



It is the need of the hour to upgrade the existing healthcare facilities

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

AFTER VISITING GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS IN MIRIK SUB-DIVISION

Delhi's positivity rate falls to .88 pc, lowest since 18 March

Capital records 623 new coronavirus infections, 62 deaths; active cases dip to 10,178

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Delhi today logged 623 new coronavirus cases—it's lowest in two-and-a-half months—and 62 Covid-linked deaths while the positivity rate fell below one per cent for the second consecutive day, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The city's Covid positivity rate fell to .88 per cent from yesterday's .99 per cent yesterday.

Today's positivity rate is its lowest in over two months. It was .76 per cent on 18 March. It was .93 per cent on 19 March before the daily count of coronavirus cases, deaths and the positivity rate began to shoot up. The positivity rate had surged to 36 per cent on 22 April.

According to the health bulletin, the number of new



A health worker collects swab sample for Covid test in the Capital on Tuesday. SNS

coronavirus infections in the national capital dipped to 623 from yesterday's 648. This took the city's cumulative caseload to 14,26,863, the bulletin stated.

Letin said.

Delhi now had 10,178 active cases—down from 11,040 a day before—and those patients under treatment in home isolation numbered 4,888, the bulletin said.

The count of Covid patients in the city who recovered during the past 24 hours was 1,423, which took their cumulative tally to 13,92,386 so far.

The national capital had 20,347 vacant hospital beds out of 24,752 beds meant for coronavirus patients.

There were now 18,843 containment zones in the city, the bulletin added.

This is reportedly the third consecutive day that the daily Covid deaths in the city remained below 100. On 11 April, the figure was 48.

Delhi had last Sunday recorded 946 Covid cases and 78 deaths and the positivity rate had stood at 1.25 per cent.

The city's fresh cases recorded today are the lowest since 18 March, when 607 people were diagnosed with the disease.

The fresh cases were detected out of 70,813 tests including 46,715 RT PCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests.

As the second wave of the Covid pandemic spread across the country, Delhi began witnessing a spike in daily cases and deaths from 19 April. It had reported its highest single-day spike of 448 Covid deaths on 3 May. However, there has been a declining trend in the number of cases and deaths over the last several days. The fatality rate in Delhi stood at 1.7 per cent, the bulletin said.

A total of 56,623 people were vaccinated against Covid in Delhi in the last 24 hours. So far, over 54 lakh people have been inoculated, including over 12.24 lakh who have received both doses of the vaccine, it added.

City hospitals ramping up infra for 3rd Covid wave, focus on child care

PTI

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Hospitals across Delhi have started ramping up infrastructure to ensure availability of essential equipment, drugs and ICU beds for children as part of their plan to tackle a possible third wave of the coronavirus.

The Delhi government has set up a task force to suggest measures to protect children from the third wave. Most of the hospitals are focussing on ramping up their ICU beds and facilities for children, amid fears that the third wave might be fatal for them.

Dr P K Bhardwaj, Chief Executive Director of Saroj Super Specialty Hospital in Rohini, said the plan is to improve the infrastructure in the paediatric ICU and neonatal ICU.

The hospital has been preparing infrastructure keeping in mind that an attendant will have to be kept with their Covid-positive child, he said.

"So, there will be two partitions in a room for the parent and the kid," Dr Bhardwaj said.

The number of beds in neonatal unit will be increased

from 10 at present to around 20. The capacity of the paediatric ICU and high-dependency unit will be tripled, he added.

The hospital has already started procuring oxygen masks, high-flow nasal cannulas, special ventilators and BIPAP machines for children, he said.

Sources from Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals said that the hospital has existing arrangements with two vendors who would meet any increased requirement for liquid medical oxygen in future.

Moreover, the hospital has installed an oxygen generator plant to meet its requirements of cylinders through the support of the French government. The hospital is also exploring the creation of an LMO generation plant in keeping with the directions of the Delhi High Court and the Delhi government, sources told PTI.

In case a child aged below one month gets infected, he/she can be accommodated in the 40-bed neonatal ICU at the hospital.

However, there has hardly been any case of child that age getting infected.

"We expect more cases of multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and are ramping up our technical and

manpower support and taking steps to ensure enough quantity of essential drugs and oxygen," he said.

The hospital is likely to create oxygen storage capacity on its premises and can also tie up with neighbouring hospitals having oxygen plants, he said.

The facility will also hire more neonatologists and paediatric intensivists. We have one intensivist at present, we have to have minimum three, Dr Bhardwaj said.

Dr Chandrashekhar, the head of the paediatric intensive care at Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Malviya Nagar, said the number of paediatric ICU beds at the facility can be increased to 30 from 25 at present, if need arises.

The hospital has been preparing infrastructure keeping in mind that an attendant will have to be kept with their Covid-positive child, he said.

"So, there will be two partitions in a room for the parent and the kid," Dr Bhardwaj said.

The number of beds in neonatal unit will be increased

Hospitals record lowest Covid admissions in nearly 2 months

PTI

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Delhi recorded less than 200 hospital admissions of COVID-19 patients on Monday, the lowest in nearly two months, according to government data.

The number of people discharged from hospitals on a daily basis after recovering from COVID-19 has outnumbered the number of those getting admitted since May 14, the data showed.

The decline in hospital admissions can be attributed to the drop in the number of positive cases, officials said.

According to the government data, Delhi witnessed 182 hospital admissions as against 333 discharges on Monday.

On Saturday and Sunday, the hospital admission figures stood at 228 and 237 respectively, while 619 and 425 patients were discharged on those days.

The hospital admissions have dropped below the 1,000-mark since May 16.

The admissions on a single day had risen to 1,993 on April 29, it showed.

Between April 1 and April 5, when the daily cases were

below 5,000, the admissions were more than the discharges on a daily basis, according to the data.

On May 14, 1,256 new COVID patients were admitted as against 1,331 discharged, it stated.

The next day, 1,052 patients came to hospitals while 1,379 were discharged.

Between May 16 and May 20, the hospital admissions recorded were 952, 914, 806, 731 and 560 respectively while the discharges in the same period were 1,079, 895, 1,326, 1,090 and 978 respectively.

Since May 22, the hospital admissions have remained below the 500-mark. The hospital admissions recorded on May 22 stood at 482 and the subsequent days figures were 412, 382, 388, 300, 368 and 229 respectively.

Between April 1 and April 5, the hospital admission figures stood at 294, 356, 353, 305 and 406 while the number of patients discharged were 139, 163, 166, 131 and 141 respectively.

On April 11, the daily cases crossed the 10,000-mark for the first time. Last year on November 11 last year, the national capital had recorded 8,593 cases, the highest figure before that date.

"Doctors in other cities have

Delhi doctors observe 'black day' to protest Ramdev's allopathy remarks



Resident Doctors Association members participate in a nationwide 'Black Day Protest' against Baba Ramdev at AIIMS Hospital, in the Capital on Tuesday. SNS

also joined the stir."

While some doctors held up placards bearing protest messages, others wearing PPE kits had "Black Day Protest" scribbled on the back of the medical gear.

In a statement issued last Saturday, the FORDA India had said even after raising objections to Ramdev's statements, "no action has been taken yet. We are hereby declaring Nationwide #BlackDay Protest on 1st June, 2021 at workplace, without hampering healthcare services".

"We demand an unconditional open public apology from him (Ramdev) or action against him under the relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897," the statement said.

"Our protest began on Tuesday morning against the remarks made by Ramdev, who is not qualified to even speak on the discipline of allopathy. It had affected the morale of doctors, who are fighting day in and day out in the (Covid-19) pandemic. We demand an unconditional public apology from him or action against him under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897," the statement said.

The FORDA has also alleged that Ramdev's remarks have added to the "vaccine hesitancy" among people.

In a statement, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) RDA said, "such 'slandering remarks' by Ramdev will incite violence against the healthcare services personnel and will lead to a total failure of public health systems."

"However, we will ensure patient care would not be hampered in this process," it said.

The AIIMS RDA also urged "competent authorities to take stringent action against Ramdev and to book him under relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897" for allegedly "trying to create public unrest against the vaccination drive, harassing healthcare services personnel and preventing them from discharging their duties and creating misconceptions in common public which could cost them their dear lives".

Ramdev was recently forced

to withdraw his remarks questioning some of the medicines being used to treat the coronavirus infection and for claiming that "lakhs have died from taking allopathic medicines for Covid-19", a video clip of which went viral.

His remarks were met with vociferous protests, following which Union health minister Harsh Vardhan asked him to withdraw the "extremely unfortunate" statement.

A day later, the yoga guru posed 25 questions to the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in an "open letter" on his Twitter handle, asking if allopathy offered permanent relief from ailments.

His remarks had irked the medical fraternity, upsetting both the IMA and the Delhi Medical Association (DMA).

The RDA of RML Hospital extended its full support to the FORDA too and its members protested without hampering patient care. During the ferocious first and second waves of the pandemic, all the Covid warriors, including the doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, police personnel, media person etc have worked tirelessly day and night beyond their limits to serve the affected people, it said in a statement.

"The vitriolic, disgraceful and derogatory statements" of Ramdev are equivalent to belittling the sacrifices made by the Covid warriors, many of whom have laid down their lives in the line of national duty, it said.

"Secondly, his baseless, unscientific and illogical claims have potential to create a sense of fear and panic in the public and it may derail the government of India's vaccination campaign. Despite multiple representations, no action has yet been taken against him," the RDA added.

HC directs Centre to form policy on distribution of drug to treat black fungus patients

PTI

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

The Delhi High Court Tuesday said it was passing with "a heavy heart" a direction for the Centre that a policy on distribution of Liposomal Amphotericin B drug for treating black fungus be made giving priority for patients of younger generation who can build and take the country forward.

It said the administration of drug has to be prioritised for those with better chances of survival as also the younger generation, having promise of future over the older ones who have lived their lives and added that this could at least save some lives, if not all.

The high court made it clear that it was not at all saying the lives of older people are not important as the emotional support which the elderly persons provide to a family cannot be discounted.

A bench of Justices Vinod Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said the Centre may carve out an exception in the policy for those serving the nation in high position and whose safety and security is necessary because of the pivotal roles that they play.

Why do you provide SPG cover to the Prime Minister of the country and not to others? Because that is what is required by his office. Similarly, you provide it first to those who are serving the society, the bench said.

We need to protect our future, we need to protect our younger generation. You can't let them down. They will build the nation and take our country forward, it said, adding.

The high court said despite

best efforts, availability of the drug remains acutely short and as per the data, there is a shortage of 66 per cent while cases of black fungus are showing an upward range.

The high court was informed that the number of active black fungus cases in Delhi were 753 on May 31 and 792 today.

The court said several questions are arising which can only be answered by medical experts committee like the ICMR and explained some of them including whether it is medically prudent to administer two vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B, and Posaconazole, for black fungus treatment.

The high court, which was informed that steps are being taken by the Centre to procure 2.30 lakh vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B from six countries, was not impressed with the explanation offered and said it appeared from the report that there is hardly any vials coming from the sources from where they were expected.

Mr. Kirtiman Singh (Centre's advocate) are you kidding us here? I am not understanding the exercise how it is panning out here. We are not getting your figure. It is a notional figure. One week has gone by and you have not given the information we wanted.

You are completely vague and non-committal. Tell us out of 2.30 lakh vials, how much my country India has received, Justice Singh said.

The high court said despite

the manner in which the drug should be made available to patients.

However, the requirement of Liposomal Amphotericin-B is far in access of its availability. In this situation, in our view, it is fallen on the shoulders of the Centre to take a policy decision with regard to the manner in which the drug should be made available to patients.

Sushil Kumar's arms licence suspended

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

The arms licence of Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who was arrested in connection with the murder of wrestler Sagar Dhanikar, has been suspended on Tuesday, police said.

The procedure to cancel the licence permanently has also been initiated, police added. Crime branch of Delhi Police on Sunday took the 38-year-old wrestler to Haridwar, to investigate his hideouts where he had allegedly fled after committing the murder. Earlier, Kumar and his associate Ajay were taken to Bathinda and Chandigarh to ascertain the sequence of events following the incident.

On 4 May, Sagar Dhanikar, who had competed in the 97-kg Greco-Roman category, was beaten to death following a clash between two groups. Kumar, along with his associate and co-accused Ajay, were arrested from outer Delhi's Mundka area on 23 May in connection with the alleged murder.

After his arrest, the Northern Railway has also suspended Sushil Kumar. Kumar had been on deputation with the Delhi government since 2015 and was posted as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Chhatrasal Stadium for the development of sports at the school level.

The 23-year-old Dhanikar died following a brawl with Kumar and his associates at Chhatrasal Stadium on 4 May. Two of Dhanikar's friends, Sonu and Amit Kumar, were also assaulted by the two-time Olympic wrestler, police said after making the arrest on 23 May from outer Delhi's Mundka area. A video of the incident had also surfaced on social media, in which Kumar and his associates were allegedly seen attacking a man who was lying on the floor, with sticks. 'Encroachment of property' and 'threat to eliminate' was the reason for the dispute which resulted in Sagar's death on 5 May, according to police sources.



The governor has no right to say such things. The CM is working round the clock for the interest of the state.

AFTER GOVERNOR JAGDEEP DHANKHAR SLAMS MAMATA BANERJEE FOR NOT ATTENDING PM REVIEW MEETING

SENIOR TMC LEADER AND LOK SABHA MP SAUGATA ROY

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 02 JUNE 2021

03

Delhi allows home delivery of liquor via app or website

The move came as Delhi's economy struggles in the wake of a protracted Covid lockdown

PTI
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Delhiites can soon order home delivery of liquor through a mobile application or a website, with the city government permitting such facility by issuing a notification, which also allows take-away of draught beer in bottles or growlers from the micro-breweries in the national capital.

The rules, notified on Monday, permit the holders of the necessary licences to serve liquor in open spaces such as terraces, the courtyards of clubs, bars and restaurants, where customers will have the choice of getting alcohol in bottles.

However, it will be the sole

responsibility of such establishments to ensure that no customer takes the served bottles out of the licensed premises.

The move will boost the government's revenue at a time when Delhi's economy is struggling in view of the Covid-induced lockdown that has been in place since April 19.

According to the notification, the licensee will deliver liquor at the buyers' residences only if the orders are received through an app or a web portal.

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has welcomed the government's move to allow home delivery of liquor in the national capital.

"This has been our consistent demand for long. Last



month also, we had requested the government to allow home-delivery of liquor in Delhi. There are many states

that have implemented this and there has been no adverse effect coming out of it," CIABC director general Vinod Giri told PTI.

The notification issued by the Delhi finance department in the name of the Lieutenant Governor states that in hotels, no liquor will be served by the licensee at any place other than the room in which the person ordering it resides for the time being.

The government also permitted the sale of medicated wine in the city, which is usually prepared by using wine as a solvent to soak out the effective components of herbs.

"The licensee shall not sell any article covered by his licence except for medicinal purpose. The licensee shall not sell to any person at any one

time any article covered by his licence in greater quantity than nine litres or 12 quart bottles, provided that sale in larger quantities may be made to persons holding a chemist's licence and to government and charitable dispensaries," the notification stated.

The government also introduced a licence in the form of L-37 for hotel management institutes to keep liquor for the purpose of training.

"The licence shall be issued to hotel management institutes or other teaching institutes recognised by the government. The liquor shall be used for teaching purpose only. The liquor shall be purchased from licensed retail vending only. The limit of liquor shall be decided by the excise commissioner," it said.

HP govt asks for Covid treatment to start if patient shows symptoms

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 1 JUNE

Amid delay of 2-3 days in getting Covid tests results in Himachal Pradesh, the state government on Tuesday issued directions to start presumptive treatment in patients exhibiting symptoms of Coronavirus infection in initial stages to reduce fatalities.

A Health department official said a total of 1,90,485 Covid cases and 3,143 deaths had been reported in the state till June (till 2 pm bulletin).

"Some of the deaths have happened in patients at home and there are two categories of individuals who have unfortunately expired due to the Covid. First category includes patients who had a known case of Covid and was kept in home isolation and the second category includes patients who had neglected his/her symptoms and had been diagnosed as a case of virus after death.

Keeping in view the patients who do not seek medical treatment and neglect symptoms, which leads to delay in treatment and poor clinical outcome, the state Covid Clinical team has issued instructions for presumptive treatment for suspected Covid patients," he added.



Government officials making people aware about Covid-appropriate behaviour and tests at Naco in Kinnar district. SNS

He stated that it had been advised that the patients in home isolation and all patients who are suspected to have Coronavirus infection and were waiting for their test report should be started on presumptive therapy.

The management protocol should be strictly adhered to by these patients and they should be advised to wear triple layer masks, maintain hand hygiene and practice physical distancing.

Besides, such should monitor temperature, oxygen saturation, pulse rate 4 to 6 hourly and take prescribed medicines for Coronavirus infection treatment, he said.

He further stated that all the patients who were suspected to be suffering from Covid whose RT-PCR test report was awaited or whose RT-PCR report was negative.

But show features of Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (fall in oxygen saturation, increased respiratory rate), shall be admitted in the triage area of the hospital.

These patients must be considered for HRCT scan of the chest and the Covid treatment in such patients should be started with the aim to maintain a target oxygen saturation (SpO₂) to 96 per cent and in COPD: 88-92 per cent.

"Treatment with Remdesivir should start only after consultation of the clinical committee constituted by the institute for the management of Covid-19 infection."

In addition, the steroids and anticoagulants shall be started as per protocol laid down by the Union health and family welfare ministry and adopted by the HP government," he added.

Himachal to instal indigenous anti-hail guns on trial basis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 1 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh horticulture minister Mahender Singh Thakur on Tuesday called for setting up indigenous anti-hail guns on trial basis and making timely availability of cartons to the horticulturists for selling their apple produce.

After a review meeting on the upcoming apple season in the state, Thakur directed the officers to take necessary steps in time to facilitate the horticulturists so that they do not face any problems for transportation of their produce.

"IIT Mumbai and Dr YS Parmar Horticulture and Forestry University Nauni have jointly developed indigenous anti-hail guns."

Keeping in view the welfare of the horticulturists, a project should be prepared to install indigenous anti-hail guns at 8 to 10 places in the state on a trial basis," he added.

He stated that at present the foreign made anti-hail guns are being used in the state which costs about Rs 2 to 3 crore but the cost of anti-hail guns could be reduced only by adopting anti-hail

guns of indigenous technology.

He further stated that the rates of apple boxes should be fixed in collaboration with HP Horticulture Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (HPPC) and the manufacturers should be empanelled so that these could be made available to the horticulturists at reasonable rates in time.

"The works of marketing yards and cold houses etc being built under World Bank funded horticulture projects should be expedited."

Besides, the name and number of the fruit procurement centres should be mentioned on the bags which are procured by HPPC and HIMFED under MIS so that the quality of fruits procured could be ensured at every level," he added.

a priority as the crisis is not over yet.

All the deputy commissioners must ensure to increase the number of testing being done in their respective districts and the state Health department must ensure minimum wastage of vaccine as the nation and state cannot afford it," he added.

The CM said the Health department must take effective steps to provide manifold oxygen facilities in all the 50 bedded and more hospitals in the state and proper inventory of oxygen cylinders and storage must be ensured.

Since about 11,000 people were still in home isolation, therefore, it was vital to maintain close coordination with them to regularly monitor their health parameters.

"It is not possible to keep the restrictions going on for a very long time thus if the cases keep on decreasing with the same pace, the state government may consider some relaxations in the Corona curfew in the time to come," he added.

Jai Ram asks officials to strengthen paediatric care before 3rd Covid wave

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 1 JUNE

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday said world over it is being speculated that Covid third wave can affect children more, therefore, greater stress must be laid on strengthening pediatric wards and services in all the health institutions.

After a meeting with all deputy commissioners, superintendents of police, chief medical officers, principals and medical superintendents of medical colleges, Thakur said the medical fraternity must plan well in advance the probable requirements and logistics to effectively tackle the probable third wave of Coronavirus.

"Special focus must be laid on strengthening of health infrastructure related to pediatrics and possibilities must be explored for vaccination of pregnant women in the state," he added.

Thakur stated that with the active support of all the stakeholders, the state gov-

ernment had successfully overcome the first wave of Corona pandemic and now, Himachal was gradually coming out from the second wave.

Still we have to be more vigilant as the pandemic was not over yet and with gradual reduction in the number of Covid cases in the state, the people may at times adopt a casual approach, thus opinion makers must persuade them to be more alert, the CM

said.

He further stated that the Information Education and Communication activities were very vital for sensitizing the people for removing the stigma associated with the Covid-19.

The opinion makers, local leaders and elected representatives of PRIs must be involved to educate the people regarding the stigma associated with this virus.

Now gradual efforts must be made to de-notify the dedicated Covid-19 hospitals where there were no Covid-19 patients to facilitate the patients of other diseases.

Similarly, efforts must be made to demobilize private hospitals requisitioned by the state government, he stated.

"The twin strategy for testing, tracing and treatment along with effective surveillance must remain even now

ing priority to 60 plus who have lived their lives. It is the younger lot which is the future, we are on our way out, he added.

The judge pointed out that so many young people have lost their lives to COVID-19.

He added that in this time of crisis, if a choice has to be made, we have to choose the younger one because an 80-year-old person has lived his

live and he will not take the country forward.

Indeed, we should be able to save everyone but if we have to choose, we have to save younger people, the judge said.

When the Centre's counsel said only God can help us now, the judge said this is the area where even God cannot help us if we do not act ourselves, noting the facts and figures.

Why are you feeling shy? It is the duty of the government to lay down the way forward. Other countries have done it. In Italy, they said sorry for old people we do not have beds, Justice Sanghi said.

The court's observations came while hearing pleas relating to management of COVID-19 crisis in Delhi, including shortage of medicine to treat black fungus patients.

Lockdown taking lives of common people in Punjab, alleges Mann

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 1 JUNE



ported the people of the state during the Covid pandemic. "People lost their jobs. In Sangrur, three generations of a family died and a young businessman who was disturbed by the closure of gym business in Ludhiana ended his life," he said.

The AAP leader said that businesses were shut down due to the lockdown imposed by the Amarinder government and unemployement.

In a statement, the AAP leader said that although the Covid-19 pandemic in the state was a natural calamity, it was the onus of the ruling Congress to deal with it.

Mann alleged the Amarinder government had failed to protect the people of the state from the Covid pandemic and its aftermath. "Instead, Captain Amarinder Singh has focused on enforcing the lockdown and beating the people," he added. Mann said that the Amarinder government's policies sometimes were seen kicking the vegetable vendors or chalanging and beating the people.

He said Amarinder Singh's government had not sup-

TENDER



NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum
Ref: (i) Tender published date: 06.04.2021 and Tender opening date:- 27.04.2021.
(ii) Corrigendum published date: 27.04.2021.
(iii) Corrigendum published date: 11.05.2021.
(iv) Corrigendum published date: 21.05.2021.

It is to inform all concerned, that due to the lockdown imposed by Delhi Government, the NIT for leasing of SLR parcel space in special trains, published in various English & Hindi newspapers, which was earlier scheduled to be opened on 02.06.2021 through IRPES portal i.e. www.irpes.gov.in, is now postponed and the same shall be opened on 15.06.2021 at 15:00 hrs. Moreover, kindly carefully read and follow the "General Instructions, Instructions to Tenderer and Terms and Conditions" (including modified conditions) given in the tender document before submitting the online bid.

Other information of NITs shall remain unchanged.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDER
TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited invites tenders (2part bidding) from eligible vendors for the following package :
TPWODL/PN/O/SU/013 – EGIS System implementation and maintenance at TPWODL

Interested bidders to submit Tender Participation Fee and Authorization Letter through email before 12th June 2021, 1500Hrs, after which link from e-Tender system shall be shared.

For detailed tender documents please visit Tender section on website www.tpwwesternodisha.com. Further details for participating in tender is given in the tender document.

All future correspondence regarding the tender, bid submission, bid submission date extension etc. will happen with participating bidders only through E-Tender system.

Sd/- Chief-Contracts and Stores

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
e-Procurement Notice
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer, Shimla, Division No. I, HPWD, Shimla-3, HP on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the tenders in electronic tendering system for the eligible class of contractors registered with HPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Starting date for downloading Bid	Emeast Money	Deadline for submission of Bid	Time allowed
1	Construction/Improvement on circular road i Shima Town (SH- C/O Pedestrian path with chequered plate in RD: 152/500 to 152/630 and raised PCC foot path safety railings in RD: 150/670 to 151/000, 151/120 to 151/040 & 152/640 to 153/000 and C/O Crush path with PCC foot path safety railings in RD: 148/640 to 149/000, 149/020 to 149/390, 150/450 to 151/090, 151/490 to 151/610, 149/030 to 149/110 and 148/500 to 148/640 on MRR via Lakkar Bazar)(Under Smart City in Shimla Town)	19265492/-	14-06-2021	34800/-	25-06-2021	180 days
2	C/O Shri Mandir to Shakti Vihar road km 1/00 to 1/500 (SH- M/T of Shri Mandir to Shakti Vihar road between RD: 099/0 to 1/500 & upper Shakti Vihar road km 0/00 to 0/275 under Parimahal section)	78,75,626/-	14-06-2021	37600/-	25-06-2021	30 days
3	Widening/Improvement of MBR Lakkar Bazar road from Victory Tunnel to Sanjuli km 147/825 to 153/075 (SH- C/O PCC Retaining wall at Rd: 147/920 to 148/775 and Toe wall at Rd: 148/780 to 148/870)(Under Smart City project)	7902083/-	14-06-2021	159000/-	25-06-2021	180 days
4	Widening/Improvement of MRR Lakkar Bazar from Victory Tunnel to Sanjuli km 147/ 825 to 153/075 (SH- C/O PCC, Breast wall at Rd: 147/920 to 147/945, 147/977 to 147/990 and RCC projected path partly covered with Road and P/F Railing at RD: 147/990 to 148/040)(Under Smart City Project)	1753393/-	14-06-2021	351000/-	25-06-2021	180 days

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hpten.gov.in. The executive Engineer reserves the right to accept/reject any tender/application or all tenders without assigning any reason.

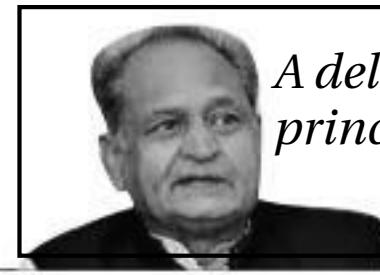
1128/2021-2022 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

Nation needs to save younger generation by vaccinating them, says HC

PTI
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

The younger generation which has lost so many lives to COVID-19 should have been vaccinated first as it is the nation's future but the jabs were prioritised for the elderly who have lived their lives, the Delhi High Court observed on Tuesday.

The court made it clear however that it was not at all



A deliberate attempt has been made to keep the principal Opposition party, the Congress, out of GoM.

RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT

India

THUMBNAILS



Social Democratic Party of India activists stage protest against Central Government on the CAA bill, in Coimbatore.

AGENCIES

Mallya's properties: A special PMLA court in Mumbai allowed the restoration of properties of fugitive liquor baron Mallya that were seized by the ED to a consortium of banks which had provided him loans. PTI

Two Maoists killed: Two naxals including a woman were killed in a gun battle with the security forces in Chhattisgarh's Kondagaon district. PTI

Islamic scholar dies: Renowned Islamic scholar and preacher Mufti Faizul-Waheed died of post Covid complications at a private hospital. PTI

Workers still trapped in mine

SHILLONG, 1 JUNE

Heavy rainfall on Tuesday is hampering operations to rescue at least five miners trapped for two days deep inside an illegal rat-hole coal pit in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district.

The district administration has identified five miners four from Assam and one from Tripura who were trapped at the coal pit in the remote Umpleng area of Sutnga Elaka since Sunday when a dynamite blast had led to the flooding of the coal mine.

Superintendent of Police in neighbouring Silchar district had sent information to the authorities here about the possibility of six miners of his state being trapped. PTI

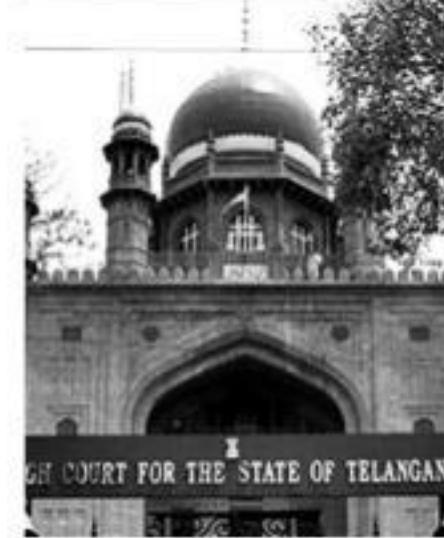
Telangana HC wants cap on hospital bills

Questions licence cancellation during Covid pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD, 1 JUNE

Pulling up the state government for failing to cap the fees being charged by private hospitals Telangana High Court today questioned whether it was wise to cancel the licence of the errant hospitals for treatment of Covid-19 patients at a time when the pandemic was raging instead of compelling them to return the excess amount that was charged.

On 18 May the bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and B Vijaysen Reddy had directed the state to issue a fresh order capping the charges for Covid-19 treatment in private hospitals but the state health department did not come up with an updated order. Chief Justice Hima Kohli expressed concern that people were mortgaging gold to pay the bills in private hospitals. The bench also asked the advocate general: "Are you waiting for the pandemic to be over to declare the prices?" When it was informed



that the health department has cancelled licenses of the hospitals guilty of over billing the bench asked whether it was a wise move during the pandemic instead of ramping up the strength of the hospitals. The Chief Justice said the hospitals should be warned with an ultimatum to refund the excess amount charged by them otherwise their licenses would be cancelled. Health department had recently cancelled the license of five hospitals in Hyderabad to treat Covid patients.

Opposition political parties have been crying themselves hoarse over the exploita-

tion by private hospitals during the pandemic. "The High Court of Telangana rightly questioned the state government about the reconciliation of excess charges levied by the private hospitals. TRS government should do justice to the people who paid excess charges, reimburse excess amount and immediately come up with a fresh government order capping the treatment charges," said state Congress chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy.

Indian citizen brought back from Pakistan jail:

A Hyderabadi based software professional who was lodged in a Pakistani jail for illegally entering the country was released, brought back and today handed over to his family. Waindham Prashant along with another person was arrested by Bahawalpur police in April 2017 for crossing into Pakistan without relevant documents. The matter came to light only after a video was circulated saying he was in Pakistani prison while trying to search for his girlfriend.

Man kills wife for dinner delay

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE MEERUT, 1 JUNE

Followed by an altercation over delay in serving salad for the dinner, a man attacked his wife and young son on Monday night in village Gogawan Jalalpur under Babri police station of district Shamli. Wife succumbed to injuries while his son is in critical condition.

Accused husband Murli (45), is still at large. A case has been registered against him and teams of cops raiding at different possible hideouts, said SP Shamsi Sukirti Madhav.

According to the SP the incident was reported on Monday night. Wife Sudesh (42) served dinner to Murli who asked her to give him

some salad. Sudesh who was engaged elsewhere took some time in giving salad to him. This enraged Murli leading to a fight between husband and wife. Later when everyone fell asleep angry Murli attacked his wife with a hoe. Then with the same hoe he attacked his 20 year old son who was sleeping in the courtyard of his friend's house in the neighbourhood. The injured son tried to catch hold of Murli but he slipped away.

Meanwhile the neighbours woke up hearing screams of injured mother and son. Sudesh had succumbed to her injuries when she reached the hospital while her son who is undergoing treatment there is in a condition critical.

Opp walkout from Kerala Assembly

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 1 JUNE

The opposition UDF on Tuesday staged a walkout in the Kerala Assembly protesting the Left government's alleged reluctance to discuss issues relating to the coastal belt, which was severely battered by heavy rains recently.

"Any issue of fishermen will be seen as the problem of the entire state," Vijayan added.

Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian said the coastal protection measures would be strengthened once the rains subside.

Two Malda workers die in UP building collapse

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE MALDA, 1 JUNE

Two migrant workers died and six others were injured when a building they had been working in near the Kashi Viswanath Temple in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh collapsed early this morning, police said.

All the eight men hail from different villages under the Kalachak police station in Malda.

The injured have been admitted in a local hospital there, while news of the deaths reached the village this morning, leading to the entire village grief-stricken.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tweeted his condolences and promised help, while chief minister Mamata Banerjee has deputed state minister Farhad Hakim to meet the bereaved families tomorrow with, while also handing some one-time compensation to them.

The deceased have been identified as Aminul Momin, 40, of Shersahi and Ebadul Momin, 30, of Ranuchak areas. The six injured are Arif Momin, Sahid Akther, Imran Momin, Arif Momin Shaikh, Shakib Khan and Abdul Jabbar of Narendrapur area in Kalachak.

Sources said a dilapidated building was being demolished to make way for a new one and the eight victims had been sleeping in room there, which suddenly collapsed early this morning.

"Two labourers died on the spot, while the six others were taken to hospital," a source said.

With news arriving this morning in the houses of the deceased, the entire village started to mourn the loss, while police and local political leaders rushed to the houses to offer their condolences, it is learnt.

A local leader of the Trinamul Congress, Rahul Biswas, said, "These migrants fell victim to an accident in another state and we are by the side of the families with all sorts of help."

Centre notice to former chief secy illegal, says TMC leader



Mamata moving heaven & earth to protect Alapan: Suvendu

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, 1 JUNE

The BJP's Nandigram MLA and West Bengal Leader of Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, today asked chief minister Mamata Banerjee, on Twitter, the reason that impelled her to move heaven and earth to protect IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay.

Adhikari said that a "theatre of the absurd" is playing out in West Bengal and accused Miss Banerjee of destroying India's federal structure to satisfy her ego. "Chief secretary for his indiscipline, (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial Didi is bringing disrepute to the CM office and the Constitution of India," said the BJP leader in his tweet.

Taking a dig at the CM for not releasing Alapan Bandyopadhyay, in his next tweet, Suvendu wondered what "What secrets does the

outgoing CS know that (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial is moving heaven and earth to protect him? Is it really becoming of a CS to skip the Prime Minister's meet organised to help the people in distress due to Cyclone Yaas? No, it is not".

He demanded "strictest action be taken against the outgoing CS for indiscipline, violating service rules at a time of a natural disaster and a global pandemic, irregularities, and not helping others just because of sinister political games. TMC has failed the people of West Bengal."

He added, "Looting taxpayer money is TMC's favourite hobby. Outgoing CS and now advisor to CM @MamataOfficial will enjoy a comfortable salary of Rs.2.5 lakhs per month and cushy perks. Surely, there are better ways to spend the hard-earned money of the taxpayers," he tweeted.

ego, to destroy India's federal structure and protect the Chief Secretary for his indiscipline, (non-MLA) CM @MamataOfficial Didi is bringing disrepute to the CM office and the Constitution of India.

According to Section 51 (b), whosoever refuses to comply with any direction given by or on behalf of the central government or the state government or the National Executive Committee or the State Executive Committee or the District Authority under this Act, shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, or with both.

"And if such obstruction or refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years..." the Act says.

Customs wants envoys' names in gold smuggling list

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 1 JUNE



the former diplomats.

Al Zaab and Ali Musaiqri had left for the UAE last year, after smuggling of gold through diplomatic channel by a Kerala-based racket came to light.

The Customs sources said, the involvement of both diplomats in the gold smuggling incident was revealed during the probe.

The Customs sought permission from the External Affairs Ministry before arraigning them in the case, as the duo enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

Now, the External Affairs Ministry has given the sanc-

tion to proceed with the case against them stating that both of them no more serve as diplomats.

However, it is not clear whether the UAE will provide any access to these persons or give permission to bring them for any legal procedure here as part of the case registered in India.

The gold smuggling case surfaced in July last year, with the seizure of 30.24 kg of gold from diplomatic baggage addressed to Rashed Khamis Ali Musaiqri Al Ashmia, the acting Consul General of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram.

JAB OF LIFE



Beneficiaries wait in a long queue to receive a dose of vaccine, at a government hospital in Bolpur on Tuesday. IANS

Mamata's ego prevailed over public service: WB governor

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, 1 JUNE



nance with constitution and federalism. Certainly such actions are neither of public interest nor of the state's".

Dhankhar further tweeted, "With unparalleled trampling of constitutional values & affront to the office of PM, May 28 will go down as a dark day in India's long-standing ethos of cooperative federalism."

"At PM Review Meet #Cyclone Yaas democracy was shredded @ MamataOfficial and Chief Secy@IASassociation."

He felt that "all constitutional principles were torn asunder by the CM and functionaries at the review meet. Democracy imperilled by such unconstitutional stance".

Reacting to Dhankhar's tweet, senior TMC leader and Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy said,

"The governor has no right to say such things. The CM is working round the clock for the interest of the state. She knows what to do."

Senior TMC leader and state minister Chandrima Bhattacharya had on Monday

claimed that the chief minister had to wait for 30 minutes to meet the prime minister on May 28. "After she met him, Banerjee submitted details

about the damages caused by cyclone Yaas and then sought my permission to leave for a pre-scheduled programme in Purba Medinipur district," Bhattacharya had said.

Kunal Ghosh, the TMC spokesperson, alleged the governor is not in a sound mind and has been acting like a BJP politician than a state's governor. He questioned why Dhankhar never asks the Centre as to why dead bodies of Covid patients are being thrown into the river in Uttar Pradesh and in Bengal we are having to guard the water to fish them out?

Though, in a letter to the Prime Minister on Monday, Banerjee had written, "I wanted to have a quiet word with you, a meeting between the PM and the CM as usual. You, however, revised the structure of the meeting to include a local MLA from your party and I am of the view that he had no locus to be present in a PM-CM meeting."

Banerjee had also mentioned in the letter that she had no objection to the presence of the governor and other Union ministers in the meeting.

Narada row: Calcutta HC hears CBI transfer plea

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE (KOLKATA, 1 JUNE)



tice Mukerji asked the Solicitor-General. Let us know when did the gherao start, Justice Mukerji asked. We have to know this as these are important facts, he said.

Let the court give a stay to the judicial process of the trial court in this matter and announce the entire procedure to be vitiated, the solicitor general submitted. If in the process it has to cancel the bail, let it do so, it was submitted. Whatever happened after arrest if the four political leaders is without a precedent in the country's history and perhaps the world, Mehta said. It is shameful and unfortunate that Cabinet members joined the protest and sat in a dharna, it was submitted.

Whenever a person in political high position is arrested in this state these planned agitations take place, Mehta submitted. Similar incident occurred when Madan Mitra was arrested, a vehicle belonging to CBI was ransacked and a constable of the probe agency was injured, it was submitted. Did the accused person apply for bail then and was it granted, Jus-

itor general submitted.

In our country, anyone can be within the courtroom to hear the matter and there is nothing high profile or low profile among them, Justice Mukerji observed.

How should the bail of the accused be cancelled if there is no evidence of their having a direct link or any collusion with the agitation outside CGO complex, Justice Mukerji asked. The larger bench of the Calcutta High Court questioned Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta how was the judge in the lower court influenced by the demonstration and stone pelting that took place outside CBI's Nizam Palace since the judicial process was conducted in a closed-door room and in a virtual mode.

There may be questions in people's minds whether the learned judge could dissociate himself from gheraos, staying in demonstrations and presence of ministers, the solicitor general submitted. How can a judge be influenced by that since the people in our country have the right to protest peacefully? How does an opportunity to influence the judge arise since the judicial process was conducted in a closed-door room and in a virtual mode? Why did not the CBI counsel ask the court to adjourn the matter if there were so many irregularities, Justice Mukerji asked. The hearing was adjourned and will be resumed tomorrow.



PM's hall of shame - Minimum GDP, Maximum Unemployment

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
ATTACKING PRIME MINISTER OVER ADVERSE GDP AND UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 02 JUNE 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



A girl tries a hand at cricket during the lockdown in Ward No 1 in Siliguri on Tuesday. ■ SNS

Valley hit by hailstorm:
Many parts of north and central Kashmir were hit by heavy hailstorm on Tuesday, causing damage to agriculture and horticulture crops in the affected areas, officials said. PTI

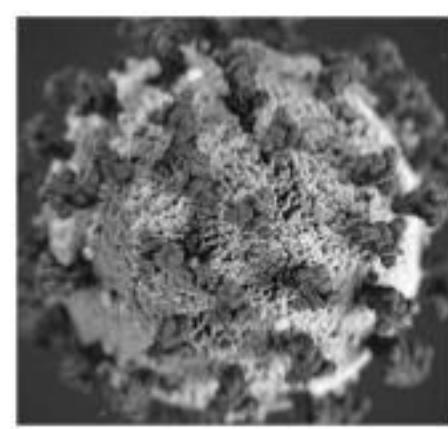
Fine for spitting in public:
Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has proposed to steeply raise the fine amount for spitting in public to Rs 1,200 from the current Rs 200, a senior official said on Tuesday. PTI

Elgar case: Bombay HC on Tuesday directed a private hospital in Mumbai not to discharge Hany Babu, a Delhi University associate professor arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, till 3 June. Babu, lodged in Taloja prison in Navi Mumbai, tested positive for Covid-19 in May. PTI

Doctors on mass leave: In all 230 resident doctors of a government medical college in Nagpur on Tuesday went on indefinite mass leave demanding they be relieved from Covid-19 duties at a time when the number of cases is falling so that they can focus on post-graduation. PTI

Experts flag concerns over 'Vietnam coronavirus variant'

PARAG BISWAS



The Covid-19 pandemic never fails to amaze us with its unpredictable nature. While the second wave of the pandemic in India seems to be slowing down with less than 1.5 lakh cases being reported everyday, a new variant of the coronavirus has been found in Vietnam.

Since the virus was first identified in January 2020, thousands of mutations have been detected, but the decision of the World Health Organisation to classify the new variant as a "variant of global concern" and the warning from the Vietnamese Health Minister Nguyen Thanh Long that the new variant was more transmissible than the previously known ones and spreads faster by air, is sending chills down the spines of experts and the common people in north Bengal as in the rest of the country.

According to experts in the region, the new variant, which is being referred to as the "Vietnamese variant," is far more infectious and can cause more deaths in an unvaccinated population.

A senior professor of the Department of Biotechnology, University of North Bengal, Dr Ranadhir Chakraborty, who was part of an international team which mapped a total of 7,170 genomes of the coronavirus till August 2020, said the new variant was a hybrid of strains found in India and the United Kingdom, which were already causing rapid infections across the globe and were mainly responsible for the devastating second wave in India.

In the Indian double variant, which is being scientifically referred to as the B.1.617.2 variant, two mutations had taken place in the receptor binding domain, namely L452R and E484Q. In the UK variant, which is being scientifically referred to as the B.1.1.7 variant, there was one mutation in the receptor binding domain, namely N501Y. There were also two deletions, one

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Asking the government to not let another year go waste, the Congress on Tuesday said it should reverse its "disastrous" economic policies and heed the advice of experts by printing more money and increasing spending.

While Rahul Gandhi shared a graph on rising unemployment and said: "PM's hall of shame - Minimum GDP Maximum Unemployment", former finance minister P Chidambaram asserted that going by the performance of the economy in the past four quarters, 2020-21 has been the "darkest year" in four decades.

All indicators point to the fact that the economy is in dire

straits, Chidambaram told reporters.

"If 2021-22 should not go the same way as 2020-21 did, the government must wake up, admit its errors of commission and omission, reverse its policies and heed the advice of economists and the Opposition," the Congress leader added.

"The current state of the economy is no doubt largely due to the impact of the pandemic, but it has been compounded by the ineptitude and incompetent economic management of the BJP-led NDA government," he alleged.

The former finance minister said good advice by distinguished economists and renowned institutions has so far been rebuffed and worldwide experience ignored.

"Suggestions on fiscal ex-

pansion and cash transfers have been turned down. Hollow packages like Atmanirbhar have fallen flat," he said.

"We may note that Nobel Laureate Abhijit Banerjee has called for printing money and increasing spending. Yet, even as recently as yesterday morning, the finance minister gave along interview to some newspapers defending her misguided and disastrous policies," he said.

If necessary the government must print money. We have the space and the sovereign right to print money," Chidambaram said, adding that if at any point the government feels too much money is being printed, it can always stop printing money.

Taking potshots at finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman

Suggestions on fiscal expansion and cash transfers have been turned down. Hollow packages like Atmanirbhar have fallen flat

P CHIDAMBARAM
FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

and her chief economic adviser's claims of a V-shaped economic recovery, he said: "It was a false story and we had expressed our strong reservations and warned there were no signs of a recovery."

"We had pointed out that what the economy needed was a strong dose of stimulus, including increased govern-

ment expenditure, direct transfers of cash to the poor and liberal distribution of free rations. Our pleas fell on deaf ears, and the result is a negative growth of (-) 7.3 per cent," he said.

He also criticised the finance minister for treating the GST Council with disdain as she did not respond to any of the decisions pertaining to GST concessions for material used for Covid treatment.

Calling for immediate payment of GST dues to states, Chidambaram pointed out that unemployment is growing and has now crossed 11 per cent, labour force participation is declining and more and more people are falling below the poverty line.

"This government is completely insensitive and completely impervious to what the

lower middle class and the poor are facing," he alleged.

On the rise in fiscal deficit, Chidambaram said: "This is not the time to worry about the fiscal deficit. It should not make any difference and it should not stop us."

"What we need is not to lose another year like we lost last year. This is the time to act boldly and decisively. Borrow and spend," he said.

Chidambaram said what is most worrying is that per capita GDP has fallen below Rs 1 lakh, to Rs 99,694.

The deeply worrying conclusion is that most Indians are poorer than they were two years ago, he added. He noted that the poor are suffering and they must be given cash transfers and liberal free rations as they need them.

The Congress leader said FICCI and CII have echoed the views and pleaded for fiscal expansion, including cash transfers to the poor.

The RBI's monthly review has flagged the 'demand shock' and its consequences and the CMIE report on loss of jobs and growing unemployment is alarming, he said.

Research and survey reports from the Azim Premji University have concluded that 23 crore people have been pushed below the poverty line and into indebtedness, the Congress leader noted.

Chidambaram said the second wave of the pandemic is following the same pattern as the first wave, except that it has wrought more damage in terms of numbers of infections and deaths.

Heed advice of economists: Cong to govt

PC says govt must wake up, admit its errors of commission & omission; reverse its 'disastrous' policy; print more money, increase spending

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NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

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'EC confident of holding five Assembly polls in '22 on time'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

dara said in an interview.

He was asked whether the poll panel will be able to hold the assembly polls due in five states on time due to Covid-19 as recently it has deferred several Lok Sabha and assembly bypolls due to the second wave of Covid-19.

Some Rajya Sabha bypolls and biennial legislative council elections were also deferred due to the second wave of the pandemic.

"I'm sure that with the receding pandemic now, and I wish the pandemic is over soon, we will absolutely be in a position to hold elections next year which are scheduled in five states on time, as per the schedule," Chandra said.

The terms of the legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab and Uttarakhand are coming to an end in March 2022, while the term of the UP legislative Assembly is scheduled to end in May.

"That is the foremost duty of the Election Commission that we should hold the elections and submit the list of the winning candidates (to the governor) before the term of the Assembly expires," Chandra said.

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Opportunity cost

The result of the ill-informed criticism of the one aspect of managing the Covid-19 pandemic which India got right ~ its vaccine diplomacy or humanitarian outreach termed the Vaccine Maitri initiative under which it exported 600 lakh doses to its neighbouring countries and others in the global South ~ is now apparent. For, China announced last week that one million Covid-19 vaccines would be provided by it to Nepal under grant assistance to follow up on the 800,000 doses of Sinopharm's BBIBP-CorV shots it sent in March. That Beijing's move comes at a time when not only is Nepal's coronavirus crisis deepening but its political crisis has imploded may be a coincidence. But if so, then it is a fortuitous one for China's South Asia strategy. Beijing's announcement, incidentally, comes days after Nepalese President Bidya Devi Bhandari's letter to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind urging him to take the initiative to ensure vaccines for Nepal.

India had hitherto been instrumental in Nepal's vaccination drive which began in January this year. Nepal currently has one of the highest Covid-19 viral reproduction rates in the world and as it struggles to acquire vaccines, it has been reaching out to various countries for help. Nepal has a higher number of cases per million than India and by mid-July new case numbers could reach 800,000 with a predicted death toll of 40,000. The Ministry of Health said in a statement: "Since coronavirus cases have spiked beyond the capacity of the health system and hospitals have run out of beds, the situation is unmanageable." The ministry also said it had no more vaccines. Meanwhile, the widely perceived to be pro-China Prime Minister, Mr KP Oli, having lost a no-confidence motion earlier this month, is fighting for his political survival and that of his policy of "standing up to India". With Parliament dissolved on the night of 21-22 May ~ the Constitutionality of that decision is currently being examined by the Nepalese apex court amid great acrimony ~ the stability of the country is in serious danger of being undermined as the pandemic threatens to spin out of control.

There is, therefore, reason for South Block to take seriously local reports which suggest there is a groundswell of support in a significant section of the population for China for coming to Nepal's aid in its hour of need. The Chinese embassy in Kathmandu, in its official statement, iterated that it would support Nepal "though thick and thin". "Despite huge demand for the vaccines both in China and across the world at present, the Chinese government has prioritised Nepal in providing the vaccines, fully demonstrating the great importance it shares the bond with Nepal," the statement said. Shorn of the hyperbole, the message is clear. India has its work cut out in trying to draw Nepal out of the Chinese strategic embrace which the now-aborted Vaccine Maitri initiative had provided it an opportunity to do.

Curbs on Belarus

The United States of America has tightened the screws on the one-time Soviet satellite, Belarus, for human rights violations by the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko.

The cache of sanctions imposed on Sunday are targeted at state-owned enterprises that support the government of President Lukashenko. It thus comes about that the Biden administration has renewed American sanctions on nine state-owned companies in Belarus for human rights violations by the regime. The move by the US Treasury Department has primarily forestalled potential future sales of US crude oil to the former Soviet-state, which US officials had hoped was looking for alternative sources in Russia for its refineries. The US State Department cited government suppression of political protests following the August 2020 re-election of Lukashenko, which the US has said was fraudulent. The reprisal is as political as it is economic. The action came as a "consequence of the country's flagrant disregard for human rights and its failure to comply with obligations under international law", US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. More than 340 political prisoners are being detained in Belarus and this is part of a political crackdown against dissent following Lukashenko's re-election, according to the State Department. "The United States calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those unjustly detained or imprisoned," Blinken said. He named several political prisoners still being held whom US officials are concerned about. Belarusian political figure Siarhei Tsikhanouski, who had intended to run against Lukashenko in 2020, was arrested before the August election and remains imprisoned. Protest leader Maria Kolesnikova was detained in September after a mass march against the Lukashenko government. "The nine state-owned enterprises affected by this action finance and support the Lukashenko regime, facilitating its violent repression of the Belarusian people and repeated rejection of the rule of law," Blinken's statement said. The US reprisal comes in the immediate aftermath of the recent diversion of a commercial aircraft to detain a journalist the regime deemed inconvenient. Sanctions had been lifted in 2015 when the US and Western nations attempted to develop better relations with Belarus. The US had exported goods worth \$112m to Belarus in 2020 ~ mostly medicines and cars ~ and imported goods worth \$332m, mostly fertiliser, iron and steel, according to US government data. In February, the United States imposed travel restrictions on 43 Belarusian nationals identified as taking part in Lukashenko's political crackdown. The travel sanctions were triggered by the sentencing of two journalists who had live-streamed an enormous protest in Minsk against Lukashenko's rule in November.

No matter how much noise people make, 5G is inevitable because this is the future of capital investment and a profit-driven market. The future lies in the application of artificial intelligence to robotics, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, quantum computing and transhumanism. So, just like the bullock cart and the street play, the coming era will destroy the post-offices, banks, so-called shopping malls, restaurants, TV, cine-



A Grim Battle ~ I

The world has also seen unparalleled international cooperation in forging a common response to tackle Covid-19 while there have been countries who have tried to fish in troubled waters to establish their hegemony in the international pecking order



The world has undergone humongous changes since 11 March 2020 when Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. While the pandemic continues to rage today in its different avatars, its newer strains and mutants are being reported at regular intervals from different corners of the world. Humanity has accordingly been trying to discover suitable modus vivendi and modus operandi to live with this lethal virus.

From the First Wave to the Second Wave and on the way to a purportedly incoming Third Wave, the world has often found itself all at sea in trying to find ways to tackle and control an intractable virus which has continuously been mutating. While medical science and health administrators have their shoulders continuously to the wheel to bring about a creditable regime for its surveillance, tracking, testing and treatment, there still remains a lot which needs to be done before humanity can be said to be safe from this chimerical virus.

Some of us who have been involved and associated with sundry aspects of Covid management since the beginning definitely know how we were often at our wits' end trying to deal with Covid-19 while very little was known about the disease and its treatment protocols were still evolving. We had learnt words like 'Quarantine' only lexicographically or had read about the phenomenon sketchily at different periods of history when humanity was called upon to deal with pestilences like the plague and Spanish Flu. However, none of us knew how to actually effect or put the same in place.

'Quarantine' was such a reviled and dreaded word at the beginning of Covid that most would shudder to ever think of going inside an established 'Quarantine Centre' or even to allow it coming up somewhere in the vicinity of our neighbourhood. People resisting the drive to set up such 'Quarantine Centres', 'Isolation Centres' or 'Dedicated Covid Facilities' ranged from the most illiterate and uneducated in the slums to the most educated and well-placed people, who thought that setting up of such a facility would somehow

jeopardise their life or that of their near and dear ones.

As such it was a real Herculean task to find and convince people to work and serve inside such Covid facilities, notwithstanding the promise of provisioning them with all necessary personal protection equipment (PPEs) and higher wages. The Covid protocols for disposal of bio-medical waste (BMWs) have been so rigorous that it was a huge challenge to find ways to dispose the massive amounts of BMWs which were being generated, or to ensure proper sanitation services in the Covid facilities. Often, they needed to be led by example to convince them to serve patients in a Covid facility with due precautions.

Same was the experience when health administrators were grappling with the need to ramp up health infrastructures across the length and breadth of this country. This was no mean task as creating newer hospital beds or CCU/HDU facilities required and involved emergent civil works or procurement of equipment, logistics or hiring of qualified human resources. At the fastest of speed, the facility creation still required some gestation time. But Governments and administrations always found ways to relax rules and norms to expedite such works.

While there were many regular hospitals which were converted into dedicated Covid facilities, there were many greenfield facilities which were set up to provide treatment against a disease which was still unknown and where the suggested line of treatment was still evolving. There was often some resistance from within and without the medical fraternity for converting a regular facility for Covid treatment on one or the other pretext. Still, the spirit of humanity triumphed as the predominant majority in every instance was positively forthcoming to go the extra mile for saving and safeguarding the lives of fellow human beings.

While the same was successfully being clinched and put in place, nosocomial services did suffer in some parts of the country in the beginning. This happened because of intrinsic fears of contracting the disease or losing one's life. Non-Covid health services across the world have been a huge casualty as a consequence of Covid-19 getting disproportionate attention. It is suggested that umpteen non-Covid surgeries have been postponed for fear of an unknown virus.

Studies suggest that a good number of people have lost their lives in many countries because of non-availability of timely medical attention while the world has been fixated on Covid management. India as a country

and psychological counselling to the teeming millions who either could not come to the health centres or who were anxious to clarify their Covid-related doubts. This not only reduced pressure on our health facilities, but also ensured efficient and optimal use of available human resources.

In fact, the occasional Covid bed scarcity which was experienced in certain parts of the country was often not because of the actual dearth of bed, but because of the unnecessary occupation of hospital beds including CCUs/HDUs because of the morbid fear of the well-heeled asymptomatic and mild patients. Such patients never needed hospitalisation and could have very well stayed home but ended up occupying hospital beds due to their panic.

The scarcity also arose because some of the vested interests (read vultures who feed and flourish on dead) started dealing in these beds and were known to indulge in black-marketing private and public hospital beds.

The world has also seen unparalleled international cooperation in forging a common response to tackle Covid-19 while there have been countries who have tried to fish in troubled waters to establish their hegemony in the international pecking order. India, on its part, has tried its best to reach out to the weaker members of the comity of nations to provide them succour including vaccines and necessary drugs to deal with the virus while also receiving reciprocal assistance from many countries during its time of need. So, by the time the world was faced with the Second Wave of Covid-19 with newer and more contagious variants surfacing, we were relatively better prepared to respond to the virus with many effective vaccines having been discovered to tame the virus. While the pace of vaccination and the quality of Covid-19 response in some parts of the country leave much to be desired, still the disease definitely has brought out the best in many of us. West Bengal, as a state, has been at the vanguard of Covid fight with well-placed infrastructure and systems for Covid management, thereby having least of dislocations while providing suitable healthcare services to its population.

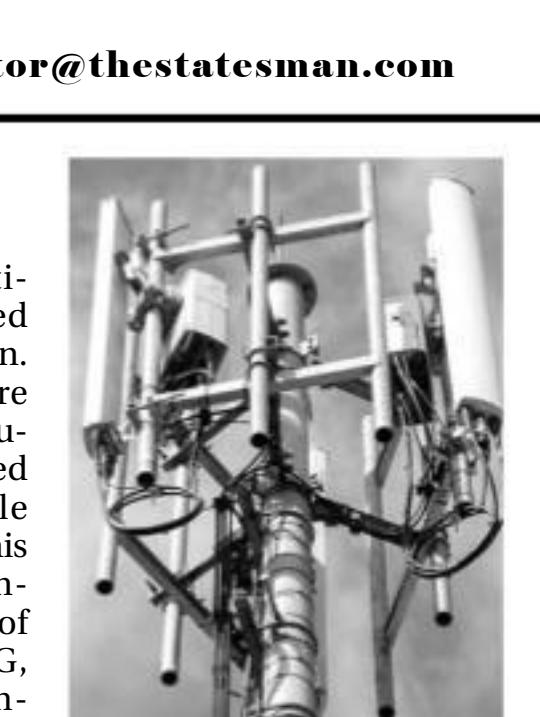
(To be Concluded)



SAUMITRA MOHAN
The writer is an IAS officer, presently posted as Mission Director, National Health Mission and Secretary in the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. The views are personal and not those of the government

ma halls (single or multi-screen), the man-powered factory machine, and so on. Because already there are various mediums like virtual-reality 3D devices based on deep learning. People will tend to lean towards this new context of entertainment and other facilities of life. So in the case of 5G, there will be an environmental-health debate as there was before about mobile and its towers. But that will not have any effect on the arrival of this new technology, rather another technology called geoengineering or artificial meat will come up to protect the environment.

But in the meantime, the debate that has erupted around the world is whether to adopt Chinese or American 5G technology equipment and methods. It is important to judge this in two contexts - first, the cost-benefit model which is important to capitalists, and second, to politicians, the strategic nature of national security risks and sovereign-



ty which is not negligible. So in this order, United States and Australia have banned Chinese companies for spying, cyber-attacks and information theft, and are already issuing strong propaganda threats.

Countries like New Zealand and Japan have adopted a silent moderation. In contrast, Chinese technology has been given priority in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific region for improved services at negligible cost. But it is unclear whether India will side with the US or China. This is a dilemma

because if India sides with the US, the Sino-Indian border would be inflamed by China, which has huge military might, and on the other hand, joining hands with China will affect long-term international relations with the US.

Yours, etc., Ardhendu Banerjee, Kolkata, 1 June.

CHINA'S OBDRACY

SIR, I am on board with the views expressed in the letter published today under the headline 'Virus from a Lab'. There is no denying the fact that it is only China where freedom of expression and human rights are blatantly suppressed under the barrel of a gun. Nobody knows what actually happens to the people of China when they get infected by the coronavirus. It is common knowledge that the spread of the virus started in Wuhan city of China, while till date there is no information about the total deaths in China. Noticing China's strong economy, many of our so-called pundits are praising the country, while deriding India. But they forget that

DIGNIFIED

SIR, I refer to your report 'Bengal chief secy resigns, appointed CM's top adviser' published today. I feel that the Chief Secretary has neither dishonoured the state government nor the Central government by tendering his resignation and kept his dignity intact by opting to resign/retire on the last day of his service. His appointment as the top adviser of Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal is likely to help the State which is reeling under an adverse situation.

Yours, etc., AK Deb Biswas, Hooghly, 1 June.

under the bright light of China's economy there is much darkness that exists. In a country where everything is controlled by the autocratic communist government, how can the world expect a fair and free investigation? Earlier a team of the WHO went to Wuhan for investigation and they were not given free access. They submitted a report after conducting a superficial investigation.

On that basis, the WHO chief heaped praise on China and gave it a clean chit. In this regard, the WHO chief's role has been suspi-

cious from the beginning. While the virus spread in Wuhan, he remained silent but declared it a pandemic after it had spread in the world.

The Biden administration has set a deadline for an investigation in 90 days. But the question is whether laboratory data and other related papers in this regard would be available. Until and unless China's obduracy in conducting a free and fair investigation is countered suitably, nothing meaningful can come out.

Yours, etc., Mihir Kanungo, Kolkata, 1 June.

The battle for 5G

SIR, In the mid-nineteenth century, the British invented the telegraph and submarine cable communications systems, which astonished the world, and in the aftermath of World War II, the United States invented the satellite communications system and tore their technology apart. And now in the 21st century, China is determined to overtake the entire West by the "wireless system." Therefore, the cloud of controversy has gradually turned black during this transformation.

No matter how much noise people make, 5G is inevitable because this is the future of capital investment and a profit-driven market.

The future lies in the application of artificial intelligence to robotics, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, quantum computing and transhumanism. So, just like the bullock cart and the street play, the coming era will

destroy the post-offices, banks, so-called shopping malls, restaurants, TV, cine-

ma halls (single or multi-screen), the man-powered factory machine, and so on. Because already there are various mediums like virtual-reality 3D devices based on deep learning. People will tend to lean towards this new context of entertainment and other facilities of life. So in the case of 5G, there will be an environmental-health debate as there was before about mobile and its towers. But that will not have any effect on the arrival of this new technology, rather another technology called geoengineering or artificial meat will come up to protect the environment.

But in the meantime, the debate that has erupted around the world is whether to adopt Chinese or American 5G technology equipment and methods. It is important to judge this in two contexts - first, the cost-benefit model which is important to capitalists, and second, to politicians, the strategic nature of national security risks and sovereign-

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Yours, etc., Mihir Kanungo, Kolkata, 1 June.

paper.thestatesman.com

Mamata's political moves must be measured

SUNIL SHARAN

The country is in the throes of an unprecedented pandemic. Cyclones are battering the country. But our leaders are still fighting yesterday's elections as well as elections oh so far away.

The BJP must reconcile itself gracefully to its defeat in the recent West Bengal elections. They threw everything including the kitchen sink at Mamata Banerjee, but she prevailed, fair and square. By raising the stakes of the election so high, almost making it a general election and then losing so dramatically, the BJP has made Banerjee the foremost challenger to the PM's seat.

There is no leader other than Banerjee in sight who can galvanize the opposition to take on Modi in 2024. Even senior Congress politicians like Kamal Nath have stated, in a pointed snub to Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, that Banerjee is the leader of the country. Most of the opposition will have to perform unite behind Banerjee. Yet, India needs a calm leader, and not a mercurial one. If one week is a long time in politics, then three years is an eternity. There is no doubt that the BJP is needling Banerjee. But must she resort to histrionics?

One day it is a tiff over a Zoom call with the PM to discuss the Covid crisis, the other it is a clash over a meeting to address the cyclone. Banerjee must realize that the BJP has got used to power and will do everything in its power to destroy anyone who seeks to grab that power from them.

The PM is in an especially vulnerable position right now given the state of the pandemic in India. The PM knows that scams beset the UPA2 government two to three years before it finally disintegrated. The pandemic has thrown a spanner in the wheels of all the BJP plans for 2024. And in order to destroy a Frankenstein like Banerjee, they have instead created a bigger Frankenstein in her.

But must she behave like Frankenstein? Arvind Kejriwal, believe it or not, the chief minister of a city-state (unlike Banerjee who is



the CM of a full state), too retains ambitions of becoming the PM. He used to clash with the Centre repeatedly, but now those roars have become just squeals. He doesn't have the mandate to lead the opposition that Banerjee has now, yet his measured behaviour might elevate him to the challenger's slot over Banerjee.

Banerjee must calm down and focus on governance. She must have done a good job in her last term that she won so resoundingly now. She must continue doing her good work and not make unnecessary news. She has beaten the BJP once. To beat it again, she must plan and plot carefully.

By provoking her into hissy fits, the BJP is trying to upend her victory and show the people of India that she is unfit for the highest executive

office in the land. She is well known to the people of West Bengal. She is not that well known to the people of India. Bengal has given a long line of stellar leaders to the country - Bose, Tagore, Basu, Mukherjee, Bose, Basu and Mukherjee all almost made it to the top job in the country, but fortune didn't favor them. They were all measured leaders though.

Banerjee must follow in their vein. She must appear calm and collected to the people of India, who will not hand over the keys of the Ferrari to someone who might crash it. No matter his supposed recent shortcomings, the PM still has kept the Ferrari safe and sound. Any challenger to his throne must give a similar impression, that no matter the crisis, the Ferrari that is India will be

kept safe.

Banerjee has not only the BJP to take on in 2024. Numerous opposition leaders will try to scuttle her bid to become the undisputed prime ministerial challenger. Certainly there must be misgivings in the Congress over her rise. The last time she tried to become the leader of the opposition, in 2019, Rahul Gandhi refused to endorse her. It remains to be seen whether he will endorse her now.

Even if she becomes the prime ministerial challenger for 2024, many opposition stalwarts might want her to lose in 2024 and the BJP to win then. Modi will be 73 in 2024. If he wins then, he will be 78 in 2029. Perhaps he will hand over the reins to someone else in what would be his third stint in office. Perhaps he will

refrain from contesting in 2029. Who knows what kind of leader the BJP has in 2029? He or she may have neither the charisma nor the political nous of Modi.

Some opposition leaders might decide that they are better off waiting until Modi leaves before taking on the BJP. Banerjee is another charismatic leader. If she wins in 2024, it might be hard to dislodge her in 2029. Politics is a long game. Mamata Banerjee is mercurial. There is an "M" in her first name, and there is an "m" in her middle name. Banerjee must take the mercurial out of Mamata and become calm and composed and rejoice in her victory.

The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.

Attempt to gag Press in Pakistan



HUMA YUSUF

You may not be aware, but a long-running effort to deny you access to independent information is culminating. The state's attempts to control the media are blatant and blunt. If they succeed, Pakistan will be authoritarian in all but name.

Attacks against outspoken journalists have become shameless; they are shot at strolling in the nation's capital, or thrashed in their homes. Inquiries are launched, but culprits are never apprehended. Online, armies of trolls baselessly accuse journalists of reporting fake news, eroding both their mental health and credibility with

threats of rape and murder.

Meanwhile, the government is trying to push through the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) Ordinance 2021, which media and rights groups have termed akin to 'media martial law'. This seeks to centralise media oversight under one draconian authority. Media outlets will need annual NOCs to remain operational, and would be subject to suspension and arbitrary fees and penalties, with no onus on the government to provide warning or rationales for clampdowns. The law might enable the break-up of large media groups and extend control to digital platforms. What better way to turn media outlets into state mouthpieces than by mak-

ing them entirely reliant on the government to stay in business?

Ironically, despite years of journalists' pleas to end impunity for killings and harassment, the PMDA also calls for media tribunals to mete swift punishment to journalists for violating the new rules. This is what it looks like when you formalise censorship.

And yet, the information minister still insists that Pakistan is "one of the freest states as far as media is concerned". Simply publishing and broadcasting (and that too under threat, and on the direction of PEMRA and other backchannel directives) do not amount to freedom. Freedom is about what you can say, and how. And

those options are ever diminishing.

No government wants to deal with a free press. Who wants to be criticised? Who wants to be held accountable? And this is precisely why the fourth estate is essential in functioning (even hybrid) democracies. Sadly, this simple point seems lost on a key constituency — large sections of Pakistan's burgeoning middle class.

For ages, this group was politically apathetic. Now mobilised, it has bought into the PTI's populist politics, which paints the press as complicit and corrupt. It doesn't help that this constituency's main engagement with the press is through political talk shows, which over the past two decades have brought out the worst in an industry gasping to survive while playing a cut-throat ratings game. Middle-class audiences assume that journalists who are killed, beaten or disappeared deserved it — that journalists cry foul because they are anti-army traitors trying to emigrate to the West.

This fugue state is exacerbated by the narrow middle-class conception of the media as hostile to the state. This 'us-versus-them' dynamic is an accident of Pakistan's fumbling political trajectory, and the existential crisis that the press has faced through each martial law — and most democratic spells too. Pakistan's history has clouded over the fact that free media defends the public's interests — not only against state institutions but also corporates, international actors and any others who hold power.

These dynamics are not new, but

they are playing out in a changing world. Previous regimes had to indulge a free press to keep up appearances globally. But who can defend Pakistan's journalists when there are few repercussions for those who persecuted Roman Protasevich, Jamal Khashoggi, and Daphne Caruana Galizia?

The extent to which media freedom has been reduced to lip service was laid bare by the recent cabinet-level approval of a journalists' protection bill, which will help Pakistan retain its GSP-Plus trading status with the EU. Days later, Asad Ali Toor was tortured by *namaloos afraad* ('unknown' individuals) for exposing this bill as the cynical ploy it is.

The only hope for Pakistan's media is for the middle class to realise how critical an uncensored press is for their own freedom, safety and prosperity. This is a tough ask: it requires the public to deconstruct deep-running institutional power tussles in Pakistan. Who has the patience to consider this? And who has the credibility to deliver the message without being undone with an allegation of foreign funding, a death threat, or worse?

Journalists also need to get better at documenting the nature and scale of the pressure they face. This will require unprecedented solidarity, which has been absent in the face of the state's divide-and-conquer strategies of recent years. But we are at a tipping point. Senior journalists at protests last week indicated that it's time to name the 'known unknowns' who harass and attack journalists. Let the press do what it does best, and hold them accountable.

Dawn/ANN.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The preliminary steps which the Calcutta Corporation is taking for the verification of the Census figures in this city have met with an unexpected obstacle. The Census Commissioner for India and the Provincial Census Superintendent find themselves unable to allow the Corporation to check the Census schedules. One can understand that the papers cannot be spared without some inconvenience and risk of delay in the post-census work for which these officials are responsible, and therefore it need not be imagined that the refusal to make them available for the Corporation's inquiry is altogether without reason. If the Census Commissioner and the Provincial Census Superintendent cannot act on their own responsibility, however, the case is one for the intervention of the Government, and the General committee of the Corporation has already decided to approach the Government on the subject. A draft letter by the Chairman is included in the agenda of this week's meeting of the Committee for consideration and approval. It is to be hoped that the Government will issue the desired instructions with the least possible delay. As matters stand, no one can put any confidence in the Census figures for Calcutta, whatever be the case in other cities. It may be true that nobody is ever quite satisfied with Census statistics, but in the present instance a *prima facie* case has been made out for believing that the results in Calcutta and Howrah are seriously misleading.

NEWS ITEMS

SCIENTIFIC & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

An informal conference of representatives of the managing committees of recognised schools in Bengal and Assam will be held in the University buildings on June 9, 11 and 12 for the purpose of discussing the steps to be taken to carry out the resolutions adopted at the conference of headmasters. A circular letter to this effect has been issued over the signature of the Registrar to the presidents of the managing committees, enclosing therewith copies of the proceedings of the conference and a note of the Vice-Chancellor on the proceedings, with a request to communicate to the Registrar not later than June 6, their decision as to the scientific and vocational subjects in which it may be possible to impart instruction in their schools.

SUGGESTED PARK IN BURRA BAZAR

A plea for a park in Burra Bazar was made at yesterday's meeting of the Calcutta Corporation by Babu D.P. Khaitan, who moved a resolution urging on the Calcutta Improvement Trust the necessity of taking early steps to open a suitable park between Banstola Street and Armenian Street, or close to that locality. Mr. Khaitan said Burra Bazar had always been overcrowded and it was a standing disgrace to the Corporation that no park had been opened there. It was a matter of common knowledge that lung and other diseases prevailed to a greater extent in Burra Bazar than in any other part of Calcutta. Several supported the idea of a park, though it was thought by some that the resolution was merely the expression of a pious wish.

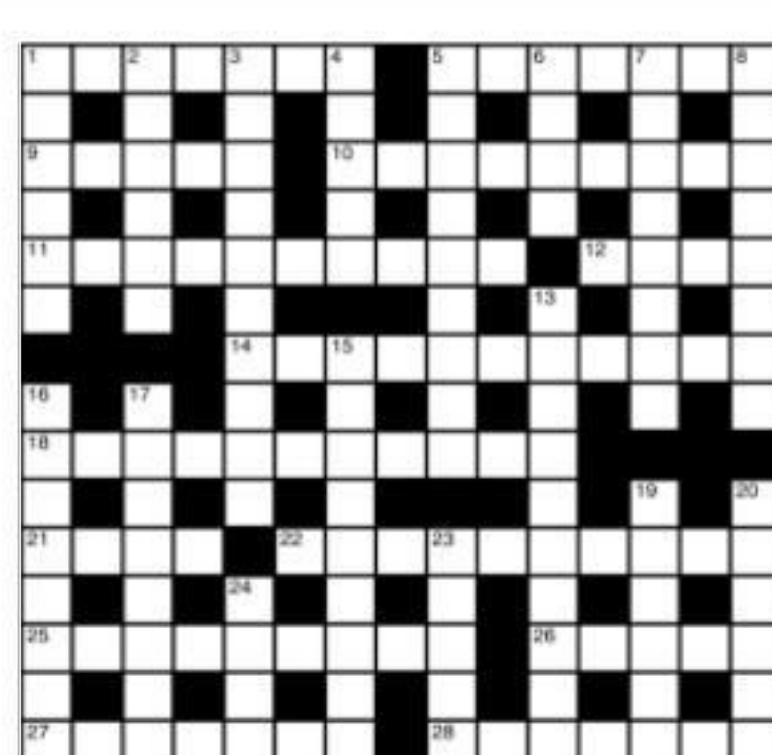
MYSTERY OF KUMAR OF BHOWAL

Dacca, June 1
With regard to the reappearance of the alleged second Kumar of Bhowal, which has created so much sensation in Dacca, a confidential inquiry is being held by the District Magistrate and witnesses are being examined. A petition was moved before the District Magistrate on Monday last on behalf of the sisters of the Kumar of Bhowal praying for the examination of witnesses to be cited by them, and for permission to cross-examine those whose depositions have already been recorded. The Magistrate ordered that petitioners should file a list of witnesses by June 2, with the option to submit a supplementary list later if necessary. As regards the cross-examination of witnesses the Magistrate will pass orders after consulting the Divisional Commissioner.

CHARGE OF MURDER DISMISSED

Mr. F.W. Ward, Additional Sessions Judge, presiding over the Alipore Criminal Sessions disposed of the case in which Nozar Ali Gazi of Bhasirhat was charged with having murdered Baramuddy Gazi, a headman of the village Patali. It was alleged that the deceased was cited as a witness in a case brought against the accused by the local police. The accused went to the deceased and requested him to depose in his favour, but he declined to accede to his request. On the following night while the deceased was sleeping on his verandah, the accused, it was alleged, killed him with an axe. Hemendranath Das, vakil, submitted on behalf of the defence that the story of the prosecution was concocted. The Judge accepting the verdict acquitted the accused.

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

ACROSS

- 1 Foreign Office initially sends deranged Australian to rummage (7)
- 5 Grizzly infant to stand with inexperienced reporter (4,3)
- 9 Brown and green light — this takes two (5)
- 10 European in spot gets excited about current spirit (9)
- 11 Mice emptied place for grain left over in city (10)
- 12 Extent of Crusaders' objective? (4)
- 14 Field dismal without young man — top player (7,4)
- 18 Smoke and marine pollution here skinned smooth urbanite (4,7)
- 21 Help needed to cross river that's dry (4)
- 22 Untouchable carcass not to be moved (10)
- 25 Restricted area with monstrous bird in bottle (9)
- 26 Season failing to start for Bury (5)
- 27 Why chicken didn't cross road: exhausted (3-4)
- 28 Debtor back in action exposed (7)
- 29 Handsome caliph denied last daughter to prophet (6)
- 30 Name occupying chair with English governing body (6)
- 31 Dissident, stoical, reviewed Tory cuts (10)
- 32 One causing buzz, Egyptian spirit loves to embrace unknown (5)
- 33 Bar on one Scots town where magistrate held sway? (9)

DOWN

- 1 Sea food from loch within range (4)
- 7 Lion perhaps devours couple, causing gossip (8)
- 8 In passing through on vacation, we're going outside? (2,3,3)
- 13 Attack SAS, Goering ordered (10)
- 15 A race covering one mile demands energy (9)
- 16 Military engineer receives credit as fighter (8)
- 17 Northern club actress Helen under stone (2,6)
- 19 Married college boy? (6)
- 20 Celebrity editor held consistent views? (6)
- 23 One given pound, apparently indebted, angered (5)
- 24 Bounce back as nymph consorting with Zeus (4)

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

NO 28930





5G adoption is accelerating around the world, and the company remains upbeat about the future, given the rapid pace of innovation.

BORJE EKHLOM
PRESIDENT & CEO, ERICSSON

THUMBNAILS

ITC profit: ITC Ltd on Tuesday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 3,816.84 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021. The cigarette-MCC-to-hotel major had posted a net profit of Rs 3,926.46 crore during the January-March quarter of the previous fiscal, it said in a regulatory filing. Its revenue from operations was at Rs 15,404.37 crore during the quarter under review. It was Rs 12,560.64 crore in the corresponding period of 2019-20. Meanwhile, ITC said its results for this quarter are not comparable with the earlier period as it also includes the revenue of Sunrise Foods, which it had acquired on 27 July 2020. PTI

Tata Sons board: Former CEO of Citi India, Pramit Jhaveri, and Tata Groups Noel Tata are the top contenders for positions on Tata Sons board as they get vacated, according to reports. Tata Group is likely to take the final decision in a few weeks. Tata Sons' board member Farida Khambata's term will end soon. Reports say that Khambata could be considered on the boards of both Tata Steel and TCS after her tenure at Tata Sons board comes to an end. Pramit Jhaveri had joined Tata Trusts as a trustee in February 2020. IANS

Stainless steel: India may lose the tag of the world's second largest stainless steel producer to Indonesia in 2021, industry body ISSDA said on Tuesday. In a statement, the Indian Stainless Steel Development Association (ISSDA) also said the surplus production in Indonesia is likely to be pushed into the Indian market. Indonesia may overtake India as the second-largest stainless steel producer in calendar year (CY) 2021, as per the latest melt shop projections. PTI

IoTian technologies: NASSCOM CoE incubatee start-up, IoTian technologies, has raised Rs one crore from an Angel funding led by early-stage investors. The round was facilitated by Tycubation, a start-up incubator from Nashik, Maharashtra. Headquartered in Bangalore, IoTian Technologies, using AI & IoT, focuses on media, urban mobility, industrial, manufacturing and smart city, which makes them a perfect partner for various businesses across verticals. The company primarily offers, machine learning, computer vision, and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions, said the Press release. SNS

Mobile ATMs: In view of restrictions imposed in various parts of the country, HDFC Bank on Tuesday announced the availability of mobile automated teller machines (ATMs) in 50 cities across the country to assist customers during the lockdown. At restricted areas, the mobile ATMs will eliminate the need for general public to move out of their locality to withdraw cash, said a Press release from the lender. SNS

Economy to expand by 9.3% during this fiscal: Moody's

But a severe second Covid wave, it says, has increased risks to India's credit profile and rated entities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Indian economy would rebound in the current fiscal ending March 2022 and clock a growth of 9.3 per cent, but a severe second Covid wave has increased risks to India's credit profile and rated entities, Moody's Investors Service said today.

Moody's, which has a "Baa3" rating on India with a negative outlook, said it expects a decline in economic activity in the June quarter due to reimposition of lockdown measures along with behavioural changes on fear of contagion.

"India's economy rebounded quickly from a steep contraction in 2020, but a severe second wave of the coronavirus has increased risks to the outlook with potential longer-term credit implications. Risks to India's credit profile, including a persistent slowdown in growth, weak government finances and rising financial sector risks, have been exacerbated by the shock," Moody's said.

GROWTH OUTLOOK

We expect a decline in economic activity in the April-June quarter, followed by a rebound, resulting in real, inflation-adjusted GDP growth of 9.3 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2022 (fiscal 2021) and 7.9 per cent in fiscal 2022.

MOODY'S INVESTORS SERVICE

In an "FAQ on the coronavirus second wave and the sovereign's medium-term credit challenges", the US-based rating agency said the pandemic will leave new economic scars and deepen pre-pandemic constraints and GDP growth would average around 6 per cent in the longer term.

"We expect a decline in economic activity in the April-June quarter, followed by a rebound, resulting in real, inflation-adjusted GDP growth of 9.3 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2022 (fiscal 2021) and 7.9 per cent in fiscal 2022," it said, adding that the impact from potential subsequent waves remains a risk to its forecasts.

Moody's had in February

forecast a 13.7 per cent growth in the current fiscal. The Indian economy contracted by 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2020-21 as the country battled the first wave of Covid, as against a 4 per cent growth in 2019-20.

It said the government's ability to limit the spread of the virus and materially increase the rate of vaccination will have a direct impact on the trajectory of both health and economic outcomes.

India began the third phase of its vaccination campaign for those aged 18-44 on 1 May, making vaccines available to the entire adult population. However, as of late May only around 15 per cent of the country's population had received at least one dose of the vaccine, Moody's said.

Moody's had in February

SBI cuts growth estimate to 7.9%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 1 JUNE

SBI economists today sharply slashed their FY'22 GDP growth estimates to 7.9 per cent - the lowest among all analysts - from the earlier projection of 10.4 per cent growth.

The economists at the state-run lender seemed to attribute the impact of the second wave of Covid-19 infections as a key factor for the revision in the growth estimate, and pitched for faster vaccination.

"Our analysis shows a disproportionately larger impact on the economy this time and given that rural is not as resilient as urban, the pick-up in pent-up demand is unlikely to make a large difference in FY'22 GDP estimates, and hence it could only be a modest pick-up," they

said.

The SBI economists said the increasing international commodity prices will also have an impact on the GDP growth, and added that the overall consumption trajectory will depend on the recovery in "trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting" services which support roughly 25 crore households.

They however, said that at Rs 145.8 lakh crore, the real GDP for FY'22 will be slightly higher than those in FY'20, and called it a "W-shaped" recovery.

The RBI has maintained its growth estimate at 10.5 per cent, despite the emergence of the second wave and may have a look at the number at this week's policy review.

Infosys insider trading: Sebi bans 8 entities from securities market

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has barred eight entities from the securities market for indulging in insider trading activities in the shares of Infosys.

Sebi, prima facie, found that Capital One and Tesora had traded in the scrip of Infosys in the F&O (futures & options) segment just prior to announcement of financial results for the quarter ended 30 June 2020, and soon after the announcement, they offloaded or squared off their positions such that net positions were zero.

Amit Bhutra and Bharath C Jain had placed orders on behalf of Capital One. In addition, Amit Bhutra, who is also a working partner at Tesora Capital, had given trading instructions on behalf of Tesora.

By indulging in such trades, Capital One Partners and Tesora Capital had made illegal gains to the tune of Rs 2.79 crore and Rs 26.82 lakh, respectively, according to the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

senior corporate counsel of Infosys, and Venkata Subramanian VV, senior principal, corporate accounting group of the company, have been barred, as per the Sebi order.

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trend. "The Indian manufacturing sector is showing increasing signs of strain as the Covid-19 crisis intensifies. Key gauges of current sales, production and input buying weakened noticeably in May and pointed to the slowest rates of increase in ten months. In fact, all indices were down from April," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

"Amid a lack of new work, goods producers reduced headcounts again, with the rate of job shedding quickening in May."

According to IHS Markit's economics associate director, the detrimental impacts of the pandemic and associated restrictions seen in the manufacturing sector are considerably less severe than during the first lockdown when unprecedented contractions had been recorded.

Domestic car sales decline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

in May as against 25,041 units in April last year.

Sales of compact segment vehicles, including Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire, declined by 72 per cent to 20,343 units from 72,318 cars in April.

Likewise, utility vehicle sales, including Vitara Brezza, S-Cross and Ertiga, declined by 75 per cent to 6,355 units as against 25,484 units in April.

Rival Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) posted domestic sales of 25,001 units last month, down 75 per cent from 49,002 units in April. Homegrown auto major Tata Motors said its passenger vehicle sales in the domestic market stood at 15,181 units in May, down 40 per cent from 25,095 units in April this year. TATA Senior vice-president Naveen Soni said in a statement.

Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) said it dispatched 2,032 units in domestic market in May 2021 amid the prevailing second wave of Covid-19 and state-wide lockdowns.

Manufacturing growth slows down

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

India's manufacturing sector growth slowed down considerably in May, as the second wave of Covid-19 impacted demand and order flow.

The PMI ranges between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month.

Accordingly, the headline seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) inched up to 50.8 (index reading) in May compared with 55.5 in April.

The latest index reading pointed to a marginal improvement in business conditions that was the weakest in the current ten-month sequence of expansion.

"New orders, the largest sub-component of the headline figure, increased at a mar-

ginal pace that was the slowest since the current stretch of expansion started in August 2020. According to panel members, demand was suppressed by the Covid-19 crisis," IHS Markit's May PMI report said.

"Firms scaled up production volumes during May, but the pace of expansion was modest in the context of historical data. In fact, the rise was the weakest in the current ten-month period of growth. Anecdotal evidence indicated that the upturn was curbed by the escalation of the pandemic and difficulties in securing raw materials."

Besides, May PMI report said that although new export orders increased at a softer rate, the upturn was solid and outpaced the long-run series

Rupee falls 28 paise to 72.90 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 1 JUNE

Extending losses for the second straight session, the rupee today fell by another 28 paise to end at 72.90 against the US currency due to dollar buying by banks and higher crude oil prices. The rupee opened on a marginally positive note at 72.57 per dollar as against its previous close of 72.62 at the interbank foreign exchange market. It hovered in the range of 72.54 to 72.94 per dollar during the day before ending at 72.90. The domestic currency has lost 45 paise in the two trading sessions to Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.01 per cent to 89.83.

"Rupee depreciated for the second day in a row and underperformed among Asian currencies amid foreign banks' dollar buying and higher crude oil prices raising concerns for higher import bills," said Dilip Parmar, research analyst, HDFC Securities.

Going ahead, RBI policy decision will be an investor radar this weekend after below expectation manufacturing PMI numbers.

"However, market don't expect any change in rate from central bank but looks for the inflation outlook as they give more importance to growth last meets," Parmar said.

India's manufacturing sector activity witnessed a significant loss of growth momentum in May. The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 50.8 in May, down from 55.5 in April, as companies observed the slowest rise in new work and output in ten months amid intensification of the Covid-19 crisis.

Petrol and diesel sales drop by 17% in May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

India's petrol and diesel sales fell by about 17 per cent in May from a month ago as restrictions clamped to curb the world's worst outbreak of coronavirus infections stifled demand.

Sales of petrol - used in cars and motorcycles - fell to 1.79 million tons in May, the lowest in a year, according to the preliminary data of state-owned fuel retailers.

Stimulated by increased activity and higher coal consumption, stock at thermal power stations of the country fell by 5 MTs in the month of

May last year, which brought all mobility and economic activity to a grinding halt.

This year, though the infection rate is much severe,

restrictions are localised. Personal mobility is not as ham-

REPORT CARD FOR MAY

► Coal India has registered its highest-ever coal off-take of 55 million tons (MTs) in May this year, backed by revival in coal demand from the power sector.

► Coal off-take increased by 15 MTs or 38 per cent against the same month of last year. Even compared

to pre-Covid May 2019, the growth was 5.8 per cent.

April 2021 from that of 28.9 MTs at the closure of last fiscal. However, increased supplies by CIL in May resulted in the coal stock again rising to 29 MTs at the coal-fired plants. In the coming months, the company aims to further increase its supplies, the statement said.

"Understandably due to covid-forced lockdown coal supplies suffered during last

CIL's total coal off-take in April-May 2021 was 109.2

MTs, clocking a growth of 38 per cent compared to 79 MTs in the same period year ago.

Similarly, supply to the power sector, the largest coal consuming sector, also registered a 38 per cent growth. CIL supplied 86.3 MTs of coal to the power sector during the first two months of the ongoing fiscal compared to 62.7 MTs in the same period a year ago.

CIL has liquidated 25 MTs of coal out of its inventory during April-May'21. The company which began FY'22 with close to 100 MTs stock at its pitheads reduced it to 74.3 MTs at the end of May this year, the statement said.

The company's coal production stood at 42.1 MTs in the month of May this year and 84 MTs in April-May period of this year. CIL is confident of ramping up production even at short notice when the demand peaks to even higher levels, the Coal India statement said.

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Sales volume of cooking gas LPG fell by 6 per cent year-on-year to 2.16 million tons in May 2021 but was 6 per cent higher than 2.03 million tons sold in May 2019. LPG was the only fuel to have registered growth during the lockdown last year as the government gave free cylinders as part of the Covid-19 relief package.

India's new coronavirus

cases have fallen from over 4 lakh to 1.27 lakh and deaths from the infection dropped to 2,795 from over 4,000 a few weeks back, according to health ministry data released today.

"We are near pre-Covid level in March 2021, but new restrictions due to the second Covid-19 wave have temporarily reduced demand for both personal mobility and industrial goods movement," an industry official said. "Local fuel consumption will start to look up this month when second pandemic wave is expected to weaken," the official said.

Declining fuel sales reduced crude intake by refiners, reducing the operating run rate by 85-86 per cent.

Fuel prices differ from

Prices hiked again, rates at new high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

Petrol and diesel prices today scaled new highs across the country after they were hiked for the 17th time in a month.

Petrol price was increased by 26 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise a litre, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of Rs 94.49 a litre, while diesel is priced at Rs 85.38 per litre.



Provinces are independent to take their own decisions regarding Covid and Sindh can extend lockdown restrictions for another week

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN
CHAIRING A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COMMAND AND OPERATION CENTRE (NCOC)

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 02 JUNE 2021

09

Nepal SC to form Const. Bench on judges' seniority

It will hear a bunch of petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 1 JUNE

The Supreme Court of Nepal on Tuesday agreed to form a Constitutional Bench on the basis of seniority of the judges to hear a bunch of petitions challenging the dissolution of the House of Representatives, after differences among justices led to the postponement of the hearing.

In a meeting with the representatives of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana, who leads the five-member Constitutional Bench, said he would amend the regulation for the functioning of the apex court.

The amendment of the regulation, which has been proposed to be carried out within a week as agreed upon by both sides, would be endorsed by the full court, it said.

"It will ensure the appoint-



ment of judges to the bench based on seniority," senior advocate Purna Man Shakya told the media.

With this development, the hearing on the petitions is likely to be adjourned on Tuesday, the report said.

The Supreme Court, which was to decide on Monday whether or not the two Constitutional Bench justices Tej Bahadur KC and Bam Kumar Shrestha should recuse themselves from the House of Representatives (HoR) dis-

solution case, could not do so due to differences among justices on the roster for the Constitutional Bench.

The two justices said they had no compunction hearing the HoR dissolution case. The other two justices on the Constitutional Bench - Deepak Kumar Karki and Ananda Mohan Bhattacharai - did not endorse justices Tej Bahadur KC and Shrestha's views.

The controversy over the recusal led to the postponement of the hearing on Mon-

day. Thirteen justices who are on the roster for the Constitutional Bench dwelt on the recusal issue on Monday.

Lawyers representing the petitioners who have challenged the dissolution of the House had pleaded before the Constitutional Bench on Sunday that justices whose verdict nullified the unification of the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre and those who had heard the review petition against the division bench's verdict should recuse themselves from the HoR dissolution case to avoid conflict of interest, The Himalayan Times reported on Monday.

They said that NCP nullification and the HoR dissolution were related. The apex court has listed the House dissolution case for continuous hearing.

As many as 146 members of the dissolved HoR, including Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, who

had staked claim to form the new government under Article 76 (5) of the Constitution, have also filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking reinstatement of the House.

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on 22 May for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on 12 November and 19 November on the advice of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

She rejected the separate bids of both Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a new government, saying the claims were insufficient.

Earlier on December 20, the president dissolved Parliament and called snap polls on 30 April and 10 May. However, two months later, Chief Justice Rana-led Constitutional Bench on 23 February overturned the decision and reinstated the HoR.

Israeli official rolls back army chief comments on AP Gaza



ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 1 JUNE

Hamas militant group that rules Gaza used various floors of the Jalaa Tower for significant electronic warfare meant to disrupt Israeli air force GPS communications.

The article then said Kohavi had told a foreign source that AP journalists drank beer each morning in a cafeteria in the building's entrance with Hamas electronics experts, whether they knew it or not.

The AP called the comments patently false, noting that there was not even a cafeteria in the building. Asked about Kohavi's comments, Defense Minister Benny Gantz told foreign

journalists that the military chief was only speaking in figurative terms.

When the chief of staff talked about it, he was trying to portray the atmosphere, not the actual aspects," Gantz said. Gantz again alleged that there was Hamas infrastructure in offices that operated from this building.

Asked to respond to Gantz's comments, the military spokesman's office also said Kohavi's statements were meant to be figurative.

It was never claimed that AP journalists were knowingly interacting with Hamas personnel. On the contrary, due to the nature of Hamas' activities, AP journalists had no means of knowing that Hamas personnel were in the building, it said.

The chief of the general staff explained the possible circumstances of such an encounter where the terrorist organisation Hamas embeds itself within the civilian population and uses civilian buildings for military purposes, it said.

China hoping to build consensus on common issues at BRICS FMs meet



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 1 JUNE

Ahead of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' meeting, China said on Tuesday that it looks forward to exchanging views, coordinating positions and building up consensus with other members of the five-member bloc on the most urgent issues of common concern.

Announcing the participation of China's Foreign Minister WangYi at the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Foreign Ministers' meeting via video link convened by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here that the conference is of special significance to promote the post Covid-19 pandemic world economic recovery.

"Together we will send out a strong signal that BRICS countries with solidarity and cooperation, support true multilateralism, promote post epidemic economic recovery and tackle global challenges, he said.

"Amid the combined

impact of Covid-19 and other major changes as seen in this century the BRICS mechanism is of more special significance in deepening cooperation between emerging markets and developing countries in promoting the post epidemic world economic recovery," he said.

Under the guidance of the BRICS leaders, Foreign Ministers of the five countries meet regularly to deepen mutual trust and cooperation in the field of political security," he said. Asked about China's expectations of the meeting, the spokesman said, "At the meeting, China looks forward to exchanging views, coordinating positions and building up consensus with other BRICS members on the most urgent issues of common concern".

"Together we will send out a strong signal that BRICS countries with solidarity and cooperation, support true multilateralism, promote post epidemic economic recovery and tackle global challenges, he said.

"Amid the combined

Egypt rejects Ethiopian PM's remarks on building new dams

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
CAIRO, 1 JUNE

Egypt has rejected the remarks by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to build a number of dams across his country.

In a statement on Monday, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Ahmed's statements reveal once again that Ethiopia is dealing in bad faith with the Nile River and water bodies that it shares with neighbouring countries, reports Xinhua news agency.

On Sunday, Ahmed announced that Ethiopia will build more than 100 small and medium dams in various states of the country in the coming fiscal year.

"Egypt has always recognised the right of all Nile Basin countries to establish water projects and exploit the resources of the Nile River in order to achieve development for its brotherly peoples.

"But these projects and facilities must be established after coordination, consultation and agreement with the

countries that may be affected, especially the downstream countries," said the Ministry statement.

The statements by Prime Minister Ahmed are nothing but a continuation of the regrettable Ethiopian approach that ignores the international law that regulates the use of international rivers, it added.

Egypt and Sudan have been raising concerns about Ethiopia's decision to unilaterally carry out the second filling of the disputed GERD later this year.

Police arrest 11 suspected militants in Indonesia's Papua

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JAKARTA, 1 JUNE

Indonesian police said Monday they have arrested 11 suspected Islamic militants accused of plotting attacks at several Christian churches in easternmost Papua province.

On Friday, the elite counterterrorism squad arrested 10 suspects in several raids in Papua's Merauke district after receiving information about planned attacks in the province, a predominantly Christian region in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Merbau police chief Untung

Sangaji said.

The arrests led police to another suspect who was detained Sunday, and led them to seize items from various locations including chemicals for explosives, modified air guns able to fire real bullets, jihadist books and documents on planned attacks, he said.

Sangaji said those arrested are suspected of being members of Jemaah Anshorut Daulah, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group and carried out a series of suicide bombings in Indonesia.

Two pilots killed in Iran fighter jet incident

TEHRAN, 1 JUNE

An Iranian fighter jet on Tuesday developed a technical problem that killed both of the aircraft's pilots, state TV reported.

The report said the incident happened in the country's southwest, in the city of Dezful, 444 kilometers (270 miles) from the capital, Tehran and near the border with Iraq. The report said an investigation was underway as to what had caused the malfunction of the Iranian air force's F-5 fighter jet.

China faces strains as population ages, birth rate falls

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 1 JUNE

Yue Yan is glad to have two daughters but sees why, even with the ruling Communist Party urging them to have more children, fewer Chinese women give birth at all.

Yue, 35, spends day looking after her two-year-old and evenings helping her 10-year-old with homework. Yue quit a restaurant job to do that, so the family lives on her husband's salary, which many can't afford to do.

If a young couple is busy working and their parents can't help care for the children, they will not want kids, Yue said. The pressure is just

so heavy.

The ruling party is easing official limits on the number of children each couple can have, hoping to counter the rapid aging of Chinese society. But the number of births is falling. Couples are put off by costs, disruptions to jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

On Monday, the ruling party announced it would ease birth restrictions to let all couples have three children instead of two. But its track record suggests rule changes on their own do little to change long-term trends.

Rules in force since 1980 that limited most couples to one birth were changed in 2015

to allow two. After a brief uptick the next year, however, the number who had even one child fell, while the share of the population over age 65 is rising.

China's population of 1.4 billion already was expected to peak later this decade and start to decline. Census data

released 11 May suggest that is happening faster than forecast, adding to pressure to prepare for slower economic growth and do more to help the elderly.

The rise in average age could disrupt official ambitions to turn China into a technology leader and prosperous con-

sumer-driven economy.

The aging of the Chinese population grows faster than we expected, said Yi Fuxian, a senior scientist in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. This will result in a drop in the economic growth rate, Yi said.

The 12 million births reported last year were down nearly one-fifth from 2019. About 40% were second children, down from 50% in 2017, according to Ning Jizhe, a statistics official who announced the figures on 11 May.

The share of working-age people under 60 in China's population of 1.4 billion fell

to 63.3% last year from 70.1% a decade earlier, according to census data. The group aged 65 and older grew to 13.5% from 8.9%.

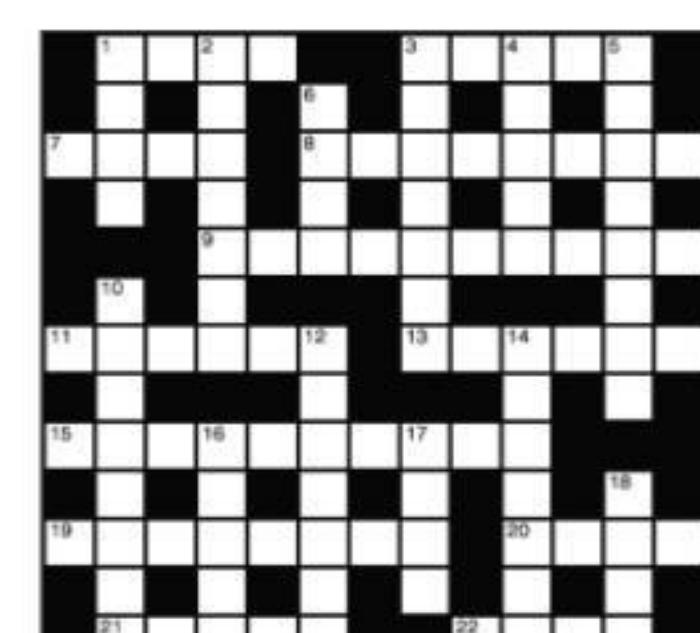
Chinese researchers and the labor ministry say the share of working-age people might fall to half the population by 2050.

That increases the dependency ratio, or number of retirees who rely on each worker to generate income for pension funds and pay taxes for health and other public services.

A growing number of retirees, even with children, live alone because sons and daughters have left home for work.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Female horse (4)
3 Large antelope (5)
7 Bend double (4)
8 Answer (8)
9 Favourable (10)
11 Fondle (6)
13 American rodent (6)
15 Summer eyewear (10)
19 Sun room (8)
20 Second-hand (4)
21 Rear of a ship (5)
22 Something owed (4)

DOWN
1 Debatable (4)
2 Time-consuming bureaucracy (3,4)
3 Following (7)
4 Garlic mayonnaise (5)
5 Uneasiness (8)
6 Weapons (4)
8 Extremely good (8)
10 Eared seal (3,4)
12 Stare angrily (5)
16 Stare angrily (5)
17 Japanese wrestling (4)
18 Bird's home (4)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD
11 United, 13 Carton, 14 Bedclothes, 15 Nose dive, 16 Excused, 17 Rocker, 18 Edible, 19 Area, 20 Toss, 21 Mattress.
1 Trombone, 2 Salsa, 3 Excused, 4 Clip, 5 Holst, 6 Solo, 7 Hogshead, 8 The Fens, 10 Cholera, 11 The, 12 The, 13 Clip, 14 Holst, 15 Solo, 16 Area, 17 Rocker, 18 Edible, 19 Area, 20 Toss, 21 Mattress.

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513187;

23717473, 23325320

FIVE RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

C E R I U M 10
A P A T H Y 28
A D A G I O 8
A B E Y A N T 70
J U D D S O L U T I O N 116

PAR SCORE 145-155

by JUDD

SCRABBLE[®] BRAND

G R A M S I

</

Bacteria strike back

Metals that target the microbe get affected too

S ARANATHANARAYANAN

Copper and silver are known bactericides. The existence of microbes, like bacteria, was not realised till improvements in the microscope in the 17th century. But it was known since ancient times that water stored in copper containers does not develop slime or show signs of fouling.

While we now understand that metals can be selectively toxic to bacteria, a question is what effect the bacteria may have on those metals. Giuseppe M Paternò, Aaron M Ross, Silvia M Pietralunga, Simone Normani, Nicholas Dalla Vedova, Jakkarin Limwongyut, Gaia Bondelli, Liliana Moscardi, Guillermo C Bazan, Francesco Scotognella and Guglielmo Lanzani, from Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Politecnico di Milano, and Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, at Milan, the University of California at St Barbara and the University of Singapore, describe in the journal, *Chemical Physics Reviews*, their work on the effect on silver or its interaction with bacteria. This understanding could even become the basis of imaging the interior of the bacteria.

Metals like copper, silver, gold and platinum are different from others like sodium, potassium, even iron, zinc or aluminum, on a scale of electrical activity. Thus, an electric cell with one electrode as copper and the other as zinc develops a voltage equal to the large difference in electric potential of the two metals. Metals at the copper or silver end of the scale are also less reactive, and form weak bonds with other elements, like chlorine or oxygen. They are thus easily found in nature in the metallic state, without having formed compounds. That is why gold, silver and copper were the first metals to be extracted from their ores.

Metallic copper or silver can hence stay as atoms of the free metal, and if they enter living cells, or the bodies of microbes, they can be toxic. Copper and silver are hence known to be bactericides, as they are more toxic to bacteria than to humans. Copper containers have been considered naturally disinfecting and silver coins were dropped into casks of water or wine, on sea voyages, to keep the contents fresh. Knobs or railings of copper alloys or silver do not harbour microbes and silver is used in medical devices, like breathing tubes and catheters, for the same reason. Silver nitrate swabs have been used to prevent infection and battlefield wounds were wrapped in silver foil or sutured with silver thread.

As the effect of the metal on bacteria comes from individual atoms, which exist as charged ions of the element, the effect is marked when the metal is in the form of nanoparticles, which present the largest surface area. Nanoparticles of silver also display well-known optical features, changes in which have been used to monitor release of charged silver ions in different conditions and surroundings. Atoms of the metal release their outermost electrons, and these electrons move, relatively free, over the surface of the metal. Being charged particles, and influenced by the charge of the mother atoms, they move in waves, which are characteristic. As dis-

turbance of the electrons by a light source modifies the electron wave, there are optical effects, with frequencies of light getting absorbed.

Such effects were known to Roman glass-

makers, who embedded silver or gold in the glass, to make goblets that would change colours when the source of light was altered.

The effect was studied by the English scientist Michael Faraday in 1857 and an explanation based on scattering of light waves was developed.

The current understanding, however, based on absorption by oscillation modes of free electrons, turns the property into an instrument to study how the electron cloud is affected by surrounding influences. They could be the shape of the nanoparticle, other particles in the vicinity, chemicals, or, as in the present study, microbes and bacteria.

The team writing in *Chemical Physics Review* carried out the study with films of silver, just eight nanometres thick, deposited on a glass slab. A colony of the bacterium, *E. Coli* was grown and poured onto a base that had been treated with a nutrient. The plates with the silver film were then placed face down on the base that had the *E. Coli*, as well as a base without *E. Coli*, as a control, and left in contact with the bacteria, or the base, for 24 hours.

The silver nanoparticles were then studied,

using a high resolution, scanning electron microscope and with scattering of X-rays, to look for changes in shape. And then, with a spectroscope, to look for changes in the colours of light that the nanoparticles absorbed. And yet again, where the sample is excited by a laser pulse and probed by another pulse that rapidly follows.

The images of the silver film, before exposure, show irregular nanoparticles with average thickness of eight nm, the paper says. They stay unchanged by contact with the nutrient-enriched, control medium. Exposure to *E. Coli*,

however, "causes dramatic changes," the paper says. These changes were, first, of the size and shaping of the nanoparticles, with rounding of edges, and clumping together nearer the bacterial membrane and within the bacteria. And then, in the nature of the electron cloud at the surface of the nanoparticles.

The use of silver nanoparticles as a bactericide has gained importance with the emergence of bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

Knowing the mechanism of interaction of metal particles and microbes would help understand the reasons behind the nanoparticles acting on



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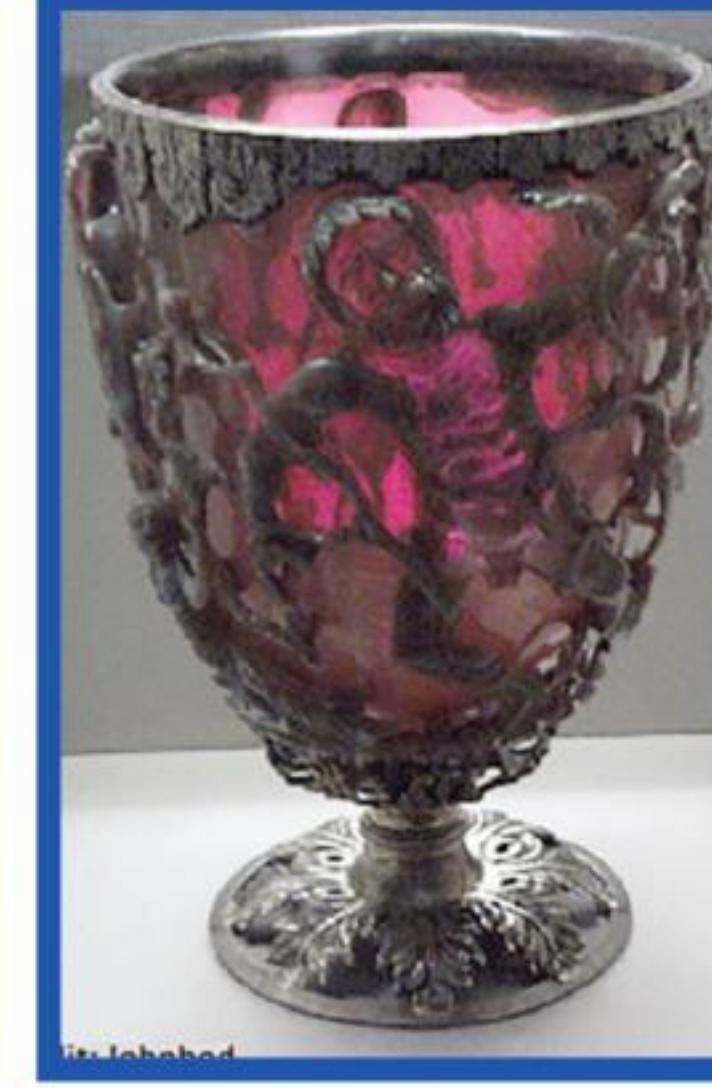
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Knowing the mechanism of interaction of metal particles and microbes would help understand the reasons behind the nanoparticles acting on



the organisms but not on human cells. It would help devise new applications and therapeutic strategies.

It is challenging to study the internals of microbes while the microbes are alive. Nanoparticles that have been exposed to the microbes, however, can be examined and studied in detail. Nanoparticles could thus serve as proxies, for the study of things like bacteria, and also to detect their presence.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

PLUS POINTS

Gifted for tax bills



A vast collection of personal belongings and landmark papers belonging to professor Stephen Hawking have been gifted to the United Kingdom.

The contents of the late British physicist's office have been handed by his family to London's Science Museum, while an archive of scientific and personal papers have been given to the University Library in Cambridge, where he lived. Among the "treasure trove" of items include Hawking's personalised wheelchairs, voice synthesizers and his original PhD thesis.

The acquisition, announced on last Wednesday, was made through the government's acceptance in lieu scheme, which allows people to pay their inheritance tax bill by donating important cultural, scientific and historical objects to public collection. The office contents to the Science Museum settles £1.4m tax and his archive to Cambridge University Library settles £2.8m tax.

Described as a "once-in-a-lifetime" acquisition, it includes a "treasure trove" of research papers, personal letters and mementoes of the great scientist's life. His children, Lucy, Tim and Robert, said they were "very pleased" to see their father's work preserved "for the benefit of generations to come".

"Our father strongly believed that everyone should have the chance to engage with science so he would be delighted that his legacy will be upheld by the Science Museum and Cambridge University Library," they said.



The renowned scientist died at his Cambridge home on 14 March 2018 at the age of 76. Diagnosed with motor neurone disease in his twenties, he went on to become known as one of the greatest scientific minds in the history of the world.

Hawking shot to international fame after the 1988 publication of his book *A Brief History of Time*, and he would also embrace areas of popular culture, appearing several times in the TV show *The Simpsons*. His work ranged from the origins of the universe itself, through the possibility of time travel to the mysteries of space's all-consuming black holes. His most famous theoretical breakthrough was the idea that black holes are not really black but can produce thermal radiation and potentially "evaporate". Scientists refer to such potential emanations as "Hawking radiation".

The Science Museum plans to display selected highlights of the acquisition early next year, including his custom-built Permobil F3 Corpus wheelchair. Also, on display will be his glasses, which contained an infrared sensor that he operated by moving his cheek, and other innovative communications devices that generated his famous voice. The museum will also show documents made by the professor with fellow scientists, using his thumbprint as authentication.

The Cambridge archive contains letters dating from 1944 to 2008, a first draft of *A Brief History Of Time*, and letters he wrote to popes, United States presidents and leading scientists of our time. Cambridge University Library said the 10,000-page archive joins those of Sir Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin, bringing "together three of the most important scientific archives in history under one roof".

Hawking's son, Tim, said his family were "delighted" that his father's body of work and memories were being safeguarded. He said, "Our father would be really pleased. It was really important during his lifetime that science be opened up to the widest possible number of people and be democratised and not be the preserve of the elite few."

"So I think this body of work will help – hopefully inspire – the next generation to come."

–The independent



ESCAPE TO SURVIVE

Is the Covid-19 pandemic a prelude to space colonisation?

adapt or die out. Going by the present, it can be said that we will eventually face a disaster so great in future that adaptation will be virtually impossible.

Global disasters have happened many times in the past and they will inevitably happen again. Earth has already witnessed five major extinction cycles in which up to 90 per cent of all life forms vanished. It's imminent that extinction will happen and to tide over that, we must establish ourselves as a multi-planet species. Elon Musk, the entrepreneur behind space tourism company SpaceX, said recently, "I think there is a strong argument for making life multi-planetary in order to safeguard the existence of humanity in the event that something catastrophic were to happen." We must leave Earth, or we will perish.

Hopping across to Mars

The successful landing of the Mars Perseverance Rover on 18 February this year is a scientific and technological landmark. At an average distance of 140 million miles, Mars is one of Earth's closest habitable neighbours and many people are interested in colonising the Red Planet in the immediate future, as soon as 2050.

Mars is about halfway between the Sun and Earth and therefore, has decent sunlight. It is a little cold, but we can warm it up. Gravity on Mars is about 38 per cent of that on Earth, so you would be able to lift heavy things and bound around! Furthermore, the diurnal cycle is remarkably close to that of Earth. Its atmosphere is primarily carbon dioxide with some nitrogen, argon and a few other trace elements, which means that we can grow plants on Mars just by compressing the atmosphere.

Recently Nasa astronauts successfully grew "Amara" mustard (*Iberis amara*) and "Extra Dwarf" pak choi (*Brassica rapa*) on the ISS. They were grown for 64 days – the longest leafy greens have grown on the station. The plants were cultivated for the "veggie study" that is exploring space agriculture to sustain astronauts on future missions to the Moon or Mars.

The writer is a science communicator and can be contacted at bijudharmapalan@gmail.com

BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Every year, 12 April is celebrated as the International Day of Human Space Flight under the auspices of the United Nations. It commemorates the anniversary of the first human space flight on 12 April 1961 by Soviet Union astronaut, Yuri Gagarin. Since then, citizens from 41 countries have flown to space, including India's Rakesh Sharma, who did so aboard the Soviet rocket Soyuz T-11 launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome on 3 April 1984.

After the "space race" ended, many countries collaborated to build the International Space Station. The ISS was constructed with contributions from 15 nations and their space agencies of whom the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (United States), Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities (Russia) and the European Space Agency are major funding partners. As of January 2018, 230 individuals from 18 countries have visited the ISS.

The long-term habitation of the ISS by teams of astronauts, scientists and medical professionals has provided a wealth of data to establish the parameters for keeping humans alive and healthy for long periods in the harsh environment of space.

Once in the realm of science fiction, space travel and space colonisation could soon become a reality. The urgency to establish humanity as a multi-planet species has been revaluated by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has taught us to live in an enclosed area wearing extra equipment – in a way, quite like astronauts travelling to space.

Need for space colonisation

Every part of Earth, be it mountains or oceans, has become a repository of harmful pollutants and the planet is slowly transforming into an inhospitable region, thanks to us. The grand history of life on Earth shows that faced with a hostile environment, organisms inevitably meet one of one fates – they can leave,

The writer is a science communicator and can be contacted at bijudharmapalan@gmail.com



BRING ON THE GIRLS

England Test captain Joe Root (photo, left) has praised plans to kick off The Hundred with a women's match and is ready to tune in for tips when it launches. Having been postponed during the height of the coronavirus pandemic last year, the tournament is set to get under way on 21 July.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

French Open India: India's Rohan Bopanna and Franko Skugor of Croatia sailed into the men's doubles second round at the French Open with a straight-set win over Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili and Andre Begemann of Germany in Paris on Tuesday.



Shafali on top: Indian teen sensation Shafali Verma maintained her pole position among T20 batters while Kathryn Bryce became the first woman from Scotland to make it into the top-10 in the latest ICC rankings published on Tuesday.

'We've played badly but there are times when we do well'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DOHA, 1 JUNE

Indian players should be brave enough to accept that the national football team did not play to their potential in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers, experienced defender Sandesh Jhingan (in photo) said today.

Already out of the reckoning for a place in the next round of the World Cup qualifiers, India are currently placed fourth in the group with three points from five matches. From the remaining fixtures, the side will hope to collect as many points as possible and finish third so that they can seal automatic qualification for the 2023 Asian Cup qualifying third round.

India are scheduled to play Asian champions Qatar on 3 June, Bangladesh on 7

June, and Afghanistan on 15 June with all three matches to be held at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium here.

"We can never take things for granted. The team need to stay focused on the job at hand. It hasn't gone the way it should have," said Jhingan, who has returned to the national team after more than seven months. "I will be the first one to raise my hand and say that we haven't been able to play to our potential. It's not gone the way we all would have wanted it to go - especially after such a promising start. We need to be brave enough, raise our hands and take the blame for it. I iterate, we haven't played to our potential."

Jhingan is back in the scheme of things after recovering from a knee injury. "It's a relief. I am happy that



I have been able to get back after the injury lay-off. A man's greatest honour is to represent his country. In that

sense, I am lucky, grateful and thankful whenever I get a call-up," he said.

Jhingan had been sidelined by the injury since October last year, which forced him to miss the entire Indian Super League season for Kerala Blasters FC. He sustained it ahead of the World Cup qualifier against Bangladesh on 15 October last year. The talismanic India footballer said that the team needed to learn from their mistakes going forward.

"It's a human tendency to remember and talk about negatives. In Dubai, we drew with Oman, who are such a good side, and that too with 10 debutants. People don't talk about how we came from behind, and had it gone on a little longer, we could have won. I am a person who has believed in the process and

the roadmap which (coach) Igor (Stimac) has laid down for us. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. But right through my career I have learnt that you learn more from your failures. You just need to stay positive and keep going."

Asked about India's preparation for the next matches, Jhingan said: "Anyone who understands football will know the importance of a proper preparatory camp, and how important a friendly match is in preparation for a major tournament.

Owing to the pandemic we lost out on friendly matches in Dubai, which isn't ideal. But there are always two ways of looking at things. The easier option could have been to throw in the towel but given the great squad we have, we are here to fight."

Camp abroad for boxers

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

India's nine Olympic-bound boxers will travel abroad for a three-week training stint after getting a few days' break following a record-shattering medal haul by the country's pugilists at the recent Asian Championships in Dubai.

The Indian men's high-performance director, Santiago Nieva, said today that the boxers would reach Tokyo for the Games some five or seven days before the start of the event on 23 July.

"We will go abroad for training. Discussions are on and the place will be finalised in the next few days. It will be a three-week camp. We will come back to India to fine-tune a few things, and then head for Tokyo five or seven days before the Games," Nieva said.

'Great chance to upset India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MOUNT MAUNGANUI (NEW ZEALAND), 1 JUNE

The qualification process for the World Test Championship final is still a bit of an enigma for Trent Boult (in photo) but the New Zealand pace spearhead is confident that his team are capable of making history when they clash with India for the inaugural title. The WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from 18 June.

"The way the group has travelled and performed around New Zealand and the world, the boys are in a great place hopefully to create a bit of history," Boult told reporters at the Bay Oval. "Everything is feeling good with what lies ahead, a big stage for the final, and hopefully I can get over there and be part of that second Test (against England) as well," he added.

"I've taken a while to understand the process with qualifying, how everything works with the points. I still think no one knows how that actually works, but the excitement is ramping up now," Boult said.



Talking about the Dukes ball, to be used in the WTC final, the 31-year-old said: "I haven't had too much experience of it, played a handful of Tests over in England. I'm sure the boys are very excited to get it in their hands and see it move around. Hopefully we can entertain you a little bit over the next wee while."

Ahead of the WTC final, New Zealand take on hosts England in a two-match red-ball series. Boult, who has taken 281 wickets in 71 Tests, will be unavailable for the first Test as he has opted to spend time with his family after

the suspension of the Indian Premier League mid-season. However, the seamer, who will leave for the UK on Thursday, is hoping to be a part of the second fixture. "Once I step into the UK, get that chance to smell the English fresh air and see the ball move around a little bit I'll definitely be excited," he added. The left-arm seamer, who plays for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League, is also optimistic about turning up for the second half of the currently-suspended Twenty20 league in the United Arab Emirates.

"Looks like it's moving forward to the UAE where it ran very nicely last year. So if I get the chance I'll be looking forward to finishing that campaign off nicely," Boult said, adding: "Things escalated pretty quickly over there. I was very grateful to get that opportunity in the IPL to play on that stage."

New Zealand wicketkeeper-batsman Tim Seifert was one of the players to contract Covid-19 during the IPL. "What happened to Tim was really unfortunate. They guy was feeling very upset. You can imagine it would be quite an iso-

lating feeling being there not really knowing how you'll get home and when. It's the risk of taking on this job. I've loved India with the culture and fans over there, but it was a different story this time. It was very quiet around the streets compared with that usual hum of going into the stadiums with the fans. It was definitely different," Boult said.

Families allowed

The families of the players and the support staff of both the Indian men's and women's cricket teams will be allowed to accompany them during their long tour of England this month, a senior Board of Control for Cricket in India source revealed today.

The BCCI earlier put in a request that the players be allowed the company of their loved ones given they had to spend a considerable amount of time in a bio-secure bubble because of the Covid-19 pandemic. None of the BCCI office-bearers, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah, will be present for the WTC final.

Cash-cow show to miss a lot of glamour boys

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

As the cricket board seeks to complete this year's Indian Premier League in the United Arab Emirates, it appears to have accepted that the UAE leg may not feature several of the league's star foreign players.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India was staring at a \$270 million loss in revenue when the IPL was suspended last month after several players and backroom staff tested positive for Covid-19.

Having shifted the rest of the tournament to the UAE in September-October, the BCCI top brass are currently in Dubai to finalise the schedule of the remaining 31 matches in consultation with their Emirati counterparts.

England have effectively ruled out further participation of their players when the tournament resumes but the BCCI appears unfazed. "Our main focus is on completing this edition of the IPL," BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla (in photo) told the *Khaleej Times* today.

"So whichever foreign players are available is fine.

Whoever is not available, it is not going to stop us from hosting the tournament."

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel, currently in Dubai, did not respond to calls to elaborate. Boards would be wary of releasing players and exposing them to possible injuries on the eve of the Twenty20 World Cup in October-November.

Cricket Australia yesterday said that it had yet to start discussions on whether Australian cricketers would compete in the IPL when the T20 league restarted in the UAE in September.

Cricket Australia has not considered their players' return for IPL yet. "Once we get back together as a group that is something we'll obviously need to discuss," CA chief executive Nick Hockley said.

ley said.

The Bangladesh duo of Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman will not be available for the IPL, their cricket board has said, citing the team's international schedule.

According to newspaper report in Australia, Pat Cummins has already made it clear that he would not be taking part in the remainder of the IPL; however, there is no reason given for his decision.

According to media reports, the BCCI has requested Cricket West Indies to advance the start of the Caribbean Premier League, scheduled from 28 August to 19 September, so their players remain available for IPL. CWI did not say if it would oblige.

An IPL franchise official said that players would be paid on a pro-rata basis if they did not return for the rest of the tournament which had been suspended just before the halfway stage. It means South African Chris Morris, sold to Rajasthan Royals for a record \$2.23 million, would take home around \$1 million should he skip the league's UAE leg.

ICC gives India time till 28 June to decide on T20 WC

NEW DELHI, 1 JUNE

The International Cricket Council has given BCCI time till June 28 to take a call on whether it would host the marquee T20 World Cup in India amid the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ICC Board met virtually on Tuesday with India being represented by BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah. The T20 World Cup is due in October-November this year.

The BCCI sought a month's time and the ICC board unanimously agreed to give that for a detailed assessment of the health situation in the country, which has been left battered by a second wave of the ragi.

PTI

Captain Mithali, coach Powar say differences a 'thing of past'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 1 JUNE

ing pandemic.

"Yes, the ICC board has agreed to BCCI's request and they will have time till June 28 to decide on hosting the T20 World Cup in India. They will come back to the board next month with a concrete plan," a source close to the ICC Board said. If the BCCI is unable to host the event in India given the looming threat of a third wave of the pandemic, the tournament will shift to the UAE after it gets done with hosting the IPL, which finishes likely on 10 October. BCCI may retain the hosting rights in that scenario. The BCCI is also mulling a couple of more windows in 2022 in case October-November is not feasible in India.

professional enough to move on and I think everyone should move on. I have been at NCA, been with Rahul Dravid, you know [the] Rahul effect will [be at] play in this series," said the former India off-spinner, who previous term in 2018 was a short one.

"We have interacted well. Everyone grows up after three years. There are larger goals and big picture -- India women's cricket, the BCCI, responsibility, and opportunity. This is a great opportunity for me, Mithali, for the whole group to take it to another level," he said.

The team leaves for England, along with the men's team, in the early hours of Thursday.

Mithali when asked about

the wake of a controversy involving 23-year-old Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka, who withdrew from the ongoing French Open, after refusing to take part in the post-match media conferences said women's cricket needs media support to promote the game and personally she had never felt the necessity to forgo a press conference.

"Well, I think it is tough to be in quarantine for any athlete. But, I think getting into a tournament, we do not feel that. Personally I have not felt that I should forgo a press conference because women's cricket right now, where it stands, it needs media support," Mithali said when specifically asked about the topic.

Barty fights through injury to avoid upset opening loss

AGENCIES
PARIS, 1 JUNE

World number one Ash Barty managed to play through an injury problem and stave off an upset against American Bernarda Pera with a 6-4 3-6 6-2 win in her opening match of the French Open on Tuesday.

Returning to the Philippe Chatrier court after her maiden Grand Slam win in 2019, the 25-year-old Australian seemed to be cruising against the 70th-ranked Pera when she was up 5-2 in the opening set.

Martina Navratilova said: "I am so sad about Osaka. I truly hope she will be okay. As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental and emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a Press conference. Good luck Naomi - we are all pulling for you!"

Billie Jean King was just as supportive: "It's incredibly brave that Osaka has revealed her truth about her struggle with depression. Right now, the important thing is that we give her the space and time she needs. We wish her well."

Kvitova injury

Petra Kvitova has withdrawn from the French Open after injuring her ankle in a freak fall while performing her post-match media duties on Sunday, the 11th seeded Czech player said in a statement.

Two-times Wimbledon champion Kvitova, who reached the semi-finals at Roland Garros in 2020 and 2012, beat Belgian qualifier Greet Minnen 6-7(3) 7-6(5) 6-1 in her opening match of the tournament and hurt her ankle shortly afterwards.

"It is with great disappointment that I announce my withdrawal from Roland Garros," the 31-year-old Kvitova said on Twitter on Tuesday. "During my post-match press requirements on Sunday I fell and hurt my ankle."

"Unfortunately after an MRI and much discussion with my team, I have made the tough decision that it would be unwise to play on it. It's incredibly bad luck, but I will stay strong and do my best to recover in time for the grasscourt season."

Kvitova was due to take on unseeded Russian Elena Vesnina in the second round.

Serena says dealing with media scrutiny made her stronger

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS, 1 JUNE

Serena Williams (in photo, right) says she can identify with anxiety regarding Press conference scrutiny, and has experienced it frequently after matches.

"Many of them I've been into where I've been -- very difficult to walk in those moments," she said. "But you know, it made me stronger." Williams made her comments in a post-match Press conference following her first-round victory yesterday at the French Open.

She spoke hours after four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka (in photo) had withdrawn from the tournament, saying in a statement that she had dealt with long bouts of depression since



winning a tumultuous final against Williams in the 2018 US Open.

Last week, Osaka said she would not participate in the standard post-match Press conferences during Roland Garros, citing her decision as a mental health matter because media questions could create self-doubt.

"I feel for Naomi," Williams said, adding: "Not everyone is the same. I'm thick. Other people are thin. Everyone is different and everyone handles things differently. You just have to let her handle it the way she wants to and the best way she thinks she can. That's the only thing I can say: I think she is doing the best she can."

Few athletes have been under the media spotlight like Williams, 39, who is chasing

make an effort, just as in anything, and say, 'I need help with A, B, C and D,' and talk to someone. I think that's so important to have a sounding board, whether it's some-

one at the Women's Tennis Association, or someone in your life, or maybe it's someone you talk to on a weekly basis.

I've been in that position

too, and I've definitely had opportunities to talk to people and just get things off my chest that I can't necessarily talk about to anyone in my family or anyone I know," Serena said.

Martina Navratilova said: "I am so sad about Osaka. I truly hope she will be okay. As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental and emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a Press conference. Good luck Naomi - we are all pulling for you!"

Billie Jean King was just as supportive: "It's incredibly brave that Osaka has revealed her truth about her struggle with depression. Right now, the important thing is that we give her the space and time she needs. We wish her well."