready for Republic Day 2022 & new Parliament building for winter session 2022 – the 75th year of India's Independence. Those weaving a web of deceit are doing great disservice to their own reputation," Mr. Puri wrote in a tweet.

**Plea against Param Bir Singh in SC**

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

A Mumbai police inspector on Thursday accused the city's former top officer, Param Bir Singh, in the Supreme Court of trying to "silence" him by framing fake cases against him.

Mr. Singh, who was shunted out from the post of the Mumbai Police Commissioner following his corruption complaint against then Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, had recently approached the Supreme Court. He wanted the apex court to transfer the pending internal inquiries against him to another State.

Inspector Bhimraj Rohidas Ghadge, represented by advocate Vipin Nair, has accused Mr. Singh of being corrupt during his tenure as Mumbai police chief. Mr. Ghadge said the investigation against Mr. Singh should not be transferred.

He said his former chief had "used his position and uniform to implicate the interlocutor in several false and frivolous cases".

**Wrong call led to tragedy: barge owner**

Afcons says the decision of the master to stay put caused the deaths

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) contractor Afcons Infrastructure Ltd., a Shapoorji Pallonji Group company, said on Thursday that it was unpredictable bad weather and the decision of the master of the Barge-P305 to stay put in high sea that led to the tragedy in the Arabian Sea.

"On May 14, 2021 itself, all our vessels were advised to secure their respective work locations and move to a safe location at the earliest. Accordingly, all vessels and barges, including P305, commenced moving out of their work locations on May 14 and 15, 2021," Afcons said on Thursday.

It said while other barges moved to the Mumbai Port, the Mumbai outer anchorage or the anchorage close to Revandanda, the master of P305 chose to move 200 metres from the HT platform where the Barge-P305 was working.

The master had decided



**Huge relief:** Rescued crew of Barge-P305 after they were brought by INS Kochi to Mumbai on Wednesday. ■PTI

this as a safe location since the maximum predicted wind speed was only 40 knots and his location was 120 nautical miles from the eye of the tropical storm, Afcons said.

Unfortunately, the weather conditions deteriorated rapidly from the evening of May 16, 2021, reaching levels far worse than predicted on May 17, 2021. The sudden deterioration of weather left no time at all for any further action to be taken by the master of the vessel," the company said.

The master had decided

Putting the blame on the owners of the vessel, it said, "As per the normal marine protocol as well as the specific charter agreement for P305, matters concerning vessel safety lie under the responsibility of the Owner/Barge Master, who is in the best position to decide on the appropriate course of action regarding vessel safety, as he has the necessary skill sets as well as the understanding of his vessel and its equipment, under the prevailing local conditions".

It said to secure the vessel and bring the people onboard to the shore, Afcons had chartered the vessel from Durmast. "Charting is not same as subcontracting. Durmast is the owner and the responsibility for marine operations rests with the vessel owner and his marine crew stationed on the vessel. Afcons, as charterer, deploys its construction workers and supervisors, who stay on the barge and carry out construction/revamp work on the platform," it said.

As per the international standard vessel chartering terms, which was adopted for the charter of P305, the responsibility for the marine side of the operations, namely safe vessel operation, navigation and vessel management, came under the scope of the vessel owners, carried out through the master, officers and the crew appointed by the owner. On not evacuating those on the barges, it said evacuation was an extreme step resorted to in case the vessel was in distress.

The country is passing through a critical juncture and the Prime Minister's approach is very casual. They have demolished the federal structure... If Chief Ministers were not allowed to speak why were they invited," she told journalists at the Secretariat after the conclusion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with 54 District Magistrates from States in the presence of their Chief Ministers.

Talking about the slow pace of vaccination, Ms. Banerjee said, "If States were to accept his [PM's] formula of vaccination, it will take 10 years to vaccinate people."

**'20 lakh doses'**  
Later in the day, the Chief Minister wrote to the Prime Minister on vaccination of State and Central government employees. "In Bengal, while we have taken steps to complete vaccination of a large section of frontline and electorally engaged employees across several sectors, we still need minimally 20 lakh doses to cover all the employees," she wrote in the letter.

Referring to the arrests in the Narada sting video case, she accused the Centre of indulging in "vendetta politics" during the time of a pandemic.

**India in touch with Iran over Farzad B, says govt.**

It wants to involve us at a later stage'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday said there is a possibility of India becoming a part of the projects unfolding in the Farzad B gas field in Iran at a later stage. The statement from the Ministry's official spokesperson, Arindam Bagchi, came days after Iran announced that it will develop the gas field domestically and signed a deal with Petropars.

"Iran wanted to involve us at a later stage. Our consortium is in touch with the Iranian authorities," Mr.

Bagchi replied to a question during the weekly virtual news briefing. The comment shows that India continues to consider itself a player in the gas rich Farzad B region discovered by ONGC Videsh Ltd.

The National Iranian Oil Company signed a deal with the Petropars Group last Monday, where Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zanganeh announced that the gas field would be developed with domestic support. It came as a setback to the Indian efforts in Farzad B, which has spanned more than a decade.

be complied with by all the hospitals in the capital.

The court reminded the government and authorities of their responsibility to create a buffer stock of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) and that they were not caught unprepared. "If you have not taken steps, we will come and chase you again. We are telling you, we mean business. Please don't take it lightly, we are again warning you," the HC told the Centre.

**Webinar on cloud computing technology to be organised**

The event on May 23 is part of the SRM Virtual Conclave

STAFF REPORTER

CHENNAI

A webinar on the 'Future World with Cloud Computing Technology' will be held as part of the SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021 on May 23 at 11 a.m.

The 15-part webinar series organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), in association with The Hindu Group, spotlights science, engineering and technology courses and their relevance to the 2020 workplace.

Abhishek Gupta, Founder and CEO, Hex N Bit; Narayan Subramanian, Senior Director of Engineering and Principal Architect, Hybrid Cloud Management, Nutanix; and Dr. Meenakshi S Arya, Professor, Department of Computer Science and

Engineering, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, will speak at the webinar. The discussion will be moderated by Shubhshree Desikan, Senior Assistant Editor, *The Hindu*, and will end with a Q&A session. To register for the free webinar, visit <http://bit.ly/2R9T9> or scan the QR code given.

**Ease building bylaws to set up oxygen plants, says Delhi HC**

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

While ordering larger hospitals in the national capital to install pressure swing absorption (PSA) oxygen plants, the Delhi High Court on Thursday said that since their installation would need some space, the Municipal Corporation and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) could offer some relaxations to building bylaws. It said the direction should

**Multi-disciplinary steps to fight mucormyosis**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, has told the States that the treatment of mucormyosis required a multi-disciplinary approach that involved eye surgeons, ENT specialists, general surgeons, neurosurgeons and dental maxillofacial surgeons and the use of Amphotericin B as an anti-fungal medicine. The High Court noted that despite its directions, hospitals and nursing homes were not regularly updating the number of beds and occupancy position.

fiable disease under Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, wherein all government and private health

# Rajiv Gandhi's assassination and the downfall of LTTE

Today marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the grotesque killing of the former Prime Minister, who was believed to be on a comeback trail to power



M.R. NARAYAN SWAMY

In retrospect, everyone is wise. One will, however, be never sure what destiny would have had in store for Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) chief Velupillai Prabhakaran had he not ordered the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

May 21, 2021, will mark the 30th anniversary of a well-planned and well-executed grotesque killing that snuffed out the life of an Indian leader believed to be on a comeback trail to power.

Though the LTTE and Prabhakaran kept denying its role in the suicide bombing, the killing sealed his fate.

It was Dharmalingam Siddharthan, a former Sri Lankan Tamil MP, who was among the first to realise the heavy cost Prabhakaran would pay for the killing.

"Ezharai Sani [a bad phase of life, according to astrology] will go away for everyone after seven-and-a-half years," Siddharthan told me a long ago. "I can say without hesitation that Ezharai Sani gripped Prabhakaran on May 21, 1991, and it will not leave him until he dies."

Looking back, Siddharthan turned out to be on the dot.

None of this would have been evident to the LTTE chief when he, along with his intelligence boss Pottu Amman, decided to do away with Rajiv Gandhi, fearing that he might again dispatch Indian troops to Sri Lanka.

## RETROSPECTIVE

1990, a boat packed with Tamil civilians fleeing the war in Sri Lanka's northeast reached the Tamil Nadu coastal town of Rameshwaram.

Two men and a woman from the group met Indian officials and registered themselves as refugees but moved on to Chennai, saying they had friends in the city.

A few days later, another boat of Tamil refugees also reached the Tamil Nadu coast. As in the first instance, two men and a woman registered themselves as refugees and said they, too, would prefer to live with friends in Chennai.

The two groups rented out separate houses in Chennai, telling those who cared to ask that they were lucky to be away from the war.

The six Sri Lankans did not know themselves but their arrival in Tamil Nadu marked the unleashing of a deadly plot Prabhakaran had drawn up to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi.



**Tragic end:** Rajiv Gandhi being greeted before his address at an election rally in Sriperumbudur, moments before he was killed by a suicide bomber. •FILE PHOTO

Sivarasan, known as "One-Eyed Jack" because of a glass prosthesis he wore in place of an eye he lost in a battle, realised soon that the men sent in advance as "refugees" were not enough for the tough job he had on hand.

By then, two LTTE intelligence operatives, Nixon and Kanthan, also reached Tamil Nadu. After a brief stay in the State, Sivarasan went back to Sri Lanka and returned to Chennai in January 1991.

## Sacking of the DMK government

It was the month the Indian government sacked the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (DMK) government in Tamil Nadu for turning a blind eye to LTTE activities and placed the State under direct federal rule.

After taking permission from Pottu Amman, Sivarasan telephoned Sathasivam Krishnakumar, alias Kittu, the London-based LTTE representative, and sought introduction to a reliable Indian contact in Chennai. Sivarasan did not realise that this was a blunder. Since the June 1990 assassination of Eelam Peo-

This is when Muthuraja suddenly dis-

appeared one day. He was being shadowed in Chennai by Indian security agencies but gave the slip one evening at Egmore. It was later learnt that he had left for Sri Lanka, ostensibly on the request of Pottu Amman.

Muthuraja, however, never reached Sri Lanka. His boat sank in the sea after being hit by a Sri Lankan naval vessel. Believing he died, the LTTE honoured him. But Indian security agencies believe that Muthuraja did not die. The Sri Lankan Navy took him into custody after his boat collapsed.

Prabhakaran, meanwhile, asked an LTTE member, Kasi Anandan, to meet Rajiv Gandhi to convey his best wishes for the upcoming general election in India. The meeting took place in New Delhi on March 5, 1991.

Some days later, a Sri Lankan Tamil banker based in London also called on Rajiv Gandhi with a message that the Tigers were eager to make up with the Indian leader. Both meetings were meant to make the Indian security brass believe that Prabhakaran was willing to

bury the past and start a new chapter with New Delhi.

## Arrival of Dhanu

Sivarasan, who had again gone back to Sri Lanka, returned to Tamil Nadu by sea early in May 1991 with Dhanu, the suicide bomber. They landed in the coastal town of Vedaranyam and left for Chennai by bus.

Within 10 days of their arrival, Dhanu and a companion, Shuba, wrote to the LTTE leadership: "We are determined to attain our objective."

By now, the Intelligence Bureau had intercepted a couple of complex, coded radio messages from Tamil Nadu to Jaffna. The IB headquarters in Delhi was pressed to break the code.

One of the LTTE messages, decoded after Rajiv Gandhi was killed, was a revealing one-liner from Sivarasan to Pottu Amman: "Nobody [in India] knows about our operation."

Another explicit message, intercepted on May 7 but again deciphered after Rajiv Gandhi had been killed, was a vow

by Sivarasan: "If I return to Jaffna, it will be as Pottu Amman's man, having achieved the incredible feat of assassinating a world leader."

Sivarasan, who pretended to be a journalist when it suited him, found out from some Congress party functionaries about Rajiv Gandhi's election rally in the small town of Sriperumbudur, near Chennai, on May 21, 1991.

## A rehearsal

To ensure that everything went well, the LTTE had carried out a rehearsal at an election rally of former Prime Minister V.P. Singh in Chennai. As Singh was leaving, Dhanu walked up to him and touched his feet as a mark of respect for an elder.

The whole exercise was recorded on video and viewed by the LTTE many times to check if there were any flaws. Clearly, there were none.

On May 20, 1991, the LTTE killer squad watched a Tamil movie at a cinema hall in Chennai. The next evening, the group proceeded to Sriperumbudur and was met by a young Indian photographer, Hari Babu, who had no clue about the planned assassination.

At the rally, Dhanu was armed with a sandalwood garland – and a deadly suicide vest which was hidden by a loose-fitting bright orange salwar-kameez. When a policewoman tried to question Dhanu after seeing her near the VIP enclosure, Hari Babu intervened to say she would garland Rajiv Gandhi. Sivarasan, dressed in a white kurta-pyjama, stood near the dais. Eventually, when Rajiv Gandhi made his way towards a waiting crowd, Dhanu moved close to him. The same policewoman tried to push her back. But he stopped her and remarked: "Let everybody get a chance!"

Dhanu put the garland around him and bent down as if to touch his feet. But she never got up. She switched on the toggle switch attached to her suicide vest, triggering a terrible blast that ripped through her, Rajiv Gandhi and 16 others.

*The author is a Sri Lanka watcher and has written a biography of LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran*

**Issue correction, Singapore tells Twitter, FB**

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Health of Singapore on Thursday cautioned social media networks against a "false statement" circulating online, which described Singapore as the place of origin of a highly infectious variant of the COVID-19 virus that is threatening children.

The statement came hours after the High Commissioner of Singapore in New Delhi said that his country "reserves" the right to invoke the law regarding fake news for comments from Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who had said that a COVID-19 variant was "found in Singapore".

The Minister for Health has instructed the POFMA [Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act] Office to issue General Correction Directions to Facebook, Twitter and SPH Magazines Pte Ltd. (HardwareZone Forum). Facebook, Twitter and SPH Magazines are required to carry the Correction Notice to all end-users in Singapore who use Facebook, Twitter, and HardwareZone.com," said the official notification from the Ministry of Health.

# China completes Tibet highway

It enables greater access to remote areas along disputed border with Arunachal Pradesh

ANANTH KRISHNAN



**Strategic link:** A file photo of the Yarlung Zangbo river's Grand Canyon, through which the highway passes. •AFP

China has completed the construction of a strategically significant highway through the world's deepest canyon in Tibet along the Brahmaputra river, enabling greater access to remote areas along the disputed border with Arunachal Pradesh in India.

The highway, official media in China reported this week, took seven years to complete and passes through the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, as the Brahmaputra is called in Tibet. This is the "second significant passageway" to Medog county that borders Arunachal, the official *Xinhua* news agency reported, directly connecting the Pad township in Nyingchi to Baigung in Meodog county.

The highway will reduce the distance between Nyingchi city and Medog from 346 km to 180 km and will cut the travel time by eight hours.

The project, undertaken by the China Huaneng Group, required an estimated investment of over 2 billion yuan (around \$310 million), *Xinhua* reported.

The construction, which began in 2014, is part of a wider infrastructure push in border areas in Tibet. In November,

China began work on a strategically important railway line – its second major rail link to Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet railway that opened in 2006 – that will link Sichuan province with Nyingchi.

That project was considered important enough for President Xi Jinping to officially launch it, as he called it "a major step in safeguarding national unity and a significant move in promoting economic and social development of the western region".

Zhu Weiqun, a senior Party official formerly in charge of Tibet policy, was quoted as saying by state media that the railway will help "transport advanced equipment and technologies from the rest of China to Tibet and bring local pro-

ducts out". He said, "If a scenario of a crisis happens at the border, the railway can act as a 'fast track' for the delivery of strategic materials."

The first segment of the line within the Sichuan province, from Chengdu to Yaan, was completed in December 2018. Work on the 1,011-km section from Yaan to Nyingchi will be finished in 2030.

## Civilian settlements

Another part of the border infrastructure push is the construction of new civilian settlements, along with the expansion of existing smaller hamlets, along border areas, some of which lie in disputed territories claimed by India and Bhutan, to strengthen China's control over the land.

In 2017, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government launched a plan to build "moderately well-off villages" in border areas, under which 628 "first line and second line villages", referring to those right on the border and others in remote areas slightly further within, would be developed in the prefectures of Ngari, Shigatse, Shannan and Nyingchi, along China's borders with India, Bhutan and Nepal.

An investment of 30.1 billion yuan (about ₹30,000 crore) was announced for the project, covering 62,160 households and 2.4 lakh people, and includes plans to resettle residents to live in the new settlements.

Last year, satellite images emerged showing a new village called Pangda built 2-3 km into what Bhutan sees as its land. On January 18 this year, another village built 4-5 km into what India sees as its territory in Arunachal was seen via satellite images. Indian officials said this land has been under China's effective control since 1959 and there were military barracks there earlier.

The civilian settlements, along with the new infrastructure connectivity, are seen as aimed at bolstering China's control over the areas.

**Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited**

In front of Ram Mandir, Convent Square, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar-751007

Tel.: (07474) 2380660; Website: www.osmcl.nic.in ; Email: logistics.osmcl.od@nic.in

## Bid Reference No.:OSMCL/2021-22/SHORT-SYRINGE/19

Online Bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) are invited from eligible bidders for Supply of S02418 - Disposable Syringe, 0.5 ML as per the particulars mentioned below:

SI. No.	Particulars	Date and time
1.	Date & time of release of bid	19/05/2021
2.	Date & time of Online bid submission	Start Date & Time End Date & Time 20/05/2021, 11 AM 27/05/2021, 11 AM
3.	Date & time of Online Technical bid Opening	27/05/2021, 11:15 AM
4.	Date of opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the qualified bidders

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

SD-  
Managing Director,  
OSMCL Ltd., Odisha  
OPR-101211/0014/2122

**Will act within 7 days of request, says MHA on FCRA accounts**

10 NGOs had moved HC over operationalisation issues

VIJAITA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday that it would release authorisation certificates to operationalise the FCRA (Foreign Contribution [Regulation] Act) bank accounts of non-government organisations (NGOs) within seven days of receiving a request.

The court was hearing a petition moved by 10 NGOs that their foreign contribution account in the State Bank of India's main branch

in Delhi be operationalised. Even if an NGO had applied before the earlier deadline of March 31, the accounts were not operational for want of an FCRA certificate. After NGOs moved court, the deadline was extended to June 30.

The SBI said on May 17 that out of the total 22,598 active FCRA associations, 17,611 entities (NGOs and Associations) approached SBI for opening of FCRA accounts". It claimed that it had opened accounts of 78% of the applicants.

# Cong. seeks suspension of 4 BJP leaders' Twitter accounts

Party writes to platform amid 'toolkit' row

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

There is a difference between opening an account and operationalising it. The SBI opened the account but it cannot function till the bank receives an authorisation certificate from the ministry," said NGOs' lawyer Abishek Jebaraj. The Ministry also gave a relief to NGOs whose registration was expiring between September 29, 2020 and May 31, 2021. They had to apply for renewal of certificates or registration by May 31, which has now been extended to September 30. "As Twitter's own policy and

rules seek to discourage deceptive/synthetic/manipulated media that are likely to cause harm, we humbly request you to immediately remove the tweets contained in Annexure 1, or any other such material on the Twitter platform. Also, you are requested to kindly carry out a detailed probe on the subject-matter and permanently suspend the Twitter accounts of the above named individuals," read the complaint. The Congress said the "toolkit" was prepared "with the clear intent to cause social unrest, communal disharmony to fuel hate and escalate violence in various parts of India".

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU  
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

Priyadarshini Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai - 625 001

Tender Notice No.02/D1/C.199/2021/Date: 20.05.2021

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, tenders are invited and the sealed Tenders should be submitted in main sealed cover containing (1) Pre-qualification documents and E.M.D. in a separate inner sealed cover and (2) Price Tender Schedule duly filled in, in another inner sealed cover with the name of work duly superscribed on the covers will be received by the Superintendent Engineer, WRD., Priyadarshini Vaigai Basin Circle, Madurai for the following works from the eligible contractors registered under Class-I (State Level) in Public Works Department.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Work Value + GST (₹)	E.M.D.
1.	Construction of a Check Dam and Recharge shafts across the Vaigai river for recharge of ground water near Aarappalayam of Madurai West Taluk in Madurai District.	Rs.10,48,39,272/- Rs. 1,25,80,713/- Rs. 14,74,19,985/-	Rs.5,98,000/-
2.	Renovation of the Chithanai Anicut		

# Modi flags COVID-19 risks for children

Prime Minister tells District Magistrates to collect data on infection rates among young people

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi told officials on Thursday that empathy and resoluteness in the face of COVID-19 was essential while also flagging that mutations of the novel coronavirus had raised concerns for youth and children.

Addressing a video conference of District Magistrates from 54 districts across 10 States in the presence of their Chief Ministers, Mr. Modi said intensive presence of the administration and empathetic dialogue with people in rural areas would go a long way in addressing the spread of the disease in those areas.

"My experience of rural areas is that they need clear information about standard operating procedures. If informed correctly of SOPs they follow it religiously. Make a team, hold a dialogue, offer clarity in terms of SOPs and resources

  
My experience of rural areas is that they need clear information about Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), if informed correctly of SOPs they follow it religiously. Make a team, hold a dialogue, offer clarity in terms of SOPs and resources

NARENDRA MODI,  
PRIME MINISTER

Clarity is required with regard to rural population; they are disciplined in carrying forward what is required and this presence and clarity of the administration will boost the courage in these areas to face this situation. Make a team, hold a dialogue, offer clarity in terms of SOPs and resources. The second wave mutations have raised alarm bells for youth and children too. We need to prepare for what lies ahead. The first thing to do is to col-

lect data on contagion rates among young people and children. Analyse it, this will help you in planning for the future," he said.

He said field experience was invaluable in coming up with practical and dynamic policy interventions.

Both in the case of dealing with the pandemic and for vaccination campaigns, the Prime Minister said, extensive records should be maintained that would give direction to where the policy

should be tweaked and what went right or wrong.

"This pandemic has occurred after a gap of 100 years. You are facing situations that no one has faced in a century; you need to keep extensive records, so that future generations may know what happened and how it was dealt with. The records for the previous pandemic were not extensive, and we must not repeat that," he said.

#### Staying vigilant

He said while it "is true that active cases may be coming down", experience had shown that one could not let the guard down. "Masking and distancing should be emphasised. Government bodies, people's representatives, civil society groups, a collective responsibility needs to be fostered," he said.

"Vaccination calendar should be publicised via media platforms to reduce problems. Every pandemic has taught us, innovation and upgrade is key to dealing with them. The virus mutates - it is 'bahurupia' [deceptive] and 'dhoor' [malevolent]," he said.

Mr. Modi laid special emphasis on reducing vaccine wastage. "Wasting even one shot is to deprive one person of the shield it provides.

When you review the figures in your districts, that should also be an area of focus. Tier 2 and 3 cities especially should analyse this," he said.

The meeting with top district authorities was the second part of a similar interaction with district officials held on Tuesday, with 46 DMs from eight States.

NITI Aayog and Health Ministry officials were present at the meeting.

# Sonia for free education to those orphaned in pandemic

They are left with the trauma of loss and no support'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free education in Navodaya Vidyalayas to the children whose parents died of COVID-19.



Sonia Gandhi

bust future after the unimaginable tragedy that has befallen them," she wrote.

The Navodaya Vidyalayas are CBSE-affiliated co-educational residential schools in which talented students of Class VI to XII, after clearing a selection test, are offered free education, including text books, school uniforms and hostel facilities.

Ms. Gandhi described the Navodaya Vidyalayas among the most significant legacies of her husband, Rajiv Gandhi, and noted that there were as many as 661 such schools across the country.

"It was his dream [Rajiv Gandhi] to make high-quality modern education accessible and affordable to talented young people from rural areas," she stated.

rents to COVID-19 are the most poignant," she said.

"I am writing to request you to consider providing free education at the Navodaya Vidyalayas to the children who have lost either both parents or an earning parent on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. Feel that as a nation, we owe it to them to give them hope for a ro-

## IN BRIEF



### Cong. demands White Paper on vaccine policy

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday demanded a White Paper on the Centre's vaccination policy and asserted that 'accelerated vaccination' was the only way to prevent a third wave of coronavirus. Addressing an online press conference, former union minister Rajeev Shukla said citizens needed to know how many vaccines had been procured and how many were in the pipeline to vaccinate all Indians.

### NCPHR seeks guidelines for care of children

NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPHR) has written to the Indian Council of Medical Research seeking guidelines for treatment of children ahead of the potential third wave of COVID-19. In a separate letter to Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the child rights body sought that directions be issued to States for emergency ambulance services for children.

### Five firms get nod to make mucormycosis drug

HYDERABAD

Five firms have received approval to produce Amphotericin-B, a drug used in the treatment of mucormycosis, known as black fungus disease. Emcure Pharmaceuticals, Natco Pharma, Gufic Biosciences, Alembic Pharmaceuticals and Lyca Pharmaceuticals have got the approval, said Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya.

## Jaishankar may meet U.S. vaccine makers

Minister likely to travel next week

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

As the government gears up to tackle the growing vaccine shortage, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is expected to travel to the U.S. next week to discuss procurement with American companies. Mr. Jaishankar is expected to meet U.S. officials and executives from Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson in Washington and New York, sources told *The Hindu*.

The Minister's discussions with the vaccine manufacturers are expected to focus on the availability of doses in India at the earliest.

The External Affairs Ministry did not confirm Mr. Jaishankar's dates for travel to the U.S., which would be his first such visit since U.S. President Joseph Biden assumed office..

"We remain engaged with U.S. entities on the prospects of procuring vaccines from the U.S. and also perhaps manufacturing them in India subsequently. This would augment our vaccine availability," Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a press briefing on Thursday.

I would like to emphasise that all vaccines that may be procured from abroad would need to be as per our regulatory guidelines. I understand that the U.S. has also indicated that any vaccine that it sends abroad would be after obtaining FDA [Food and Drug Agency] clearance for product quality," Mr. Bagchi said, referring to possible delays in the release of As-



S. Jaishankar

traZeneca doses given that the FDA is still carrying out what the U.S. State Department called a review of "all doses made at the plant where AstraZeneca doses were produced".

According to the sources, India continues to worry about the U.S. strictures on the export of vaccine ingredients or raw materials needed for manufacturing in India under its "Defence Production Act", that is still an issue despite the Biden administration's decision last month to divert some of its orders towards India. In a tweet on May 5, U.S. Charge D'Affaires Daniel Smith had announced the arrival of vaccine components that would enable the manufacturing of 20 million doses of the Covishield vaccine at the Pune-based Serum Institute of India.

However, according to officials, the DPA-driven restrictions will still pose a problem for future production of vaccines in India. The EAM and his team will also discuss plans for the production of Johnson and Johnson's single-shot "Janssen" vaccines at Hyderabad-based Biological E.

## 'One person can spread virus to 406 others'

Health Ministry cites study that says transmission can be restricted to 2.5 persons with safety norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A COVID-19 infected person not following any social distancing measure can spread it to as many as 406 people in 30 days, Health Ministry spokesperson said Lav Agarwal on Thursday. He was quoting a study conducted at a stem cell research laboratory in the University of California, San Diego.

The projections have been made by a team led by scientist Robert A.J. Signer, according to which a 75% reduction in social exposure could restrict the spread to just 2.5 people in 30 days.

Quoting a media report on a survey involving 2,000 respondents across 25 cities, Mr. Agarwal said 50% of the people did not wear a mask and of them, 64% covered



Covering up: Many States and NGOs offer free masks but correct use is important. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

the mouth but not the nose, while 20% wore the mask on the chin and 2% on the neck. Only 14% wore the mask correctly, covering nose, mouth and chin and with a clip on the nose, he said urging the people to follow social distancing guidelines diligently.

Mr. Agarwal said even a single case had the potential of triggering further spread of infection if necessary precautions were not taken.

At the Health Ministry briefing, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director-General Balram Bhar-

gava said one company had already submitted the application for COVID-19 home testing kit and those of three others were in the pipeline. The kit, priced at about ₹250 a unit, would soon be available in the market.

**Home testing kits**  
Dr. Bhargava said any person could buy a test kit, download the required mobile application and register, carefully read the user manual, conduct the test oneself, click a mobile image and upload it in the system. The test result would be given on the mobile phone. In order to ensure patient confidentiality, the data would be saved in a secured server.

The country's weekly test positivity rate stood at 15%. On May 18 and 19, more than two million tests were conducted across the country. Despite the increase in testing, positivity had declined from 23% a few weeks ago to 13% on Thursday, Dr. Bhargava said. By June 30, the country would have achieved the capacity of 18 lakh RTPCR and 27 lakh rapid antigen tests a day.

The recovered cases had also gone up from 81.7% to 86.7%. He said 69% of the active cases were limited to only eight States. However, in 21 States, recoveries were more than the daily reported active cases.

## 2.5 lakh cases and 3,700 deaths recorded

T.N. and Kerala see most number of fresh infections

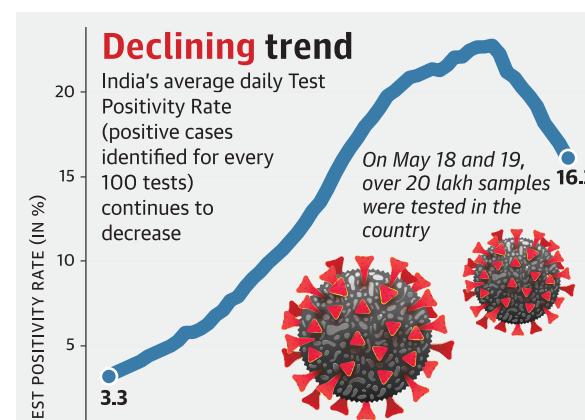
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India recorded 2,50,267 new COVID-19 cases and 3,708 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Thursday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,60,21,806 cases and 2,90,865 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 35,579 new infections, followed by Kerala (30,491) and Maharashtra (29,911). Maharashtra recorded 738 new casualties on the day, followed by Karnataka (548) and Tamil Nadu (397).

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Punjab, Jharkhand, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep. The data are sourced from the respective



available on Thursday). This is the second instance when daily tests in India have crossed the 20 lakh-mark. On May 18, 20.08 lakh tests were conducted in the country. India's average daily test positivity rate (TPR, positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 22.7% on May 9 and reduced to 16.2% as on May 19.

However, not all States are following this trend. Among major States, in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the average daily tests have reduced even as the average daily TPR continues to increase. As on May 18, Karnataka's average daily TPR stood at 32.2% while that of Andhra Pradesh was 24.4%.

Revise vaccine policy, urge ex-officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

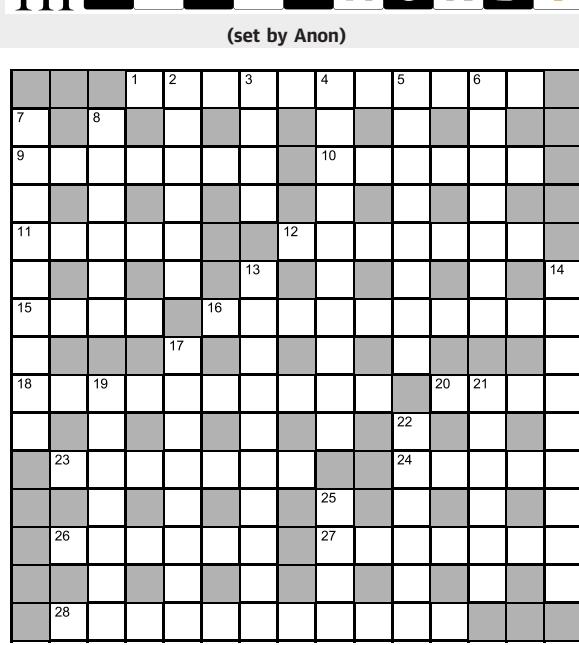
NEW DELHI

A group of 116 former officials wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urging the government to centralise procurement of vaccines and supply them to all State governments.

The retired All India and Central services officers, under the banner of Constitutional Conduct Group, wrote: "No advance planning was done to secure adequate stocks of vaccines, despite India being one of the major vaccine suppliers to the world."

## TH CROSSWORD + 13253

(set by Anon)



### ACROSS

- 1 Can activity disrupt European city state? (7,4)
- 9 Trojan leader has currency difficulty (7)
- 10 Regular orbit of European returning from adversaries (6)
- 11 Problem child (5)
- 12 Odd farm trick gone out of control (7)
- 15 Catch your breath at first glance of snake (4)

CM YK

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

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



## SUDOKU

	1	3	4	7			
	7	4	6	5			
3	1						
7	8						
1	9	4	6				
6	4			1	8		

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13252

P
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# Israel unleashes airstrikes across Gaza

Officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GAZA CITY

Israel unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a cease-fire could be coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against calls from the U.S. to wind down the Gaza offensive, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career. Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours.

In another possible sign of progress, Mr. Netanyahu scheduled a meeting later on Thursday with his Security Cabinet, where the issue of a ceasefire was likely to be debated.

Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis. As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five fa-



**Escalating tensions:** Debris flies and smoke rises following an Israeli air strike at Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday. ■ REUTERS

mily homes destroyed in Khan Younis. There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City.

The Israeli military said it struck at least three homes of Hamas commanders in Khan Younis and another in Rafah, targeting "military infrastructure," as well as a weapons storage unit at a home in Gaza City.

With hundreds already killed in the worst fighting since Israel and Hamas' 2014

war, U.S. President Joe Biden told Israel on Wednesday that he expected "a significant de-escalation today on the path to a cease-fire" – but Netanyahu pushed back, saying he was "determined to continue this operation until its aim is met". It marked the first public rift between the two close allies since the fighting began and poses a difficult test of the U.S.-Israel relationship early in Biden's presidency.

Still, an Egyptian intelli-

gence official said a cease-fire was likely late Thursday or early Friday, after the U.S. appeal bolstered Cairo's own efforts to halt the fighting. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the delicate talks.

Khalid Okasha, director of the Egyptian Center for Strategic Studies, which has close ties to the government, also said a cease-fire was likely in that timeframe, as did Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas official.

Still, an Egyptian intelli-

Sanders wants arms sale to Israel halted

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders is leading a long-shot effort to halt a \$735 million arms sale to Israel as Democrats in the U.S. Congress raise mounting concerns about the violence in West Asia.

The Vermont Senator introduced a resolution on Thursday to block the weapons transfer. A similar measure in the House was introduced Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat from New York, and liberal lawmakers on Wednesday.

Mr. Sanders said that Congress needs to "take a hard look at whether the sale of these weapons is actually helping do that, or whether it is simply fueling conflict."

Supporters of this effort are unlikely to have the votes needed to reverse the sale, but they're registering their opposition.

# EU lawmakers back patent waiver for vaccines

Key members Germany and France defend patents, argue companies must be rewarded for efforts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BRUSSELS

The European Parliament has urged the EU to back a push for a temporary waiver of coronavirus vaccine patents, in the face of scepticism from Brussels and key member states.

Lawmakers voting late on Wednesday narrowly approved an amendment calling on the bloc "to support the Indian and South African World Trade Organization

(WTO) initiative for a temporary waiver on intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, equipment and treatments, and urges pharmaceutical companies to share their knowledge and data".

EU leaders this month said they were willing to discuss patent waivers after U.S. President Joe Biden backed the plan – but called for more details on the proposal and urged other major

producers to first increase their exports of much-needed jabs.

EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis told lawmakers on Wednesday that Brussels would put forward its own proposal at the WTO focused on boosting production and freeing up exports.

He insisted Brussels would "engage constructively" to see if a temporary waiver of patents could help bolster global supplies and

access to the doses.

WTO boss Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was set to meet EU Trade Ministers for talks in Brussels on Thursday.

The WHO, India and South Africa have all called for patents to be temporarily suspended in a bid to help boost deliveries to poorer nations struggling to vaccinate their populations.

Key EU members France and Germany have defended vaccine patents, arguing that

innovative companies must be rewarded for their efforts.

Germany is the home of BioNTech, which developed the vaccine now being produced by U.S. giant Pfizer that has become the mainstay of Europe's inoculation campaign.

Officials from the bloc have said the hoarding of crucial ingredients needed for vaccines by some nations was a larger obstacle than patent protection.

# U.S., Russia at odds over military activity in the Arctic

Moscow's growing presence in the region raises concerns

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
REYKJAVIK

The Biden administration is leading a campaign against Russian attempts to assert authority over Arctic shipping and reintroduce a military dimension to discussions over international activity in the area.

As Russia assumed the rotating chairmanship of the Arctic Council on Thursday, the U.S. rallied members to oppose Moscow's plans to set maritime rules in the Northern Sea Route, which runs from Norway to Alaska, and its desire to resume military talks within the eight-nation bloc. Those talks were suspended in 2014 over Russia's actions in Ukraine.



Russia's Bastion anti-ship missile systems on the Alexandra Land island. ■ AP

Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the group should maintain its focus on peaceful cooperation on environmental issues, maritime safety and the well-being of indigenous people in the region.

Mr. Blinken stressed the importance of upholding "effective governance and the rule of law" to ensure that the "Arctic remains a region free of conflict where countries act responsibly."

Several other Foreign Ministers, including those from Canada, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden, echoed Mr. Blinken's call to keep the Arctic peaceful and free of conflict.

**U.S. panel supports India in its fight against virus**

HFAC passes unanimous resolution

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representative's Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), on Tuesday, unanimously passed a resolution in support of India as it faces a devastating COVID-19 wave.

The resolution, although largely symbolic, demonstrates support in Congress for the U.S.'s efforts to assist India fight the pandemic.

The resolution, introduced by House India Caucus co-chairs Brad Sherman (Democrat) and Steve Chabot (Republican), expresses solidarity with the people of India and recognises the Biden administration as well as the U.S. private sector and Indian Americans for their assistance to India.

The U.S. public and private sectors, including individuals, had provided over \$500 million in assistance to India to fight this wave of the pandemic, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Wednesday.

The Biden administration is working with international vaccine access programme COVAX to determine how it will distribute 80 million doses of spare vaccine to other countries in the coming weeks.

The HFAC resolution also notes that India "lifted its export ban on certain therapeutics" in response to a request by the U.S. government last year when the pandemic was surging in America.

# World's largest iceberg breaks off from Antarctica, says ESA

Scientists say A-76's dislodging appears to be a natural cycle

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

A huge ice block has broken off from western Antarctica into the Weddell Sea, becoming the largest iceberg in the world and earning the name A-76.

It is the latest in a series of large ice blocks to dislodge in a region acutely vulnerable to climate change, although scientists said in this case it appeared to be part of a natural polar cycle.

Slightly larger than the Spanish island of Majorca, A-76 had been monitored by scientists since May 13 when it began to separate from the Ronne Ice Shelf, according to the U.S. National Ice Center.

The iceberg, measuring around 170 km long and 25



**Moving away:** A view of the newly calved iceberg designated A-76 and captured by the ESA. ■ VIA REUTERS

km wide, with an area of 4,320 sq km is now floating in the Weddell Sea.

It joins previous world's largest title holder A-23A – approximately 3,880 sq. km. in size – which has remained in the same area since 1986.

A-76 was originally spotted by the British Antarctic

Survey and the calving – the term used when an iceberg breaks off – was confirmed using images from the Copernicus satellite, the European Space Agency said.

Icebergs form when

hunks of ice break off from

ice shelves or glaciers and

begin to float in open water.

# Sri Lanka Parliament passes Bill on China-backed Port City

Tamil MPs raise strong objection to the legislation

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Parliament on Thursday passed a controversial Bill on laws governing the China-backed Colombo Port City, with a majority of 149 legislators – in the 225-member House – voting in its favour.

The development comes after the Supreme Court suggested certain amendments, following over a dozen petitions challenging the Bill that political opposition and civil society groups said "directly affected" Sri Lanka's sovereignty. The government accepted the amendments, pre-empting the requirement for a two-thirds majority or a referendum for passage of certain clauses, as per the apex court's determination.

The \$1.4-billion Colombo Port City was launched in 2014 during the previous term of the Rajapaksa government, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the island nation. The mega infrastructure project is currently being built on land reclaimed alongside Colombo's iconic sea front, while environmentalists and fisher folk opposed the move. The Ranil Wickremesinghe -Maithripala Siripala administration too went ahead with the project, vowing to develop it as a financial hub. Following their return to power in November 2019, the Rajapaksa administration sought to expedite construction work as well as a legal framework for what promises to be a tax haven for foreign investors.

In a two-day debate in the



**Major push:** An aerial view of the Chinese-funded Port City project in Colombo, in this file photo. ■ AFP

legislature, culminating in Thursday's vote, government MPs defended the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill, pointing to potential foreign direct investments – up to \$15 billion – and prospects for job creation. The ruling side has a two-third majority in Parliament. law". Intervening in the debate, Tamil National People's Front Leader Cajen Ponnambalam on Thursday said Sri Lanka had gone too close to the U.S. in the Cold War era, prompting India to back and train Tamil militant groups. The "China-centric" Rajapaksa administration was again challenging the geopolitical order in the region, he said. Observing that the "Tamil nation" had paid a heavy price the last time Sri Lanka made such choices, he said he opposed the Bill for that reason. Tamil National Alliance MP M.A. Sumanthiran said the Supreme Court had made merely "cosmetic changes" to the Bill, while its fundamental character remained unchanged.

Accusing the government of giving away part of its land to China, the Jaffna legislator said: "You say so much about [Tamil] Eelam, but this is Cheelam, referring to China and Eelam, the Tamil name of Sri Lanka... and it is Cheelam that you are enacting in your own laws, when you don't have jurisdiction over that territory."

Some of the strongest attacks on the Bill, during the debate, came from Tamil MPs. Legislator and former Northern Province Chief Minister C.V. Wigneswaran on Wednesday asked the government if its stated policy of striving for 'One Country, One Law' meant "Chinese enclave".

In strong remarks during a conference call with officials, the President noted that foreign efforts to contain Russia date back to centuries.

"In all times, the same thing happened: once Russia grew stronger, they found pretexts to hamper its development," Mr. Putin said, alleging that some critics of Russia, who he didn't name, have argued that it's unfair for it to keep its vast natural riches all to itself.

"Everyone wants to bite us or bite something off us, but those who would like to do so should know that we would knock their teeth out

# Will knock their teeth out, Putin tells would-be aggressors

President warns countries against efforts to contain Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin alleged on Thursday that some of the country's foreign foes dream about biting off pieces of the country's vast territory, warning that Moscow would "knock their teeth out" if they ever try.

In strong remarks during a conference call with officials, the President noted that foreign efforts to contain Russia date back to centuries.

so that they couldn't bite," the Russian leader said. "The development of our military is the guarantee of that."

The Kremlin has made the modernisation of the country's armed forces a top priority amid tensions with the U.S. and its allies. Russia-West ties have sunk to post-Cold War lows over 2014 annexation of Crimea Peninsula, accusations of Russian meddling in elections, hacking attacks, and other issues.

Coal India Limited (A Maharatna Company)		Corrigendum
"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd <a href="http://www.coalindia.in/">www.coalindia.in/</a> in respective Subsidiary Company, CIL e-procurement portal <a href="https://coалиндияtenders.nic.in">https://coалиндияtenders.nic.in</a> and Central Public Procurement Portal <a href="https://eprocure.gov.in">https://eprocure.gov.in</a> . In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <a href="https://gem.gov.in">https://gem.gov.in</a> ".		Dated: 13/05/2021
<b>Subject:</b> Extension of last date of EO/Under PMKVY-CSSM 3.0 (2021-26) <b>Reference:</b> RFP/PMKVY-CSSM 3.0/2020-21/353 dated 08/05/2021 The above subject is extended till the last date for submission of online proposals for EO/under PMKVY-CSSM 3.0 (2021-26) is extended till 15th June-21. The online portal will be accepting proposals till 05.00 pm on 15th June-21. Further, timeliness for submission of hardcopy is also being extended till 24th June-21. RajSamad/C21/3397		
<b>Rajasthan Skill &amp; Livelihoods Development Corporation</b> (A Government of Rajasthan Enterprise) EMI Campus, J-8-A, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur- 302004 (Rajasthan) F/ No. RSLDC/PMKVY 3.0/2021-22/33147 Dated: 13/05/2021		
<b>TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS:TIRUPATI</b> S.V.Gosamrakshana Shala e-Tender cum-Reverse Tendering Notice NIT No.TTD-30021/(43)/6/SVGS/IPT/2021, Dt:19-05-2021 S.V.Gosamrakshana Shala, TTD, Tirupati is inviting "e-tender-cum-Reverse Auctioning/ Reverse Tendering" (2nd Call) to select service provider / bidder to produce Embryo Derived Calves (EDC) of Gir breed. The details of the Tender documents can be downloaded by login to <a href="https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in">https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in</a> and select on current tenders and click on more and then select "Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams at department field and "S.V.Gosamrakshana Shala Dairy Farm" in the Circle / Division field and click on search button. NIT No.TTD/30021/(43)/6/SVGTPT/2021. <b>TENDER DOCUMENT DOWNLOAD:</b> ● Start Date: 22-05-2021 from 05.00 p.m. ● End Date: 05-06-2021 at 05.00 p.m. <b>DATE OF OPENING:</b> 05-06-2021 at 11.00 a.m. ● Technical Bid: 05-06-2021 at 11.00 a.m. ● Reverse Auction / Reverse Tendering Date: 05-06-2021 from 02.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. For further details contact Phone No.0877-224570. Roc.No.PRA/13930/Adv.No.24/PRO/2021/Dated:20-05-2021 <b>EXECUTIVE OFFICER</b>		
<b>CHEENNAI METRO RAIL LIMITED&lt;/b</b>		

## MARKET WATCH

	20-05-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49,565	-0.68
US Dollar	73.12	0.08
Gold	47,994	0.29
Brent oil	66.21	-0.26

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	765.70	-6.70
Asian Paints	2794.10	-21.75
Axist Bank	705.90	-10.90
Bajaj Auto	4071.20	-24.75
Bajaj Finserv	11227.90	12.75
Bajaj Finance	5588.75	-42.45
Bharti Airtel	520.65	-7.55
BPCL	454.80	8.35
Britannia Ind	3422.55	-111.85
Cipla	924.20	20.25
Coal India	146.65	-5.20
Divis Lab	4040.80	1.15
Dr Reddys Lab	5236.30	-1.50
Eicher Motors	2530.60	-34.10
Grasim Ind	1375.25	-14.45
HCL Tech.	924.40	-7.00
HDPC	2445.00	-14.85
HDPC Life	1432.80	-25.40
Hero MotoCorp	667.50	-1.35
Hindustan	2865.10	-49.90
Hindustan Unilever	2344.15	-15.60
ICICI Bank	618.60	-6.85
IndusInd Bank	975.50	8.50
Infosys	1339.30	2.30
Indian Oil Corp.	104.70	-2.50
ITC	207.00	-0.75
JSW Steel	694.50	-11.35
Kotak Bank	1708.20	-22.35
L&T	1409.75	6.30
M&M	803.25	18.45
Maruti Suzuki	6737.85	-38.05
Nestle India Ltd.	17285.35	-164.00
NTPC	111.75	-0.20
ONGC	111.80	-3.10
PowerGrid Corp	228.95	-4.80
Reliance Ind	1985.40	-11.65
SBI Life	969.15	-8.90
State Bank	384.55	0.15
Shree Cement	27510.35	-22.35
Sun Pharma	686.85	-16.55
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	644.90	-8.30
Tata Motors	307.70	-6.75
Tata Steel	1105.05	-59.20
TCS	3060.00	-22.00
Tech Mahindra	973.10	-4.55
Titan	1531.35	10.20
UltraTech Cement	6573.85	12.65
UPL	767.50	-14.65
Wipro	508.25	-3.40

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.90	73.22
EURO	88.84	89.23
British Pound	102.95	103.40
Japanese Yen (100)	66.91	67.21
Chinese Yuan	11.32	11.37
Swiss Franc	80.85	81.25
Singapore Dollar	54.67	54.92
Canadian Dollar	60.06	60.35
Malaysian Ringgit	17.58	17.66

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF

AXIS BANK	
World Branch	
Govt. nets ₹ 4,000 cr. via Axis Bank stake sale	
New Delhi	
The government has raised ₹ 4,000 crore through the sale of about 1.95% stake held in Axis Bank through the Specified Undertaking of the Unit Trust of India (SUUTI). The offer for sale (OFS) of Axis Bank shares, which began on Wednesday, got a good response from investors with SUUTI garnering about ₹ 4,000 crore (subject to reconciliation), said DIPAM Secretary Tuhi Kanta Pandey.	
Mindtree to buy start-up NxT Digital for ₹ 198 cr.	
Bengaluru	
Mindtree, a digital transformation and technology services firm, entered into an agreement to acquire NxT Digital Business, a start-up set up by the L&T Group, to broaden its digital capabilities for a total cash consideration of ₹ 198 crore. NxT Digital posted a revenue of ₹ 37.59 crore in FY21. The deal would be completed before July, it said.	
Cipla unveils RT-PCR test kit 'ViraGen' in India	
New Delhi	
Drug major Cipla on Thursday announced the commercialisation of its RT-PCR test kit 'ViraGen' for COVID-19 in India, in partnership with Ubio Biotechnology Systems. "This launch will help address the current testing services and capacity issues while reaffirming the company's ongoing expansion in the diagnostic space," Cipla said. PTI	
RBI imposes penalty on CUB, three other lenders	
Mumbai	
The RBI has imposed monetary penalty on City Union Bank, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank and two other lenders for contravention of certain directions issued by it. The RBI said the penalties were imposed based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction with customers. PTI	

## Govt. extends I-T filing deadline

Centre sets Sept. 30 date to file returns, employers have till July 15 for Form 16

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government has extended deadlines for various Income Tax law compliances citing the hardships being faced amid the severe COVID-19 pandemic.

The due date for furnishing income tax returns for the Assessment Year 2021-22 has been extended from July 31 to September 30. Employers have also been granted a month's extension for furnishing Form 16 that reflects tax deductions at source from employees' salaries, from June 15 to July 15.

Entities that need to file audited income reports have also been given a month's extension from their usual deadlines for filing such audit reports, as well as furnish their income tax returns.

The Central Government, in continuation of its



Online pause: E-filing services will be unavailable between June 1-6 due to an upgrade of the I-T portal. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

commitment to address the hardship being faced by various stakeholders on account of the severe COVID-19 pandemic, has, on consideration of representations received from various stakeholders, decided to extend timelines for compliances under the Income-tax Act,

for migrating data from the legacy system.

"Taxpayers are encouraged to complete all their urgent tasks involving any submission, upload or downloads before June 1 to avoid any difficulty during the blackout period," the I-T department said, adding that no compliance dates had been scheduled during that week to avoid inconvenience to taxpayers.

The new portal is expected to facilitate quicker tax refunds and simplify tax returns with pre-filled forms that would minimise data entry efforts for taxpayers without any tax knowledge, the department said.

A new call centre would aid taxpayers with immediate answers to queries with FAQs, tutorials, videos and chatbots and live agents, the department added.

FM urges CCI to take 'market friendly' tack

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday urged the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to adopt a 'free market' approach and become a market-friendly regulator to help businesses recover from COVID-19's adverse effects.

"Referring to the challenges of post-pandemic revival of enterprises, the Finance Minister stressed on the need for the CCI to proactively engage with industry so as to ensure that their legitimate claims are patiently heard while also making sure that knowing or unknowingly, by omission or by commission market processes are not undermined," the Corporate Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

Cryptocurrency sell-off flags U.S. inflation fears

Investors are paring their risk appetite

REUTERS  
NEW YORK

A sell-off in cryptocurrencies, high-growth stocks and other high-flying assets may be signalling a more cautious outlook among market participants after a stretch of rampant exuberance, investors and analysts said.

Few believe the bull run that broader U.S. stock markets have experienced over the past year is set for a reversal. Still, concerns are growing that a looming rise in inflation combined with a potential peak in U.S. economic growth could force investors to cut down on risk in their portfolios, hurting many of the assets that shot higher earlier this year.

"Higher-risk assets, whether in the form ... of cryptocurrencies or the more speculative growth stocks, are seeing their multiples taken down markedly as investors begin to reassess what impact the potential for inflation will have," said David Mazza, managing director at Direxion.

Wednesday's sell-off zeroed in on many of the assets that rallied the most over the last year. Bitcoin dropped to its lowest levels since January. The cryptocurrency is still up 34% for the year-to-date.

## ICRA lowers growth outlook across automobile segments

Significant medical spends have eroded purchasing power'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ratings agency ICRA on Thursday downgraded the growth outlook for all automobile segments as the second wave of the pandemic, which has now penetrated the rural areas as well, has derailed the recovery momentum of the sector.

"The second wave of the pandemic, the intensity of which has taken the entire country by surprise, is expected to impact near-term automobile purchases, across segments," said Shamsheer Dewan, VP and group head, ICRA Ratings.

"Unlike the first wave, where infections were large-

ly confined to urban clusters, the second wave has seen deeper and wider penetration into rural hinterlands," he added.

He added that the significant medical spends have also eroded the purchasing power of individuals and families to a greater extent, which would impact large

## Bosch Q4 net profit jumps to ₹ 3,018 crore

Second wave delays sector's recovery'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Auto parts maker Bosch Ltd. on Thursday posted a six-fold jump in Q4 net profit to ₹ 482 crore from ₹ 81 crore in the year-earlier period.

Net profit for FY21 stood at ₹ 482.5 crore as against ₹ 649.8 crore in the previous year, a decline of 26%.

Total revenue from operations stood at ₹ 971.8 crore, a decline of 1.3% compared with the previous fiscal. In Q4, the company reported total a revenue of ₹ 321.8 crore, an increase of 43.8% compared with the year-earlier period.

The second wave of the pandemic pushed the Indian auto industry, which was on road to recovery until early this year, to market uncertainties again, Bosch said. In addition, international market volatilities in

the supply chain would continue to impact the auto sector in the country, the company said.

"With 80% of our revenues driven through mobility business, we have been affected adversely," said Soumitra Bhattacharya, MD, Bosch Ltd. and President, Bosch India. "The challenge will be to manage the fluctuating demand, supply chain crisis and changing consumer behaviour all at once," he added.

Introducing STEP LIVE Junior+ to develop your child's overall communication skills.

expected from Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka," he added.

"Nearly, 25-40% losses are expected in the agriculture sector in all the above impacted States," Mr. Johari said. About 15-20% from transportation sector, primarily ports, and a similar loss share from the utility sector, primarily power and telecom," he added.

Fortunately for the insurance industry, the loss would be minimal as the cyclone had spared the cities. "The loss is primarily driven by impact to ports and vehicles and potentially agriculture as no major city has been impacted. The structural losses are to the tune of ₹ 100 crore," he said.

"The remaining losses are

## Gujarat, Diu bore the maximum brunt of cyclone Tauktae: RMSI

Two regions share 65% of the ₹ 15,000 crore estimated loss'

LALATENDU MISHRA  
MUMBAI

Cyclone Tauktae is estimated to have caused losses to the tune of ₹ 15,000 crore, including ₹ 9,000 crore to the agriculture and transportation sectors, an initial assessment by RMSI, a provider of geospatial and engineering solutions, shows.

Gujarat and Diu have suffered 65% of the losses, said Pushpendra Johari, senior VP, Sustainability, RMSI.

He said while Gujarat and Diu were badly impacted, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa faced flooding and soil erosion along the coast due to a mild surge. The wind impact was primarily on electric poles and telecom towers, leading



to disruption in power supply and communication in some areas.

"The initial potential loss from cyclone Tauktae is estimated to be ₹ 15,000 crore. Out of this, at least 65% of the losses are expected from Gujarat and Daman & Diu," Mr. Johari said.

"The remaining losses are

expected from Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka," he added.

"Nearly, 25-40% losses are expected in the agriculture sector in all the above impacted States," Mr. Johari said. About 15-20% from transportation sector, primarily ports, and a similar loss share from the utility sector, primarily power and telecom," he added.

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"The loss is primarily driven by impact to ports and vehicles and potentially agriculture as no major city has been impacted. The structural losses are to the tune of ₹ 100 crore," he said.

# Indian women to play maiden pink-ball Test

The tour of Australia will also have three ODIs and as many T20Is

## CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Indian women's cricket team will compete in its maiden day-night Test from Sept. 30 to Oct. 3 when it tours Australia this year.

The match will be played in Perth, which hasn't hosted a day/night game as yet, Cricket Australia said after BCCI secretary Jay Shah made the initial announcement.

"Taking forward our commitment towards women's cricket, I am extremely pleased to announce that Team India @BCCIWomen will play in their first-ever pink-ball day/night Test later this year in Australia," Shah tweeted.

### First in seven years

The Indian women's team, which will play its first Test in seven years from June 16 in England, will compete in another one during the tour of Australia.

The team will also play three ODIs (from Sept. 19 to 24) and as many T20Is (from



**New experience:** The pink-ball Test against Australia will be played in Perth from Sept. 30 to Oct. 3. ■ FILE PHOTO

Oct. 7 to 11) Down Under.

India last played a Test against Australia in 2006.

The pink-ball Test between India and Australia will be only the second such match to be held in the history of women's cricket.

The only day/night women's game played so far was between Australia and England at Sydney in November 2017. The match ended in a draw.

England and Australia are the only two teams which regularly play Test cricket, mainly against each other in the Women's Ashes.

Going forward, India will also be seen playing the longest format against the two teams.

"As players, we've said for a long time that we'd love to play more Test matches," Australia captain Meg Lanning said on Wednesday.

"It's an exciting prospect and I know (India) are heading over to England to play a Test match pretty soon so it shows they're up for the challenge and really willing to play that format."

#### The schedule:

**ODIs:** Sept. 19, North Sydney Oval (D/N); Sept. 22, Junction Oval; Sept. 24, Junction Oval.

**Test:** Sept. 30-Oct. 3, WACA Ground (D/N).

**T20Is (all at North Sydney Oval):** Oct. 7, Oct. 9 & Oct. 11.

## Organise a pink-ball tournament before D/N Test: Shantha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

BCCI Apex Council member and former captain Shantha Rangaswamy on Thursday welcomed the resumption of Test cricket for Indian women, and hoped that the board will organise a domestic pink-ball tournament before the day/night Test in Australia.

Shantha spoke after Cricket Australia announced that India's inaugural pink-ball Test will be held at the WACA in Perth from September 30.

"BCCI has been planning tournaments for women in the last year, but the plans have gone haywire because of the pandemic.

"It is heartening to note that the board has planned a Test during the Indian women's tour of England," said Shantha.

"I firmly believe that the



Shantha Rangaswamy.  
■ FILE PHOTO

ultimate barometer is the longest format. To add to this, a day/night Test against Australia has also been announced which should be highly appreciated.

"However, as the Indian women don't play pink-ball cricket even in the domestic circuit, it is advisable for the BCCI to conduct a pink-ball tournament in India before the players embark on the tour of Australia," she added.



Dravid. ■ FILE PHOTO

part of the support staff. India is expected to play three ODIs and as many T20Is in Sri Lanka in July though the schedule has not been announced yet.

### Fringe players

The squad will have plenty of fringe players and some established white-ball specialists. Hardik Pandya and Shikhar Dhawan are in the running for captaincy.

## BCCI requests England to drop a Test for IPL window

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has requested the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to cut down the last of the scheduled five Test matches in England to enable a practical window for staging the suspended Indian Premier League (IPL).

After the World Test Championship in Southampton from June 18 to 22, India's Test squad will stay back in England for the five-Test series, scheduled between Aug. 4 and Sept. 14.

The Hindu understands

that the BCCI, in an informal discussion, had requested the ECB to advance the series by a week so that the series gets over in September first week.

### Only option

However, a BCCI insider confirmed late on Thursday evening that the only option it may explore is to request any of the counties if they are willing to forfeit a Test.

Members of India's touring entourage, most of whom have been quarantined in Mumbai, are hoping that they will have clarity about the itinerary before boarding the flight on June 2.

With the T20 World Cup set to begin around Oct. 20, it will be impossible for the BCCI to carve out a three-week window for the IPL keeping in mind the quarantine protocols.

"Since the venues in England are booked keeping in mind their tight international calendar and The Hundred, it's not possible for them to advance the se-

## Fans for WTC final



**Physical presence:** Fans can make a big impact by rooting for their teams during the WTC final. ■ REUTERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SOUTHAMPTON

The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand in Southampton will be held in the presence of 4000 spectators, Hampshire County Club head Rod Bransgrove has said.

The COVID-19 situation

has improved in the UK and around 1500 people were allowed to watch the county game between Leicestershire and Hampshire at the Ageas Bowl, which hosts the WTC final on June 18.

"It is a high interest game and there is a good demand for it," added Bransgrove.

## Milkha Singh tests positive for COVID-19

### GENERAL

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday and has gone into isolation at his home in Chandigarh.



Milkha Singh. ■ FILE PHOTO

get us all tested. Sardarji had around 101 degrees fever last night but it has reduced now to 99 degrees and he is stable. Doctors at the PGI, Chandigarh are monitoring and have also offered to provide an attendant," she added.

Barring the fever, Milkha is asymptomatic and in control, but his wife admitted the only concern was his age.

The former sprinter has been largely staying home for the past few months to stay protected and was taking all precautions while going out occasionally. He is yet to get vaccinated.

Milkha's son, golfer Jeev, is in Dubai and is expected to return over the weekend.



**Sizzling show:** Leclerc, sidelined by a gearbox problem in the first session, surged to the top in the second. ■ REUTERS

## Leclerc's stunning turnaround

Goes from last to first as Ferrari makes it a 1-2

### MONACO GP

REUTERS  
MONACO

Charles Leclerc went from last to first on his hometown streets to lead a stunning Ferrari 1-2 in a red-flagged second Monaco Grand Prix practice session on Thursday.

The 23-year-old Monegasque, born and bred in the Mediterranean principality, lapped the metal-fenced layout with a best time of one minute 11.684 seconds in the

afternoon session. Leclerc managed only four laps in the morning before being sidelined by a gearbox problem that left him bottom of the timesheets.

Spanish teammate Carlos Sainz was second fastest, 0.112 slower, with Mercedes' seven-time World champion Lewis Hamilton third as Formula One returned to Monaco after a two-year absence due to COVID-19.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen, 14 points adrift of Hamilton after four races, was

fourth fastest. It was the first time Ferrari had led a practice session since Sebastian Vettel, now at Aston Martin, was fastest in Hungary last July.

The afternoon session was stopped five minutes early after Mick Schumacher hit the barriers sideways at Massenet and parked up after going through the tunnel, with the Haas needing to be removed.

Mexican Sergio Perez was fastest for Red Bull in the opening session.

## Foreign relay teams likely in Indian meets

STAN RAYAN  
KOCHI

Despite the uncertainty over flights, the long quarantine in many countries and the worrying COVID-19 situation, the AFI is working on ways to get its athletes ready for Tokyo.

### New developments

"Every day something new comes up, the countries might be open for flights but a lot of countries are not allowing Indians to come," said Adille Sumariwalla, the AFI president.

"We are trying to send different batches to different countries. We will have to see the competitions they are going for, is it a competition for qualification or not, whether they can go to a neighbouring country, there are so many things being worked out."

"So, our athletes were in very good shape and prepared. And that final competition, that final edge which you need for the Olympics, that got hampered. That is the problem."

## Andujar ends Stricker's impressive run

### GENEVA OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

Pablo Andujar, who had knocked out Roger Federer in the second round, defeated Dominic Stephan Stricker 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the Geneva Open here on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the 18-year-old had given Swiss fans hope for the future when the World No. 419 became the youngest from his

country to reach an ATP quarterfinal since Federer at Copenhagen in 2000.

Stricker, 18, followed up his first round win over former US Open champion Marin Cilic with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Hungary's Marton Fucsovics.

### The results:

**Quarterfinals:** Pablo Andujar bt Dominic Stephan Stricker 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

**Second round:** Stricker bt Marton Fucsovics 7-5, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov bt Marco Cecchinato 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-1.

## James' last-gasp trey takes Lakers through

### NBA PLAY-INS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

LeBron James overcame blurred vision on Wednesday to score a 34-foot trey (three-pointer) with under a minute left as Los Angeles Lakers rallied from a first half deficit to beat Golden State Warriors 103-100 and reach the NBA's West playoffs.

James, who said he could only see out of one eye, hit the game winner for the defending champion in dramatic fashion as it came over top of Warriors superstar

Stephen Curry, who poured in a game-high 37 points, with the shot clock expiring.

"After Draymond fingered me in the eye I was literally seeing three rims. I just shot for the middle one," said James, who had a triple double of 22 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists.

The Warriors will get another chance to get into the main playoff draw, but must beat Memphis Grizzlies on Friday.

The Grizzlies earned the right to face the Warriors next by beating the 10th-seeded San Antonio Spurs 100-96.



**The clincher!** Impaired by blurred vision, James nailed a 34-foot long basket to help Lakers edge Warriors. ■ AFP

India's current sprint power is the best it has ever had, says Sumariwalla

### ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN  
KOCHI

There are just two slots left to fight for in the women's 4x100m relay for the Olympics and, at No. 22, India is way down in the Road to Tokyo rankings but Adille Sumariwalla believes the team will make the cut.

"The 4x100m women will run and qualify. They have not run, that is why they are below in the rankings. One meet if they run, they will come up," said the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president to *The Hindu*.

Clearly, girls like Dutee Chand, Hima Das and Dhanalakshmi have made the federation confident.

"Never in the history of Indian athletics have we had a sprint power like this. We have not run in two years

that came as a bit of a surprise for only a few weeks ago, the AFI withdrew its women's 4x400m team – which the federation keeps insisting has the potential to win an Olympic medal – from the World Relays in Poland before the flight ban forced India to miss the event.

In fact, after the pull-out, many had wondered whether the country could put together a quality women's mile relay team for Tokyo.

India has a confirmed Olympic berth in the mixed relay. The AFI is now busy trying to work out foreign trips. "All the three relay teams will qualify," he said. "And if athletes are not fit, they will be fit by the time of the final trials," said the AFI chief adding that the final trials will be held during the Grand Prix next month.

The AFI is now busy trying to work out foreign trips.

"Yes, that is also on the

plan. We will do that if required. We will have to see who is ready to come, how they will come, when they will come. We are in conversation with people there also," he said.

The AFI has also decided to move the Indian Grand Prix-4 (June 15) and the Inter-State Nationals (June 25-29) from Bengaluru to Patiala.

"We are moving them to Patiala, the dates remain the same," he said.

Sumariwalla felt that everything went out of hand just when they all appeared together nicely.

"We were doing fantastically, everything was going fine and you saw the good results we had in the Federation Cup and all. We had so many national records, never had so many before."

"So, our athletes were in very good shape and prepared. And that final competition, that final edge which you need for the Olympics, that got hampered. That is the problem."

And if countries insist on a 14-day quarantine, the AFI could even bring in foreign relay teams to run in Indian meets.

"Yes, that is also on the

</

## IN BRIEF



## Another Italian Cup for Juventus

**REGGIO EMILIA**  
Gianluigi Buffon lifted the last trophy of his glittering Juventus career after his team beat Atalanta 2-1 in the Italian Cup to put some shine on a disappointing season. It was a record-extending 14th Italian Cup title for Juventus on Wednesday. Dejan Kulusevski and Federico Chiesa scored for Juventus, either side of Ruslan Malinovskiy's equaliser for Atalanta shortly before half-time. AP



## Rudisha not to defend his 800m Olympic title

**GENEVA**  
Two-time Olympic 800m champion David Rudisha will not defend his title at the Tokyo Games because of a persistent hamstring problem. Now 32, the Kenyan has not run at the international level since the 2017 season, and the current injury is linked to chronic inflammation of his sitting bone. AP



## Mbappe stars as PSG retains French Cup

**PARIS**  
Kylian Mbappe scored one goal and set up the other as Paris Saint-Germain stayed on course for a domestic double by beating Monaco 2-0 to retain the French Cup. PSG's record-extending 14th cup win was given a helping hand after a defensive error gifted an early goal to Mauro Icardi on Wednesday.

**WI's Test contingent's 13 members get vaccinated**  
**ST. JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)**  
Thirteen members of the West Indies red-ball squad, including players and support staff, have received COVID-19 vaccinations in St. Lucia, Cricket West Indies (CWI) said. While 11 players and support staff received their first dose of the vaccine, two squad members got their second jab, where they are preparing for the upcoming ICC World Test Championship matches against South Africa. Last week, the women's squad had received its first dose of the vaccine. PTI

## Riya-Chihiro pair makes its exit

**PLATJA D'ARO (SPAIN)**  
Riya Bhateria and Chihiro Muramatsu of Japan lost 6-4, 6-1 to Lithuania's Justina Mikulskyte and Oana Georgeta Simion of Romania in doubles pre-quarterfinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here.

## HFI chief Jagan Mohan's gesture to Sravanthi

**HYDERABAD**  
A. Jagan Mohan Rao, president of the Handball Federation of India, has personally provided ₹2 lakh to former India women's cricketer K.S. Sravanthi Naidu towards the treatment of her parents, who are battling COVID-19. "I thought it was my moral obligation to help a fellow sportsperson who is struggling to raise funds for the treatment," Mr. Rao said.

## Shammi Silva elected SLC president

**COLONBO**  
Shammi Silva was elected for a second term as president of Sri Lanka Cricket in the polls held on Thursday. He will be at the helm of affairs till 2023. Silva was first elected president in 2019. Silva's faction, which includes vice-presidents Ravin Wickramaratne and Jayantha Dharmadasa, and secretary Mohan de Silva, were also elected unopposed after a rival group withdrew from the elections on Tuesday. PTI

# Olympic Channel captures Bindra's golden journey

First part of video series on the shooter recounts the gripping passage of time

## SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

It is a story told a million times to a billion people. It never ceases to inspire the youth.

The Olympic Channel has captured the golden journey of Abhinav Bindra, who has won the country's only individual Olympic gold so far, in a vibrant fashion in the first episode of its video series, *Legends live on*.

Starting to shoot under the mango tree with Lt. Col. J.S. Dhillon, missing the

Olympic final narrowly as a teenager in Sydney in 2000, having the shattering experience of an unstable wooden floor destroy his 10 best shots in Athens, to helping the country realise an incredible dream in Beijing, and the swansong of missing the Olympic medal in Rio by a hair's breath, the story nicely recaptures the gripping passage of time.

## Explorer

"More than an athlete, I was an explorer," Abhinav concludes in the 26-minute video, that has footage from around the world, including

his home in Zirakpur, where his parents, Dr. A.S. Bindra and mother Babli, provide so much insight to the makings of a champion.

It was coach Gaby Buehmann who gave Abhinav the first hug after the gold medal, when he shot 10.8 on the last shot.

When the whole nation was holding its breath, Abhinav timed his shot between his "heartbeats".

"I wish we were there. I wanted to give him the first hug," said Abhinav's mom. She admits that at that moment of triumph she ran to her temple to thank God.

"The last shot was THE shot," said Dr. Bindra, quite proud to have supported Abhinav in fulfilling his improbable dream.

Abhinav was tied with Henri Hakkinen of Finland, who had enjoyed a two-point lead before the final.

In the process, the defending Olympic champion Zhu Qinan of China was pushed to the silver and a flood of tears.

The biggest hurdle was in the five-minute warm-up prior to the start of the final. Abhinav's first shot was a 4, which he had never shot even under the mango tree

as a beginner.

"Not again" was the thought, but he was composed to give 40-clicks to his dioptrite, that helps to zero in on the target. His first competitive shot in the final was 10.7. He just focused on each shot thereafter to stand on top of the podium, crushing under his feet the overwhelming sense of negativity back home in India.

For Abhinav, every challenging situation has been an inspiring motivation, as he marches on to help Indian sports in a big way with his ABTP venture, targeting performance.



**Inspiring story:** Bindra, India's only individual Olympic gold medallist, is a big source of motivation for youngsters.

• OLYMPIC CHANNEL

## Vinesh to train in Europe till Olympics

Rowers Arjun and Arvind to hone their skills in Portugal

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

Asian champion and one of India's biggest medal hopes at the Tokyo Olympics, wrestler Vinesh Phogat will continue training overseas for the next two months till the Games.

Vinesh, currently undergoing high-altitude training in Bulgaria, will proceed to train in Hungary and Poland after the Mission Olympic Cell approved her training programmes costing ₹20.21 lakh on Thursday.

The 53-kg wrestler will train in Budapest until June 9, travel for the Poland Open



Vinesh Phogat...overseas stint continues • FILE PHOTO

(till June 13) before returning to Budapest till July 2.

She will be accompanied by coach Woller Akos, spar-

ring partner Priyanka and physiotherapist Poornima Raman Ngomdir.

Rowers Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh, who qualified for Tokyo earlier this month, have been moved from the TOPS development group to the core group and sanctioned ₹21 lakh for a five-week training stint at the Pocoinho High Performance Centre in Portugal from June 1.

**More in TOPS core group**  
Wrestlers Seema Bisla and Sumit Malik, along with tennis player Ankita Raina, have also been added to the core

death, her father Manohar Gorhe too succumbed to COVID-19.

Monali was the coach of the pistol core group.

She had also served as the national coach of the Sri Lankan shooting team. She

A few hours before her

group.

## Divij, Bopanna's participation cleared

Meanwhile, tennis doubles players Divij Sharan and Rohan Bopanna's participation in 14 and 11 tournaments respectively between January and June 2021 has also been approved.

While Divij's proposal cost approximately ₹30 lakh, he has received ₹80.59 lakhs in funding from TOPS in the present Olympics cycle.

Bopanna's proposal, including fee for coach Scott Davidoff and physio Gaurang Shukla, cost ₹27.61 lakh.

## A budding talent with promise

Sahaja steps into the professional tour after a brilliant season in the American Collegiate circuit

## TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

Sahaja Yamalapalli offers a little more promise for Indian women's as she steps into the professional tour after a brilliant season in the American Collegiate circuit.

The 20-year-old Sahaja, who graduated from Sam Houston State University in Texas last week, with Food Science and Nutrition as the main subject, did not drop a set the whole season, winning 18 singles matches on the trot, at the No. 1 position.



Sahaja. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ically 100% present that day on the tennis court," said Sahaja.

She was awarded 'Tennis student-athlete of the year' this season and in 2018 and 2019 as well, for topping both studies and sports.

Sahaja achieved so much as the No. 1 player in the team, despite being a "part-time tutor" and stringing the racquets for the whole team, for four years. She has also

worked as a tennis trainer in various camps organised in the US by different Foundations and companies.

## First step

"I have already started training. I want to train for a month continuously. I will make a schedule of tournaments to play. The first step is to find tournaments that I can get in, and the second step is to find the sponsorship to travel there," said Sahaja, the daughter of a teacher in Hyderabad, Bhanu Kumar.

"I am well prepared to start playing the pro tournaments with my present game level. I am looking forward to training at a professional academy, to compete better, if I get financial support," she said.

If she is able to show similar spark on the pro tour, as she has done in the American Collegiate circuit, Sahaja is bound to be noticed and gain support.

## Shooting coach Monali passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

In a big loss to the Indian shooting fraternity, coach and technical official Monali Gorhe died of mucormycosis on Thursday.

She was 44 and is sur-

vived by her mother and a sister. Monali was admitted to a hospital after being diagnosed with COVID-19 but was discharged, only to get re-admitted to treat mucormycosis.

A few hours before her

death, her father Manohar Gorhe too succumbed to COVID-19.

Monali was the coach of the pistol core group.

She had also served as

the national coach of the Sri

Lankan shooting team. She

vived by her mother and a sister. Monali was admitted to a hospital after being diagnosed with COVID-19 but was discharged, only to get re-admitted to treat mucormycosis.

"We have significantly

raised the insurance cover for Khelo India scholar and junior athletes up to ₹5 lakh per athlete each year," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

SAI to provide health, accident insurance to athletes, staff

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) has decided to extend medical and accident insurance cover to more than 13,000 athletes, coaches and support staff from 2021.

The health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh each will be provided to all national campers and probables, Khelo India athletes and junior campers training at SAI

Centres of Excellence. It would also include a ₹25 lakh cover for accident or death.

"We want to ensure that all our athletes and contractual staff have health cover during these difficult times and even after. Through this initiative, we are ensuring that all national-level athletes have insurance not just during the national camps but throughout the year.

"We have significantly

raised the insurance cover for Khelo India scholar and junior athletes up to ₹5 lakh per athlete each year," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

SAI to provide health, accident insurance to athletes, staff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LAUSANNE

India hockey goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh was on Thursday appointed as a member of the FIH Athletes' Committee during the virtual meeting of the Executive Board.

"The EB confirmed the

appointment of four new members for the Athletes' Committee.

"Sreejesh Parattu (IND), Marlena Rybacha (POL), Mohamed Mea (RSA) and Matt Swann (AUS) are now joining the Committee," FIH said in a release.

## Piecemeal investigation not good: Vaughan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has described Cricket Australia's probe into the 2018 ball-tampering issue as a "piecemeal investigation", saying

it has left many questions unanswered and will keep coming back to bite the governing body.

"Not many former professionals believe something like that would be confined to just three people"

it has left many questions unanswered and will keep coming back to bite the governing body.

"We have achieved good results at Asian-level tournaments. Playing well in these events has given the team, particularly youngsters, a sense of what it really takes to do well at big tournaments. Now, I feel we are ready for bigger feats," said Savita. The goalkeeper said the team has improved immensely in the last three years.

## Ministry invites applications

## SPORTS AWARDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry on Thursday invited applications for the national sports awards, allowing eligible athletes, coaches, universities and other entities to self-nominate and apply online.

nistry had for the first time allowed for self nomination of applicants in view of the pandemic. This year too, self nomination will be allowed," it added.

Till 2019, applicants needed recommendations to be able to apply, but the condition was waived last year as the COVID-19 lockdown prevented movement of people.

## CHALLENGES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE NEW NORMAL

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu Group brings a 15-part webinar series to provide expert career guidance to Class 10, 11 and 12 students.

Join the webinar on

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 (Saturday) at 5:00 PM

to hear from the experts followed by a Q&A session.

## Siddharth Chaturvedi

Executive Vice President  
AISECT Group

## Yashasvini Rajeshwar

Founder & CEO - AuxoHub  
(Moderator)



**Hari Krishnan Nair**

Co-founder, Great Learning