

SALMAN KHURSHID  
WANTS HIS PARTY TO  
THINK BIG LIKE BJP

P4



THE MIDEAST BATTLE

P6



MICROSOFT PROBED  
GATES BEFORE HE LEFT  
BOARD

P10



A GOALIE WHO  
DOUBLES AS  
SCORER

P12

WEATHER

Generally cloudy sky with possibility of light rain. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 33 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 66% Min: 28%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 37.8°C (-2) Min: 23.6°C (-3)  
SUN RISES 05:29 hrs SUN SETS 19:07 hrs  
MOON RISES 10:34 hrs MOON SETS 0:41 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Women mourn the death of a family member, who died due to Covid. In Srinagar. AGENCIES

WPI inflation hits double digits in April at 10.49 pc: The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to an all-time high of 10.49 per cent in April, on rising prices of food items, crude oil and manufactured goods, and experts believe that the uptrend is likely to continue. This is the fourth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. In March 2021, it was 7.39 per cent. The low base in April last year, when WPI inflation was (-) 1.57 per cent, also contributed to the spike in April 2021. P8

SC orders rebel YSRC MP's medical examination: The Supreme Court on Monday directed rebel YSR Congress MP K Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, arrested in sedition case, be taken to Army hospital at Secunderabad in Telangana for medical examination. Raju had moved the Delhi High Court last year for his security on the ground that he was facing threats for being critical to the state government. The bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B R Gavai directed that he be kept at the Army hospital at Secunderabad till further orders. P5

## Daily cases below 3L; uptick in fatalities

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

India's Covid-19 tally mounted to 2,49,65,463 on Monday with 2,81,386 fresh cases, the lowest in 27 days, while the death toll climbed to 2,74,390 as 4,106 more people succumbed to the disease, according to Union health ministry data. The daily new Covid cases being registered in India was less than 3 lakh after 26 days, the ministry said.

The number of active cases stands at 35,16,997, accounting for 14.09 per cent of the total infections. The national recovery rate has improved to 84.81 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,11,74,076, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.10 per cent, it stated.

Karnataka, Maharashtra,

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh cumulatively account for 75.04 percent of India's total active cases.

There has been an average decline in daily new cases since 9 May. Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 34,389, followed by Tamil Nadu with 33,181 new cases. A declining trend in the weekly positivity rate is also observed which stands at 18.17 per cent, it said.

Delhi cases fall below 5K:

Delhi today reported 4,524 fresh coronavirus cases — the lowest since 5 April—and 340 Covid deaths while the positivity rate dipped to 8.42 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The current positivity rate is the lowest since 9 April when it had stood at 7.8 per cent. On 5 April, 3,548 peo-



ple were diagnosed with the disease, according to official data.

SEE P2

They provide Patidar his meals, snacks and tea daily at the tree only, while he remains seated on the chair perched between two branches. The farmer has been carrying out this ritual for the past fortnight and says he will continue doing it regularly.

According to some media reports, many hapless relatives of oxygen-requiring Covid-19 patients were also allegedly advised by policemen in Prayagraj to make the patients sit under trees to boost up their oxygen levels.

Eminent pulmonologist of Bhopal, Dr Priyanath Agrawal DM, cautions people to not believe in such methods.

"Non-Covid people must regularly do deep breathing exercises, Pranayam, yoga or cardiovascular exercise for maintaining good oxygen levels," he suggested.

Nonetheless, Patidar points out that climbing and descending the tree daily has an added advantage too, as it keeps him physically agile and fit. He states that physical fitness attained by the exercise of climbing and coming down the tree has boosted his immunity level.

The farmer says he does not even have to bother about social distancing when he is on the tree.

His family members, though not following in his footsteps, support his ways.

As the cyclone raged past the Maharashtra coast and inched closer to Mumbai in the morning, the Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Interna-

## Deadly second wave rages on

Vaccine doses: More than two crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and Union territories, while nearly three lakh doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

AP govt extends curfew: The Andhra Pradesh government on Monday decided to extend the curfew till 31 May as the virus graph continued to be on an upward spiral in the state.

Hoarding of Covid meds: Political leaders have no business to hoard stocks of Covid-19 medicines that are already in shortage and they are expected to surrender these drugs, said Delhi High Court.

P2

A very severe cyclonic storm with winds gusting up to 185 km per hour was barreling towards the Gujarat coast on Monday, dumping heavy rains on Mumbai, forcing the evacuation of over 1.5 lakh people in Gujarat and leaving two barges with 410 people on board adrift in the Arabian Sea.

Tropical storm *Tauktae* which has intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm was packing wind speeds of about 20 kmph and is expected to reach Gujarat coast by the evening and cross it between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m., the IMD said.

As the cyclone raged past the Maharashtra coast and inched closer to Mumbai in the morning, the Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Interna-

## Adverse effects after Covishield jab minuscule in India: Govt panel

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

India has reported 26 potential cases of bleeding and clotting after administration of Covishield vaccine, a government panel investigating adverse events following Covid-19 immunisation has found.

The Union Health Ministry said in a statement on Monday that over 23,000 adverse events have been reported since the vaccination drive involving Covishield and Covaxin vaccines started in the country and of these 700 cases were reported to be serious.

The National Adverse Event Following Immunisation Committee (AEFI) has completed an in-depth case review of 498 serious and

severe events, of which 26 cases have been reported to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel) after Covishield administration

severe events, of which 26 cases have been reported to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel) that might also break loose and carried by the blood stream to plug another vessel events following administration of Covishield vaccine with a reporting rate of 0.61 cases/million doses".

"There were no potential thromboembolic events reported following administration of Covaxin vaccine," the ministry said.

As alerts were raised in some countries on post-vaccination embolic and thrombotic events on 11 March particularly with AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, a decision was taken to conduct an urgent in-depth analysis of the adverse events (AE) in India in the light of global concerns, the ministry said.

The AEFI data in India showed that there is a very minuscule but definitive risk of thromboembolic events. The reporting rate of these events in India is around 0.61/million doses, which is much lower than the 4 cases/million reported in the UK.

Rajnath launches DRDO's 2DG Covid medicine



NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Defence minister Rajnath Singh today released the first batch of Anti-Covid drug 2DG developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), calling the medicine an important example of the country's scientific prowess.

"This drug is a new ray of hope in our fight against Covid," he said at an event in which Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan was also present.

Singh said under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the issue of oxygen production has been resolved with collective effort of various authorities. "We should not become complacent because this is the second wave of coronavirus and there is no certainty about the future. We can't afford to lower our guard."

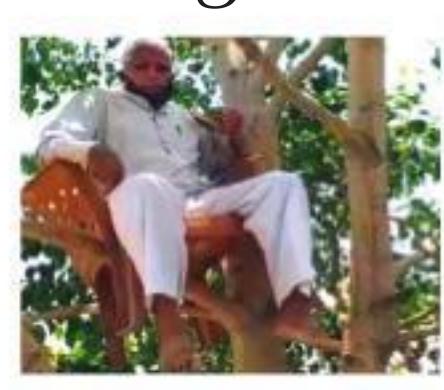
He complimented the DRDO for bringing out the drug which was the outcome of the first indigenous research in the battle against Covid-19.

The drug was recently approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use. Clinical trials of the drug, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), showed that it helps in a faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence.

The anti-Covid therapeutic application of the drug has been developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) along with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) in Hyderabad. SNS

## No oxygen shortage for this MP man!

GAURAV CHANDRA  
BHOPAL, 17 MAY



Even as the government and experts are grappling with ways to produce and supply adequate oxygen for Covid-19 patients across India, a farmer in Madhya Pradesh simply climbs a peepal tree, fixes a plastic chair between two branches and sits there for most of the day in the belief of directly breathing in the oxygen released by the tree.

The 68-year-old farmer, Rajendra Patidar of village Rangwasa near Indore, believes that directly receiving oxygen from the peepal tree keeps his body's oxygen saturation level at 99 percent. He says that fresh and pure oxygen goes into his lungs.

Doctors say such antics do not help in increasing the oxygen level in the body.

His family members, though not following in his footsteps, support his ways.

## Tauktae barrels towards Guj coast; two barges adrift

SNS & PTI  
MUMBAI, 17 MAY

A very severe cyclonic storm with winds gusting up to 185 km per hour was barreling towards the Gujarat coast on Monday, dumping heavy rains on Mumbai, forcing the evacuation of over 1.5 lakh people in Gujarat and leaving two barges with 410 people on board adrift in the Arabian Sea.

Tropical storm *Tauktae* which has intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm was packing wind speeds of about 20 kmph and is expected to reach Gujarat coast by the evening and cross it between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m., the IMD said.

As the cyclone raged past the Maharashtra coast and inched closer to Mumbai in the morning, the Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Interna-

tional Airport here announced the suspension of operations from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and later decided to keep all operations shut till 6 p.m.

Six persons were killed in Maharashtra's Konkan region related to the severe cyclonic storm *Tauktae* while three sailors remained missing after two boats sank in the sea

while three sailors remained missing after two boats sank in the sea, a statement and officials said on Monday.

Over 1.5 lakh people have been shifted from low-lying coastal areas in Gujarat, while 54 teams of the NDRF and SDRF remained deployed, an



Strong sea waves near the Gateway of India on Monday





I have told them to accept the Swasthya Sathi card

GAUTAM DEB, CHAIRMAN, BOA, SILIGURI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

ON ALLEGATIONS THAT PVT NURSING HOMES HAD BEEN FLEECING COVID PATIENTS' FAMILIES

# 'No supply may force Delhi to shut vax centres for 18-44'

Sisodia puts its onus on Centre, demands that vaccine allocation to states be made public

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

doses for this month," Sisodia said.

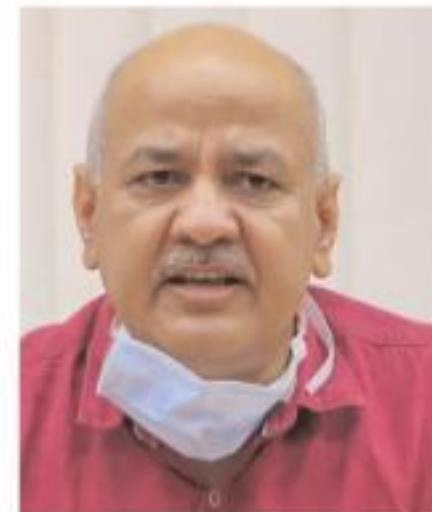
He said he has urged the Centre to provide Delhi 3.83 lakh doses for the 18-44 years age group too for this month.

"There is a problem in supply of vaccines because the Centre exported crores of doses to many other countries. We are ready to purchase the vaccines but at least they (vaccines) should be available," Sisodia said.

In his letter to the central government, he also demanded transparency in the distribution of vaccines among different states/UTs as well as between governments and private sector.

"We understand there is a problem of production. But the Centre should make the data on vaccine doses provided by it to different states/UTs for different age categories public," he stated in the letter.

Sisodia said the Covid vaccine manufacturers should



similarly also provide information on how many doses produced by them are being supplied to the governments and private sector establishments.

The Delhi deputy CM also sought information from the Union government on the number of doses it will provide in June and July months to the city so that the Delhi government could plan in advance its Covid vaccination programme for the coming months.

The Delhi government officials said under the Centre's free vaccine supply, the national capital will receive only 50,000 Covishield doses on May 21, 50,000 doses on May 25, 1,00,000 doses on May 26, and 83,970 doses on May 29. Delhi will also receive only 50,000 Covaxin doses on May 22 and 48,890 doses on May 26, they said.

The AAP-led Delhi government is yet to make any direct procurement of Covishield and Covaxin from respective manufacturers, they added.

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has, however, maintained that orders for supply of 67 lakh doses each of Covishield and Covaxin have been given to the manufacturers concerned.

Meanwhile, the ruling AAP's MLA Atishi said that Delhi has less than a day's stock of Covaxin left for the 45 plus age group and that they will have to temporarily shut centres

administering it. The centres administering Covaxin to the 18-44 age group have been closed.

While issuing the vaccination bulletin, Atishi said that Delhi also started walk-in vaccination for 45-plus, healthcare workers and frontline workers from Monday. There are many people who don't have smartphones and can't register online, she said, adding that there were 97 schools where such centres have been opened.

"We will have five days stock of Covishield, but less than day's stock of Covaxin for 45 plus age group after today's vaccination," she said.

Atishi also said they have only four days of Covishield left for the 18-44 age group.

"We urge the Centre to supply us vaccines for the 18-44 age group since the new strain of coronavirus is affecting the young people," she added.

# Delhi cases fall below 5K, lowest since 5 April; 340 deaths logged

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Delhi today reported 4,524 fresh coronavirus cases — the lowest since 5 April — and 340 Covid deaths while the positivity rate dipped to 8.42 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

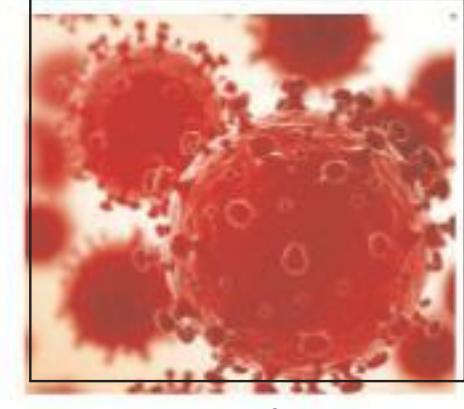
The current positivity rate is the lowest since 9 April when it had stood at 7.8 per cent. On 5 April, 3,548 people were diagnosed with the disease, according to official data.

The lower number of fresh Covid cases was detected out of relatively lesser number of tests — 53,756.

Delhi had logged 6,456 cases yesterday, 6,430 on Saturday, 8,506 on Friday, 10,489 on Thursday, 300 on Wednesday, and 347 on Tuesday. The highest number of single-day Covid fatalities so far — 448 deaths — was reported on 3 May.

The national capital had reported 262 Covid deaths yesterday, 337 deaths on Saturday, 289 on Friday, 308 on Thursday, 300 on Wednesday, and 347 on Tuesday. The highest number of single-day Covid fatalities so far — 448 deaths — was reported on 3 May.

Medical experts have held the lockdown as the main factor behind the dip amid the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic.



a positivity rate of 36.2 per cent, the highest so far, was recorded.

The national capital had reported 262 Covid deaths yesterday, 337 deaths on Saturday, 289 on Friday, 308 on Thursday, 300 on Wednesday, and 347 on Tuesday. The highest number of single-day Covid fatalities so far — 448 deaths — was reported on 3 May.

The total of 10,918 people recovered from the Covid infection in Delhi during the last 24 hours, the health bulletin said. About 91,500 people recovered from the disease in the city in the week ending on 16 May as compared to 70,000 infections detected during the period.

There are currently 56,049 active cases and 35141 of these patients are in home isolation, according to the bulletin.

The number of Delhi's cumulative Covid tally stood at 1398391 and its toll at 21846, the bulletin stated.

Over 13.20 lakh people have recovered from the infection in the national capital so far. Of the 24,104 hospital beds meant for coronavirus patients in the city, 8,562 were vacant, the bulletin added.

The Covid situation has been improving in Delhi with the number of cases and positivity rate going down steadily in the past few days.

Medical experts have held the lockdown as the main factor behind the dip amid the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal yesterday announced the extension of the nearly month-long lockdown in the city till 24 May, saying the gains made so far in combatting coronavirus cannot be allowed to be lost due to any relaxations on various curbs now.

## Court sends Kalra for three days in police custody in oxygen concentration black marketing case

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

A Delhi Court on Monday sent businessman Navneet Kalra to police custody for three days in connection with allegedly black marketing and hoarding oxygen concentrators amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Delhi Police arrested Kalra on Sunday night. He was on the run for over a week since the seizure of more than 500 oxygen concentrators from Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege &amp; Ju restaurants owned by him.

Metropolitan Magistrate Archana Beniwal allowed

custodial interrogation of Kalra by Delhi Police which had sought five days of police custody to quiz him.

Kalra will now be produced before the court on May 20.

Investigating Officer (IO) Kamal Kumar asserted that his custodial interrogation is required to unearth the whole nexus and conspiracy behind the black marketing and hoarding of oxygen concentrators amid the coronavirus pandemic.

During the proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava told the court that Kalra has to be confronted with the co-accused in the case and that documents are voluminous

for which his custody is required.

It is a case of conspiracy. He had been evading arrest. This is a serious case. Without police custody, it will be impossible for the investigating agency to reach the conclusion, the prosecutor said.

Opposing the police custody, the counsel representing Kalra said that his bank details, mobile phone, laptop and gadgets are already available with police and that his custodial interrogation is not required.

Remand must be granted only in cases of real necessity. For what purpose do they need custody?

They need to know the trail? They can get any information they want from me.

Request for the police remand is absurd, the counsel added.

It was also requested that Kalra be allowed to receive treatment at Medanta for stiches in his fractured jaw.

The businessman had been on the run for over a week since the seizure of more than 500 oxygen concentrators from three upscale restaurants owned by him in the national capital.

The concentrators are a crucial medical equipment used for COVID-19 patients and are on high demand amid the second wave of the

pandemic.

On May 13, a court had rejected his anticipatory bail application, saying that allegations against him are serious and his custodial interrogation is required to unearth the entire conspiracy.

Pursuant to this, the accused moved the Delhi High Court, which also declined to grant interim protection from arrest in the case, agreeing with the reasons given by the trial court while denying him the relief.

During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from three restaurants owned by Kalra in Khan Market and Lodhi

Colony in Delhi. The case was subsequently transferred to the Delhi Police Crime Branch.

The police claimed that the concentrators were imported from China and were being sold at an exorbitant price of Rs 50,000 to 70,000 a piece as against its cost of Rs 16,000 to Rs 22,000.

On May 5, a case was registered against Kalra under Section 420 (cheating), 188 (disobedience to order promulgated by public servant), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code, Essential Commodities Act and Epidemic Diseases Act.

## HC dismisses plea to convert CNG cylinders for transporting oxygen

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to entertain a plea seeking conversion of CNG cylinder cascades for storage and transportation of oxygen, saying the issue falls in the policy-making domain of the government.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said conversion of CNG cylinder cascades for storing and transporting oxygen.

"We, therefore, see no reason to entertain the petition. The writ petition is dismissed," the court said. The order came on a plea by a company which claimed to be an expert in testing of CNG cylinders.

that in a similar matter before another bench, the central government had said that it was not technically possible to convert CNG cylinder cascades for storing and transporting oxygen.

The order came on a plea by a company which claimed to be an expert in testing of CNG cylinders.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. HARGURVARINDER  
SINGH  
Addl. District Judge-02  
Room No. 605, 6th Floor,  
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.  
PC No. 65/2019Smt. Pratiksha Gaur and  
Ors.Versus  
The State & Ors.  
CITATION UNDER INDIAN  
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian  
Succession Act, 1925, for

Grant of Probate/Letters of

Administration to the estate of Late Sh. Vishwanamita, s/o

Late Sh. Basant Ram, who

died on 08-09-2019 has been

made by Smt. Pratiksha Gaur,

w/o Shri Sanjeev Sharma, d/o

Late Shri Vishwa Mittar, r/o

House No. S-4, Plot No. 722,

Sector-5, Vaishali, Ghaziabad

U.P. 201010, in respect of the

property as per annexed will

dated 05-07-2018 bearing No.

House No. WZ-H2, First Floor,

Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059.

Whereas the 06-07-2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case. Notice is hereby given that any person having any interest in the Administration of the Estate of the said deceased may, if he/she desires to appear in this court on the said 06-07-2021 and see the proceedings before the Grant of Probate (or for Letter of Administration).

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this

19-04-2021.

Addl. District Judge-02  
Dwarka Courts,  
New Delhi.

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. HARGURVARINDER  
SINGHAddl. District Judge-02  
Room No. 605, 6th Floor,  
Dwarka Courts, New Delhi.

PC No. 13/2021

CNR No. DLWV10030632021

Chandan Singh  
Versus

Govt. of NCT of Delhi &amp; Ors.

CITATION UNDER INDIAN  
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925Whereas an application under Section 276 of the Indian  
Succession Act, 1925, for

Grant of Probate/Letters of

Administration to the estate of Late Sh. Braham Singh, s/o

Late Sh. Hanand, who died on

03-06-2020 petition has been

### IN MEMORIAM

KUTU DASGUPTA  
Birth: 18.05.1999  
Death: 20.05.1999Lots and lots of love  
on your birthday  
Ma & Baba

### TENDERS

COOCH Behar College - Ref.  
No. 164/41-21, Date:  
13.05.2021 - E-tender is invited  
for structural frame work  
with colour sheet roofing.  
For details visit:  
www.wbtender.gov.inSd/-  
Principal  
Cooch Behar College

## Why can't formula to determine MRP of O2 concentrators be fixed: HC asks Centre

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre why it can't fix a formula to determine the MRP of oxygen concentrators which are in demand for COVID-19 treatment as people were charged exorbitantly.

The high court said it was not asking the government to fix a price in rupee or paisa, but to fix a principle on which oxygen concentrators will be charged.

and it should understand if this is not an extraordinary circumstance where it should intervene, then what will be.

Assuming that there has to be a cap on the price of the product, it said, there has to be some limit to it. It cannot be limitless. Tomorrow some Chinese manufacturer will say it will sell it at 5X rate, it cannot be allowed.

As a government, it is your responsibility that people are actually able to afford the product and not have to pay through their nose. They can't be taken for a ride. Shortage of a product cannot be taken advantage of. Should you not think of the consumer, a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet said.

The bench asked why can't the government fix a formula to determine the price and said it cannot say that the demand is more and supply is less and

everything is in flux so it can't do anything. This is not an answer. You have to fix it, it said and suggested of fixing a formula like landed price of the product plus duty charge (GST) plus 15 per cent profit margin.

The bench said there cannot be only demand and supply criteria and there has to be government intervention and a ceiling on price and it cannot throw its hands in the air and say it cannot be fixed.

Central government Kirtiman Singh and Amit Mahajan said the landed price is ultimately determined by the exporter and said it was not possible for the government to fix the prices as there are different concentrators in the market with different prices, sizes and names.

The Centre's counsel sought some time to obtain further instructions on the issue and inform the court, which will now hear the matter on May 19.

The court was hearing a plea relating to fixation of price of oxygen concentrators by Delhi resident Manisha Chauhan who has also sought appointment of special public prosecutors for dealing with such cases before the special fast track courts.

Advocates Sanjeev Sagar and Nazia Parveen, appearing for Chauhan, had told the court that in the absence of a notification declaring medicines and

equipment meant for COVID as essential



*I do not know for what unknown reason they went to the governor and sought his sanction.*

WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER BIMAN BANERJEE

SAYING THIS SANCTION IS ABSOLUTELY ILLEGAL'

# Dhindsa, Brahmpura groups merge to form new Pb party

2 splinter SAD groups unite to launch Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukat) ahead of Punjab election

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 17 MAY

In a significant political development ahead of coming Assembly polls in Punjab, two splinter groups of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) — led by former Members of Parliament (MPs), Ranjit Singh Brahmpura and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa — today announced their merger and formation of a new political party, Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukat).

The dissolution of the SAD (Taksali), formed by Brahmpura, and the SAD (Democratic), launched by Dhindsa, and their merger led to the creation and launch of the new political outfit in Punjab ruled by Capt Amarinder Singh-led Congress dispensation.

The SAD (Democratic) and SAD (Taksali) — both breakaway parties of the Opposition SAD (Badal) — had announced on 19 April that they were dissolving both outfits to make way for a new party. But due to the second Covid-19 wave, the launch of the new party



got delayed.

The announcement of the making of the new political party was made in the presence of some senior leaders of both the parties.

"We have decided to launch new political party Shiromani Akali Dal Sanyukat (united)

today and the organizing structure of the party would be set up soon," said Dhindsa and Brahmpura in a joint statement after a meeting of the two veteran Punjab leaders in Chandigarh. Dhindsa will be the president of the new

political party while Brahmpura will be its patron.

Coming down heavily on SAD (Badal) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, they sought his clarification on the "acceptance of Amitabh Bachchan's Rs 12 crore donation by Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Man-

agement Committee (DSGMC)." The SAD (Badal) is said to "control" the DSGMC.

"We also demand Badal that Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and DSGMC should release a white paper on how much donations have been received from whom during the Covid-19 pandemic and farmers protest by the two Sikh bodies so that the people can learn about the donors. As it has been come to light that DSGMC has accepted nearly Rs 12 crore from film actor Amitabh Bachchan who was responsible for instigating mobs to attack the innocent Sikhs after the assassination of Indira Gandhi during which thousands of Sikhs were killed and got no justice so far," said Dhindsa and Brahmpura in their joint statement.

The Aam Aadmi Party is currently the principal Opposition party in the Punjab Assembly, although the Badal-led SAD is widely considered to be the main rival of the Amarinder-led Congress dispensation in the state.

## Punjab Cong MLA alleges threat call from CM's adviser for raising voice

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 16 MAY



gations, CM Amarinder's bete noire Partap Bajwa said Partap Singh was being threatened by advisors of CM for "doing his duty to the people and raising his voice", which was "extremely distressing".

"I stand with him & his democratic right to speak about issues affecting Punjab. This continuous attempt to browbeat INC MLAs for raising their voices must stop," Bajwa said in a tweet.

Pargat's attack on the CM's close aide appears to be a continuation of bitter attack on the CM by Sidhu, who resigned from the Cabinet in July 2019 following differences with Amarinder.

The recent decision of the Punjab and Haryana High Court to quash the findings of a probe into the 2015 Kotkapura firing case - when police allegedly opened fire on people protesting the sacrificial treatment of the Guru Granth Sahib - has provided more fuel to the fire.

Sidhu has accused Amarinder, who faces criticism from both the Opposition and from within his own party, of allegedly colluding with the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Badal family, which was in power at the time.

## HP's Covid positivity rate soars to 28.9 pc

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 17 MAY

Himachal Pradesh has registered a positivity rate of 28.9 per cent in the last week (10 May to 16 May) with Kangra district recording the highest positivity rate of 38 per cent in the state.

The positivity rate in the week from 3 to 9 May was 26.3 per cent.

HP National Health Mission, mission director Dr Nipun Jindal said a total of 1,61,072 persons had tested positive. Covid positive till date in the state out of which 1,24,434 persons had been cured of the disease with a recovery rate of 75.5 per cent.

During the month of February, 2021 there were around 200 active cases in the state but after the beginning of the 2nd wave, the number has increased to 36,909.

In the last week (10 to 16 May), 28,817 positive cases with a positivity rate of 28.9 per cent were recorded in

## Punjab gets 804 MT O2 through air route

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 17 MAY

The Punjab government on Monday said it has managed to get 804.26 metric tonnes (MT) Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) by operating 30 flights with assistance of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Disclosing this today, members of the State COVID Control Room (02) said the oxygen supply had started from 27 April through air route due to the long journey involved in engaging to take trucks to and from Bokaro and Hazira, from where the state of Punjab gets its LMO quota.

Officials said the Punjab government decision to air lift the oxygen tankers to Bokaro and Hazira plants from Chandigarh air base and to bring them back by road has turned the situation in the state's favour and the state was able to obtain adequate oxygen supplies.

The Control Room (02) with the oxygen tankers will be arranged to provide relief to all the infected patients.

Chief Executive Officer, Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority, Gurugram, Sudhir Rajpal said the number of COVID patients would be analysed through ICRCC.

Patients can contact the District Administration through WhatsApp Chatbot (9643277788), COVID helpline number-1950. They can even contact the Administration on the state government's web portal.

After launching the arrangements being made by the state government to combat the virus spread.

Meanwhile, Khattar on Monday inaugurated the Integrated Command and Response Control Center (ICRCC) at Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority's office at Sector-44. The said center has been

arranged to make necessary and required arrangements to control the COVID-19 pandemic as through this centre COVID-19 patients would be ensured care through various means.

An analysis would be made as to how many patients are there in an area that comes under Primary Health Centre and even further analysis would be done as in which house, how many COVID patients are there. Later all this information can be obtained from the cen-

ter's dashboard.

All agencies engaged in relief operations will be linked with this centre. By visiting the dashboard, the patient or his attendants will be able to get information about the availability of beds in hospitals and vaccination centres etc, he added.

Recently, the state government had announced plans to provide financial assistance to the people of the state and poor families battling COVID-19 and now this scheme has been integrated with the GMDA portal. To take advantage of the scheme, every hospital has to update the information about the beds, admissions and discharged patients available here daily on <https://gmdahrheal.in>, said Rajpal.

## Will go by Centre's directive on farmers' agitation: Khattar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 17 MAY

Two days after appealing to farmers agitating against the Centre's controversial farm laws to return to their homes in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday said his government would act as per the directions given by the Centre.

After meeting Union home minister Amit Shah at his residence in New Delhi, Khattar said he apprised the former about the ongoing farmers' agitation and said that the state government would act as per the directions given by the Centre.

During the meeting, the CM apprised Shah about the present COVID-19 situation in Haryana and the

arrangements being made by the state government to combat the virus spread.

Meanwhile, Khattar on Monday inaugurated the Integrated Command and Response Control Center (ICRCC) at Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority, Gurugram, Sudhir Rajpal said the number of COVID patients would be analysed through ICRCC.

Patients can contact the District Administration through WhatsApp Chatbot (9643277788), COVID helpline number-1950. They can even contact the Administration on the state government's web portal.

After launching the arrangements being made by the state government to combat the virus spread.

The list of hospitals which have withdrawn their petitions include Maharaja Agrasen Hospital Trust, Bhagat Chandra Hospital, Jaipur Golden Hospital, Shanti Mukund Hospital, Venkateshwar Hospi-

tal, Batra Hospital and Medical Research Centre, Ganesh Das Chawla Charitable Trust and Bram Health Care Pvt Ltd. The high court has been closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation, especially the acute crisis of medical oxygen supply, and passing urgent orders to be implemented by the Centre and the state government. The other issues being considered include RT-PCR testing, hospital beds of COVID-19 patients, food and medical assistance to migrant workers and vaccines.

The oxygen supply issue is now pending before the Supreme Court.

## HC lets hospitals withdraw pleas as O2 supplies stabilise in Delhi

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Delhi High Court Monday permitted various private hospitals, which had sought immediate relief of oxygen supply to treat critically ill COVID-19 patients, to withdraw their pleas as the supplies have now been stabilised.

The hospitals informed the court that now they are getting medical oxygen supplies and if they have any issues, they will give representation to the Delhi government.

The court said in case a representation is made by any hospital, it should be duly con-

sidered by the authorities, action be taken and reply be given within one week.

In view of the fact that the medical oxygen supply in Delhi has been stabilised, the petition is disposed of, a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said, while sim-

## TENDER

### HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT "CORRIGENDUM"

The item rates tenders for the works published in Giriraj weekly vide RO No.0290/2021-2022 invited on behalf of the Governor of H.P. vide this office letter No. PW/EDP/CB/TANIT/2021-22/115-25 dated 12.04.2021 are hereby postponed due to Administrative reason. Next dates shall be under:

Tender Schedule:  
1. Date/Time for receiving applications: 21.05.2021 up to 1.00 PM.  
2. Bid submission closing date/time: 24.05.2021 up to 10.30 AM.

3. Bid opening date/time: 24.05.2021 at 11.00 AM.  
All other terms and conditions of TOC shall remain unchanged.

ASHA workers should also

advise the patients regarding use of medicines and also about maintaining hygiene and they should motivate the patients to keep their morale high to ensure their speedy recovery, he stated.

Since about 90 per cent of the total Covid-19 patients in the state are in home isolation, the ASHA workers have a key role to play by acting as a bridge between the patients and health department.

"Delay in shifting Covid patients in home isolation to hospitals is one of the major causes of fatality in the state," he said while urging ASHA workers to regularly monitor their parameters and if their condition worsens, they should be immediately shifted to hospitals.

The chief minister stated that ASHA workers in the state played a pivotal role in making the "Active Case Finding Campaign" a major success during the first wave of

Covid-19. It was due to this campaign that the state government was able to identify people with co-morbidities and protect them from Coronavirus by taking preventive measures, the CM said, adding they must also educate the general masses regarding dos and don'ts in Covid pandemic. He further stated that adequate sanitizers, face masks and necessary medicines should also be provided to the patients in home isolation.

ASHA workers should also

### ODISHA GRAMYA BANK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT, HEAD OFFICE, GANDAMUNDA, PO: KHANDAGIRI, BHUBANESWAR-751030 (ODISHA)

Odisha Gramya Bank invites application for rate contract for supply of original passport printer cartridges. For details and application format please visit Bank's website: [www.odishabank.in](http://www.odishabank.in).

RFO Ref No. OG/R/FQ/ITD/HW/01/2021-22 Dated 18th May 2021. Last Date of Submission of application: 14th June 2021 on or before 14:00 hours through e-procurement process.

GENERAL MANAGER

### INDIAN RAILWAYS "PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railways lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the Northern Railway that the 2200 Volts 50 Hz AC overhead traction wires has been energized as anti theft measure on and after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the over head traction lines shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said over head lines.

Section Date

Energisation of 2.2 KV, Single phase AC newly electrified UP/DN Main line from Shamli location number 88/05 (Ch: 88/197.50) to Tapri location number 150/6 (Ch: 150/205.50) of Delhi Division as anti theft measure.

No. 14-Elect./Const./WK/DL/1339 Dated : 12.05.2021

INDIAN RAILWAY "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25KV AC electric traction over the section "Energisation of 2.2 KV, Single phase AC newly electrified UP/DN Main line from Shamli location number 88/05 (Ch: 88/197.50) to Tapri location number 150/6 (Ch: 150/205.50) of Delhi Division as anti theft measure". Height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.78 m and contact wire shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire.

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the load carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.

The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:-

- (i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line.
- (ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.
- (iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

No. 14-Elect./Const./WK/DL/1339 Dated : 12.05.2021

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/ Const.,

1047/21 Northern Railway, 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



After launching the arrangements being made by the state government to combat the virus spread.

The list of hospitals which have withdrawn their petitions include

Maharaja Agrasen Hospital Trust, Bhagat Chandra Hospital, Jaipur Golden Hospital, Shanti Mukund Hospital, Venkateshwar Hospital and Medical Research Centre, Ganesh Das Chawla Charitable Trust and Bram Health Care Pvt Ltd. The high court has been closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation, especially the acute crisis of medical oxygen supply, and passing urgent orders to be implemented by the Centre and the state government. The other issues being considered include RT-PCR testing, hospital beds of COVID-19 patients, food and medical assistance to migrant workers and vaccines.

The oxygen supply issue is now pending before the Supreme Court.

Office of EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (MECHANICAL DIVISION)  
H.P. PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, KULLU-175101  
PHONE/FAX: 01902-222052, E-mail:kul-hp@nic.in

### "CORRIGENDUM"

The e-procurement tender notice issued by this office letter No. PW/EDP/AB/T/2021-22 dated 30/04/2021, which was published online on 05.05.2020. Following changes are made in the Notice Inviting Tender due to social distancing to contain the spread of COVID-19 & imposition of curfew and lockdown



Immense gratitude to these heroes dedicated to serving others and showing the world what India truly stands for

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

LAUDING INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE HELPING OUT PEOPLE IN THIS CRISIS

India



Waterlogging at Bhendi Bazar due to heavy rain, strong winds triggered by cyclone Tauktae, in Mumbai on Monday. IANS

**J&K encounter:** Two unidentified militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Srinagar district in J&K on Monday, police said. PTI**Gujarat 'quake:** An earthquake of magnitude 4.5 hit Gujarat's Gir Somnath district in the early hours of Monday, officials said. No casualty or damage to property was reported. PTI**Satav's last rites:** The mortal remains of Congress MP Rajeev Satav, who died after recovering from Covid-19, were consigned to flames with state honours at Kalmunnai in Maharashtra's Hingoli district on Monday. PTI**Boat crew rescued:** All the nine crew members of the tug boat *Coromandel* that got stuck among rocks off the Mulky coast in Mangalore were rescued on Monday in a joint operation by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard. PTI**Man gets bail in rape case:** A Delhi court has granted interim bail to a man arrested for raping a 15-yr-old girl, saying there is no real apprehension that the accused may threaten or influence the victim as the minor girl is untraceable. PTI

## Doctors open up on mental agony

When you see your patients in unbearable pain one feels helpless against this raging virus

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

**P**rolonged duty shifts, watching patients die every day or family members pleading to save their lives, doctors on Covid duty in Delhi say they went through unimaginable mental agony during the worst phase of the second wave of the pandemic.

From government hospitals to private facilities, the calamitous second wave in Delhi not only strained healthcare infrastructure to its limits, but also affected the physical and psychological well-being of doctors and other healthcare workers.

Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Apollo Hospitals here, said the daily cases count dropping in the last few days has come as bresher as it was an "absolute nightmare" in the Covid wards before.

"We are trained as doctors to handle pain and deaths in front of us, but the sheer number of fatalities everyday, when you see your patients in unbearable pain or their relatives pleading to save their lives or when they are struggling on ventilators, one feels helpless against this raging virus," he told reporters.

Chatterjee, himself a Covid survivor, said the last 20-25 days of his job has "changed his life".

"We are hardened professionals but we are also humans at the end of the day, and to see our colleagues and family friends suffering in pain and then die with such a severity and frequency, it became unbearable," he recalled.

The senior doctor at the Apollo in Sarita Vihar said his daughter was infected this year despite testing positive last year, his in-laws too were hit by the pandemic.

"With such heavy duty stretching to about 15 hours, in wards and over phones, and lately the SOS calls would

Cow urine extract protects from lung, coronavirus issues: Pragya

Bhopal, 17 MAY

Bhopal BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur has said cow urine extract of desi cow offers protection against lung infections and coronavirus.

"I'm in a lot of trouble ((health issues) but take the *gaumutra* ark every day. After this, I am not supposed to take any other medicine for coronavirus. I am not affected by coronavirus infection. I believe God will keep me protected as I'm using this medicine," the Bhopal MP said at a function in Bairagarh, Bhopal, to dedicate oxygen concentrators on Sunday evening. She said cow urine is like a "life-saving" medicine.

In April, a MP Congress leader had announced a reward of Rs 10,000 for anybody who spots Thakur in public alleging she was "missing" from the scene when the people need her help as an MP.

just not end day and night, and also reading about beds and oxygen crisis, as a doctor, we were stretched both physically and mentally and these last couple of weeks have been very agonising," he said.

A large number of doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers and frontline staff in Delhi have lost their lives since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Delhi has been reeling under a brutal second wave that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals, adding to the woes.

She alleged the hospital staff might have attempted to sex-



VHP national general secretary Milind Parande and others inaugurate the cremation frame and eco-friendly cow dung logs at Panchkuhan Crematorium, organised by Indraprastha Vishwa Hindu Parishad, in the Capital on Monday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

## Hospitals turn into centres of horror for Covid victim, attendant

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
PATNA, 17 MAY

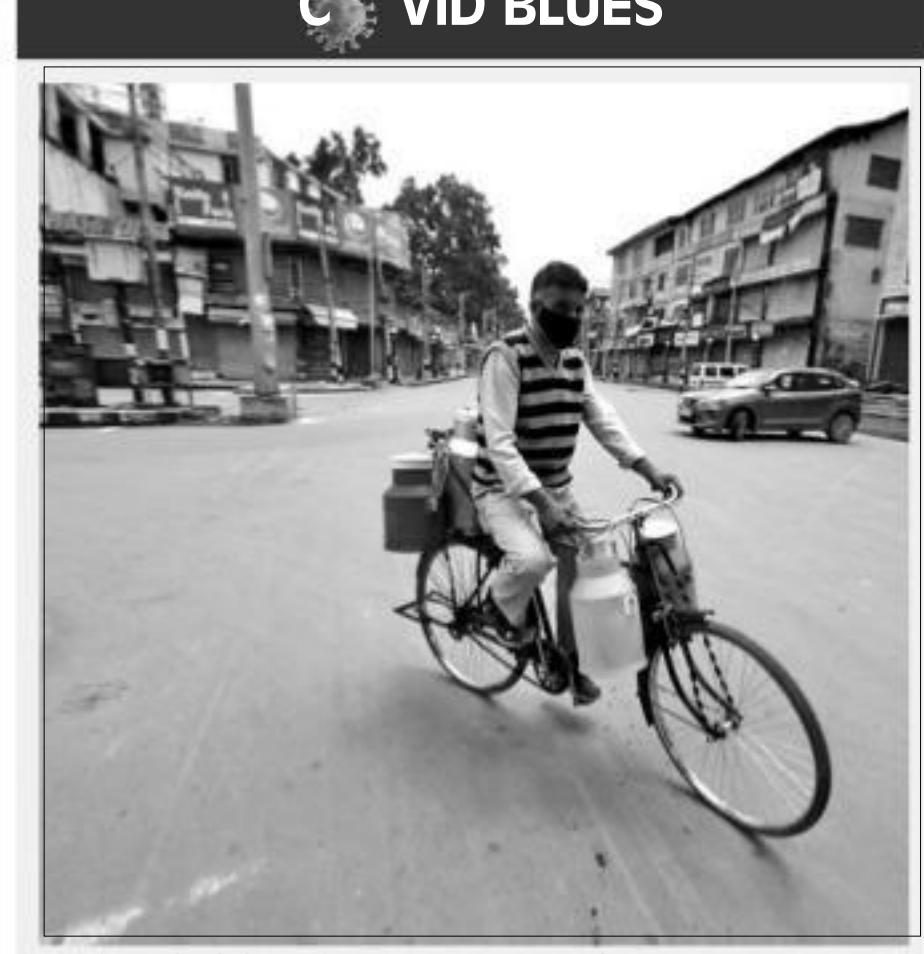
Even as the molestation allegations of a Covid victim's wife are still under investigation, another attendant of a Covid patient has alleged rape bid by the hospital staff in the ICU, sending shock waves. The private hospital in question is located along the Bailey Road in Patna.

According to a report, a 45-year-old woman had been admitted to the hospital some fortnight back after her condition deteriorated due to Covid infection. Her daughter was shocked to find her mother's hands and feet tied with ropes on the hospital bed in the ICU when she visited the hospital to see her today. She also made some videos of the incident.

The police have begun investigating into the matter. "We have not received any written complaint in this regard but we have already begun investigation. We are scanning the CCTV footages to go to bottom of the story," Shashtrinagar police station in-charge Ramashankar Singh

told newsmen today. Last week, a woman Ruchi Raushan had alleged how she was molested by doctors and medical assistants at two hospitals in Bhagalpur and Patna where she admitted her husband after coming in the grip of coronavirus. In a video which has gone viral in social media, the woman alleged how the hospital staff and doctors touched her with other intent, put their hands around her waist and also made dirty gestures but she didn't react since her husband was admitted there. Her husband finally died at a hospital in Patna after battling Covid for a fortnight.

Taking the matter seriously, the Patna police have begun a probe. As per the report, the police have found the charges leveled against a private hospital in Patna true during the course of investigation.



During a lockdown in Srinagar on Monday. IANS

**Another AMU prof. dies of Covid-19:** Another senior professor of AMU, Mohammad Nasiruddin (55), succumbed to coronavirus at the university's Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, according to officials, pushing the number of serving and retired faculty members who have died due to Covid or Covid-like symptoms to at least 39. Alarmed by the deaths, the medical college had sent some samples for genome sequencing to the Institute of Genomics and Integrated Biology Laboratory, Delhi. However, no new strain of coronavirus was found in the samples. PTI

**WHO donates 100 O2 concentrators to Raj govt:** The Jaipur unit of the World Health Organisation donated 100 oxygen concentrators to the Rajasthan government in Jaipur on Monday. State health minister Raghu Sharma said every possible effort is being made to overcome the lack of oxygen in the state. PTI

**Govt move to rehab children who lost parents to COVID:** The government has laid out a procedure for rehabilitation of children who lost their parents to Covid-19. The public notice by the Women and Child Development Ministry comes amid reports that several messages offering children, who have lost their parents to Covid, for adoption are circulating on social media. The ministry said effort will be made to sustain the children in their family and community environment as far as possible, while ensuring their safety in their surroundings and safeguarding their interest, as prescribed under the Juvenile Justice Act. PTI

**Over 90 people got black fungus in Karnataka:** As many as 97 people in the state contracted mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, as post-Covid complications in Karnataka, state health minister Dr K Sudhakar said on Monday. He, however, appealed to the people not to panic as it does not spread like Covid. PTI

## Guj braces up as cyclone Tauktae advances

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
AHMEDABAD, 17 MAY

As cyclone Tauktae is advancing Gujarat, the state government has evacuated nearly 1.50 lakh people from the coastal villages which are likely to bear the brunt most.

Tauktae, which has developed into a severe cyclonic storm hovering about 350 km south of Gujarat by Monday, is expected to hit the coastline by Tuesday morning.

People from as many as 655 low-lying areas and coastal villages have been evacuated to safer places, additional chief secretary (Home) Pankaj Kumar told journalists on Monday.

Apart from the state government's efforts to minimise the losses due to the cyclone, the Army has also sent an Engineer Task Force to Saurashtra region for assistance of the local administration in relief work.

Fully equipped teams have also left Jamnagar Military Station for Porbandar and Diu, the region where Tauktae is likely to hit with the most intensity, said Defence PRO (Gu) Wing Commander Manish.

A total 41 teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and ten teams of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed in the vulnerable areas.

A few thousand Covid-19 patients are now receiving treatments in many hospitals across the state, more than 1,300 power back units have been set up to maintain electricity supplies to the Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

Sufficient stock of medical



NDRF personnel carry out restoration works after cyclone Tauktae, in Goa, on Monday. IANS

oxygen and Remdisivir injection have been ensured so that treatments of the Covid patients are not affected in the wake of the cyclone.

Many patients have already been shifted to safer places from hospitals in unsafe areas.

More than 2,000 hoardings have been pulled down as precautionary measure.

Chief minister Vijay Rupani has discussed various relief measures with district administrators through video conferences.

**Konkan farmers hit:** Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik on Monday said farmers in the state's Konkan region had suffered losses due to rains brought about by Tauktae and work on inspecting and assessing the damage had begun, adds PTI.

In a statement, the state's minority affairs minister said 193 Covid patients admitted in a makeshift centre in Mum-

bai's Bandra-Kurla Complex have been shifted to other BMC-run hospitals due to the heavy rains that have lashed the metropolis

**Floating crafts shifter:** Essar Ports on Monday said it has moved all its floating crafts to inner anchorage and has lashed all the equipment at jetty and shore for cyclonic conditions as part of its preparedness as the cyclonic storm intensifies.

Besides, operations and movement of manpower has been suspended, and will only resume once the conditions improve, to ensure the safety of the workplace, Essar Ports said in a statement.

**12 fishermen rescued:** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on Monday said it rescued 12 fishermen stranded around 35 nautical miles off the Kochi coast amid rough seas due to the incoming cyclone on the night of 16 May.

**12 fisherman rescued:** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on Monday said it rescued 12 fishermen stranded around 35 nautical miles off the Kochi coast amid rough seas due to the incoming cyclone on the night of 16 May.

**Khurshid also said that the Congress manifesto for Assembly elections in Uttar**

**Pradesh, due next year, would be a manifesto "from amongst"**

**"That's true. One analyst said the extent of tactical voting that happened in Bengal and those who claimed that the partnership with AIUDF cost the party dearly in Assam.**

"Whenever you don't succeed, this is the kind of explanation that you are given; when you succeed, you are given a different explanation," he said.

Khurshid was asked about his take on assessment by some of his party leaders who

## Rajnath reviews armed forces' preparedness

NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Defence minister Rajnath Singh today held a meeting to review the preparedness and assistance being provided by the armed forces to the civil authorities to deal with the emerging situation arising out of Tauktae.

Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat, Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar, Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhadauria and Chief of Army Staff, Gen M M Naravane were among those who attended the virtual meeting.

Eleven Indian Navy diving teams have been kept on standby. Twelve flood rescue and medical teams have been earmarked for immediate response and deployment. Repair and rescue teams have been formed to undertake urgent infrastructural repairs post cyclone.

Talwar, Tarkashand Tabar are on standby with aid and relief material. Balance ships on the Western seaboard are on standby to assist fishing boats/small boats stranded due to rough weather.

Navy's maritime reconnaissance aircraft on surveillance are broadcasting cyclone warnings to fishermen.

Singh was briefed that the IAF has deployed its aircraft to transport personnel and tonnes of NDRF load to Ahmedabad.

## SITTING BACK



Rickshaw stands idle during lockdown in the Capital on Monday. SUBRATA DUTTA

to rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The scheme has provided relief to thousands of workers who returned to their villages, after losing jobs in industrial clusters due to lockdowns imposed in the wake of the pandemic.

As on 13 May, 2021, 2.95 crore persons have been offered work in financial year 2021-22, completing 5.98 lakh assets and generating 34.56 crore person-days.

The scheme aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

The accomplishment was made despite casualties either through death or infection among the operating staff at all levels, including

Dialogue only way to resolve Centre-farmers standoff: BJP leader Birender

CHANDIGARH, 17 MAY

Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Birender Singh on Monday asserted that dialogue between the government and farmers protesting against the new farm laws is the only way forward to resolve the issue.

He condemned the violent clashes in Hissar on Sunday wherein the protesting farmers had tried to march towards the venue where Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar had gone to inaugurate a Covid hospital.

There is a need to go to the root of the matter to prevent reoccurrence of unfortunate happening which took place in Hissar. Should the government not take a step ahead and talk to farmers? There should be no further delay in finding a solution, he tweeted.

Scores of farmers have been protesting for nearly six months at various border points near Delhi, demanding rollback of the new farm laws. They have claimed that these legislations will remove the safety net of the minimum support price (MSP) and leave them at the mercy of big corporates.

The farmers in Haryana have also been opposing public functions of BJP-JJP leaders in the state.

From day one of the peasants movement, I am for dialogue. If you start dialogue, there would be positive results from both sides, he said. PTI

## Rural schemes: 1.85 cr persons offered work per day in May under MGNREGA

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) offered work to 1.85 crore persons per day during May this year, so far, compared to 1.22 crore persons per day during May, 2019.

The achievement was made despite a raging Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), which runs the scheme, said today.

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As on 13 May, 2021, 2.95 crore persons have been offered work in financial year 2021-22, completing 5.98 lakh assets and generating 34.56 crore person-days.

Under this initiative, 13,958 state, district and block level nodal persons were trained as master trainers in 34 state RLMs; 1,14,500 Community Resource Persons (CRPs) were trained by master trainers and 2.5 crore women Self Help Group members were trained by CRPs.

## WB: Cabinet approves Vidhan Parishad, senior TMC leaders may find seats

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, 17 MAY

West Bengal Cabinet today approved formation of Vidhan Parishad or the Upper House of the state Assembly, which was announced by chief minister Mamata Banerjee when she had declared the Trinamool Congress' candidate list in March.

Following the Cabinet nod, the proposal would now require the approval of Governor Jagdeep

Dhankhar, after which Rules would be framed. In the backdrop of some of her sitting MLAs including P



## THUMBNAILS



A health worker administers a dose of Covid-19 vaccine to a woman at a drive-through vaccination camp, at a mall in Noida, on Monday. IANS

**Leopard attack:** A 45-year-old woman was mauled to death by a leopard at a forest in MP's Seoni district. The feline grabbed the woman by her neck and dragged her for about half-a-kilometre. PTI

**Man set ablaze, dies:** A 43-year-old man died after he was set ablaze by unidentified assailants in UP's Dุมri village. Reason for the crime was not known. PTI

**Triple lockdown:** Boundaries of four major districts in Kerala were sealed as a seven-day triple lockdown announced by state government came into force from midnight. PTI

## Covid, govt apathy hit PSU bank staff hard

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, 17 MAY

The public sector banks are facing a major crisis with the pandemic and work schedules hitting the over-tent lakh employees hard. The panic-stricken staff of these banks is dreading to attend work despite its commitment, considering the rising number of cases and the accompanying deaths.

In fact, according to the Indian Banks Association, last year the sector lost over 600 employees to the pandemic. The number this year it is learnt, could be more alarming if the figures available for Canara Bank alone are any indication. In the last 40 days, the bank lost over 100 of its staffers. It would be unnerving to imagine the cumulative figures for all the psu banks.

If this was not enough, the lockdown declared by many states has made matters worse. Especially as regional offices of some banks have directed their staff to attend to their branches if they are negative. Never mind the fact that they may have a Covid-19 case at home!

As Mamata, a senior employee in one of the bank branches in the IT capital, for example, told The Statesman, "my colleague has been asked to come for work in her branch just because she has not affected by Covid, even though there is a patient at her house." The bank employee has no option but to attend to work even though she could be a carrier!

In a related case, another bank's employee was forced to report for duty even though her mother-in-law was unwell. She went to work while waiting for the relative's test report which subsequently showed her to be "positive." Was it not natural for the remaining staff

## Sedition case: SC orders Raju's medical checkup

Top court said medical exam be videographed & report be sent in sealed cover

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 18 MAY

**T**he Supreme Court on Monday directed rebel YSR Congress MP K Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, arrested in sedition case, be taken to Army hospital at Secunderabad in Telangana for medical examination.

In a relief to the MP who had been quizzed by state police for several hours in the case, a vacation bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B R Gavai directed that he be kept at the Army hospital at Secunderabad till further orders.

It also directed that his medical examination be conducted in the presence of a judicial officer, to be appointed by Telangana High Court chief justice.

The top court said that the medical examination of Raju be videographed and report be sent in sealed cover to the top court.

The apex court said he shall be granted Y-category security as directed by the Delhi High Court earlier.

Raju had moved the Delhi High Court last year for his security on the ground that he was facing threats for being critical to the state government.

The bench directed the registry that the order be sent through email to the chief secretary of Andhra Pradesh, the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana besides asking the top bureaucracy of the state (AP) to ensure compliance of the order.

During the hearing, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the YSR Congress MP, said that he was seeking two things—ad interim bail and his medical examination by a neutral hospital.

Rohatgi said it is a matter

of some extraordinary proportion as the sitting MP is critical of the party leadership and the state government for some time.

The MP is critical of the chief minister, he said, adding that last year he had to move the Delhi High Court for security as there was threat to his life.

At the outset, senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for the state, requested the top court that the matter be kept for hearing on Friday so that he can file a short reply.

Rohatgi argued there are no allegations that the MP had incited any rebellion.

The MP is critical of the state government's handling of COVID. Along with him, FIR also names two TV media channels, he argued, adding that section of sedition has been added in the FIR so that the accused can't get bail.

Rohatgi claimed that the MP was beaten and tortured by the police and when he was produced before the trial court, the magistrate had found some injuries on his feet and ordered that he be examined in hospital.

Today, he should be examined by a private or a neutral hospital or at Army hospital,

he said.

Dave said he has no problem if the MP is examined by a medical board.

Let him be examined at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Mangalagiri, Dave said, adding, It may not be appropriate to use Army hospital. AIIMS is there.

However, the bench observed, Army hospital is not under either the state or the Central government. Army hospital will be a neutral hospital.

Dave, while requesting the bench to keep the matter for hearing on Friday, said the authorities would take the MP to the AIIMS and if the apex court feels, he could be examined in the presence of a judicial officer.

The bench during the hearing sought presence of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for assistance in the matter.

Mehta told the bench that he has no objection, if Raju is medically examined at AIIMS, New Delhi or any other government hospital and said that it will not be appropriate if Army hospital is roped in as it is a political matter. On 15 May, the CID also named two media houses and "others" as accused in the case.

## Pinarayi's Cabinet to have 21 ministers

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 17 MAY

The CPI-M-led Left Democratic Front (LDF), which has returned to power with a thumping majority, will form a 21-member Cabinet in Kerala. The new ministry will be sworn in on Thursday.

Speaking to media persons here, after the LDF meet held here on Monday, LDF convener A Vijayaraghavan said the swearing-in ceremony headed by Pinarayi Vijayan would be held on Thursday and Cabinet will comprise 21 ministers.

Vijayan will decide on the distribution of portfolios of ministers. Due to Covid-19 protocols, invitees to the ceremony will be capped, he added. The LDF meet has decided to allot 12 ministerial berths to CPI-M, while four have been given to CPI. One ministerial berth each would be allotted to Kerala Congress (M), Janata Dal (S) and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Four of the single-MLA parties have been asked to share two Cabinet berths equally.

Antony Raju of Democratic Kerala Congress and Ahammed Devarkovil of Indian National League will be inducted into the Cabinet for the first 30 months. K B Ganesh Kumar of Kerala Congress (B) and Ramachandran Kadannappally of Congress (S) will replace them for the next 30 months.

## TN boycotts HRD minister's virtual meet on NEP 2020

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHENNAI, 17 MAY

Despite our request to hold discussions at the minister-level, the Centre has chosen to go ahead with its plan to hold discussions only with the officials. Protesting this, we have boycotted this meeting.

ANBIL MAHESH  
STATE EDUCATION MINISTER

principles," minister said.

Objecting to the "taut" implementation of Hindi and Sanskrit through the three-language formula, the minister said centralisation of education is unacceptable as it was not in practice even in the developed nations.

"Delhi can't decide what the people of Tamil Nadu, especially our rural students should learn. Tamil Nadu's two language policy has been in practice since the times of Anna," he added. The minister said there are many issues in the NEP 2020. The Centre did not consider the views expressed by the party.

Regarding the current meeting state education minister Anbil Mahesh said, "Despite our request to hold discussions at the minister-level, the Centre has chosen to go ahead with its plan to hold discussions only with the officials. Protesting this, we have boycotted this meeting. We don't have any intention to confront the Centre but our protest is based on our Tuesday.

## AP govt sets aside ₹10L for orphans

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, 17 MAY

As hundreds of children are being left vulnerable everyday due to Covid-19 claiming their parents Andhra Pradesh has decided to set aside Rs 10 lakh in fixed deposits for orphans till they turn 25 years.

AP chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy directed his officials to draw up a financial package for the children and come up with an interest amount that can be provided to the guardian each month to take care of the orphaned children. The state government has already set up 32 child care centres for children whose parents have either contracted the virus, required hospitalisation or have succumbed to it. It was the first state to set up child care centres.

Meanwhile, the state government has decided to extend its partial curfew between 12 noon and 6am till May end as the virus continues to rage. Reddy asked officials to focus on the rural areas where cases are increasing everyday. It was also decided that the treatment for Mucormycosis

Besides, it wanted that bank timings during this period to be limited between 10 AM and 2 PM. At present the function from 10 am to 4 pm.

In fact, Jagadeesh, criticised the central government, adding that as the owner of psu banks, it ought to have taken the initiative in getting the banking staff vaccinated. On priority.

Besides, of course, ensuring hospital or ICU facilities along with oxygen for the needy staff and their families.

Similarly, the importance of covering the bank staff with a group term insurance of Rs 50 lakh during the Covid period was underlined. The argument being that since the government wants the banks to function even during the lockdown period, it should become its responsibility to protect the banking staff.

In fact, the 229th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs on Management of COVID-19 pandemic and related issues, had welcomed the banking sector's contribution in providing uninterrupted service. Significantly, according to the AINBOF the committee had also

noted that the banking staff had been protesting against the camp for three days. The villagers alleged that they have been facing threats of lodging cases of being Maoist accomplice since the setting up of joint camp.

The administration, however, persuaded the villagers to go back to their homes yesterday.

A large number of people arrived from Udharpur village this afternoon.

Maoists managed to reach the camp and attacked the camp under the guise of these villagers, IG Police claimed.

Three bodies were recovered during the search operation after forces retaliated the attack, he said.

After stopping the firing, search was done in the area, in which three bodies were found.

## CBI blitz: TMC uproar over 'illegal' arrests

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA/HOOGHLY, 17 MAY

across the state, transforming the usual scenes of desolate streets.

Hakim, state transport minister, before boarding his car, confirmed to the newspeople "CBI has arrested me. We will fight in the court."

Another senior Cabinet minister Subrata Mukherjee, TMC MLA Madan Mitra and turncoat Sovan Chatterjee were arrested.

When CBI teams reached their Nizam Palace headquarters, incensed TMC workers and supporters blocked the road outside the premises, throwing down steel barricades that separated the central forces from agitated mob.

Tension escalated when Miss Banerjee entered Nizam Palace and after short conversation with senior officials demanded them to arrest her too.

Inevitably and eventually,

## Appeal for Identification



General public is hereby informed that one person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 30-32 Years, Height: 5'5", Sex: Male, Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Thin, Face: Round, Wearing: Blue T-Shirt & Black Pant, Place of Recovery: Found dead near Public Toilet, Hardyal Library, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

In this regard DD No. 08A, U/s-174 CrPC, Dated 11.05.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Kotwali, Delhi. Any clue come to notice please inform undersigned.

SHO

P.S. Kotwali, Delhi  
Ph.:011-23977100, 23953442 &  
8750870121

## DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI

4<sup>th</sup> FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001  
O.A. No.47/2020  
Central Bank of India ..... Applicant

Mr. Arvind Chanden & Ors. ..... Defendants

To,  
1. Mr. Arvind Chanden, S/o. Shri Mahesh Parshad (Defendant No.01)

R/o. Flat No.254, DDA, LIG, Jai Ambe Apartments, Mayur Vihar, Phase-III, New Delhi-110096.

Also at: Senior Professor, Applect Learning System Pvt. Ltd., A-222, Industrial Area Okhla, Phase-I, New Delhi-110020.

Also at: H. No.84/B, Kashi Nagar, Lakhimpur Kheri, U.P.-202701.

2. M/s. Shubhkarma Buildtech Pvt. Ltd. (Defendant No.02)

Through its IRP AAA Insolvency, Professional LLP, E-10A, Kailash Colony, New Delhi-110048.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 60,67,633/- (Rupees Sixty Lakhs Sixty Seven Thousand Six Hundred and Thirty Three Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Ld. Registrar on 09.06.2021 at 10:30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit DRT website: www.tribunalindia.gov.in Phone Number 011-23748473).

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application / Software.

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar / Recovery Officer / Land Recovery Officer -II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates / Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 23748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 12<sup>th</sup> March of 2021. Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry, Mr. Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi. Phone No.: 011-23748473, E-mail : drt1@delhi-dsfsncl.in.

By Order of this Tribunal,  
For Registrar

## Maoist attack on CRPF camp, three villagers killed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RAIPUR, 17 MAY

At least three villagers were killed in cross-firing during a Maoist attack on a joint security camp established to accommodate Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Special Task Force (STF) and District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawans near Silger in Sukma district of restive southern Chhattisgarh today.

Bastar IG Sundar Raj P confirmed the Maoist attack and deaths of three villagers. These villagers were reportedly protesting the setting up of joint security camp for less few days.

Security forces retaliated when a group of Maoists opened fire at the Silger CRPF camp on Monday killing three villagers in cross firing. Bastar IG however, said that it

could not be ascertained that deceased people were villagers or ultras.

The incident triggered a wave of protest and a large number of villagers gathered near the Silger joint camp. Residents of 15 nearby villages have been protesting against the camp for three days. The villagers alleged that they have been facing threats of lodging cases of being Maoist accomplice since the setting up of joint camp.

The administration, however, persuaded the villagers to go back to their homes yesterday.

A large number of people arrived from Udharp

## The Mideast Battle

With remarkable promptitude, a scarce commodity in the case of Libya and Syria, the UN Security Council convened a meeting on the Israel-Palestinian conflict on Sunday. However, it made no progress towards resolving the war ~ the worst in recent memory ~ and Israeli warplanes renewed the attack on Gaza as the conflict moved into its second week. Indeed, the Council held its first meeting on the crisis, but took no action. The outlook is grim if the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu's statement is any indication ~ "There is no clear end in sight." The nub of the matter must be that the conflict has exploded after years of quiet. Tel Aviv has been targeted with over 160 rockets. It is a measure of the chronically explosive nature of the region that hours after Mr Netanyahu spoke, Israeli warplanes began another round of attacks on the Gaza Strip. The offensive was heavier, and lasted longer, than the air raids from the day before. The politically beleaguered Prime Minister of Israel has shown no signs of a retreat. He has on the contrary defended his country's bombing and shelling of Gaza, which according to Palestinian authorities has killed at least 197 people, including 58 children. At least 10 people in Israel have died because of rocket attacks launched from Gaza, the territory controlled by the militant group Hamas. Representatives of the United States, Qatar, Egypt and others have tried to broker a cease-fire, thus far to no avail. Neither side is in the mood to relent and palpable is the wartime intransigence. "If there will be one it will be reached with our conditions, not Israeli conditions," Moussa Abu Marzouk, deputy leader of Hamas, told the Israeli public broadcaster, Kan, on Sunday. "If Israel does not want to stop, we will not stop." An intricate task, therefore, devolves on the Security Council, known for having dithered in other storm-centres of the world.

Saturday's attack on the offices of the Associated Press and Al Jazeera has exacerbated the situation. Israeli forces had warned in advance of the attack, and there were no casualties reported. Officials in Tel Aviv claimed that the building harboured military assets for Hamas. On Sunday, Mr Netanyahu provided no clear evidence to support that claim; neither did he confirm whether he presented any evidence of this assertion during a conversation with President Biden.

It was shocking to hear from him that "it's a perfectly legitimate target. Israeli forces unlike Hamas, take special precautions to tell people 'Leave the building, leave the premises.'" That, to say the least, is feeble excuse for a horrifying blitz. Both sides appear to be violating international law. Hamas has fired nearly 3,000 rockets towards Israeli cities and towns, a clear war crime. And Israel has subjected Gaza to such an intense bombardment, killing families and flattening buildings, that it probably constitutes a disproportionate use of force ~ also a crime. No legal adjudication is possible in the heat of battle.

## Death of elephants

The death of as many as 18 elephants in Assam is one of the worst wildlife tragedies in recent memory. Conservationists can scarcely recall a similar accident anywhere else in the world. The elephants were neither killed by the pandemic nor even by a speeding train, as often happens in North Bengal. They perished in the jungle area when struck by lightning in Nagaon district. Though initially there was some confusion over the circumstances leading to the deaths, veterinarians and conservationists are reasonably sure that they died when hit by a "bolt of lightning" last Wednesday. This region in Assam is reportedly prone to lightning.

This has also been confirmed by the chairman of the Assam Elephant Foundation. And yet other possible factors, not the least poisoning for the invaluable tusk, are also being considered. "It is also the first time that so many elephants have died due to a bolt of lightning in a single incident anywhere in the world," was the response of the renowned veterinarian, Markus Hofmeyer of South Africa. His conclusion was based on visuals and reports from the spot. "Elephants have been killed by lightning in Pattaya (Thailand), Sri Lanka, West Bengal and Kerala, but the toll has been five or below." A not dissimilar opinion has been expressed by a senior forest official in Assam.

The wildlife tragedy has riveted attention to the state's dwindling forest cover. Sparse vegetation largely explains why the elephants bore the brunt of the lightning strike. Indeed, lightning is a natural phenomenon, one that cannot be stopped. But the forest department can arguably minimise the fatalities by urgently conducting an intensive afforestation drive in the area and other animal corridors as well. Visuals do suggest that the place where the pachyderms were found dead ~ on a hillock ~ has very sparse vegetation or forest cover. Of course, improvement of habitat is imperative, but Assam's forest department must of necessity examine all the reports, including the cause of death, and then decide on the course of action. One major reason why the man-animal conflict is on the rise in Assam is that since 2009, the north-east has lost 3199 sq km of forest cover.

The fact that there is no such cover in the vicinity of the tragedy must be probed if future tragedies are to be averted. The affected herd of 40 elephants, of which 18 were killed, had rarely disturbed the local population. While the post mortem reports will not be available for another 15 days, an incisive investigation can alone establish the exact reason behind the deaths, notably a probe into the quality of water and salt-lick. Nature's precious asset has been lost. And the loss is of the ever so fascinating animal kingdom.

# Mamata's return

The moot question today is about how this massive mandate can be converted into socio-economic gains for the long-neglected state. Away from all political rhetoric, what the state needs is strategic moves to ensure good administration and financial management. Governance is about addressing problems and finding solutions. Politics is, in the end, the art of achieving the impossible



Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The history of the world is full of men and women who rose to leadership by sheer force of self-confidence, bravery and tenacity." Mamata Banerjee has undoubtedly been one of them in recent history. Mamata's remarkable and sweeping victory over the formidable BJP reminds one of the CPI(M)'s mauling at the hands of her Trinamool Congress on that historic Friday of 13 May 2011. It is as if history has repeated itself.

For a democracy as diverse as India, polls essentially serve as a litmus test to determine the nature of the intricate social fabric that holds our country together. Elections elucidate the most authentic voice of the people. Ideological sway, media trends or even public image often fail to adequately capture the fate of Indian politics, despite the insidious forces that temper with the process of election and democracy. It is the common public who wield the ultimate authority. In this context West Bengal has especially forged a unique character with regards to its response to politics. Recent developments in West Bengal may be inferred as a microcosmic preview of the overall nature of Indian politics. Call it versatile or volatile, the politics of West Bengal is defined by the changing tides and changing times.

Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) has scored a hat-trick with her "Khela-Hobe" (the game is on) campaign. Anti-incumbency took a beating in West Bengal. It proved to be Khela Khatam (the game is over) for Narendra Modi's BJP. Regional parties have successfully stopped the BJP from getting close to its "one-nation, one-party" ambition". Bengali sub-nationalism, vocal for local, Mamata's personal pop-

ularity, minority consolidation and the State Government's welfare schemes can be credited for TMC's sweeping victory.

This time around Trinamool Congress has trounced and decimated both the CPI(M) and the Congress. Mamata's victory is also hailed as an inclusive vote against communalism. Regional satraps in India are proving to be the real opposition to the BJP, with diminishing foothold of national parties, including the Congress.

The BJP fancied its chance in 2021 after winning 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha Seats in the 2019 General Elections, which helped the party cross the magic 40 per cent vote share mark, just 3 per cent lower than the Trinamool. The BJP secured roughly 62 per cent support from the Hindu community in a State where minorities account for 27 per cent of the population. BJP needed to increase its vote share by 4 per cent from 2019 to win this election, but it lost about 3 per cent vote, while TMC gained 4 per cent giving it a record mandate.

The going for BJP in the post-election era will not be easy if it is to remain in contention for the 2026 Assembly Elections. In an introspective article, the RSS mouthpiece "Organizer" magazine reviewing the Bengal election results has cited the induction of Trinamool turncoats, the Centre's mismanagement of the Covid-19 crisis and the network of beneficiaries that the Mamata Banerjee Government created through Welfare Schemes as the main reasons for the BJP's defeat.

Now it is up to Mamata Banerjee to bring about a real Poriborton. Mamata is the biggest brand that the state currently has. Her biggest asset is her indomitable spirit and upright-

ness. She is not shy of taking innovative, imaginative and ingenious steps. In this context, I will quote from the preface of my book "West Bengal: Changing Colours, Changing Challenges" published in 2014: "The Complexities of the socio-economic and political environment prevailing in this State, that is so full of potential, that is vibrant at all times but one that set its own rhythm, often refusing to march to the beat of the global drum. The Goddess Saraswati continues to hold sway over the masses far more than her sibling Lakshmi does. Political or Social debate continue to be better informed and sharper than the dialogue around industrial development, even though West Bengal, more than most other states needs employment, needs development. Yet there are those who believe in development under a different paradigm to the one that holds sway in this day and age of globalization. Bengal despite its tremendous potential has turned from a leader into a laggard."

The best analysis of West Bengal's failure to exploit its potential came from Ronen Sen, the former Indian Ambassador to the USA. He said, "One of my regrets has been that over the decades I tried but I failed to get people to focus more on Bengal mainly due to lack of infrastructure, human potential, consistent land policy and presence of domestic players. If you do not have domestic industry coming in here, you are not going to have foreign players coming in here."

The moot question today is about how this massive mandate can be converted into socio-economic gains for the long-neglected state. Away from all political rhetoric, what the state needs is strategic moves to ensure good administration and financial management. Governance is about addressing problems and finding solutions. Politics is, in the end, the art of achieving the impossible.

Now it is up to Mamata Banerjee to bring about a real Poriborton. Mamata is the biggest brand that the state currently has. Her biggest asset is her indomitable spirit and upright-

turbing commentary on the minister himself. It is high time those leading the fight against Covid in Goa, and in the country, focused not on themselves, but on the challenge before them.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das,  
Kolkata, 15 May.

### CROSSING A LINE

SIR, The West Bengal Governor was in no mood to abstain from the path of confrontation with the Bengal Government. Otherwise, he would not have visited the areas hit by post-poll violence at a time when the Covid situation is alarming. He could have discussed the matter with the Chief Minister, particularly when he knows the responsibility of an elected government.

If the actions of the government fall short of his expectations, he could have at best advised the government instead of visiting the disturbed areas. This was beyond the scope of his work, as was admonishing the SP.

Is he acting at the behest of the BJP high command? A healthy democracy certainly demands a cordial relationship between the two constitutional bodies.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta,  
Kolkata, 16 May.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

**ASIAN VOICES**

## Occupational safety

Workplaces can easily become contaminated, exposing workers, their families and communities to the risk of infection. In addition to infection, workers in all sectors face additional hazards that have emerged due to new work practices and procedures adopted to mitigate the spread of the virus. Working at home, for instance, has led to ergonomic and psychosocial risks with some 65 per cent of surveyed enterprises reporting that worker morale has been difficult to sustain. Certain workplaces have been particularly affected, such as the 136 million health and social workers at serious risk of acquiring Covid-19 during the course of their work. Moreover, those workers, as well as essential staff in many other sectors, have faced increased workload, longer working hours and reduced rest periods. The risk of violence and harassment at work has also risen, with consequences for both physical and mental well-being. The protection of workers against sickness, disease and injury related to their work environment has been a central issue for the ILO since 1919.

Since the start of the Covid-19 crisis, principles contained in the ILO Occupational Safety and Health standards have shown to be more relevant than ever, especially the principle of prevention. Faced with an unprecedented public health emergency, governments have taken measures to curb the spread of the virus through public health systems. Actors in the world of work, particularly in the field of OSH, have been crucial in the emergency response for protecting workers

**NATION**  
including those who support public health systems. At the same time, special attention has been needed to ensure that policies and strategies do not discriminate against anyone, and consider those in vulnerable situations including the young, women, disabled and migrant workers, the self-employed and the informal economy.

Among the many lessons learned from this crisis, is the need for countries to have a sound and resilient OSH system in place, one that can build capacity for future emergencies and protect workers' safety and health while supporting the survival of enterprises. The ILO's Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 lays out key elements of a national OSH system. They comprise regulatory and institutional frameworks; occupational health services; information, advisory services and training; data collection and research; and mechanisms for strengthening OSH management systems at the enterprise level to prevent and respond to OSH risks. Investing in these systems enables countries to better face and recover from crises by safeguarding lives and livelihoods, and advancing the protection of workers. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Covid pandemic has led to many countries taking steps to strengthen priority elements of their national OSH system.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Squabbles cast shadow on Covid fight



"Logistical issues were involved in manoeuvring the tractor which carries trolleys of oxygen and in connecting the cylinders to the manifold (a cohort of cylinders)". Snags along the supply chain, as much as indifferent planning by the Central and state governments, have played a major role in the current oxygen crisis. The inadequacy of cryogenic tankers, crucial to transporting oxygen through the length and breadth of the country, has been exposed. But the onus is also on hospital authorities to ensure last mile delivery. There needs to be an investigation into why Goa's largest Covid care facility so comprehen-

sively and repeatedly failed its critically ill patients. The significance of such an investigation extends beyond fixing accountability ~ though that is paramount. It could also throw light on the deficiencies of healthcare agencies, as well as their failings. Dealing with the virus will require such micro-level probes. A beginning should be made in Goa.

But that would require those at the helm of the battle against the virus in the state to rise above petty politicking. Goa's Health Minister Vishwajit Rane has ascribed the tragedy to a shortfall in oxygen supplies while Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has

blamed "mismanagement in getting oxygen to the hospital". The health minister has described the CM as misinformed over the issue. Rane has also said that Goa was late by more than 15 days in imposing the lockdown and allowing full-fledged tourism was a major reason behind the surge of cases. Rane and Sawant are known to be political rivals and the imperative of fighting the virus evidently hasn't made them put their differences on hold. Their squabbling has cast a shadow over the framing of anti-Covid strategies in the state. That the Health Minister wants the High Court to probe the deaths under his watch is a dis-

turbance.

Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana,  
Kolkata, 16 May.

### VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

SIR, There is ample evidence which shows that women are more adversely affected than men by the economic and social effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Women are losing jobs at a disproportionate rate compared to men, with four out of every ten working women having lost their jobs post the lockdown. Levels of unpaid work have risen dramatically, prompting to a sturdy debate among feminists on the desirability of cash transfers for housework. In India domestic violence is widespread and deep-rooted with 30 per cent of all women over the age of 15 being subjected to domestic violence, both in parental and matrimonial homes. The lockdown led to increase in the scale, frequency and intensity of violence against women in their purportedly 'safe' homes. During the lockdown period, victimised women's ability to escape violence or access help from relatives and well-wishers was restricted by constraints on mobility and paucity of transport, all compounded by the constant presence of the abusers at home. Such violence on women during the pandemic period has been termed by the United Nations as a 'shadow pandemic'.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) designed an index named Global Gender Gap Index to measure women's disadvantages compared to men. It is hardly surprising that India has fallen 28 spots to rank 140th among 156 countries as per Global Gender Gap Index Report 2021 when compared with the 112th rank it held in 2020.

Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana,  
Kolkata, 16 May.

HARSHA KAKAR

The Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, stated last week, "Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (QUAD), because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship." It was outright interference in foreign affairs of Bangladesh. He added that this was conveyed when Chinese defence minister Wei Fenghe visited Bangladesh a few weeks earlier. He is stated to have told the Bangladesh government, "Beijing and Dhaka should make joint efforts against powers from outside the region establishing a military alliance in South Asia and practising hegemonism."

The Bangladesh government reacted maturely. Its foreign minister, Dr AK Abdul Momen, stated, "We're an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position." He added, "Usually China does not interfere in others' affairs. The aggressive way the ambassador spoke is very unfortunate." Anger against direct Chinese interference is growing within Bangladesh. This is not the first time that China has directly interfered in internal matters of countries.

The Chinese ambassador to Nepal had throughout May and June been attempting to build consensus within the Nepal communist party to ensure survival of the Oli government. These attempts, apart from failing, angered the population of Nepal against China. Anger was evident when the Chinese defence minister visited Kathmandu in November last year. He was given a formal audience by the President, Bidya Devi Bhandari, but had no meeting with the PM, also the defence minister. The luncheon in his honour in the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu was cancelled as the Nepalese government voiced reservations.

In Myanmar, anger against Chinese support to the military junta and interference in internal matters has been rising. During recent riots against military rule, dozens of Chinese factories were attacked and burnt as also Chinese citizens became targets. In Pakistan, Baluch insurgents and the TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) have been attacking Chinese diplomats, workers and CPEC projects, displaying anger at exploitation of their country by the Chinese. Its taking over the Hambantota port has angered local Sinhalese. Similarly, anger is rising against China in Maldives.

Within Southeast Asia, China no longer enjoys the same standing as it did earlier. The Philippines foreign minister had tweeted in anger, "China, my friend, how politely can I put it? Let me see... O...GET THE F\*\*K

# Unprovoked aggression is hurting China's image



OUT. You're like an ugly oaf forcing your attentions on a handsome guy who wants to be a friend; not to father a Chinese province..." His subsequent retraction did little to change impressions about the Chinese in the country. Japan and Indonesia have rising anti-China sentiments for its offensive forays into their island territories.

China has taken over Laos' power grid system due to non-payment of dues, resulting in a growing anti-China wave. A report in The Diplomat states China obtained 1,158 Kms of territory from Tajikistan as an alternate to repaying loans. It will demand assets from Montenegro as it fails to repay a USD 1 Billion loan. The EU has refused to intervene.

China threatened Australia with economic and military actions over its demands for a probe into the origins of the virus and tensions over Taiwan. This only hardened Australian resolve. Even New Zealand has begun having doubts over its trade relations with China, as per lat-

est comments from their Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern. It is a matter of time before this relationship also goes downhill.

China's trade deal with the EU, announced with much fanfare, and expected to break the US-Europe alliance, is now in tatters. China imposed sanctions on a few EU Members of parliament for commenting on human rights abuses against Uighurs. In retaliation, the European Parliament withheld support to the trade deal. China warned Sweden to reverse its ban on Huawei or face retaliation against Ericsson, its rival. Sweden has refused to bend. The G 7, united due to Chinese actions, sent a strong message to China on its aggressive actions and human rights violations.

There is growing anger against the Chinese in Africa on account of debt owned by nations on BRI loans. Djibouti was the first African victim of China's debt-trap and was compelled to permit China to build its first overseas military base in the country. Nigeria is facing pressure

from China to hand over strategic assets. Many other countries facing similar pressures, have ordered probes into the loans taken, leading to resentment against the Chinese.

The anti-China wave continues in India. The Ladakh crisis of last year, followed by the Galwan clashes, and currently growing casualties from the China virus is lent force to this wave. India has made it clear that there would be no restoration of ties, diplomatic or economic, unless the Ladakh crisis is resolved. It is with this background that India banned the participation of Huawei and ZTE in its 5 G trials. When China faced the first wave of the pandemic, India despatched 15 tonnes of assistance; however, India despite facing a devastating second wave, has refused official Chinese aid, while allowing companies to procure medical stores from China.

The recent incident of debris falling from the Chinese space rocket displayed the global disconnect between China and the world. A similar incident of a US rocket was

ignored, while China was accused of carelessness. Overall, the global community is displaying a dislike for China and its leadership.

China, which should have used its economic clout to positively alter its image and project its ideology as an alternative to democracy, failed due to its military and diplomatic aggressiveness. It expected third world countries to gravitate towards it, but on the contrary, its BRI is viewed as a debt trap. Its breaking of global norms, open aggression, seeking to grab strategic national assets, wolf warrior diplomacy as well as directly interfering in countries has led to it being disliked. Its neighbours, fearing its aggressiveness, maintain silence, though they seek to challenge Chinese hegemony. The downside is evident, when the Chinese spokesperson in Beijing daily spends more time defending China from global accusations than on questioning other nations.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

## Surely this is exceptional!

SUSHREY NEPAL

right to manufacture, sell and distribute the vaccines for 20 years.

India and South Africa had submitted a joint proposal to the WTO, which has now been supported by over a hundred countries, asking for a temporary waiver of patent on Covid-19 vaccines, medicines, diagnostic kits and protective gear. The United States government has declared its support for a patent waiver. Some countries have remained critical of this proposition, and maintain that suspending IP protection for vaccines is not a solution to filling the shortages, and that such a move will disincentivise innovation. WTO member countries are yet to begin negotiations on the matter as people continue to perish in the pandemic.

The Marrakech Agreement establishing the WTO has enabled a waiver of obligation on members in exceptional circumstances, but these 'exceptional circumstances' have not been defined. Nonetheless, it is to be understood that they include concrete and urgent situations causing hardships to member countries where compliance with WTO practices may not be feasible, and thus may need some relaxation. In such a situation, the WTO may make its compliance flexible, of course, with

great care whereby such relaxation does not become an excuse for a country to evade its obligations, till such hardships are contained.

The Covid-19 pandemic is the worst crisis of the century causing both economic and health adversities like never seen before, and it is indeed a chain of 'exceptional circumstances'. This makes a clear legal basis for the waiver of IP protection on Covid-19 vaccines and other technologies. The suspension of IP protection would enable economies around the world that have the resources and technical know-how to produce vaccines and drugs against Covid-19 and export them to countries that lack manufacturing resources and abilities, at a much cheaper rate.

Developed countries such as of the European Union, Switzerland, Australia, the United Kingdom and Japan have been reluctant on the IP waiver, and maintain that it has not in any way restricted production. Even though the US has supported patent relaxation, its premier vaccine provider has stated that it is 'not at all' in favour of a waiver. The decision of the US government has sent shockwaves in the stock market, and shares of leading pharmaceutical groups have plunged.

Waiving patent on Covid-19 vaccines will only be the first step to get the movement going towards the long war of eradication of the pandemic. IP waiver will definitely be a step in the right direction, but it is only a job half done. Transfer of technology and quality control are whole new dimensions of the issue that needs to be tackled cautiously. Waiver alone will not be enough, if adequate measures and mechanisms aren't prescribed for a safe tech transfer and quality control, along with the addressing of trade restrictions and supply constraint issues.

A pressing risk that is tagged with an IP waiver is uncertainty about whether the quality and consistency of manufacturing can be maintained. Vaccines and drugs, by their very nature, have to be made under strict quality control, which is why it takes years for medicinal products to be approved. The journey of a vaccine from discovery to approval is an intricate one, a far more complicated procedure than just following a particular recipe. Possibly, once the IP right is waived on Covid-19 related vaccines and drugs, international bodies like the World Health Organisation may have a crucial regulatory role in assuring that quality and safety isn't compromised. Also, even if companies are subsequently allowed to manufacture vaccines, they'd still have to run

clinical trials before getting regulatory approvals, which means that an IP waiver in itself doesn't assure speedy production.

The Covid-19 crisis warrants that the world comes together to spread and share innovation on vaccines and medicines to counter the virus. This pandemic has evidently pushed up demand for vaccines and drugs all over, meaning that the quicker the world stands united for inoculation against the virus, the better mileage the vaccination drive will get. This also assures that manufacturers will get an adequate return.

If people dying in the thousands does not form a needful circumstance where countries and pharmaceutical giants think beyond their vested interests for the sake of humanity, it is hard to imagine what will. Every possible measure that helps in the common fight against this pandemic must be expeditiously made a reality. It is imperative that the WTO begin formal negotiations on patent waiver at the earliest. Since the virus keeps mutating creating new variants, delays in inoculating the large populations of the developing countries will only worsen the already grim situation. To repeat a shared sentiment, no one will truly be safe until everyone is!

The Kathmandu Post/ANN.

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

It is anticipated that the two chief difficulties in connection with the Mount Everest Expedition, apart from those always incident to mountaineering, will be the maintenance of supplies and the preservation of health and vigour at high altitudes. In the light of recent investigations, the key to success would be an adequate supply of oxygen and of food rich in vitamins, but of course the transport of oxygen in sufficient quantities would be a serious problem. That the Bury expedition is taking with them some at least is clear from the latest reports. It is estimated that on the summit of Mount Everest the rarified air contains only one-third of the usual amount of oxygen found in the atmosphere. Experiments have shown that life can be maintained on a supply restricted to this extent, but it is another question whether the work which the Expedition hopes to accomplish would be possible with so reduced an amount of energy. The human body, however, makes a strong effort to adapt itself to circumstances, and at high altitudes it increases its number of red blood corpuscles, so that all the available oxygen may be utilised. Trained mountaineers have proved it possible not only to live but also to do a certain amount of work at an altitude of nearly 25,000 feet, and it is hoped that modern science will prove equal to the task of enabling the explorers to cover the extra 4,000 feet.

### NEWS ITEMS

#### BOMBS FOUND IN A ZEMINDAR'S HOUSE

Lahore, May 17

The police while searching the house of a zemindar of Lalbai village, Ferozepore district, for opium, have discovered two bombs. They were sent to Ferozepore arsenal for examination. Khan Bahadur Mujahid, whose arrest at Ferozepore led to the discovery of several bombs, rifles and cartridges in the house of Abdul Raof of the Gujranwala district, has been tried for conspiracy to murder and sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment by Lala Ganga Ram, Sessions Judge, Gujranwala. Abdul Raof, in whose possession the ammunition was found has been sentenced to four years' hard labour. Khan Bahadur Mujahid will be tried shortly at Ferozepore for dacoity and an attempt to murder a constable, at whom he is alleged to have fired a pistol in order to resist arrest.

#### MATUNDH RAILWAY SMASH

Allahabad, May 17

The official report on the railway accident at Matundh shows that one passenger and four railway servants were killed, two passengers and one railway servant seriously injured, and sixteen passengers and five railway servants slightly injured. In addition there are to be accounted for the missing occupants of a carriage which was completely destroyed by the explosion of the gas cylinders. Full details are not yet forthcoming, but it is certain that not more than fifteen passengers are missing from that carriage. This brings the maximum possible death roll up to 22, and thus considerably discounts exaggerated reports which have been current in regard to the collision.

#### DACOIT GANG ON TRIAL IN BOMBAY

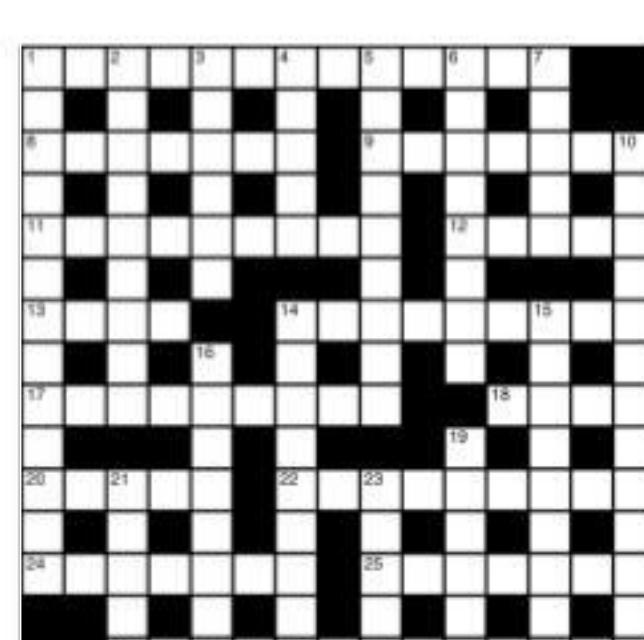
Bombay, May 17

The Third Presidency Magistrate of Bombay is engaged in hearing a number of cases in which a gang of Telugus numbering about forty, are alleged to have taken part in no less than fifty dacoities in Bombay and adjacent districts. Some of the arrested men turned approvers and gave information which led to the rounding-up of the gang. It was stated in court that the caste, called Sanchalus, to which the gang belong, hailed from the Madras Presidency and belonged to a criminal tribe. Their women had acquired the habit of swallowing stolen old ornaments by artfully breaking them up and an instance was quoted in which a woman had been known to have swallowed six tolas of gold. The trial is proceeding.

#### CENTRAL EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE

At a conference on European unemployment held on Monday, Mr. Justice W.E. Greaves in the chair, and representatives from the European Association and Ex-Officers' Association being present. It was recommended that there should be Central Employment Exchange and that all existing agencies for finding employment for Europeans should be concentrated in this one bureau; that all firms should be asked to register themselves and to notify the office of any vacancies; that the Central Exchange office should periodically circularise firms with lists of Europeans seeking employment; and that the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Association should be sought in this matter. It was recommended that an Advisory Committee should be formed for the purpose of supervising the bureau and conferring periodically on the unemployment question.

### CROSSWORD



#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

##### ACROSS

- 1 Hero potentially good to czar catching virus (6,7)
- 8 Rich ruler caught and hung in reorganisation (5-2)
- 9 Idiot and ice largely doing for this (7)
- 11 Bad atmosphere when publisher punches fellow publisher? (3-6)
- 12 Purge one recalled as the worst time (5)
- 13 In reverse of normality, a bear market with ever-rising prices (4)
- 14 Half four at lido, train regularly with greater
- 17 People reportedly unable to speak freely, Nijinsky among others (9)
- 18 Elite in revolution deprived of a valuable estate? (4)
- 20 Millionaire leaving his estate for good, born during Christmas (5)
- 22 Lingering on bed in Durham? (9)
- 24 Marking certainly stops poet working (7)
- 25 Refuse roublies Onegin brought to the west (7)
- 26 Nice bloody vodka for one true love (7,6)

##### DOWN

- 1 Pen sad epic novel about 1Ac's 26, leading character suffering that fate? (15)
- 2 Coach shortened odds saddling thoroughbred (9)
- 3 Say working men must lead state (6)
- 4 Nothing happening? Close (3,2)
- 5 Play's opening leaves playwright bound to meddle (9)
- 6 See about skinning cats; approach gradually (6,2)
- 7 That hurt, Glaswegian hooligan admitted (5)

NO 28915

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



First quarter (April-June 2021) of the new fiscal will be challenging for the business and its operations, following the impact of the second wave.

SHYAM SRINIVASAN  
MD & CHIEF EXECUTIVE, FEDERAL BANK

**business**

THUMBNAILS

**Gold exchange:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India on Monday proposed an elaborate framework for setting up a gold exchange wherein the yellow metal will be traded in the form of electronic gold receipts and will help in having a transparent domestic spot price discovery mechanism. Also, the proposed denominations ~ reflecting underlying physical gold ~ of electronic gold receipts (EGRS) are 1 kilogram, 100 grams, 50 grams and subject to conditions, those can also be even for 5 and 10 grams. Apart from issuing a consultation paper on the gold exchange, the watchdog has come out with draft norms for vault managers and they will be registered as a Sebi intermediaries.

PTI

**AirAsia offer:** Budget carrier AirAsia India on Monday announced free cancellation and rescheduling for flights to and from West Bengal in the wake of a 15-day lockdown in the state. A 15-day lockdown came into force in Bengal on Sunday, with the government putting in place a host of stringent measures to curb the spread of Covid-19. Further, the Bengaluru-based private carrier said it was extending the similar facility, announced earlier for flights to and from Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu as well for the current duration of the respective state lockdowns.

PTI

**India loses gas field:** India on Monday lost the ONGC Videsh Ltd-discovered Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf after Iran awarded a contract for developing the giant gas field to a local company. "The National Iranian Oil Company has signed a contract worth \$1.78 billion with Petropars Group for the development of Farzad-B Gas Field in the Persian Gulf," the Iranian oil ministry's official news service Shana reported.

PTI

**Industrialist dies:** Industrialist and former chairman of Usha International Siddharth Shriram passed away on Monday due to Covid-19, according to people close to the family. Shriram (76), who served as advisor to the board of Usha International after stepping down from executive role, was admitted to Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon for treatment of Covid-19.

PTI

**PowerGrid initiatives:** PowerGrid Corporation of India Limited has taken up various initiatives for extending timely help to its employees in all its offices across the country. It is organising vaccination camps for its employees and their family members across all its establishments in the country. The cost for vaccinating the staff and their families is being borne by the company. The vaccine camps are being organised for both age groups ~ 18-45 and more than 45 years ~ regularly, according to a Press release.

SNS

# Stocks up on drop in Covid cases

Sensex, Nifty log best 1-day gains in 7 wks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 17 MAY

**E**quity gauges the Sensex and the Nifty registered their biggest single-session gains in about seven weeks today as investor optimism returned amid a consistent drop in new Covid-19 cases in the country.

The BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 848.18 points or 1.74 per cent to end at 49,580.73 points; and the NSE barometer Nifty surged 245.35 points or 1.67 per cent to settle at 14,923.15 points ~ the biggest one-day gains for both indices since 30 March.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, rallying over 7 per cent, followed by SBI, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC and Bajaj Finserv.

On the other hand, L&T, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India, Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Maruti Suzuki and HUL were the laggards.

Of the Sensex constituents, 23 closed with gains and 7 suffered losses.

Sectorally, BSE banking, finance, metal and auto indices rallied up to 3.98 per cent, while telecom and healthcare were in the red.

Broader mid-cap and small-cap indices surged up to 1.63 per cent.

"Indian indices soared with solid gains led by banking, metal and auto stocks due to fall in infection cases. The market expects a rapid fall in daily reported Covid cases which helped to ease concerns over extended lockdowns and sharp correction in FY'22 estimates. Banking stocks took a breather as it helped in soothing asset quality concerns," Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to Binod Modi, head strategy at Reliance Securities, domestic equities witnessed strong rebound as robust Q4 FY'21 earnings and early sign of decline in second wave of daily caseload bolstered investors' confidence.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses

**► The BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 848.18 points or 1.74 per cent to end at 49,580.73 points; and the NSE barometer Nifty surged 245.35 points or 1.67 per cent to settle at 14,923.15 points ~ the biggest one-day gains for both indices since 30 March.**

**► On the forex market front, the rupee rose for the second straight session on Monday to close 7 paise higher at 73.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on the back of positive domestic equities and weak American currency.**

In Shanghai and Hong Kong ended on a positive note, while Tokyo and Seoul were in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.06 per cent higher at \$68.75 per barrel.

On the forex market front, the rupee rose for the second straight session today to close 7 paise higher at 73.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on the back of positive domestic equities and weak American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.24 and hit an intra-day high of 73.16 and a low of 73.26.

The local unit finally settled at 73.22, registering a gain of 7 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had closed at 73.29 against the US dollar.

The domestic unit has appreciated 20 paise in the last two trading sessions.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.09 per cent to 90.23.

**KKR invests \$95 million in Lenskart**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY



Lenskart today said global investment firm KKR will invest \$95 million (about Rs 695.8 crore) in the omni-channel eyewear retailer via a secondary stake acquisition.

As part of the transaction, existing investors ~ TPG Growth and TR Capital ~ will each divest a portion of their holding in Lenskart, a statement said. These entities had invested in Lenskart in late 2014.

Upon the completion of the transaction, KKR will look to leverage its experience working with leading technology and eyewear companies globally to support Lenskart in expanding its presence in India, scaling its growing operations overseas, and enhancing its digital offerings to augment customers' virtual and omni-store experience, the statement said.

According to reports, KKR's investment is part of a larger \$300-million round. However, the companies did not comment on the report and if other investors have participated in the round.

KKR said it is making its investment from its Asian private equity fund.

Some of the recent technology-focused investments for KKR in Asia include Adopt-A-Cow (a digitalised, direct-to-consumer dairy company in China), NetStars (the operator of Japan's largest QR code

payment gateway), and Walnut Programming (a children's programming education company in China).

In 2019, Lenskart had announced raising over \$275 million (nearly Rs 1,956 crore) from Softbank Vision Fund. In the past, it has received funding from investors like Ratan Tata, PremjiInvest, IFC (venture capital arm of the World Bank), TPG Growth, IDG Ventures, Unilazer Ventures and Adveq.

Established in 2010, Lenskart currently serves over 7 million customers annually through its omni-channel presence that spans online, mobile application, and 730 stores in 175 cities across the country. In 2019, Lenskart had also expanded to Singapore, marking its foray into Southeast Asia.

Lenskart integrates technology into all aspects of its operations, to the browsing, shopping and purchasing

experience, in addition to manufacturing and supply-chain optimisation.

Among Lenskart's digital offerings is a virtual 3D try-on tool; AI-powered facial mapping and frame recommendation features; smart physical stores with seamless omni-channel experience; and footfall tracking beacons, heatmaps and demographic analytics; and intelligent supply-chain and inventory-management solutions.

More than 600 million people in India and 4.5 billion people globally need vision correction, but only a fraction of them use it due to a lack of access, awareness, and high-quality, affordable solutions, Lenskart CEO Piyush Bansal said.

Lenskart was founded to address this gap by leveraging technology to make eye-wear accessible to everyone ~ first in India, and now worldwide, he added.

Panacea Biotec files suit against Sanofi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

Panacea Biotec today said it has filed a suit before Delhi High Court seeking to restrain Sanofi Healthcare India from marketing a fully liquid hexavalent vaccine.

The national capital-based firm said a case has been filed in order to stop infringement of its patent for fully liquid whole cell pertussis based fully liquid Hexavalent vaccine EasySix.

"The suit filed against Sanofi comes at the heels of Sanofi having received marketing approval for a Whole Cell Pertussis based Hexavalent vaccine by the Drugs Controller General (India)," Panacea Biotec said in a regulatory filing.

On 11 May 2021, when the suit was listed before Delhi High Court, after elaborate

submissions from both parties, Sanofi undertook that it could not manufacture or market any product which infringes the amended claims of Panacea patent, it added.

Panacea said Sanofi has been contesting the patent before the Indian Patent Office since 2017, where the dispute has spilled before Bombay and Delhi High Courts in 2018 and 2019, respectively. The EasySix vaccine comes in pre-filled syringe and is used to vaccinate against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae Type B and Inactivated Polio.

EasySix has been in the market since 2017 and the company expects it to be a part of government vaccination, immunisation programmes, Panacea Biotec noted.

## NEFT to be unavailable on Sunday

MUMBAI, 17 MAY

The popular National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) system for online transfer of funds will remain unavailable for 14 hours from Saturday mid-night till Sunday afternoon due to technical upgrade, the RBI said today.

NEFT is a nation-wide centralised payment system owned and operated by the RBI. It is available round the clock on all days of the year.

A technical upgrade of NEFT, targeted to enhance the performance and resilience, is scheduled after the close of business on 22 May 2021, RBI said in a statement. "Accordingly, NEFT service will not be available from 00:01 hrs to 14:00 hrs on Sunday, 23 May 2021. The RTGS system will continue to be operational as usual during this period," the RBI said.

# Jewellers face 'impossible' 1 June hallmarking deadline

RAJA MURTHY  
MUMBAI, 17 MAY

The 1 June 2021 deadline, set by the government for mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery, is fraught with insurmountable difficulties, according to representatives of the All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) now pushing for an extension to June 2022.

A hallmark is an official mark made on metal items to certify content of gold, platinum, silver, palladium, to avoid fraud.

In its 15 January 2021 order, the consumer affairs ministry had mandated all gold jewellery items and artefacts to be hallmarking by 1 June 2021. While stakeholders wel-

come hallmarking, their problem is the deadline. They say the jewellery industry does not have the infrastructure to hallmark India's estimated 6,500 crore (65 billion) pieces of jewellery in barely six months.

"It's a mammoth task, not possible in short notice," say representatives of the Mumbai-based gold and gems trade body.

As reported earlier in The Statesman, the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court had in an interim order on 7 May stopped the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) from taking any coercive action on jewellers unable to comply by 1 June, after a video-conferenced court hearing of the writ the GJC filed.

The interim court order referred to the lack of infrastructure, 66.58 per cent (488 districts) of 733 districts in India with registered jewellers not having hallmarking and assaying (A&H) centres, and only eight per cent of the entire country having such access.

Infrastructure problems affect India's more than 300,000 gems and jewellery industry entities. India is a major global player contributing 29 per cent of jewellery consumption worldwide. While Maharashtra hosts the most number of hallmarking centres (124) in India, followed by West Bengal (119), Tamil Nadu (103) and Gujarat (83), many states and Union Territories, including Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram,

Nagaland, Sikkim have no A&H centres. With jewellers prohibited from operating A&H centres, credible new hallmarking facilities need a minimum of three months to be operational with machinery and trained people.

This means higher cost for customers, with the safe transportation of jewellery to existing A&H centres being "significantly high" without reliable courier services in nearly 80 per cent of the districts across India. Jobs will also be lost in locations without A&H centres as jewellers shift their manufacturing closer to A&H facilities to reduce logistic costs. Worldwide hallmarking is only applicable to manufacturers, but it is only in India the BIS has applied hallmarking to retail jewellers irrespective if they are manufacturer or wholesaler," say gem and jewellery industry leaders.

Other concerns include the new unique ID scheme mandating a unique ID number for each article made of gold. This helps customers verify gold items but will also violate their privacy, feel industry representatives.

They say such a UID is not mandated anywhere else in the world as it is "practically not feasible" to have a unique ID number for every gold article. "The exclusivity of the designs is crucial and UID will not safeguard this as everything will be available online, including the buyers contact details," India's gem and jewellery industry leaders say.

But with the government concern being to reduce the rampant black money laundering through gold, honest purchasers of gold jewellery have nothing to hide and therefore nothing to worry. In 2017, the gems and jewellery industry was brought under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, with subsequent modifications.

Lack of clarity is another issue, according to industry representative, such as procedures to hallmark ancient jewellery and whether each component of a jewellery item needs to be hallmarking ~ as when customers buy only a part of the entire jewellery like a pendant from a gold chain.

A GJC delegation, including chairman Ashish Pethé, met the Union minister of state for consumer affairs, Raosaheb Danve, on 15 May to express concerns and suggest solutions. "He assured us of favourably exploring the possibility of postponement of mandatory hallmarking and resolving related issues," said delegation member Nitin Khandelwal.

Other concerns discussed in the meeting included restriction of caratages.

## GJC seeks minister's help

► A GJC delegation, including chairman Ashish Pethé, met the Union minister of state for consumer affairs, Raosaheb Danve, on 15 May to express concerns and suggest solutions.

He assured us of favourably exploring the possibility of postponement of mandatory hallmarking and resolving related issues.

NITIN KHANDELWAL  
DELEGATION MEMBER

**WPI inflation hits double digits in April**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 17 MAY

WPI inflation rises further to 13.13 per cent in April.

ADITI NAYAR  
CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

We expect the headline WPI

inflation to rise further to

13-13.5 per cent in the current

month before commencing a down-

trend, whereas the core-WPI infla-

tion may continue to rise over the

next three prints to a peak of

around 10.5 per cent.

ADITI NAYAR  
CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

We expect the headline WPI

inflation to rise further to

13-13.5 per cent in the current

month before commencing a down-

trend, whereas the core-WPI infla-

tion may continue to rise over the

next three prints to a peak of

around 10.5 per cent.



I stand with Britain's Jews who should not have to endure  
the type of shameful racism we have seen today

UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON  
RESPONDING TO A VIDEO SHOWING A CONVOY OF CARS SHOUTING ANTI-SEMITIC ABUSE IN LONDON

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 18 MAY 2021

09

# 'Gaza tunnels destroyed in heavy airstrikes'

A three-storey building in Gaza City was heavily damaged, but residents said the military warned them 10 minutes before the strike and everyone cleared out

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAZA CITY, 17 MAY

The Israeli military unleashed a wave of heavy airstrikes on the Gaza Strip early Monday, saying it destroyed 15 kilometers (nine miles) of militant tunnels and the homes of nine alleged Hamas commanders.

Residents of Gaza awakened by the overnight barrage described it as the heaviest since the war began a week ago, and even more powerful than a wave of airstrikes in Gaza City the day before that left 42 dead and flattened three buildings.

There was no immediate word on the casualties from the latest strikes.

A three-story building in Gaza City was heavily damaged, but residents said the military warned them 10 minutes before the strike and everyone cleared out.

They said many of the airstrikes hit nearby farmland.

Gaza's mayor Yahya Sarraj told Al-Jazeera TV that the



A Palestinian family sits outside their home after it was hit by an early morning Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, Monday.

airstrikes had caused extensive damage to roads and other infrastructure. If the aggression continues we expect conditions to become worse, he said.

He also warned that the territory was running low on fuel and other spare parts. The UN has warned that Gaza's sole power station is at risk of running out of fuel.

The territory already experiences daily power outages

of 8-12 hours and tap water is undrinkable.

The war broke out last Monday, when Hamas fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem after weeks of clashes in the Holy City between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police.

The protests were focused on the heavy-handed policing of a flashpoint holy site during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Pales-

tinian families by Jewish settlers.

Since then, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of airstrikes that it says are targeting Hamas' militant infrastructure. Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired more than 3,100 rockets into Israel. Eight people have been killed in rocket attacks launched from Gaza, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

China urges US to play constructive role

BEIJING, 17 MAY

China on Monday renewed calls for the US to play a constructive role in ending the conflict in Gaza and stop blocking efforts at the United Nations to demand an end to the bloodshed.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said, "We call on the United States to assume its due responsibility and take an impartial position to support the council and play its due role in cooling down the situation and rebuilding trust for a political solution," Zhao said at a daily briefing.

China strongly condemns violence against civilians and calls for an end to air strikes. Calls have grown for the Biden administration to take a more active stance on violence," he said.

Dogged by Mideast crisis, Blinken visits Denmark

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
COPENHAGEN, 17 MAY

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is in Denmark for talks on climate change, Arctic policy and Russia as calls grow for the Biden administration to take a tougher and more active stance on spiraling Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Blinken is seeing Danish leaders as well as top officials from Greenland and the Faeroe Islands in Copenhagen on Monday before he heads to Iceland for an Arctic Council meeting that will be marked by his first face-to-face talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at a time of significantly heightened tensions between Washington and Moscow.

Russia on Sunday called for an immediate ministerial-level session of the quartet of Middle East peacemakers to discuss the escalating Israeli-Palestinian crisis but there was no overt indication that the US would agree and no sign Blinken was planning changes to his travel plans that currently have him returning to Washington from Reykjavik on late Thursday after a brief stop in Greenland.



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» Airstrike kills Islamic Jihad commander: A top commander with the Islamic Jihad militant group, Hussam Abu Harbeed, in Gaza was killed in an Israeli air strike on Monday.

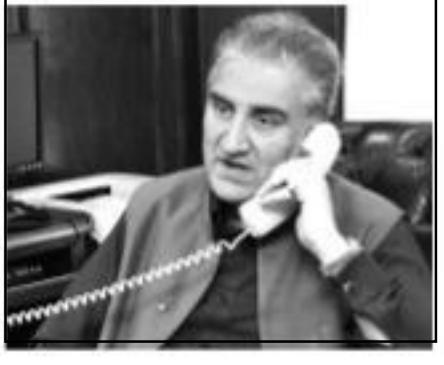
» Turkey urges Pope to back sanctions on Israel: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has asked Pope Francis to support sanctions against Israel, saying Palestinians will continue to be "massacred" as long as the international community does not punish Israel.

» AP's top editor calls for probe: The Associated Press' top editor is calling for an independent investigation into the Israeli airstrike that targeted and destroyed a Gaza City building housing the AP and broadcaster Al-Jazeera with several other media, saying the public deserves to know the facts.

Blinken, Qureshi hold phone talk on Afghan peace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY



countering terrorism", US State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said.

They also spoke about the potential to expand US-Pak trade and commercial ties and to improve regional connectivity in South Asia, Price said.

During the call, Blinken "highlighted the importance of continued cooperation on the Afghan peace process and Pakistan's progress on

## Saudi eases travel ban for vaccinated citizens

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JIDDAH, 17 MAY



Vaccinated Saudis will be allowed to leave the kingdom for the first time in more than a year on Monday as the country eases a ban on international travel aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus and its new variants.

For the past 14 months, Saudi citizens have mostly been banned from travelling abroad out of concerns that international travel could fuel the outbreak of the virus within the country of more than 30 million people. The ban, in place since March 2020, has

impacted Saudi students who were studying abroad, among others. In recent months, however, the kingdom has vaccinated close to 11.5 million residents with at least one jab of the Covid-19 vaccine, making them eligible to depart the country Monday under the new guidelines. Authorities will also allow people who have recently recovered from the virus and minors under 18 years of age with travel insurance to travel abroad. Saudi travellers are required to show their health statuses to airport officials through the govern-

ment's health app, Tawakkalna. Travellers returning from abroad will be required to quarantine at home and be tested for the virus.

The kingdom, which has covered coronavirus-related hospitalisations for citizens and residents, imposed some of the most sweeping measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus early on in the pandemic. They include shutting mosques and businesses for several weeks at a time, dramatically scaling down the annual hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and sealing its borders to travellers.

EU vows to boost efforts to end Israeli-Palestinian violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BRUSSELS, 17 MAY

The EU has never had the impact Washington can wield in the region and no immediate breakthrough was expected from Tuesday's meeting. Ever since the outbreak of violence last week, the EU has been calling for restraint and condemned attacks that hit civilian populations. The kingdom, which has

redundant efforts to end the upsurge in violence between the Israeli military and Palestinian militants, and seek progress during a special meeting of its foreign ministers Tuesday, the bloc said.

The EU also called the weekend destruction of a building housing major international media "extremely worrying" and said safe working conditions for journalists were essential.

Antony Blinken told reporters last month that the US is committed to helping interpreters and other Afghan civilians who aided the war effort, often at great personal risk. The Biden administration has also launched a review of the SIV programs, examining the delays and the ability of applicants to challenge a rejection. It will also be adding anti-fraud measures.

Amid the review, former interpreters, who typically seek to shield their identities and keep a low profile, are becoming increasingly public about what they fear will happen should the Taliban return to power.

## Next Digital trading halted after Jimmy Lai's assets frozen

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONG KONG, 17 MAY

The Hong Kong stock exchange halted trading of Next Digital shares Monday at the media company's request after authorities froze assets belonging to its founder Jimmy Lai, who has been a high-profile voice in the the territory's pro-democracy movement.

Later in the day, the media tycoon and nine other pro-democracy activists pleaded guilty to taking part in an unlawful assembly in 2019.

Lai is already serving a

14-month sentence for his role in two other unauthorized assemblies during a period when Hong Kong residents were involved in mass anti-government protests.

Next Digital said in a filing that it requested the trading halt after authorities announced the freeze on Lai's assets on Friday under a national security law that critics say is meant to snuff out dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Next Digital publishes pro-democracy tabloid Apple Daily, and the company was founded by Lai, who owns a

71% stake and is its controlling shareholder.

The freezing of Lai's assets raises questions about Next Digital's survival as a company. Advertisers have become wary of Apple Daily's staunch, pro-democratic stance in Hong Kong, adversely impacting its revenue as authorities crack down on dissenting voices in the city at the urging of leaders in Beijing. Last week, the Taiwan Apple Daily newspaper said it would stop publishing a print edition.

The paper said it had been losing money and Next Digital could no longer support it.

## Afghans who helped the US now fear being left behind

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL, 17 MAY



sands of others who aided the war effort fear they will be left stranded, facing the prospect of Taliban reprisals.

We are not safe, the 41-year-old father of six said of Afghan civilians who worked for the US or NATO.

The Taliban is calling us and telling us, 'Your stepbrother

is leaving the country soon, and we will kill all of you guys.'" The fate of interpreters after the troop withdrawal is one of the looming uncertainties surrounding the withdrawal, including a possible resurgence of terrorist threats and a reversal of fragile gains for women if

chaos, whether from competing Kabul-based warlords or the Taliban, follows the end of America's military engagement.

Interpreters and other civilians who worked for the US government or NATO can get what is known as a special immigrant visa, or SIV, under a program created in 2009 and modeled after a similar program for Iraqis.

Both SIV programs have long been dogged by complaints about a lengthy and complicated application process for security vetting that grew more cumbersome with pandemic safety measures.

US Secretary of State

port 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838; JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111; EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377; AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 1800125151; INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 435131285, Call Center 09910383333, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181; Air Canada Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport); Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

ACROSS

1 Arab leaders (7)

5 Lager, for example (4)

7 Rugby forward (4)

8 Intermittently (2,3,3)

9 Moderate speed (7,4)

12 Numbung substance (11)

14 Legendary beauty (5,2,4)

17 Domestic assistant (4,4)

19 Lion's cry (4)

20 Hind part (4)

21 Basket (7)

1 Certain (4)

2 Seaside walkway (9)

3 Criticise (Informal) (5)

5 Dependable (7)

6 Of poor quality (3)

8 Effectiveness (8)

10 Miscellaneous (8)

11 Mouth (Vulgar slang) (8)

13 Support (5,2)

15 Easy goal (Informal) (3-2)

16 Just (4)

18 Transgress (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Reens, 11 Callus, 12 Absolve, 13 Sleepy, 13 Bar code, 15 Large, 17 Endue, 18 Bush, 19 Hardy, 21 Pinpoint, 22 Melée, 23 Cheeky.

DOWN 1 Debase, 2 Woods, 3 Epoch, 4 Will, 5 Glasses, 7 Inbred,

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

REDACTED

RE



Covid-19 has shone a bright light on our own society's failings

AMERICAN PHYSICIAN-SCIENTIST AND IMMUNOLOGIST DR. ANTHONY FAUCI  
STATING THAT PANDEMIC EXPOSED UNDENIABLE EFFECTS OF RACISM

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	30°C	27°C
HONG KONG	32°C	28°C
TOKYO	23°C	17°C
LONDON	16°C	8°C
DUBAI	39°C	28°C
SAN FRANCISCO	16°C	9°C
NEW YORK	26°C	16°C
MOSCOW	29°C	16°C

S=sunny, CL=clear,  
H=hazy, R=rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



A Hotshots fire crew walks in line to fight the wildfire in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles. AP

**Miss Universe:** Andrea Meza of Mexico has been crowned Miss Universe. Meza, who has a software engineering degree, beat out Miss Brazil at the end of the night, screaming on Sunday when the announcer shouted Viva Mexico! AP

**Dubai eases Covid-19 restrictions:** Dubai on Monday eased Covid-19 restrictions, allowing hotels in the regional tourism hub to operate at full capacity and permitting concerts and sports events where all attendees and participants have been vaccinated. The United Arab Emirates ranks highly globally for Covid-19 testing and vaccination rates. AGENCIES

**88 pc of US children covered by monthly payments**

WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

The Treasury Department said Monday that 39 million families are set to receive monthly child payments beginning on 15 July.

The payments are part of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, which expanded the child tax credit for one year and made it possible to pre-pay the benefits on a monthly basis. Nearly 88 per cent of children are set to receive the benefits without their parents needing to take any additional action.

Qualified families will receive a payment of up to \$300 per month for each child under six and up to \$250 per month for children between the ages of six and 17. The child tax credit was previously capped at \$2,000 and only paid out to families with income tax obligations after they filed with the IRS.

But for this year, couples earning \$150,000 or less can receive the full payments on the 15th of each month, in most cases by direct deposit. The benefit total \$3,600 annually for children under six and \$3,000 for those who are older. The IRS will determine eligibility based on the 2019 and 2020 tax years, but people will also be able to update their status through an online portal.

The administration is also setting up another online portal for non-filers who might be eligible for the child tax credit. AP

# UK PM urges 'heavy dose of caution' as lockdown eases

UK continues to monitor rapidly rising cases of B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19 first identified in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON, 17 MAY

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday urged people to move to the next stage of considerable easing of lockdown restrictions that allows greater indoor interactions with a heavy dose of caution, as the UK continues to monitor rapidly rising cases of the B1.617.2 variant of Covid-19 first identified in India.

In what is step three of a four-step roadmap set by Johnson for easing the legally-binding lockdown restrictions, the hospitality sector including pubs, restaurants and cinemas and most businesses can resume close to normal service in England, Wales and most of Scotland.

However, surge testing and an accelerated vaccination programme is being implemented as the threat from the variant first found in India looms over the reopening, with UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock warning over the weekend that the B1.617.2 variant of concern (VOC) seems to spread like wildfire among those who have not been vaccinated.

"Together we have reached another milestone in our road map out of lockdown, but we must take this next step with a heavy dose of caution," said Boris Johnson.

"Everyone must play their part by getting tested twice a week, coming forward for your vaccine when called, and remembering hands, face, space and fresh air. I urge everyone to be cautious and take responsibility when enjoying new freedoms today in order to keep the virus at bay," he said.

Meanwhile, the UK reported four coronavirus-related deaths and 1,926 new cases over Sunday.

The latest easing of lockdown, described by scientists as a very finely balanced political decision amid low overall coronavirus infection rates but the doubling of the case numbers of the B1.617.2 VOC to over 1,300 in a week, comes as the National Health Service (NHS) hit another milestone in the vaccination programme. Experts believe the variant, which is very highly transmissible, does spread more easily but early data suggests that vaccines still work against it.

According to the latest NHS data, more than 20 million UK adults have received both doses of a Covid-19 vaccine even as the remaining over-50s and vulnerable groups will be given their second jabs ahead of the 12-week timeline at eight weeks.

The latest real-world data has once again demonstrated how effective the vaccine is at providing life-saving protection, with two doses of the Pfizer vaccine providing 97 per cent protection against mortality, said Matt Hancock.

Receiving a second dose is vital to ensure you have the ultimate protection from this deadly virus. Encourage everyone to book their jab as soon as they are offered it, he said.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said that latest data from Public Health England's (PHE) real-world study shows the vaccines have reduced hospitalisations and deaths, saving more than 11,700 lives and preventing 33,000 hospitalisations in England by the end of April.

As freedom beckons once more, there is excitement. Friends will hug, pints will be pulled and swathes of the British economy will reopen on Monday, giving 65 million people a measure of freedom after the gloom of a four-month Covid-19 lockdown.

Most of the British will be free once again to hug, albeit cautiously, drink in their pub, sit down to an indoor meal or visit the cinema after a series of lockdowns that imposed the strictest restrictions in peacetime history.

The biggest public health crisis in a century was accompanied by a drastic extension of state power; during England's lockdowns police broke up parties and protests alike, shut down religious services and handed out fines of up to 10,000 pounds (\$14,000) to youngsters for partying.

"My family haven't met my youngest child so we're happy to be allowed to travel," she told.



## Free at last to hug and party: UK reopens for business

AGENCIES  
LONDON, 17 MAY

I shall be hugging literally everyone I can get my hands on," British actress Joanna Lumley told *The Telegraph* newspaper. Beside the euphoria, though, there is also anxiety.

Broadly, from Monday in England gatherings of up to 30 people will be allowed outdoors, two families will be permitted to meet indoors; cafes, bars and restaurants will reopen for indoor service; care home residents will be allowed to have five visitors; and face coverings will no longer be compulsory in schools.

A ban on international travel has also been lifted.

"I'm American, my kids are American, my husband's British, we live in the UK so it's really nice that we can travel again today," said Julie, 42, who was flying to Austin, Texas from Heathrow.

"My family haven't met my youngest child so we're happy to be allowed to travel," she told.

## BA, Heathrow urge UK to ease travel restrictions

LONDON, 17 MAY

The bosses of British Airways and London's Heathrow Airport urged the government to go further in easing restrictions around travel on Monday, saying links to much of Europe and the United States should be opened up.

Britain lifted a ban on international travel on Monday but the government has designated only 12 countries safe for quarantine-free travel so far, limiting any industry recovery.

"It's clear to us that America should be on the green list," said BA CEO Sean Doyle. Heathrow boss John Holland-Kaye said France, Greece and Spain should also be added.

Ministers have said people should not go on holiday to those countries which are not on the green list, and Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday that it would not be extended any time soon because of the risk of new variants.

"I don't expect that we'll be adding to the (list) very rapidly and indeed we will be maintaining a very, very tough border regime for the foreseeable future," he said.

Passengers at Heathrow, however, were relieved that Monday's easing had gone ahead. Erica Stoltion, 29, heading to Madrid to introduce her baby to her family said she had been waiting for a long time. AGENCIES

# Harris to headline Democratic Asian American summit



AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, 17 MAY

Asian Americans are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States and served as a key piece of President Joe Biden's winning coalition in November's election.

"The API community does now have the loudest voice we've ever had," said Varun Nikore, the executive director of the AAPI Victory Fund. "One of the reasons the voice is so loud is because we're asking and in certain cases demanding much more from our government."

Amid a wave of anti-Asian hate crimes, AAPI voter turnout surged more than 45 per cent from 2016's presidential election to 2020, according to the voting analytics firm TargetSmart ~ nearly four times the increase among all other voters. Almost two-thirds of the voters supported Democrat Joe Biden, according to agency poll.

The group Stop AAPI Hate, which tracks anti-Asian incidents, released a national report last week that found 6,603 instances between March 2020 and March 2021. Two other ethnic political groups—Collective PAC, which supports Black candidates, and the Latino Victory Fund—will also participate in the summit.

## 'Microsoft investigated Gates before he left board'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK, 17 MAY

Board members at Microsoft Corp. made a decision in 2020 that it wasn't appropriate for its co-founder Bill Gates to continue sitting on its board as they investigated the billionaire's prior romantic relationship with a female Microsoft employee that was deemed inappropriate, according to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Citing unnamed sources, *The Journal* reported online Sunday that board members looking into the matter hired a law firm in late 2019 to conduct an investigation after a Microsoft engineer alleged



in a letter that she had a sexual relationship with Gates over several years.

*The Journal* reported that Gates resigned before the board's investigation was finished, citing another person familiar with the matter.

An unnamed spokeswoman for Gates acknowledged to *The Journal* that

there was an affair almost 20 years ago, and that it ended amicably."

The spokesperson told *The Journal* that his decision to transition off the board was in no way related to this matter. When he left Microsoft's board last year, Gates said he was divorcing after 27 years of marriage but would keep working together at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In an email sent to The Associated Press late Sunday, Microsoft said that it received a concern in the latter half of 2019 that Bill Gates sought to initiate an intimate relationship with a company employee in the year 2000.

A committee of the Board reviewed the concern, aided by an outside law firm, to conduct

a thorough investigation. Throughout the investigation, Microsoft provided extensive support to the employee who raised the concern. Earlier this month, Bill and Melinda Gates announced that they were divorcing after 27 years of marriage but would keep working together at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Earlier on Sunday, *The New York Times* reported that Gates had developed a reputation for questionable conduct in work-related settings. *The Times* reported that on at least a few occasions, Gates made overtures to women who worked for him at Microsoft and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

## 2 arson suspects detained in Los Angeles wildfire

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LOS ANGELES, 17 MAY

A smoky wildfire churning through a Los Angeles canyon community gained strength Sunday as about a thousand residents remained under evacuation orders while others were warned they should get ready to leave, authorities said.

The cause of the fire near Topanga State Park has been deemed "suspicious" and is under investigation, the Los Angeles Fire Department said.

Arson investigators with the fire department and the Los Angeles Police Department identified one individual who was detained and released. Investigators then detained a second suspect and were questioning them Sunday evening.

No structures were damaged and no injuries were reported in the wildfire that broke out

according to a statement from fire department spokesperson Margaret Stewart.

Cool, moist weather early in the day gave firefighters a break, but by afternoon flames starting moving again in steep terrain where tinder-dry vegetation hasn't burned in a half-century, the fire department said. "We're definitely seeing increased fire activity," said Stewart.

Arson investigators with the fire department and the Los Angeles Police Department identified one individual who was detained and released. Investigators then detained a second suspect and were questioning them Sunday evening.

No structures were damaged and no injuries were reported in the wildfire that broke out

according to a statement from fire department spokesperson Margaret Stewart.

For all the focus on sexual violence in the #MeToo era, and on student protections under Title IX, very few campus rapes are ever prosecuted, according to victim advocates and the limited crime data available. Only one in five college sex assault victims report to police. And when they do, prosecutors often hesitate to take cases where victims had been drinking or knew the accused.

It has bothered me over the years that I was never able to do anything, said Keeler, now 26. If you're not going to help me, who are you going to help? Because I do have evidence.

At Gettysburg, a small school with about 2,500 students, 95 rapes were reported to campus security from 2013 to 2019 but only 10 non-child rape cases were prosecuted in the entire county during that period, according

and trees. There was no containment. The Los Angeles sheriff's department's Lost Hills station said on Twitter that the evacuation orders will remain in effect throughout the night.

Los Angeles has seen very little rain in recent months, making for extremely parched conditions and high fire risk.

Crews relied on aircraft making drops of water and retardant because "the terrain is very steep and extremely difficult to navigate which hinders ground-based firefighting operations," a fire department statement said.

Topanga Canyon is a remote, wooded community with some ranch homes about 32 kilometers west of downtown Los Angeles, on the border with Malibu.

By Sunday evening, the fire had charred a little over 5.4 square kilometers of brush

according to the fire department.

On Sunday evening, the fire had charred a little over 5.4 square kilometers of brush

according to the fire department.

"I didn't have any witnesses, and after the experience I had with Shannon, and nothing

happened with her, I just

(thought), Well, what's the point of me going through all of this for nothing?" said the 26-year-old New Yorker. So I just didn't really tell anyone.'

For Keeler, the suspect's withdrawal from school ended the campus Title IX investigation. Two years later, just after the window to file a civil suit closed, then-District Attorney Scott Wagner said he didn't get a rape kit. Instead, she quietly left school after that spring.

Keeler recalls him saying it was difficult to bring cases when alcohol is involved.

Wagner, now a county judge, declined to speak with

plan to begin late-stage trials and production in the coming weeks and hope to win regulatory approval for the vaccine before the end of 2021.

Regulators have already authorised a number of Covid-19 vaccines, though experts say more are needed as public health authorities around the world race to vaccinate their residents amid a pandemic that has already killed more than 3.3 million people and caused economic havoc.

The Sanofi-GSK vaccine was an important part of the European Union's vaccination strategy, and had notably been championed by French President Emmanuel Macron's

government.

The Sanofi-GSK candidate joins about a dozen vaccines now undergoing late-stage trials. The companies plan to produce up to 1 billion doses annually, and they have signed agreements to supply the US, Canada and developing countries, too. Public health experts say several vaccines will be needed to end the pandemic, because of the challenges in rapidly producing and distributing enough doses to vaccinate billions of people.

The results released Monday were from a Phase 2 trial involving 722 volunteers aged 18 to 95 who were recruited in the US and Honduras.

The 12-year

# Campus & Career

## Going beyond convention

From augmenting the digital transformation to creating unique fashion technology, engineering is playing a crucial role in new-age courses

CM FAIZ

One of the most technical fields around, engineering is turning out to be a multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary innovation that is supplementing most industries at any point in time. To follow one's dreams or make money as an engineer, students must be open to explore where their interests lie. Today, it isn't about the hardcore engineering programmes such as mechanical, electrical or computer science, but much more that is encouraging students to choose innovative courses.

According to the Union ministry of education, India is home to a total of 6,214 engineering and technology institutions in which around 2.9 million students have enrolled, and the number is only increasing.

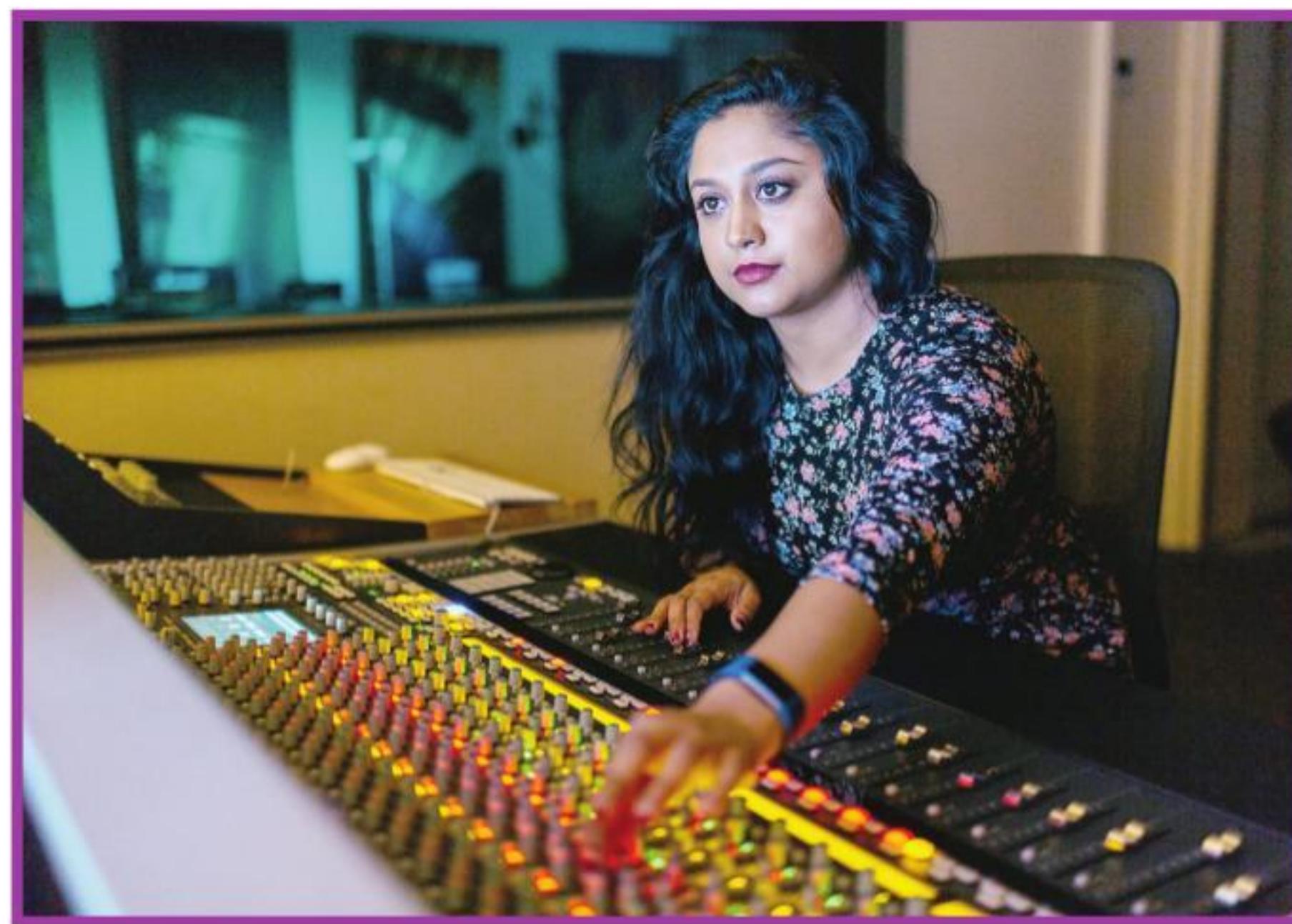
From augmenting the digital transformation to creating one-of-a-kind fashion technology, engineering is playing a crucial role in defining new-age careers that are attracting millions of students from across the world. Here are a few unique courses that are helping prepare the next generation of engineers:

### Sports analytics/management

Technology and analytics data are shaping the next generation of sports enthusiasts who are interested in managing any kind of sports. Sports analytics, also known as sports management, has many on-field applications in a sports environment, such as managing individual or group performance.

With the technological advancements in sports tracking and analysis, coaches/managers can now use data to optimise exercise programmes to help improve player performance and/or develop nutrition plans to boost fitness. Besides, sports analytics is used at every level of sports management from the school to international in developing tactics and team strategies.

Aspirants can opt for a Bachelor



of business administration in sports management or Bachelor of technology in sports engineering.

### Audio engineering

If music is something that defines a student's potential, they can invest in the new-age field of audio engineering. As an audio engineer, one has to work with sounds to produce a recording or a live performance, balancing and adjusting sound sources using various techniques such as equalisation, audio effects, dynamics processing, mixing, reproduction and more. Basically, reproducing or recording a sound through various means. Interested students can go for a BTech degree in audio/sound engineering.

### Media studies

People consume content at the speed of light today, and there are so many ideas in the pipeline to be produced. Amid such a dynamic situation, the need for media engineers has increased manifold. In this rapidly growing field, students can learn the art of film, animation, network designing and Internet strategy, while having their focus on voice production, concept presentation and media design.

Candidates will get an opportunity to make their career in the music or film industry, ad agencies and more. They can enrol for a BTech in



media studies.

### Biological mathematics/mathematics biology

One of the highly interdisciplinary subjects, mathematical biology helps define the areas of intersection of significant mathematical problems and fundamental questions in biology. Students who like to leverage the power of mathemat-

ics with biology at their heart can opt to take up this course and help in the discovery of complicated real-life systems by organising, identifying and studying emergent structures.

Biological mathematics will create opportunities for candidates in core research and clinical research, pharmaceutical companies, etc. The best course for this subject is a BTech in biomathematics.

### Economics

Living in a global economy has given rise to the integration of big data and machine learning. Being an economist is something more than just understanding the basics of micro and macro economy; it is about understanding advanced data analysis techniques to figure out the stakes involved in any decision-making scenario.

If a student is eager to pursue their interest in engineering and combines it with passion for economy, they can create wonders by taking up a career in economics analytics. Candidates can leverage their knowledge to join private research firms or government agencies to forecast, analyse and give solutions. A Bachelor of science in economics and BS in analytical economics major are the courses to look out for.

### Forensic engineering

In this field, candidates will get the opportunity to combine their interest in investigation and engineering to assist government and law enforcement agencies by analysing complex, diverse data sets efficiently and creating reports to an evidential standard. They will get to learn about the different kinds of tactical and strategic software. Those interested can opt for a BTech in forensic engineering.

The next generation of engineers need a tailor-made syllabus, on-field exposure, state-of-the-art infrastructure, project integration with research, real-time internships and conferences, and student exchange programmes. Academic and industry sessions from subject matter experts are also important.

Institutions can consider signing memoranda of understanding with expert entities for knowledge exchange, thus establishing an ecosystem where students get to learn directly from industry professionals. Also, it is of utmost importance to impart crucial lateral thinking skills to help students succeed in their domain. Since engineering is a specialisation that is shaping our present and future at the same time, it is mandatory to train the trainers to believe in the philosophy of innovation and the need for multidisciplinary solutions for multidisciplinary problems in an ever-evolving world. Engineers are creators, problem solvers and critical thinkers who can lay down a foundation for generations to come or disrupt the existence of several fields in an instant.

The writer is director, HKBK Group of Institutions, Bengaluru

### PLUS POINTS

#### Ayurvedic help



Sanskriti Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital organised "Ayu Samvad", a public awareness campaign by leveraging the knowledge of Ayurveda in light of the current global pandemic. The campaign was aimed to sensitise students and other stakeholders by creating awareness about the increasing number of Covid cases and how Ayurveda could help.

The seminar showcased presentations and detailed discussions on principles, practices, evaluation and various available solutions as well as the progress made in the domain of Ayurveda. Teachers explained to students about the latest symptoms of Covid-19 and the importance of wearing a mask, using sanitisers and social distancing.

#### New business school



Mahindra University recently announced the launch of its School of Management from the 2021-2022 academic session in academic partnership with Cornell University's SC Johnson College of Business. Three undergraduate programmes – Bachelor of arts in economics and finance, Bachelor of business administration in digital technologies, and BBA in computational business analytics – will be on offer from this academic year.

The School of Management will have a curriculum that is strongly aligned with industry needs, strong research orientation, quality faculty pool and a student-centric pedagogy. For details visit, <https://www.mahindrauni-versity.edu.in/>

#### Unique exposure



The Sutardja Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology at the University of California, Berkeley announced a partnership with The Purpose Academy to enable young minds in becoming responsible business leaders by providing unique exposure. SCET will help support the initiative by connecting students with the UC Berkeley campus and faculty, and by providing mentorship from UC Berkeley students.

The Purpose Academy provides a real-life impact lab environment in which students discover not just what makes impact initiatives successful and scalable but also what makes them fail.

The Purpose Academy is also inviting applications for its summer programme (June-August 2021). The batch size is limited to 25 students and selections are based on interviews. Top students will be given an opportunity to showcase their work at SCET, UC Berkeley.

#### Informed choices



properly.

After becoming aware of these models, it is important to invest time in deciding which works best. One must make sure that the model chosen is compatible with the type of business one is planning for. It will be wrong to go by a model simply because someone else succeeded at it and is wise to pick what suits one's style.

The writer is founder, Caurav Bhagat Academy, Uttar Pradesh

ImaginXP launched a virtual education counselling fair 2021 recently. The mission is to help guide and counsel millions of Indian undergraduate and post-graduate aspirants in discovering lucrative career opportunities in future skills and explore available degree programmes in those skills. In the absence of physical education fairs, conclaves and university visits, students are finding themselves at a loss to make the right career and education choices. The timely event is taking place every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday 5 p.m. onwards till 30 June.

More than 80 corporate houses, 100 industry experts, recruiters, start-up founders, policy makers and 30 universities from across the country are participating. It is a unique opportunity for students to get their queries answered on careers, recruiter expectations, degrees, skills and impact of the pandemic on the job scene.

## CHOOSE HOW YOU MAKE MONEY

It is important to pick a revenue model compatible with the nature of one's business

GAURAV BHAGAT

Entrepreneurship is becoming one of the most desired career paths among 21st-century graduates. It is because the scenario has never been as conducive for entrepreneurship as now. Modern-day challenges motivate innovative minds to come up with novel solutions, which have the potential to become saleable products. Simply having good ideas and products, however, is not enough. One needs to consider several other factors that can influence one's business before diving headfirst into a market rife with competition.

This article delves into presenting a rough idea of what one may do once a product/service has been finalised. Here are some of the common revenue models that are used by start-ups in these times:

### Advertisement

An ad-based revenue model means that one creates a website and lets other websites, applications, service providers, etc, place ads on it and be compensated accordingly. Google AdSense is one such tool available in the market where one can make up to \$ (US) 10 for every thousand page views.

Benefit: It is one of the simplest models. The fact that it helps generate a passive income stream also means one doesn't need to work too hard for it.

Drawback: If one wants to have substantial revenue, it is necessary to create heavy traffic on one's website. Many people also find ads annoying, which may reduce click-through rates and eventually, revenue.

**Affiliate marketing**  
We are living in the age of the

Internet. Having a social media account or a website that boasts high crowd engagement can help bring in tons of revenue. Instead of seeking mainstream advertisement channels, many advertisers are reaching out to social media influencers. One can promote products on one's own website or collaborate with popular social media handles and earn significant revenue.

Benefit: The best thing about this model is that it helps to make more money than an ad-based revenue model.

Drawback: The amount of capital that one can draw with this model depends majorly on one's industry, products and audience. It isn't accessible to all types of entrepreneurs.

### Transaction

It is one of the oldest and simplest revenue models. One sells a product or service and the customer pays for it.

Benefit: It attracts a lot of customers because of its simplicity.

Drawback: Because it is an easy option, it is employed by a lot of organisations, which gives rise to competition and results in the reduction of profit margins.

### Subscription

By employing this model, one allows customers to access a product or service over a certain period by accepting fixed payments (often month to month or year to year). Several over-the-top platforms use this model.

Benefit: Everyone knows that the secret to success in business is creating recurring customers, and this model helps to accomplish that. It creates a steady income flow that keeps growing with the passage of



time.

Drawback: One needs to constantly maintain a high subscribed to unsubscribed ratio to generate enough revenue.

### Retail sales

With this method, one sets up a retail store offering products to customers. It is best suited for products that require logistical support to reach customers. Online retail is an offshoot of this model that is comparatively cost-effective.

Benefit: This way, one can interact directly with the customer and mould one's sales strategy according to actual observation of customer behaviour. It is also great for offering deals and complementary products to existing customers to boost brand name.

Drawback: It is not suitable for companies that are still in their early growth stages as it requires significant capital investment.

### Free product, paid services

This model is different from others in the sense that one has to give away one's product for free, while the customers pay for installation, customisation and other services.

Benefit: This model is great for generating buzz around one's brand as customers always love freebies.

Drawback: Employing this model means that one will be running a services business with one's products as the marketing cost. It is necessary to maintain a fine balance, or it won't be long before there's red in one's ledger.

### Freemium

Through this model, a certain set of services are provided for free. There are some premium features, however, that the customers can unlock by paying for them. Grammarly and LinkedIn are two of the companies that employ this model. Many YouTubers also offer exclusive content on sites like Patreon.com for a nominal subscription fee.

Benefit: Because certain services are being offered for free, the provider develops a good relationship with users. The free content is supposed to act as bait, which then encourages customers to buy a premium membership.

Drawback: Converting free users to paid ones is not always easy. It is important to keep delivering top-notch content and spending enough on marketing the premium services



properly.

After becoming aware of these models, it is important to invest time in deciding which works best. One must make sure that the model chosen is compatible with the type of business one is planning for. It will be wrong to go by a model simply because someone else succeeded at it and is wise to pick what suits one's style.

The writer is founder, Caurav Bhagat Academy, Uttar Pradesh



## SMART GIRLS

India's women hockey players are now tech-savvy and understand the purpose of their training sessions, experienced midfielder Monika (in photo, left) has said. Saturday morning sessions are the toughest, given they are higher-intensity ones, according to her.

For more updates [www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

## THUMBNAILS



**Nadal wins:** Rafa Nadal warmed up for the French Open with a battling 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 win over world number one Novak Djokovic as the Spaniard claimed a record-extending 10th Italian Open title here yesterday in the latest chapter of their rivalry. After a mid-match wobble, Nadal turned up the heat in the decisive moments of his 57th meeting with top seed Djokovic - the pair's ninth in Rome - to secure the victory over the defending champion in two hours and 49 minutes. "I was lucky in some moments, especially against (Denis) Shapovalov," Nadal said, referring to the round of 16 match he won in a tie-break in the decider.

**Child abuse charges:** Australian domestic cricketer Aaron Summers, who has also played in the Big Bash League, was produced in a court in Darwin on Monday after being charged with child abuse. The 25-year-old fast bowler was charged with two counts of possessing child abuse material and one count of grooming a minor.

**Honda riders finish on podium:** Hero MotoSports Team Rally missed out on podium but its riders Sebastian Buñol and Franco Caimi finished a strong fourth and fifth, respectively, at the Andalucia Rally in Villamartin (Spain). Monster Energy Honda Team grabbed twin podium finishes with Joan Barreda claiming the overall win and Pablo Quintanilla securing the third spot. Barreda won the overall race, claiming the title that the squad had previously clinched in the first edition here last year.

**Iga enters WTA top 10:** Polish teenager Iga Swiatek, who won the Italian Open on Sunday to add to last year's French Open crown and the Adelaide Open this year, jumped six places on the WTA Tour rankings to enter the top 10 on Monday. The 19-year-old player is now ninth, behind American legend Serena Williams, winner of 23 Grand Slams, from the list released on Monday.

**No visas for Indian boxing team:** India's participation in this month's Asian Boxing Championships in Dubai looks doubtful as its 20-member team hasn't got the visas, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) secretary said on Monday. "The Indian men and women's boxing teams haven't got visas to travel to Dubai. We are, however, trying our level best to send the teams," BFI secretary Hemanta Kalita told IANS.

# With Barca out of title race, Messi has future to consider

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BARCELONA, 17 MAY

**W**ith Barcelona's season effectively over, Lionel Messi (in photo) now has a big decision to make. Should he finish out his career at the club that helped him become what he is? Or have the team's struggles to keep winning trophies convinced him that he can find more success in Paris or Manchester?

Barcelona yesterday were left without any chance of winning the Spanish league, bowing out of the title race in demoralising fashion after letting Celta Vigo overhaul a goal by Messi and rally for a 2-1 victory. Atletico Madrid beat Osasuna 2-1 and could now only be caught by Real Madrid in next weekend's final round. Barcelona have one game left on the calendar, but with nothing to play for except third place in the league, the club's attention is now fully on the future of its inscrutable star.

Last summer, Messi had



said that he wanted to leave Barcelona after a campaign that finished without a title and a humiliating 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League. When that exit was denied by the club, Messi said

that he would focus on this season and put off any decision until this summer when his contract expired on 30 June.

Since then, Joan Laporta has been elected for a second stint as the club's president.

Laporta ran Barcelona when Messi was just blossoming with the team and maintained a good relationship with the player and his family. Even so, Messi has not confirmed a decision on his future. "I hope not," coach Ronald Koeman replied when he was asked if he believed Messi had played his final match at Camp Nou, a stadium still without fans because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"He is still the best player in the world and today he showed that it is impossible to play without him," Koeman said. "He has scored 30 goals this season (in the league) and earned us a lot of points. It is up to Messi. For me and the club, we want him to stay with us. Because if Leo is not here, we have doubts about who can score."

On the same night that Barcelona's women won the Champions League for the first time by routing Chelsea 4-0, Barcelona's men's line-up were again undone by some sloppy defending and failing to convert their scoring chances. The 33-year-old Messi extended

his club-record tally to 672 goals with a header to give Barcelona a first-half lead against Celta. But like too many times in recent weeks, Barcelona's defence let them down.

Celta striker Santi Mina equalised before half-time on a shot that goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen could have done more to try to keep out. Mina then added a second goal in the 88th after defender Clement Lenglet left Barcelona a man down when he earned a second yellow card. Koeman had succeeded in bringing in some younger players to rejuvenate Barcelona's squad this season and steering the team to the Copa del Rey title last month. The former Barcelona defender had also inspired his team to a hot streak in the league that had allowed it to almost erase a double-digit lead by Atletico. But when Barcelona had the opportunity to move past Atletico and take the lead in late April, it was upset 2-1 by Granada at home. That loss derailed the team.

## 'India's matches were fair and square'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI, 17 MAY

The International Cricket Council today dismissed charges made by Al Jazeera that India's Test matches against England (2016) and Australia (2017) had been fixed, saying the passages of play identified as fixed were entirely predictable and therefore 'implausible' as a fix.

Al Jazeera, in a documentary, Cricket's Match Fixers, released in 2018 had claimed that India's game against England in Chennai in 2016 and the one against Australia in 2017 in Ranchi had been fixed.

The ICC also cleared five people - shown by the channel - of wrongdoing, saying though they had behaved in a questionable manner, no credible evidence was available to charge them. The programme had an alleged bookie boasting of his connections and talking about two Tests involving Virat Kohli's (in photo) Indian team.

The ICC probed the claims. "The programme alleged that two matches were fixed: India v England in Chennai in 2016, he didn't join the investigation.



and India v Australia in Ranchi in 2017. To assess whether the

passages of play highlighted in the programme were unusual in any way, the ICC engaged four independent betting and cricketing specialists to analyse the claims," the ICC said, adding: "All four concluded that the passages of play identified in the programme as being allegedly fixed were entirely predictable, and therefore implausible as a fix."

The ICC did not name the people exonerated but sources said former Pakistan cricketer Hasan Raza, Sri Lanka's Tharanga Indika and Tharindu Mendis were among them. They had joined the investigation. While small-time Mumbai first-class cricketer Robin Morris was also filmed, he didn't join the investigation.

## New Zealand players arrive in London

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON/MELBOURNE, 17 MAY



Most New Zealand Test players have arrived in London for the two-match series against England and the World Test Championship final against India. The players flew in yesterday afternoon and were transferred to the Ageas Bowl in Southampton where they would be based for the tour's first two weeks.

The series-opening match will begin on 2 June in London, while the second match is to start on 10 June in Birmingham. The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand will begin at Southampton on 18 June. "The Black Caps are adhering to strict health protocols including pre-departure vaccinations and covid tests, besides receiving medical bags equipped with masks and hand sanitisers," a New Zealand Cricket Press release said.

The first three days will be spent in hotel room isolation, before training groups of six can be set up from days four to six, pending negative Covid-19 results. A three-day intra-squad game is to start on 26 May at the Ageas Bowl, where six local bowlers who have isolated in advance will help make up the sides. Tim Southee, BJ Watling, Ross Taylor and Neil Wagner will soon join the squad in Southampton. The Maldives-based Indian Premier League contingent of captain Kane Williamson (in photo), Kyle Jamieson, Mitchell Santner, team physio Tommy Simsek and trainer Chris Donaldson too were to roll up all right. After a successful County Championship stint with Durham, batsman Will Young will also link up with the

### Archer ruled out

England paceman Jofra Archer, who recently returned to action after missing the now-suspended IPL, has been ruled out of the Test series against New Zealand as his elbow injury has resurfaced.

The 26-year-old played a game for Sussex against Kent but had to be pulled out of the game after bowling just five overs. Before this match, the fast bowler featured in a game against Surrey last week, bowling 29.2 overs.

### Back home

Australia's IPL players, including Pat Cummins and Steve Smith, arrived in Sydney today after a stop-over on the Maldives owing to a travel ban from Covid-19-ravaged India,

almost two weeks after the T20 league had been suspended because of the health crisis.

Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including players, officials and commentators who had been in the league, landed at Sydney airport. The players, however, couldn't head home immediately as the country had imposed a travel ban from India. They will all be spending two weeks in a Sydney hotel for the mandatory quarantine.

According to national broadcaster ABC, Smith, Cummins, batsman David Warner and Ricky Ponting, who coached Delhi Capitals, were among the people on the Air Seychelles flight. Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey also headed home yesterday via Doha after testing negative for Covid-19 on Friday. He had tested positive on 4 May and was brought to Chennai from Delhi in an air ambulance.

## Azharuddin backs Raman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE, 17 MAY

Former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin on Sunday threw his weight behind WV Raman, saying there are very few sharper brains around in cricket than the recently-removed women's national team coach.

In a surprising move last week, former spinner Ramesh Powar replaced Raman as the Indian women's cricket team's head coach. While the move surprised many, Azharuddin too fully backed his former India teammate Raman, who has represented the country under the stylish Hyderabad's captaincy.

"WV Raman's knowledge of the game and coaching skills can be very useful for many. There are very few sharper brains than him and he has many years of experience. Hyderabad cricket association will do its best to engage him and draw immense benefit," Azharuddin tweeted.

Raman's unceremonious ouster opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs. Raman, who successfully coached the women's team to T20 World Cup final in Australia and is widely acknowledged as one of the best Indian coaches, was removed by Lal and Naik's CAC, which reinstated Powar, who was also removed from the same post in 2018 following a bitter fallout with ODI captain Mithali Raj. Following his ouster, Raman alleged that a "smear campaign" against him has gained unwarranted traction and urged the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly to intervene.

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## Oz high-ups getting inquisitive, suddenly

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## Goalkeeper Becker heads in Liverpudlians' match-winner

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, 17 MAY

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker (in photo, centre) made the 80-m journey into West Bromwich Albion's penalty area, more in hope than any expectation of scoring the stoppage-time goal that would keep alive his team's chances of qualifying for the Champions League.

After all, he'd never scored a goal in his career. No Liverpool keeper had in the club's 129-year history. One textbook header from a corner changed all that. In one of the most sensational moments of this or any Premier League season, Alisson - with his gloves on and unmissable in his black shirt and shorts - found space in



the middle of the area to glance a header into the bottom corner from a perfect delivery by Trent Alexander-Arnold and secure Liverpool a dramatic 2-1 win on Sunday. It came in the fifth minute of added-on time and was delivered with the technique of an established striker. Alisson got up off the ground and was immediately mobbed by his teammates.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was speechless in his technical area. A goalkeeper had scored for just the sixth time in Premier League history, but none of the previous five had been a winner. And Liverpool, against all the odds, could dream once again of the Champions League with one week left of the season. "You

can't explain a lot of things in life," the Brazil international said. For me, the only reason for those types of things is God, he put his hand on my head today and I'm feeling really blessed." Alisson dedicated the goal to his father, Jos Agostin-

ho Becker, who drowned in February after going for a swim on his property in the southern city of Lavras do Sul in Brazil. "I wish he was here to see it. I'm sure he is with God at his side, celebrating," he said.

Without that goal, Liverpool would have been on course to miss out on finishing in the top four, their destiny no longer in their players' hands. Now, wins over Burnley and Crystal Palace will likely seal Liverpool a place in the top four and a return to the Champions League for one of European soccer's grandest clubs.

"What a goal, what a world and unbelievable goal, the technique was insane," Klopp said. "It couldn't have been a better moment, it's just perfect for today. If he is never doing it again, I'm fine. It's a perfect moment." Liverpool have 63 points, one behind fourth-place Chelsea and three behind third-place Leicester with two rounds remaining. Chelsea host Leicester on Tuesday in the next-to-last round. Tottenham are still in the hunt for the top four - if only mathematically - after a 2-0 win over Wolverhampton, but Everton dropped out of the race by losing 1-0 at home to Sheffield United.

**Golden Boot**  
Tottenham striker Harry Kane and Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah are tied on 22 goals heading into the final week of the season as they battle to win the Golden Boot - the trophy awarded to the league's top scorer for the third time. Kane set Tottenham on