



THAPAR INSTITUTE
OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY
(Deemed to be University)



S O A R

JOIN THE GO GETTERS

THAPAR SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

At TSLAS we dream, we design, we build and we soar. We are on a journey to developing ideas, training minds, challenging thoughts and stretching possibilities.



THAPAR SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

in partnership with

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE GRONINGEN, THE NETHERLANDS



is inviting applications for admission to the following programs and many other majors and minors

Dual Degree Options

University of Groningen, The Netherlands
Temple University, Tokyo Campus, Japan

University of Tel Aviv, Israel

The University of Toledo, USA

International Internships

Summer Exchange Programs

BA

(Majors in Psychology/Economics/Philosophy/History/Literary & Cultural Studies/Political Science)

BBA

(Majors in Finance/Analytics/Marketing/Operations/Information Systems/International Management/Human Resources Management/Organizational Leadership)

BCom

(Majors in Finance/Analytics/Marketing/Operations/Information Systems)

BSc

(Majors in Biotechnology/Chemistry/Cognitive Sciences/Computer Sciences/Environment and Sustainability/Mathematics/Physics)



#1
private university in India



#19
Asia university rankings



#31
amongst top universities



Accredited A+ by NAAC

To apply, visit tslas.thapar.edu

or call: +91 842 702 9525

Toll Free: 1800 202 4100

(Mon to Sat: 9.00 am to 6.00 pm)

LIVE A LITTLE

From facing their fears to finding joy in a pot of mint, the elderly in India are braving the pandemic

PAGES 14, 15, 16

SUNDAY STORY
PAGE 10

ONE DAY IN A COVID ICU

Stories and photographs from seven hours spent at Holy Family, one of the hospitals at the heart of Delhi's coronavirus crisis

INSIDE

SARMA, SONOWAL IN DELHI; PARTY MEET OVER CM POST TODAY
PAGE 9

HOPE

A resident doctor checks a newborn baby in an isolation ward of Nowrosjee Wadia Maternity Hospital, Mumbai. There are 35 beds in the Covid ward and 15 in the isolation ward of the 450-bed hospital. PTI/Kunal Patil

REPORT, PAGE 8

CENTRE PLEA ON DELHI HC CONTEMPT NOTICE

SC sets up task force for Covid response, oxygen audit, supply

Centre suggests panel on oxygen, agrees to SC call to cover all issues; Delhi govt's plea against oxygen audit rejected

ANANTHAKRISHNANG
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE SUPREME Court has put in place a 12-member National Task Force (NTF), including top experts and doctors from across the country, "to facilitate a public health response to the pandemic based on scientific and specialised domain knowledge".

The Task Force would also undertake an oxygen audit for "formulating a methodology for the scientific allocation of oxygen to states and UTs (Union Territories)". The Union Cabinet Secretary or a nominee of the official will serve as Convenor of the NTF.

"It is necessary that an effective and transparent mechanism is set up within the Union government for the purpose of allocating medical oxygen to all states and UTs for being used during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Union Government has agreed to set up a National Task Force to streamline the process," a Bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said in its May 6 order, which was uploaded on Saturday.

The order said the Centre had suggested that "in order to ensure



Relatives of patients admitted in a 'jumbo' Covid facility in Pune line up to deliver essentials on Saturday. Ashish Kale

Oxygen, ventilators, ICU: Govt puts out data, steep rise in critical care demand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

CLOSE TO 50,000 Covid patients in India are currently in intensive care units, while more than 14,500 are on ventilator support, according to Government data released on Saturday.

Also, more than 1.37 lakh patients are currently on oxygen support, a Government statement said. This is the first time that the Government has released nation-wide data on

Covid patients requiring critical care, and it shows how serious the second wave of infections has been, compared to the first wave last year.

At the peak of the first wave in September, about 23,000 patients were in ICUs, less than 4,000 of them were on ventilators, and around 40,000 required oxygen support, documents accessed by The Indian Express

The latest numbers were shared by Union Health Minister
CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

INSIDE



TAMIL NADU JOINS OTHER STATES IN 'TOTAL LOCKDOWN'

COVID DRUG DEVELOPED BY DRDO GETS EMERGENCY USE NOD
PAGES 8, 12

Fear in each family: Govt on the defensive, anxiety deepens within BJP and RSS ranks

RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

FOR THE first time since the Modi Government came to power in 2014, senior Union ministers and top functionaries in the BJP and the RSS are on the defensive and unsure of how — or even what — to communicate to the people as the second Covid curve rages across the country.

Yet, there is a consensus that

"fear has touched each family" and people need to see more "effort and achievement" to feel some "reassurance". To that effect, there are also voices in the party and the RSS speculating on the need for the government to "revamp its team" so that it can deliver.

A fortnight after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation, the Centre's response trails way behind the curve, which shows few signs of

upick began in Mumbai mid-February and all warning signs — from need of oxygen to the possible impact of the variant — came early and the Government had time to prepare, the chorus is that "no one anticipated such an intense wave."

Few are willing to discuss how the Centre misread the situation and the BJP passed a resolution praising the Prime Minister for success in the fight

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



A drive-in for vaccination of those above the age of 45 at Sardar Patel Stadium in Ahmedabad Saturday. Nirmal Harindran

DOMESTIC VACCINATION VS EXPORT (in lakh)

UNTIL	30 JAN	28 FEB	30 MARCH	30 APRIL
Inoculation	39	150	630	1,460
Export	160	370	640	660

How good intentions but bad timing, not securing stocks, paved road to the shortage

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

mountain of vaccines, a lifesaver like the mythical Sanjeevani, from India to Brazil.

Until March. Then India's growing struggle to vaccinate people at home prompted a pause on exports. This has hit hard the Covax program aimed to benefit over 90 poorer countries. As things stand, the African Union could miss the target to vaccinate 30-35% of its population by the end of 2021.

That's why, experts say, much more thought and planning should have gone in both

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

FROM WHO chief Tedros Ghebreyesus and Caribbean cricket star Chris Gayle to Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne, many praised India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for demonstrating "perhaps the most significant of benevolence, kindness and certainly of empathy... compared to any act of any other leader globally". President Jair Bolsonaro tweeted a depiction of Lord Hanuman delivering a

EXPLAINED E.

part to the same centre.

"I saw her sitting on the floor. She didn't know why she was there and she insisted that she wanted to go home. All she could reveal was her name and she kept asking if her family was coming," recalls Parte.

Though scheduled to be discharged the next day, the 24-year-old says she couldn't turn away seeing the woman's plight. "I realised she could not even go to the toilet on her own." The centre where Parte was lodged, a building developed to accommodate BPL families under a scheme of the Urban

Bengaluru bed scam: Man linked to PA of BJP MLA is under scanner

JOHNSON T A
BENGALURU, MAY 8

A POLICE investigation into irregularities in the allotment of beds through the centralised system of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) — highlighted by BJP South Bengaluru MP Tejasvi Surya recently — has led to the arrest of four people linked to the BBMP South Zone war room, searches at eight zonal war rooms and 16 different hospitals. Police are also looking at the role of a middle-

man with close links to the personal assistant of a BJP MLA who, incidentally, accompanied Surya during a raid on the BBMP South Zone war room.

The middleman reportedly had free, unregulated access to the war room, and was involved in the bed-blocking scam as alleged by Surya and others. Police have not been able to arrest or question him, however, as he is hospitalised for Covid-19.

One of the four persons arrested is Rihan, an operator with the South Zone war room, who

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Suspect in attack on Maldives Speaker has Islamist group 'links'

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, MAY 8

ONE OF the three men arrested for Thursday night's attack on the life of Maldives Speaker and former president Mohamed Nasheed is believed to have links with Islamist extremists, official sources told The Sunday Express.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. But Maldives police chief Mohammed Hameed has said the attack is being investigated



Mohamed Nasheed suffered extensive wounds. File

as a "terrorist act". Maldives has also raised its terror alert level to amber, the highest, Maldivian

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

A law student, a 93-yr-old refugee, and a Covid centre bond

PAGE 1
ANCHORTORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, MAY 8

TILLA month back they lived on either side of an international border, oblivious of each other's existence. On May 2, when they walked out of a hospital in Mizoram, arms intertwined, they were bound by more than just the virus they had beaten.

To 24-year-old C T Ramnunmawii Parte, the 93-

year-old refugee from Myanmar she nursed for 10 days is now "pi-pi (grandmother in Mizo)". For "pi-pi", who doesn't want to be named because of her uncertain status, Parte is "an angel that god sent to me".

A law student, Parte tested positive for Covid on April 13. As per the guidelines in Mizoram, which has 1,902 active cases at present and has seen 17 deaths, she was taken to a Covid care centre in Aizawl. A week later, she recovered and was set to go home when she heard that "an old lady with no family" was going to get admis-

ted to the same centre.

"I saw her sitting on the floor.



Parte holding the hand of the 93-year-old, as they headed home from hospital on May 2. Express

Development and Poverty Department, Mizoram, had 300 patients at the time, with three doctors, three nurses and three assistants.

Parte immediately asked the authorities if she could be the elderly woman's attendant.

The authorities agreed, and both were admitted to a hospital in Aizawl, Mizoram's sole Covid hospital. As she conversed with the woman, Parte realised that the 93-year-old had crossed over from Myanmar — among the hundreds to have fled the country following the crackdown after the military coup in February.

Parte says the 93-year-old didn't remember well the details of her journey, only that she was headed to live with her daughter, married to a person based in Aizawl. "She said she came by a vehicle up to a point... She is old so she can't remember most things," Parte says.

The law student took it upon herself to try and find the daughter. "On April 19, I finally got through and found that the daughter and her family were in home quarantine" she says, recalling their relief in realising the 93-year-old was fine.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



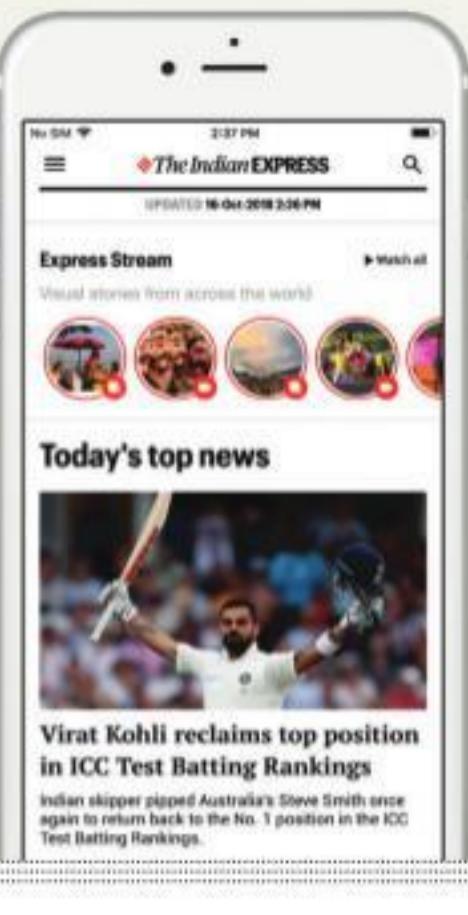
BLAST NEAR KABUL SCHOOL KILLS 40, DOZENS INJURED

EU SCEPTICAL ON VACCINE WAIVER, READY TO DISCUSS

PAGE 13

VIRUS AN AIRBORNE THREAT, THE C.D.C. ACKNOWLEDGES

PAGE 13



DOWNLOAD APP
■ VISUAL STORIES
■ DAILY BRIEFING
■ PODCASTS
■ CUSTOMIZABLE NEWS EXPERIENCE
Indian Express ★★★★ 4.6

**SRINAGAR TEEN BAGS \$70,000 SCHOLARSHIP TO QATAR UNIVERSITY**

Late last month, Class 12 student Maleeha Zehra received an email informing her that she had bagged a \$70,000 (over Rs 51 lakh) full-ride scholarship to study at the prestigious Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

BOLLYWOOD REWIND

SHARADA: OF LOVE THAT IS BEYOND LABELS
Kind of romance that makes you question understanding of love



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE APP

EXPLAINED

EXPLAINED: CHINA'S SINOPHARM VACCINE
Vaccine has about 79 percent efficacy among all age groups

**EXPRESS AUDIO**
Why did the BCCI conduct IPL in India?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In the latest episode of the Express Sports podcast, we discuss how the IPL bubble was breached, and why the BCCI conducted the tournament in India.

FROM PAGE ONE**Vaccine exports**

to severity of the pandemic – measured in terms of Covid case and death count per lakh population. And yet, over 60% of all exports went to these countries.

This was a goodwill gesture, but as the second wave surges and vaccines run out, it raises questions about why so much was shipped overseas so early.

"Going by public health reasons, there was no tearing hurry to export at this scale when we didn't secure our stocks and our curve was rising," said a senior Health Ministry official. "Of course, the bulk of it were sent under commercial contracts and Gavi (global vaccine alliance) commitments and many of these countries wouldn't get vaccines otherwise, but these supplies could have been timed and staggered better."

Especially, since the second wave had reared its head in Mumbai as early as mid-February. But until March 30, when the second wave had pushed the daily national count above 70,000 and more was on way, India was shipping out more doses than it had used for inoculating people at home.

On March 17, with the second surge clearly evident, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar underlined India's low Covid fatality and high recovery rates that "resulted from the Prime Minister's leadership" and "the external beneficial impact of India's capability" to back the Vaccine Maitri initiative. Ten days earlier, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said: "Unlike most other countries, we have a steady supply of vaccines... We are fortunate to have a global leader... who insisted that vaccines should be provided (to other countries)."

Fast-forward: shortage of vaccine and mounting case load forced India to drastically cut down exports. From over 6.4 crore doses in nine weeks since January 20, the supply overseas fell to just 18 lakh shots in April.

The Sunday Express looked at the WHO dashboards for all the 93 vaccine recipient countries:

Of the 93 countries, last week as many as 88 recorded either fewer new cases or deaths per lakh population than India's.

On April 30, the cumulative Covid case count in India stood at 1.88 crore, or 1,360/lakh population. In contrast, 50 countries that received 3.68 crore doses, or over 55% of India's vaccine export, showed under 500 cases/lakh or less than half of India's.

In terms of deaths, too, on April 30, 46 countries that got 3.66 crore doses, again over 55% of India's vaccine export, recorded cumulative deaths per lakh below 7.5, compared to India's 15.1.

Of those, 14 countries that received 88 lakh shots, did not report more than 1 death per lakh.

Of the top 20 recipient countries by consignment, 14 are better off than India, on April 30, in terms of cumulative cases and deaths per lakh population.

This isn't just the benefit of hindsight. When exports began January 20, India's Covid case and death counts per lakh were 769 and 11 respectively. Even that day, as many as 64 countries – which were to get over 60% of India's vaccine exports – were faring better than India on either parameter.

Of the 6.6-crore shipment, 1 crore doses were sent as grants, 3.6 crore were sold commercially, and another 2 crore were supplied under the Covax program backed by WHO and Gavi vaccine alliance for equitable global distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to low-and-middle-income countries. Serum Institute of India's (SII) Covishield constituted more than 99% of India's export.

Under a licensing agreement with AstraZeneca, Pune-based SII was to supply 100 crore doses of Covishield under the Covax pro-

gramme with a commitment to provide 40 crore shots by the end of 2021. Significantly, India was the first country to contribute vaccines under the Covax programme when 6 lakh doses left India for Ghana on February 23. In contrast, it took France another two months to contribute vaccines to Covax when France donated 1 lakh doses on April 23.

Questions were sent to the MEA and the Health Ministry asking whether India's Covid curve was factored in when deciding how many doses to send and where. No response was received.

Road to shortage

timing and sustaining the exports. This coupled with not placing advance purchase orders to build stock and not allowing liquidity for manufacturers to increase capacity has now strained supplies.

"Of course, exporting vaccines to those who paid for it and need it was a commercial and moral obligation. But we should have planned this better so that both domestic supply and exports could be sustained," said virologist Shahid Jameel.

By December 2020, Serum Institute of India (SII) had offered 10 crore shots at a discounted rate for domestic use but the government dithered on pre-booking even after setting a national target to vaccinate a vulnerable population of 30 crore by July 2021.

This "strange reluctance", explained a public health consultant privy to the negotiations since late-2020, denied the world's largest vaccine manufacturer "enough liquidity to step up production" and build stock.

The delay, it is learnt, deferred SII's plans to ramp up monthly production capacity from 5 crore in December to 10 crore by March. On paper, this made India's vaccination goal a non-starter.

"Vaccinating 30 crore people would have required 65 crore shots, considering some wastage. Of this, a maximum of 15 crore shots would come from Bharat Biotech. But at a monthly production capacity of 5-7 crore, SII would anyway struggle to supply the remaining 50 crore doses by July," said the consultant.

Yet, until the end of March, India was vaccinating fewer people than doses it was sending overseas. Consider these:

■ In the first two weeks of vaccination drive since January 16, India inoculated 39 lakh people. By January end, the country had already exported 1.6 crore doses.

■ In February, India administered another 1.1 crore shots while exporting 2.1 crore doses.

■ By April 1, when the country extended the vaccination drive to everyone above 45, India's domestic vaccine delivery caught up with the export count at around 6.5 crore shots. Less than three months from the July deadline, India has so far administered around 15.5 crore vaccine shots or 25% of the target. From over 35 lakh each day in early April, vaccine shortage forced the daily count down to around 21 lakh in the last week of April. The daily average has dropped to below 16 lakh in May. A turnaround will take time. Bharat Biotech has enhanced monthly production of Covaxin from less than 50 lakh in January to 2 crore in April and expects to hit the 3.5-crore mark in June. SII, on the other hand, hopes to increase its production capacity to 10 crore shots a month by July.

Covid bond

The Sunday Express tried contacting the family, but they did not respond. While the Mizoram government has said it would not turn away the refugees from Myanmar, with people of the two regions sharing deep ethnic bonds, the Centre has been insistent that the borders be sealed – leaving the fate of refugees like the 93-year-old in a limbo.

In a letter to Prime Minister

SC sets up task force for Covid response

that the allocation and distribution of oxygen takes place on a rational and equitable basis, it is necessary to constitute a National Task Force of experts which would determine the method of allocation and distribution of oxygen across states/UTs".

"The Court suggested that an expert body drawn of inter alia renowned national experts with diverse experience in health institutions can be considered for being set up as a National Task Force, which will provide a public health response to the pandemic on the basis of a scientific approach". The Centre through Solicitor General Tushar Mehta agreed to this.

The order came on a plea by the Centre challenging the contempt notice issued to it by the Delhi High Court over medical oxygen supply to Delhi. The Delhi government held that "there is no need for an audit and if at all an audit is to be conducted, it should be of the availability of tankers".

While overruling the objection, the Court clarified that till the NTF has submitted its recommendations, the Centre shall "continue with the present practice of making allocations of oxygen (as modified by the orders of this Court or the orders of the High Courts as the case may be)". Earlier, the Court had stayed the contempt notice to the Centre, while directing it to remedy any oxygen shortage forthwith and to supply Delhi 700 MT (metric tonnes).

In the May 6 order, the Court asked the Centre to ensure that its direction on 700 MT "is strictly observed on a daily basis, pending further orders".

The Court ordered the Task Force to "commence work immediately", dealing with oxygen

Dr Rana of Ganga Ram said,

"While the government will be taking the final decision, we will suggest ways to ramp up the production of oxygen and streamline the issues faced by each state. We will advise the government to ensure that oxygen is equally distributed to states as well as hospitals. More oxygen plants should be installed so that the problem doesn't arise in the future."

Dr Rawat, also of Ganga Ram, said it was the first time the government was facing such a problem, due to the surge in oxygen demand. "As a doctor, we have seen that hospitals are on the edge with supply left of one-two hours. So, now the focus should be on availability and distribution."

The order said it was necessary to take into account the likely course of the pandemic so that future requirements could be scientifically mapped and modulated in the light of experiences gained. The Task Force, it said, would provide inputs on a "transparent and professional basis". The Court said the NTF will assess the need for oxygen for the entire country as well as availability and distribution, and devise allocation on a "scientific, rational and equitable" basis, reviewing this periodically. It will also make recommendations on augmenting the supplies.

As per the order, the NTF would facilitate audits by sub-groups in each state and UT. It specifically said that the purpose of the audit was "not to scrutinise the decisions made in good faith by doctors". The Court specified the officials who should be part of these sub-groups, apart from doctors and a representative from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation.

For Delhi, this committee

shall consist of Randeep Guleria, Professor and Head, Department of Pulmonary Medicine and Sleep, AIIMS, Sandeep Budhiraja, Clinical Director & Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare; and an IAS officer each from the Centre and Delhi government, not below the rank of Joint Secretary.

Apart from oxygen, the NTF will review availability of essential drugs and medicines, and plan for emergencies; facilitate the use of technology to ensure optimal utilisation of available manpower; suggest incentives for medical staff; promote research; and help sharing of best practices across the country.

Since April, a nine-member government committee under DPIIT Secretary Guruprasad Mohapatra has been functioning to "ensure adequate availability of medical oxygen in the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic". Mohapatra also heads an Empowered Group-II (EG-II) to coordinate medical logistics.

Sources in the government said the NTF is not being seen as an encroachment on the remit of the EG-II, one of several such groups formed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tackle the pandemic.

"The group has been meeting every day and, based on situations on the ground, taking necessary decisions. That is not going to change. And in any case, the government has welcomed the Supreme Court committee since it contains eminent experts. The job of implementation still remains with the group," said a senior official of the Empowered Group.

WITH INPUTS BY ASTHA SAXENA, HARIKISHAN SHARMA, AVISHEK G DASTDAR

Narendra Modi in March, Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga wrote: "... the Myanmar areas bordering Mizoram are inhabited by Chin communities who are ethnically our Mizo brethren with whom we have (had) close contact... even before India became independent... Mizoram cannot just remain indifferent to their sufferings."

The CM told *The Sunday Express* he was aware of the 93-year-old's story, as well as the "noble and exemplary service" by Parte. "Everyone must learn a lesson from her," said Zoramthanga.

Unofficial figures put the number of Myanmar refugees to have come to Mizoram since the coup at 4,000-5,000. NGOs have been helping them, a government official said. "We accept them, and we will accept her (the 93-year-old) too," he added.

Asked about the conspicuous silence at the top as compared to daily and regular press briefings by some Chief Ministers, a Union Minister said: "I am with you on the need for a voice of reassurance (from the government). The entire situation is challenging."

"This wave has taken all of us by surprise," said another Union Minister. "All of a sudden, the case count went through the roof," said a third Minister admitting that today, "there's a fear in almost every family across the country."

"Kai bar unapekshit cheezin ho jati hain. In these situations, every plan falls short," said a fourth Minister. "Thoda hatash ka bhaav hai.... thodi dhilayi hui.... lekin zameen bhii dhilai ki," he said.

However, he added there was an "organised attempt to defame the government" by the "suspects who attack us on every policy."

Said a top official: "Last year, they said the lockdown was the worst thing to have happened and now they say you need to lock down. They said put vaccines in the open market, now they say vaccines should be free."

However, another Minister suggested that more effort was needed to take the public into confidence. "There will always be people against us but there are fair-minded people as well. Fear and loss of a loved one can anger anybody, this isn't the time to see all criticism as motivated," he said.

But a senior Minister said that daily communication with the public – at a senior political level

– may not be that effective. "Bolne se chidh machegei public mein abhi. Logon ko result chahiye, bhashan nahi (Speeches will anger people; they want results, not a lecture)," said the minister.

The Ministers may be guarded but some leaders in the BJP and RSS are more forthcoming.

"The Government is making efforts but is falling short in articulating a convincing message," said a BJP national office-bearer adding, "It might need to remind its team to deliver results".

The BJP functionary, however, evaded queries on where does the buck stop. A senior RSS leader blamed "centralised decision-making" for not anticipating the second wave. "There is over-centralisation in the PMO and a deep problem in the quality of feedback the PM gets. The Principal Scientific Advisor admits he couldn't see the second wave and then says a third wave will come."

The question of accountability is also being raised. "Is there any accountability mechanism for people surrounding the leadership?... I suspect it is a tendency to please N.O.I (Prime Minister), so no is flagging negative situations," said the RSS leader.

The defeat in West Bengal has also rubbed this in. "Clearly, no one, between April 4 and 15, when the curve exploded, sensed that the Covid curve was rising steeply and rallies in Bengal was not the answer. We misread both the political mood in the state and the public health challenge."

A BJP Chief Minister, however, said that the central leadership is working hard to "salvage" the situation. "The PM warned CMs in mid-March... Whenever I have made a call or wanted to speak to the PM, Defence Minister, Home Minister, the response has been prompt," said the CM.

But a senior Minister said that daily communication with the public – at a senior political level

Asked about people's resentment at the sense of helplessness, a Union Minister said: "People understand that oxygen and vaccines cannot be arranged overnight in these dire situations."

"During the UPA, people were angry at CWG, 2G and coal scams. The situation is not like that, people know the situation seems uncontrolled but they also understand the limitations in times of such surge. They trust the Prime Minister," said a Union Minister.

But with cities still reeling and the wave spreading to rural areas, that trust will be further challenged. The summer of 2021 remains long and harsh.

More than 2.18 crore people have been found infected in India till now. The Government figures, therefore, suggest that 2.23 per cent of all have been admitted to an ICU, about 0.78 per cent have been put on ventilators, and 4.12 per cent have required oxygen.

It also means that close to 93 per cent have recovered without needing any critical care support.

The Government statement also gave figures for the total number of people who had been admitted to ICUs. "The number of critical cases thus far includes 488,861 patients who required ICU beds, 170,841 who required ventilator support, and 902,291 patients who were given oxygen support," the statement said.

Police said they were looking for "four people of interest" who had been seen engaging in "suspicious activities" in the area. The IED explosion was most likely triggered by a mobile phone or a remote device. Two men were arrested early on Saturday for their suspected role in the attack, in which Nasheed suffered extensive shrapnel wounds, and a third in the evening. One of them has "known links" to an Islamist group, according to official sources. Nasheed, who is now Speaker of the Majlis, the official name of the Maldivian Parliament, underwent surgery for removal of shrapnel. His condition has improved, and he has been taken off the ventilator, the sources said.

According to police, Australian Federal Police (AFP) are assisting in the investigation – two AFP officials stationed in Colombo flew into Male. The MDNF said two Maldives-based British experts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are also assisting.

"The Australian Federal Police section of the Australian High Commission Colombo works closely with the Sri Lanka Police Service and the Maldives Police Service, and other Sri Lankan and Maldives law enforcement agencies," as per the AFP website.

Defence Minister Mariya Didi said Friday night that the explosive used in the IED was "not military grade". Shamaa said security forces had made requests to declare the road in front of Nasheed's house a no-parking area, but this was not done. There was no prior intelligence about the attack, he said.

Nasheed has been outspoken against the growing influence of Islamist extremists in the predominantly Sunni country.

and Crime are

ADVERTORIAL An initiative by **RED**
Reed. Engage. Deliver.

Mothering Sunday

OUR mothers are everything to us! She is the only person in this world who showers her infinite love towards us in a most selfless manner. She stands by us whenever we've found ourselves torn asunder. Her love knows no bounds and her care is precious. They are an incredible and inseparable part of our life and there's no denying that. Though philosophical, but mothers are the true embodiment of God.

Usually the second Sunday of May is a day dedicated to celebrate Mother's Day amidst the fun-filled family atmosphere of affection and care. This widely celebrated occasion is also known as 'Mothering Sunday' in the West. Normally, this day begins on a promising note, including family outings to brunch, spas, or family get-togethers at home. However, this seems like a far-fetched dream when, currently, we're in the grasp of a deadly second wave of the pandemic.

However, the lockdown doesn't imply that celebrating Mother's Day remains cancelled for us. Does it? Well, there are many ways to surprise your mommy, if you decide to do so. You can celebrate the occasion virtually if you're living away from your mom, while those staying with their mummy dearest can spring up some cool surprises to ease out her daily woes.

Clearly, this year, Mother's Day is the time to pull off something extraordinary using your out-of-the-box thinking and creativity to make your mother feel special and happy. Small gestures coupled with love and care during this time will surely leave her spellbound.

A great idea to begin this special day would be to prepare a special breakfast where you can serve her with delectable



foods, preferably of her choice. Many DIY recipes are available online and this activity will surely bring an ear-to-ear smile on her face. In the evening, you can bake a cake for her from scratch and watch her eat blissfully. You will agree that this will make her happy beyond measure and, consequently, you will have the satisfac-

tion of making her smile once amidst all her troubles.

An interesting and much needed treat can be a home salon for her manicure and pedicure needs; additionally, you can give her a head massage to make her feel rejuvenated. You can also give her a little break from her daily chores by deep



cleaning your house for a day.

However, if you're not physically present, you might find it difficult to celebrate this day and might even feel nostalgic about her. It's true that the pandemic has altered the ways in which we have been accustomed to living our life. However, this should not deter you from going the extra mile in celebrating this special day with zest. You can arrange a virtual party for your mother, wherein your other family members and siblings are there to wish her and maybe sing a song or recite a poem for her. This can really go off well, if planned carefully.

With courier services operating, you can also send her a heartfelt letter expressing your feelings for her and maybe reminiscing about some good old times and past anecdotes. Along with the letter, you can also send her some old forgotten photographs of you and her together to make it really special for her. It will be like a souvenir for her to cherish forever. Further, you can dig up the gallery section of your mobile and sort out some of the

most fabulous photographs of her and arrange them together to make a video collage along with a message and a favourite song of hers as a background score.

In these unprecedented times, it is also important for the family to take care of "soon-to-be-mommy" ladies in the house. This is because the second wave of the

pandemic is causing problems and complications for pregnant ladies and they need to be doubly taken care of. As per health experts, pregnant women are more susceptible to viral respiratory infections as they experience immunologic and physiologic changes during pregnancy.

Some of the precautions pregnant ladies should take include — washing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before eating and after sneezing and using the bathroom; using alcohol-based sanitizers; regularly cleaning surfaces such as kitchen counters, mobile phones etc.; sneeze or cough into your sleeve rather than into your hand or air; avoid unnecessary touching of face, eyes,

In these extraordinary times, you need to make extraordinary efforts to pull off a heartfelt and memorable Mother's Day celebration for your mommy dearest

nose and mouth with hands; take regular online check-ups for the health of your baby and yourself during pregnancy; get enough sleep to keep your body and mind energetic; stay home from work or school; avoid contact with anyone with cold or flu symptoms; and be sure to eat a balanced diet as the efficacy of immune system dips during pregnancy.

Moreover, mothers who have recently given birth to a baby should also take enough precautions to avoid falling sick. Some of the precautions include — physical distancing becomes a must to protect the newly born baby from outside visitors; use any video-calling app to make your family acquainted with the baby; ask all caretakers and siblings to wash and sanitise their hands before touching the baby; and keep yourself and the baby isolated as much as possible from other members of the family. The more you're alert and conscious of your new role as a mother, the better it will be for the health and safety of your baby during these troubled times.

Daffodils by Artemis ensuring a COVID-free and safe journey to motherhood



BEING pregnant is hard and expecting a baby in the midst of a pandemic is harder. As expecting mothers feel stressed due to hardships imposed by coronavirus, Daffodils by Artemis is now providing an easy and safe escape route for them with its one-of-a-kind luxury child birthing centre. The centre is one of the most advanced child & mother care centres and is assuring extra precautions and safety for mother and the baby in a complete COVID-free environment.

Expecting mothers normally face certain problems throughout the nine months of pregnancy and the resurgence of coronavirus has elevated the risk factors for them. The anxiety has grown exponentially as the mothers 'to be' come under the high-risk groups and are prone to many complications. Understanding the needs of extra care, Daffodils by Artemis, through its luxury birthing centre, is making sure that every aspect is taken care of from the beginning till the newborn reaches home. All staff wear masks while attending the patients and the centre has made it mandatory for patients to wear masks when someone is attending them. The centre promises a complete Covid-free environment and ensures limited exposure. Patient registrations and other formalities too are done digitally.



and remotely.

Amid a hoard of worries disturbing the mental well-being of pregnant women coupled with restricted movement due to the pandemic, it is extremely important for patients to be under expert supervision for holistic care and overall well-being. Backed by Gurugram's most trusted team of obstetricians and paediatricians with experience of over 10k successful deliveries and more than 1k preterm babies, the one-of-a-kind luxury COVID safe centre comes with an expertise in advanced neonatal and paediatric surgeries. The centre is backed by multi-speciality tertiary

care Artemis Hospitals and has advanced neonatal ICUs supported by full-time intensivists. A team of fetal and medical genetics specialists work round the clock and a level IV nursery care for complex and critically ill newborns makes the centre one of the most advanced birthing centres in the region.

Daffodils by Artemis specialises in painless birthing, complex and advanced surgeries, infertility and art procedures, children's growth, nutrition & development, lactation sessions, among others. One of the problems is lack of physical activity and outdoor exposure that has led to various physical ailments and a psychological impact. Through pre-natal yoga and physiotherapy sessions, the centre provides an all-round care for expecting mothers before and after delivery. With help of advanced aesthetics and cosmetology, the centre helps mothers to get back their bodies in pre-pregnancy shape.

The hospital has adopted effective infection control measures and safety for mother and new-born by promoting COVID prevention appropriate behaviour among staff & the visitors.

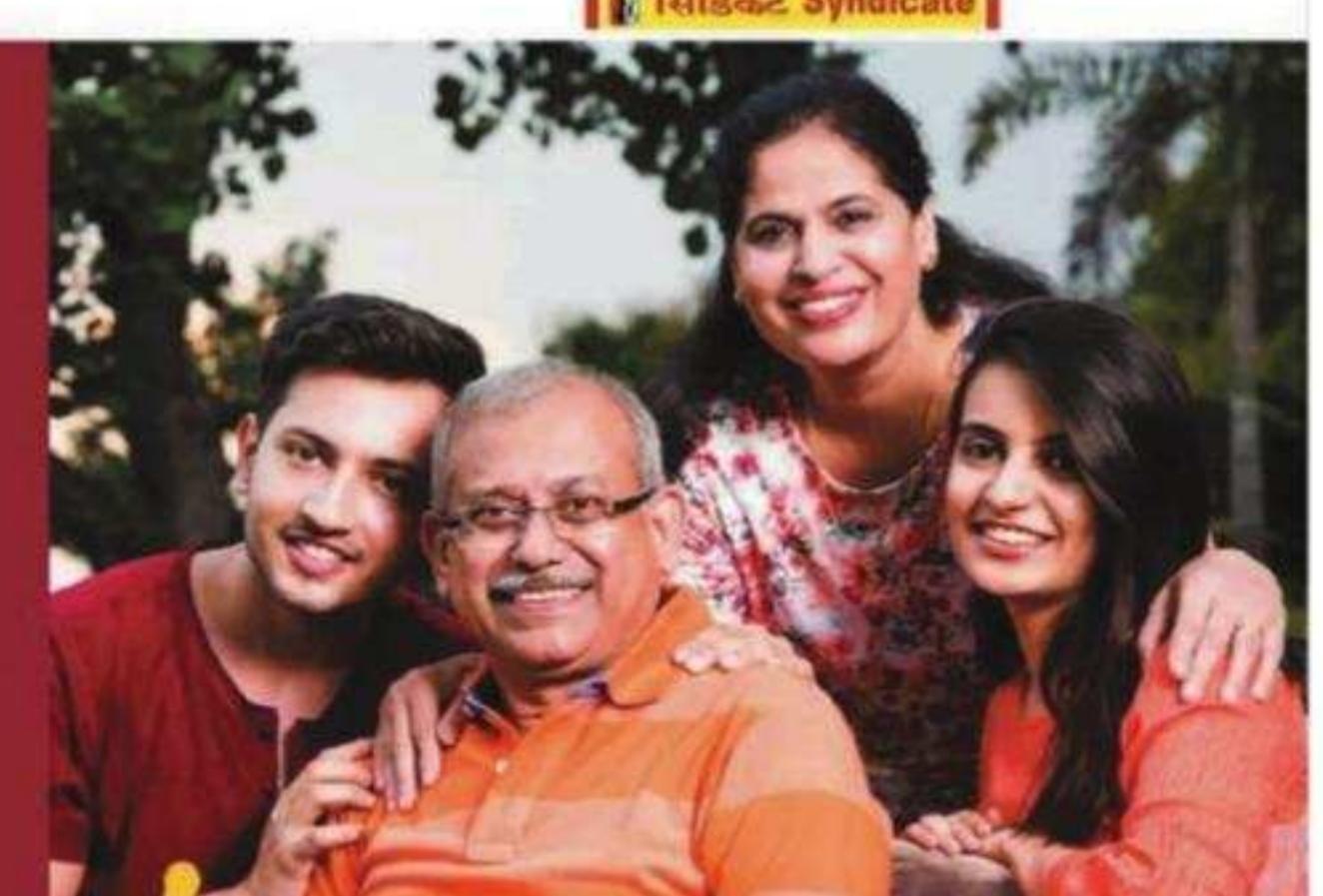
The pandemic has brought an overwhelming crisis over the healthcare sector and prenatal care becomes a major challenge. By promoting safe COVID prevention strategy during OPD visit for consultation for every child and mother with extra precautions, Daffodils by Artemis assures a safe environment for both of them.



Block G, Greenwood City, Sector 40, Gurugram
Phone : 0124-4638900

Indian Banks' Association

बैंकिंग के
बारे में हमें जो
पसंद है वह है
**डोरस्टेप
बैंकिंग!**



PSB DOORSTEP
BANKING

सभी के लिए!

पिक-उप सेवाएं

- बैंक/ ड्राफ्ट/ पे ऑर्डर
- नए चेक बुक के लिए मांग पर्ची
- IT/GST चालान की स्वीकृति
- फॉर्म 15G और 15H
- जारी किये गए निर्देश अनुसार

डिलीवरी सेवाएं

- खाता विवरणी
- सावधि जमा रसीदें
- TDS/ फॉर्म 16 प्रमाणपत्र
- ड्राफ्ट/ पे ऑर्डर
- गिफ्ट कार्ड

अन्य सेवाएं

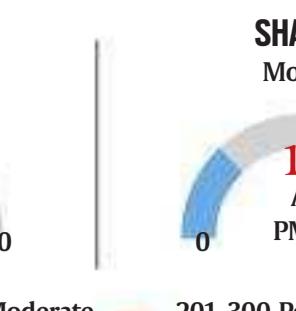
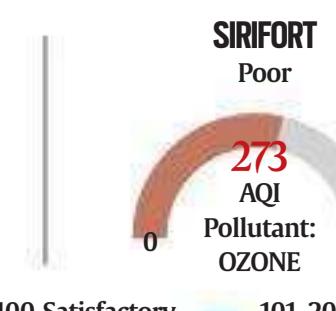
- केश निकासी सेवाएं
- (डेबिट कार्ड / ऐप्पीएस)
- जीवन प्रमाणपत्र

रजिस्टर करें

► 1800 1213721
1800 1037188

विज़िट
www.psbsdb.in

। डाउनलोड:
DSB Mobile App



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: May 9
Mainly clear sky
MAX: 40 1.3°C above normal | MIN: 23 1.8°C below normal

BRIEFLY

Afghan couple held with over 100 kg heroin

New Delhi: Delhi Police arrested two Afghan nationals who were allegedly smuggling 125 kg of heroin from Delhi to Punjab. Police said the drugs are worth Rs 860 crore in the international market. The accused, Mohd Shafi and his wife Tareena, hail from Afghanistan's Kandahar and shifted to India in 2012. The couple were remanded to five days' police custody, police said.

20 added to Gurgaon health staff via admin initiative

Gurgaon: Ten days after the Gurgaon district administration appealed to doctors, nurses, MBBS students and retired health workers to come forward and volunteer their services amid the Covid pandemic, officials said 20 people have been added to the ranks of healthcare staff in the district through this means so far. **ENS**

CONCENTRATORS SEIZED FROM KHAN MARKET

Top Matrix officials held, firm moves HC: 'Probe malicious'

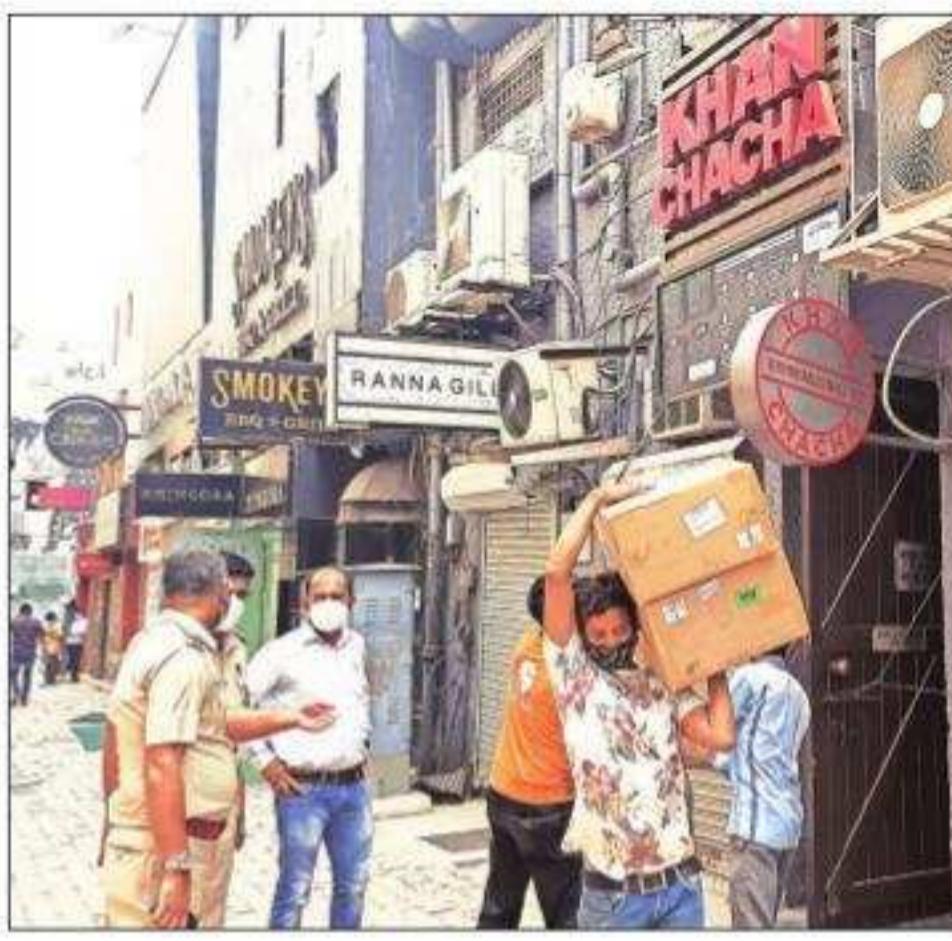
JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

A DAY after 105 oxygen concentrators were seized from two Khan Market restaurants—Khan Chacha and Townhall—police said they have arrested the CEO and Vice-President of an international SIM company called Matrix Cellular Services Ltd, and are looking for businessman Naveen Kalra, who owns the two establishments.

Police had on Thursday seized 419 oxygen concentrators from Negeju restaurant in Lodhi colony, also owned by Kalra, and a warehouse in Chattarpur Farms. Four men, including the restaurant manager, were arrested at the time for allegedly black marketing the equipment.

Police claim Kalra, whose phone is off, worked with his friend Gagan Duggal, owner of Matrix Cellular Services, to sell the equipment. The warehouse in Chattarpur's Mandi Village, which was being used to store the equipment, is operated by the same company, said police.

The company's CEO Gaurav Khanna and V-P Gaurav Suri were on Saturday arrested in connection with the case, while Duggal's



105 concentrators seized from Khan Chacha, Townhall. PTI

alleged role is being investigated. Police said he does not live in India and was allegedly procuring the concentrators from China to sell at an inflated price here.

Police have invoked sections of cheating and the Essential Commodities Act and Epidemic Diseases Act against the accused.

Meanwhile, Matrix Cellular

Services moved the Delhi High Court to "get back" their oxygen concentrators seized by police. In a statement, the company said the investigation is "ill-conceived and erroneous".

The case has been transferred to the Crime Branch.

Police said that during verification, they found that the four

men arrested on Friday were allegedly selling the equipment through a portal named X-Factor, which has a logo of Matrix Cellular Services and sells a range of Covid products. "The accused bought the equipment for Rs 16,000-Rs 22,000 from China and sold it at a price of Rs 70,000," claimed a senior officer.

The statement by Matrix Cellular Services read: "We... worked with our network partners to ensure availability of critical material to respond to Covid pandemic, including masks, oximeters, sanitisation equipment and oxygen concentrators. All material procured by Matrix has been by way of import or purchase in India, after paying all relevant duties and taxes."

It stated that during the second wave, the company set up a collection centre from where customers, including Covid patients, could pick up oxygen concentrators. "What Matrix thought was a convenience to help its fellow citizens has been maliciously portrayed to be a grand conspiracy to cheat Delhi and profit from the pandemic — when nothing could be further from the truth," it said,

adding that their employees, who have been arrested in the case, are not criminals.

ASHNA BUTANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE projects have been put on hold as the capital grapples with the 'fourth wave' of Covid-19, with several construction sites now empty and labourers having left for their hometowns. Officials said deadlines for projects that were to be completed this year will be pushed by a few months, depending on when the lockdown is lifted.

A Public Works Department (PWD) official said project deadlines will be extended by the number of days the lockdown is on for, plus another 30-40 days to mobilise labour forces. "As a majority of labourers have gone home, all projects are on hold. It will take a month or so to call labourers back from their hometowns after the lockdown is lifted," said the official.

The Chandni Chowk Redevelopment project was among those nearing completion. The project's inauguration, scheduled for April 17, was cancelled by the Delhi government owing to a rise in cases. An official from MIA Construct Pvt Ltd, the company working on the redevelopment, said, "Most of our labourers went



A PWD official said project deadlines will be extended by the number of days the lockdown is on for, plus another 30-40 days to mobilise labour forces. Archive

home when the lockdown was announced... 95 per cent of work on the project was done. The scramble junction in front of Red Fort is only half complete as work on that began a few days before the lockdown."

Meanwhile, work on the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor, aimed at reducing traffic around India Gate and Ring Road, was scheduled to wrap up by May-end. An official working on the project said the deadline revision depends on how long the lockdown is on for. The project, that began in 2017, was stalled once in 2019 due to the construction ban in winter due to pollution, and again last year when Covid cases rose in the capital.



ADVERTORIAL An initiative by **RED***
Read. Engage. Deliver.

Happy Mother's Day

Care
AS SECURE AS A MOTHER'S
WARM EMBRACE

Even as the COVID-19 Pandemic rages around us, Fortis La Femme stands by all women, especially mothers, who are bravely managing to take care of their work and their families. This Mothers' Day, we pledge to remain committed to their good health and well-being through these very difficult times.

Mother's Day Special Offers*

Upto INR 40,000* off on booking a maternity package
Two free tele/video consultations with a nutritionist
50% discount on Zumba, Yoga & fitness at Mamma Mia
10% discount on preventive health checkup packages
10% discount on prenatal screening tests

Valid till 31st May 2021

Fortis laFemme
A FORTIS VISION
HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

To book an appointment, call **011 4057 9400**
Fortis La Femme, S-549, Greater Kailash-2, New Delhi-110048 Email: contactus.flf@fortishealthcare.com

You can also reach out to us by sending WhatsApp message on **8527121234**



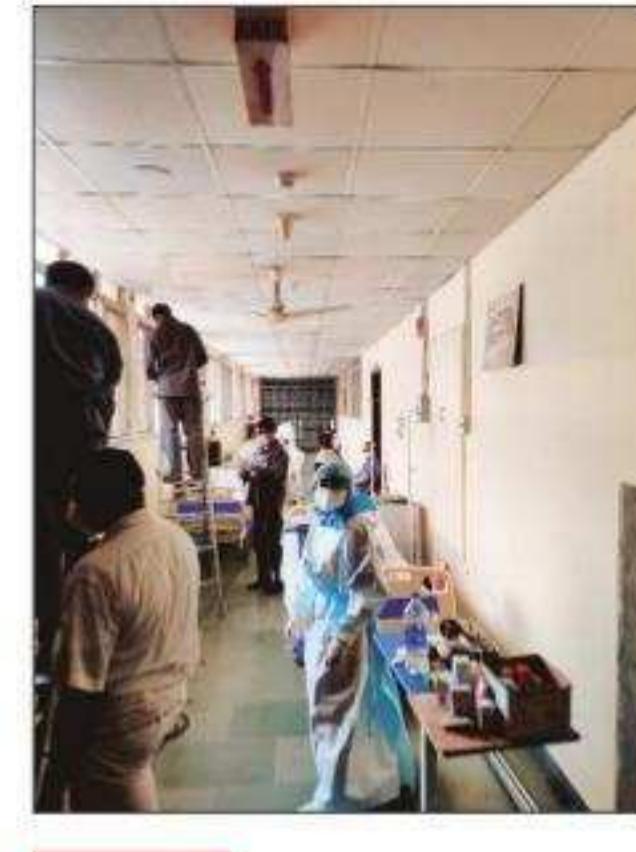
10:30 AM On two adjacent beds in Room No. 4 of the ICU lie two 32-week-old pregnant women. Nurses have been rooting for them, their babies



11:00 AM Medical Superintendent Dr Ray on his rounds



1:00 PM A patient on video call with family members. Families are allowed 1-2 calls a day, and the tablet has been provided by the hospital



4:00 PM Extra beds being placed in the ICU corridor

One day in a Covid ICU

The beds between beds, the prayers for two pregnant women, the cheer from a video call, the nurses sustaining on juice, the doctor with a Netflix story, the files in polythene bags, the long hours of wait, the despair over oxygen, and the 14-year-old who came off a ventilator. AMIL BHATNAGAR brings stories and photographs from seven hours spent at Holy Family, one of the hospitals at the heart of Delhi's coronavirus crisis

IT IS 10 am in South East Delhi's Holy Family Hospital and Dr Sumit Ray arrives in ICU Room No. 4. Donning a blue PPE gown, the doctor greets a staff of nurses whose shift began two hours earlier. There is a short discussion, before the staff begin their monitoring of the 60 beds in the hospital's Covid ICU – located on the other side of two wooden doors with steel panels.

Inside is a distinct world. Gone is the comotion of the hospital, replaced by the sound of muted, shuffling feet, dragging of metal wheels, and beeping of monitors.

The doctor takes a slow round, stopping at beds occasionally to flip through patient's chart sheets. Most of the patients are unconscious because of heavy medication. There is a narrow passage of about 4 feet between the two rows of beds on either side.

On any given day, the ICU would have 48 beds and Dr Ray would be able to spend seven-eight minutes with a patient. The surge of cases and the hospital's decision to not refuse any has resulted in capacity expansion.

"The most important trend we have observed in this wave is the surge of cases. If perhaps there were fewer patients, we would be in a position to give even better care and time. I can only spend three-four minutes with each," says Ray, Head of Department, Critical Care Medicine, and Medical Superintendent.

Apart from Room 4, the Covid ICU has another, wider room, with beds placed there too to fill all possible space.

The hospital has 49 ventilators in total, all of which are in use, and is using six anaesthesia machines for temporary ventilation. Authorities say orders have been placed for more ventilators but deliveries are delayed.

With its capacity of 390 'adult' beds, Holy Family was declared a 100% Covid facility in the first week of April. Since then, the hospital has seen 1,600 admissions and more than 190 deaths. Half of those deaths were on arrival in the Emergency and not in the hospital wards or ICUs.

At 10.30 am, five staff members clad in PPE gather around a 70-year-old on a ventilator in Room 4. With a countdown, the patient is lifted onto a moveable stretcher, and taken for trachea treatment. Not much later, a patient on an adjacent ICU bed takes his place on the ventilator after his oxygen levels drop partially.

There is very little conversation among the resident doctors, nurses and interns. Like clockwork, the staff move from bed to bed, administering medicines, checking vitals, and taking notes, watching out for any little deterioration that may cost a life, not sitting down for more than a few seconds at a time. Two members are continuously at work at a small station, updating patient data in computers.

Still on his rounds, Ray meanwhile leans in to have a conversation with a 35-year-old patient who has a nozzle attached for High Flow Nasal Oxygen supply. To ease his discomfort, the doctor throws in a reference to the Netflix show *Peaky Blinders*. The patient smiles briefly and goes back to lying in a foetal position in an attempt to breathe better.

"There is a significant rise in the number of young patients in the critical ward," Ray says. "Even though many of them recover well, the worry remains."

At one end of the room, a small curtain is pulled aside and two staff members emerge and head to a washbasin to clean their hands vigorously. Another staff member pulls out a stretcher from behind the curtains revealing a body covered in white sheet. The patient, in his 50s, had been admitted for more than four days. He died a couple of hours earlier, the staff say, and his body was being prepared for the mortuary, which includes removing the wires and monitors keeping track of his vitals. As two interns enter his final data into a computer, the area is sanitised to receive another patient.

Which patient will get an ICU bed is a complex decision based on many factors, says Ray. "An entire team sits down and discusses the next admission. It could be based on age, condition etc. Sometimes we are called at 4 am to take a decision. There is no guarantee that a person already in the hospital will get it."

As the stretcher with the body is manoeuvred out, a nurse rolls in a portable X-ray machine between two beds. One of the beds, a makeshift one, is at a lower height. Two women, aged 27 and 29, are on the adjacent



12 NOON In Room No. 4 of the ICU. As a policy, Holy Family has decided not to turn away any patient, and adding beds, between two regular beds, the ICU now has 60 patients instead of the usual 48

beds. Strangers, they have one thing in common – both are 32 weeks pregnant. The nursing staff have been silently praying that the women and their unborn children stay safe.

In the second wave, while hospitals have seen several cases of pregnant women, none has so far had complications.

Ray says the situation has demanded a lot of their dedicated staff, who have been working months without a break. Founded in 1953 by Medical Mission Sisters, Holy Family was subsequently handed over to the Delhi Catholic Archdiocese, and currently Rev Anil J T Couto, the Archbishop of Delhi, is the Chairman of the hospital's governing body. Ray has been in the profession for 31 years, and served in senior posts at several hospitals.

"Our nurses are very empathetic, they speak from the heart and look out for patients on a personal level... The entire staff is rooting for the two expectant mothers," says the Medical Superintendent.

On the left of Room 4, a gallery leads to another portion of the ICU. Down a narrow corridor are two small rooms with their doors ajar. Inside, a couple of nurses are quickly gulping down juice packets in their brief break.

Given the rise in cases, the nursing staff shifts have been changed from three eight-hour shifts to two 12-hour ones. The nurses wear multiple layers of masks, as well as gloves and PPE gowns at all times. There is no time to eat during shifts.

A majority of them stay on the campus in accommodation provided by the hospital. A cot is placed in a small room for those who want to stretch legs briefly.

Around 12.30 pm in the second room of the ICU, at a bed placed near the door, the monitor of a patient suddenly starts beeping. Six people rush to his side. The man is unconscious. Observing that his oxygen is dropping, the team lifts him and puts him onto the prone position (on his stomach) to improve his breathing.

At a bed placed diagonally, a 51-year-old is sitting holding his head in his hand, occasionally sipping water from a bottle. He looks exhausted, struggling for every breath, and finally even the bottle dangles from his hand. A nurse notices his condition and walks over and hands him a phone tablet. Soon the screen lights up to show his family members.

"You do not worry. We are all fine here. You just take care of yourself," says his brother on the video call. "Do you know we had to get rid

EXPLAINED E Capital mess

WITH AN average of 19,000 cases per day, Delhi has been battered hard in the second coronavirus wave – seeing among the most cases in the country, and crossing own peak of daily deaths. Hospital facilities like Holy Family have come under tremendous strain, with the government struggling to streamline operations. More than 30 deaths have been attributed to shortage of oxygen alone. Only now, with the intervention of courts, is the oxygen situation stabilising and doctors made available for tele-consultation to ease some load of hospitals.

of the smartphone? So many people called for you that the touch screen couldn't handle it. This is how popular you are," adds the brother. The 51-year-old smiles wearily, smooths down his hair and gives a thumbs-up.

The nurse says they have given family members the phone number of the ICU, and provided a tablet to the patients, since unlike non-Covid ICU, no visitors are allowed here. "We let family members make one or two calls a day. It keeps their spirits up."

As the clock approaches lunchtime, a multi-layered trolley is wheeled in with juice and hot beverages. The stress is on a nutrition-rich diet to help patients sustain the intensive treatment. Most patients can only take liquid food. Some resist eating due to the lack of taste and smell and appetite, as well as discomfort. The nurses try their best to convince them to eat.

Outside the ICU, a crowd has begun to gather. Since visits are not allowed, the family members have come to try meet doctors for an update. They are barred beyond the first level of ICU entry, but many stay hours, sitting on stairs or the floor, even at this distance. Every time the door swings open, they jump

FROM HOSPITAL RECORDS

FIRST WAVE

Doctors	134
Nurses	466
Interns	10
Oxygen Beds	104
ICU beds	34
Ventilators	20

Nearly 3,000 admissions over an 11-month period, with 132 deaths

SECOND WAVE

*April onwards	
Doctors	138
Nurses	434
Intern	74
Oxygen Beds	330
ICU Beds	60
Ventilators	49

Nearly 3,000 admissions over an 11-month period, with 132 deaths

6-WEEK PERIOD FROM APRIL ONWARDS

1,600 ADMISSIONS, MORE THAN 190 DEATHS

Half of those deaths on arrival in the Emergency and not in hospital wards or ICUs

AVERAGE ER VISITS PER DAY

99	now
in Jan, Feb, March	

Average length of stay in ER up from 3-4 hours to nearly 10-12 hours, as fewer beds available in wards or ICUs

DAILY OXYGEN REQUIREMENT

0.3-0.35 MT	3-3.5 MT
earlier	since April

to their feet in anticipation. All eyes follow the medical staff going in and out.

On the ground floor, in the Emergency section, a different scene is playing out. Most of the arriving patients have spent some time in home isolation, and come when need arises for oxygen support. The hospital staff has been instructed to not refuse anyone unless the capacity is exhausted. Oxygen is administered to almost everyone, even if for a short period.

Right next to the entrance, a man and woman have been hooked onto the central oxygen supply. The man, lying on a narrow stretcher, is being fanned by his brother. "My brother was having breathing issues. We were lucky we found a place in the Emergency in two hours," says Virendra Saini, 33.

They are now waiting for a bed. "If the hospital tells us it is vacant, we will get him admitted," he says.

Nearby, Tushar Kumar, a pharmacist, says he has already lost his grandfather and mother-in-law to Covid within days. Now, after four days of hunting for hospitals, he has managed a stretcher for his father in the Emergency.

"We have been to so many places and it is finally here that we found some space. For now, he needs oxygen supply and the hospital says they can manage it," says Kumar.

On other days, the front section of the Emergency, next to the registration counter, serves as a waiting area. With patients placed in chairs and stretchers, it is now literally a mini-ward.

From a nurse station inside the main Covid ward in the Emergency area, announcements are made on mics regarding doctors and patients. A room for gynaecologists and a minor operation theatre have also been turned into Covid wards. In a small room, patients can be seen sitting next to each other sharing oxygen.

Several makeshift arrangements have been made to accommodate as many people as possible, with beds separated by less than a foot. There is no mandatory testing for attendants, and they are here at own risk.

On a bed placed right in front of the washroom, a son is rubbing his mother's back to ease her breathing. The area demarcated for supplies and stacked with shelves of medicines also has a bed along with a cylinder. Another bed has been placed at the end of the corridor, leaving just enough space for a door to open.

Apart from the beds, patients occupy chairs – 15 steel ones are placed haphazardly in the centre of the ward, equipped with oxygen.

While some patients are receiving oxygen from the LMO (Liquid Medical Oxygen) central line, some others breathe from a D-type cylinder, with a capacity of 40-60 litres. Some patients have come with their own supplies.

A 70-year-old sits on a stool next to her son on a stretcher, wiping her tears every five minutes. Another pleads with the nurse to keep a watch over her husband as she fetches food for the two of them. Two young brothers frantically search for attendants to fix their father's mask to the cylinder as it comes off.

Outnumbered by the patients, the staff often break into a sprint to keep pace.

In another corner, two siblings keep urging a staff member to admit their father, as he tells them it is subject to someone getting discharged. "Where will my father go if there is no bed here? We do not have oxygen at home either," they say, clutching a polythene bag full of reports, before finally walking back to their father to consider their options.

The chaos in the Emergency Room is not audible in the office of the Medical Superintendent, where another crisis is playing out. Dr Ray has just received news that eight patients have died at Batra Hospital, located not too far away, following lack of oxygen.

As the day wears on towards evening, Dr Ray says this is their constant worry. "Every day we are on the edge when it comes to oxygen supply. The trucks we send out for cylinders have a waiting period of 24 hours. We have enough LMO but the demand is unprecedented. This needs to be resolved."

Over the sound of another ambulance siren, the Medical Superintendent says, "The fact remains that top leaders went into a celebratory mood announcing the end of corona... Even now many states are hiding information... So much needs to be done for the hospitals and doctors to help patients."

And that's all they ask. "The nurses, staff are working night and day... The last thing we want is to be betrayed by oxygen," says Dr Ray, as he begins making calls to the logistics team to prepare for the night.

However, in the midst of the gloom, there is hope as well. While there is little time to celebrate recoveries, each person who goes home well is a prayer answered, Dr Ray says. "We have 40 beds for children, and had a 14-year-old on a ventilator. But nothing happened to him. After a few days, he was back to his normal health, and returned home... Not all is lost."

Across THE AISLE



P CHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in

Twitter@Pchidambaram_IN

A regional party speaks the language of the people of that state more eloquently... recognises the changing norms of society sooner, and adapts deftly. National parties are big mammals. Like mammals, they are among the most intelligent, but change happens at a glacial pace. The Congress makes an effort to change but, for one reason or other, it is unable to re-invent itself... The elements of the re-invented Congress are visible to discerning observers

A WEEK has passed since the results of the elections in four states and one Union Territory were announced. Every party has claimed some degree of vindication, if not total victory, and none more than the BJP.

The comforting truth is that there are stable governments in the four states with the winning side having got an absolute majority and the losing side a respectable number to sit in the state Assembly as the Opposition. The people are the winners. Other than the people, the unquestionable winners among the parties/fronts are the Trinamool Congress, the Left Democratic Front and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. The BJP won in Assam but lost miserably in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Congress earned the right to be the principal Opposition in Assam and Kerala but was blanketed out in West Bengal.

Of all the battles, the most absorbing was Modi vs Didi. Mr Modi's defining image was the cat-call 'Didi, ooooooooooooooh, Didi' that was totally unbecoming of a prime minister. He explained it by saying he was simply uttering the word Didi twice, but failed to explain the place and meaning of ooooooooooooooh. Ms Banerjee's defining image was her wheelchair-bound campaign. The wheelchair triumphed over the cheap cat-call. No less absorbing was the battle for Kerala where the UDF lost to the LDF.

MAMMALS AND RE-INVENTION

My hypothesis that regional parties are closer to the people has been proved right once again. A regional party speaks the language of the people of that state more eloquently, understands their culture better, accommodates the demographic changes quicker, recognises the changing norms of society sooner, and adapts deftly to the changes. National parties are big mammals. Like mammals, they are among the most intelligent, but change happens at a glacial pace.

The Congress makes an effort to change but, for one reason or other, it is unable to re-invent itself. 'Re-invention' is the only way forward. The elements of the re-invented Indian National Congress are visible to discerning observers.

The BJP is paying the price of becoming too big too soon and accepting an authoritarian leader. Nothing would please Mr Narendra Modi more than the BJP becoming the 'one party' that is the Communist Party of China and he becoming a Xi Jinping. What stand in the way are the Constitution and elections in the states at different times. As for the second, many people are tempted by the slogan 'One Nation, One Election'. Mr Modi's aim is to convert the simultaneous elections (to Parliament and state Assemblies) into a referendum on himself. As for the Constitution, he will wait

patiently until he has a two-third majority in the Rajya Sabha and one-half of the states under BJP governments. However, the vast majority of the electorate has seen through his design and will never oblige him. Besides, there is the formidable Supreme Court.

The next three years will not be very different from 2021. There will be state Assembly elections in 2022 (Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat) and 2023 (Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Telangana). The election to the Lok Sabha will be in 2024. We will see Mr Modi more as a campaigner than as a prime minister.

MISERY AND DEATH

The economy has been hit by two waves of the pandemic and there is no assurance there will not be a third and/or a fourth wave. The sluggish economy is killing people. Businesses are being told to close down, jobs are lost (unemployment is at 8 per cent), and consumer price inflation is rising. Capital is fleeing India. The government has no choice but to borrow more to keep up expenditure but may not be able to reverse the tide.

The biggest lesson learned was by the middle class. They believed in *Modi Hai, toh Mumkin Hai*, closed the gates of their communities/colonies, clanged

plates and lit *diyas*, worked from home, and shut their eyes to the untold suffering of the poor, especially the daily labourer and the migrant workers. Today, due to the government's incompetence, they find themselves on the corridors of hospitals begging for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds. Every day brings news of the death of someone who is family, or a relative, or a friend, or an acquaintance, or somebody one has admired for his/her achievements. Death has never been closer to each one of us.

A GRIM FUTURE

The government has lost control over both the pandemic and the economy. Both lives and livelihoods deserve to be saved. Both require large amounts of money, which is in short supply. The government has no choice but to enlarge the fiscal deficit. Mr Modi does not have the courage to do so, his finance minister is too timid to advise him, and his advisers are a failed lot. The result is an unprecedented tragedy that has wrecked millions of families.

The emperor and his men are without clothes. The world's media has savaged them. The Indian media is beginning to stir. The people are seizing every election to vent their anger (e.g. Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections). I am bracing for another 'lost' year in 2021, but I shudder to think of the implications of 'losing' 2022 and 2023 as well.

Fifth COLUMN
TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter@tavleen_singh

Virtual realities

AS I watched the Prime Minister urge chief ministers last week to not slow down the pace of vaccinations, I wondered if living in virtual reality has made him lose touch with reality. This virtual meeting was where we had the first sighting of the Home Minister since the defeat in West Bengal. The Home Ministry is directly in charge when there is a national disaster and yet for the past two months Amit Shah has been sighted only at election rallies in Bengal.

He was so certain that the BJP would snatch this state from Mamata Banerjee that he boasted publicly about winning at least 200 seats. He gave many televised interviews about Bengal after it became clear that this second Covid wave was catastrophic, and that he should have been in the Home Ministry directing operations. When asked about reducing the length of the Bengal campaign, he smiled and said, "There are no elections in Maharashtra so why is the virus spreading there?" In another interview, he said that the only reason why Opposition leaders were asking for a shorter campaign in Bengal was because the BJP was winning. India was left to fend for herself while our two most important leaders concentrated on winning Bengal.

It is good to know that they are back, at least virtually, but so much time has been wasted that India is now on a ventilator. Modi's '*atmanirbarta*' dream has been thrown in a garbage bin and we are begging for help from anyone ready to give it to us. Many countries have closed their doors to Indians because they see images of the pyres that burn all night in our cremation grounds and people gasping for oxygen in our hospitals, and they fear that we have a horrific new mutation that travellers will bring with them. Things are so bad that our Foreign Minister seems for now to have given up his silly efforts to counter the bad press the Supreme Leader is getting internationally.

The Prime Minister's image has taken a huge hit. May I humbly suggest that it could be improved considerably if he stopped work on the Central Vista project. Images of the mounds of debris and dirt that lie scattered where once there were elegant streetamps and manicured lawns have travelled all over the world and most people are horrified at what they think of as vandalism. We Indians know that the Prime Minister believes that this project is an assertion of nationalism and that his favourite architect will do a much better job than Edwin Lutyens or Herbert Baker. His faith in Bimal Patel is extraordinary. He was tasked with tearing down parts of the old city of Varanasi to build a corridor from the Ganga to the Vishwanath Mandir, and to redesign the Sabarmati river front in Ahmedabad.

In any case the Central Vista redevelopment must stop. The money being spent on it is needed to build the infrastructure for modern healthcare. Since the pandemic, we continue to report that our healthcare system has been overwhelmed. The truth is that it never really existed. Most Indians were using private hospitals and clinics because in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, they said that politicians usually built hospitals only to make money out of construction. Some years ago, I did a series for this newspaper on hospitals in small towns in UP and saw hospitals whose roofs had blown away and whose wards had wild grass growing in them. It should surprise no Indian that our hospitals have been crushed by this pandemic.

Now is a chance to rebuild public healthcare from scratch. But, this cannot happen if the Prime Minister and his Covid team remain in denial about the horrific realities ordinary people are dealing with. It is very bad in the cities, but it is going to get much worse in rural India. Already reports are coming in from villages in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar of people dying of 'breathlessness' before they can be taken to the nearest district hospital. This is just the beginning.

The Prime Minister needs to urgently put together a new team in which there should be chief ministers of every political party along with scientists and doctors, so that a national policy can be made to deal with what is the worst crisis India has ever faced. But, first he needs to acknowledge that his old team has failed abysmally.

Modi has always boasted of his image as a strong and decisive leader. This is the time for him to prove that he is. For now, every time he appears virtually on our screens and gives one of his speeches, he sounds as if he has been fooled by his admirers and his social media army to believe that the horror stories are lies. Is this why he has shown more empathy for BJP workers in Bengal than for people dying without oxygen in hospitals? Is this why he has not ordered his ministers and MPs to go into their constituencies and help those who are in desperate need?

Is the Prime Minister privately tormented by the disease and death that has spread across the country on his watch? Does he see that we have come to this pass because of mistakes made by his government? He shows no sign that he does, and he really needs to.

She
SAID
SHRUTI DHAPOLA

shruti.dhapola@indianexpress.com

ambulance within the hour. Chahal is rightly getting plaudits, but so should his boss. Maharashtra's Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray may have a reputation for being laidback, but he realises that delegating authority is the mark of a confident leader. When he appointed Chahal, Thackeray told him that, if you do well, you can take the credit; if you fail, I will take the blame. A contrast to the Capital's culture, where every official and scientist looks only to the top for inspiration and shies away from individual initiatives. The country's Principal Scientific Advisor sees nothing ironic in informing us that a third Covid wave is inevitable, in the midst of a second wave, which he failed to properly anticipate. In Delhi, the most concrete help in arranging relief, oxygen cylinders, oxygen dispensers, medicines etc came initially from gurdwaras, NGOs, good Samaritan groups and resident colony associations, not from officialdom.

VACCINE VACUUM

After patting ourselves on the back a year ago that we were the world's largest dispenser of vaccines, we now discover that we have a major vaccine shortage. Our leading manufacturer, the Serum Institute of India, has also defaulted on its international commitments that were paid for by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) last year. SII CEO Adar Poonawalla began manufacturing AstraZeneca from October last year, long before the Health Ministry cleared the vaccine in January 2021. By the end of 2020, the SII had stockpiled 200 million doses. Poonawalla risked \$200 million of his own money and another \$600 million was raised internationally. The Centre took over distribution of vaccines in India and banned exports in March, but still did not spell out its requirements to the manufacturer. Which businessman is going to expand facilities without any clear-cut financial commitment or an offer of investment for ramping up production? The government's financial clearances came only in late April.

OSTRICH-LIKE

Even after a week, the Central government could not explain to the Delhi High Court just why the Capital was starved of its fair share of oxygen. Patients were gasping for breath and hospitals lived in constant panic that their oxygen supplies would not last the night. Yet oxygen supplies and ventilators airlifted as aid from abroad could be seen lying at Delhi airport hangars. Our bureaucrats have wasted precious time in organising a centralised coordination system to deliver oxygen. The court compared the Central government's delayed responses to that of an ostrich burying its head in the sand. An apprehension, hopefully untrue, that there is favouritism at play in allocating vital resources to states must be dispelled.

At night, I slept with one hand on his body. Typically, around 2 am, his fever would return, just when I thought we had dodged it. It would hit 100 easily, leaving me uneasy. This continued for nearly four days. Plus, he was coughing, his nose blocked. Even now, when he has fought off the infection, I sometimes touch his feet and chest at night, just to check and reassure myself that everything is okay.

Then there was the matter of monitoring his blood oxygen levels. Regular pulse oximeters don't work on babies. I tried but with no success. My husband eventually managed it. Mercifully, it always showed 97, though I was never sure whether to trust this number.

The term viral load was thrown around a lot, something which none of us non-doctors at home really understood. But it was enough to scare us. Was I adding to his viral load by sleeping next to him, I wondered. After all, I was positive too, and getting sicker.

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

In my moment of desperation, I went back to my trusted breast pump. I could only get two tablespoons or so of milk. The paediatrician joked that this is breast milk in homeopathic doses. I've let it slide. All

My mommy guilt was in full flow as well. 'Why did I let someone who had gone out of the house near him?', 'Why didn't I isolate the person who had gone out?', 'Why did I stop breast-feeding?', 'Why did I stop pumping my milk? I should have soldiered on.' I still can't stop blaming myself.

The term viral load was thrown around a lot, something which none of us non-doctors at home really understood. But it was enough to scare us. Was I adding to his viral load by sleeping next to him, I wondered. After all, I was positive too, and getting sicker.

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other questions. Was he hydrated enough? Is it dangerous if the fever lasts for more than four days? Is he losing weight because of the illness?

Then there were other

SECTOR WATCH
DATA PRIVACY

Why WhatsApp deferred deadline for users to accept new privacy policy

AASHISH HARYAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

GLOBAL INSTANT messaging app WhatsApp on Friday deferred for now the May 15 deadline for users to accept its privacy policy. The Facebook-owned platform said that even those users who had not accepted the updated terms of services will not have their account deleted for now.

Why did WhatsApp defer the compulsory deadline for users to accept its privacy policy?

One of the reasons for the deferral of the deadline could be that the new privacy policy of WhatsApp has been under a lot of fire from users, privacy activists and even the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), which flagged the new policy as "invasive" and said that it enabled WhatsApp and other Facebook group companies to make "precise inferences about users".

These fears triggered a small exodus of users from WhatsApp in early January, with many either opting to download other instant messaging apps like Signal and Telegram, and others deleting their accounts on WhatsApp.

WhatsApp maintains this was caused due to "misinformation" and that it would continue to reach out to people. It also said the update does not impact privacy of personal

IT MIN VIEW ON NEW POLICY



■ The IT Ministry had said that WhatsApp rolling out the update right before the data privacy law was scheduled to come in was not right

messages.

Why did the IT Ministry, users and privacy activists oppose the new policy?

While users and privacy activists feared that with the new update they would have no privacy whatsoever left on the platform, the MeitY said WhatsApp rolling out the update right before the data privacy law was scheduled to come in was not right.

What's next for WhatsApp?

Experts said WhatsApp now has two options: the platform will either roll back the privacy policy completely for now and come out with a new privacy policy acceptable to everyone; the second is to wait till the Personal Data Protection Bill is passed in Parliament.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

EXPLAINED

REACH \$588 BILLION AS ON WEEK ENDED APRIL 30

Forex reserves see fourth week of gains, close to all-time high

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE FOREX reserves registered a growth of \$3.913 billion to reach \$588.02 billion during the week ended April 30, data released by the RBI showed. In the previous week ended April 23, the reserves had risen by \$1.701 billion to \$584.107 billion.

With the latest gain, the forex kitty posted its fourth successive week of gains — starting with a rise of \$4.344 billion to reach \$581.213 billion during the week ended April 9.

The latest boost also placed the reserves in touching distance of the all-time high of \$590.185 billion, recorded in the week ended January 29.

In the week ended April 16, the reserves had swelled by \$1.193 billion to \$582.406 billion.

According to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday, during the reporting week ended April 30, the rise of reserves was on account of an increase in foreign currency assets

RISE BY \$3.913 BILLION (IN MILLION US DOLLARS)

	April 30	April 23
Foreign currency assets	546,059	541,647
Gold	35,464	35,969
SDRs	1,508	1,505
Reserve Tranche Position	4,990	4,987
Total	588,020	584,107

(FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCAs increased by \$4.413 billion to \$546.059 billion, as per the weekly data by the RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the FCAs include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US currencies such as the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves, meanwhile, declined by \$505 million to \$35,464 billion during the reporting week, according to the central bank data.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rose \$3

million to \$1.508 billion for the week ended April 30.

The country's reserve position with the IMF rose by \$2 million to \$4.99 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

The rising forex reserves could bring some comfort to the government as well as the Reserve Bank in managing the nation's external and internal financial issues at a time when the economy is facing Covid stress once again and it could have an impact on the GDP growth rate for the ongoing fiscal as states are announcing lockdowns.

It is a big cushion in the event of any crisis on the economic front and enough to cover India's import bill for a year.

An increase in the forex kitty could also help strengthen the rupee against the US dollar.

Higher reserves could bring confidence to markets that a country can meet its external obligations, demonstrate the backing of domestic currency by external assets, assist the government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations, and maintain a reserve for national disasters or emergencies.

The RBI functions as the custodian and manager of forex reserves, and operates within the overall policy framework agreed upon with the Centre. It allocates the dollars for specific purposes. For example, under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme, individuals are allowed to remit up to \$2,50,000 every year.

The central bank uses its forex kitty for the orderly movement of the rupee. It sells the dollar when the rupee weakens and buys dollar when the rupee strengthens.

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE COUNTRY'S drug regulator has approved an oral drug developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for emergency use for adjunct treatment of moderate to severe Covid positive patients.

DRDO, in a statement on Saturday, said the 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) drug can provide early relief from oxygen dependency among the patients, which can be helpful as the second Covid-19 wave rages across the country, and more patients continue to need medical oxygen.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) granted emergency use permission on May 1, "as adjunct therapy in moderate to severe" patients. The drug has been developed by DRDO's Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hyderabad.

The DRDO statement mentioned that "clinical trial results

have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence" and a "higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid patients".

Scientists of INMAS-DRDO conducted laboratory experiments in April 2020, the first wave of the pandemic, with the help of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits the viral growth. Phase 2 trials were conducted in May-October last and it was found that the drug was safe for Covid-19 patients, who showed significant improvement in recovery.

"In efficacy trends, the patients treated with 2-DG showed faster symptomatic cure than Standard of Care (SoC) on various endpoints. A significantly favourable trend (2.5 days difference) was seen in terms of the median time to achieving normalisation of specific vital signs parameters when compared to SoC," DRDO said.

Mini Ipe, BC Patnaik named new managing directors of LIC

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, MAY 8

THE BANKS Board Bureau (BBB) — the head-hunting agency for chairmen, CEOs and MDs of public sector banks and insurance companies — has chosen Mini Ipe and BC Patnaik as Managing Directors of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), which will have two vacancies of MD in the next five months. However, insurance regulator Irdai is without a Chairman, with Subhash Chandra Khuntia having retired on May 6 after a three-year tenure.

Mini will succeed Vipin Anand, who will retire in July-end, while Patnaik will be joining in place of Mukesh Gupta, who will be called it a day in September-end. "The board of the Bureau interfaced with six candidates on Friday for the forthcoming two positions of Managing Director in LIC and keeping in view their performance in the interface and their overall experience, Mini and Patnaik have been selected," said the BBB.

Dinesh K Bhagat and Parkash Chand have been kept as the re-

serve candidates for these posts of MD. Though the post of the LIC Chairman will fall vacant after MR Kumar retires in June-end, the Ministry of Finance is yet to initiate the process of shortlisting candidates for the post.

On the basis of BBB recommendations, the ministry will process the papers of Mini and Patnaik for seeking the approvals of Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC), which may take another two-three months before the final appointment letters for two officials are issued.

Meanwhile, the three-year tenure of outgoing Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) Chairman Khuntia, a retired IAS officer, ended on Wednesday.

Although the government has kicked off the exercise to select the next Chairman of Irdai, it will take at least three months to select a new one.

Separately, the BBB has selected Inderjeet Singh for the position of CMD in United India Insurance Company and Suchita Gupta for the position of CMD in National Insurance Company.

Oil PSUs commit ₹100 cr to Badrinath revamp: 'In process' before Covid

EN SECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

FIVE STATE-OWNED oil and gas PSUs, on Friday, committed Rs 100 crore for the redevelopment of Shri Badrinath Dham in Uttarakhand and as a spiritual smart city. Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the move "would help attract tourists to the state", adding that oil PSUs would also

contribute to the development of Kedarnath, Uttarkashi, Yamunotri and Gangotri. The latest announcement, however, has triggered questions on why oil sector PSUs are directing corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds towards such a project when India is dealing with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To make it 'self-sustaining'

Sources at oil and gas public

The five oil and gas PSUs — ONGC, GAIL, IOC, HPCL and BPCL — contributed ₹870 crore to the PM-CARES fund set up last year to combat the pandemic

sector undertaking (PSUs) told *The Indian Express* that the decision to contribute to the development of Shri Badrinath Dham "was in the process" before the pandemic.

Oil and Natural Gas Corpora-

tion (ONGC), GAIL, and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) are each set to contribute about ₹25 crore, while Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd

(BPCL) will contribute about ₹20 crore and ₹5.5 crore, respectively.

A source at a leading oil PSU said that the goal behind this move was to make the Shri Badrinath Dham "economically self-sustaining".

Earlier contribution by PSUs

The aforementioned five oil and gas PSUs contributed ₹870 crore to the PM-CARES fund set up last year to combat the pandemic.

Oil & gas sector companies

have also been participating in the efforts to bolster the supply of oxygen to the worst-affected areas across the country, as India deals with a second wave of infections.

The oil and gas PSUs mentioned did not immediately respond to emailed requests for formal comment on their contributions to the project.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

Bank credit

Mumbai: Bank credit grew by 5.71 per cent to Rs 108.60 lakh crore and deposits rose 10.28 per cent to Rs 151.34 lakh crore in the fortnight to April 23, as per RBI data.

CSB Bank Q4

Mumbai: Kerala-based CSB Bank on Saturday posted a net profit of Rs 42.89 crore for the March 2021 quarter as against a loss of Rs 59.68 crore in the year-ago period.

D-Mart Q4 profit

New Delhi: Avenue Supermarkets Ltd, which owns retail chain D-Mart, saw a rise of 52.56 per cent in consolidated net profit to Rs 413.87 crore for Q4FY21.

'India-EUFTA'

New Delhi: Implementation of the proposed free-trade agreement between India and the European Union (EU) will benefit both sides, industry body CII said. PTI

China apps ban

Shanghai: China's internet watchdog said Saturday it will ban some mobile app notifications and tighten norms as the government ramps up a campaign to rein in the growing influence of internet firms over its citizens' daily lives. REUTERS

Bandhan Bank Q4 net falls 80% on provisions for MFI loan write-offs

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
KOLKATA, MAY 8

PRIVATE SECTOR lender Bandhan Bank on Saturday reported an 80 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) fall in net profit for the quarter ending March to Rs 103.03 crore on the back of additional provisions on non-performing assets (NPAs).

The Kolkata-based bank had posted Rs 517.28 crore net profit in the fourth quarter of FY20. The lender's total provision and contingencies in Q4FY21 rose 92.7 per

cent y-o-y to Rs 1,594.30 crore from Rs 827.36 crore in the same quarter previous fiscal.

During the period under review, gross NPAs as a percentage of total loans rose 569 basis points quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q) to 6.8 per cent from 1.1 per cent during the third quarter last fiscal.

The bank's proforma gross NPA had stood at 7.12 per cent in Q3FY21.

During Q4FY21, net NPA ratio rose by 325 basis points q-o-q at 3.51 per cent. Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, MD and CEO, Bandhan

Bank, said a very challenging year ended on a positive note with growth and collection coming back to normalcy. "With accelerated provisioning and write off, we are now well placed as we enter FY22," he said.

During the fourth quarter, the bank wrote-off Rs 1,930 crore worth of loans, where Rs 1,876 crore was from microfinance institutions (MFIs). "Our bank did not restructure any loan in the micro-finance segment, while Rs 617 crore of housing finance was restructured," Ghosh said. FE

In a circular, the CBIC said im-

porters and exporters will have to furnish an undertaking to the

Customs authorities in lieu of the bonds till June 30.

The indirect tax body said it has received representation from traders to accept undertaking in lieu of bonds in certain cases of Customs clearance, in view of the difficulties being faced in the ongoing lockdown/constraints imposed in different regions of India.

To expedite Customs clearance of goods and for maintaining balance between Customs control and facilitation of legitimate trade, the CBIC said it has approved relaxation of the re-

CBIC eases norm on furnishing bonds for import, export of goods till June 30

jobs since before the pandemic, and Federal Reserve officials say the true unemployment rate is closer to 10 per cent than the 5.8 per cent a government report is expected to show on Friday.

Analysts estimate US employers added nearly a million new jobs last month, but the question is not why US employers hired so many, but why they did not hire more? What gives? It's a long list, but here are some highlights:

* Parents - particularly mothers - cannot work because closures or shortened hours at schools and daycare keep them home to watch their kids.

* Would-be workers remain concerned about health risks

amid a pandemic still claiming about 700 American lives daily.

* Stock market gains have given some older workers the cushion to retire.

13

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD

Nicola Sturgeon's SNP is set to retain power

SCOTLAND

Pro-independence party heads for win
THE SCOTTISH National Party, which has vowed to hold an independence referendum that could tear the UK apart should it be returned to power, will find out Saturday if it has won a majority in Scotland's parliament. The SNP says it will seek to hold a new vote on secession if they return to the devolved 129-seat Parliament. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN

Shahbaz stopped from flying abroad
PAKISTAN'S OPPOSITION leader Shahbaz Sharif was on Saturday barred from flying to the UK by the country's top investigation agency though a top court here allowed him to seek medical treatment abroad, his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party said. **PTI**

MYANMAR

Junta brands rival govt a terror group
MYANMAR'S MILITARY rulers have branded a rival National Unity Government (NUG) a terrorist group and blamed it for bombings, arson and killings. The NUG itself describes the army as a terrorist force, and announced this week that it would set up a People's Defence Force. **REUTERS**

BRIDGE

At times, it pays to be an optimist on bridge table. When you certain layout for your contract to succeed, just assume it is there and play your play accordingly.

Dir: South, Vulnerable: Both

NORTH	
♦ Q J 10 8 7 5 4	
♥ A 7 4	
♦ 6 3	
♣ 8 6 3	
SOUTH	
♠ A K	
♥ K 2	
♦ K J 9 5 3	
♣ Q 5 4 2	

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
INT
pass 4♦ pass 4♣
pass pass pass

South started with INT, the best bid he had to describe his sixteen points, and North used Texas to transfer to 4S. West led the ten of hearts. South is a little sad to see that his minor suit high cards are not worth much. How does South get ten tricks out of this?

The West Hand: S- 9 6 3 2 H- 10 9 D- A 10 7 4 C- AJ 10
The East Hand: S- H- Q J 8 6 5 3 D- Q 8 6 2 C- K 9

He gets them very quickly if he sees the proper play. There is a 99% line of play available but it won't work.

Win the heart lead with the king of hearts, play the ace of spades, a heart to the ace, and then ruff a heart in your hand. All you need for success is that no one ruffs the second heart. Don't get involved in setting up a club or a diamond trick.

Easy.
Dealer: South, Vulnerable: None

NORTH ♠ J 8 7 5 3
♥ A 5
♦ 7 3
♣ A 7 6 3

SOUTH (YOU) ♠ A
♥ K 0 6 5 4 3
♦ J 6 5 4 2
♣ Q 8

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1H
pass 1♠ pass 2♦
pass 2♥ pass pass

West led a club, which turned out poorly for the defense when South turned up with the queen, which won the first trick. How should South continue?

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quiz.

The ___ of a fool is the ___ thing in the world. - Thomas Shadwell (5., 7.)

MNAEE

MUULLT

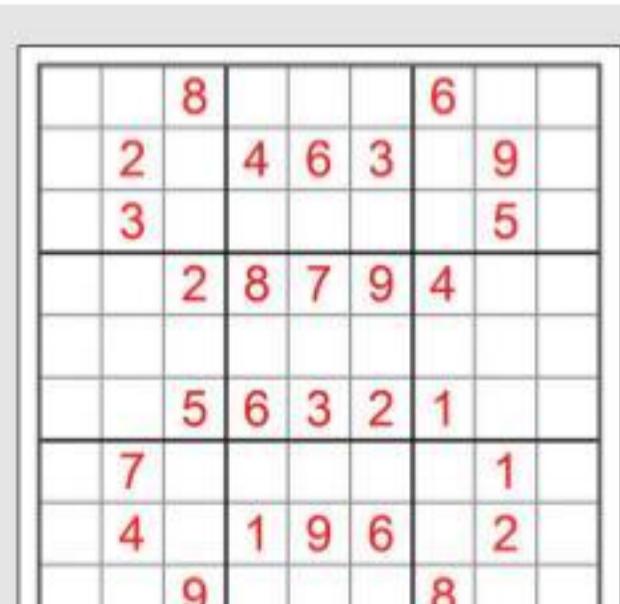
BYOSS

DERHSW

SOLUTION: ENEMA BOSSY TUMULT, SHADWEL

SUDOKU 4466

Difficulty Level 3s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4465



Bangladesh,
Sri Lanka detect
Indian variant

SRI LANKA and Bangladesh have reported the first cases of the Indian variant of coronavirus, also known as B.1.617, prompting authorities to exercise caution to contain its spread.

Bangladesh overnight detected six people, who had recently visited India, infected with the Indian variant of the Covid-19. Directorate General of Health Services spokesman Professor Dr Nazmul Islam Munna said on Saturday.

Out of the six people, two were detected in the national capital Dhaka. All of them are currently kept under quarantine.

The first case of the Indian variant in Sri Lanka was detected on a person who was already at a quarantine centre for returnees in Colombo, authorities said. **PTI**

US diplomats, staff families allowed to leave Nepal

THE US State Department said Friday it is allowing non-essential diplomats and the families of all American staff at the US Embassy in Kathmandu to leave Nepal at government expense due a surge in coronavirus cases.

The department also advised private Americans to reconsider any plans they may have to visit the Himalayan country and asked those already there who wish to leave to submit information to the embassy. That step suggests the embassy may organise charter flights out of the country in the absence of regularly scheduled commercial flights.

Doctors in Nepal have warned of a major crisis as daily cases hit record highs and hospitals ran out of beds. **AP**

EU sceptical on vaccine waiver, but ready to discuss proposal

'We don't think that in the short term that it is a magic bullet'

REUTERS
PORTO, MAY 8

European Council President Charles Michel in Porto on Saturday. **Reuters**

THE EUROPEAN Union is sceptical about the usefulness of waiving patent rights to Covid-19 vaccines as a way to fight the pandemic, but is ready to discuss a concrete proposal, the chairman of EU leaders Charles Michel said on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters before the second day of an EU summit in the Portuguese city of Porto, Michel said the way to fight the pandemic now was to quickly make more shots and lift export curbs on them in countries like the US and Britain that make vaccines but do not sell them to others.

"In Europe, we took the decision to make exports possible and we encourage all partners to facilitate the exports of doses," Michel said after discussions with leaders of the 27-nation bloc on Friday.

India and South Africa called last year for the lifting of patent

rights to vaccines as a way of boosting manufacturing and ensuring the world is supplied. Debate around the issue erupted anew on Wednesday when US President Joe Biden supported the idea, provided it was done through the World Trade Organisation.

The time taken to get a WTO agreement and to build expanded vaccine-making capacity would mean that such a waiver would not provide a

quick fix, sceptics say.

"On intellectual property -- we don't think that in the short term that it is a magic bullet, but we are ready to engage on this topic as soon as a concrete proposal would be put on the table," Michel said.

Officials said that during Friday's summit talks, Germany -- home to BioNTech which holds a patent on the highly effective mRNA vaccine together with Pfizer -- argued strongly against the idea of waiving patent rights.

Portugal, Estonia, Belgium and Ireland were also sceptical but Greece backed the waiver idea, as did Italy, which was in favour of time-limited and geographically targeted measures.

EU officials say Europe is one of the biggest exporters of Covid vaccines, with some 200 million doses shipped out to 90 countries -- the same number of shots that Europe has distributed among its own citizens.

Coronavirus is an airborne threat, US CDC acknowledges

RONI CARYN RABIN & EMILY ANTHES
MAY 8

People crowd together at a bar in El Paso, Texas. **NYT**

US FEDERAL health officials on Friday updated public guidance about how the coronavirus spreads, emphasising that transmission occurs by inhaling very fine respiratory droplets and aerosolised particles, as well as through contact with sprayed droplets or touching contaminated hands to one's mouth, nose or eyes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now states explicitly -- in large, bold lettering -- that airborne virus

can be inhaled even when one is more than six feet away from an infected individual. The new language, posted online, is a change from the agency's previous position that most infections were acquired through "close contact," which they criticized as vague and said did not necessarily capture the nuances of aerosol transmission.

"CDC has now caught up to the latest scientific evidence," said Linsey Marr, an aerosol expert at Virginia Tech. The new information has significant implications for indoor environments, and workplaces in particular. **NYT**

As the pandemic unfolded last year, infectious disease experts warned for months that both the CDC and the World Health Organisation were overlooking research that strongly suggested the coronavirus traveled aloft in small, airborne particles. Several scientists welcomed the agency's scrapping of the term "close contact," which they criticized as vague and said did not necessarily capture the nuances of aerosol transmission.

"CDC has now caught up to the latest scientific evidence," said Linsey Marr, an aerosol expert at Virginia Tech. The new information has significant implications for indoor environments, and workplaces in particular. **NYT**

Doctors in Nepal have warned of a major crisis as daily cases hit record highs and hospitals ran out of beds. **AP**

MULTIPLE BLASTS at a school in the Afghan capital Kabul on Saturday killed at least 40 people and wounded dozens more, mostly female students, officials said, in an attack. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blamed the insurgents.

A senior interior ministry official told Reuters that most of the casualties were students coming out of the Sayed ul Shuhada school. Footage on TV channel ToloNews showed chaotic scenes outside the school, with books and school bags strewn across a bloodstained road, and residents rushing to help victims.

Israeli police fire stun grenades during clashes with Palestinians in Jerusalem. **Reuters**

200 Palestinians injured in Al-Aqsa clashes with police

Jerusalem: A night of heavy clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound and elsewhere in Jerusalem left more than 200 Palestinians wounded, medics said Saturday, as the city braced for even more violence after weeks of unrest.

Nightly protests broke out at the start of the holy month of Ramzan over police restrictions at a popular gathering place and have

SOUTH AFRICA

NEW ZULU KING'S CLAIM DISPUTED



A new Zulu king in South Africa was named amid scenes of chaos Friday night as other members of the royal family questioned Prince Misuzulu Zulu's claim to the title, and bodyguards suddenly whisked him away from the public announcement at a palace. The chaos came after Queen Mantombi's death last week. Longtime King Goodwill Zwelithini had died in March.

AFGHAN PRESIDENT BLAMES TALIBAN

Blast near Kabul school kills 40, injures dozens

REUTERS
KABUL, MAY 8

EXPLAINED **E** Raising fears over US pullout

THE BLAST, which appeared to have targeted female students, raises fears that have already been expressed by a number of groups that the withdrawal of US troops at this stage could lead to the further ascendancy of Taliban and other extremist outfits that seek to curtail women's rights, including the right to education.

Kabul is on high alert since Washington announced plans last month to pull out all US troops by

Sept 11, with Afghan officials saying the Taliban have stepped up attacks across the country following the announcement.

No group has claimed responsibility for Saturday's attack. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid denied the group was involved and condemned the incident.

Saturday's explosions took place in western Kabul, a heavily Shia Muslim neighbourhood that has frequently been attacked by Islamic State militants over the years.

"Targeting primarily students in a girls' school, makes this an attack on the future of Afghanistan," the European Union's mission in Afghanistan said on Twitter.

US pipeline company halts operations after cyberattack

Washington: A US energy company said a cyberattack forced it to temporarily halt all operations on a major pipeline that delivers roughly 45 per cent of all fuel consumed on the East Coast.

Colonial Pipeline said the attack took place Friday and also affected some of its information technology systems. The company transports gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and home heating oil from refineries primarily located on the Gulf Coast through pipelines running from Texas to New Jersey.

The Alpharetta, Georgia-based company said it contacted law enforcement and federal agencies. While there have long been fears about US adversaries disrupting American energy suppliers, ransomware attacks by criminal syndicates are much more common and have been soaring lately. **AP**

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You are entering a fascinating phase. Your task, for nothing in astrology comes free from responsibility, is to acknowledge your emotional power, understand its source deep within your unconscious, and use it wisely. At such times, there is little to be gained from confronting other people.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You are probably now acting in defiance of your Taurean character by being far more lively than usual. Your travel prospects at present are really quite remarkable and it does seem that adherence to a strict daily routine can only lead to frustration.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You will be supported by the fact that Mercury, your sparkling planetary ruler, is in a helpful region, but could also be encouraging you to confuse your thoughts with your feelings. It may be that you will take decisions based on your desires, and prioritise your needs according to the facts.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Your major asset at the present time is self-confidence and it is the power of positive thought which will prove your greatest ally. Push ahead with domestic plans and don't be put off by difficult partners. By the way, you should perform impressively in professional relationships.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

It's time to put on your thinking cap. You may reflect on your life so far and consider carefully just what your next step should be. Also, develop those discreet mystical or spiritual interests which have so far been pushed to one side by the pressures to conform to a particular lifestyle.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

As a result of the fact that both the Sun and the Moon are providing helpful alignments, we may make a confident forecast of increasing prosperity over the next year. As more money comes your way, your fears over your lack of security will be appeased.

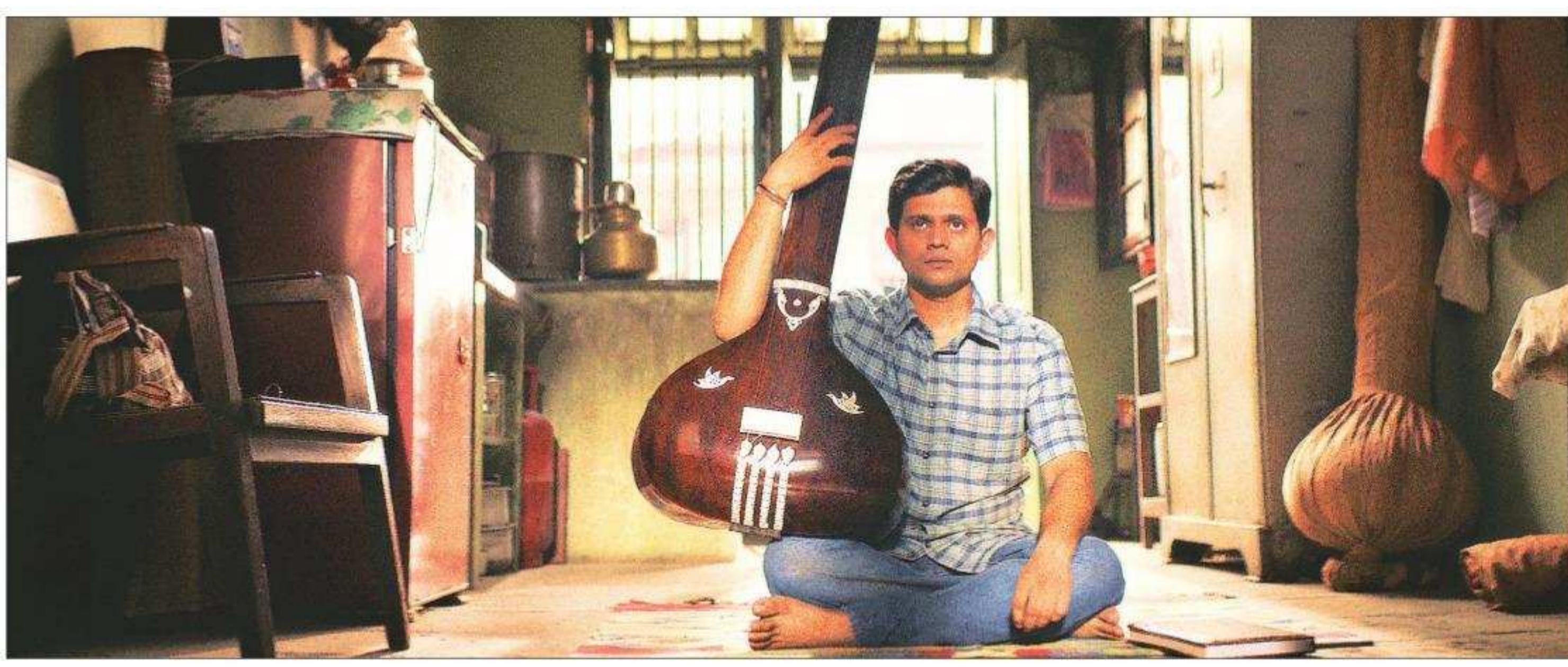
LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Emotionally, this is a period during which you must continue the process you should already have begun, questioning all that is fundamental to your existence. Revise every assumption that you have ever held about relationships in general, as well as about one or two special individuals in particular.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

In private, intimate and emotional situations, such as developing now, the price you have to pay is always balanced by eventual rewards, yet these may come in a form which is at first difficult to recognise. You must therefore rely on your instincts, and ease yourself forward very carefully.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)



The Rest is Noise

Hindustani classical singer Aditya Modak on being 'the disciple' in Chaitanya Tamhane's critically acclaimed film and reliving on reel his real journey and struggles of becoming a classical vocalist

Suanshu Khurana

CHAITANYA TAMHANE'S film *The Disciple* opens with Pt Vinayak Pradhan (essayed deftly by Jaipur-Atrauli gharana classical singer Pt Arun Dravid) on the stage. The ageing vocalist, from Alwar gharana, is immersed in the glorious Jaunpuri (*Jhanana bichhua baje*), a raga that evokes wonder and bhakti bhaav. His accompanying "disciple" looks on in reverence, with eager nods and eyes that capture his desire to perform like his guru one day. Moments later, the setting shifts to the *guru's* room, who, with a teacup in hand, breaks down the raga to his promising *shishya* as Sharad Nerulkar (played by Hindustani classical artiste Aditya Modak), tanpura in hand, rote-learns and sings.

Tamhane's sophomore Marathi feature (released on April 30 on Netflix), since his National Award-winning *Court* (2014), has been this year's most awaited film after it premiered at last year's Venice International Film Festival. The film revolves around Nerulkar who, in keeping with traditions, follows the teachings of his *guru*. His cloistered existence and learning is at odds with the demands of life – a game of cricket, eagerness to find love, or anxieties that a job would take him away from music. It is a story of deep reflection, of flaws, failures and frustrations, and, yet, striving and seeking to be better. In the end, it is this journey and not our successes that make us who we are.

Director Tamhane and the film's music adviser, tabla exponent Aneesh Pradhan, were concerned how a musician would be able to evoke and emote reverence and a genuine sense of admiration, on screen, for someone who's not his own *guru*. "So, I went to Arun ji's house a few times, to sit at his feet and learn from him, and imbibe his teachings before the shoot began. This was done so that I could gen-



IMAGES COURTESY NETFLIX

I HEREBY SURRENDER
(Top) Aditya Modak as the disciple; Sharad Nerulkar; with guru Pt Vinayak Pradhan (played by Pt Arun Dravid) in stills from *The Disciple*

uinely feel respect for him as a *guru*. Arun-ji learnt from (the late Hindustani classical singer) Kishori Amonkar, so, there were many new things for me to explore and understand," says Mumbai-based Modak, 33. The film shows the *guru-shishya parampara* of the Indian classical performative-arts world, where the disciple in lieu of learning from the *guru* cares for him, massages his aching legs and back, bathes him and pays his doctor's fee. Modak's Nerulkar falters while singing Samaporna Malkauns and is pulled up by the *guru*. "It's a new raga for me," he says. The raga, a heptatonic version of the meditative raga Malkauns, is often performed by Jaipur-Atrauli gharana practitioners. And so, it never featured in Modak's Gwalior gharana training. The au-

thenticity of the moment is kept intact.

As a musician, Modak does not think like Nerulkar, and yet, for him "it's a universal story, in terms of the dilemma, the internal struggle that any artist goes through," he says. As a "classical musician, there is a struggle" to remain pure to the form as well as "make it likable to the audience and relevant to the current times," adds Modak, who, in real life, tries to strike a fine balance. There is "the fear", he says, of turning the "traditional" form into "something superficial to make it relevant for the masses". Tamhane often sent him back to relive this personal dilemma to essay the role.

To remain steady on his path, in the film, Nerulkar listens to the lectures of a famed musician, Maai or Sindhubai Jadhav (voiceover by the late National Award-winning filmmaker Sumitra Bhave). Among them is an essential lesson which forms the crux of the film:

"Indian classical music is an eternal quest. And to embark on that quest, you will have to surrender and sacrifice. If you want to walk this path, learn to be hungry and lonely." Maai says. Her quivering voice and wise words, that tell of her age and experience, along with tanpura's drone accompany Nerulkar's thoughts as he rides his motorbike along the streets of Mumbai, where the film is set.

Classical music came to Modak as a toddler at a Mumbai daycare centre. The centre was at the house of classical musician Pt Chandrakant Parkar. As Parkar taught his students, little Modak imbibed the music in the other room. When he was five years old, he moved to Parkar's class. Later, he learnt under the tutelage of Pt Pradeep Dhond. At 17, he started training with Pt Ram Deshpande of the Gwalior gharana. Deshpande, in particular, told Modak that he would only teach if Modak would not treat music as a hobby. "He didn't like that I was pursuing an academic career, and said if my academics would affect music then he wouldn't teach. I liked academics. He wasn't happy but I convinced

him," says Modak, who completed his chartered accountancy on the side.

At the auditions three years ago, Tamhane wasn't looking for an actor who could sing. It had to be the other way round. "You can't fake this music on screen," says Tamhane, who told Modak, the camera reads your mind. Modak had a corporate job when a casting director reached out to him. "I thought it was a prank. Why would anyone call me?" says Modak, with a laugh. He ignored it until he was contacted again. Modak was asked to sing for his audition. Tamhane was happy, except he was unsure of the appearance. Modak looked older and overweight than Nerulkar's character. He lost 20-23 kg in three months to look the part.

Tamhane taught bit by bit, ensuring Modak didn't buckle under the strain. "I'm a forced-method actor. Chaitanya took many workshops, taught me what to think, to relive a particular moment while doing a scene, it was all about the mind, and he allowed me the flexibility of time to do that," says Modak about prepping for his noteworthy acting debut.

For the film's music, Modak says, Aneesh Pradhan wanted to balance tradition with relatability. Children learn the basics of Yaman raga (*Salhi eri aali piya bina*), a young Nerulkar learns a *bandish* (composition) in Bhopali from his father. He graduates to learning the meditative Malkauns from his *guru*, presents the romantic Bageshri in a competition, and, years later, performs the dramatic raga Hameer. All the pieces and the moods they evoke represent Modak's state of mind and his growth. Yet, after endless explorations, elaborate and complex improvisation, he says, it was difficult to lip-sync the pieces on location in the exact same manner they were recorded. "The same piece is presented differently every time it's attempted, even by the same musician, because a raga evolves. Even I didn't remember how I had sung it earlier," says Modak, who's now returned to his *riyaz* and being a full-time musician.

'I don't know why the migrant crisis surprised us'

Director Ivan Ayr, 37, on his film *Meel Pathar* and how the capitalistic system makes victims of those at its core

Ektaa Malik

IN AN interview, you've said that the film *Meel Pathar* (Milestone, released on Netflix on May 7, premiered at last year's Venice International Film Festival) 'tells you where you are and how much further you have to go'. Could you explain?

That was about why I'd named the film *Meel Pathar* (Milestone). Milestones tell you where you are and how far you have to go. But in the film, it's a weird sort of milestone, because even after 500,000 km, Ghalib has absolutely no idea he's achieved that. There's just uncertainty.

Your debut feature *Soni* (2018) came as a reflection on the aftermath of the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case. How did the idea for your second feature come about?

I was always interested in writing about the world. There are people in my extended family who have been truck drivers at some point in their lives and then went on to become transporters. Growing up, I had heard stories and this whole idea fascinated me – that there is this individual who's just travelling all his life, but still kind of stuck within this little box. So, travelling but not really, travelling. This idea was an interest-

ing paradox. Living outside India, I got a chance to discover more about this world. A lot of the transportation in the trucking business, especially in the US, is dominated by the Indian community. Originally, the idea was that of an immigrant truck driver. When I moved here (to India) after *Soni*, the idea then was to work in north India, especially Delhi. Delhi has Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, which, I think, is the biggest transportation zone in all of Asia. The place is quite appealing just from the image perspective alone. So, the film eventually became a film about a Punjabi truck driver who was working in Delhi.

You named your protagonists after poets Ghalib (Suvinder Vicky) and Pash (Lakshvir Saran), and there's a cameo by the young poet Aamir Aziz, too. How important was poetry to the film?

Initially, I wanted the driver to be an aspiring poet. But then that train of thought ran a bit hollow. I chose to stick with the names because I wanted to explore this thought, what if nobody mentions their names in the poetic context in the film. The names by themselves are meaningless in the story. Chances are, for the majority of the young audiences, barring those into literature and poetry, these names don't mean much, they will not know who these names belong to or what they mean. I



LONG WAY TO GO
(Top) A still from *Meel Pathar*; Chandigarh-based filmmaker Ivan Ayr

felt it would be an interesting experiment to see how many people actually notice. But, overall, it was a cynical, pessimistic thought at work that the names are meaningless in the story. As for Aziz, we wanted someone who could play a union leader, who came from Bihar or Jharkhand, because most people who do the loading-unloading work are from there. When we got his (Aziz's) audition, we didn't register who he was even though his face seemed familiar. Then, people were not familiar with his poetry yet.

Why aren't the trucks in your film colourful and quirky like the ones we see on the roads and in Bollywood films?

There are both kinds of trucks in the trade. I decided not to show ostentatiously decorated trucks in the film because Ghalib isn't a kind of truck driver who's interested in doing that. He lives with a sense of detachment, does his work, and that's all. He's aloof, not interested in making places he inhabits attractive. We had a whole casting process for the truck. Bollywood sees things in a different way and a certain kind of truck driver and bright trucks are a part of their film experience. They choose to portray them in that way: happy, loud and gregarious.

You finished shooting the film right before the lockdown last year. How do you think

the truck drivers' community has been dealing with the situation?

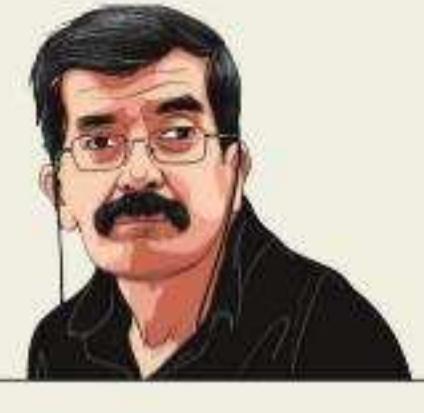
The truckers suffered immensely last year, because everything stopped. I think there was a period of almost two weeks when they didn't even allow many of the truck drivers to come on to the highways. I don't know why the migrant crisis surprised so many of us. What were they (migrant workers) supposed to do? This is the kind of thing that happens when you do things just out of pure impulse, without even understanding the consequences for a large majority of the country. This showed that people are only interested in saving themselves, even if it comes at the cost of throwing the ball under the bus. That they (migrant labourers) don't matter.

With rural-urban migration and woes of the urban working class as the film's dominant themes, are you critiquing capitalism through *Meel Pathar*?

I've always felt that they (truck drivers) are the backbone of our economy. The transportation business is essentially what makes civil life possible. The whole capitalistic system is still very much dependent on this industry, and yet, the sector ends up being at the receiving end of the injustices of the system. It is ironic that people who are probably at its core, end up becoming probably its biggest victims. A lot of them don't even realise it until it's too late. You see that in the film through the strike of the loader (porters) and a veteran truck driver friend of Ghalib being laid off.

But I've also tried to highlight other things, like how we expect too much from the urban working class. The scene where Ghalib is trying to walk up the stairs as the lift is out of use, he encounters the lift repairman, and the gas-cylinder-delivery man, I wanted to expose the world that exists outside of Transport Nagar, and how that world is also infested with the same injustices and tension. It's hard to pin down whose fault it is. It's the whole complexity of our modern Indian society. These are just observations that I'm just trying to share with the audiences.

DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal

Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

Anatomy of Seduction

A marriage bureau in the plant kingdom fixes the perfect match

IN THE animal kingdom, it's usually the male of the species that struts its stuff and tries to seduce the ladies, who will pick the most handsome, rugged and tough as her mate, checking out his looks and fitness and fighting capabilities. In the botanical world, a plant, rooted to the ground cannot wander around showing off, singing and dancing to seduce a mate. So, it employs the services of, what one could roughly say is, a marriage bureau to get itself a mate. This bureau has a host of mammals, insects and birds (and even the wind) on its rolls. And as there are no free lunches, these services have to be paid for in sweet nectar (sugar water, really), produced in glands called nectaries, and nourishing pollen.

First, the "fixer" has to be convinced that it's worth its while to visit the plant and, so, the plant bedecks its reproductive parts in vivid colours and patterns or spreads a heavenly scent around. These reproductive parts are, of course, flowers. Instead of seducing its actual partner, the flower must seduce the "fixer" (botanists call them pollinators). Once the pollinator arrives to check it out, the plant generously deabduces and blesses it with pollen grains (the equivalent of sperm) from the tip of its stamens, which is called the anther.

Some of these pollinators are cooperative, and have pollen carry bags on their legs, which they fill up; others are furry and get a good dusting of pollen on their bodies. They drink deep, get energised with sugar and pollen (some of which is reserved for their own larvae, if they are bees) and buzz off happily to the next plant – hopefully, as pretty and handsome as the one it just came from. Its load of pollen is applied to the stigma, the female section of the bloom as it gorges on more nectar and pollen. The big, sticky pollen grain germinates and sends down a pollen tube bearing a pair of actual sperms along a wider tube called the "style" (collectively, the female parts, the stigma, style and ovary are called the pistil). One of the sperms fertilises the egg at the bottom of the style in the ovary and the seed begins to form. The second sperm develops into the nourishing "endosperm" for the baby seed to feed and grow (seeds we eat, too – peanuts, wheat, rice).



HERE COMES THE SUN

Sunflowers tempt with their inflorescence, or thousand tiny flowers surrounded by yellow petals

Flowers can be both boy and girl or either. In boy-girl flowers, the stamens (together, they're officially called the androecium) are usually arranged along the outer rim of the bloom and the lady parts, the pistil, called the gynoecium on the inner side. They are usually surrounded by the corolla – the colourful, soft petals – which are guarded by the leaflike calyx that hold the petals in place at the bottom of the flower's stem. Some plants, like the sunflower, for example, have thousands of tiny flowers surrounded by the yellow petals, a phenomenon called inflorescence. In others, like the petunia and the tulip, the flowers stand proud in solitary splendour.

Usually, the pollen from one bloom is deposited on the stigma of another bloom by the pollinators, which enables genetic variety. This is called cross-pollination. Then, there are those which "self-pollinate" – the pollen of the plant fertilises the eggs of the same plant – a horrific habit! Many plants take great care that this does not happen, either the pollen and eggs get ready for "mating" at different times, or the plant annuls such accidental unions.

While many flowering plants try to look and smell their best for their pollinators, there are those *binaas* type, like grass and conifers, who trust the whimsical wind to find themselves a match. Their pollen is fine as dust, easily blown around and they don't have to cough out fancy colours and perfumes.

It's thought that flowering plants evolved some 180 million years ago, though this could be pushed back to 250 million years according to some recent "circumstantial evidence". There have been chemicals used for self-defence as found in these 250 million year-old ancients.

We've been seduced, too! Lovelorn youngsters send red roses to one another; flowers are used in religious ceremonies all over the world. They've even been (mis-)used as symbols by political parties! Garlands are strung around the greasy necks of politicians (pity the flowers!). We've interfered with their reproductive processes and now there are flowering plants that are dependent on us for propagation.

The worldwide business in cut flowers is colossal. Remember when playwright George Bernard Shaw was asked by a journalist if he liked flowers, because there were no cut flowers in his house, he apparently retorted, "Yes ma'am, I do. I like flowers, I also like children, but I do not chop their heads off and keep them in bowls of water around the house."

Revolution at the Door

A historical murder mystery re-imagines the tumultuous run-up to India's first war of Independence

Paromita Chakrabarti

ON A dark night in May 1857, a solitary man on horseback makes his way towards Shahjahanabad. Unrest had been fomenting over from years of humiliation and abuse by the British, who had, since an obscure battle in Plassey, come to control greater parts of the country. Sarfaraz Laskar, the rider, knew that the time was ripe to flame that seething animosity into a full-blown rebellion – if he could make his way to the seat of the etiolated Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, that is.

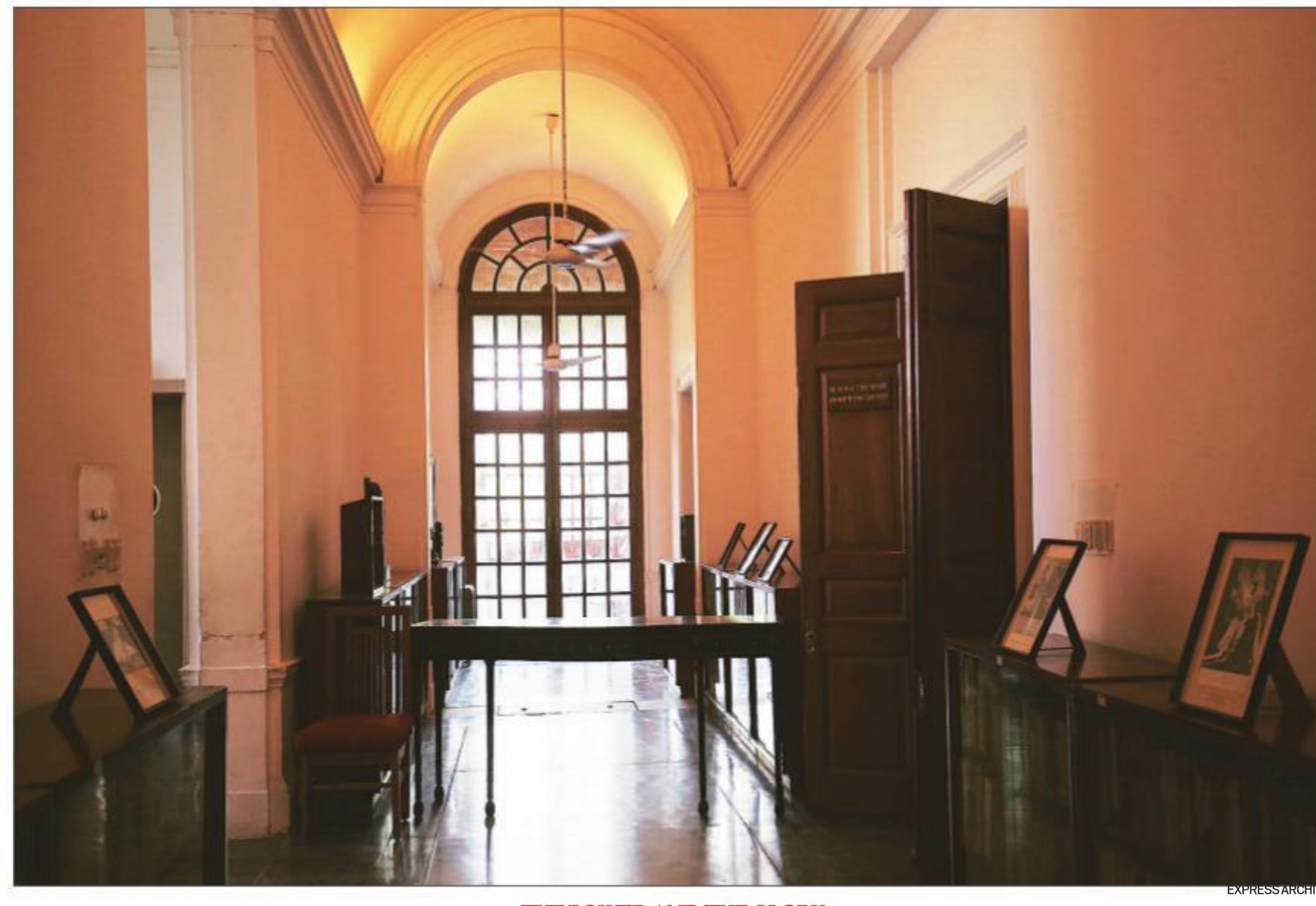
Despite the palpable air of fear, chaotic, simmering Shahjahanabad wears a festive air in the holy month of Ramzan. After the fasting through the day, evenings are kept aside for feasting and social gatherings, with the nobility organising *mushairas* that host the finest poets of the land. One such *mushaira* at Nawab Iftikhar Hasan's house ends in the murder of a poet – the dubious Sukhan Khairabadi, rumoured to be a British spy. With trouble brewing in the barracks over a newly-introduced greased cartridge, the death of an informer, especially one who had sent a message for an audience on a matter of utmost urgency, catches the attention of the Company agents. The new *naib-kotwal* of the area, the young Kironimal Chainsukh, is given a deadline and an ultimatum. With the British breathing down his neck, Chainsukh turns to an unusual ally – the poet laureate of the realm, "Mirza" Ghalib, composer of exquisite poetry and an amateur detective when a case piques his interest. Together, they race against time, trying to solve a murder that holds the key to a larger, wholly audacious plan.

The year 1857 is a crucial landmark in Indian history. Once diminished by the colonial rulers as a revolt by disgruntled subordinates – it has, since, come to signify the concerted Indian attempt at freedom from the Empire. Setting his narrative against this backdrop, Raza Mir weaves together a fictional account, a people's version so to speak, of the events that led up to the moment of conflagration. In doing so, Mir is working within the thriving genre of historical crime fiction, that delightful branch of mystery writing which reconstructs not just cases of murder and mayhem but also eras long gone. The publication of *Madhulika Liddle's Muzaffar Jang* novels (between 2009 and 2015) gave the genre a fillip in Indian-English writing. Since then, several writers, most notably the US-based Sujata Massey with her Perveen Mistry series, and the UK-based writer Abir Mukherjee with his Wyndham and Banerjee books, have worked it to very satisfactory ends. Mir's novel, though a standalone work, is a layered and gripping narrative.

The world Mir creates is one of great churn, poised at the cusp of momentous change. The once mighty Mughal empire is a shadow of its former self; its sovereign reduced to a figurehead, the peerage scrambling to protect their properties or financial interests, the farmer and the soldier both at the mercy of the increasing tyranny of Company officials. But beyond this roil, Mir's Shahjahanabad embraces people of disparate tempers and interests, religions and stations and makes them its own. In its crowded alleys, a tavern stands next to a mosque; neighbours squabble but look out for each other and atheists and believers both marvel at science.

If Delhi is a character in itself, those who throng its streets and *havelis* – some historical, some fictitious – are equally powerful presences. While Ghalib, wise, witty and intuitive, (and so perfect a detective that one wonders why no one had thought of him before) holds the novel together, characters such as Ramachandra, the enigmatic Laskar who looms large over the novel's landscape, the painter Hyderi Begum Zutshi, Kathak dancer Ratna Bai – the last three, women of wit and agency – propel much of the novel's action.

Unlike a traditional murder mystery, in which the resolution restores order in society, here, it is only the beginning of a devastating, if heroic, end. Mir takes a familiar event in history to reimagine not just how it shaped the course of an era but also to show how one must always "rage at the dying of the light", no matter the consequences.



THE POWER AND THE GLORY

The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library was converted into a memorial to all Indian prime ministers instead of one for Jawaharlal Nehru alone

The Way Privilege Works

In his new book, Sanjaya Baru analyses the dismantling of an old order of power elites in India for a new ideological hegemony

Coomi Kapoor

DEbate on the constantly evolving power elite in India is not a new concept. The strength of Sanjaya Baru's latest book, however, is its topicality. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the term power elite has acquired a new, thought-provoking, somewhat sinister inference. Modi, as Baru sees it, has dismantled the old order of power elites in Delhi and seeks to impose an unquestioning hegemonic domination on an ideological basis. Globalised upper-class intellectuals and liberals are suspect and to be replaced by middle-class Hindu nationalists who serve, ostensibly, the larger cause of Bharat as opposed to that of India. Any negation of the new faith is viewed with unconcealed hostility.

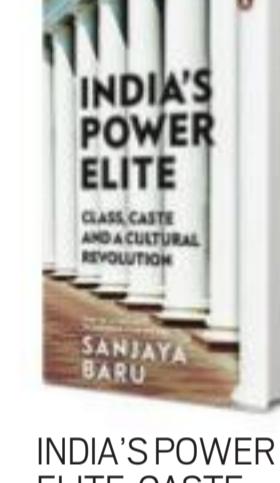
Baru draws parallels with Modi's socially divisive, disruptive movement and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966–76), the difference being that while Modi wants to purge the old elite outside his party, Mao wanted to rid his own party of doubters within who wanted to remove him. Mao's revolution was Marxism, Leninism and Maoism while Modi's is premised on the Sangh's version of Hindu nationalism. The Cultural Revolution gave free rein to the Red Guards (student-led paramilitary services instituted by Mao) to take the law into their own hands. Similarly, self-proclaimed Hindu vigilantes seem at liberty to strike anxiety and fear over cow protectionism, love jihad, alleged sedition by Muslim minorities and left-wing radicalism.

The character of India's power elite has shifted over the years in consonance with the upheavals of electoral politics. For socialist Ram Manohar Lohia, India's power elite at the dawn of independence was defined by Brahminical castes, privileged schooling and familiarity

with the English language. Over the years, many other factors have come into play. The era of coalition politics and the introduction of Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservations, brought into prominence elite, regional parties and politically influential castes, which were not at the top of the traditional caste pyramid. Upper castes in the first Lok Sabha occupied half the parliamentary seats, while OBCs were 10 per cent. Since then, upper castes have yielded to the OBCs within Parliament and it would have been helpful if Baru had provided some current statistics. Even the once upper-caste Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has opened its top rungs to the OBCs, the category to which Modi belongs.

Baru has woven his wide-ranging experiences as academician, journalist, media adviser and economist to propound his thesis on elites. Occasionally, he shifts focus to share anecdotes of his own experiences and quotes sociologists and economists to give it a slightly academic flavour. This makes the book difficult to classify into any clear-cut slot.

Modi is not the first prime minister to work his way up from a non-elite background. Manmohan Singh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Bahadur Shastri also came from humble stock. They, however, did not feel it necessary to keep stressing the point. Rather, Modi's predecessors, once they arrived, sought to be



INDIA'S POWER ELITE:
CASTE, CLASS AND
CULTURAL REVOLUTION
BY SANJAYA BARU
Penguin
264 pages
₹699

come a part of Lutyens Delhi and woo what was considered the Nehruvian elite. Modi, in contrast, makes no attempt to fit in. Rather, he seeks to annihilate the old landmarks of the power elite from the Nehru-Indira era. The conversion of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library from a memorial to Nehru alone to one for all PMs is one such example.

Today, the real cultural revolution and power shift under way is not about displacing one set of intellectuals trained in the English language with another trained in the vernacular. It is of the overthrow of globalised upper-class intellectuals by provincial middle-class Hindu nationalists. These new intellectuals around Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath view the old intellectuals of both the right or the left, whether it be a Romila Thapar or a Montek Singh Ahluwalia, as part of the same social set. They want this establishment replaced by a desic cultural revolution.

Dispersal of media power has also helped cut to size the Lutyens legacy and to reshape power elites. The cosy relationship between senior media professionals and the government has ended. Despite the growing wealth and power of owners and editors, there is a fundamental shift with politicians either controlling or owning the media directly or through proxies. The growing assertion of state power at the centre and in the states under Modi has forced the media to become docile or openly partisan with some honourable exceptions. Modi has unabashedly bent the media and the celebrity to serve his cause.

Modi is not just targeting institutions, he wants to put his stamp physically on Lutyens Delhi by rebuilding the Central Vista. Artist Anish Kapoor sees Modi's destruction of Lutyens Delhi as borne out of his political fanaticism. He sees himself at the centre as the maker of a new Hindu India. The old order espies the new – lacking any aesthetic sensibility – as barbarians at the gate, while a new aspiring class believes that it will finally be getting its due under a strong Hindu leader.

Coomi Kapoor is contributing editor,
The Indian Express

Today, the real cultural revolution and power shift under way is not about displacing one set of intellectuals trained in the English language with another trained in the vernacular

• • •

The Line of Separation

A new book looks afresh into how Bengal negotiated Partition

Mani Shankar Aiyar

AN IMPASSIONED and deeply-researched work, Bhaswati Mukherjee's *Bengal and Partition: An Untold Story* is an invaluable contribution to the particular issues that animated politics in Bengal, a marginally Muslim-majority province, that distinguished it from the freedom movement in much of the rest of the country. It was not only, or indeed most significantly, the Hindu-Muslim demography of the province that gave it a unique perspective, but, overlaying these religious differences was the proud linguistic unity and syncretic cultural heritage that made Bengal different. (I would rate Chapter 6, "The Struggle for identity: Language and Religion", as the most outstanding in the book).

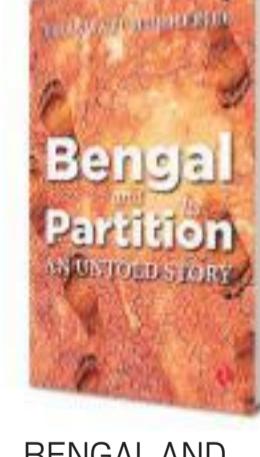
These cultural characteristics, Mukherjee convincingly argues, were, however, adversely affected by the ownership of land: a disproportionate majority of zamindars were Hindus, who banded themselves in their *bhadralok* identity. The relatively few Muslim landowners, on the other hand, found their identity in their Persian and Turkic origins, accentuated by a marked linguistic preference for Urdu and Persian over the native Bengali.

The two religion-based elites kept themselves apart, in contrast to the masses who together evolved a composite culture – but in acute poverty and deprivation. To this was added the *bhadralok* taking to modern education as the vehicle for advancement, while the Muslim elite shrank from embracing the foreign power that had overthrown their centuries-old political dominance in Bengal. In striking contrast, the Muslim masses remained indigenous and vernacular (like most of their wretched Hindu brethren). The rival elites played out their differences in the political field where the British played umpire and firmly grounded their policies on the ancient Roman dictum of 'divide and rule'. But we only had ourselves to blame for remaining divided.

The author lists the leading members of the *bhadralok*; it does not contain a single Muslim name, for it would have been anathema to the *bhadralok* to let the Muslim aristocracy and the lower castes into their ranks. Equally, the "Muslim communists", as Mukherjee brands them, did not wish to be synthesised into a larger and largely Hindu nationalist identity. This was aggravated by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* (1882), and, especially the poem that later became the national song, *Vande Mataram*, having captured

the imagination of the *bhadralok* from which the Muslim elite had distanced themselves and into which the *bhadralok* had no intention of including the Muslim gentry. It was only after AKFazlul Huq, born of peasant stock, arrived on the political scene that the Muslim *jotedar* (ryot and rent collector) and the masses of Bengal peasantry started involving themselves in the affairs of the nation. Under the British, the enfranchised electorate never exceeded 14–15 per cent – elections under the colonial aegis were, thus, never "representative".

All this, the author recounts with skill and impressive documentation. From Robert Clive's victory at the farcical Battle of Plassey (1757) to the first partition of Bengal (1905), the horrific Bengal Famine of 1943 and the subsequent partition of Bengal in 1947, Mukherjee never fails to link her arguments to the relevant primary and secondary sources. But as an impassioned nationalist herself, the author does not give adequate space to those she believes betrayed her beloved homeland. This results in TB Macaulay getting selectively quoted, no reference being made to his remarkably prescient prediction that the Empire would not last more than a century, nor the constructive achievements of colonial rule, nor the grievances (often self-inflicted) of the minor-



BENGAL AND
PARTITION: AN
UNTOLD STORY
BY BHASWATI
MUKHERJEE
Rupa Publications
224 pages
₹595

ity community, nor of the failure of the Bengal Congress leadership to conciliate opposing Muslim opinion, only aggravated by the many failures of the Congress national leadership. Indeed, the chief unanswered question is why the Bengal Congress behaved so cravenly before the Indian National Congress. The reason, of course, is that much of Bengal preferred the national over the local leadership.

There is no mention of the 1927 Delhi Pact where MA Jinnah, the prime mover of the 1916 Lucknow Pact, acknowledged that separate electorates had led only to the 1920s becoming the worst decade of communal violence. He proposed, along with Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, to abandon separate electorates in exchange for 33 per cent reservation of seats in the Central Legislative Assembly endorsed by the Congress Working Committee but rejected by the All India Congress Committee, and later, Mahatma Gandhi, which led to the final parting of ways between the "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity" and the mainstream freedom movement.

There is also only passing reference to the astounding experiment of running an exemplary harmonious coalition government between Syama Prasad Mookerjee of the Hindu Mahasabha and Fazlul Huq of the Muslim-dominated Krishak Praja Party, affiliated to Jinnah's Muslim League, after Huq had secured the Lahore Resolution of March 1940, often, if wrongly called, the "Pakistan resolution". The Huq-Mookerjee coalition government was not brought down by any internal dissension but by governor Richard Casey's unilateral order, when the Japanese were

knocking at Bengal's door.

Another brilliantly written and heavily documented chapter is on the 1942–43 Bengal Famine, in which Mukherjee weighs in with an academically sound and emotionally poignant damnation of Winston Churchill's callous racism in refusing to divert available grain stocks to starving Bengalis – an action that horrified even his Secretary of State for India, leading to the best quip in the book: the historian SD Choudhury remarking, "Churchill said that history would judge him kindly because he intended to write it himself!"

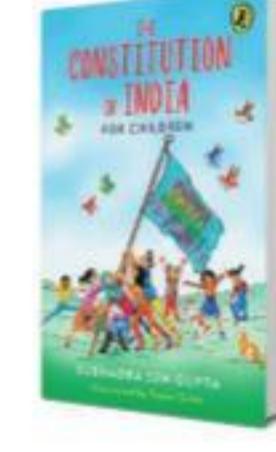
Mukherjee puts much of the blame for Partition on the weak negotiating capabilities of Jawaharlal Nehru, exonerating her *bhadralok* heroes who had laid the foundations of the second division of Bengal by refusing to conciliate their fellow Bengalis of a different religion. The only alternative presented was by Subhas Bose's elder brother, Sarat Chandra, of a united Bengal splitting from the Union of India. That, the author elides. The real solution came in 1971 but Mukherjee terminates her tale with the second partition of Bengal, that did not include the partition of Pakistan. One hopes she will join the caravan of others marking the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Bangladesh, including the much-awaited volume *India and the Bangladesh Liberation War* by our common Foreign Service colleague, Chandrashekhar Dasgupta. I hope Mukherjee, as a proven historian of high ability, will supplement that effort to complete the story.

The writer is a senior Congress leader and former Union minister

SHELF LIFE

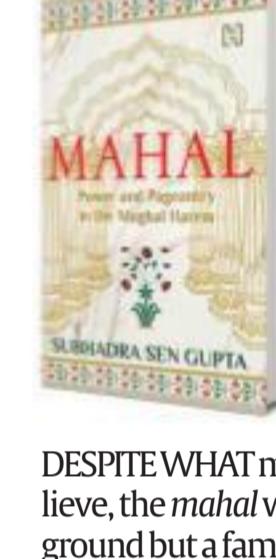
In Her Words

Three books to remember Subhadra Sen Gupta, who passed away last week, by



The Constitution of India for Children Puffin 192 pages ₹299

SEN GUPTA'S book *The Constitution of India for Children* (2020), illustrated by Tapas Guha, came out ahead of the Republic Day last year, but more than that, it came on the heels of the massive protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens in the country. While Leila Seth's *We The Children of India: A Preamble to our Constitution* (2010) has been essential reading for children on this, Sen Gupta's book holds its own by incorporating interesting anecdotal insights into the making of the Constitution.



Mahal: Power and Pageantry in the Mughal Harem Hachette 304 pages ₹599

DESPISE WHAT many would like to believe, the *mahal* was not a sexual playground but a family space that housed the women of the court. In her 2019 book, one of her few for older readers, Sen Gupta makes us meet some of these charismatic characters – Ehsan Daulat Begum, Babur's grandmother, without whose enterprise there would have been no Mughal empire; the Padshah Begums who ran the *mahal*'s vast establishment; scholars and poets like Zeb-un-Nissa and Salima Sultan Begum, who influenced the emperor on matters of diplomacy and state policy, among others – women who often go unnoticed in history.

A Children's History of India Red Turtle 452 pages ₹295

WHICH WERE the first cities of India and how did they come to be discovered? What was it like living in Mughal times? How did the British, who had come for trade to India, end up ruling the country? How has India changed since Independence? Sen Gupta delves into the past to discover the answers to these questions and many more in this comprehensive history of India (written in 2015), that is an engaging experience for readers of all ages.

SURBHI GUPTA

BRIEFLY

Real, Barcelona, Juventus cling onto Super League

Madrid: The three Super League rebels stepped up their criticism of UEFA on Saturday, with Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus denouncing intolerable threats for their refusal to back down on the prospect of a breakaway competition. The other nine clubs who formed the ill-fated Super League three weeks ago accepted a settlement on Friday to be fined by UEFA and stay within the open Champions League structure. "We regret to see that our friends and founding partners of the Super League project have now found themselves in such inconsistent and contradictory position when signing a number of commitments to UEFA yesterday," Barcelona, Madrid and Juventus said in a joint statement. **AP**

Indian team to leave for UK on June 2

New Delhi: Indian cricketers will complete an eight-day hard quarantine period in Mumbai before leaving on June 2 for a marathon tour of United Kingdom, where they will play six Test matches including the marquee World Test Championship final against New Zealand. The BCCI is still carrying out negotiations regarding the duration of 10 days of soft quarantine (training allowed) for players after reaching the UK where they will be based for three and half months. "Indian team will have eight days of hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms) in India with mandatory negative RT-PCR reports on second, fourth and seventh day required to board the flight," a senior BCCI official said. "Since we have a bubble to bubble transfer, it needs to be seen if the duration of the 10-day quarantine can be reduced a bit. However players during soft quarantine can go for training," the official added. **PTI**

BCCI scorer Tiwari passes away

New Delhi: KKTiwar, a scorer with the Board of Control for Cricket in India, passed away because of Covid-19 related complications at the AIIMS in Jhajjar on Saturday. Tiwari was 52 and is survived by two daughters and a son. Tiwari was a regular on the cricket circuit in and around Delhi and often was one of the first to spot the potential of an upcoming player in a local tournament. Tiwari officiated in local tournaments as an umpire. As a scorer he has covered Tests, ODIs, domestic tournaments and the IPL. **ENS**

Rohan-Shapovalov lose in Madrid last 8

Madrid: India's Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov of Canada fought hard before losing in three sets to German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the men's doubles quarterfinals of the Madrid Open. Bopanna and Shapovalov went down 6-4 3-6 10-5 against their German opponents to crash out of the ATP Masters 1000 tournament. The Indo-Canadian pair hit five aces as against their opponent's three, but they committed more double faults, which hampered their prospects. **PTI**

DHANRAJ PILLAY

DHANRAJ PILLAY

THE YEAR was 1987. I was new to Bombay, as it was called back then, and one of the first places I visited was the hockey stadium next to Churchgate station. I can't recall the teams that were playing, but I do remember one thing: until that moment, I had never seen anyone run so fast on a hockey ground. That was the first time I saw Maharaj Krishan Kaushik in flesh, he was playing for Tata I think, and he was everything my brother Ramesh described to me.

Over the decades, Kaushik sir meant different things to me. Growing up in Khadki, I wanted to be an Olympian like him. After moving to Bombay and watching him play, I tried to model my game around Kaushik sir's, trying to run as fast and cross as precisely as him. When I became a player, he was one of the people who helped me realise my potential. After both of us got old, we became friends.

His demise on Saturday evening due to Covid-19-related complications has left me devastated. Hours earlier on Saturday, we lost another great player and Kaushik sir's teammate from the gold medal-winning 1980 Olympics side, Ravinder Pal Singh, also because of Covid-19. Ravinder sir never spoke a lot but he took over the role of centre-half from Ajitpal Singh and excelled in that posi-

Vaulting from Midnapore to Tokyo

As an 8-year-old, gymnast Pranati was rejected by a coach for being too thin. Now she is leaving nothing to chance ahead of her maiden Olympics, including training her palate for Japanese food

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, MAY 8

A CHEF at Kolkata's Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre assigned to cook for gymnast Pranati Nayak is preparing to slice the fish super-fine rather than the thick fillet, large chunks he usually tosses into the tomato curry. Aside from all the tweaks that'll go on over the vaulting table, Pranati's palate will now be conditioned to trad the machher jhol (fish curry) for the sashimi twice a week.

"Our athletes always run into this problem: they struggle for food abroad and then mentally they keep thinking they've not eaten properly and are not prepared for competition. Pranati will need to get used to having Japanese meals, so 2 or 3 days in a week, we'll start her off on the food she might end up eating in Tokyo," coach Lakhman Sharma says, of India's latest and only qualifier in gymnastics at the Olympics, picked for the four apparatus of All Around competition.

That's an astonishing amount of detailing worked out quickly, considering what has been a surprise qualification for the Tokyo Games.

With a bunch of tournaments cancelled—including the Asian meet at Hangzhou, China for this week—qualification came down to Pranati's results at the last World Championship.

Snaking in as the second reserve from Asia, the 26-year-old from Midnapore in West Bengal who won bronze in the vault

at the Asian Championships in March 2019, has a coach who makes it a point to keep himself updated with international trends.

"There's just two months left so we'll only polish the old routines on Floor exercise, Balance beam and Uneven Bars. But she'll go there with all the upgrades," says the geeky mentor, hailing from Ujjain, posted at Kolkata as coach.

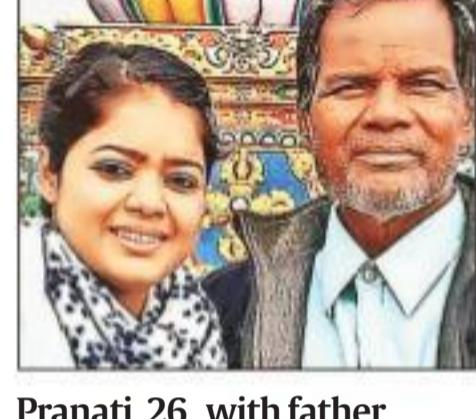
An order was placed for a tome on techniques, titled *Championship Gymnastics* penned by Gerald George and illustrated by James Stephenson, costing Rs 30,000 as soon as it became clear to Sharma that Pranati had a chance to get to Tokyo.

Natural flair

"She's a strong gymnast who's very hard-working. But she's also a natural, she'll go further than people expect her to," Sharma says with a coach's conviction, hoping to use the definitive text to polish a couple of her elements at the Olympics.

To that effect, he's weaning her away from her mobile phone – "only Saturday/Sunday, she'll be allowed" – he says.

While a physio, masseur and nutritionist will assemble to fine-tune Pranati's preparation as the SAI arena opens its facility only for her, the chef is choosing his best knives for the usu-zukuri, the fine cuts.



Pranati, 26, with father Sumanta Nayak.

reer," the now-retired coach recalls.

Besides the leotards with frills that she fixed for Pranati and taking care of her education and meals (since she was extremely thin, though not frail), Minara would also equip her with skills, sponged up by the eager learner.

"From the springboard, there's a forward salto on the beam. I taught her that very early on – because she was sincere and would learn meticulously," the coach recalls of the tiniest of headstarts for her ward. "Others in India are doing it only now."

It's on the vault though that Pranati will look to carry forward the baton from Rio 4th-placer Dipa Karmakar. It was India's second World Cup medalist, Aruna B Reddy, also a vaulter, in fact who alerted Pranati to the chance of making it to Tokyo last week.

Pranati's Handspring forward 540 (difficulty 5.8) and Tsukahara back 720 (D: 5.6) have been her reliable routines that she hopes to land perfectly – banking on the staple if not the spectacular – à la Karmakar. On the Floor, Pranati – a hobby dancer – has a trippy sequence where her acrobatic lines blend into some bop to the 'Dom and Tak' beats of Maashallah from the hit film *Ek Tha Tiger*.

It's on the beam and vault though that Pranati truly finds her rhythm.

Sumanta Nayak and wife Pratima knew their second daughter had a future in gymnas-



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

tics when she repurposed all surfaces in their house to spin and whirl right since they dropped her off at a gymnastics club, one amongst hundreds that dot Bengal – even the rural non-descript towns.

Older sister Jayati and younger Tapti got busy with books, but Pranati couldn't stop cartwheeling around. Her father, who moved from Jharkhand to Bengal and drove a bus to make ends meet, was supremely confident that his second daughter had what it took.

"I'll be honest. After three daughters, I felt a little bad about not having a son. But Pranati showed so much talent that I knew she is going to go further than any male child I might've had. I was convinced she was special. That's why it was important that the Kolkata centre accepted her. She needed a good diet I could see, but only a sports hostel could've provided for her. Part reason I cried (when she was turned down) was I couldn't do much for her if she didn't get into the training centre," the father remembers.

Prodigious talent

Coach Minara Begum was impressed with the bridges and forward and back somersaults of the 9-year-old. She would shepherd her career with her own diligence from 2003, and while India was just acquainting itself with Dipa's scary vault, Minara would keep Pranati on the conventional path – nothing eye-popping, just gymnastics basics, executed to the

best of her ability.

Pranati wouldn't forget about the family that had revolved its routine around ferrying her to and fro from practice – at times 4-hour rickety bus rides to Kolkata. So the Rs 12 lakh

she earned from the Nationals two years ago saw her build a slightly bigger house in Midnapore and take entire responsibility for her older sister's wedding couple of years ago.

Her first medal had come at Children's Asian in Russia, while she would make the All Around finals (4th on Beam & 5th on vault) of the 2014 Asian Games alongside Dipa.

After her Asian Championship bronze, Pranati had ramped up her vaulting proficiency – even scoring 14.20 at the last major international, though she had slipped on the beam chasing a score of 48 on the All Around at the German Worlds.

Falling short at 46.90 even as the first lockdown came around, Pranati would aim for the 2022 Commonwealth Games and Asian. "I was disappointed at the World meet, so I spent all of the lockdown keeping in shape and not going out of training for a single day," she says.

It meant her father would fix a bamboo horizontally across two trees – for her to do the simple swings that were part of her weakest apparatus – the uneven bars. "Olympics wasn't on my training plan then – this was unexpected. I wanted to do well at the CWG in Birmingham," Pranati says. "Somewhere, I think, that hard work paid off. Even now with

everything closed, Lakhan sir ensures I get training," Pranati says.

Sharma had been lining up practice at different clubs – in Bally, Patuli and Dum Dum, with Pranati travelling for up to an hour and 40 minutes to clock one session of practice wherever possible.

Lakhan Sharma would message his trainees – and the club owners would open up their facilities for the international gymnast, twice a week, to enable her to practise when SAI was closed. "You have to understand what gymnastics means to Bengal. Even the smallest towns have gymnastics clubs with basic infrastructure, nothing fancy. It's in the culture, even rurally, that's why it's not a surprise Pranati's father saw a future for her in this sport.

A lot of girls from Bengal as well as the Northeast are suited for this sport. They aren't very tall, so lower centre of gravity," he says.

"But moreover, people here are extremely creative and artistic. It's great to work with gymnasts who understand the art in this sport," he says.

Sharma says little girls training hard at clubs dotting Bengal's remote geography were bound to throw up a winner, though the pandemic serendipitously picked Pranati.

Fine angles define perfection in gymnastics. In a kitchen corner of Kolkata, this could mean that a chef serving a gymnast is learning the finer goujon cut on the fish, rather than the chunky troncon.

Class of 1980 loses two players in one day

TUSHAR BHADURI

NEW DELHI, MAY 8

SATURDAY was a day to forget for the Class of 1980, the bunch that took India to the summit of world hockey at the Moscow Olympics – the last time the country enjoyed such success.

Ravindra Pal Singh, 60, in the morning and **Maharaj Krishan Kaushik**, 66, in the evening succumbed to the Covid-19-related ailments on the same day.

Kaushik, a right-out, passed away in the national capital after a three-week battle with the virus and leaves behind a legacy full of success and recognition on the hockey turf, both as player and coach.

Hockey lovers of more recent vintage may recall Kaushik as a former coach of the national women's team, who guided the unfancied bunch to the 2002 Commonwealth Games gold medal, which was one of the inspirations for the hit movie *Chak de India*. But Kaushik had also taken the men's team to the top of the podium at the 1998 Bangkok Asian, the first time they had been there in 32 years.

Add to it, the ultimate success as a player at Moscow 1980 – he scored three goals, including one in the final against Spain – and one can safely say that there was very little in hockey that Kaushik didn't achieve.

But Kaushik's coaching career also had its share of ups and downs. Soon after the triumph in Bangkok, he was sacked by the erstwhile Indian Hockey Federation, an

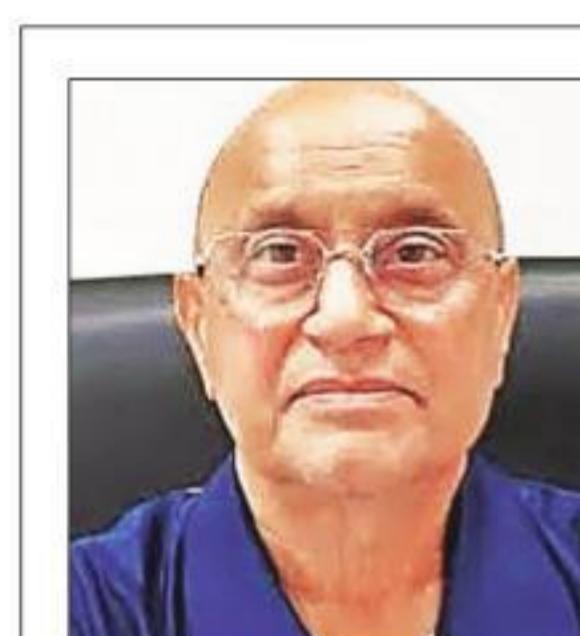
episode he describes in the book *The Golden Boot*. The Arjuna and Dronacharya awardee was the assistant coach of the team that won gold at the 2014 Incheon Asian Games (Australian Terry Walsh was chief coach), 16 years after he had guided the team to glory as head coach.

Ravinder Pal Singh, centre half, may not be the first name that comes to mind when one recalls the hockey gold medallists from the 1980 Olympics, but talk to his teammates and one gets the picture of a graceful & stylish midfielder who did his work silently and efficiently.

Singh, who succumbed to Covid-19 in Lucknow on Saturday after fighting the virus for two weeks, was a product of Uttar Pradesh Sports Hostel, Lucknow and Vasudevan Baskaran, the captain at the Moscow Games, remembers him as a player with good skills and adept at both the defensive and attacking aspects of the game.

"He played as a centre-half – the successor in that position to Ajitpal Singh. Ravinder sir was, thus, stepping into big shoes. But he matched Ajitpal in every inch," Baskaran told *The Indian Express*.

"He possessed all the skills. But what caught my eye was the graceful nature of his game and he had a big contribution to our success. He was quick in attack and gelled perfectly with the players around his position – like myself (left half), MM Somaya (right half), Mohammed Shahid (inside left) and Merwyn Fernandes (inside right)."



MK KAUSHIK
1955 - 2021

forward had to convert it into a goal. Maarna ha maarna hai (You have to score a goal).

A master of his trade

Kaushik sir was the king of crosses. Even on uneven grass surfaces, he played crisp balls that would land right at the stick of the forward, ekduin ground ko chikap ke (right along the ground). It was remarkable, especially because they played with white leather balls, similar to the ones we see in T20 matches now.

Much later, when I moved to Bombay, Joaquim (Carvalho) sir, MM Somaya sir, Merwyn bhai (Fernandes) as the right in, Surinder Sodhi was the centre-forward, the great Mohammad Shahid, as the left in and Zafar bhai (Iqbal) as the left out.

In this star-studded line-up, Kaushik saab stood out with his skills. His pace on the wings, the way he carried the ball along the touchline and his pinpoint crosses were the stuff of legends. These days, the number of crosses in a hockey match is a fraction of what it used to be during that period. In that era, crosses were a very potent weapon to score goals.

We see it a lot in football today: a winger crosses a ball into the box, the centre-forward leaps and heads the ball past the goalkeeper.

Similarly, back then in hockey, if a ball was crossed in from the left or right, the centre-

forward had to convert it into a goal. Maarna ha maarna hai (You have to score a goal). Kaushik sir was the king of crosses. Even on uneven grass surfaces, he played crisp balls that would land right at the stick of the forward, ekduin ground ko chikap ke (right along the ground). It was remarkable, especially because they played with white leather balls, similar to the ones we see in T20 matches now.

Before the Games, Merwyn sir had come to Bangalore to coach us for a few days and MP Ganesh was the deputy director of Sports Authority of India's Bangalore centre. Every night, we met at Ganesh's house to draft a plan for the next day. Soft-spoken and a disciplinarian, Kaushik sir gave us players a lot of freedom to operate.

Every player was given a role in the team, which was his way of showing his faith in us. He pushed and motivated us in the right manner, which helped each one of us play to our true potential and win the gold medal eventually. My bond with him grew stronger over the years. Whenever I was in Delhi, I made it a point to meet him. We'll all miss him a lot.

DHANRAJ PILLAY IS A FORMER INDIA HOCKEY CAPTAIN AND FOUR-TIME OLYMPIAN. HE SPOKE TO MIHIR VASAVDA

In this star-studded line-up, Kaushik saab stood out with his skills. His pace on the wings, the way he carried the ball along the touchline and his pinpoint crosses were the stuff of legends. These days, the number of crosses in a hockey match is a fraction of what it used to be during that period."

And while the hockey fraternity was still coming to terms with Ravinder sir's death, the news of Kaushik sir's passing away left us all shaken.

Where do I even begin to talk about Kaushik sir's greatness as a player?

The Olympic title in 1980 is, of course, a reminder of the golden generation – India's last – to which he belonged. How is this for an attacking quintet: Kaushik sir as the right out, Merwyn bhai (Fernandes) as the right in, Surinder Sodhi was the centre-forward, the great Mohammad Shahid, as the left in and Zafar bhai (Iqbal) as the left out.

In this star-studded line-up, Kaushik saab stood out with his skills. His pace on the wings, the way he carried the ball along the touchline and his pinpoint crosses were the stuff of legends. These days, the number of crosses in a hockey match is a fraction of what it used to be during that period. In that era, crosses were a very potent weapon to score goals.

We see it a lot in football today: a winger crosses a ball into the box, the centre-forward leaps and heads the ball past the goalkeeper.

Similarly, back then in hockey, if a ball was crossed in from the left or right, the centre-</p

Seema set for Mission Olympics

Becomes fourth Indian woman wrestler to qualify for Tokyo after winning 50kg gold in Bulgaria

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, MAY 8

SUSHILA DEVI made it a point to call her parents in Gudhan village once news came through. Ever since her younger sister Seema Bisla was little, Sushila and her husband Nafe Singh had looked after her at their home in Rohtak. On Friday, when Sushila made the call, the message was clear: Bisla will be staying in Rohtak for three months more. After all, now that Bisla had won an Olympic quota, she will need to prepare for it.

Around 5000 km away in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Friday, Bisla grappled and won the semi-final against Poland's Anna Lukasiak 2-1 to become the fourth Indian woman wrestler to seal a quota for the Tokyo Olympics. A few hours later, she went on to earn gold in the 50kg event of the Olympic qualification tournament by beating Ecuadorian Lucia Guzman, who conceded the match due to injury.

"Seema's father's financial condition was not good, so we supported her as if she was our own daughter," says Nafe, an assistant sub-inspector with the Haryana Police.

"I had to support five children in the family, including my brother's children. But most of my salary gets used up on Seema's training. Her passion for wrestling was what kept us all motivated, and now that she's booked the Olympic spot, it's just going to encourage us further."

With Nafe and Sushila by her side, Bisla grew in the sport. But the seed of wrestling was planted back at her father Azad Singh's two-acre farm. A young Bisla would listen to the fables her father would tell her from his own wrestling days. Soon, listening to the tales would pave the way for others to create their own accounts of her journey.

"When she came to practice at the stadium the first time, I noticed she had a strong grip and that's required to become a good wrestler," remembers her first coach Ishwar Singh Dahiya, who also happened to train 2016 Olympics bronze medallist Sakshi Malik.

Fast and furious

"She was agile and flexible, which made attacking opponents' legs come natural to her." The accolades weren't far behind for the 28-year-old. She won bronze at the



Seema Bisla booked a berth after a close 2-1 win over European Championship bronze medallist Anna Lukasiak.

2009 Asian Cadet Championships in Pune. By 2012, a shoulder and neck injury led her to put on weight, so she competed and won the 67 kg junior nationals that same year. She also picked up successive bronze medals in that weight category at the 2012 and 2013 Asian Junior Championships.

"She increased weight because doctors advised against dropping it," says Railways coach Paramjeet Singh, under whom she was training at the time.

"She had less power since she was shifting from 53kg to 67 kg. So we had to work to build her core strength. The railways job meant she was financially stable and so she got focused on maintaining a good diet."

She cut her weight and got down to 53 kg to win bronze at the senior nationals in 2015 and 2016. Another weight shift was in order in 2018. When Vinesh Phogat moved up to the 53kg, Bisla dropped further down to 50kg.

"The fight in freestyle is all about leg attacks and leg defence and once she settled to the 50 kg weight division, it helped us plan on a long-term basis," Paramjeet adds.

"I would make her see videos of tall wrestlers bending their knees to avoid leg attacks and worked on moves like 'Baghal

Doob,' where she lifts her hands and attacks from behind, or 'Khinch Mar,' where she pulls the leg or body of the opponent while moving her body back."

All the training wasn't about attacking though. Just after returning from Almaty, Kazakhstan with an Asian Championships bronze last month, chief national coach Kuldeep Malik started to focus on Bisla building her defensive skills.

The results showed as she scored an 8-2 win over Belarussian grappler Anastasiya Yanatova, followed by a 10-2 win over Emma Malmgren of Sweden. Then came the semi-final win over Lukasiak in the semi-finals.

Ironing out flaws

"In Almaty, Seema lacked leg defence and we worked on this by making her fight against taller wrestlers in the camp," Malik explains. "We also made her counterattack leg attacks on the smaller sparring partners, similar to what she did against Lukasiak. Now we need to focus on her speed if she's to have a chance at winning a medal in Tokyo."

At home in Rohtak, her sister and brother-in-law have already started

preparing for her return, and the gruelling Olympic training she has in store for her. But they will allow her just once cheat meal when she gets back.

"She loves malai ka halwa and always scolds our son not to eat it (so there's more for her)," Sushila says. "She can have it, but just once. Now she must think of Tokyo."

Barren outing

Putting up an abject show, India's Greco Roman wrestlers drew a blank at the World Olympic Qualifiers as none of them could earn a Tokyo Games quota on Saturday.

India's brightest chance was with Gurpreet Singh but he was ousted after losing his 77kg pre-quarterfinal in just 48 seconds to 2020 European champion Rafiq Huseynov from Azerbaijan.

The quick Huseynov pulled off a quick four-point move to stun Gurpreet. Before Gurpreet could regroup, the Azerbaijani effected another four-pointer to end the bout in the first period itself.

Gurpreet, who had won a bronze medal at last month's Asian Qualifiers, had got a walkover from Tajikistan's Daler Rez Zade in his opening bout.

PTI ADDS

"The entire week I did things well, both in training and in the matches," Nadal said.

"Today again, but when it counted, in the decisive moments, I did everything wrong." Nadal has been trying to regain his best form after not playing much because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"He got off to a slow start on clay by his standards, being eliminated by Andrey Rublev in the quarterfinals in Monte Carlo then won the Barcelona Open after dropping multiple sets through that week. At the start of the year at the Australian Open, he lost in the quarterfinals."

AP

Nadal dejected after Madrid exit

MADRID: Rafael Nadal's good run preparing for the French Open has suddenly hit a speed bump. Nadal's quarterfinal loss to Alexander Zverev at the Madrid Open on Friday came as an unexpected setback in a week in which the king of clay said he was feeling good about his game. "Negative feelings because this was an important week for me," Nadal said.

"I had been progressing, but sometimes when you are going up the stairs you may take a step backward, and that's what happened today." Nadal lost to No 6-ranked Zverev 6-4 6-4 after comfortable wins against up-and-comers Carlos Alcaraz and Alexei Popyrin.

Notice Inviting Expression of Interest for Development & Implementation of Integrated ERP based e-Governance System in all Urban Local Bodies of Bihar (through e-tendering)

Urban Development and Housing Department

1st Floor, Vikas Bhawan, New Secretariat, Patna - 800 015

(Tel: 0612-2215580, Fax: 0612-2217059)

Email: urbansecbih@nic.in, udhd.bih@gmail.com,

Website : www.state.bihar.gov.in/urban

NIT No.: E-555

1. Urban Development & Housing Department, Government of Bihar invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for Development & Implementation of Integrated ERP based e-Governance System in all Urban Local Bodies of Bihar.

2. Interested Agencies/Firms may download the complete EOI Document from website www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in or www.state.bihar.gov.in/urban.

Sr.	Information	Details
1.	Website for submission of proposal	www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
2.	Last date (deadline) for submission of EOI Proposal on Eproc, website	Upto 01:00 PM on 28.05.2021
3.	Last date (deadline) for submission of hard copies at UDHD office	Upto 02:00 PM on 28.05.2021
4.	Opening of Responses/EOI	03:00 PM on 28.05.2021
5.	Date of Presentation by eligible bidders	To be notified later

3. A firm will be selected following the criteria and procedures described in the EOI document. 4. No proposal will be accepted without non-refundable EOI document fee of Rs. 1000/- . No liability will be accepted for downloading the incomplete EOI document. 5. The Principal Secretary, UD&HD, GoB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without incurring any obligation to inform the affected application/s of the grounds. 6. Other details can be seen in the EOI document on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in/

Officer on Special Duty,
UD&HD,

PR-0001124 (Urban) 2021-22

किसी भी तरह आपवा ले जानकारी अथवा सुझाव दें आपदा प्रदूषण के हेल्पलाइन नं. 1070 पर सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है।

ADVERTORIAL



Me n Moms “The Joy Of Parenting”

Parenthood is a Journey. A life-time full of laughter, tears, care, joy, learning & discovering something new every day. At Me n Moms we understand your baby's need and want to help you give your little one the best care possible. Since 1994 Me n Moms has been able to put a smile on both the mother and baby's face. Me n Moms is a one-stop destination for all products for mother and baby at all the stages of development, made easily available online & offline through our 125+ stores PAN India.

Brand Story

Conceived in the year 1994, established by first generation entrepreneur Mr. Naresh Khatar M.D. and Founder, Me n Moms aims to make parenting a more joyful journey for all the mothers out there. From a single store outlet to now being a Pan India entity with more than 125 outlets, Me n Moms currently is a 200 crore empire which is home-grown. The understanding towards the needs of modern Indian mother while keeping in mind the child's comfort and over all development has been a catalyst of this brand's success.

Knowing the pulse of a parent, the brand relentlessly works towards bringing innovative products of International Standards to the local market that is sen-



Mr. Naresh Khatar
M.D. Founder, Me n Moms



sibly priced making it a perfect companion of the foundation years of baby's life i.e. 0 to 3 years. And we did not stop there, the popular baby care and parenting brand Mee Mee was launched in 2007, offers a large variety of products across all categories including Skin & Oral Care, Feeding, Infant Utility Accessories, Travel, Nursery, Toys, Fashion & Maternity which

ensures each and every requirement of a parent in met. The products are scientifically developed and undergoes rigorous test before it reaches the baby and are certified by international standards such as ASTM, EN, BIS & ISI.

As a brand, Mee Mee and Me n Moms together are meeting the needs of over 10 million happy moms and babies by providing international quality at affordable pricing across India. Today, the brand is country's only label that offers products in every category of childcare and mother care and are present across more

than 3000 leading outlets which include Me n Moms stores, specialized baby stores, chemists, hypermarkets and e-commerce portal.

Mother's Day Message

During the initial years, the mother & baby need utmost care. This Mother's Day the entire team from the Mee Mee family wish for a safe and healthy life to all the Mothers & Babies out there. "No language can express the power and beauty of mother's love. Happy Mother's Day to all the strong, beautiful mothers who do it all, for their baby."



During the initial years, the mother & baby need utmost care. This Mother's Day the entire team from the Mee Mee family wish for a safe and healthy life to all the Mothers & Babies out there. "No language can express the power and beauty of mother's love. Happy Mother's Day to all the strong, beautiful mothers who do it all, for their baby."



TO THE MOM WHO ENSURES HER BABY IS WELL FED EVEN WHEN SHE'S AT WORK

With all the responsibility that motherhood brings, Mee Mee understands the need to make life a little bit easier for the modern mom. After lots of research and active participation of mothers all over India, we have developed a range of breast pumps that suit everyone's needs.

Easy to use : Simple instructions and information make the pump very easy to use.

Easy to store your milk : Detachable bottles make storing your milk hassle free.

Easy to assemble : All parts are easy to remove and put together, making cleaning and storing effortless.

Easy on the pocket : Mee Mee Breast Pumps come in a wide range to suit every need, whether for travel, work or just to increase your supply.

Easy to clean : All parts of the breast pumps can be sterilized thus are easy to clean.



Wishes You

HAPPY
Mother's Day



The joy of parenting™

SKIN & ORAL CARE | BATH | FEEDING | MATERNITY | DIAPERS & MORE | TRAVEL | SLEEPING & NURSERY | TOYS | APPAREL & FOOTWEAR

100 Be 100 times happier

me n moms®

10000 + Stores

Retail & Chemist presence

Online partners: amazon.in Flipkart bigbasket firstcry

Customer Care No.: +918080335566 | Email: customercare@mennoms.co.in

For Franchise Enquiry: +91 74088 85503 | Email: bd.head@mennoms.co.in

Shop online: www.mennoms.in | /mennomeindia | /mennomeindia

Mee Mee products are certified by ASTM-F-963 (American Standards for Testing & Materials) and EN-71 (European Normal) standards. All parts used are safe, lead free and the edges of all products are soft and rounded, keeping the child's safety in mind.