



Supreme Court judge  
D.Y. Chandrachud tests  
positive for COVID-19

Page 8



Taliban seizes district  
on the outskirts of  
Afghanistan capital

Page 13



India's retail inflation  
eases to a 3-month  
low of 4.29% in April

Page 14



Former National  
table tennis champion  
V. Chandrasekar dead

Page 15

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## NEARBY



Net spread in Ganga to fish out bodies

PATNA

A day after 71 bodies of suspected COVID-19 victims were retrieved from the Ganga at Chausa in Buxar district of Bihar, the authorities on Wednesday spread a big net in the river to catch bodies floating in from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## Positivity rate in three Haryana districts dire

GURUGRAM

Though Gurugram tops the table for number of active cases in Haryana, followed by Faridabad, the top three districts in terms of test positivity rate in the State are Sonipat, Panipat and Rewari where every second person is testing positive for the deadly virus.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

## Delhi sees 300 COVID-19 deaths, over 13K cases

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 300 COVID-19 deaths and 13,287 new cases on Wednesday, while the positivity rate came down to 17%. There are now 82,725 active cases in the city. The number of cumulative cases stands at 13,61,986 and the death toll at 20,310.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

# Opposition urges PM to start free, universal vaccination

Parties ask govt. to invoke compulsory licensing to expand vaccine production

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

In a joint letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 12 Opposition parties have urged the government to immediately begin a free, universal mass vaccination campaign across the country as the COVID-19 pandemic has "assumed unprecedented dimensions of a human catastrophe".

This is the second such letter by the Opposition parties in less than 10 days to the government. In the earlier one on May 3, they asked the government to ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen and free vaccination.

The signatories to the letter include Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, M.K. Stalin, Uddhav Thackeray and Hemant Soren. Congress president Sonia Gandhi, JD (S) leader H.D. Deve Gowda, NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, CPI general secretary D. Raja and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury are the other signatories.

**No response from govt.** The parties complained that all their previous attempts to draw the government's attention, both independently

Without going into all the acts of commission and omission by the Central government that have brought the country to such a tragic pass, we are of the firm opinion that the following measures must be undertaken on a war footing by your government

Release all money held in the unaccounted private trust fund, PMCare, to buy more vaccines, oxygen and medical equipment required

Though it has not been the practice of your office or government, we would appreciate a response to our suggestions in the interests of India and our people

LETTER TO PM SENT BY OPPPOSITION PARTIES

## Waive GST on Remdesivir, vaccines: Cong.

A GST waiver on vaccines, Remdesivir and oxygen concentrators can save ₹6,000 crore for States and individuals, the Congress said on Wednesday, reiterating that tax must be waived on all goods needed to fight COVID-19. ▶ PAGE 9

and jointly, had come to naught.

"Without going into all the acts of commission and omission by the Central government that have brought the country to such a tragic pass, we are of the firm op-

## Maharashtra, Karnataka stop vaccination

Having run out of vaccine stocks, the Karnataka and Maharashtra governments on Wednesday announced that vaccination for those in the 18-44 age group would be suspended temporarily and priority would be given for second dose. ▶ PAGE 13

nion that the following measures must be undertaken on a war footing by your government," they said.

The government should procure vaccines centrally from all available sources – global and domestic. "Imme-

SIGNATORIES INCLUDE



UDDHAV THACKERAY



SONIA GANDHI



SHARAD PAWAR



SITARAM YECHURY



MAMATA BANERJEE



M.K. STALIN

'Need 6 to 8 more weeks of lockdown'

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI

The head of the main Indian health agency responding to the coronavirus has said districts reporting a high number of infections should remain locked down for another six to eight weeks to control the spread of the rampaging disease.

Balram Bhargava, head of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said in an interview that lockdown restrictions should remain in place in all districts where the rate of infection is above 10% of those tested.

Currently, three-fourths of India's 718 districts have what is known as a test positivity rate above 10%, including major cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru.

Dr. Bhargava's comments are the first time a senior government official has outlined how long lockdowns, which already encompass large parts of the country, need to continue to rein in the crisis in India.

CONTINUED ON ▶  
PAGE 8



# Israel-Palestinian clashes trigger fears of a 'full-scale war'

At least 53 die in Gaza and 6 in Israel



Fighting escalates: Israeli soldiers firing shells towards the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. \* AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GAZA CITY/TEL AVIV

Gaza, including 14 children, and six in Israel, including an Israeli soldier and one Indian national, since Monday. Three Palestinians were killed in West Bank clashes. At least 230 Palestinians and 100 Israelis were wounded.

As world powers voiced growing alarm and the UN Security Council readied for another emergency meeting on the bloody crisis, the UN Middle East envoy Tor Wennesland warned that "we're escalating towards a full-scale war".

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz vowed more attacks on Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in Gaza to bring "total, long-term quiet" before considering a ceasefire.

Gaza militants have launched over 1,000 rockets since Monday, said Israel's Army, which has carried out hundreds of air strikes on Islamist groups in the crowded coastal enclave of Gaza.

The most intense hostilities in seven years have killed at least 53 people in

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 5, 13

# Delhi closes over 100 jab centres due to 'shortage'

Deputy CM says supply of Covaxin has stopped

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday said that more than 100 vaccination centres, where Covaxin is administered, have been closed in the city.

The Delhi government has been raising the issue of shortage of vaccines and urging the Centre to resolve the issue. A total of 1,28,800 doses were administered in the city on Tuesday, down from 1,39,261 doses on Monday.

"More than 100 Covaxin (vaccination) centres have been closed in 17 schools. Covaxin (manufacturer Bharat Biotech) has said it cannot give more than what the Cen-



A woman gets a COVID-19 vaccine at a centre in Delhi's Jahangirpuri on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tral government says," Mr. Sisodia said on Wednesday.

He said the supply of Covaxin to Delhi has stopped, and it was "high time" the Centre recognised the severity of the crisis and plays the role of a "united government". The Deputy Chief Minister also released a letter

to Bharat Biotech to the Delhi government, which read: "We are making dispatches as per the directives of the concerned Govt. officials. We, therefore, sincerely regret that we cannot make any additional supplies as required by you [sic]."

"Although States are will-

ing to pass tenders if the need arises, it is important for the world to see India as one entity instead of a divided nation-state. It is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure availability of vaccine to all States, while States make sure that all citizens are vaccinated within three months after receiving the vaccine from the Centre," the Minister said.

**18-44 group affected** Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi said no centre in Delhi will be able to administer Covaxin from Thursday to the 18-44 age group due to unavailability of the vaccine.

"Our goal is to inoculate 3,00,000 people a day, and we are steadily moving towards this goal, but shortage of vaccines is a huge hurdle," Ms. Atishi said.

SC rejects bail plea of activist Navlakha

'Period of house arrest not custody'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused bail to activist Gautam Navlakha in the Bhima Koregaon violence case. Justice K.M. Joseph pronounced the verdict saying Mr. Navlakha's period of house arrest cannot be counted as "custody" and, hence, he was not eligible for statutory bail.

A Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit had heard arguments raised by senior advocate Kapil Sibal and advocates Nitya Ramakrishnan and Shadan Farasat for grant of default bail to Mr. Navlakha. They had argued that the 34 days of his house arrest from August 28, 2018 to October 1, 2018 amounted to "custody" under Section 167 (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure read with Section 43(D)(2) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Hence, they argued, he had crossed the 90-day period of investigation in custody, following which he should be granted default bail.

The court also highlighted that the investigating agencies were not granted access to Mr. Navlakha during the house arrest. This was taken as a further indication of the fact that his house arrest cannot be viewed as custody under Section 167(2).

Mr. Navlakha had challenged the dismissal of his bail plea by the Bombay High Court on February 8. The HC had upheld the NIA court verdict to deny him bail "despite the petitioner spending over 90 days in custody".

Will move SC for NRC reverification: Assam CM

'We will ask for the court's guidance'



Himanta Biswa Sarma

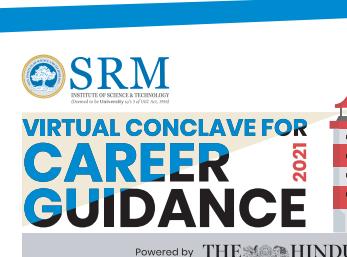
Mr. Sarma said it was currently not in the purview of any State government.

"The CAA is a legislation that was passed by Parliament and, as it stands, the State government has nothing much to do in this case, as rules are yet to be framed... Since, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the exercise to frame the rules is on hold, that is where the matter lies," the Chief Minister said.

On the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that had broken out in the State in 2019-20,

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 9

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HOW AI IS CHANGING THE TECHNOLOGY PERSPECTIVE FROM LEARNING TO JOBS UNDER COVID-19

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## Foreign national held for fraud

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Police have arrested a foreign national for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing Remdesivir injections, officers said on Wednesday.

The accused has been identified as Ashwingwo Ashelly Azenmbuh, a resident of Kumba, Cameroon, they said.

Forty names and phone numbers of victims were found in the message box of the recovered phone. Police have identified 23 victims who have been cheated of around ₹7.50 lakh and further efforts are being made to trace the remaining victims, they said.

Twelve bank accounts of the accused have been identified that are located across India. These accounts have been blocked with an overall existing balance of over ₹85,000, police said.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused charged ₹3,000 to ₹10,000 for one injection and did not supply a single shot to the victims. Police recovered 10 SIM cards and five mobile phones from the accused, they added.

# In pandemic wave, non-COVID patients too are feeling the heat

Some are scared to visit hospitals while online consulting is limited to pvt. hospitals

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

Many non-COVID patients have embraced online consultation, but what has made their plight worse is that government hospitals are not venturing into online consultation on a large scale, said doctors in the city.

Furthermore, most hospitals are treating COVID-19 patients, some are now dedicated centres. People are afraid to go to hospitals where COVID-19 patients are also treated, doctors said.

"Non-COVID patients are facing a lot of difficulties. There are a limited number of hospitals providing treatment only to non-COVID patients," Girish Tyagi, Secretary of the Delhi Medical Council, said.

This is true especially for pregnant women and heart patients. "For Heart patients or pregnant women, it is very difficult to get admission. In private hospitals, tele-consultation is strong. But in govt. hospitals, it is not happening much. There should be more govt. hospitals, exclusively for non-COVID patients. We



A non-COVID patient being brought in for admission at GTB Hospital in the Capital on Wednesday. • R.V. MOORTHY

get many calls for non-COVID emergencies. People are confused a lot. Emergencies are filled with COVID patients, others can't go in there," said Dr. Tyagi.

### Limited reach

At the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), there is no online consultation for non-COVID-19 patients and at Lok Nayak Hospital, it is very limited.

"For non-COVID patients, there are ILBS, GB Pant, Delhi State Cancer Institute and other hospitals. But we do not do an online consultation," a doctor at the RGSSH said.

When asked whether people who had been undergoing treatment for non-COVID health problems are contacting the hospital, the doctor said: "Many of them are taking the medicine and are at home. Most of them know that we are a COVID-19 facility now. People are afraid and they are not coming to enquire. Even for vaccinations, people do not want to come to hospitals. They only want to go to schools."

A Delhi govt. spokesperson said that government hospitals are not doing online consultation as "non-COVID patients can be seen in person".

Suresh Kumar, Medical Director of Lok Nayak Hospital, said that at the hospital they were attending to certain patients during COVID-19 too. "Those with HIV, hepatitis C, hemophilia, thalassemia, etc. we have been seeing them as they needed regular treatment," he said. About online consultation, he said they help the patients a "little bit". "If the patient contacts individual departments [we do], but we do not do it on a large scale," he added.

### Surgeries postponed

Harsh Vardhan Puri, Senior Consultant, Thoracic Surgeon of Medanta Hospital, said they have postponed most surgeries and were seeing patients mostly on tele-video consultation. "We are doing cancer-related surgeries, which cannot wait. Even in this case, most of the patients are told to do an RT-PCR test and 10-15% of them turn out to be positive," Dr. Puri said.

Dr. Puri also said that the government hospitals are not conducting online consultation at the scale it was being done by private hospitals.

## Humble recognition



Nursing staff and doctors celebrate International Nurses Day at a vaccination centre in west Delhi on Wednesday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

# Three held for selling oxygen flow meters at exorbitant rates

They were selling it at ₹5,000 each; 36 devices recovered

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

from a resident of U.P.'s Meerut named Shafiq and later sold the equipment at ₹5,000 per piece, according to police.

cused. He requested him to provide oxygen flow meter urgently, said Anto Alphonse, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka).

The accused agreed but kept on dodging and finally, he agreed to meet at petrol pump, opposite Transport Authority in Burari, he said.

"A strategic trap was laid and accused Karanjeet and Bhanu were apprehended. Also, 32 oxygen flow meters were recovered from their possession along with a motorcycle," the officer said.

On their instance, another accused Arun Gupta, (25), a resident of Delhi's Roshanara Road, pursuing Bachelor of Architecture from a reputed institute in Gurugram, was also arrested in the case, police said.

With the arrest of Karanjeet Singh (20), who worked at a medical store, and Bhanu (21), both residents of Burari, police claimed to have recovered 36 oxygen flow meters, which were being sold for ₹5,000 each, they said.

Since there is an acute shortage and high requirement of oxygen flow meters in the market due to COVID-19, the duo took advantage of the situation to make a quick buck. They purchased oxygen flow meters

## Woman, friend arrested for killing husband following tiff

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 43-year-old woman and her male friend were arrested for allegedly killing her husband following a quarrel between them in outer Delhi's Alipur, police said on Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Sangeeta and her friend Rinku alias Nikhil John. The woman told the police that her husband Phool Ray forced her into

prostitution and also abused her physically and sexually.

A day after the murder, Sangeeta reported to the police that her husband, a vegetable vendor, had been missing since May 8. The next day she told the police that Ray's body was found at a cremation ground in northwest Delhi's Khampur village.

When the police team reached the spot, they found her husband's body with in-

jury marks lying there. The body seemed to be two days old and had started to decompose. The scene of crime was inspected by the officers, a senior police officer said.

A case of murder was registered and an investigation was taken up, said Rajiv Ranjan Singh, DCP (Outer North).

During enquiry, police found that Sangeeta was his second wife. Ray got married

to a woman named Rekha in 2005. Later, after coming to Delhi, he started living with Sangeeta who was a divorcee. The duo got married in 2017, the officer said.

Investigation revealed that around three months ago, Rekha along with her children came to Delhi following which Ray left Sangeeta and started living with them.

"During investigation, Rekha told police that

around three days ago, Sangeeta had a quarrel with her husband. The call detail records of Sangeeta and deceased were analysed and CCTV footage of the area was also analysed. Sangeeta became the prime suspect. After thorough interrogation, she committed to the offence.

She said that her husband forced her for prostitution and also abused her physically and sexually," the DCP said.



**GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI**  
**Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board**  
**FC-18, INSTITUTIONAL AREA, KARKARDOOMA, DELHI-110092**  
**Website: <https://dsssb.delhi.gov.in>**

No. F.1 (603)/P&P/ DSSSB /2021/Advt./5110

Dated: 12/05/2021

### VACANCY NOTICE ADVERTISEMENT NO. 02/21

**IMPORTANT NOTE:- Only online applications will be accepted. Applications received through any other mode shall stand rejected automatically.**

The opening date and closing date for receipt of online applications are as under:-

Opening Date of Application: 25/05/2021 (25<sup>th</sup> May, 2021)

Closing Date of Application: 24/06/2021 (24<sup>th</sup> June, 2021)

Online Applications are invited for recruitment to the following posts under different departments under Govt. of NCT of Delhi:-

Sl No	Post Code	Name of the Post	Name of Department	Group	Grade Pay	Vacancy							
						EWS	UR	OBC	SC	ST	Total	PwD	Ex-SM
1	33/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Hindi) Female	Directorate of Education	B	4600	26	310	91	39	85	551	22	0
2	34/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Hindi) Male	Directorate of Education	B	4600	26	329	163	25	13	556	22	0
3	35/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Natural Sc.) (Male)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	29	482	242	198	89	1040	42	0
4	36/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Natural Sc.) (Female)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	36	339	96	207	146	824	38	0
5	37/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Maths) (Female)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	48	397	142	359	221	1167	52	0
6	38/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Maths) (Male)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	49	388	211	197	143	988	40	0
7	39/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Social Sc.) (Male)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	35	295	116	21	2	469	19	0
8	40/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Social Sc.) (Female)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	42	341	105	72	102	662	19	0
9	41/21	Trained Graduate Teacher (Bengali) (Male)	Directorate of Education	B	4600	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
10	42/21	Assistant Teacher (Primary)	Directorate of Education	B	4200	38	313	6	44	33	434	18	0
11	43/21	Assistant Teacher (Nursery)	Directorate of Education	B	4200	2	52	8	9	3	74	8	0
12	44/21	Jr. Secretariat Assistant (LDC)	Municipal Corporation of Delhi	C	1900	27	114	75	41	21	278	23	28
13	45/21	Counselor	Department of Women & Child Development	B	4200	5	22	13	7	3	50	2	0
14	46/21	Head Clerk	Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board	C	4600	1	7	3	1	0	12	1	0
15	47/21	Assistant Teacher (Primary)	New Delhi Municipal Council	B	4200	35	45	17	16	7	120	5	0
16	48/21	Patwari	Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board	C	2000	1	6	2	1	0	10	0	0

The details of the qualification, age limit, fee etc. are available on the website <https://dsssb.delhi.gov.in/current-vacancies/Delhi-subordinate-services-selection-board>. Candidates must apply online through the website <https://dssbonline.nic.in>. The closing date for submission of online application is up to 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 (till 11:59 PM) after which the link will be disabled. Applications received through any other mode would not be accepted and summarily rejected. Further, the Date of Examinations for the above said posts will be intimated separately in due course.

--sd--

Deputy Secretary (P&P)  
DSSSB

Timings  
DELHI

THURSDAY, MAY. 13	
RISE 05:32	SET 19:04
RISE 06:27	SET 20:32
FRIDAY, MAY. 14	
RISE 05:32	SET 19:05
RISE 07:07	SET 21:28
SATURDAY, MAY. 15	
RISE 05:31	SET 19:05
RISE 07:53	SET 22:20

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	37 24
Safdarjung	37 24
Palam	39 24

Delhi Palam Today  
36°C A spells of rain and thunderstorm likely with gusty moderate winds at some places. Sky will be cloudy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
37°C A spells of rain and thunderstorm likely during morning at some places. Clouding would reduce during day.

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# HC raps govt. for not operationalising hospital

It should learn from the bitter experiences, says court; directs it to submit completion timeline of Indira Gandhi Hospital

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday questioned the Delhi government on why it has not yet fully operationalised its 1,241-bedded Indira Gandhi Hospital, which presently has only 80 beds available, that too for non-serious COVID patients.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghvi and Justice Rekha Palli said, "If a third wave comes, as many experts are warning it might, and your facility is not up and running [to full capacity], then again we would be back to this situation".

The High Court said that Delhi government should learn from the "bitter experience" of the people during the onslaught of the second wave of the pandemic.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, said completion of the hospital was not a pressing issue as around 4,500 beds were available in the Capital at present.



Young beneficiaries after getting vaccinated at a government school in Janakpuri, west Delhi, on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Responding to this, the court remarked that though situation may have "somewhat improved" with regards to availability of COVID beds, "we can't forget the situation which existed just a couple of days ago, when serious patients were in need of hospitalisation".

The High Court directed the Delhi government to submit a detailed affidavit with the timeline of completion of Indira Gandhi Hospital, along with the reason for delay if any. It also remarked that the project appeared to have been not completed due to "lethargy of the State".

The court said the timeline for completion of the Indira Gandhi Hospital should

be realistic and once placed before it, "should be adhered to". The Delhi government will have to respond to the issue by May 24.

During the hearing, the High Court told the Centre it was "high time" that maximum retail price (MRP) of oxygen concentrators and other equipment in demand for COVID treatment was fixed

If a third wave comes and your [Delhi govt.] facility is not up and running [to full capacity], then again we would be back to this situation

HC BENCH

to immediately stop their hoarding and black marketing.

The court also issued contempt notices to all the persons named in the FIRs lodged after May 2 in connection with hoarding and black-marketing of medicines and equipment required for treating COVID-19 and directed them to appear before it virtually on May 19.

#### Black-marketing cases

On May 2, the High Court had ordered that individuals, booked for black-marketing and hoarding be brought before it for taking contempt of court action against them.

The HC was informed that in the hearings before the trial courts, in connection with these FIRs, the public prosecutors as well as the judicial officers appeared to be unaware of the May 2 order of the Bench to book those engaged in hoarding and black-marketing.

It was also informed that a trial court has said that offences cannot be "made up" against such individuals and the option was to book them for contempt of court if they are selling medicines or equipment at exorbitant rates.

It was shown media reports where the trial court, while hearing the anticipatory bail filed by businessman Navneet Kalra in connection with the seizure of oxygen concentrators from his upscale restaurants, has said that first a law has to be made to regulate the prices and people cannot be penalised in a hurry because the High Court wanted steps to be taken.

City records 300 COVID-19 fatalities

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 300 COVID-19-related deaths in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 20,310, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

Also, 13,287 new cases were reported and the total cases stood at 13,61,986. A total of 78,035 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 12,58,951 people have recovered and there are 82,725 active cases.

The test positivity rate was 17.03%. This means that about 17 out of 100 people taking the test are now COVID-19 positive.

There was a sharp rise in positivity from 3.5% on April 1 to 36.2% on April 22. But since then, it has stayed below it. A decrease in positivity is a good sign, as per experts. The positivity rate has been below 20% for the past three days. Of the total 23,345 beds, 19.9% were free as on Wednesday evening.

## IN BRIEF

### BJP slams AAP govt. over vaccine doses

NEW DELHI  
Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Wednesday said the AAP government stood exposed on the issue of vaccine orders not placed by it in time. The people of Delhi, he said, well understood that "no vaccine [doses]" had been ordered by the Delhi government and it only wrote a letter of interest seeking rate quotation, that too as late as on May 7. "They have failed to order vaccine doses and are trying to play blame game to evade responsibility for failing to procure vaccination on time," he said.

## SOS calls from hospitals down

Government is planning to cap prices of oxygen cylinders'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

**C** The Health Department is in the process of creating storage in the city too

ASHISH KUNDRA  
Officer on Special Duty, Health Department

Daily SOS calls for oxygen from hospitals have reduced from a high of 49 calls a day on May 4 to one call on Monday and three calls on Tuesday, said Ashish Kundra, Officer on Special Duty, Health Department.

**Supply ramps up**  
The official said that the allocation of oxygen fixed to Delhi is 590 MT and on Sunday the city received 596 MT, 623 MT on Monday and

prices of oxygen cylinders. The official said that the government has also reached out to private storage facilities outside the city. He said that there is no large-scale oxygen production plan in Delhi.

"Health Department is in the process of creating storage in the city too," the official said.

He also said that challans amounting to more than ₹3 crore were issued by the government in a week related to COVID-19 norm violations.

Nagesh Kariyappa, general secretary of the NSUI and spokesperson Lokesh Chugh claimed that after filing the report, the Delhi police had come to question Mr. Kariyappa at the NSUI office.

"Until 2013, the politicians were responsible towards the citizens but after that, the BJP government came to power and the dynamics have totally changed. Now, the second-most important person in the government after the

Prime Minister is missing during the pandemic," Mr. Chugh said.

"We all are suffering from this disastrous pandemic and what we need is a government to support its citizens and be answerable for their deeds. The current government has failed to do so and thus, the NSUI has filed a missing complaint and is waiting for the government to address to the nation," the NSUI said in a statement.

## 'Missing report' filed against Amit Shah

Leaders are not supposed to run away during a crisis: NSUI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

National secretary of the NSUI and spokesperson Lokesh Chugh claimed that after filing the report, the Delhi police had come to question Mr. Kariyappa at the NSUI office.

"Until 2013, the politicians were responsible towards the citizens but after that, the BJP government came to power and the dynamics have totally changed. Now, the second-most important person in the government after the

## THE HINDU

Air surcharge: Leh, Srinagar & onward — Rs. 5.00 and Kathmandu — Rs. 3.00.

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Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvamur.n@thehindu.co.in

## THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

## This Year Offer Namaz from Home

### Our Request

Maintain Social Distancing

Avoid Personal Greetings or Hugs

Avoid Social Gatherings & Wear Mask

IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS NO GATHERING ALLOWED AT RELIGIOUS PLACES/ PUBLIC PLACES/ GROUNDS/ PARKS ETC.

Follow Latest DDMA Guidelines & Have a Safe EID  
Email to CP, Delhi at : cp.snsrvastava@delhipolice.nic.in | Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL: 112

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL: 1090

Department of Women and Child Development  
1st Floor, ISBT Building, Kashmere Gate, Delhi-06

दिल्ली सरकार  
गति की संस्कारण

**Attention:** If anyone has knowledge of any Child in distress because of his/her parent/s suffering from COVID-19 or if the Child is orphaned due to demise of parent/s or is left without parental care or is in need of Care & Protection, he/she must immediately inform the appropriate Statutory Bodies/States Machineries.

## Where to Inform?

**The Childline Services at 1098 that works 24\*7**

OR

nearest Police Station/ District Child Welfare Committee/ District Child Protection Unit/ DCPCR Helpline (9311551393)/ take child to a registered Child Care Institution.

**CONTACTS FOR CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE/ MEMBER OF DISTRICT TASK FORCE**

Ms. Meenu Mehta, CWC-I, West 8585940221  
Ms. Vaidehi Subramani, CWC-II, South 9910015483  
Ms. Minnie George, CWC-III, Central 9810399985  
Ms. Renu Love, CWC-IV, East 98108 85991  
Ms. Divya Kumar, CWC-V, NE & Shah. 9717374846  
Sh. Varun Pathak, CWC-VI, NW 9811441098  
Sh. Pratap Narain, CWC-VII, SW 9871795330  
Mohd. Iqbal, CWC-VIII, SE 9313609151  
Sh. Sanjay Joshi, CWC-IX, New Delhi 9910110150  
Sh. Varun Pathak, CWC-X, North 9811441098



**CONTACTS FOR DISTRICT CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS/ MEMBER SECRETARY OF DISTRICT TASK FORCE**

Ms. Ritu , DCPO-Central 8744855034  
Ms. Vasudha, DCPO- NE 9718817348  
Mr. Varun, DCPO- South 9650885307  
Ms. Sarita, DCPO- West 8130601924  
Mr. Sudesh, DCPO- NW 9718417666  
Mr. Anurender,DCPO- North 9899012315  
Ms. Vasudha, DCPO- East 9718817348  
Ms. Anita, DCPO- SE 9650448603  
Mr. Shyam, DCPO-New Delhi 7053958728  
Ms. Sarita, DCPO- SW 8130601924

A Central Control Unit (CCU) for child protection functions at WCD (HQ)  
& can be reached for any query at childcare.covid19@gmail.com

Dr. Rashmi Singh, IAS  
Director, WCD

DIP/Shabdarth/D/0016/21-22

## IN BRIEF

'Provide free ration under Central scheme'

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Delhi government of failing to provide free ration to 72 lakh ration cardholders in the Capital under a Central scheme during the lockdown and demanded its immediate implementation. BJP MLAs went to Chief Minister's residence but were not allowed to meet him, they alleged.

## Appeal to appoint kin of deceased DU employees

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A group of Delhi University professors, who are also members of the academic and executive councils, has written to DU Vice-Chancellor P.C. Joshi asking the administration to grant appointments to family members of those who have lost their lives during the

pandemic, to mitigate financial distress.

In the letter to the V-C, the academics said: "The kin and family members of the deceased employees must be hired on priority basis so as to mitigate financial and mental agony that they are facing owing to the loss of their dear one to the virus."

## Jamia Teachers' Association wants hospital on campus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Jamia Teachers' Association (JTA) on Wednesday appealed to Jamia Millia Islamia administration to start a fundraising campaign to build a 50-bed hospital on the campus.

In a letter to the Vice-Chancellor Najma Akhtar, the teachers said they would extend all possible help to create a multi-specialty hospital fully equipped with modern medical tools and facilities.

Stressing on the need for a hospital, JTA secretary M. Irfan Qureshi said: "This is heartening to mention that many teachers and staff members of Jamia have lost their lives to COVID-19 in want of good hospitals which they could not get even running from pillar to post. It is high time we secure the future of Jamia with better medical facility". He added that it had been a dream for Jamia to have a full-fledged medical college, and establishing a 50-bed hospital will open the ways for Jamia Medical College.

## Bystanders share bed on the street, use unclean washrooms

Attendants of COVID-19 patients have to endure difficult conditions at hospitals

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

Two men sat outside the gate of Lok Nayak Hospital on a bed sheet spread over a flex sheet. Behind them, from the hospital's brick wall, hung a violet mosquito net. The arrangement is their bed for the night.

"We used to sleep inside GB Pant Hospital till five nights ago. But the guards kicked us out and now we sleep here on the footpath. There are too many mosquitoes here and even Odomos doesn't work. So we got this mosquito net four-five days ago for ₹150," said Kirpal Singh (46), as he shared the bed sheet with Sandeep Dube (50).

Attendants of COVID-19 patients, who stay overnight at Lok Nayak Hospital and GTB Hospital, the largest and second largest Delhi government-run hospitals, are struggling.

At Lok Nayak Hospital, attendants were found sleeping on the footpath outside the hospital's gate and at GTB



Relatives of COVID-19 patients outside the GTB Hospital in Delhi. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Hospital, they sleep on benches and even on the floor inside the hospital campus and have to adjust with two unclean washrooms.

Most of them are financially backward and cannot afford a room and are forced to spend their nights in and around the hospitals.

## Friendship blooms

When Mr. Dubey and Mr. Singh, both from Uttar Pradesh, met in a ward of GB Pant Hospital in Delhi in February, they didn't know they would become friends, let

alone share a bed on the street outside Delhi.

Mr. Dubey's mother was admitted at GB Pant Hospital on February 6, which is adjacent to Lok Nayak Hospital, and Mr. Singh's brother on February 17. Later, both the patients tested positive and were shifted to Lok Nayak Hospital, a COVID-19 facility.

"After being kicked out of GB Pant Hospital we found this place to sleep. But last night some of our hospital documents got stolen from here," Mr. Dubey said. They duo spend their day-

time talking about Uttar Pradesh, COVID-19 situation and reading Hindi newspapers. "In our villages people still do not wear masks," Mr. Singh said.

## Unclean washrooms

At GTB Hospital, the two washrooms for the attendants are unhygienic and do not have buckets. There is no latch on the door – a piece of rope works as a latch. A portion of the roof has fallen and there were flies inside both the washrooms.

Mukesh Kumar, whose brother is admitted at the hospital, said: "I slept on the floor outside the clinic. The washrooms are really bad, but what can we do?"

Sarveshwar Rao, whose brother is admitted at the hospital, said he plans to spend the night on a bench while Vijay, who accompanied his father, shook his head when asked about the washroom. "The roof is leaking and it is very unhygienic. A plastic bottle is there instead of a bucket and a mug," he said.

## JNU reluctant to start COVID centre on campus: teachers' body

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A day after the Delhi High Court rapped Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) for not responding to requests by students and teachers to set up a COVID Care Centre and oxygen production facility on the campus, the JNU administration called for a meeting to work out the for-

milities and protocols for creating the facility on the campus.

The university was directed by the court to email reports explaining the feasibility, modalities and timeline for setting up of a COVID Care Centre, preferably with oxygenated beds, by 9 a.m. on May 13, the next date of hearing.

Members of the JNU Teachers' Association that attended the meeting said the JNU administration continued to be reluctant to the move as they did not have doctors and nurses to manage the facility.

"There was a meeting scheduled on Wednesday morning by the JNU administration but the link to the on-

line meeting did not have the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of the area as mandated by the court. I pointed this out but the meeting continued without the official being present," JNTUA secretary Moushumi Basu said.

"All the administration needs to do is to start tele-consulting facilities and an isolation centre on the campus that even RWAs have been doing," she said.

**MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI NOTICE**

Shri Amit Kumar, Emp.- 18329801615, Tech-II/Filter (Fur/Shunting)/MCF/RBL S/o SH. Jagat Lal, Village-Chapura, Post-Majhiyan, Distt. - Kaushambi-212201 (UP) remained continues unauthorized absent from 18.12.2020 to till date. So Major Charge sheet No. M-100/MCF/RBL/DAR/A.K. dated 10.04.2021 was issued and sent to your above permanent address by Registered post. But you neither appeared nor provided any reply or information to this office.

You are hereby given last opportunity to appear before disciplinary authority along with representation within two weeks from the date of publication of the notice; else ex parte action will be taken against you.

D.A. & AWM/Fur. Shunting

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(An Autonomous body under Department of DoT & eGov, Govt of Jharkhand)  
Ground Floor, Engineer's Hostel - I, Near Golchakkar, Dharwa, Ranchi, Jharkhand  
Phone. 0651-2401040, 2401067, 2401040 email: japtit.doit@rediffmail.com

**FINAL TECHNICAL BID EVALUATION RESULT**

Empanelment of Agencies under Manpower Rate Contract for providing various category of Manpower to various Departments/ Organizations/Offices of the State Government of Jharkhand

Tender Ref: JAP-IT/RC/MANPOWER/01/2021

With reference to the above tender it is hereby informed that final result of technical bid evaluation is being published for the purpose of information for all bidders. The final result of technical bids evaluation can be downloaded from e-Procurement Portal (<https://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>).

Commercial bids of technically qualified bidders will be opened online, through Virtual Meeting (Via Zoom App) on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2021 at 3:00 PM.

Zoom Meeting code and link will be shared to the concerned ASAP.

**PR Ref No. 241270** **Sd/-** **CEO, JAP-IT**

**Corrigendum Notice**

Subject: Tender No. OP/203/2021-22 – DNIT for providing additional 4 x 315 KVA P/M T/Fs and augmentation of existing 4 Nos. 200 KVA P/M T/F with 315 KVA P/M T/F at various locations for the improvement of LD System in Ram Darbar Ph-I & Ph-II under the jurisdiction of Electricity, 'OP' Sub Divn. No. 5, U.T. Chandigarh.

Some amendments in the DNIT have been made in the subject cited tender. The same can be seen / downloaded from the website <https://etenders.chd.nic.in>. All the other terms and conditions shall remain the same. The opening date of the tender will remain the same i.e. 17.05.2021 at 16.00 Hrs.

—Sd—  
Executive Engineer,  
Electricity (OP) Division No. 2  
Chandigarh, U.T.

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Manisha D/o Suraj Bhan R/o RZ-32A/29 Gali No. 4, Geetanjali Park, West Sagar Pur, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Sagar Pur, Delhi since 13.02.2021. In this regard, a case DD No. 71A Dated 16.02.2021 has been registered at P.S. Sagar Pur, Delhi. The description of the missing girl is as under.



MANISHA

Age: 18 Years Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5', Face: Long, Hair: Normal, Wearing: Blue colour jeans skin and jeans pant. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped girl then please inform P.S. Sagar Pur, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Ph: 011-2436638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639

**Sd/- SHO**

PS: Sagar Pur, Delhi  
Ph.: 011-28522655

DP/53/SW/2021

**SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL**

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Sana Uddin, D/o Mohd. Fariduddin, R/o RZ-67/350, Khasra No. 350, Jagdamba Vihar, West Sagarpur, New Delhi, Age 28 years, Height 5', Complexion Fair, Round Face, Medium Built, Wearing White colour suit, white colour plajo and black colour chappal in feet has been missing from her house since 28.04.21 at 10.45 pm. In this regard a DD No. 13-A dated 29.04.21 has been lodged at PS Sagarpur, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the following.

**SHO**

E-mail ID:cic@cbi.gov.in  
PS: Sagarpur, New Delhi  
Tele: 011-23014046, 23015218  
Fax: 011-23011334

DP/53/SW/2021

**NOTIFICATION**

**GOVERNMENT OF KERALA**

**PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS DEPARTMENT**

Dated: 12/05/2021

The last date for receipt of the applications for one anticipated vacancy for the post of Administrative Member in the Kerala Administrative Tribunal is extended from 30.04.2021 to 5 p.m. on 22.05.2021.

The details of eligibility conditions and the application form to be filled up may be downloaded from the Information and Public Relations Department's website ([www.prd.kerala.gov.in](http://www.prd.kerala.gov.in)), the High Court website ([www.hightcourtofkerala.nic.in](http://www.hightcourtofkerala.nic.in)) and the Kerala Administrative Tribunal website ([www.keraladministrativetribunal.gov.in](http://www.keraladministrativetribunal.gov.in)). All the applicants should submit Integrity Certificate issued by the respective Head of Departments along with their applications. In case of serving officers of Central/State Government, their applications should be routed through the Cadre Controlling Authorities. Defective and late applications will not be considered. The applications with relevant documents should be addressed to the Additional Chief Secretary, Personnel & Administrative Reforms Department, Government Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram-695001. The application envelope should carry the title "Application for the post of Administrative Member, Kerala Administrative Tribunal".

(Sd/-) Additional Chief Secretary  
Personnel And Administrative Reforms Department

4 CITY

**DIP/J-1218/21**

**WESTERN RAILWAY**

**WORK OF OUTSOURCING FOR TRACK MAINTENANCE**

Executive : DEN (CENTRAL) MMCT, Tender Notice No. & Date : BCT/21-2414 dt. 12-05-2021, Work and location : Udhana-jalgana section :

Outsourcing of track maintenance by engaging companion to Patrolman/keyman for monsoon & winter patrolling under SSEP(P.wy)Yvara, Approx. cost of work : ₹ 26,73,300.00, EMD : ₹ 0, Date & Time of submission : On 04-06-2021 till 15.00 hrs. Date & Time of opening : On 04-06-2021 till 15.30 hrs.

Regarding detailed nature of containing cost of tender document (Non-Refundable), EMD, Eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender condition please visit [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in).

Manual offer will not be considered, 101 Like us : <https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly>

**WESTERN RAILWAY**

**Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of IBM Blade Server H Chasis**

Dy. FA & CAO(IT), Western Railway, 1st floor, station building, Churchgate, Mumbai- 400 020 invites offers through E-tender portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) under Single bid system i.e. Technical bid with terms & conditions and Price bid for the following tender:- Tender No: ED/PEN-E789-AMC-ARPAN-S, Name of work : Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of IBM Blade Server H Chasis with storage on blades 08 nos. Intel Server performance Xeon for a period of two years. NIT Cost (in ₹) : ₹ 8,40,280, Earnest money deposit (EMD) (in ₹) : Declaration of Bid Security, Bidding Start Date : 17.05.2021, Bid submission closing on : 31.05.2021 - 15.00 Hrs., Instruction of tenders: 1. Only E-offers submitted online through E-tender portal will be considered. Please note that printed offers will not be entertained. 2. The date of tender, terms & conditions and scope of work are uploaded and are available only in electronic format in our website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). 094 Like us : <https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly>

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**WESTERN RAILWAY**

**Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of IBM Blade Server H Chasis**

Dy. FA & CAO(IT), Western Railway, 1st floor, station building, Churchgate, Mumbai- 4

# Kerala woman killed in rocket attack on Israel

She was working in Ashkelon, near that country's border with Gaza

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan confirmed early on Wednesday that a Keralite woman was killed in a rocket attack on Ashkelon, near Israel's border with Gaza.

The deceased was identified as Soumya Santosh, a resident of Keerithodu in Idukki district. She was working in the coastal city as a housemaid.

Her neighbourhood had come under rocket attack from militants in Gaza. The fighting between Israel and Palestinians has intensified recently.

Mr. Muralidharan tweeted: "Spoke with the family of



Soumya with her husband Santhosh and son.

Ms. Soumya Santosh to convey my deep condolences at her tragic demise during the rocket attacks from Gaza today. Assured all possible assistance."

#### Embassy receives body

Ms. Soumya's husband Santhosh and their son survive her. Some television channels reported that she was

employed as a caretaker in an Israeli household since 2014.

In a separate post on Facebook, Mr. Muraleedharan said the Indian Embassy in Israel had received the body of Soumya Santosh from the local authorities.

The Minister said efforts were afoot to bring the body home at the earliest.

Mr. Santhosh's brother Sajji, who resides at Keerithodu, told *The Hindu* that she was

A CORRESPONDENT  
IDUKKI

Keerithodu, a little-known village near the district headquarters at Cheruthoni, on Wednesday mourned the unexpected death of Soumya Santosh, 32, in a mortar shell attack at Ashkelon on the border with Gaza in Israel on Tuesday evening.

According to her husband Santhosh, Soumya had decided to quit her job as a housemaid in Israel and wanted to settle in Keerithodu.

Soumya's family has been in shock since they heard that she was killed in the mortar attack.

What Mr. Santhosh could see on video was only smoke and soon the video too got cut off. He anxiously waited for information from the spot and contacted his sister Sherly, who is also working near Ashkelon. She made

ode, told *The Hindu* that the shell hit as she was talking to her husband. She told him that she was in the grip of fear as intermittent mortar shells from Hamas in Gaza were pounding the residential neighbourhood.

Soumya said she would soon move to the bunker inside the house for safety and did not know when she could speak to him again. Then the mortar shell fell and her voice was cut.

Mr. Santhosh could see on video was only smoke and soon the video too got cut off. He anxiously waited for information from the spot and contacted his sister Sherly, who is also working near Ashkelon. She made

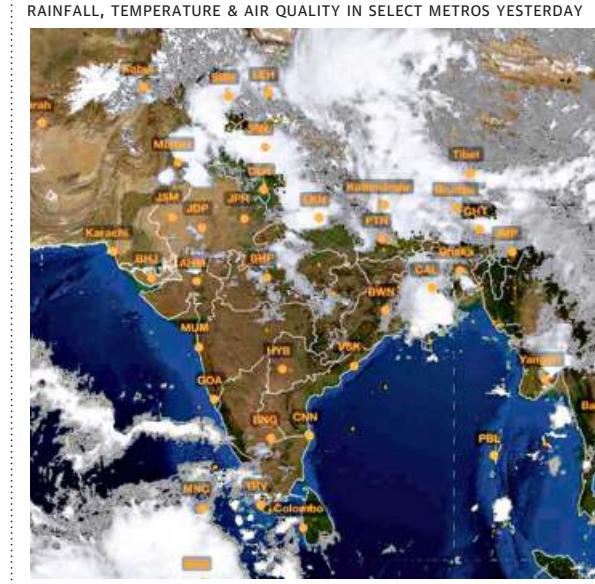
some enquiries and informed him that Soumya had died in the attack.

#### Bringing back the body

Soumya was working as a housemaid for an elderly woman at Ashkelon. She had visited Keerithodu a year-and-a-half ago after moving to Israel 10 years ago. She had planned to come home last year, but postponed the trip due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Idukki MP Dean Kuria-kose said he had written to the Union Foreign Affairs Ministry to speed up the process of bringing the body back. The officials assured him that they would take the necessary steps, he said.

#### WEATHER WATCH



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

**Forecast for Thursday:** Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Haryana, Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, West Bengal, Odisha, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Chhattisgarh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.7...	23.3	23.3	Kozhikode	50...	33.4...	25.9
Ahmedabad	...	41.0...	27.2	Kurnool	8...	39...	24.6
Aizawl	4...	26.0...	19.9	Lucknow	...	37.5...	26.5
Aligarh	...	39.1...	24.4	Madurai	...	37.8...	27.1
Bengaluru	...	31.9...	23.5	Mangaluru	0.3...	33.0...	25.6
Bhopal	...	40.7...	23.4	Mumbai	...	34.3...	27.0
Bhubaneswar	...	35.8...	22.1	Mysuru	...	34.0...	21.5
Chandigarh	...	32.0...	24.1	New Delhi	...	36.8...	23.5
Chennai	...	37.7...	29.4	Patna	2...	31.4...	21.0
Coimbatore	...	35.4...	24.9	Port Blair	...	34.4...	26.2
Dehradun	0.2...	32.0...	20.1	Puducherry	...	35.3...	26.9
Gangtok	55...	16.8...	12.1	Pune	...	38.2...	22.7
Goa	...	36.0...	27.0	Raipur	23...	36.7...	23.7
Guwahati	...	31.5...	23.4	Ranchi	0.6...	35.0...	20.1
Hubballi	...	34.0...	23.0	Shillong	...	21.7...	14.9
Hyderabad	0.8...	39.5...	25.5	Shimla	...	25.7...	17.4
Imphal	0.8...	25.0...	18.5	Srinagar	0.1...	22.7...	12.8
Jaipur	0.6...	38.0...	24.8	Thiruvananthapuram	156...	31.1...	24.8
Kochi	27...	25.0...	22.5	Tiruchi	...	39.7...	28.9
Kohima	1...	22.0...	13.0	Vijayawada	24...	37.6...	24.4
Kolkata	111...	32.5...	21.4	Visakhapatnam	...	36.8...	22.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	26	39	47	70	87	...
Bengaluru	...	60	67	74	73	...
Chennai	15	5	7	25	...	...
Delhi	12	21	65	139	159	...
Hyderabad	4	45	66	41	57	...
Kolkata	11	19	13	52	52	...
Lucknow	7	35	57	152	144	...
Mumbai	50	8	6	22	111	...
Pune	6	13	51	51	54	...
Visakhapatnam	16	48	9	29	44	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Thane, Maharashtra recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 239 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 13

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

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

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

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

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing and premature death in people with heart disease



**Long wait:** Consumers waiting to get a refill in Visakhapatnam after many delivery boys tested positive. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

five while Alappuzha reported four deaths. The State had 4,32,789 active cases. COVID patients in hospital rose to 34,436 with 3,593 new admissions.

Ernakulam had the highest number of active cases at 67,180 and new cases at 6,410.

Karnataka on Wednesday reported 39,998 new cases, 16,286 of them from Bengaluru Urban. With 517 deaths, the toll rose to 20,368. The daily TPR stood at 29.67%.

Andhra Pradesh reported 89 deaths and 21,452 new infections on Wednesday. The TPR of 90,750 samples was 23.64%.

Visakhapatnam reported 11 new deaths, East Godavari

ri, Krishna and Vizianagram nine each, Chittoor, Guntur and Nellore eight each, Srikakulam seven, Anantapur six, Kurnool five, Prakasam four, West Godava-

ri three and Kadapa two deaths. East Godavari reported close to 3,000 new infections.

In Telangana, testing remained largely unchanged

on the first day of a 10-day lockdown. On Wednesday, 69,525 people were tested.

The State reported 4,723 fresh cases and 31 more deaths. Greater Hyderabad accounted for the most number of new cases at 745.

Tamil Nadu's daily case count surpassed the 30,000-mark on Wednesday, with 30,355 more people testing positive and 293 succumbing to it. Four districts – Chennai, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore and Tiruvallur – accounted for 46% of the fresh infections. Chennai accounted for 7,564 cases and 89 deaths.

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

## NORTH & EAST

# 3 Haryana districts in dire straits

'Every second person testing positive for COVID-19 in Sonipat, Panipat and Rewari'

ASHOK KUMAR  
GURUGRAM

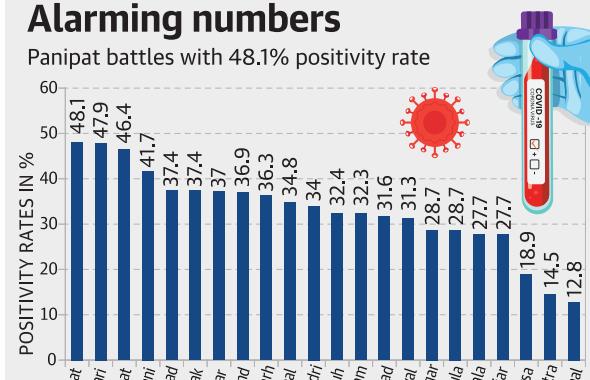
Though Gurugram tops the table for active cases in Haryana followed by Faridabad, the top three districts in terms of positivity rate in the State are Sonipat, Panipat and Rewari with every second person testing positive for the deadly infection, as per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's latest weekly statistics for districts with more than 10% positivity rate.

Nuh with highest 55.8 % positivity rate for May 4-10 week has dramatically slipped to twelve position with the positivity rate of 32.4% for May 5-11 week.

**'Not the right picture'**  
Deputy Commissioner, Nuh, Dhirendra Khadgata, said that Union Health Ministry data did not reflect the correct picture due to discrepancies in data uploading. He said the current positivity rate in Nuh was around 25 %. Mr. Khadgata conceded that the number of tests being conducted daily was low, but added that efforts were on to increase it substantially. The Nuh health department collected only 1,216 samples on May 11.

Mr. Khadgata said the

#### Alarming numbers



lone laboratory in Nalhar with a capacity of 1,500 tests daily catered to Mahendergarh and Rewari as well, along with Nuh.

However, the locals claimed the health infrastructure was in shambles and a large population was left at the mercy of the quacks. "I went to Nalhar Medical College after my oxygen levels dropped two days ago, but they turned me away saying there was no bed. Every day I get calls from Mandikheda Hospital saying that a team would visit me, but no one showed up till date. Many in my village have fever, cough and

breathlessness. With no help from the administration, they are forced to consult the quacks," said Saleem Khan, a resident of Madhi village, who contracted the infection a week ago.

Deputy Leader of the Congress Legislative Party and Nuh MLA Aftab Ahmed said nothing had changed even two weeks after the



## Protecting prisoners

Imprisonment practices need a relook so that the police do not effect unnecessary arrests

If overcrowding of prisons has been a perennial problem in this country, high occupancy levels can only mean bad news amidst a pandemic. The Supreme Court has been intervening from time to time to address this problem, but its latest order directing the interim release of eligible prisoners acquires salience in view of the uncontrolled second surge in the raging pandemic. Last year, the Court had passed such an order quite early – the one of March 23, 2020 came even before the nation-wide lockdown. The Court had then ordered all States to take preventive steps as well as constitute high-powered committees to determine the class of prisoners who could be released on bail or parole for a specified period. In directing this week that besides identifying more prisoners for release, the same set of prisoners be given parole this year too, the Court continues its trend of seeking to protect prisoners as well as those guarding them from getting infected. There have been significant initiatives to prevent any uncontrollable spread within the congested jails, ranging from stopping the practice of transporting remand prisoners to court for periodical extension of custody and hearings to asking authorities to prepare readiness and response plans. The Court's order is welcome, both as a move to decongest jails and a measure that protects the right to life and health of the prisoners. Now that the issue of reducing occupancy in the prison is once again under focus, and not merely for the usual reason of overcrowding, but also in view of the vulnerability of prisoners and prison staff to infection and disease, a comprehensive look at imprisonment practices in the country may be in order.

There have been reports of prisoners testing positive and getting hospitalised. How far the regular testing and medical treatment available to inmates across the country is effective is unclear. Further, even political prisoners, such as those jailed in the Bhima Koregaon case without any direct link to any act of violence, are being repeatedly denied bail, solely because stringent laws have been invoked against them. Some political activists in Delhi are also in jail under anti-terrorism laws for alleged complicity in riots early last year. The courts must take into account their vulnerability to infection and consider bail. In its order, the Supreme Court has rightly emphasised the need to adhere to the norms it had laid down in *Arnes Kumar vs State of Bihar* (2014) under which the police were asked not to effect unnecessary arrests, especially in cases that involve jail terms less than seven years. In the past, the Court has also asked authorities in all districts in the country to give effect to Section 436A of the Cr.P.C., under which undertrials who have completed half of the maximum prison term prescribed for the offence may be released on personal bond. Effective follow-up action is needed to audit these measures so that these are not implemented selectively or arbitrarily.

## State action

Instead of dictating how States deal with the pandemic, the Centre must be a facilitator. India's national positivity rate, or the proportion of tested cases returning positive, is around 21%. Moreover, 533 of the 734 districts have reported positivity greater than 10%. There are 26 States that had more than 15% positivity, nine with over 25% and 10 with 20%-25% positivity. Couple that with the faltering vaccination drive, and the picture is far from pretty. On April 12, India administered 3.7 million doses of vaccine and after April 26, it has failed to administer over 3 million doses a day. Ever since the vaccine drive was expanded to all adults over 18, on May 1, the maximum number of daily doses administered has been 2.4 million. This, even as daily new cases added continue to be above 380,000 and deaths close to 4,000 a day. The oxygen crisis continues and the pandemic has now established itself in rural India in lethal proportions, with macabre reports of bodies surfacing in the Ganga in the stretch from Uttar Pradesh to Bihar. All of these point to the fact that there is a very large pool of those infected and prone to infecting those around, bringing up the question of whether a national lockdown should be reimposed.

No fewer than 18 States have imposed various grades of lockdown or curfews. Some only lay stress on shutting down marketplaces whereas others are more reminiscent of the curbs of March and April last year. These restrictions are expected to be in force at least till the third week of this month. Many of the States with the highest positivity rates and growth in infections have already imposed restrictions on the main sources of continued spread. These include religious gatherings, social functions and leisure visits to public entertainment spaces. A 'national lockdown' at this stage has only cosmetic value. India's economy was already in a nosedive before March 2020 and the sudden imposition wreaked havoc on the migrant workforce. The brutality of the second wave has burnished the importance of masking up and opting for a vaccine as early as possible. In the absence of newer effective treatments, these continue to be the mainstay in staying safe. A lesson that has emerged from the pandemic is that States are best equipped to take care of themselves with the Centre doing its job best while acting as a facilitator. Central Ministers, armed with the best medical experts, had declared early this year that India was in the 'end game' of the pandemic and that India had "shown the world" how to beat it. Instead, the Centre must focus on distributing equitably across States vaccines, oxygen tanks, testing kits and other critical medical equipment while also accounting for a potential third wave.

# The science teaching and rationality India needs

The novel coronavirus crisis has fully revealed the price to be paid in the neglect of education and health



KRISHNA KUMAR

mosquitoes does prevent the chances of being infected by the parasite that causes malaria, carried by mosquitoes. Malarial mosquitoes breed in stagnant water, and that is where the imperative of avoidance begins.

### Logic of avoidance

For many decades now, schoolchildren have scored marks by giving the correct answer to the question, 'How can mosquitoes be stopped from breeding in our neighbourhoods?' It is a rare school that gives children a task of going around noticing stagnant puddles formed during the rainy season containing visible mosquito larvae. The standard textbook line of action is to spread kerosene on stagnant water. That is what municipal workers supposedly do, and that is what is taught in the lesson on the services that municipalities provide.

As the pedagogic calendar goes, once a lesson has been delivered and the test based on it taken, there is no reason to recall its content in the later parts of the year, except for the final examination.

So, if malaria, dengue and chikungunya persist during the long autumn and winter months, it is unlikely that a teacher will relate them to the lesson taught earlier on mosquito prevention. Thus, while mosquitoes are avoidable, the diseases they cause take on an inevitable character, quite different from the inevitability that my autorickshaw driver was associating with an impending accident.

Before the advent of antibiotics, typhoid fever and jaundice were life-threatening, and especially in the case of children. Doctors knew that it was possible to prevent both these diseases by avoiding contaminated water. And this could be done by boiling drinking water. But more usually, boiling of water only started after someone had been diagnosed as suffering from typhoid, or from jaundice. In any



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

case, boiling was cumbersome and expensive. Along with antibiotics, water purifying devices and bottled water have distanced us from the grim experiences associated with water-borne diseases prevalent before the 1970s. Common diarrhoea is still a threat to the life and health of babies. Instead of preventing it by ensuring the supply of clean water in all geographical locations, India as a nation has ended up addressing the problem of drinking water by popularising personalised devices.

### No public systems

The absence of public systems has proved costly both in health and in education. The teaching of science from the primary levels was a major policy initiative taken in the early decades of Independence through which the welfare state hoped to create general awareness on crucial matters of disease prevention and health.

But the teaching of science is more than talking about science and telling students what ought to be done. In the case of boiling water, for example, it is hardly enough to say that high temperatures kill microbes. To achieve the belief that it actually does, one needs to see microbes with one's own eyes.

For an overwhelming majority of children, our system of education fails to provide them this kind of experience, even at the higher secondary level. The idea that boiling purifies water remains a

matter of giving the correct answer in the examination, rather than a belief based on evidence seen through a microscope. This can hardly be described as a failure of education, because the seed of a capable public system was never sown, and, therefore, we could hardly expect a harvest. The novel coronavirus crisis has fully revealed the price that the neglect of education and health has wreaked.

### COVID compulsion

Just this week I had the opportunity to talk to a city-based rickshaw puller who had booked a seat in a private bus which would take him to his native village in Uttar Pradesh. When I asked him why he was going, he gave me the obvious answer I had expected, referring to the sheer inadequacy of income to sustain himself in the city. But then he mentioned another reason why he had to go urgently, and this had to do with a wedding in the village. He had to attend it, he said, otherwise his relatives would feel upset with him. It did not help our conversation when I alluded to the risk of him contracting the novel coronavirus while travelling in a bus and later attending a wedding ceremony.

He was not particularly interested in my concern that he must take every precaution, and especially make sure that he did not remove his mask during the journey and during the wedding ceremony. His response to my concern for his well-being reminded me of what the autorickshaw driver had said many years ago, namely, that the inevitable cannot be avoided. In this case, the inevitable was hardly a matter of fate. In fact, it is the wedding that was inevitable and therefore unavoidable, even if it posed the risk of getting sick.

My interlocutor also shared with me the feeling that the pandemic is mainly in the big cities and that villages are free of it. Ap-

parently, despite being on WhatsApp, he had not heard about the surge currently being witnessed across rural parts of northern India. But the most interesting part of this conversation had to do with the mask. If the mask, a bit like boiling water, prevents an invisible microbe from entering the human body, it is a matter of faith for someone who has no idea of the world of invisible pathogens.

### The mask and the citizen

We may wonder why several western countries, where education is supposedly better, also failed to convince their citizens to wear masks. This argument is based on a positive stereotype of the West. Looking more closely at different countries that comprise the West, one noticed sharply differentiated levels of the quality of their school science. Over the last half century, some of the richest countries have allowed science at school to decline. India's education system, which was already impoverished, suffered severe cutbacks under the repeated waves of lopsided economic reforms. New norms of public financing have undermined science teaching, robbing ordinary citizens of the intellectual resources they might have acquired during childhood.

But science teaching alone cannot create miracles. For science to mean anything, a rational social environment is needed. Moreover, for science to acquire meaning during school life, it is important that children grow up in an ethos where dissent and debate are encouraged. It is obvious that the benefits of science and its teaching do not accrue when the democratic order, and the institutions on which it is based, are not in good health.

*Krishna Kumar is a former director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training and the author of Education, Conflict and Peace'*

## Forget 'play', the machine needs to be scrapped

The Centre must revisit its vaccine policy by procuring 100% doses which can then be equitably disbursed to States



PARTHA MUKHOPADHYAY

In its affidavit (<https://bit.ly/3eHudlb>) submitted to the Supreme Court on May 9 in the *suo motu* COVID-19 management case, the Union of India avers, in the words of Justice Holmes, that "play must be allowed for the joints of the machine". Arguably, in this instance, such play is irrelevant because the machine needs to be scrapped. The Centre must revisit its policy by procuring 100% of the vaccine doses which can then be equitably disbursed to the State governments.

### Reasons to revisit policy

The States were indeed thoughtless to ask for an immediate expansion of vaccination to all adults, beyond the 45-plus years priority group, but the affidavit shows the Centre as cavalier and spiteful. The submission provides three good reasons to revisit the new "liberalised" policy.

First, it is indefensible and out of line with international practice; put bluntly, it is patently stupid.

Second, it is incoherent and internally inconsistent – it alludes to liberalisation while controlling both price and quantity for every State – an inevitable consequence of the infeasibility of a liberalised policy at this time. Indeed, the Centre is currently threatening to penalise States that are not administering sufficient second doses.

Third, the submission frequently resorts to legal legerdemain, obfuscating the argument, instead of constructively addressing the es-

sential problem at hand.

To begin with, at a time when the Centre is deciding which manufacturer of Remdesivir, hitherto a competitively marketed drug with multiple manufacturers, will sell how much to which State at what price, it is concomitantly deregulating the vaccine market, which currently has just two suppliers, in a situation of extreme shortage, exacerbated by adding 600 million 18 to 44-year-old citizens to 200 million unvaccinated people above the age of 45. This is far from using "differential pricing... to instil a competitive market", a goal best left for later. In every other country, only the national government is buying vaccines, with odd exceptions such as Indonesia and the Philippines, where corporates are allowed to buy internationally, to vaccinate their workers for free. It is also perplexing why Covaxin is not more widely licensed, given that the affidavit makes it clear that much of the core work in developing the vaccine was done at the ICMR-NIV in Pune.

### The high price States will pay

In the affidavit, the Centre baldly admits that "by nature of its large vaccination programme, [it] places large purchase orders for vaccines as opposed to the State Governments and/or Private Hospitals and therefore, this reality has some reflection in the prices negotiated" – i.e., it can buy vaccines cheaper than States or the private sector. If so, why should it not buy and distribute, as it was doing till April 30?

Next, the Centre takes 50% (it may have booked more than its share) to give to States for the 45-plus age group, and the States get 25% of the total vaccine production for their use. Each State is "informed by the Central Govern-

ment in writing about the number of vaccines it would receive...." Further, "by conducting informal consultations with the vaccine manufacturers, [it] ensured that the prices of vaccine is uniform for all the States", i.e., the Centre has fixed both quantity and price. It is clearly not a liberalised policy.

The balance 25% in each State "will go to the private sector based upon the contracts between private sector and vaccine manufacturers," but how is the private sector in a specific State defined, since contracts are at a corporate level and not by State units? Also, what happens if the private sector cannot absorb the 25%? After all, in terms of CoWIN sites, the private sector, which earlier had about 10% share, is now under 3%. Day before yesterday, Bihar had nine sites, Chhattisgarh, 32 and Arunachal Pradesh had none. The private sector allocation actually privileges large urban areas, where it is more present.

Thus, instead of the full production at zero cost, the States now get one quarter of the production at twice or more the price paid by the Centre. The private sector will access the other quarter, at a landed cost that, based on current reports, might be up to 10 times the price it paid earlier.

Little did States know that their petulant insistence on immediate universal vaccination would come

at such a high price.

### The Centre has little to show

But, cannot States secure other supplies, e.g., via global tenders that many are now floating? The affidavit states, quite sensibly, that "efforts in the direction of procurement of other vaccines from other countries is essentially a responsibility of the Central Government" and "discussions for procurement of vaccines... has been going on since third-quarter of 2020... These negotiations are a complex undertaking which is currently ongoing on a war footing using all resources including diplomatic channels." Effectively, the Centre has been trying for over six months, with little to show for it. Thus, States are either being led up the garden path – it is difficult to accept that States are so naïve – or their global tenders are just grandstanding.

Finally, legal legerdemain, that is most evident in the response to door-to-door vaccination. Yes, it is impracticable. But, the spirit was to make vaccination easier to access, e.g. through pop-up centres in communities, maintaining the necessary protocols. Instead, after expending five pages on creating and demolishing an unnecessary straw man of door-to-door vaccination, the affidavit dismisses the central question as to "whether the Central government will revisit its policy by procuring 100% of the doses which can then be equitably disbursed to the State Governments" with an airy "the answer has been already elaborated hereinabove", when it has no such answer.

Is there not enough residual trust between the Centre and States for such equitable distribution? If so, the need is to reinvigorate this trust, rather than accept policies leading to further

Balkanisation. What then does this liberalised policy accomplish? It increases the vaccine maker's revenue, with a weighted price of ₹477 per dose for Covaxin and ₹302 per dose for Covishield, based on prices to be paid by States and private firms. (On pricing, the weighted average is calculated based on a share of 50% for the Centre, 25% for States and 25% for the private sector for both vaccines, according to the affidavit. Covaxin and Covishield are both at ₹154 – <https://bit.ly/2SBTwva> – for the Centre, and ₹400 for States and ₹1,200 for the private sector for Covaxin and ₹300 for States and ₹600 for the private sector for Covishield.) While this is possibly too high, their revenue can be raised more simply by increasing the Centre's price, currently ₹154, and providing the comfort of large long-term orders for 100% of India's needs, enabling firms to invest more and sell globally. States could bear the extra cost directly without this convoluted new policy. It could even be financed by special interest-free 50-year loans to States, as promised last year for infrastructure, by the Finance Minister.

The Union Minister for Health has clearly stated that "those who can afford to get them at the private and corporate sector rates shall go ahead" (<https://bit.ly/3y54h4r>). Should such a policy be accepted, one that makes supplies less reliable and vaccination more expensive and less equitable across geographies and sends the marginalised to the back of the queue? One that delays vaccinating the vulnerable, by halving their allocation? Or should this "new" policy just be scrapped?

*Partha Mukhopadhyay is Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal*

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of politics is exacerbating the situation. As citizens we need to help each other in the true spirit of humanity.

**DONALD DCRUZ,**  
Mundakal, Kollam, Kerala

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:** In the reports titled "Indian 'double mutant' strain named B.1.617" (April 9, 2021) and "Covishield protects against double mutant: study" (April 24, 2021), one of the mutations found in the double mutant variant was given as L425R. It should have been L425R.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

**Pandemic control**  
It is totally unfair and irresponsible on the part of those with smartphones and their 'tech' abilities to be blocking vaccine slots. If the government has allotted a certain and specific number of doses of the vaccine for a certain place, what happens to the local people living in that vicinity who may not have a smartphone? The government must

quickly come up with a system as to where and how many doses of the vaccine would be distributed on a daily basis, and who is eligible. Those in the age group 18 years and above seem to be insecure especially after the way the surge is spreading and are trying to grab any slot wherever it is available. Those waiting for their second dose are also becoming desperate.

There is no need for governments to pretend that everything is fine. People are well aware of the fact that they do not have enough vaccines. In such a situation, a safe system must be evolved quickly.

**HEMACHANDRA BASAPPA,  
Bengaluru**

■ We are a country with an abundance of brilliant minds, but have lost time in creating a crisis management

team. We seem to live in denial, with streams of misinformation hiding the reality. The abrupt lockdown last year should have been an eye-opener but a year later, we are still ill-prepared to handle the second wave. We made a premature announcement of success in keeping COVID-19 under check. Today, the vaccine drive is faltering as we have covered only a small percentage of 'priority' citizens' even while underestimating needs with the addition of new categories. The situation is clearly very serious. All States must report actual mortality which will help map vulnerability. The state

of politics is exacerbating the situation. As citizens we need to help each other in the true spirit of humanity.

**DONALD DCRUZ,**  
Mundakal, Kollam, Kerala

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## FROM PAGE ONE

## Start free, universal vaccination: Opposition

The budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crore for vaccines should be immediately spent, the parties said. As of now, only close to ₹5,000 crore had been spent.

**'Scrap Central Vista'**  
The parties demanded that the construction of the Central Vista project should be stopped forthwith and instead the money used to procure oxygen and vaccines. "Release all money held in the unaccounted private trust fund, PMCare to buy more vaccines, oxygen and medical equipment required," they stated.

They reiterated the demand of giving a basic sustenance allowance of ₹6000 a

## Need 6 to 8 more weeks of lockdown: ICMR chief

Several States have introduced varying levels of curbs on economic activity and public movement to stop the spread of the virus, which are mostly being reviewed and extended on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

"The high positivity districts should remain (shut). If they come to 5% from 10% (positivity rate), we can open them, but that has to happen. That won't happen in six-eight weeks, clearly," Dr. Bhargava said in an interview at the New Delhi headquarters of the ICMR, the country's top medical research body.

## Capital hit hard

Referring to the capital, one of India's hardest hit cities, where the positivity rate reached around 35% but has now fallen to about 17%, Dr. Bhargava said: "If Delhi is opened tomorrow, it will be a disaster."

India is in deep crisis in the current wave of COVID-19 infections with around 350,000 cases and 4,000 deaths being reported daily. Hospitals and morgues are overflowing, medical staff is exhausted, and oxygen and drugs are running short.

Many experts say the actual case tallies and deaths could be five to 10 times higher.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top political leaders have faced a public backlash for addressing mass election rallies where no major COVID-19 safety protocols were followed.

## Slight delay

Dr. Bhargava did not criticise the Modi government but conceded there had been a delay in responding to the crisis.

"I think the only discontent we have was there was a slight delay accepting the 10% (recommendation), but

## States can buy 50% of vaccine doses directly

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Every month, 50% of the vaccine doses of every manufacturer would be available for direct procurement by the State governments and private hospitals while the government of India would continue to procure its share of 50% which it would send to the State governments free of cost, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday following an interaction with State Health Ministers and Principal Secretaries/Additional Chief Secretaries of eight States/UT, according to the Health Ministry.

These States/UT are reporting a high growth rate in daily cases and mortality. These included Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Telangana.

month to the vulnerable families who have lost their jobs during the pandemic. First raised by the CPI(M), this demand has been raised by the Opposition parties since last year when the pandemic first hit.

They demanded that free foodgrains be distributed to the needy, with nearly one crore tonnes of grains present in the Central godowns.

Lastly, they reiterated the demand of repealing the farm laws.

"Though it has not been the practice of your office or government, we would appreciate a response to our suggestions in the interests of India and our people," the letter said.

## DRDO's oxygen supply units to be procured for ₹322.5 crore

Oxycare technology was developed to help soldiers posted in high-altitude areas

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The PM CARES (Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations) Fund has sanctioned the procurement of 1.5 lakh units of the Oxycare system, developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), at a cost of ₹322.5 crore.

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Lifeline: INS Tarkash arriving in Mumbai with two cryogenic tankers carrying 20 MT liquid medical oxygen each. ■ PTI

sinking into a state of hypoxia, which can be fatal," a DRDO statement said on Wednesday. Under this sanction,

1,00,000 manual and 50,000 automatic Oxycare systems along with non-rebreather masks (NRM) are being procured, it stated.

The automatic system also provided audio warning for various failure scenarios. The DRDO had transferred the technology to multiple industries, which would be

producing the Oxycare system, it added.

## Supplies from West Asia

As part of operation 'Samudra Setu II', launched by the Navy, INS Tarkash arrived at Mumbai with two Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) filled (20 MT [metric tonne] each) cryogenic containers and 230 oxygen cylinders.

"The oxygen containers were facilitated by the French Mission as part of the

"Oxygen Solidarity Bridge" and oxygen cylinders were gifted by Indian diaspora in Qatar," the Navy said. The consignment was handed over to the Maharashtra civil administration.

On Tuesday, INS Kochi and INS Tabar reached the New Mangalore Port carrying 100 MT LMO in five containers and 1,200 oxygen cylinders from Kuwait.

A second Canadian flight carrying medical supplies is on its way to India and is scheduled to arrive in New Delhi on Thursday. "Collective action is the only way to defeat COVID-19. The second Canadian Armed Forces flight is on its way to India with 300 ventilators in support of the people of India," said Nadir Patel, Canadian High Commissioner in India.

As on the early hours of May 12, Indian Air Force aircraft airlifted 403 oxygen containers of 6,856 MT capacity along with other equipment of 163 MT capacity, in 634 sorties from different parts of the country.

## J&amp;K govt. to look into viral video of officer thrashing people

Netizens, political parties demand action

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Though J&K has no dearth of sensitive, efficient and humane administrators, such behaviour also highlights how even to this day some strands persist with the medieval and dehumanising ways of public administration," Arjmand Hussain, a columnist and author, wrote on the social media.

A spokesman of the J&K Apni Party said it has taken a strong exception to the incident.

"We demand strong action against the erring officer. The ADC Baramulla has outraged the modesty of women folk as he doesn't even spare the females from his wrath. The officer needs to be brought to book and even an FIR needs to be registered against him for insulting, thrashing and manhandling the women."

Dilbag Singh, DGP, on Wednesday reviewed security arrangements for Id. "Lockdown is being enforced to safeguard the lives of the people," the DGP said.

## SRMIST-The Hindu meet on cybersecurity

Webinar to discuss impact on students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

The SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) along with The Hindu Group will organise a webinar on 'How cybersecurity concerns are topping the headlines today due to pandemic and its impact on students' on May 15 at 4 p.m.

It would be the fifth session in the 15-part webinar series - 'SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021', which focuses on science, engineering and technology courses and their relevance to workplaces.

Two senior ICMR officials told Reuters that the organisation was frustrated about political leaders addressing large rallies and allowing religious gatherings, saying the actions publicly flouted required safety measures.

The panellists are Pankit Desai, co-founder and CEO of Sequaret Cybersecurity Firm; N S Nappinai, advocate and cyber law expert; and Revathi Venkataraman, chairperson, School of Computing, SRMIST. The

webinar would be moderated by Anand Venkateswaran, Steward of Metapurse Fund.

The session would conclude with a question and answer session with the speakers. The dates for SRMJEE are May 23 and May 24 for Phase 1 and July 25 and July 26 for Phase 2.

To register for the free

webinar, visit

<http://bit.ly/SRMTHES5>

or scan the QR code.



## Maharashtra pauses COVID-19 vaccination for 18-44 age group

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet on

Wednesday decided to pause the COVID-19 vaccination drive for individuals in the 18-44 age group for the time being. The government decided to prioritise availability of vaccines for individuals

above 45 years, who have their second dose pending.

Health Minister Rajesh Tope said after the Cabinet meeting, "We are doing this for the time being. It is because we have no vaccines left. Presently, we get vaccines from two companies only. Therefore, the Central

government cannot supply enough vaccines for the vaccination of those above 45 years. It is mandatory to give second dose to ensure effectiveness of first. As a result,

the vaccine the State government purchased for 18 to 44 (years) will be diverted to those above 45 years."

## Language not a ground for case transfer

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The inability to understand the language spoken in court is not a ground to seek transfer of the case, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment.

The Chief Secretary also sought a relaxation in the powers for direct emergency purchases and negotiated contracts as per the powers delegated to the L-G, from the current limit of ₹10 crore. In a missive to the islands' top brass on Friday, the Department of Expenditure in the Finance Ministry said: "With regard to the request to relax the powers for direct emergency purchase/negotiated contract of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor from the current limit of ₹10 crore, the Andaman & Nicobar administration is requested to place this before the competent authority in MHA for consideration."

Given these challenges and "the obvious surge in

## Tarun Tejpal case verdict postponed

Staff crunch in Goa court delays ruling

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Mapusa District and Sessions Court in Goa on Wednesday postponed the verdict in the 2013 sexual harassment case against journalist Tarun Tejpal to May 19 due to a staff shortage.

Judge Kshama Joshi was to pronounce the judgment.

Mr. Tejpal is accused of raping a colleague in the elevator of a five-star hotel. He was arrested on November 30, 2013 by the Goa Crime

## Litterateur Homen Borgohain passes away

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Noted Assamese litterateur and journalist Homen Borgohain, 88, breathed his last on Wednesday at a hospital here. Doctors attributed the death to cardiac arrest.

A former president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Mr. Borgohain tested positive for COVID-19 on April 24. He was discharged from a Gauhati hospital after testing negative on May 7.

His body of work includes 11 novels and four non-fiction. He won the Sahitya Akademi in 1978 for his novel *Pita Putra* but returned the award in 2015 to protest the growing intolerance in

that all the existing FCRA accounts of the NGOs will be linked to the SBI account in Delhi, and while they may not be able to receive fresh foreign funds from April 1 in the existing accounts, they could utilise the money that already exists in the old account.

## Pandemic poses hurdles

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many NGOs could not complete the stringent paper work, making it impossible for foreign donors to send help during the second wave that has now spread to rural areas. Many

said that they did not fulfil the eligibility criteria as they did not possess an Aadhaar card as a "matter of principle".

An Andhra Pradesh NGO that had moved the Delhi High Court last week seeking exemption from the March

## SC judge Chandrachud tests positive

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who was leading the Bench hearing cases on COVID-19 management, has tested positive for the virus.

A crucial hearing on the COVID issue, listed before a three-judge Bench of Justices Chandrachud, L. Narasimha Rao and S. Ravinder Bhat for hearing on Thursday, has been deferred.

Justice Chandrachud's Bench had in the previous hearing constituted the National Task Force to scientifically study and recommend a foolproof mechanism for allocation of oxygen to States.

Justice Chandrachud had made it clear to the Centre that the Supreme Court would not remain a "mute spectator" to a national calamity.

## Monuments shut till May 31

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Wednesday extended the closure of all Centrally protected monuments to the public till May 31, due to the COVID-19 surge. It was on April 15 that the ASI closed all its monuments and historical sites till mid-May.

## Relax spending norms, says Andaman &amp; Nicobar L-G

Island is facing an acute shortage of COVID-19 supplies

VIKAS DHOOT  
NEW DELHI

Following a plea from the Andaman and Nicobar islands' administration to relax the ₹10-crore limit on the Lieutenant Governor's power to authorise direct emergency purchases amid an acute shortage of essential COVID-19 supplies, the Union Finance Ministry has asked the Port Blair top brass to take up the issue with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Finance Ministry has, however, granted a one-month relaxation to the islands' administration from several rules pertaining to procurement in the General Financial Rules, stating that procurement delays amid the national health emergency would result in loss of lives of citizens.



L-G Admiral D.K. Joshi

Last Thursday, the Chief Secretary of the Andaman & Nicobar administration wrote to the Centre about "an acute shortage of essential COVID-19-related supplies, particularly of medical oxygen". He had said they were "facing tremendous challenges in procuring supplies" due to the islands' unique geographical location.

Given these challenges and "the obvious surge in

prices" of COVID-19-related supplies, the administration had sought flexibility in following the General Financial Rules for at least one month.

The Chief Secretary also sought a relaxation in the powers for direct emergency purchases and negotiated contracts as per the powers delegated to the L-G, from the current limit of ₹10 crore.

In a missive to the islands' top brass on Friday, the Department of Expenditure in the Finance Ministry said: "With regard to the request to relax the powers for direct emergency purchase/negotiated contract of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor from the current limit of ₹10 crore, the Andaman & Nicobar administration is requested to place this before the competent authority in MHA for consideration."

Given these challenges and "the obvious surge in



Homen Borgohain. ■ FACEBOOK

India. He was serving as the editor-in-chief of Assamese daily *Niyomita Barta* until his death.

"Deeply pained by the demise of eminent litterateur and veteran journalist Homen Borgohain," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

## INTERVIEW | HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

# 'We will approach the Supreme Court for reverification of the NRC'

COVID-19 pandemic, employment and welfare schemes for women are on top of the government's agenda, says the new Assam Chief Minister

NISTULA HEBBAR

The new Chief Minister of Assam, **Himanta Biswa Sarma**, speaks about his priorities under the new role, his relationship with his predecessor, **Sarbananda Sonowal**, and the big club of ex-Congress members who became Chief Ministers after leaving the party.

**What are your priorities with regard to your term as Chief Minister of Assam?**

Well, we are in the midst of a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and there are some decisions of stricter norms, etc., that we have taken in the first Cabinet meeting and these will be implemented.

Other than that, there were certain promises we made in our manifesto, like employment for one lakh young people. We have formed a committee under the new Finance Minister of

the State [Ajanta Neog] to go into the modalities.

Welfare schemes with regard to women are being sought to be expanded, with allowances for women in various situations to be raised to ₹3,000 along with increasing the number of beneficiaries from the current 22 lakh.

Many joint liability groups run by women have taken loans paying interest up to 24% to 26%. We are working out a scheme to either partly pay these loans or the interest component. The cost to the government would be around ₹2,000 crore.



As you know, Assam had been kept out of the delimitation exercise due to a High Court order, but now we want that this exercise should be concluded for our State as well and we will be taking steps to get that going.

**You have said you want a re-verification of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as well?**

Yes, we will be approaching the Supreme Court again for re-verification of the NRC – up to 20% re-verification for areas bordering Bangladesh and 10% for interior areas.

If the NRC checks out, then we shall do nothing. But if there are discrepancies, we will ask for the Supreme Court's guidance on the issue. We have been saying

this for a while and we stand by this.

**The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) has been seen by many in Assam as a backdoor way of getting citizenship to Bengali-speaking Hindus, who may also find themselves out of the NRC. There were**

protests in Assam in 2019 on this. What is your government's view?

■ The CAA is a legislation that was passed by Parliament and as it stands, the State government has nothing much to do in this case, as rules are yet to be framed. We had approached the Un-

ion Home Minister [asking] that certain exceptions with regard to Assam be framed in the rules. Since due to the pandemic, the exercise to frame the rules is on hold, that is where the matter lies. We are, of course, steadfast on the request that as and when rules are framed, we be given a hearing and our concerns taken on board.

Your predecessor, **Sarbananda Sonowal**, acquiesced in the transfer of the chief ministership to you

smoothly. What has your interaction with him been since and has he confided his future plans to you?

■ After our first Cabinet meet, my Council of Ministers and I went and met Mr. Sonowal at his home this morning [Wednesday] and took his guidance. We assured him that he was our leader and continues to be our leader. I will be visiting his constituency Majuli on Thursday to meet his constituents and party workers there and assure them that all the development works that he had initiated there will receive the same support from the government as before.

As for his future plans, that is in the remit of the national leadership of the party and Mr. Sonowal, and I can-

not comment on that.

With you becoming the Chief Minister, it's being said that many Congress persons (at least six) joined or formed other parties to get the role, but did not get the opportunity when they were in the Congress. Any thoughts on joining the club of Chief Ministers formerly in the Congress stables?

■ I left the Congress in 2015-16, and with many grievances, pain and trauma. It was not an easy decision for me to make. But now, I have found a home in the BJP and I am no longer an outsider to it or the organisation or the ideological stream. That I belonged to the Congress at one time is now an event that is in history, of interest only to those who study history.

Cong. fuelling vaccine hesitancy: Puri

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Twitter spat about the COVID-19 vaccination drive between Union Minister Hardeep Puri and Congress leaders continued on Wednesday, with Mr. Puri accusing the party's leaders of fuelling vaccine hesitancy.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Wednesday retweeted a post of his on Twitter from two weeks ago saying Covaxin had been tested on enough people and proven its worth. This, he said, was for the "benefit of my friend", Mr. Puri. The Minister had alleged earlier that Mr. Tharoor had spread vaccine hesitancy by saying Covaxin had not yet completed phase three trials in January.

In response, Mr. Puri said in a series of tweets: "The Congress party's narrative on the vaccines is getting increasingly bizarre by the day. Some of their leaders like Shashi Tharoor, to name one, are betraying an almost childish stubbornness in admitting their fault about India's vaccine policy. The entire pack through statements & tweets fuelled vaccine hesitancy. They openly cast doubts about vaccine efficacy, choice of manufacturers & rollout..."

## 'Drop GST for key medical items'

Congress calls for tax waiver on vaccines, Remdesivir and oxygen concentrators

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



**Health crisis:** People waiting in queue to buy Remdesivir in Chennai on Monday. ■ RAVINDRAN

desivir and oxygen concentrators.

There is 5% GST on vaccines and 12% on Remdesivir and oxygen concentrators.

Quoting these calculations, Mr. Vallabh asked, "When the States and the citizens have such an enormous fight on their hands, why can't the Centre waive GST for all essential COVID-19-related medical items? Is this the opportuni-

would only contribute to increasing the cost of these products. "If full exemption from GST is given, vaccine manufacturers would not be able to offset their input taxes and would pass them on to the end consumer/citizen by increasing the price," she stated.

Reacting to the Minister's comments, Mr. Vallabh said that the tax on input should also be reduced. "Why can't the Finance Minister call a meeting of the GST Council to hear from the State Finance Ministers," he asked.

The pandemic had reached the rural areas, which kept the economy running in the first wave, said Mr. Vallabh.

"Now, along with unemployment, the disease has reached our villages. So, I expect that the contraction in GDP in the first quarter of this financial year will be more than last year," he added.

## Two Bengal BJP MPs resign as MLAs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Two BJP Lok Sabha MPs, who won in the recent West Bengal Assembly poll, on Wednesday tendered their resignations as MLAs before Speaker Biman Banerjee.

Cooch Behar MP Nisith Pramanik was elected from Dinhata and Ranaghat MP Jagannath Sarkar from Santipur. While Mr. Pramanik won by a margin of only 57 votes, Mr. Sarkar won by a margin of over 16,000

votes. Both said they were resigning as MLAs as per the instructions of the party leadership.

"It's not possible to hold both these positions. The party asked us to resign as MLAs," said Mr. Sarkar.

Mr. Pramanik said the Constitution did not allow anyone to hold the posts of both MP and MLA.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the Speaker said the process of holding bypolls to the two seats could start.

## Four more Cabinet Ministers demand action against Sidhu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Protesting against former Cabinet Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu's attacks against Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, four more Punjab Cabinet Ministers on Wednesday sought disciplinary action by the party high command against Mr. Sidhu.

In a joint statement, Balbir Sidhu, Vijay Inder Singh, Bharat Bhushan Ashu and Gurpreet Singh Kangar said that Mr. Sidhu's targeted attacks on Captain Amarinder over the past several days were an invitation for disaster for the Congress.

The Ministers said, "It was quite possible that Sidhu's targeted attacks on the Chief Minister were instigated by the AAP or BJP leaders to create problems in the Punjab Congress to further their electoral agenda in the State. This manner in which Sidhu had launched the offensive against the State government, particularly Captain Amarinder, suggested a conspiracy against the Chief Minister."

Two days after three of their Cabinet colleagues launched a counter-offensive against Mr. Sidhu, the four Ministers said his blatant defiance was an act of total indiscipline and such anti-party activities cannot be tolerated by any political establishment, and more so in a State headed for elections. "He [Mr. Sidhu] should be immediately suspended, if not expelled, as his continued presence in the Punjab Congress was creating a mess in the party's State unit and diverting its attention from the more important task of gearing up for the polls," they added.

Mr. Dhankhar had announced about his visit to Cooch Behar on social media a few days ago.

It violates long-standing norms, she says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday wrote to Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, describing his scheduled visit to Cooch Behar on Thursday as "unilateral proceedings", which is "violation of long-standing norms of procedures". She urged the Governor to desist from abrupt decisions with regard to field visits.

Governor's response

Responding to the Chief Minister's remarks, Mr. Dhankhar said on social media, "In response@MamataOfficial urged her to revisit her stance & commit to constitution that by oath she is obligated to uphold & follow. This is time to address issues being faced by people in deep distress. Assured her of my fullest cooperation within constitutional parameters." He also wrote back to Ms. Banerjee. "I am appalled that a leader of your stature should be even contemplating that in making visits the Governor has to obtain orders from the Government," Mr. Dhankhar wrote.

Mr. Dhankhar had announced about his visit to Cooch Behar on social media a few days ago.



Jagdeep Dhankhar

cess of your power under the Constitution and directing them to attend before you".

**Governor's response**

Responding to the Chief Minister's remarks, Mr. Dhankhar said on social media, "In response@MamataOfficial urged her to revisit her stance & commit to constitution that by oath she is obligated to uphold & follow. This is time to address issues being faced by people in deep distress. Assured her of my fullest cooperation within constitutional parameters." He also wrote back to Ms. Banerjee. "I am appalled that a leader of your stature should be even contemplating that in making visits the Governor has to obtain orders from the Government," Mr. Dhankhar wrote.

Mr. Dhankhar had announced about his visit to Cooch Behar on social media a few days ago.

## INDCOSERVE, Coonoor - The Nilgiris TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from Companies registered under Companies Act,2013 and the Companies (Amendment) Act,2020 /Manufacturer of Tea Processing Machinery/Machineries having its own manufacturing unit in India for carrying out "Basic Renovation, Replacement of Obsolete Machinery and Upgradation of Existing Machinery" in INDCOSERVE Tea Factory in The Nilgiris district.

Tender documents and other details can be obtained from the website of INDCOSERVE Ltd., Room No.604, 6th Floor, Nilgiris District, Ooty, Tamil Nadu. Demand payment Rs.5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only) by Cash/Money Order/Demand Draft on all working days between 10.00 AM and 05.45 PM.

Tender documents may also be downloaded from the website, www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.indcoserve.com. The downloaded Tender document should be submitted along with the Demand Draft of Rs.5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand Only) drawn in favour of the INDCOSERVE, payable at Coonoor Branch.

Last date and Time for Issue of Tender document : 14.06.2021 upto 11.30 AM

Last date &amp; Time for receipt of sealed Tender Document : 14.06.2021 upto 01.30 PM

Date and Time of opening of Technical Bid : 14.06.2021 at 03.00 PM

Further details can be obtained by contacting the General Manager, INDCOSERVE, Coonoor. Telephone No.+91-423-2231821

DPR: 1536/TENDER/2021

## PARADIP PORT TRUST e-Tender Call Notice No.

Tender Call Notice No. TDT/GEN-235/04/2021 dt. 07.05.2021

Name of the Work : "Allotment of 11(Eleven) nos. of Mechanical Iron Ore/Iron Ore Pellet Plots at IOHP" License fee : Re. 2,79,00,510/- Wharfage Charge : Rs. 15,28,690/- Last Date and Time of Bid Submission : 27.05.2021, 1700 Hrs. Bid Opening Date and time : 28.05.2021, 1500 Hrs. Refer our website for details : https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure.eProcurement

Sr. Asst. Traffic Manager PPT/PR/31/21-22 Dt : 12.05.2021

## TAMIL NADU SALT CORPORATION LIMITED

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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST 18/PD/2021

The undersigned invites sealed quotes in the prescribed form from the eligible consultancy firm for the following

Tender No.	Description	Last date for Submission of tender	Date and time of opening of tender
18/PD/2021	To carry out detailed study on the operation of the Mariyur Valinokkam Salt Complex and preparation and submission of detailed report for efficient operations of the salt works with reference to Industry standards	3.00 PM on 31.05.2021	3.30 PM on 31.05.2021

For further details please log on to our website [www.tnsalt.com](http://www.tnsalt.com) Managing Director DIPR/431/DIS/2021

## KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Chief Engineer, Distribution North, Kozhikode

E-Tender ID - 2021-KSEB-422168-1. Supply of Resin cast Ring type LT Current Transformers of accuracy class 0.5 S for LT energy metering. P.A.C - Rs. 95,000.00/- Last date - 24/05/2021 - 5 pm

CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 75/5A	453
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 100/5A	3756
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 150/5A	7710
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 200/5A	7362
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 250/5A	1101
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 300/5A	1330
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 400/5A	526
CT resin cast 0.45KV, 5VA, class 0.5 S, 500/5A	126

Visit [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) and [www.kseb.in](http://www.kseb.in) Ref: PR/MC1/D152/E-Tender/2021

Ref: PR/MC1/D15

# Net spread in Ganga to fish out bodies

After 71 bodies were retrieved from the river, Bihar keeps a watch for bodies floating in from U.P.

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA

A day after 71 bodies of suspected COVID-19 victims were retrieved from the Ganga at Chausa in Buxar district of Bihar, the authorities on Wednesday spread a big net in the river to catch bodies floating in from the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.

Taking cognisance of the bodies being found floating in the river, the Patna High Court asked the State government to file an affidavit on it by Thursday.

Earlier, the Buxar district authorities said the 71 bodies that were retrieved on Monday and Tuesday had washed ashore at downstream Chausa village from the neighbouring districts of eastern U.P. However, U.P. officials had denied the claim.

"We've placed a big net at Ranighat, bordering Bihar-



**Tragedy plays out:** Family members mourning the death of a COVID-19 victim in Patna. •PTI

U.P. in the river. Some bodies floating in from the U.P. side were found tangled in it on Wednesday. We've informed the U.P. administration about it and now whatever action is to be taken on this, the U.P. administration will take," a top government

official in Bihar told *The Hindu*, requesting anonymity.

"We are in regular touch with the U.P. officials of the bordering districts on this issue and patrolling along the border has been intensified so that people cannot throw bodies in the river."

Earlier, Bihar's Water Resources and Information and Public Relations Department Minister Sanjay Jha tweeted,

"Last rites of 71 bodies performed as per protocols. A net has been placed in Ganges in Ranighat, bordering U.P. & Bihar. We've advised

U.P. administration to be vigilant; our district administration is keeping vigil too. Advise all to give all respect to those dead, and Maa Ganges."

#### Doctor's warning

Civil surgeon of Buxar Dr. Jitendra Nath has advised people to be cautious and refrain from using the river water to protect themselves from the infection.

"People living in the riverine areas should keep strict caution and vigilance, as the bodies that were found floating in the river at Chausa were decomposed. Though, until reports come, it cannot be said that they were infected with COVID-19, people should not use the river water for bathing or other religious purposes, as chances of infection increases with it," he told local presspersons in Buxar.

# 'Child marriages may go unnoticed amid lockdown'

Weddings may be restricted to houses due to norms: activists

K.C. DEEPIKA  
BENGALURU

Last year, as the pandemic took grip of the world and India went into a lockdown, child rights activists were alarmed to see a slew of child marriages being reported in Karnataka. Now, with another lockdown in place and weddings being restricted to houses because of tough guidelines, there are fears of child marriages going unnoticed.

Fr. Antony Sebastian, Chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR), told *The Hindu* that a total of 2,180 child marriage cases were reported in Karnataka as per reports of Childline (1098) from April 2020 to January 2021.

In December last year, of the 1,598 complaints, 365 were related to this category. The other complaints ranged from illegal adoptions, child trafficking and child labour to the need for medical help or shelter.

Last year, 579 complaints were received in May by Childline in Karnataka when India was observing the national lockdown imposed by the Central government.

The number of complaints eased when lockdown restrictions were relaxed, but were still worrying. As many as 214 complaints were received in August and 111 in September 2020.

The number of such complaints for October 2020 was 190 and for November 321.

#### Number may go up

This year, in January alone (up to when data are available), 1,947 complaints were received overall in the State, of which 288 were related to child marriages.

**Young brides** | The number of child marriages in Karnataka may increase owing to the fresh lockdown, experts believe

- Between April 2020 and January 2021, a total of 2,180 child marriages were reported in Karnataka
- In December 2020, of the 1,598

complaints received by the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR), 365 were related to child marriages

- In January 2021, of the 1,947 complaints in the State, 288 were related to child marriages

"During the first lockdown, we saw child marriages for a variety of reasons, ranging from insecurity for the girl, wherein the parents assume their responsibility is over with her marriage, to the fact that they could get away with a simple marriage without calling too many people, resulting in less expenditure. When we get information, we try and create awareness. Many people don't know what the punishment is for the offence. When they learn about it, they are surprised," he added.

He urged the people to alert Childline if they come across child marriages.

"If people get to know about such marriages, please inform Childline. Cases are booked even after the couple has a child if they are under-aged... To prevent more such cases, the key is awareness among people," Mr. Lakshapathi added.

Anuradha K.N., Director, DWCD, said every district had a committee to tackle child marriages and they had been activated to conduct regular inspections.

"In most cases, child marriage whistle-blowers are relatives or neighbours... Smaller marriage functions may not mean more cases going unnoticed," she said.

## 'WHO has not termed B.1.617 Indian variant'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has not associated the term "Indian variant" with the B.1.617 mutant of the coronavirus in its 32-page document, according to the Union Health Ministry.

In fact, the word "Indian" has not been used in its report on the matter, noted a release issued by the Ministry on Wednesday.

It added that some reports had covered the news of classifying B.1.617 as a variant of global concern and termed the B.1.617 strain of the coronavirus an "Indian variant".

## Ivermectin used despite WHO advice

Indian physicians say it shows some good results and has fewer side effects

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI



The drug is included in India's revised treatment protocol. •REUTERS

when using any drug for a new indication. WHO recommends against use of Ivermectin for COVID-19 except within clinical trials."

Indian physicians who continue to use this drug state that it is an approved anti-parasitic agent. "It has shown, in laboratory settings, to inhibit SARS-CoV-2 replication. It may be effective for the management of early onset, mild COVID-19 for adult patients. In a clinical setting, it is observed that there is an early viral clearance in patients who are put on Ivermectin... There are no severe adverse effects noted in patients with non-severe COVID-19," Vighnesh Naidu Y., consultant physician, Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, said.

Sheela Chakravarthy, director, Internal Medicine, Fortis Hospitals, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru, said: "Ivermectin is used for the treatment of two illnesses –

onchocerciasis, responsible for blindness, and filariasis, which is debilitating."

Ivermectin was also found to be effective in reducing the multiplication of certain RNA viruses such as SARS and COVID RNA, she noted.

"It has shown efficacy to bind to the spike protein site of the RNA virus, thereby reducing the multiplication and attachment of the virus to the ACE receptor in the nasal epithelium," she said.

Shafiq Ahmed, consultant, Urology, HCMCT Manipal Hospitals, New Delhi, said, "It is used for treatment of COVID-19 in mild to moderate cases. Since it is a safe drug, there are no major side effects reported till date."

## Bombay HC bars public functions by politicians

'No such events till lockdown is lifted'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court ordered on Wednesday that no politician, Minister or people's representative will hold any public function till the lockdown restrictions are lifted.

A Division Bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Bhalachandra Debadwar passed the order after it was brought to its notice that Maharashtra's Cabinet Minister for Employment Guarantee & Horticulture, Sandipanra Bhumre, held a series of public functions recently in his constituency in Paithan where people gath-

ered in large numbers and most of them, including the Minister himself, did not follow COVID-19 hygiene protocols.

"We are pained to note that Cabinet Minister Mr. Bhumre physically held ceremonies in his constituency," the Bench said. "Is he not duty-bound to obey the diktats of the Chief Minister who, in the interest of the public at large, has appealed to both the public and people's representatives to refrain from holding functions physically?" the court remarked.

The Bench is scheduled to hear the matter on May 13.

## Compensation to polling officers' kin very less: HC

Form panel in districts, court tells U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court has said the compensation provided to the kin of polling officers who died on duty during the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh due to the "deliberate act on the part of the State and the State Election Commission to force them to perform duties in the absence of RT-PCR support" should be at least ₹1 crore.

The U.P. government had recently told the court that it would provide a compensation of ₹30 lakh to the family members of the deceased polling officers.

"It is not a case that so-

mebody volunteered to render his/her services during the election, but it was all made obligatory to those assigned with election duty to perform their duties during election even while they showed their reluctance. The amount of the compensation, in our considered opinion, is very less," a Division Bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar said on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the court also directed the government to form a three-member pandemic public grievance committee within 48 hours in all districts to look into reports of complaints made by people directly.

## 3.46 lakh new COVID-19 cases recorded

3,868 more deaths were also registered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

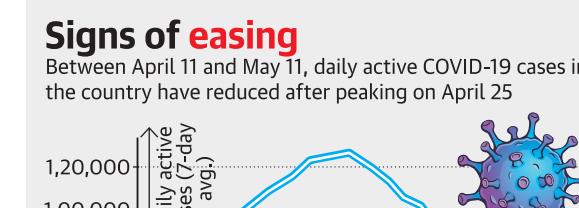
India recorded 3,46,150 new COVID-19 cases until 9.40 p.m. on Wednesday. As many as 3,868 new deaths were also registered. The country has so far reported a total of 2,36,86,742 cases and 2,58,093 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 46,781 infections, followed by Kerala (43,529) and Karnataka (39,998). Maharashtra also recorded 816 casualties, followed by Karnataka (517) and Uttar Pradesh (329). The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Andaman and Nico-

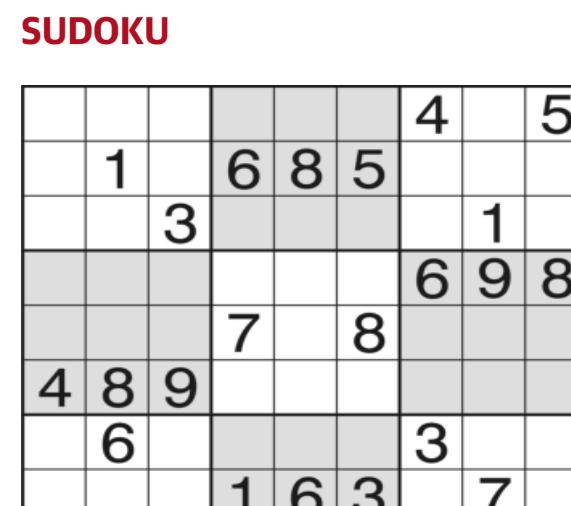
bar Islands and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

As many as 19,83,804 samples were tested on Tuesday (the results for which were made available on Wednesday), the highest number of tests conducted in a day in the country. This was 1.33 lakh more tests than those conducted on Monday and 4.42 lakh more than those conducted the previous Tuesday (May 4).

Over 24.46 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Wednesday, which was around 57,000 doses lesser than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. However, this was 8.85 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the same period one week ago. Only about 3.8% of India's adult population have received both doses of a COVID-19 vaccine as on May 10. Among major States/U.T.s, the three with the highest coverage of both doses were Gujarat (7.08%), Delhi (7.06%) and Kerala (6.93%). On the other hand, the three with the lowest adult coverage of both doses were Uttar Pradesh (1.94%), Bihar (2.12%) and Jharkhand (2.4%).



## SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13246

C	B	S	L	C
B	E	A	C	R
I	G	N	A	S
J	L	M	G	T
A	N	O	C	G
M	A	E	S	T
E	R	I	T	H
S	T	E	N	P
Y	S	E	N	A

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

9	8	5	3	1	7	4	2	6
3	1	7	4	6	2	8	9	5
4	2	6	5	8	9	1	7	3
6	9	8	7	2	5	3	1	4
7	5	4	8	3	1	2	6	9
2	3	1	6	9	4	5	8	7
4	8	2	9	7	3	6	5	1
5	6	9	1	4	8	7	3	2
1	7	3	2	5	6	9	4	8

## FAITH

Antima kala smarana

The prime focus of spiritual literature is to make individuals aware of the main and ultimate purpose of life, salvation. In this context, great realised souls have spoken of the value of Antima Kala Smarana, that is, the thoughts that prevail at the moment when life leaves the body. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord emphasises that if one leaves the

# Tune in and kick back

The rise of drop-in audio social spaces such as Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces harken back to the era of community radio, offering a comfort to users

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI AND SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

Every night, Tamil Twitter users briefly pause work from home pressures and COVID-19 updates, then sing their heart out. No judge says, 'Your pitching needs to be better.' All they get as feedback are hearts and 100-point emojis.

Spaces has enabled the Twitterati to converse about many things, but music is definitely the one winning hearts at the moment. Over the last few weeks, spaces dedicated to composers Ilaiyaraaja, AR Rahman, Harris Jayaraj and Deva have had many users tuned in. "It never goes wrong with music. It's not like a debate where you pick a side. Here, you can just be yourself and unwind," says Sindhu Ganesh (@sinofagan), a Chennai-based brand development executive, who has hosted three Spaces sessions so far.

That it is audio-only makes it a winner, says Sindhu. "Listening to Ilaiyaraaja's music on radio at night and going to sleep was my thing. I wanted to recreate that atmosphere," adds Sindhu, who also plans sessions featuring the musical works of Karthik Raja and Kamal Haasan.

#### Screen fatigue

But Twitter Spaces is not the pioneer of audio drop-in platforms – Clubhouse is. Over in Los Angeles, comedian-filmmaker Kiran Deol (*Sunny Side Up*)

which had an audience of around 650 people. Here, the actors created skits around stereotypes about Indian appearances and how they relate to facial recognition technology. Drop-in audio platform Clubhouse, launched by Alpha Exploration Co in March 2020, observed a flocking of people as 'screen fatigue' picked up.

The platform offers different interest-based Clubs to follow, such as 'Startup Club' which has more than 4,79,000 members or 'What Are You Reading' which has more than 90,000 members. Each of these Clubs joined will set up Rooms (audio chatrooms) that host informal fireside chats, panel discussions, or performances. You can even start your own Club or your own Room.

Clubhouse has been holding appeal for tech circles, motivational speakers and influencers but it has opened up avenues for filmmakers and comedians, agrees Deol. She explains, "Comedy, especially with the pandemic, has been able to connect people and these audio platforms can have so many people in their spaces. If you think about that in real-time, 700 people is a massive theatre."

Unfortunately, to the dismay of many, it was an iOS-only experience with an invite-only

'pay-it-forward' model where one can only join the free-to-use platform if an existing user sends an invite. However, after months of anticipation, Clubhouse also opened to Android users globally this past week, widening the audience reach for such projects and 'Facial Recognition Comedy' was keen to include Android-toting creators too.

Why does Clubhouse still hold an appeal? Deol responds, "Because it is a relatively young platform, the algorithms aren't as curated as that of Twitter or Facebook (which have or are

working on launching their own Clubhouse-like platforms). I like to be in control of what I am exploring and know I am not confined to my lane."

A good moderator for audio-only spaces, whatever the platform, is key. Deol points out a good moderator is one who periodically reintroduces the premise of what is happening so that for audiences just stepping in, it is easy to get on track. She adds that audio drop-in platforms are also a creative challenge since audience members are

just one sense in a wholly immersive way – so the audio content better be good.

Deol elaborates, "moderated the correct way, it can create a level of intimacy that is hard to achieve. That is the same quality you are looking to do when you're on stage as a comedian. Plus, in audio-only, people aren't forced to look at an image of themselves; they can detach into this conduit into a different world. With comedy, you have to leave space for laughter, so the rhythm of talking is different. A lot of it depends on how engaged your audience is as well."

**An intimate space**  
While Clubhouse gets the ball rolling on chats on future projects and thinkers, Twitter Spaces has been



**Hear us out** Musician Sean Roldan and comedian-filmmaker Kiran Deol are enjoying the likes of online audio chats ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

engaging elements of nostalgia.

Music lover and a senior executive in an IT firm, Ashwath Ram (@bultauta), hosted a hit session too, called SPA, aimed to be a musical representation of the songs of Sean Roldan, Pradeep Kumar and Anirudh.

While the session saw more than 500 people turn up, the big surprise was when singer-composer Sean Roldan joined the session, and enthralled people with a few songs, including an impromptu duet of his hit 'Adye Azhage' song with a female listener.

"Of late, we are used to seeing people sing in front of a camera. That reduces the mystery, which is an aspect that makes music beautiful," says Sean who himself plans to host Spaces sessions soon. "As it is audio-only, it gives us a chance to relish the tune and music for what it is rather than banking on visual appeal."

It is the nature of the platform – to listen to different voices in a short time – that works for Ashwath. "Before the pandemic, we were used to frequenting many public places, like a bus stop, or a neighbourhood shop, where we hear so many people talk. Now, because we are largely indoors, we end up listening to only the voices of family members... and this is a great place when you were surrounded by people," he explains.

As more Clubhouse-like apps trickle in, Deol concludes that the experience, regardless of the platform, is universal – "it's still intimate, it's still about feel-good entertainment."



A recently-published research paper uncovers an oft-forgotten chapter in the establishment of IIT-Madras and its connection with the Cold War in Germany, which resulted in the formation of the now-revered institution

SRIVATSAN S

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, Germany was on the cusp of facing another bout of unrest.

Over the next decade and a half, political, social and economic factors resulted in the formation of the Berlin Wall which divided the country into the German Democratic Republic (GDR, also known as East Germany) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, also known as West Germany). During the Cold War (between 1947-1991), it was common for the two rival countries to offer development support to then developing and under-developed countries, in their larger goal to muscle their influences and to benefit from the bilateral relations they shared.

One of the "largest and most successful educational projects" that emerged out of Indo-German relations during the Cold War, was the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) in 1959, which, when seen from the perspective of FDR, was largely driven by the Cold War foreign policy it shared with India.

While the SARKAR Committee in 1946 recommended that India set up "at least four technical institutions on the lines of the famous Massachusetts Institute of



**Beyond borders** (Clockwise from left) Walter Scheel (second from right), Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany, visiting IIT Madras in 1963; students at the lab in 1960s; Roland Wittje ■ IIT-M HERITAGE CENTRE

## Ship of thesis

Technology, USA, in the eastern, western, northern and southern regions of the country", the IITs came into existence only post-Independence.

The rationale behind setting up an institution as influential as IIT-M, which has been ranked as 'The No: 1 Engineering Institute' in the country for over five consecutive years by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), caught the attention of German Roland Wittje, Associate Professor,

History of Science and Technology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras.

#### Ancient history

In his latest research paper titled Engineering Education in Cold War Diplomacy: India, Germany and the Establishment of IIT Madras, a part of a series of papers published in Wiley's journal under the title History of Science and Humanities, Wittje uncovers this fascinating nugget of history, examining the social-political events and the motivation behind the formation of IIT Madras.

Wittje stumbled upon IIT-M's connection with the Cold War when he was doing the preliminary work for setting up the institution's archive and was working with Kumaran Sathasivam of the Heritage Centre. A historian of science, Wittje says he was not too familiar with political history and wanted to un-

derstand the dogma behind science diplomacy between India and Germany.

Just before West Germany made an offer for IIT-M, IIT-Bombay was established in 1958 with support from the Soviet Union. "With [Jawaharlal] Nehru spearheading the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War, what West Germany wanted was that India shouldn't acknowledge East Germany as a sovereign nation," says Wittje.

"During the early phase, Germany got what it wanted from India, in terms of the larger picture of development. In fact, IIT-M is its largest project as far as higher education was concerned worldwide, even though Germany did assist countries like Egypt and South America."

During the course of his research, which involved talking to German experts and their practices at IIT-M, Wittje found out that German faculties were quite specific on the type of character that IIT Madras should embody, as a technical institute.

"The German connection continues to thrive at IIT Madras, and it is always interesting to learn various nuggets about how the relationship evolved in the initial years. IIT Madras has benefitted from the attention paid by

the Germans in the formative years to foundational technical education and research, as well as to skill development," says Professor Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director, IIT Madras.

#### What has changed

Wittje's paper also brings to the fore the social-cultural relevance of Madras and what the institution meant for its people, though he admits that he is not an expert in South Indian history.

He argues that the location for IIT-M itself had political reasons: "Madras was not the first choice for Germany and they preferred somewhere close to Delhi, also for political reasons," he says, adding, "They were not opposed to Madras but they definitely didn't want Kanpur, as they felt it was far more isolated."

Acknowledging that the paper is still a German perspective, Wittje says he wanted to shift the general narrative: of IIT graduates settling in the US and engaging with software.

"That sort of mass exodus didn't happen with Germany because of the immigration laws that made it a lot easier for Asians to move to the US," he says, adding that a lot of students continue to reap the benefits of the Indo-German relations.



## Betty's got a bit of NFT

After shooting to crypto-fame for buying Beeple's *Everydays*, Metapurse dives into classical music with a choral piece

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

It is official: classical music has a clout with the crypto world. Betty's Notebook, a multi-layered, multimedia choral piece created by Dallas-based Verdigris Ensemble, has been snatched by Metapurse, the world's largest NFT (non-fungible token) fund, which bid on the programmable master track for \$2,15,989 (56.56 ETH).

Chennai-based Anand Venkateswaran AKA Twobadour, the steward of Metapurse, along with Vignesh Sundaresan (AKA Metakovan), explains, "Betty's Notebook has essentially given birth to crypto music, paving the way for a new and innovative medium of creating and experiencing music."

Twobadour compliments this unlikely convergence of classical music and the crypto world: "It breaks two stereotypes in 21 minutes [of Betty's Notebook]. It proves crypto is not a space for EDM music alone, and that this is a viable and healthy way to make and engage with classical music."

Just like a programmable artwork, Stem (or the individual programmable component) NFTs are effectively the same as Layer NFTs: they have the ability to change what the current master track both looks and sounds like. So, the 'most hardcore fan' will likely own the master track – in this case Betty's Notebook – with other fans owning the stems and choosing which 'variant' of their stem is currently active on the master track.

So far, musicians including The Weeknd, Pink Floyd and DaBaby are delving into programmable stem NFTs, while other NFT music ventures have been pursued by Doja Cat, Eminem and Kehlani.

The history behind Betty's Notebook has been the source of controversy over the years. In 1937, in St Petersburg, Florida, 15-year-old Betty Klenck recorded what she believed was pilot Amelia Earhart's distress signals and final words breaking through her family's shortwave radio, in a notebook alongside sketches of mid-century glamour models and other ramblings.

The resulting work *Betty's Notebook* premiered in February 2019 in several Dallas venues.

But what exactly comprises this



**Amelia's songs** (Top) The physical representation of Betty's Notebook; (above) Twobadour of Metapurse ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

creation? There are four stems, each sold as separate NFTs (MP3 files imbued in algorithmic code). One is The Choir, the 16-person Verdigris Ensemble singing the voice of Amelia Earhart and her disappearance. Then there is Betty's Voice, a late-in-life interview with Klenck herself narrating what she heard.

Betty's Radio is a piece of jazz songs, also composed by Reeves, that recall the music Klenck may have been listening to on that July evening. And finally, Betty's Choir sees Verdigris creating a choral complement from Betty's voice, inserting pitches and overtones from a spectral analysis of her speaking voice into the overall texture of the piece.

That said, Betty's Notebook is physically set up in a vintage 1930s wooden radio console repurposed to include an LCD screen displaying digital art and playing the latest iteration of the four-stems combined.

Metapurse has confirmed that the physical component will be available to lend to museums interested in displaying this polyphonic sound and digital art installation piece.

When asked about what other genres Metapurse would be keen on investing in, and Twobadour responds, "Jazz comes to mind, also rural South Indian music!"

With hospitals staggering under rising COVID-19 caseloads, hotels are acting as step-down care centres, providing additional beds, monitoring doctors and nurses on call

# Isolate, with room service

SWETA AKUNDI AND GOWRI S

**A**s far as birthday celebrations go, this one at Sarovar Hotels and Resorts, Gurugram was unusual. A sexagenarian guest lay isolated in her hotel bedroom, as support staff in PPE suits walked in with a cake and a song.

The 60-bed property is now a care centre for elderly COVID-19 patients with mild or no symptoms. The hotel houses five ambulances in the premises and has a dedicated team of 20 medical professionals. Relatives can monitor the patient's vitals on a daily basis through Sarovar's app.

In the second wave of COVID-19 with increasing caseload, hospitals are collaborating with hotels, both luxury and budget, to provide additional beds and medical care for mild and asymptomatic patients.

"Healthcare systems get crippled under the large volume of people approaching hospitals," says Tejasvi Rao, Chief Operations Officer at Apollo Hospitals, adding that many have mild symptoms and may not need hospitalisation. Now, patients are screened by the hospital and only if deemed fit to be admitted in a care centre, are they encouraged to avail these services. By partnering with hotels, he says, "We can reserve admits for those that require acute care, while also helping others that need supervision."

Apollo has a tie-up with Lemon Tree

hotels and IHCL Group, which, in Chennai, includes the Taj Club House at the luxury end and Ginger Hotels at the economic end. It is a continuation of Apollo's Stay I project started in March 2020 by partnering with OYO hotels. This time around, it has partnered with 24 facilities across 11 cities, including Chennai, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Guwahati. Apart from reducing the burden on the health care system, such services also support the hospitality industry and its employees.

The hotels provide hospitality services (including protein-heavy regional meals, thrice a day) and have been trained on the hygiene and cleaning protocol developed by a team of infectious disease doctors at Apollo," adds Tejasvi. The medical supervision is done by the partnering hospital: "We have a tech platform that enables teleconsultation with

doctors, and once the prescription is generated, our pharmacy and diagnostic teams make sure it is delivered."

Apart from this, nurses (one for every 20 beds) and ward boys are stationed at the hotel 24/7, along with a doctor to come in and check on the patient every day. In select hotels, oxygen cylinders and concentrators are kept on standby in case the situation deteriorates, and the patient needs to be moved to the partner hospital.

#### But why not home isolation?

Explaining why people may not be confident about home quarantine, Dr P Kuga-

nantham, HOD, Infectious Diseases and Social Medicine, SIMS Hospital in Chennai, says, "Some COVID-positive patients who are isolating at home due to the lack of beds land up in complications by the seventh or 12th day because they are not able to monitor their CRP (a marker of inflammation in the blood). Early intervention on the third or fourth day, under medical supervision, reduces any chances of such complications."

This is where isolating at a hotel-turned-COVID care centre comes into play. With doctors, nurses and ambulances on call 24/7, daily checkups and blood tests, a sudden deterioration can be detected and treated immediately.

Equally pressing is the concern for your immediate family. With joint families under one roof, and most of the younger lot still unvaccinated, people diagnosed with COVID-19 are afraid that they will pass on the infection to the ones taking care of them. It is what drove Rajeev Arora\* (name changed on request) to be put up at The Pride Hotel in Kilpauk, Chennai, for the past week.

"The doctor at VS Hospitals suggested I quarantine myself at home, but I was worried for the safety of my family. I have my mother, granddaughter, son and

daughter-in-law living with me," he says.

Dr Aswin Sayiram SJ, COO, SIMS Hospital adds, "Most of them get anxious while at home and then fall sick. Now, even more so, we need such alternatives to work. It reduces the stress on the patient and the progression of the disease to a great extent."

This is all the more true for elderly people living away from their families, as Sarovar Hotels in Gurugram discovered. Apart from COVID-positive patients, those who are discharged from the hospital but have no one to take care of them are also welcome, says Ajay Bakaya, managing director of Sarovar Hotels and Resorts.

The hotel, which has a tie-up with Fortis Memorial Research Institute, is equipped with ventilators, oxygen concentrators and cylinders and beds in case of emergencies, adds Ajay. "While the hospitals are filled to the brim in capacity, it is understandable that they can't spare their medical professionals. In our case, Emoha Elder Care is the institution that brought in the medical support," he says. While isolating, it is also important to have a physical presence next to one if need be. Which is why, the support staff is encouraged to enter the room, clean up, serve food and "hold their hands, if necessary".

#### Care within reach

Such 'courtesy calls' are the norm at ITC's Welcomhotel too that have partnered with Manipal Hospital in Delhi, and with G Kuppuswamy Naidu Memorial Hospital and KG Hospital in Coimbatore.

"The hospitals send the patients to our hotel, and the guest is guided to their room where they stay for the entire duration. Everything is online and contactless," says Erine Louis, general manager, Welcomhotel Coimbatore. "Doctors and nurses are stationed on the same floor, along with emergency oxygen, so that everything is within reach."

In a similar way, Ramada Plaza by Wyndham in Gurugram now calls itself an extended arm of SIMS hospital. Last year, the hotel was serving doctors who had flown in from across the country to treat patients. But this year, they wished to play a larger part by partnering with the hospital. Keeping in mind the importance of fresh air and sunshine, the hotel opens up its rooftops in the morning and evenings for a quick, supervised stroll. Patients can carry out breathing exercises, light stretches and yoga. "We also have comforting teams, who are solely meant to comfort patients by talking to them and understanding their needs," adds Sandeep Bhatnagar, general manager. Patients' food preferences are catered to, by working with a menu developed by hospital dieticians, adds Sandeep.

"We give them boiled amla, *kabasura kudineer* and *sundal*, as dietary supplements." To make sure there is unobstructed air flow, windows in corridors are left open in addition to having fresh air units with viral filters through the day.

The price for these services can start from ₹3,000 a night for single occupancy and go up to ₹10,000 a night for double occupancy (excluding lab tests and medicines). However, if you have been advised to stay at a hotel with COVID-19 care facilities, as part of your treatment by a medical practitioner, you can claim insurance against the treatment cost. This was made clear last year after the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India issued a notification recognising 'mashif' and 'temporary' hospitals.

This is why, says Rajeev, he can afford his seven-day stay. "I had to spend a lakh to save my family from myself," he says. "I know how difficult it is to enter a hospital right now, at least this way there is space for those who need it more. Picking a hotel to stay was definitely the right call. If I went home and somebody got sick in the next two days, I would feel really guilty. It feels safer this way."



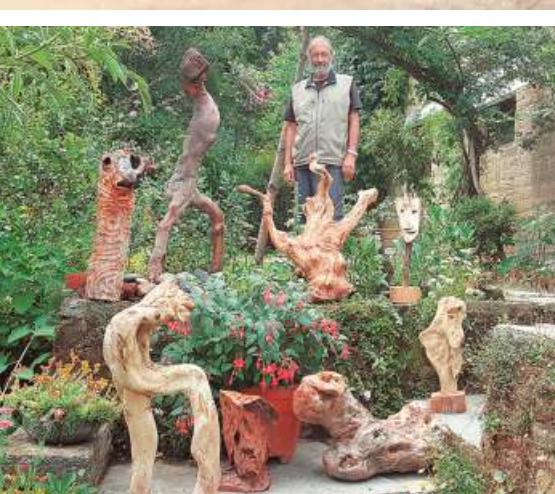
An extended arm (Clockwise from above) The support staff at Ramada Plaza by Wyndham, Gurugram; a room meant for isolation at Sarovar Hotels, Gurugram

■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKAND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



# A beautiful LIFE

Shakti Maira, who passed away in Delhi, lived a full life of an artist, writer, and thinker



(Clockwise from top) Sakti Maira with The Sangha; a painting from Pilgrims' Path; a sculpture he made out of found pieces of wood

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



lurching imitatively into western art constructs that had little relevance, and simultaneously the broader and integrative art traditions of India were being abandoned thoughtlessly," he said, on his website.

Maira also wrote two books: *Towards Ananda: Rethinking Indian Arts and Aesthetics* and *The Promise of Beauty & Why it Matters*.

It seemed that contemporary art was

#### Vijay Sethupathi to host MasterChef Tamil

Actor Vijay Sethupathi will be taking on a new avatar soon, that of a cooking show host when the latest version of the popular *MasterChef* series – *MasterChef Tamil* – airs soon on Sun TV. The *MasterChef* star, who has anchored shows earlier, appeared in a promo on Sun TV's official social media handle, confirming his presence on the upcoming cooking reality series. Reports indicate that the format of the show will follow the iconic *MasterChef Australia* series, which is currently in its 13th season. There have also been six seasons of *MasterChef India*, as well as a *Junior MasterChef India* version too. The international version made chefs Gary Mehigan and George Calombaris, and food critic Matt Preston celebrities. In India, after reality show *Cook with Comali* captured the fancy of audiences and made the likes of eventual winner Kani, Ashwin Kumar, Sivaangi and Pugazh household names, *MasterChef Tamil* hopes to follow in its wake. On the film front, Sethupathi has many upcoming projects such as *Tughlaq Durbar*, *Maamanithan* and *Laabam* among others.



#### THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13412

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
				8		
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13			14		15	
				16		
17	18					19
20				21		
22		23				

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#### Across

1 To my way of thinking (2,2,4)

5 Written musical

symbol indicating pitch (4)

9 Melted together (5)

10 Shutdown (7)

11 Proficient (12)

13 Spoke (6)

14 Shipping forecast area (6)

17 Quite frequently (2,5,2,3)

20 Predicament (7)

21 Senseless (5)

22 Nearly hopeless (4)

23 Broken piece (8)

■ Down

1 Gen (abbr) (4)

2 Tuneful (7)

3 Await a favourable moment (4,4,4)

4 Inhabit (6)

To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

6 Chuckle (5)  
7 Diabolical (8)  
8 Be lively and enjoyable (2,4,1,5)  
12 Left high and dry (8)  
15 Place for a ship to make fast (7)  
16 Inequitable (6)  
18 Fuel tanker (5)  
19 Special skill (4)

The solution will appear on May 20, 2021

Solution No. 13411

B	A	N	K	R	U	P	T	C	Y
C	L	O	E	O	O				
H	A	I	R	O	I	L	T	Y	R
E	M	K	Y	A	R	A			
W	E	P	T	F	O	O	H	D	Y
T	B	N	O	D					
H	I	A	T	U	S	B	E	D	E
E	V	T	F	S	I				
F	R	I	C	T	O	G	U	L	L
A	A	R	R	M	N	L			
T	U	T	E	B	E	L	I	N	E
O	S	I	Z	T	R				
C	R	O	S	D	R	E	S		

# COVID-19 catastrophe could have been avoided, says report

Panel blames institutions and 'science-denying' leaders for failing to heed alarm

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

The catastrophic scale of the COVID-19 pandemic could have been prevented, an independent global panel concluded on Wednesday, but a "toxic cocktail" of dithering and poor coordination meant the warning signs went unheeded.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response said institutions "failed to protect people" and science-denying leaders eroded public trust in health interventions. Early responses to the outbreak detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 "lacked urgency", with February 2020 a costly "lost month" as countries failed to heed the alarm, said the panel in its long-awaited final report.

Requested by the World Health Organization (WHO)



**Keeping safe:** People waiting to receive shots at a temporary vaccination site at a train station in New York City. ■ AFP

member states last May, the report, "COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic", argued that the global alarm system needed overhauling to prevent a similar catastrophe.

"We have identified failures at every stage and we do believe that it could have been possible to prevent this pandemic," panel co-chair and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said. "We cannot simply

point to one individual who is ultimately responsible," she said.

The panel said the WHO could have declared the situation a Public Health Emergency of International Concern – its highest level of alarm – on January 22, 2020. Instead, it waited eight more days before doing so. It was only in March after the WHO described it as a pandemic – a term that is not officially

part of its alert system – that countries were jolted into action.

As for the initial outbreak, "there were clearly delays in China – but there were delays everywhere", said former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, the report's other chairwoman.

To tackle the pandemic, the panel called on the richest countries to donate a billion vaccine doses to the poorest. The WHO and the World Trade Organization should also get major vaccine-producing countries and manufacturers to agree to voluntary licensing and technology transfers for vaccines. It also proposed an over-haul of the WHO to make it less cautious and give it more authority to send expert missions into countries immediately without waiting for their approval.

## HK legislature nod to China loyalty laws

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's Opposition-devoid legislature approved new powers on Wednesday allowing the government to sack public office holders and bar election candidates from standing if they are deemed "disloyal" to local authorities or China.

The new laws are part of sweeping changes that Beijing has ordered for Hong Kong's already limited electoral system which will dramatically reduce the number of directly elected politicians and ensure only "stauntpatriots" enter politics.

### Quashing dissent

Along with a sweeping national security law, the political changes are part of a broad campaign to quash dissent after huge and often violent democracy protests rocked the finance hub in 2019.

Forty legislators approved the new law with just one dissenting vote in a chamber cleared of Opposition members late last year ahead of the current political overhaul.

Under the new powers, all public office holders will be required to make a "pledge of loyalty" that they must adhere to throughout their term.

It includes principal government officials, Cabinet members, legislators and judges as well as members of the legislature.

It also includes more than 470 district councillors – local neighbourhood officials who are the only people Hong Kongers can choose via universal suffrage.

# Bangladesh rebuffs China on Quad warning

Dhaka asks foreign envoys to maintain decency, decorum

ANANTH KRISHNAN



Bangladesh Foreign Minister  
A.K. Abdul Momen

tries around China to work against China. So I believe you understand our position very clearly." "It is not China who has been interfering in other's internal affairs," Ms. Hua added. "We follow the principle of non-interference in other's internal affairs. India knows better than us about the Quad, what's the true intention of the Quad, is it trying to exclude China, or to target against China. If so, then it is not about interference, it is about expressing opposition to this Quad group and expressing the hope it will stop doing so."

### Chinese vaccine

Beyond the spat over the remarks, Bangladesh and China have been deepening cooperation, including on COVID-19. China invited Bangladesh, along with Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, to a Foreign Minister-level virtual dialogue last month, the fourth such meeting organised with South Asian countries to discuss COVID-19 cooperation, and offered Chinese vaccines and a plan to set up an emergency reserve for supplies for South Asian countries.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the dialogue India had also been invited to the forum, but did not attend.

A day after the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry's statement on the Chinese envoy's remarks, it expressed its thanks to China for "gifting 500,000 vaccines" and said a "regular supply of Chinese vaccines to Bangladesh is under way", as the Ministry shared a photo of Mr. Momen receiving a package of Sinopharm vaccines from Mr. Li.

## Taliban seizes district on outskirts of Kabul

Capture of Nerkh comes ahead of a ceasefire agreed to by the warring sides

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The Taliban has seized a district from the Afghan government forces on the outskirts of Kabul, ahead of a three-day ceasefire agreed between the warring sides, officials said.

Nerkh district is around 40 kilometres from the Afghan capital in the neighbouring Wardak province, which has long been used by militants as a gateway to reach Kabul.

Violence has soared since May 1 when the U.S. military began formally withdrawing its last remaining troops, as peace efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

"Security and defence forces made a tactical retreat from the police headquarters of Nerkh district," Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, said the insurgents captured

the area on Tuesday, adding that fighters seized the police headquarters and an army base.

The Defence Ministry on Wednesday said it would launch an offensive to win back the district, home to more than 60,000 people. "Commando reinforcements are on their way," said Fawad Aman, a spokesman for the Defence Ministry.

Large swathes of Wardak and neighbouring Logar province have been controlled

or contested for years by the Taliban fighters.

The main highway that connects Kabul to southern Kandahar province – the former Taliban stronghold and the scene of intense fighting in recent weeks – goes through the district. Taliban fighters have been encircling major Afghan urban centres, spurring speculation that the militants are waiting for the U.S. to withdraw before launching all-out assaults on Afghan cities.

## Republicans oust Trump critic from leadership

Liz Cheney refused to embrace false claim that Democrats stole 2020 poll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

House Republicans voted on Wednesday to oust anti-Trump conservative Liz Cheney from her leadership role, confirming that the party is casting its lot with the former U.S. President.

Eighteen months before crucial midterms and three years before the next presidential race, the Republican

Party punished one of its own for refusing to embrace Donald Trump's false claim that Democrats stole the 2020 election.

Ms. Cheney, a Wyoming conservative and the daughter of former Vice-President Dick Cheney, was removed from her role as the number three House Republican in a closed-door vote by the party's conference.



Liz Cheney

After the vote Ms. Cheney told mediapersons: "I will do everything I can to ensure that the former President never again gets

anywhere near the oval office." "We must go forward based on truth. We cannot both embrace the big lie and embrace the Constitution," she added.

Republicans argue it's about unity, and that Ms. Cheney hammering on about Mr. Trump and what she calls his "dangerous and anti-democratic cult of personality" has done nothing to bring a fractured party together following a contentious election that left them in the political hinterland.

## Ahmadinejad submits name for presidential poll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iranian ultra-conservative former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad put his name forward on Wednesday as a candidate to succeed moderate President Hassan Rouhani in elections next month.

The 64-year-old populist was applauded by several dozen supporters as he arrived at the Interior Ministry to submit his application.

The build-up to the June 18 election comes as Iran and world powers wrangle over reviving a 2015 nuclear accord, from which the U.S. withdrew unilaterally in 2018, reimposing crippling sanctions. Hopefuls have until Saturday to register, and will then be vetted by the conservative-dominated Guardian Council before a list of approved candidates is published by May 27, after which campaigning begins.

## Did Israel misjudge Hamas's response?

Hamas seems to be prepared for this moment, given the way it is firing rockets

STANLY JOHNY

The crisis escalated quickly this time. From a raid by Israeli armed forces in Al-Aqsa Mosque in the occupied Old City on Monday morning to rocket attacks from and airstrikes on Gaza in the evening. At least 53 Palestinians, including 14 children, were killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza, while the rocket and anti-tank missile attacks from Gaza killed five civilians one soldier in Israel. It is too early to say which side the conflict would turn. But one thing is certain: that this is the most dangerous escalation since the 2014 war on Gaza. Since the beginning of Ramzan last month, Israel, faced with political instability at home, has been using force to prevent Palestinian movement and gatherings in East Jerusalem. But did it expect the Jerusalem violence to take the country to the brink of a full-scale war?



**On the offensive:** Rockets being launched towards Israel from Gaza City on Wednesday. ■ AFP

now, Hamas has been in charge of Gaza since 2007 and its governance faces criticism from within. Hamas also largely stayed away from directly provoking Israel in the past seven years, while smaller militant groups fired rockets occasionally. This al-

lent partnership". So, when Israeli troops raided Al-Aqsa and protests were spreading in East Jerusalem against the eviction of dozens of Palestinians from their houses, Hamas seized on the moment. Its codename for the rocket operation was 'Sword of Jerusalem'. Clearly, it wants to project itself as a protector of Jerusalem and the only force that can stand up to Israel and thereby consolidate its position among the Palestinians.

**More rockets**  
Israel has vowed to intensify its airstrikes on Gaza. It is capable of carrying out deadly attacks. But there is a difference in the way Hamas fought this time. In 2014, it fired almost 4,000 rockets over 50 days, and most of them were intercepted by Israel's rocket defence system. This time, Hamas launched about 1000 rockets in the first two days, some of them piercing through the Iron Dome defence umbrella. If in 2014, six civilians were killed in seven weeks, Hamas rockets have killed five civilians in the first 24 hours this time. It is not sure whether Israel anticipated Hamas to escalate the Jerusalem tensions to an open conflict. But Hamas, given the way it is firing rockets, seems to be prepared for this moment.

**Anger towards Israel**  
There is also widespread anger against the way Israel treats Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the tightening of the occupation. Mr. Abbas, 85, seemed unable to counter Israeli measures. His decision to resume the PA-Israel security cooperation in January was also unpopular. Hamas termed the move "a stab in the back of efforts toward building a na-

## KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

No. 49, 4th & 5th Floor, East Wing, Khanjia Bhavan,  
Race Course Road, Bengaluru-560 001.  
Ph: 080-40931272 Website: www.kiadb.in  
email: cdoce1@kiadb.in or jdtp@kiadb.in

No.: IADB/ENG/EIA/EC/ETND-EC-05/1303/2021 Date: 12.05.2021

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER TO PROVIDE PROJECT CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR OBTAINING ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE (EC) (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting tenders under two cover systems for providing project consultancy services for preparing EIA, SIS studies etc., to obtain Environmental Clearance (EC) from State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) and Consent for Establishment (CFE) from Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and Half yearly compliance report to be submitted as per the statue for EC & CFE conditions, for 3 years for the proposed KIADB Industrial Areas Projects. The Firms / Consultancy Companies / Organisations who are approved as Accredited Consultants in the accredited list of Ministry of Environment and Forest, New Delhi. Are eligible to participate in this tender.

**SI. No.** **Proposed Name of the New Industrial Areas** **Approx. Extent**

1	Kochanahalli Industrial Area, Kochanahalli Village, Varna Hobli, Mysuru Taluk, Mysuru District.	234.38 Acres (94.85 Ha)
2	Mylnahalli & Hunasekatte Villages, Kasaba Hobli, Arasikere Taluk, Hassan District.	127.64 Acres (51.65 Ha)
3	Nagadiyatti Kaval Industrial Area, Nagadiyatti Kaval / Tangali Kaval Village, Kaduru Taluk, Kasaba Hobli, Chikkamagalur District.	236.95 Acres (95.93 Ha)

Applicants may download bidding documents from the e-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

**Schedule of dates are follows:**

- Last date to receive pre bid Queries: 02.06.2021 upto 5:00 p.m.
- Pre bid meeting will be held on: 10.06.2021 at 11:30 a.m.
- Deadline for submission of Technical and Financial bids is 25.06.2021 upto 4:00 p.m.
- Time and date of opening Technical bids is on: 28.06.2021 after 11:30 a.m.

**Sd/-  
Chief Engineer-2  
KIADB, Bengaluru**

DIPR/DDU/LC/360/2021-22

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**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PHARMACEUTICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (NIPER) KOLKATA**  
राष्ट्रीय औषधीय शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान, कोलकाता  
(Dept of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers)  
Chunilal Bhawan, 168 Maniktala Main Road, Adjacent to Bengal Chemicals, Kolkata 700045, West Bengal

### EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION NO. NIPER-K/06/2021

The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research (NIPER)-Kolkata is an Institute of National Importance established by an Act of Parliament under the aegis of Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Government of India.

Online Applications are invited from the eligible and suitable Indian Nationals for direct recruitment/deputation for the **Teaching** and **Non-Teaching** posts on regular basis through open competition on all India basis.

Date of Commencement of Online Application	12/05/2021 (Wednesday, 10.00 am)
Last date of Online Application & Payment of Fees	11/06/2021 (Friday, up to 6.00 pm)
Last date of receipt of hard copy of online application at NIPER-K along with all enclosures.	16/06/2021 (Wednesday, up to 4.00 pm)

For further details please visit our website [www.niperkolkata.edu.in](http://www.niperkolkata.edu.in). Date 12/05/2021 Registrar (I/C)

### TNPL TAMILNADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED

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### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender No. Material Description Due date

212233 000080 Transportation of Cement Grade Limestone from Mines of M/s Tamil Nadu Minerals Limited (TAMIL), Periyangalur, Ariyalur district to TNPL Cement Factory at Kagithapuram through Truck/Tipper 26.05.21

212213 000838 Providing front end loader for wet pit handling at Pulp Mill 31.05.21

212213 000761 Unloading, Stacking and Feeding of Eucalyptus and other species of wood and wood chips feeding at TNPL Unit-I at Kagithapuram for the year 2021-22 24.05.21

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	48,691	-0.96
US Dollar	73.42	-0.11
Gold	47,074	-0.49
Brent oil	69.32	1.37

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	751.60	-11.05
Asian Paints	2556.20	-0.05
Axist Bank	691.30	-16.05
Bajaj Auto	3875.25	-4.05
Bajaj Finserv	11087.95	-10.10
Bajaj Finance	5258.40	-66.20
Bharti Airtel	561.75	-6.65
BPCL	449.25	-13.00
Britannia Ind	3439.55	21.15
Cipla	898.60	7.70
Coal India	153.50	-2.20
Divis Lab	4061.45	-12.15
Drd Reddys Lab	5301.45	5.50
Eicher Motors	2456.45	-14.75
Grafin Ind	1412.35	-37.50
HCL Tech.	906.10	-1.20
HDPC	2438.70	-25.50
HFDC Bank	1399.50	-4.05
HDPC Life	668.80	-2.45
Hero MotoCorp	2840.15	1.80
Hindalco	398.90	-14.00
Hind Unilever	2328.95	-73.15
ICICI Bank	594.75	-15.10
IndusInd Bank	916.65	-32.20
Infosys	1327.00	-3.65
Indian Oil Corp	102.80	-0.90
ITC	203.25	-0.75
JSW Steel	707.90	-26.35
Kotak Bank	1718.85	-36.60
L&T	1385.30	1.70
M&M	759.70	-16.30
Maruti Suzuki	6817.55	80.90
Nestle India Ltd.	16717.90	-152.20
NTPC	113.30	0.60
ONGC	115.10	-3.00
PowerGrid Corp	225.95	2.55
Reliance Ind	1913.15	-20.00
SBI Life	972.90	-28.05
State Bank	367.70	3.05
Shree Cement	26833.25	-679.85
Sun Pharma	702.85	-5.25
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	640.05	-1.55
Tata Motors	326.00	10.45
Tata Steel	1179.15	-54.75
TCS	3087.60	-35.00
Tech Mahindra	962.35	-14.70
Titan	1454.95	19.70
UltraTech Cement	6388.85	-101.75
UPL	691.65	7.30
Wipro	507.60	-10.80

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.22	73.54
Euro	88.83	89.22
British Pound	103.48	103.94
Japanese Yen (100)	67.32	67.64
Chinese Yuan	11.37	11.42
Swiss Franc	80.97	81.37
Singapore Dollar	55.11	55.36
Canadian Dollar	60.57	60.87
Malaysian Ringgit	17.74	17.84

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## NMDC increases prices of lump ore, fines

The country's largest iron ore miner NMDC on Wednesday announced a hike in the prices of lump ore by ₹700 per tonne and fines by ₹1,500 per tonne with immediate effect. Iron ore is a key raw material used in steel making. Any change in its prices has a direct impact on the rates of steel. The announcement has come at a time when steel is trading at an all-time high. PTI

## Govt. approves PLI plan for ACC batteries

The government approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for manufacturing advanced chemistry cell (ACC) battery at an estimated outlay of ₹18,100 crore. The National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage may attract foreign and domestic investment of ₹45,000 crore, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said. PTI

## Tata Power Q4 net rises marginally to ₹481 crore

Tata Power on Wednesday posted a marginal rise of 1% in consolidated net profit to ₹481.2 crore for the March quarter. It had clocked a net profit of ₹474.7 crore in the year-ago period, the company said. Total income rose to ₹10,225.2 crore in the quarter from ₹6,794 crore in the same period a year ago. The board recommended a dividend of ₹1.55 per equity share of ₹1 each. PTI

## Eroute gets RBI nod for pre-paid instruments

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has authorised fintech firm Eroute Technologies Pvt. Ltd. to start operations of semi-closed, pre-paid instruments in the country. This would enable the firm to unveil payment solutions targeted at addressing the specific needs of various consumer segments. It is also pursuing co-branded payment solutions with consumer firms, Eroute said.

## Inflation eases to 4.29%; base lifts IIP

Softer food prices spur April CPI-based inflation to 3-month low, March industrial output jumps 22.4%

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



**May not sustain:** The turnaround in manufacturing relates to the period prior to lockdowns, says Srivastava. ■SRIRAM M.A.

than the 4.77% pace averaged in urban areas.

The March IIP data showed manufacturing grew by 25.8% and electricity generation by 22.5% over the year-earlier period, when industrial activity had collapsed 18.7% in the wake of

the COVID-19 lockdown.

For 2020-21, industrial output shrank by 8.6%, compared with a 0.8% contraction in 2019-20. Manufacturing contracted by 9.8% in the year, while mining production shrank 7.8%. Electricity seemed to have recovered

from the initial shock, dipping just 0.5% over the full financial year.

Observing that the inflation and IIP data provided strong positive signals for the economy, EY India chief policy advisor D. K. Srivastava, however, stressed that the turnaround in manufacturing related to the period just prior to the extensive rounds of lockdowns induced by the ongoing second COVID wave.

While inflation in fuel and light increased in April, indicating that cost-push inflation persists through petroleum prices, Mr. Srivastava reckoned lower demand for food and beverages and other consumption items drove overall inflation lower. "The policy message is that the government needs to support demand without getting ex-

cessively concerned about the pressure on prices of petroleum products," he said.

**Little room for rate cuts**  
Most economists expect the RBI to remain accommodative, but don't see much room for rate cuts.

"As the lockdown base fades away, we expect the CPI inflation to bounce back to an average of 5% in the remainder of the first half, ruling out the possibility of further rate cuts, said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

DBS Group economist Radhika Rao emphasised that inflation and IIP data over the next three months were likely to be 'significantly distorted' by base effects.

"Focus has returned to inflation in light of the recent rally in commodity prices," Ms. Rao observed.

## WTO chief targets waivers for COVID vaccines in Dec.

DG says pushing for initial pact by July

## VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

said: "I am hoping by July, we will start to see something, with a final outcome by MC12," she added, referring to the WTO's ministerial conference set to take place in Geneva from November 30 to December 3.

**Package on agriculture**  
Expressing the hope that the conference would encompass agendas important to both developing and developed countries, she said there would be wide disappointment if the WTO could not come up with a package on agriculture in order to meet food security concerns on a permanent basis.

"Very much like the food security angle because it's real. We are experiencing it and so we will be trying to persuade our members to look at the issue of public stockholdings and making that permanent, with all the transparency that is required and I am sure India has no problems with that."

The Nigerian WTO chief added that domestic support issues and industrial subsidies also needed review.

"We have our work cut out for us, because we still have deep divides. But guess what, I am optimistic. We have to get it done. We just need some successes for the WTO," she said.

## April fuel sales decline 9.4% on COVID wave

Diesel slides 9% from April-2019 level

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI



Fuel demand slumped 9.4% in April compared with the preceding month as lockdowns clamped in several States to curb the second wave of coronavirus sweeping the nation pummelled demand, official data showed on Wednesday.

Consumption fell 9.38% to 17.01 million tonnes in April from 18.77 million tonnes in March, data from Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) showed. India was under one of the world's severest lockdowns in April 2020. Fuel sales had halved that month, plunging to the lowest since 2006. Comparing on a yearly basis, fuel de-

mand surged 81.5% from April 2020 lows. Sales of petrol fell to 2.38 million tonnes in April, the lowest since August, and 13% lower than March 2021 and 3% lower than April 2019.

Diesel demand fell to 6.67 million tonnes in April 2021, down 7.5% from the previous month and 9% from April 2019.

On an annualised basis, the overall FPI ownership in Nifty 500 stocks rose 160 bps to 22.3% in the March quarter from 20.7% in March 2020, while that of DIIs declined 50 bps to 14.2% from 14.7%. On a quarterly basis, DIIs witnessed decline by 10 bps, data from Motilal Oswal Financial Services showed.

## Auto wholesales decline 30% from March: SIAM

PVs dip 10.7% on pandemic effect

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



though, increased. PVs rose 4.58% to 42,025 units, while two-wheelers and three-wheelers climbed 21.1% and 16.8%, respectively.

"Demand has been... impacted by the second wave of COVID-19, in terms of low consumer sentiment and closure of dealerships due to lockdowns," said SIAM director general Rajesh Menon.

## Multiples-led consortium to buy Zydus AH

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

A consortium led by private equity firm Multiples Alternate Asset Management, through an SPV, has signed definitive agreements to acquire Zydus AH, the animal health business of Zydus Cadila, for ₹2,921 crore.

The consortium that includes Multiples, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and RARE Enterprises, is buying the business focussed on India and certain other countries on a going concern basis. The deal is via a slump sale from Zydus Animal Health and Investments Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Cadila Healthcare Ltd.

Zydus AH is the second largest animal health business in India. It has a manufacturing facility in Haldwai.

"To combat this, global enterprises are beefing up their security to avoid possible catastrophes. As a result, we are seeing a 100% spike in demand for CSO jobs and other cybersecurity positions in India and abroad," he added.

On the outlook for jobs, Kamal Karanth, co-founder, Xpheno, a specialist staffing firm, said the demand for cybersecurity professionals was expected to rise 200% in the next four years.

"In 2021 alone, the country will require some 70,000 people with crucial skills such as application development security, cloud security, risk management, threat intelligence, incident response, data privacy and security strategy," he added.

## Remote working spurs demand for cyber experts

India requires 70,000 professionals

## MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Demand for cybersecurity professionals, including chief security officers, has more than doubled now from a year earlier in the country after cybersecurity emerged as a key concern following the pandemic, data from executive search firm Kingsley Gate Partners showed.

Remote working, new ways of managing workflows and efforts to ensure business continuity have only made these companies increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats," said Umesh Ramakrishnan, senior partner and co-CEO. "This has exponentially increased the risk of security failures," Mr. Ramakrishnan said.

"To combat this, global enterprises are beefing up their security to avoid possible catastrophes. As a result, we are seeing a 100% spike in demand for CSO jobs and other cybersecurity positions in India and abroad," he added.

Net revenues increased to ₹11,881 crore from ₹6,795 crore in the previous year.

Consolidated FY21

# Arjuna-winning veteran paddler Chandrasekar passes away

Three-time National champion and former International loses his battle with COVID-related complications

K. KEERTHIVASAN  
CHENNAI

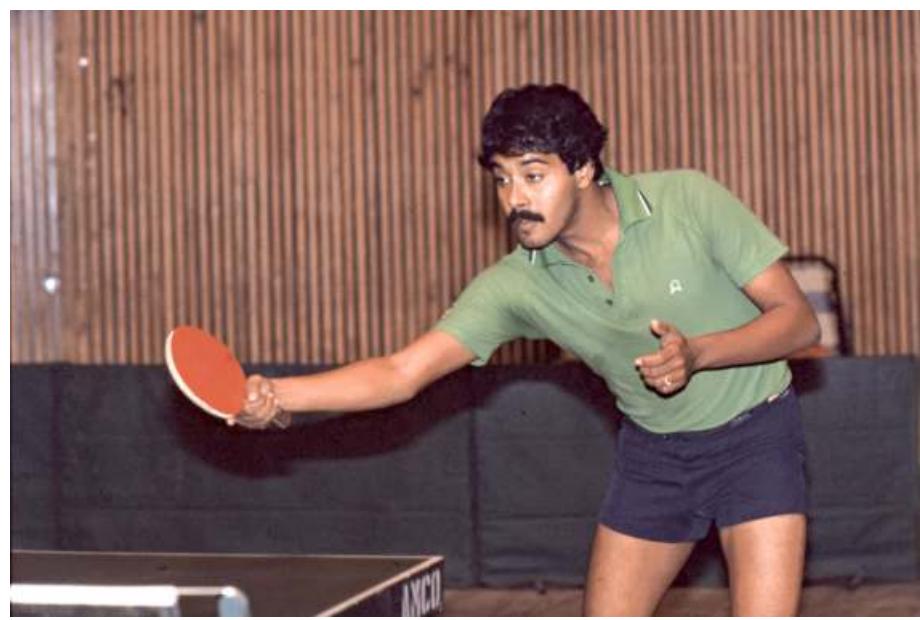
Three-time National table tennis champion and former International paddler V. Chandrasekar passed away here on Wednesday due to COVID-related complications. He was the current president of Tamizhaga Table Tennis Association (TTA). He is survived by his wife Mala and 20-year-old son C. Sanjay, a final year engineering student.

The 63-year-old Chandrasekar, a 1982 Arjuna Award winner, was admitted to a city hospital recently for coronavirus, after which he developed lung infection. Chandra, as he was popularly known, has groomed many top-level players such as S. Raman, Arul Selvi, Chetan Baboor, N.R. Indu, M.S. Mythili and G. Sathiyan and teenager Preyesh Suresh Raj, to name a few.

#### Coaching stint

Chandra has been coaching young paddlers for the last two decades. Starting his coaching stint in early 2000 at YMCA (Royapettah), he established his academy with support from the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu in Arumbakkam and later [now] in Mogappair.

Chandra, retired from State Bank of India, had a tumultuous journey, especially after a botched-up surgery on his right knee that cut short his career when he was just 26 years old. He fought a legal battle with the reputed



**Bold strokes:** An attacking player, V. Chandrasekar was always willing to experiment and take risks. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

hospital and eventually won the case. Despite his failing health and limited mobility – his peripheral vision was affected due to the after-effects of the surgery – he continued to coach youngsters with the same enthusiasm as his playing days.

As a player, he was attacking, always willing to experiment and take risks. Whether he was playing in local prize money tournaments or the National championships, people flocked to see Chandra play.

At the International level, Chandra had some success. He reached the semifinals and bagged a singles bronze in the 1982 Commonwealth Championships in Mumbai, and was instrumental in

guiding the Indian men's team from Group II to I in the 1983 World championships in Tokyo.

#### Spoke for unity

After the Tamil Nadu Table Tennis Association (TNTTA) split into two factions in 1988 – TNTTA and TTTA, Chandrasekar was made the president of TTTA. But he wasn't entirely happy with the position and always spoke about unity in the TT fraternity.

In fact, he and G. Jagannath, another former National champion, prepared a blue-print for the future of TT in the State. "We told the two Unites that they can fight the cases in court but hold tournaments as one unit so that the players don't get af-

fected, but things didn't work out," said the 76-year-old.

Chandra's autobiography with Seetha Srikanth, *My Fightback from Death's Door*, published in 2006, was well received as it frankly recounted in some detail certain important incidents in his playing career and his battle with the hospital, among other things. He wrote touchingly: "There are times when I stumble on the footpath, and people have thought that I was drunk. That is when it hurts for it is not my fault."

Outspoken during and after his playing days, Chandra was a trailblazer both as a player and a coach. His legacy will live on.

# 'A fighter all through his life'

Table tennis world mourns Chandra's demise

RAKESH RAO  
K. KEERTHIVASAN  
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Former players, including some contemporaries of V. Chandrasekar, and two current stars paid glowing tributes to the three-time National table tennis champion.

**G. Jagannath:** When I first saw Chandra, during the 1969 State championship, he was around 11 years old. He was confidence-personified and remained positive throughout his life despite all the setbacks he faced.

**Kamlesh Mehta:** A terrific fighter. Extremely stylish player to watch. Chandra was a great team man and played hard. Never gave up, either on a table tennis table or in life. Not just that, he improved his backhand play and did consistently well.

**Monalisa Mehta:** For me, his forehand drives were simply superlative. After his training in Japan (in the academy run by twice World champion Ichiro Ogimura), the way he executed those powerful forehand top-spin drives from the corner of the table, was a treat to watch.

**A. Srinivasa Rao (Dronacharya Awardee):** From 1976-83 he was mostly unbeatable in TN, he played the same strokes differently, and was really a crowd-puller.

**S. Raman:** Chandra was a



**Pupil's offerings:** G. Sathiyan says he owes his entire junior career and the medals he won to 'Chandra Sir'. ■ FILE PHOTO

learner. Initially, he appeared to be a single-dimension player, relying mainly on his forehand, but later he improved his backhand play and did consistently well.

**Sharath Kamal:** Chandra Sir was a gifted sportsman and a hands-on coach.

**G. Sathiyan:** My entire junior career and the medals I won, I owe it to Chandra Sir. It's a personal loss.

**ITTF president Dushyant Chautala:** It was very unfortunate that table tennis has lost another person to the dreaded disease. We recently lost Suhas Kulkarni and now Chandra. We all will miss his persona. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

#### IN BRIEF



**R.P. Singh's father succumbs to COVID**

NEW DELHI  
Former India pacer R.P. Singh's father passed away on Wednesday because of COVID-19 complications. "It is with deepest grief and sadness we inform the passing away of my father, Mr. Shiv Prasad Singh...we request you to keep my beloved father in your thoughts and prayers. RIP Papa," RP tweeted.



**Mary Kom and Lovlina get first jab**

KOLKATA  
Olympic-bound boxers M.C. Mary Kom and Lovlina Borgohain received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at the Command Hospital in Pune on Wednesday. These two boxers are part of the on-going elite women's National camp at the Army Sports Institute in Pune. Four members of the support staff also received the first jab.



**Kusal Perera to lead; Karunaratne, Mathews, Chandimal dropped**

COLOMBO  
Sri Lanka on Wednesday sacked one-day captain Dimuth Karunaratne and dropped him and a host of other big names from the squad heading for Bangladesh this week. Two other former skippers – Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal – were also dropped along with Suranga Lakmal and Nuwan Pradeep. Kusal Perera has been named as the new captain, with Kusal Mendis as his deputy. AFP

#### CAC interviews women's coach candidates

MUMBAI  
The Cricket Advisory Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India on Wednesday interviewed four of the eight shortlisted candidates for India Women's head coach. CAC, headed by Madan Lal, interacted with W.V. Raman (incumbent), Ramesh Powar, Ajay Ratna and Rishikesh Kanitkar on the first of the two-day process. Thursday will see CAC interviewing four female candidates – Devika Palshikar, Mamatha Maben, Hemlata Kala and Suman Sharma.

## Tendulkar's tribute to the nurses



Sachin Tendulkar.  
■ FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Sachin Tendulkar paid tribute to the nation's nursing staff on the occasion of 'International Nurses Day', saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has made everyone realise their value more than ever.

"Silently serving humanity forever. Sleepless nights, care and concern flow non stop for us when we aren't well. The pandemic has made us recognise their value more than ever before. Grateful for everything you do for us. Happy International Nurses Day," tweeted Tendulkar.

## Dravid created a solid pool for India: Chappell

He picked cues from Australian structure and replicated it'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SYDNEY

Former India captain Rahul Dravid "picked" the Australian "brains" to create solid domestic structure which has served as a feeder line for his country's national team, something Australia is missing badly, feels legendary Greg Chappell.

Chappell also said that both India and England have overtaken Australia as the best side in recognising young talent and providing them a platform to succeed. "India have got their act together and that's largely because Rahul Dravid has picked our brains, seen what we're doing and replicated it in India and with their much larger base," Chappell told cricket.com.au. He cautioned that talented Australian cricketers might find their careers at crossroads because of the domestic structure.

"Historically, we've been one of the best at developing young players and keeping them in the system, but I think that's changed in the last couple of years," he said.

"I'm seeing a bunch of young players with great potential who are in limbo. That's unacceptable. We cannot afford to lose one player." The 72-year-old feels Australia has lost the bragging rights of calling themselves the best at talent identification.

"I think we've already lost our position as the best at identifying talent and bringing it though. I think England are doing it better than us now and India are doing it better than us."

## Kohli and Anushka raise nearly ₹11 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Virat Kohli and his actor wife Anushka Sharma have raised nearly ₹11 crore in their fund-raising campaign to support COVID-19 relief work.

The pair contributed ₹2 crore and the funds raised through the campaign will be donated to Act Grants to aid COVID-19 relief.

Their aim was to raise ₹7 crore through 'Ketto' but with two days still left, they have managed to surpass their target.

## Singapore Open cancelled due to COVID-19

Saina and Srikanth set to miss the Olympics as there are no more qualifiers

#### BADMINTON

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

With the cancellation of the Singapore Open, scheduled from June 1 to 6, former World No. 1 players Saina Nehwal and K. Srikanth are set to miss the Tokyo

Olympic Games. The announcement, made by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Wednesday, has virtually shut the door on the two Indians making it to Tokyo.

That leaves P.V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and the duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy as the Indian qualifiers for Tokyo Games.

The BWF has confirmed that the Singapore Open will not be rescheduled.

After the cancellation of India Open and Malaysia Open due to recent surge in COVID-19 cases, Singapore Open was the last qualification event before the June 15 deadline.

Further statement by the BWF is awaited.

## A huge disappointment, says Srikanth

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

"The year has gone for me," K. Srikanth said after the last of the Olympic qualifying events, the Singapore Open, was cancelled on Wednesday.

"I had a chance of making the cut for the Tokyo Games if I were to compete in the Malaysian and the Singapore Opens. I have been training hard to regain peak form," Srikanth told *The Hindu*.

"I thought the BWF could have planned the qualifying events in a country with better quarantine rules. It is a huge disappointment if a player has to miss the Olympics for no fault of his/her because of these cancellations."

He added: "Like in tennis where the players' views and suggestions are sought, in badminton too we should have players' representatives."

"The Games could have been rescheduled to a later date this year so that the qualifying events could have been planned better," Srikanth said.

Seeking support: K. Srikanth is of the view that badminton, like tennis, should have players' representatives. ■ FILE PHOTO

"The Games could have been rescheduled to a later date this year so that the qualifying events could have been planned better," Srikanth said.

## Desperately need international competitions'

Uncertainty over the Tokyo Games nags champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra



TRYING TIMES: Neeraj Chopra is frustrated that four years of sincere effort may come to naught if something adverse happens. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra missed qualifying for the Rio Olympics in 2016 by 12 days. Five years on, the uncertainty around Tokyo Olympics continues to nag India's medal prospect.

"In 2016, I was doing well and even a metre less than what I did at Poland (World Junior Championships) would have been good at Rio but you cannot do anything about it. Now again my training has been really good and I am getting into a good rhythm but there is uncertainty. It is frustrating to think that four years of effort will be in vain if something happens," Neeraj said in an interaction on Wednesday.

**What's the use?**  
"2019 was lost because of injury, then from 2020 onwards because of COVID. I

do feel that some of the best 2-3 years of my career have been lost for reasons beyond my control. How long can we keep thinking about staying positive? Everyone trains to show their efforts in competition, to test themselves against the best. Without that, training becomes meaningless," he added.

The 23-year-old admitted

that competitions were his biggest need at the moment. "I have not participated in a full-fledged international competition for more than two years and I have to get that experience to be comfortable and prepared for the Olympics. Even the best cannot go directly from training and perform," he said.

"Even the smallest of countries abroad have one. Already the temperature is touching 40 degrees and it will get worse. An indoor track will help us train all year round without worrying about weather," he said.

## Disastrous day for higher seeds

Osaka, Serena, and Medvedev bundled out; Barty and Djokovic advance

#### ITALIAN OPEN

REUTERS  
ROME

World No. 2 Naomi Osaka crashed out of the Italian Open on Wednesday, losing 7-6(2), 6-2 to American Jessica Pegula.

Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam winner, has often struggled on clay and her defeat in Rome followed a second-round loss at the Madrid Open this month.

Later, Serena Williams, seeded eighth and playing the 1,000th Tour-level match of her glittering career, suffered a shock 7-6(6), 7-5 defeat by Argentinian Nadia Podoroska. It was the American's 149th defeat in her 1,000 career WTA matches.

World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty advanced to the third round. Title-holder Djokovic waited three hours to finish off the match despite Fritz's efforts in the second set.

**Beating rain and Fritz**

Meanwhile in Tuesday, World No. 1 Novak Djokovic overcame a lengthy rain delay to beat American Taylor Fritz 6-3, 7-6(5) to reach the

third round. Title-holder Djokovic waited three hours to finish off the match despite Fritz's efforts in the second set.

**Important results (second round): Men:** Alejandro Davi dovich Fokina bt Cameron Norrie 6-2, 6-3; Dominic Thiem bt Marton Fucsovics 3-6, 7-6(5), 6-0; Lorenzo Sonego bt Gianluca Mager 6-4, 6-4; Roberto Bautista Agut bt Cristian Garin 7-6(5), 6-3; Andrey Rublev bt Jan-Lennard Struff 6-7(7), 6-1, 6-4; Federico Delbonis bt David Goffin 6-2, 6-1; Aslan Karatsev bt Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 6-4; Alexander Zverev bt Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-2; Novak Djokovic bt Taylor Fritz 6-3, 7-6(5).

**Women:** Ashleigh Barty vs Yaroslava Shvedova 6-4, 6-1; Veronika Kudermetova bt Caroline Garcia 6-4, 6-4; Coco Gauff bt Maria Sakkari 6-1, 6-1; Aryna Sabalenka bt Sara Sorribes 7-5, 6-1; Garbine Muguruza bt Bernarda Pera 2-6, 6-0, 7-5; Elina Svitolina bt Amanda Anisimova 2-6, 6-3; Karolina Pliskova bt Anastasija Sevastova 6-2, 6-3; Vera Zvonareva bt Petra Kvitova 6-4, 3-6, 6-4; Jeļena Ostapenko bt Ajla Tomljanović 6-2, 7-6(3); Nadia Podoroska bt Serena Williams 7-6(6), 7-5; Petra Martić bt Kristina Mladenović 7-5, 6-3; Ekaterina Alexandrova bt Jennifer Brady, wallover; Jessica Pegula bt Naomi Osaka 7-6(2), 6-2.

AN-NDE

## IN BRIEF



## Caster Semenya arrested for speeding

**CAPE TOWN** Olympic champion Caster Semenya was sentenced to 50 hours of community service for speeding while driving in South Africa, prosecutors said on Wednesday. The runner was arrested last Thursday and released on \$35 bail, the National Prosecuting Authority said in a statement.

## Ex-hockey umpire Sodhi succumbs to COVID-19

**NEW DELHI** Former hockey umpire and technical official Ravinder Singh Sodhi died here on Wednesday due to coronavirus-related complications. He was 66. "He passed away in New Delhi on Wednesday, 12 May 2021 following COVID-related complications," a Hockey India (HI) release stated. PTI



## Prakash Padukone discharged

**BENGALURU** Badminton stalwart Prakash Padukone, who had tested positive for COVID-19, has been discharged from hospital and has returned to his Bengaluru home. Padukone and other members of his family who were afflicted with the virus have all fully recovered and tested negative, a source said. Padukone, who in 1980 became the Indian to win the All England Championships title, was admitted to a private hospital here earlier this month.

## Miami Heat clinches a playoff spot

## NBA

REUTERS

**BOSTON** Miami Heat clinched a spot in the playoffs for the fourth time in the past six seasons by beating the host Boston Celtics 129-121 on Tuesday night. Tyler Herro led the Heat with 24 points.

Caris LeVert scored 24 points and Domantas Sabonis posted a triple-double (16 points, 15 assists, 13 rebounds) to lead host Indiana to a comeback 103-94 win over Philadelphia.

The Pacers clinched a berth in the Eastern Conference play-in tournament with their second consecutive victory coupled with Chicago Bulls' loss to Brooklyn Nets.

**The results:** Denver 117 bt Charlotte 112; Minnesota 119 bt Detroit 100; Miami 129 bt Boston 121; LA Clippers 115 bt Toronto 96; Indiana 103 bt Philadelphia 94; Memphis 133 bt Dallas 104; Brooklyn 115 bt Chicago 107; Milwaukee 114 bt Orlando 102; Golden State 122 bt Phoenix 116; LA Lakers 101 bt New York 99 (OT); Sacramento 122 bt Oklahoma City 106.

## Nagal in quarterfinals

## INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU

HEILBRONN (GERMANY)

Sumit Nagal beat Antoine Hoang of France 1-6, 6-1, 6-4 in the second round of the €88,520 Challenger tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

Nagal will play Bernabe Zapata Miralles of Spain in the quarterfinals.

**The results:** €88,520 Challenger, Heilbronn, Germany: Second round: Sumit Nagal bt Antoine Hoang (Fra) 1-6, 6-1, 6-4.

€44,820 Challenger, Zagreb, Croatia: First round: Roman Jebavy (Cze) & Andrej Martin (Svk) bt Sriram Balaji & Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-7(6), 7-6(12), [11-9].

## Manchester City back as PL champion

United's loss assures Pep Guardiola his third crown in four seasons

## EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Manchester City was crowned Premier League champions for the third time in four seasons after Manchester United crashed to a 2-1 defeat against Leicester on Tuesday.

Pep Guardiola's side are 10 points clear of second placed United and has wrapped up the title with three games to spare.

With many City's players watching on television, Luke Thomas' 10th minute volley put Leicester ahead before Mason Greenwood equalised five minutes later.

Caglar Soyuncu's towering header in the 66th minute ensured City could pop the champagne corks for a title party that has seemed inevitable for months.

City faithful took to the streets round the Etihad to



We are the best! Manchester City faithful celebrate the team's triumph. ■ REUTERS

celebrate, with flares and banners creating a colourful backdrop to the joyous chanting.

The team joined the celebrations by unveiling a giant sky blue banner, with the slogan CHAMPIONS and a picture of the team celebrating, on the outside of the sta-

dium once the final whistle blew in the United game.

City, which has already won the League Cup in April, can savour a title triumph that is all the sweeter given the obstacles it has overcome this term.

"This has been a season and a Premier League title

like no other. This was the hardest one," Guardiola said.

"We will always remember this season for the way we won. I am so proud to be the manager here and of this group of players.

"They are so special. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and

## Lifters keeping their fingers crossed

Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA

Three Indian weightlifters are waiting anxiously to know whether they will be able to participate in the World junior championships to be held in Tashkent from May 21 to 31.

Keeping in view the practical difficulties in sending athletes abroad for training and competition due to the COVID-19 situation, the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWL) had selected only three lifters – Youth Olympics champion Jeremy Lalrinnunga (67kg), Achinta Sheuli (73kg) in men and Sneha Soren (55kg) in women's section – for the World junior meet.

REUTERS LONDON

However, now the IWL is struggling to make travel arrangements even for the selected trio.

"There are no flights available as of today. We are still trying to do something. We will get a clear picture in two-three days' time," IWL secretary Sahdev Yadav told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

"Knowing well that it will be difficult to book flight tickets for a big squad, we had selected only three lifters who had a chance to qualify for the Commonwealth Games next year. We thought they would get some exposure in an international competition. Now we don't know what will happen," he said.

UEFA

opens probe against three clubs

S. DINAKAR CHENNAI

UEFA has appointed Ethics and Disciplinary inspectors to conduct an investigation into Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus over their attempts to launch a breakaway Super League.

The clubs have not distanced themselves from the project following an outpouring of criticism.

The Super League was launched with 12 clubs as founding members, but nine of them – Manchester United, Liverpool, Manchester City, Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur, Arsenal, AC Milan, Inter Milan and Atletico Madrid – have since reached a deal with UEFA.

## Indian shooters reach Zagreb

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Indian shooting team, in quest of Olympic preparation, was given a warm welcome in Zagreb, Croatia, as it landed in a chartered flight, on Wednesday.

The 13 shooters, seven coaches, five physios and a two-member video crew will be in a week-long isolation.

"We are happy and excited to be your host for your Olympic preparations. We will do all in our power to make your stay pleasant and memorable," said a communication from the Zagreb Shooting Association.

Two of the coaches, Neha Chavan, the guide for Elavenil Valarivan, and Pavel Smirnov did not accompany the team.

"One of us will be there



Ready for the grind: Coach Deepak Dubey, Elavenil Valarivan, Manu Bhaker and Divyansh Singh Panwar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

for the World Cup to iron out the chinks, if necessary," said Gagan Narang as he explained the decision to let Elavenil be on her own.

"We had planned for the camp in Delhi. When Croatia was decided, we had to rework the strategy. We have programmed Elavenil to be independent, in training and competitions. On the fir-

ing line in the Olympics, you are alone," said Gagan.

"Pavel's visa application is pending with the Embassy," said Rajeev Bhatia, Secretary, National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

The team is scheduled to shoot the European championship from May 20 at Osijek, which will also host the World Cup from June 22.

## Ankita not allowed to compete in Spain

She addresses children online on request of former international Shruti

## TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN NEW DELHI

With her intense game, sincerity of approach and cheerful demeanour, India's No. 1 woman tennis player Ankita Raina is a perfect role model.

Not being allowed to compete in the \$60,000 tournament in Spain – despite her having fulfilled a week-long quarantine and tested negative for the virus – did not dampen Ankita's spirit, as she interacted with a bunch of kids and shared her wisdom on Tuesday.

"I had checked everything regarding the protocols and quarantine on the Spanish website. It says, 10 days, and if you test negative on the seventh day, you are free



Ankita Raina. ■ FILE PHOTO

to go. But the tournament said it will be 10 days," said Ankita from Spain.

## Yoga and meditation

Addressing children online, as part of the Art of Living programme of yoga and meditation, Ankita answered the questions of aspiring young sportspersons, on the request of former international Shruti Dhawani.

"Sports teaches one to stay in the present. At your age, it comes naturally. Kids

have no thoughts about the past or future. You want to grow fast, but this is the best age," Ankita Said.

Explaining that yoga and meditation helped her to be sharp on the court, Ankita said, "Meditation for me is like tennis practice, or like eating. Whatever we do, with talent or skill, meditation helps us to do even better."

Ankita stressed that the biggest stumbling block that prevented one from playing the best was the thought of the result.

"Once you start thinking about the result, you stop thinking about the game and what you have to do," she said.

Conceding that she also felt anxious, tight or under pressure during matches, Ankita said that she would take a deep breath and get her concentration back.

"The result is never in our hands," said Ankita, adding that the best efforts, with full concentration enhanced one's chances of being successful.

difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is remarkable. It is relentless."

## Another hat-trick

Guardiola now has three Premier League crowns to go with three LaLiga trophies with Barcelona and three at Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga.

## The results:

**Premier League:** Manchester United 1 (Greenwood 15) lost to Leicester 2 (Thomas 10, Soyuncu 66); Southampton 3 (Ings 19, 75, Adams 48) bt Crystal Palace 1 (Benteke 2).

**Serie A:** Napoli 5 (Zielinski 28, Fabian 31, Lozano 56, Di Lorenzo 66, Insigne 90+1) bt Udinese 1.

**LaLiga:** Osasuna 3 (Budimir 38, 75, Torres 86+pen) Cadiz 2 (Sa-ponjic 49+pen, Alfonso Espino 90+3); Elche 0 Alaves 2 (Joselu 40, Rioja 54); Levante 3 (Metello Manzanares 57, Morales 60, Limones 83) drew with Barcelo- na 3 (Messi 25, Pedri 34, Dembele 64).

## India waits for clearance from Qatar

## FOOTBALL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

The Indian national team is waiting for a clearance from host Qatar before it could travel to play the remainder of the 2022 FIFA World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers.

**Centralised venue**  
In a decision taken early in March, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) slotted all the remaining matches of Group E qualifiers at a centralised venue in Qatar owing to the pandemic.

India is currently placed fourth in Group E with three points from five games. Qatar leads the table with 13 points while Oman is a point behind it in the second spot.

India was looking to travel to the venue early and start its preparations, which seems unlikely now.

"We hope to get the clearance from the host (Qatar) in a couple of days. The process will start thereafter," said an AIFF source.

With the second wave of

the pandemic currently putting a siege on India, it is assumed that the permission is delayed because of the misgivings arising out of it.

India is scheduled to play its remaining three matches against Qatar (June 3), Bangladesh (June 7) and Afghanistan (June 15). The Indian team played its last group match in November 2019 (losing 1-0 against Oman). It was supposed to take on Qatar at Bhubaneswar in October 2020 but the pandemic forced a postponement of the fixtures.

India is currently placed fourth in Group E with three points from five games. Qatar leads the table with 13 points while Oman is a point behind it in the second spot.

Though virtually out of contention for a World Cup berth, India still has a chance to make it to the Asian Cup which will be held in China in 2023.

timism.

"When the shine was there, I was able to move the ball. Then I was able to send down workers," he said, adding: "I can consistently bowl at over 140 kmph. And my slower delivery is around 120."

His most memorable wickets in this year's IPL? "Bowling both Virat Kohli and M.S. Dhoni. Kohli was beaten by movement. And Dhoni attempted a pull."

Talking about his rapport with Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant, Avesh said, "We go back to our India under-19 days. He gave me complete freedom with my field placements. And we would discuss the day's play."

Avesh Khan is at the top of his game now.

## Avesh Khan – at the top of his game

The MRF Pace Foundation-trainee has had a breakout IPL season

## CRICKET

S. DINAKAR CHENNAI



Avesh Khan. ■ FILE PHOTO

He bowls what in cricket parlance is called a 'heavy ball'. This is the result of this tall paceman hitting the 'hard length' which is just short of a good length. So the ball hits the bat hard.

Before every IPL season, Avesh Khan pays a visit to the MRF Pace Foundation. Here, he hones his skill, trains hard and settles into a good bowling groove.

This year was a breakout season for the 24-year-old Avesh in the IPL. Before the first game he remembers Delhi Capitals coach, the legendary Ricky Ponting, telling him, "This is your moment,

seize it." And after he produced a stellar performance, Ponting said, "Now that you have got off to a good start, continue in the same rhythm. We will back you fully."

Avesh Khan finished with 14 wickets in eight matches at an economy rate of 7.70.

## Aussie connection

There is a strong Australian connection to Avesh's success. Ponting, impressed with Avesh's potential, spoke to him regularly about the day's play and the game-plan for the next encounter.

"Ponting is a very good motivator," Avesh told *The Hindu*.

And Aussie pace bowling legend, Glenn McGrath, fine-tuned Avesh's technique for longer duration matches, taught him the virtues of patience and made him bowl on the fourth stump at the MRF Pace Foundation.