

HEARINGS ON OXYGEN CRISIS

SC backs more O₂ for Karnataka, tells Centre to ensure Delhi gets 700 MT

Rejects plea against HC order, 'won't leave people in the lurch'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

OVERRULING PLEAS by the Centre, the Supreme Court Friday declined to interfere with a Karnataka High Court direction asking the Central Government to increase daily allocation of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) for the state, which has emerged as the country's new Covid hotspot, from 962 metric tonnes (MT) to 1,200 MT for a short period to tide over an acute shortage.

In its plea, the Centre said that if every High Court were to pass similar orders without regard to the stocks available, it will lead to chaos in LMO supply. The Bench said that while it is looking at the "larger issue", it will not "leave the people of the state in the lurch".

With a daily caseload of over 45,000 in the state, a Bench of



Covid-19 patients at the Shehnai Banquet isolation centre in Delhi on Friday. Amit Mehra

GUJARAT SEEKS MORE OXYGEN

THE GUJARAT government informed the Supreme Court through an affidavit on Friday that it has written to the Centre asking for more oxygen. Allocation has been static at 975 MT, while demand is expected to rise to 1,600 MT by May 15, Gujarat said.

REPORT PAGE 7

Over 45,000 cases daily, Karnataka chooses 'last resort': total lockdown

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, MAY 7

WITH KARNATAKA clocking over 45,000 Covid cases daily in the past week, the BJP government has moved to impose a total lockdown in the state — the "last resort" prescribed by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi to tackle the surge in his affidavit to the nation two weeks ago.

On Friday evening, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyappa announced a full lockdown in the state from May 10 to May 24 to break the chain of Covid transmission in the state.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Don't want to be coercive but we mean business: top court tells SG

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

STATING THAT it didn't want to be "coercive" but that it "means business", the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre to ensure that 700 Metric Tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) is supplied to Delhi daily to meet the needs of Covid-19 patients.

"We want 700 MT to be supplied to Delhi on a daily basis. Please don't force us to be in a situation where we have to be firm," a Bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta who appeared for the Centre.

"...And we mean business. It has to be supplied and we don't want to be coercive," said Justice Chandrachud, adding that while the court will clarify this in its detailed order, "you proceed and arrange the oxygen".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SURGE IN 243 'BACKWARD GRANT' DISTRICTS

BRGF	India	Shareoftotal
18.57%	18.58%	
51,18,253	38,16,838	2,10,77,110
Sept 16, 2020	May 5, 2021	
1,70,310	10,09,976	7,15,662
Sept 16, 2020	May 5, 2021	3,6,389
9,55	83,198	2,30,168
Sept 16, 2020	May 5, 2021	

In second wave, Covid hits rural India: cases and deaths quadruple

(BRGF) — 243 of the 272 for which data are available — had more than 38.16 lakh people infected with the disease as on May 5. This is more than four times the 9.5 lakh infections at the peak of the first wave on September 16, 2020.

The burden of active cases in these districts is also much higher in the second wave, which is yet to peak. The active caseload right now is more than 4.2 times the peak active caseload in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Over 15% positivity in 24 states, cases trending steeply up in 30 districts**KAUNAIN SHERIFF M**

NEW DELHI, MAY 7

TWENTY-FOUR states have reported a test positivity rate of more than 15 per cent for Covid-19 over the last week, the government said on Friday.

At least 30 districts had shown a "steep upward trend" in cases over the last two weeks. The data were a "matter of great concern", the Health Ministry said.

The country's total active caseload was 36,45,164 on Friday. A record 4,14,188 cases had been reported over the previous 24 hours, along with 3,915 deaths, the government said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

E EXPLAINED

Rising in the South

AS MANY as 20 of the 30 districts showing a "steep upward trend week-on-week" in daily new cases were in southern India, government data show — 10 in Kerala, seven in Andhra Pradesh, and three in Karnataka.

The districts covered by the Backward Region Grant Fund

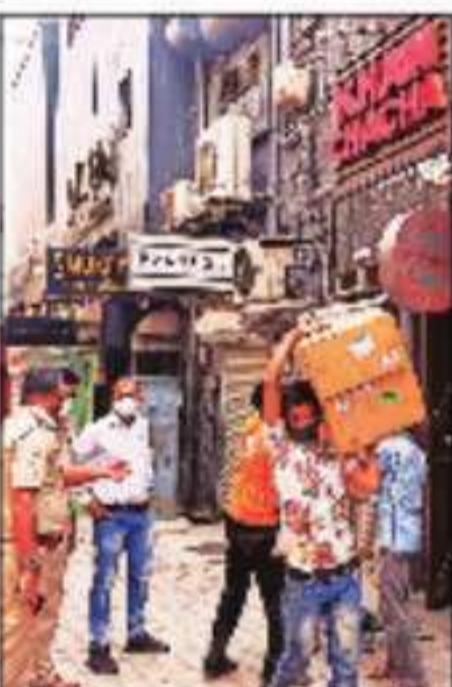
Oxygen racket: More concentrators seized from Khan Mkt eateries

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

A DAY after it seized 419 oxygen concentrators, 32 of those from a restaurant in South Delhi's Lodhi Colony, and arrested four men for allegedly being part of a racket to sell the machines at inflated rates, the net has widened

with the Delhi Police finding more concentrators stashed away in two top restaurants,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Oxygen concentrators are taken away following the raid on Khan Chacha at Khan Market on Friday.

DISTRICT SAHARANPUR**Active caseload thrice last year's peak, a lone doctor struggles to cope with flood of patients**

Primary Health Centre is shut, CHC not declared Covid centre yet, both wait for stocks of vaccines



Dr VK Sharma with a patient at his clinic in village Bargaon in Saharanpur on Thursday. Praveen Khanna

DIPANKAR GHOSH
BARGAON (SAHARANPUR), MAY 7

THE PATIENT is weak and gasping for breath. Dr VK Sharma can barely hear him speak. But he puts his hand on the patient's chest, checks the makeshift saline drip on a rickety pole, and utters the same words of reassurance that he says he has most often used throughout his 45-year practice. "Bas sard-khansi hai, thik ho jaoge (It's just a cold and cough, you will be fine)." But Dr Sharma knows it's different this time.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

COVID IN THE COUNTRYSIDE UTTAR PRADESH
AN EXPRESSES SERIES PART-2

The words are more placebo than truth. "Should I tell them they could die?" he says.

Over the past few weeks, Sharma's one-room clinic on the roadside at Bargaon village in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



SAHARANPUR
Lucknow
ACTIVE CASES

1,059 APRIL 16

5,893 MAY 6

Saharanpur on Uttar Pradesh's north-western tip has been handling a deluge of patients with Covid symptoms.

It's a snapshot of the grim

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Thought of deferring polls but decided against it: dissenting EC Rajiv Kumar

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE ELECTION Commission (EC) had considered deferring a few phases of the recently held Assembly polls given the rising number of Covid cases but decided against it since the imposition of President's Rule could have proven to be "damaging" for the poll body. The dissenting election commissioner, Rajiv

Kumar, is said to have written this in his affidavit that was rejected by the Commission, and not filed with the Madras High Court.

Kumar wrote that such a move would have caused "massive hue and cry and popular discontent" and exposed the Commission into the accusation of favouring one party over another.

The EC, he said, had also looked into the option of merging the remaining three phases

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

EVER SO OFTEN an ambulance whizzes past, rattling the economy.

COMPOSER VANRAJ BHATIA, 93, DEAD
PAGE 7

Pune cops face action as police chief, ACP in disguise stump them

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, MAY 7

A LITTLE past midnight on Wednesday, a couple walked into the Pimpri Police Station with a complaint. Jamal Kamal Khan and his wife said they had called an emergency ambulance service for a neighbour, only to be asked to pay up Rs 5,000. The police personnel on duty dismissed them and asked them to

lodge their complaint at the Sant Tukaram Nagar police chowki, 3 kilo metres away.

On any other night, this inaction on the part of the police would have gone unnoticed, but Jamal Kamal Khan was no ordinary complainant. The bearded man wearing a yellow kurta and a skull cap was Pune Police Commissioner Krishna Prakash, no less — and his 'wife', Assistant Police Commissioner Prerna

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A graduate from MIT, former banker, Tamil Nadu's finance minister wants Centre to give state its due**PAGE 1
ANCHOR**

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MAY 7

A POLITICAL scion with engineering and management degrees from top institutes at home and in the US. A top banker who lived and married abroad, and returned to become a popular MLA. An ardent devotee of Goddess Meenakshi in a party that swears by atheism.

It's a fitting progression for PTR, whose grandfather P T



Palanivel Thiagarajan with wife Margaret and sons. Express

Rajan was the chief minister of Madras Presidency in the 1930s, and whose father P T. Palanivel Rajan served as a DMK minister. He takes over as Finance Minister after winning for the second time from Madurai Central, by 34,176 votes.

In these past five years, PTR earned his stripes as a leader. Always available for his constituents, he would put out a report card of his work every six months. "If he is given time to deliver, he will deliver," Stalin knows that, "says a senior DMK

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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'SITUATION IMPROVING'

No one should die because of oxygen shortage, says CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MAY 7

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the oxygen crisis in Delhi has improved and directed officials to ensure that there are no deaths because of shortage of oxygen in the city. While chairing a high-level meeting on Friday, he also directed officials to make sure all eligible people are vaccinated within the next three months.

"Now that Delhi has received oxygen, no one in Delhi should suffer because of shortage of oxygen. All hospitals in Delhi should increase their beds and every DM should arrange new oxygen beds in their districts so that no deaths happen due to lack of oxygen in Delhi. Oxygen is very important so it should be used efficiently. We have to try to prevent oxygen wastage and save as much oxygen as we can. If we can, we should save oxygen and return it to the central government so that it can be used somewhere else," he said.

The 'oxygen bulletin' shared by the Delhi government on Friday stated the city received 577 MT of oxygen on May 6 against the demand of 976 MT. The number of SOS calls have also gradually declined, with the government receiving alert calls and messages from nine hospitals and nursing homes across the city on May 6.

BRIEFLY

Man held for cheating kin of Covid patients

New Delhi: A 25-year-old man was arrested for allegedly cheating distressed families of Covid patients on the pretext of providing them an ICU bed. Police said the accused, Imran Ahmed, arrested from Karol Bagh, has cheated more than 11 families of Rs 1.3 lakh in a span of five days.

Provide doctor consultation to home-isolated cops: CP

New Delhi: Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava has directed all deputy commissioners of police of districts/units to provide suitable medical advice and consultation of the doctors to police personnel who are home quarantined. Currently, over 4,000 police personnel have been tested positive and over 3,000 are home quarantined.

Light rain in Delhi next week

New Delhi: Following Thursday evening showers that brought respite from soaring temperatures, Delhi may witness another spell of light rain under the influence of Western Disturbance from Monday to Thursday next week, as per the IMD. Delhi recorded 1mm of rain in the 24 hours preceding Friday morning, however, some parts of the city received more showers.

1 held for murder

New Delhi: Police on Friday fired bullets at two men and later arrested one of them in Southwest Delhi's Palam Village. Police said the men accused of killing a woman two days ago at her place in Sugarpur. The motive behind the murder is yet to be ascertained. IANS



Vaccination underway at a school in Jangpura's Bhogal area, Friday. Amit Mehra

The 48 oxygen plants coming up should be installed immediately as soon as they reach Delhi. These 48 oxygen plants have an oxygen production capacity of 40 tonnes. This will further help in improving Delhi's oxygen situation. We have to prepare long-term plans and build the capacity of oxygen storage on a very large scale in Delhi. We should also create a special storage capacity for storage of oxygen," he said.

According to officials, an SOS call was received from Indian Spinal Hospital at 2.30 pm on Thursday about shortage of oxy-

gen supply. Another SOS call was received from Lok Nayak Hospital at 12 pm.

"One metric tonne of oxygen was provided to Indian Spinal Hospital immediately from the oxygen response point created by the Delhi government. Similarly, Lok Nayak's oxygen demand was met without delay and two metric tonnes of oxygen was made available to them. Officials, MLAs and ministers from the government are putting their best forward to ensure that oxygen demands are met," said a senior Delhi government official.

During the meeting, the CM

also expressed his displeasure that all home isolation patients were still not being given oximeters. "In any case, it should be ensured that oximeters are given to all patients recovering from Covid in-home isolation. We will be able to stop the third wave from coming to Delhi, only by being able to administer vaccines to everyone as soon as possible in the next three months. We need to recruit retired doctors, nurses, and medical staff on a large scale. Whoever wants to help society should join the government and contribute to helping in this difficult situation," he said.

CORONAVIRUS
IN THE CAPITAL

VACCINATIONS
IN LAST 24 HRS
1,14,657

TOTAL CASES		HOSPITAL BEDS		Total	Vacant
12,73,035		5,612		2,239	35
		Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
May 6	19,133	20,028	335	78,780	
May 7	19,832	19,085	341	79,593	
Total	91,035*	118,093	18,739	1,76,77,125	

Total animal cases
12 animal samples from Delhi zoo test negative

New Delhi: Samples of animals, including a lion, at Delhi's National Zoological Park (NZP) have been sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Bareilly days after eight Asiatic lions at the Hyderabad zoo tested positive for Covid-19.

Delhi zoo director Ramesh Pandey said on Friday that all government protocols are being followed at the zoo.

He said 12 samples of many species, including swans, alion and owls, were sent for histopathological examination. While detailed reports are awaited, zoo officials said all samples have tested negative for Covid-19. Pandey said, "The sanitisation drills never stopped in the NZP since after Covid-19 phase. The NZP went through avian influenza sanitisation drills and now all protocols are similarly being continued for Covid."

He added, "We are vigilant and doing the needful. Samples of some of the animals, including a lion, had been sent to IVRI. Nothing adverse has been informed or reported so far. Detailed reports are awaited."

On Tuesday, in what was perhaps the first such reported incident, eight Asiatic lions in the Hyderabad zoo were declared positive for Covid-19 by the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology. Rakesh Mishra, advisor of the institute, was reported to have said that saliva samples taken from the lions were thoroughly tested and they turned out positive. ENS

NGT's Registrar-General, who took up cause of young lawyers, dies of Covid at 42

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MAY 7



Ashu Garg

When Ashu Garg (42) joined the Delhi Judicial Service 14 years ago, he had big shoes to fill. Son of retired Delhi High Court Judge SPGarg, he "wanted to follow in his father's footsteps".

He went on to become an Additional Sessions Judge, fighting for the cause of young lawyers. He "worried about young advocates who lost jobs", "obsessed over old pending cases", and "gave due respect to clerks", winning admirers both inside and outside the courtroom.

On Friday the National Green Tribunal, where Garg was posted as Registrar-General, announced that he had died due to Covid-19. His death was announced by Administrative Civil Judge Shirish Aggarwal in an order on Friday. Garg is survived by his wife and two young children, said Delhi Bar Association members.

Advocate Sanjeev Nasir, President of the Delhi Bar Association, said Garg died at Balaji Action Medical Institute.

"He was admitted to the hospital for quite some time. His condition deteriorated on Thursday night and he passed away on Friday morning," Nasir said.

Garg did his BA LLB (Hons) from Amity Law School in 2005 and LLM from Kurukshetra University. He went on to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Intellectual Property Rights from Indian Law Institute, Delhi, and Post Graduate Diploma in Cyber

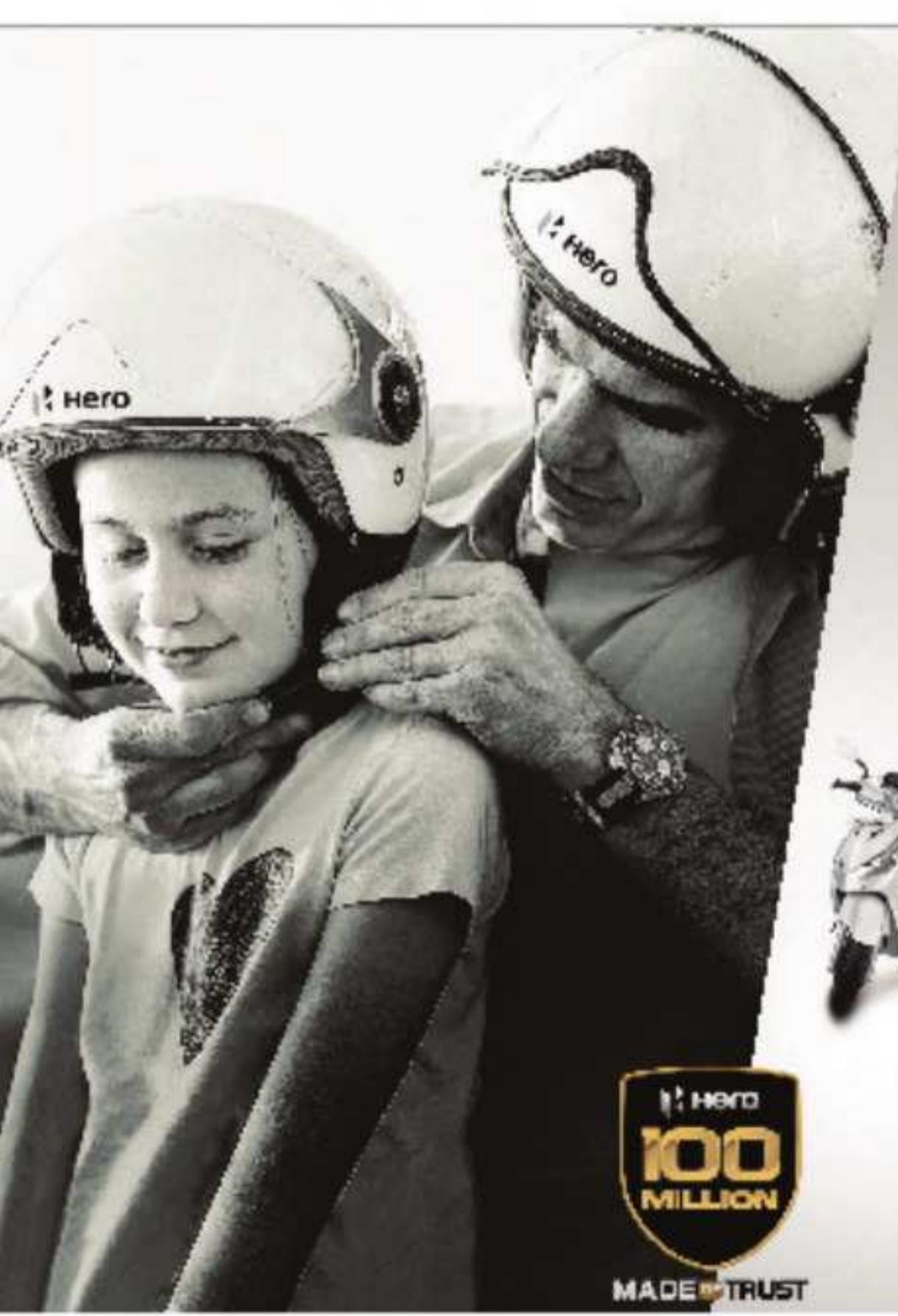
pass orders mechanically. I remember, in a bank fraud case in which I represented the accused, police had asked for a seven-day remand. Garg shouted at the investigating officer and only gave a 24-hour remand. He told the IO in open court he would not extend the remand come what may.

He was a very honest judge," Vats said. Ved Prakash Sharma, co-chairman of the Bar Council of India, said Garg wanted to walk in his father's footsteps: "Garg's father used to be a popular judge at the Delhi High Court and he wanted to stand upto his father's reputation."

In 2019, his father was appointed by the Delhi High Court to conduct an enquiry into violence at Tis Hazari court between lawyers and policemen.

Garg did his BA LLB (Hons) from Amity Law School in 2005 and LLM from Kurukshetra University. He went on to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Intellectual Property Rights from Indian Law Institute, Delhi, and Post Graduate Diploma in Cyber

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STATEMENT OF STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2021

S. No.	PARTICULARS	STANDALONE				CONSOLIDATED			
		MARCH 31, 2021 AUDITED	MARCH 31, 2020 AUDITED	DEC 31, 2019 AUDITED	MARCH 31, 2021 AUDITED	MARCH 31, 2020 AUDITED	MARCH 31, 2021 AUDITED	MARCH 31, 2020 AUDITED	DEC 31, 2019 AUDITED
1.	Total Income	8,773.35	6,407.88	9,978.45	31,380.47	29,614.43	8,758.01	6,490.82	10,032.61
2.	Net Profit for the period before tax (before Exceptional Items)	1,129.12	650.59	1,441.82	3,900.38	3,896.32	1,146.54	637.53	1,383.92
3.	Net Profit for the period before tax (after Exceptional Items)	1,129.12	650.59	1,441.82	3,900.38	4,573.69	1,146.54	637.53	1,363.92
4.	Net Profit for the period after tax (after Exceptional Items)	864.97	620.71	1,084.47	2,984.20	3,633.26	885.28	613.81	1,029.17
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	868.93	616.02	1,076.13	2,943.14	3,601.48	885.78	616.42	1,022.39
6.	Equity Share Capital (face value Rs. 2/- per share)	39.96	39.95	39.95	39.95	39.95	39.95	39.95	39.95
7.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)				15,158.47	14,096.45			15,376.48
a)	Earnings per share on net profit after tax - face value Rs. 2/- each (in Rupees)	43.30	31.08	54.29	148.39	181.91	44.10	51.02	146.07
b)	Diluted	43.28	31.08	54.29	148.37	181.91	44.08	50.27	146.04

- Notes:-
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the quarter and year ended Financial Results is available on the Company's website www.hermotocorp.com and also on stock exchange websites, www.bseindia.com
 - The Board of Directors held on May 06, 2021 considered and recommended a final dividend @ 125% i.e. Rs. 25 per equity share and special dividend @ 50% i.e. Rs. 10 per equity share (face value Rs. 2/- per equity share). This dividend together with the Interim dividend aggregates to Rs. 90 per equity share and special dividend of Rs. 15 per equity share, taking the total dividend for the year 2020-21 to Rs. 100 per equity share i.e. 5250%
 - Based on the guiding principles given in Ind AS 108 on 'Operating Segments', the Company's business activity fall within a single operating segment, namely automotive segment. Accordingly, the disclosure requirements of Ind AS 108 are not applicable.
 - The above results for the quarter and year ended March 31, 2021 have been reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee meeting held on May 06, 2021 and approved by the Board of Directors in their meeting held on May 06, 2021.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors

Pawan Munjal

Chairman, Managing Director & CEO

DIN : 00004223

WT: 013.2021

New Delhi, May 06, 2021

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ASKS DELHI TO CONSIDER GIVING OXIMETERS VIA PDS

HC stresses on need to ramp up doctor teleconsultations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE DELHI High Court on Friday told the Delhi government that 50-100 hunting lines are too few for the centralised teleconsultation service being made available by it for Covid-19 patients.

Line hunting is the method of distributing phone calls from a single telephone number to a group of several phone lines.

"Even 100 is less. If 100 people are calling at the same time, the person at 101 would have to wait; that is what it means," said the division bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli, adding that every patient would take some 5-10 minutes on an average.

The court also said the same doctor should be assigned to the patient on each call. The government said it would work towards removing bottlenecks to address the concerns expressed by the court.

The Delhi government earlier told the court that teleconsultation services have been started for Covid patients in all 11 districts on all days through an official team of 44 doctors specially dedicated for the purpose, and linked through centralised helpline number 1031 and other control rooms.

It also told the court the in-service doctors, including those in home quarantine, would be included to ramp up the teleconsultation service. The number of doctors would be raised to at least 532, the state said.

It also said retired doctors would be hired for the purpose and a request has also been made to the Delhi Medical Association and Delhi Medical Council for the same.

The court on Friday also suggested that the government can consider providing basic med-



The Delhi govt earlier told the court that teleconsultation services have been started for Covid patients in all 11 districts on all days through an official team of 44 doctors. Amit Mehra

ication, oximeters, thermometers, steamers through the public distribution system to Covid positive persons who are below the poverty line, senior citizens living alone, and those with any disability.

"What is the experience as of now because of the sheer number; this is not happening. You need to take steps," said the bench, while referring to checking in on those recuperating at their homes.

It also directed the government to revisit the order passed last year on capping the prices for Covid-related treatment by private hospitals.

The bench also asked authorities to relax restrictions imposed on e-commerce services since medical equipment is not getting delivered. "That also has to be treated as an essential commodity," the court added.

'40 PSA plants ordered'

The Delhi government on Friday told the court that 40 Pressure Swing Adsorption(PSA) plants have been ordered by the state, most of which are funded by different donors. The court was told that out of the other eight PSA plants funded by the PMCAES fund, four have been made operational so far and technical difficulties are being faced in completing the work of others.

The 40 PSA plants have a total capacity of 43 MTs and the authorities are in the process of currently installing five plants at different hospitals, the court was told. "There are many others in the pipeline and negotiations are on," Senior Advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, told the court.

The Delhi government also informed the court that Indira Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Dwarka's Sector 9 will be made operational by Friday evening subject to availability of oxygen. The court directed the government to file a status report by Monday regarding the number of Covid beds to be made available there.

HC ASKS DELHI GOVT TO APPRISE IT ON STEPS TO BOOST PLASMA AVAILABILITY

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi government to apprise it about the steps being taken to ensure availability of blood plasma for treatment of serious Covid patients to doctors at hospitals without any delay. Advocate Tarun Chahal, who recently recovered from Covid, on Thursday submitted that every Covid patient who is discharged from hospital must be mandatorily directed to donate plasma to meet the shortfall. The division bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli asked authorities to examine the said aspect and place their stand. ENS

HC refuses bid to call Army for Covid efforts

SOFIAHSAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

WHILE REJECTING a submission against the Centre's refusal to accede to the Delhi government's request for setting up field hospitals by the Army in the capital, the Delhi High Court Friday said the Armed forces would have to remain in readiness to first discharge the duty for which they have been raised, and it does not want Covid-19 to spread like "wildfire" among them.

The division bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli said it's a good thought that all have trust in the Armed Forces, but there would be unimaginable problems if the virus spreads among them. The court also said Army personnel live together in cantonment areas and barracks. "It could completely paralyse them from doing the real job they are required to do, and we should not forget it has not been even a year since the time that we had a problem," said the court.

A lawyer before the court earlier referred to news reports that the Army was rushing medical personnel from different parts of the country to assist the Bihar government during the pandemic. "If they have the operational readiness to do it in Bihar, I do not know what was the reason to not do in Delhi," said advocate Aditya Prasad.

However, the court said, "There could be logistic issues and the Defence Ministry has already said the forces are doing enough in Delhi. Let us not go into controversies," it told Prasad.

"Armies have to be in readiness to first discharge the duty they have been raised for. We cannot have any compromise on that. Let us not press on that beyond a point," said the court.

The Centre Wednesday told the court that the Defence Ministry decided against bringing the Army to set up field hospitals in the capital, as Army resources across the country are stretched and they are providing "as much as possible" without compromising their operational readiness.

Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia had earlier written to Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to lend services of the Army to the state to help it set up and run Covid health facilities.

Behind Youth Congress's Srinivas, 100 volunteers to track, respond to Covid SOS



At the IYC control room on Raisina Road, Ashna Butani

ASHNA BUTANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

AT THE Indian Youth Congress (IYC) control room on Raisina Road, the phones don't stop buzzing. Ten volunteers have their task cut out — some scour Twitter for the #SOSIYC hashtag and identify requests for oxygen, medicines or hospital beds that are to be forwarded to their seniors, while others keep refreshing the Delhi Corona app for updates on the status of empty beds.

Volunteers divide the requests under several categories: ICU beds, oxygen beds, oxygen cylinders, plasma, medicines, doctor consultations and help for cremations.

Behind IYC President Srinivas BV, who has emerged as a point person for those seeking help during this Covid surge, is a small army of volunteers who keep the gears turning behind the scenes.

Each volunteer in the control room is either looking into the computer or on the phone, or sometimes both at once. Not all requests can be fulfilled, so they narrow them down based on available resources at the time and forward them to Srinivas and IYC national convener Manu Jain, who reach out to hospitals or oxygen suppliers.

Srinivas, who operates mostly from his office in the next room, then connects to hospitals or ground volunteers — there are 100 in Delhi; 10 in the control room and 90 on ground.

Each ground volunteer is assigned one of Delhi's 11 districts.

One such request was from a man in Bengaluru, whose mother had died in Delhi while his father was in the ICU. The team stepped in and conducted the last rites.

In the afternoon, Manu calls a family whose patient's oxygen levels had dipped to 48%. He tells them he is from Srinivas's team and will arrange an ICU bed.

However, they can't help everyone. Srinivas says there have been instances where they have arranged beds, but it was too late. He says he receives calls till 3-4 am and starts working at 7 am.

Oxygen cylinders reach the office from across the country via the IYC's volunteers in other states. Sanjiv Netan (28) keeps track of requests and coordinates with those who need them.

There are around 1,000 volunteers across the country who perform similar tasks. The control room volunteers come across over 1,000 requests on Twitter every hour. If it is from Delhi, they take cognizance, else they pass it to volunteers from the respective state. Srinivas takes calls from people across the country.

Acknowledging that they can only help a few, volunteers say they do not give anyone false hope. "It takes 30 seconds to comment on social media but at least 8-9 hours to actually fulfil a request," says Manu.

Plea alleges cylinder hoarding by MLA, HC seeks presence

SOFIAHSAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE DELHI High Court on Friday issued a notice to AAP MLA and Delhi Cabinet Minister Imran Hussain and directed him to remain present in the hearing on Monday after a lawyer in an application, alleged that Hussain has been hoarding oxygen cylinders and making "arbitrary distribution".

While directing Hussain to file a reply to the application and issuing notice to the Delhi government, the division bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said it needs to be first found where Hussain is procuring the oxygen cylinders from.

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



PARTY PRAISE

AT THE Congress Parliamentary Party meeting on Friday, Indian Youth Congress president BV Srinivas came in for much praise from MPs and leaders for running an effective machinery providing help to Covid patients. Congress president Sonia Gandhi too pointed out that the Youth Congress's efforts have been particularly noteworthy. Interestingly, at the press conference addressed by Mallikarjun Kharge, Abhishek Singhvi and Gaurav Gogoi later, all of them made it a point to stress that the good work being done by Srinivas and the Youth Congress at the activation of Rahul Gandhi had come in for praise at the meeting.

POINTING FINGERS

ALTHOUGH THE state unit of the party is primarily being blamed for the BJP's poor performance in Kerala, the central leadership does not appear to be in a position to wash its hands off. A section of party leaders in Kerala are blaming the sole of a senior leader in the organisation for the "wrong decisions and flawed strategy" for Kerala. The senior leader apparently has strong influence on the state unit president and the Union Minister he is close to. Earlier this week, a meeting of Kerala leaders, including district presidents, convened by general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh to assess the election results did not find many participants. According to sources, not even 50 per cent of the leaders attended the meeting. The state leaders are now waiting for the national leadership to call a stock-taking meeting so that they can air their complaints.

CALLING IT QUIT

THE ELECTION Commission (EC) has recently been under harsh glare with political parties and High Courts being critical of its handling of the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry amidst the pandemic. On Friday, an advocate in the EC's panel of counsel in the Supreme Court resigned, saying his "values are not in consonance" with the poll panel at this time. The resignation set tongues wagging about the EC's conduct yet again. Gossiping has it that the lawyer resigned since he did not agree with the Commission's decision to file an SLP in the Supreme Court against Madras High Court's "murder" remark. However, a spokesperson for the EC said on Friday that the lawyer concerned had not handled any case of the poll panel since 2019.

Sonia: Cong poll defeats disappointing, must draw lessons together

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

COMMENTING FOR the first time on her party's disastrous show in the recent Assembly elections in four states and the UT of Puducherry, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday said the performance was "disappointing" and the party must collectively draw "appropriate lessons from this setback in a spirit of humility and honesty."

While a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) is expected to be convened next week to review the results, there seems to be rumblings among a section of leaders, given the state of electoral defeats the party has faced of late.

Sources said discontent is simmering again, with some leaders maintaining that the leadership cannot keep kicking the can down the road. One party leader said, "The leader-

ship seems to be trying to hide behind the pandemic to avoid uncomfortable questions."

Congratulating M.K. Stalin, Mamata Banerjee and Pinarayi Vijayan for their victories in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala respectively, Sonia said, "Most unfortunately, our own performance in all the states was very disappointing and if I may say, unacceptably so. The CWC is meeting shortly to review the results, but it goes without saying that we, as a party, collectively must draw appropriate lessons from this setback in a spirit of humility and honesty."

Many Congress leaders, including some from what is referred to as the 'Group of 23', believe the meeting of the CWC and Sonia's cursory mention about the party's humiliating performance in the Assembly elections was yet another attempt to avoid a much-needed soul-searching and radical action to stem the rot in the party.

MHA team meets Bengal Governor, visits violence-hit areas in South 24 Parganas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 7

A FOUR-MEMBER team of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) visited violence-hit areas in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district Friday following a meeting with Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The MHA officials interacted with people in Satgachia and Nodalkali, where violence was reported in the aftermath of the election results on May 2 and assessed property damage. Earlier, the team visited the Raj Bhavan and discussed the law-and-order situation with Dhankhar for over an hour. The MHA has asked Dhankhar to submit a report on the post-poll violence.

Meanwhile, a five-member



The MHA team with Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar. PTI

Constitution Bench of the Calcutta High Court directed West Bengal's Advocate-General Kishore Dutta to specify in the affidavit the areas where the violence occurred, and

mention the steps that were taken to prevent or control it.

Petitioner Anindya Sundar Das claimed in his PIL lives we're in danger because of alleged inaction

of the state police. The matter will be heard next on May 10.

The TMC, meanwhile, continued to manoeuvre against the BJP and filed police complaints against its leaders and supporters for alleged incitement to violence.

8 held over attack on Muraleedharan's car

Kolkata: The state police on Friday said they had arrested eight people in connection with the attack on a vehicle of Union minister V Muraleedharan. The minister's vehicle was pelted with stones while he was in Paschim Medinipur to meet BJP workers who had allegedly faced attacks from TMC men. Sources said three police officers had been suspended for failing to discharge their duties.

ENS

PM-KISAN

Decks cleared for first payment to Bengal farmers

First installment likely to be sent May 14

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee

DECKS HAVE been cleared for transfer of money directly to the bank accounts of eligible farmers in West Bengal under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan) scheme, a source in the Union Agriculture Ministry told *The Indian Express* on Friday. The beneficiaries in the state are likely to get their first installment of Rs 2,000 each in their bank accounts on May 7.

"The West Bengal government has given its approval to automatic debit for directly transferring the money into bank accounts of the PM-Kisan beneficiaries," said the source, adding that this paves the way for transfer of the money into the accounts of eligible farmers.

The state approved the automatic debit on May 4, a day after Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar wrote to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, urging her to direct state officials to facilitate it at the earliest since farmers in the state were being denied benefits of the scheme.

On Thursday, the chief minister told reporters in Kolkata that all measures have been taken and she has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting him to advise the Union Agriculture Ministry to release the funds.

According to the sources, the nodal officer of PM-Kisan in West Bengal government gave a letter to the state農業部, making them eligible for payment in the first round, a source said.

Mamata to PM:
Raise oxygen share to 550 MT; any less may lead to deaths

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 7

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday again urged Prime Minister Modi to increase oxygen supply to the state for Covid-19 treatments, saying West Bengal will need at least 550 MT medical oxygen within a week. She said the demand had gone up to 470 MT in 24 hours, and warned that any allocation less than the requested amount might lead to deaths.

PTI

RANGASAMY SWORN IN AS PUDUCHERRY CM

Puducherry: AIADMK leader N Rangasamy was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Puducherry at a brief ceremony held at the Raj Niwas on Friday and will lead a coalition government of BJP members in his cabinet. This is his fourth stint in office.

BJP's A Namashivayam,

who was elected unanimously as the leader of the

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PATENTLY FAIR

Biden's proposal for liberal IPR regime on Covid vaccines is welcome. EU must shed its intransigence

THAT'S TAKEN more than six months for the US and European Union to reach their stand on patents for anti-Covid vaccines. But all developed countries are still not on the same page on the issue. The EU — which is negotiating a deal with Pfizer to lock in 1.8 billion doses — has said that it is ready for a "pragmatic discussion" on the Biden administration's plea for intellectual property rights flexibility on Covid vaccines. However, EU Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen has expressed reservations about the US proposal and has found support from Germany, the bloc's de facto leader. "The limiting factor in vaccine manufacturing is production capacity and high quality standards, not patents," a spokesperson for German Chancellor Angela Merkel said. The EU has been far more liberal in exporting vaccines compared to the US and UK, which cornered a large number of doses. But the reluctance of some of its members on IPR, while India and several other countries are confronted with vaccine shortages amidst a staggering rise in cases, runs counter to the bloc's position during the early days of the crisis last year. Both von der Leyen and Merkel had endorsed the idea of "vaccine as a public good" then.

In October last year, India and South Africa suggested relaxing the TRIPS regime to enable Third World countries to scale up production of vaccines. The proposal received the support of at least 120 countries but was blocked by the US, UK and the EU which argued that the ban would stifle innovation — changes to international IPR rules require unanimous agreement. The US Trade Department's statement, earlier this week, calling for "extraordinary measures to deal with extraordinary circumstances" is a belated but welcome attempt at course correction. The administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines, "it said.

Articles IX.3 and IX.4 of the WTO agreement mention "exceptional circumstances" when patients can be waived. The fact that such circumstances have not been delineated should not stand in the way of invoking these clauses when the world is confronted with its worst health crisis in a century. Relaxing IPR rules could allow companies in developing countries to manufacture vaccines without fear of lawsuits from firms that developed them. Of course, such measures will not ipso facto lead to an increase in production capacities. Concerns about counterfeit vaccines also deserve serious attention. However, given the warning of epidemiologists that mutants will continue to develop as long as the virus circulates in densely populated countries — most of them in the developed world — the salience of allowing multiple players to start vaccine production under rigorous regulatory monitoring cannot be overstated. When the EU discusses the Biden proposal over the weekend, its members will surely keep the Covid adage, "no one is safe till everyone is safe," in mind. That should nudge them to open more spaces for vaccine collaboration.

STALIN'S TURN

As Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he is new face of Dravidian politics, could play a role in federal pushback by states

AFTER YEARS OF waiting, DMK president MK Stalin, 68, was sworn in as the 12th chief minister of Tamil Nadu on Friday. This is the first DMK ministry in a decade and the first since the demise of party patriarch and Stalin's father, M Karunanidhi. Stalin's ascent to office comes at a time when opposition-led states are increasingly seen as the bulwark against the centralising governance model of the Narendra Modi government and the BJP's ideological project of a unitary India. The Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) led by DMK had flagged secularism and federalism in the campaign, both defined in opposition to BJP, even though BJP is a marginal player in state politics. As the face of DMK, and of Dravidian politics, Stalin could well be pitchforked into a national role.

However, Stalin's first priority would be establishing his authority in Tamil Nadu. DMK's primary rival in state politics, AIADMK, has held together after Jayalalithaa's demise and avoided an electoral washout despite a two-term anti-incumbency. A third party, Naam Tamilar Katchi led by Seeman, has emerged as a serious electoral player with an ethnic chauvinistic agenda and seven per cent vote. Stalin will need to respond to these political challenges by refashioning the DMK's cadre character and enforcing modern governance practices. He could expand on the welfare legacy of Dravidian parties by raising the quality of public services and delivery of public goods rather than extending the list of freebies. Tamil Nadu has done well to build robust public healthcare and education ecosystems. It now calls for a new generation of investment and reforms that can transform them into world class facilities. A perennial problem in the state is water shortage — for agriculture and domestic consumption — which requires better conservation and judicious use. All these, however, can be realised only if the fiscal situation improves and a Covid-wrecked economy is put back on the rails.

Stalin has opted to carry on with a DMK tradition of keeping even pre-poll allies out of the Cabinet. Another let-down is the gender balance in the Cabinet: A party that traces its lineage to Periyar E V Ramasamy, who placed women's agency and emancipation at the core of his social justice agenda, ought to have more than just two women in its ministry.

SOUND OF THE NEW WAVE

Vanraj Bhatia took the road less travelled, gave parallel cinema movement a rare and versatile music

WHEN WRITER BHISHAM Sahni's *Ram* was immortalised on screen by director Govind Nihalani in 1988, it took a nation through the sorrow and despair of Partition all over again. The opening line, "Those who forget history find themselves condemned to repeat it" was accompanied by a haunting shriek that turns into an intense tune along with heavy synths, strings, and wind instruments. To portray the pain, composer Vanraj Bhatia, who won a national award for his work in the film, had an intrinsically western classical music score — the kind of music he remained passionate about till his death at the age of 93 on Friday in Mumbai.

Bhatia's melodies — jingles, immaculate compositions in films such as *Mandi*, *Bhoomika*, *Sardar Begum*, *Manthan*, *Kahung Mohanjosh*, *Hazir Ho* and TV's *Yeh Rishtey Hain* — became popular. Knowledge of music from both worlds, western and Indian, helped him create unique pieces. Be it "Mero gaam katha parey", or the Hindustani classical pieces from *Sardar Begum*, even Bhatia's quintessentially "Indian" pieces were unconventional.

Bhatia briefly trained in Hindustani classical music while in school but fell in love with Raga after listening to Piano Concerto Number 1 at friend and painter Jehangir Sabavala's home. He fought with his family to study composition at the Royal Academy of Music in London and followed it by winning the Rockefeller Scholarship and the French Government Scholarship which allowed him to study in Paris under the aegis of legendary composer Nadia Boulanger. Almost all of Shyam Benegal's work had Bhatia at the musical helm. In his final years, full of financial difficulties, Bhatia felt forgotten. Yet he worked diligently and completed an opera titled *Agnigarsha*, which remains to be staged.



SHAH ALAM KHAN

The oxygen famine

How to get oxygen to the patient needs careful understanding and innovation

IN HIS CLASSIC novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut uses a phrase throughout the book — "So it goes". The phrase conveys death. His use of the phrase in a novel about war is a figurative way of saying that though men, women and children were dying, no one cared for this loss of life and just moved on. The phrase has come to haunt me in recent times. In the last 15 days, there hasn't been a day when I haven't condoned a death or deaths due to Covid-19. With nearly four lakh cases and thousands of fatalities every day, the pandemic has engulfed India like an evil curse. Whatever healthcare system we had has been pulverised to dust by the sheer number of cases.

In Italy, at its peak in 2020, the Covid-19 virus had claimed around 1.21 lakh lives. In India, not only is this figure very high during the second wave but there is also a fundamental difference between their deaths and ours. In Italy, people died due to the Covid-19 illness and its complications. In the second wave in India, most of the deaths have come about due to a lack of basic healthcare facilities — medical oxygen being the most glaring. The situation is so bad that the highest court of the country has been deliberating on the matter for the past 10 days but, unfortunately, nothing seems to be happening. frantic messages by hospitals alerting authorities of the lack of oxygen supply have become commonplace. Large cities like Delhi, Surat and Lucknow are gasping for air. There are reports of Covid patients dying in hospital wards, at home and even on the streets due to a lack of oxygen supply.

Such an unprecedented situation can be compared to a famine, like a famine, where the basic problem is lack of food, the current pandemic seems to be evolving into an "oxygen famine". Deaths in a famine are overcome by increasing food supplies. In the middle of a famine, it is futile to talk about the value of micronutrients or vitamins. The mere availability of food improves the situation. And into

famine, the mortality in the current pandemic can be reduced by providing oxygen not only in the hospitals but also to patients, wherever needed, even at home.

Talk of setting up new hospitals with oxygen beds or improving the healthcare system during the current crisis may be pleasing to the ear but, unfortunately, this discussion will not avoid more deaths at the moment. Home-based oxygen treatment protocols are already in place and most mild and some moderate disease patients can be treated at home provided oxygen is available.

This may not be an ideal solution but a pragmatic approach to reduce the number of people dying. Gases waiting for admission into a hospital can also be salvaged if oxygen is available at home. This shall not only reduce the death rates, but will also reduce the admissions burden on an already crumbling healthcare system. How to get oxygen to the patient is something that needs careful understanding and some innovation.

Before the second wave landed in India, the requirement of medical oxygen was around 700-800 tonnes per day. This had increased to around 3,500-4,000 tonnes per day by the second week of April. This jump of more than 400 per cent has put immense pressure on the oxygen manufacturing units in the country. As the current wave of Covid-19 shows few signs of abating, the coming days will likely see more deaths in this oxygen famine.

In India, medicinal oxygen is produced by both government-owned and private manufacturers. Experts believe that India can produce about 2,000 metric tonnes of medical oxygen per day. We have enough capacity to produce medicinal oxygen but we still see hospitals and individuals struggling due to lack of oxygen. This is the classic trait of a famine as described by Amartya Sen — enough production but no availability. The key, therefore, lies in increasing the production of oxygen to maximum capacity. But manufacturing is not the same as supplying

The supply of oxygen cylinders to patients at home needs to be done on a war footing. Use of the existing government supply lines, for example, the 5,05,879 fair price shops (part of the Public Distribution System), can be one solution. These are distributed through the length and breadth of the country. The use of LPG cylinder distributors can also be explored. These existing supply lines can come in handy in identifying patients in remote areas as the fury of the pandemic is not yet known in the hinterlands.

to regions hungry for oxygen. Medical oxygen is prepared in a liquid form with around 99.5 per cent purity. This is then stored in jumbo tankers and transported to distributors in cryogenic tankers at a specified temperature. Once this reaches the distributor, a process of regasification is done to convert it to gaseous oxygen, which is then filled into cylinders. This process is long, requiring three to six days to reach the user because India does not have enough cryogenic tankers to ensure a quicker supply of oxygen. This needs to be sorted out by the policymakers if any respite in the current situation is to be expected. Arranging cryogenic tankers is thus as vital as more hospital beds or ventilators.

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The current wave of Covid-19 has opened the veins of the republic and is bleeding us white. If we want to intervene to stop deaths, the government needs to have a multi-pronged approach with science and rationality at the centre of it all. By treating this as an oxygen famine, a significant proportion of the mortality rates can be reduced. The current pandemic has reinforced something which we always knew: The healthcare infrastructure of a country is a reflection of the commitment of its regime to its people. We hope in these dystopian times, there is a lesson for each one of us to learn.

The writer is head of the Department of Orthopaedics, AIIMS, New Delhi. Views are personal



RAJNI BAKSHI

AN ACADEMIC IN ACTION

DL Sheth helped shape understanding of democracy for academics and activists

THE IDEAS PAGE

In Assam, a victory, and a caveat

Anti-CAA platform failed to dent the BJP's prospects in Assam. But dissident Akhil Gogoi's win might prove to be politically consequential



SANJIB BARUAH

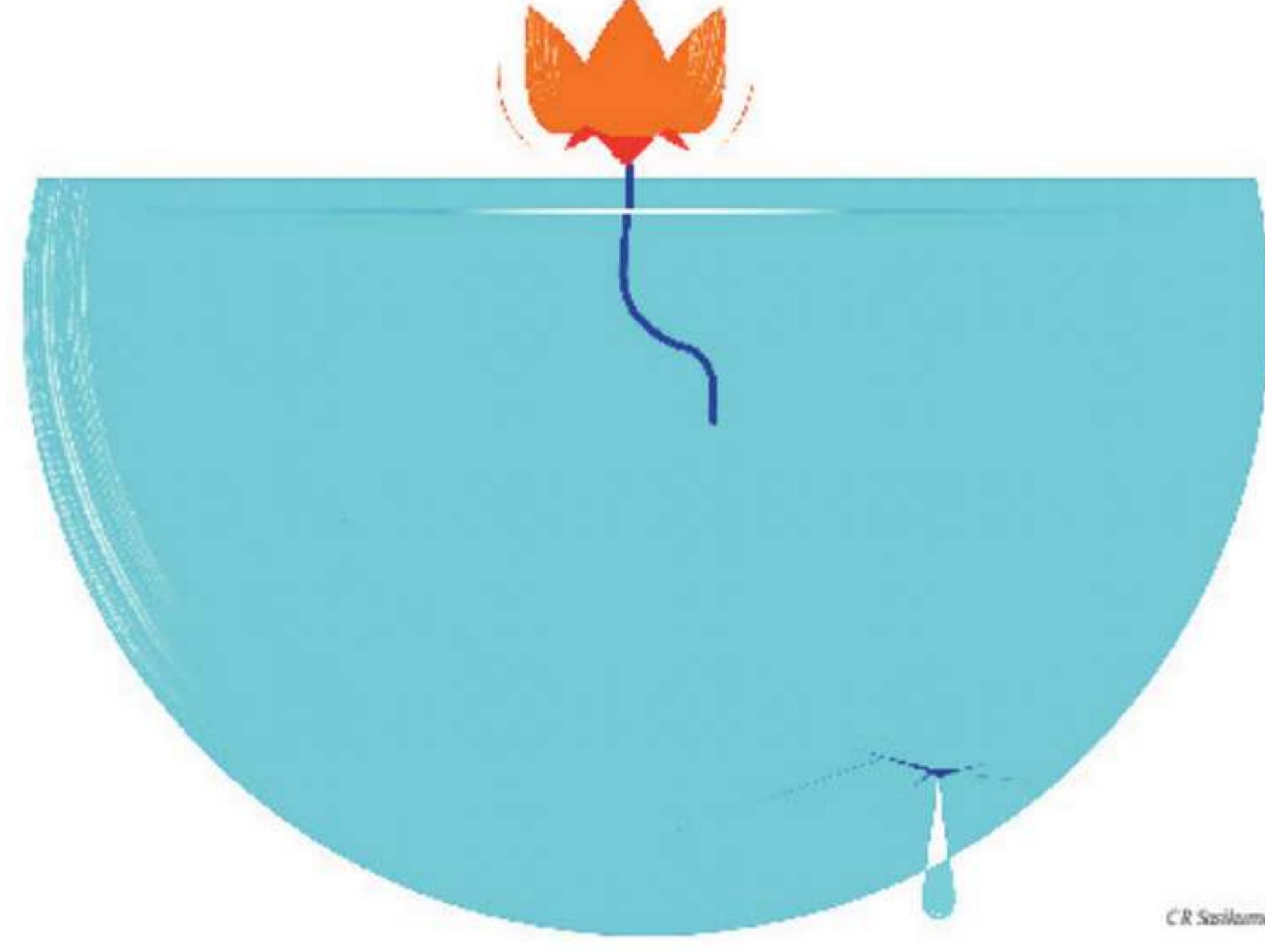
EVIDENTLY OUR PRIME minister does not like the term "election-winning machine" that some analysts like to use to explain the BJP's remarkable track record of electoral success. Modi told his party workers last July that contrary to what political commentators say, "for the BJP, the party is not just a machine to win elections. It stands for service (service), for people, for community, for the country, to bring change". Yet, when one looks closely at the party's victorious electoral campaign in Assam—especially its clever manoeuvres that successfully took the political wind out of the sails of the opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)—"election-winning machine" would seem to be a perfect description. The BJP made a strategic calculation to steer clear of the CAA, even though the rejection of the CAA was the main campaign issue for the entire opposition.

Modi's disavowal of the machine analogy, however, points to something significant. While the BJP mobilises enormous resources to win elections, it doesn't try to do it at the expense of ideology. Commentators have long drawn attention to its carefully constructed strategies of cultivating politically non-dominant caste groups that tend to get overlooked in local configurations of democracy's politics of numbers. However, all this occurred in the party's traditional heartland of northeast and western India.

Assamese caste society differs in important ways from those in the BJP's traditional heartland and it presents significant challenges to Hinduva operatives. Yet, they appear to have grasped a working knowledge of some of the specificities and have developed clever strategies of intervention that aim at both short-term electoral gains and the long-term ideological goal of expanding the Hinduva project in Assam and the rest of Northeast India. This was particularly evident in its electoral strategy in Upper Assam—the heartland of both the precolonial Ahom state and the Assamese national project.

Some of the distinctive features of Assamese caste society show the imprint of the influence of Assamese Vaishnavism and the political and cultural practices of the pre-colonial Ahom state. One's place in the order of social stratification can be determined not only by birth status, i.e., caste, but also by the status vis-à-vis one's initiation (xorion in Assamese or saran) into the Vaishnava way of life. Inter-caste mobility and the relatively easy integration of tribal groups into the Assamese socio-cultural formation—though not without status differentiation—is what characterises Assamese society. Many intermediate groups in the caste tribe continuum are an intrinsic part of the Assamese socio-cultural formation.

A number of these groups are officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes, but others are not; and they aspire to that status. There have been long-standing agitations demanding that status by organisations representing groups such as Ahom, Chutia, Moran and



C.R. Sasi Kumar

Motok that are important blocs of voters that can swing elections in Upper Assam.

Reporters often use terms like Assam's "smaller indigenous communities" to describe these groups. They identify themselves as Assamese and many, but not all, are native Assamese speakers—and some exclusively so—but they are simultaneously embedded in distinct ethno-cultural communities.

Interestingly enough, the two top leaders of the BJP in Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma and Sarbananda Sonowal, are from communities that represent the two different routes to status in Assamese society.

In order to distract from the unpopularity of the CAA among the Assamese, while insisting that the CAA would be a non-issue in this election, the BJP campaigners relentlessly attacked the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) leader Badruddin Ajmal in an effort to discredit the alliance. Because of his "attire, skull cap [and] beard", Ajmal told an interviewer, it was possible to "sell the fear of Ajmal as a representative or an advocate of migrant Muslims". The strategy paid off handsomely in Upper Assam.

The BJP also actively courted leading activists of the anti-CAA protests that belong to the "smaller indigenous communities". These communities had voted for the BJP in large numbers in 2016 and 2019. But the CAA alienated many young people from the BJP; and they became leading players in the anti-CAA protests.

In order to bring them back into their fold, the state government adopted symbolic and material measures important to those communities. Despite the fact that their long-standing demand for Scheduled Tribe status remains unfulfilled, many of these anti-CAA activists have now joined the BJP. Some hold positions in the autonomous councils created

Despite the electoral failure of the anti-CAA platform, there was one important victory that might prove to be politically consequential in the coming months. Dissident thinker, and a fierce critic of the CAA, Akhil Gogoi, won decisively from Sivasagar—historical Rongpur, the capital of the Ahom state—against a BJP candidate. Gogoi has been in jail since December 2019 for charges stemming from the anti-CAA protests and he contested the elections from prison.

Public sympathy for the incarcerated Gogoi played a role in his victory. Many consider his confinement to be unjust. Rajo Dol—the political party he launched last October—stayed away from the Congress-led alliance because of reservations about the AIUDF. Gogoi believes that Ajmal's party is as much of a communal party as the BJP; they are "two sides of the same coin". That Gogoi was elected to represent Sivasagar—a heritage city filled with historical monuments—makes his election rich in political symbolism.

Now that Gogoi has become an elected representative of the people of Sivasagar, his continued imprisonment in a democracy will be unsustainable. If events in coming days unfold in a way that pushes a confrontation between the jailed Gogoi and the institutions of the Indian state, BJP's electoral triumph could prove to be more ephemeral than it now appears.

The writer is professor of political studies at Bard College, New York

for those communities and in the BJP's state unit. They were even among BJP candidates in the elections.

But remarkably, while the BJP has successfully managed the fallout from the CAA in Assam, it has spent no political capital to expand support—not acquiescence—for the CAA among the Assamese.

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The writer is professor of political studies at Bard College, New York

The buck stops where

Centre gave itself a gold medal, do we blame the common man?



SANJAY JHA

INDIA IS A polarised country, the word bipartisan is a misnomer in its political vocabulary. Unsurprisingly, the pernicious coronavirus second wave has aggravated the chasm. I read with some disappointment the feverish defence of the ruling dispensation by senior actor Anupam Kher (a huge fan of this outstanding artiste) in the *Indian Express* ("No time for partisanship", May 1). Kher makes some valid observations about a disastrous conduct during an unprecedented health emergency and the responsibility of state governments. But he seems miffed with opposition parties for their intervention of the Centre. He shouldn't be. That's what democracy is all about: perennial scrutiny. The family members of the 25 Covid patients who died on account of inadequate oxygen supply in Delhi's Ganga Ram hospital may not quite acquiesce with Kher's commendations for the BJP-led NDA. Truth hurts.

"The buck stops here" is among the most popular aphorisms in corporate board rooms. IDB's epochal words were meant for political leadership though. A country's CEO has enormous powers; success depends upon how they are used. Kher thinks that the severe condemnation of PM Narendra Modi's handling of the pandemic is unjustified. Unfortunately, hard statistics are devoid of rhetorics and bagging: Over 4,00,000 cases in a day (cumulative 18 million), 3,60,000 deaths (2,15,000 aggregated), 69 lakh new infections in April 2021 and a teetering health infrastructure unable to cope with the interminable influx of infected patients. It is hardly a state secret that these numbers are

artificially suppressed. India has become an micro-containment zone, sequestered from the global community. This is our biggest humanitarian crisis post-1947 and we are failing the test. But who is accountable?

In calm waters, every ship has a great captain. But the litmus test is when the ship encounters storms and tumultuous waves. In March 2020, when India went into a sudden lockdown, I was among those who applauded PM Modi's mesmerising ability to get a highly disorganised, fractious India to act jointly adhere to his admonishments. Although perdition loomed large, we miraculously dodged doomsday. Following 98,000 cases in September 2020, we saw a continuous fall of cases even as the lockdown eased. India's magic formula that blended the co-existence of lives-cum-livelihood had everyone fooled. We were deemed an outlier. In retrospect, it was just serendipity. But the government should have known better. Instead, an inexplicable complacency set in. At the Narendra Modi Stadium on February 24, 55,000 people, mostly mask-less, watched the inaugural test match between England and India. Gujarat today has burning pyres.

India miscalculated the falling numbers during the hiatus between October 2020 to February 2021. The BJP's smug triumphalism was evident in its spokespersons talking of how "our honourable Prime Minister has through his enlightened leadership even thrashed the virus like no other". Everyone nodded vigorously once and if anyone dared to suggest

circumstances, they were promptly labelled chronic pessimists who wished to see India in the old drums. Scientists' warnings of a second wave were ignored. But cow urine was not working either.

There was a crucial difference; in 2020 it was the novel coronavirus. Literally. Everyone, therefore, backed the PM. Even the harried migrants forgave the government their miserable ordeal. But in 2021, we had the wherewithal to anticipate trouble. We didn't. Instead, we approached it with sublime cockiness. India had foreknown of deadly second waves in Europe. America's massive overconfidence in opening up the economy too soon had backfired, and the need for augmenting vaccine supply was compelling. The government wooed IDB but forgot to place orders for foreign vaccines because of the inward-looking 1970's economic philosophy—Amanecer. Our foreign embassies were told to create PRs pin when the world saw asphyxiating patients beg for breath.

Despite boasting of a minimum government-maximum governance slogan, an unusually risk-averse PM seemed predisposed to a communist-government model of centralised command and shoe-string budgeting. Fiscal prudence was not on the menu but the government still chose to be tight-fisted. From oxygen tanks, ICU beds, fully-functional ambulances, vaccine procurement and distribution strategy, medicine supplies, recruiting and training lakhs of healthcare professionals on a war footing, we missed the bus.

With the government giving itself a gold medal, do we blame the common man for dumping masks, skipping social distancing and avoiding elementary hygiene practices? The less said about super-spreader events such as the Kumbh Mela and the frenetic electioneering in Bihar since February–March, the better. Kher wants the opposition to back the government but ignores the latter's reluctance to form a national task force to tackle the once-in-a-lifetime crisis (former PM Manmohan Singh's recommendations were rudely trashed). He sadly hackets opposition parties as "political rejects". Every elected opposition leader is also a people's representative.

In a poignant scene in the classic film *Saaransh*, a heartbroken Anupam Kher, frustrated by bureaucratic cholesterol, goes from pillar to post for his deceased son's ashes that must travel India's cumbersome customs procedures. Kher is brilliant (he was just 29 years old) as a broken father, grieving helplessly. The audience wept with him. Today, perhaps Kher needs to tell himself that many fathers and sons are going through the same hellish nightmare. They are pleading not just for oxygen canisters, ICU beds, scarce remedevir or precious ventilators, they are scrambling for crematorium space, to give dignity to their lost loves. Even a male-shift parking lot will do. It is wretched, this bottomless depth of human suffering. It is dehumanising. And it is for real.

The writer is former National Spokesperson, Congress

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Besides constantly shoring up the healthcare sector, the government should also focus on guarding our borders against the disease. Already the mutated virus seems to have spread across boundaries from India to Nepal, as confirmed by the Red Cross."

—THE DAILY STAR

No overnight crisis

A democracy is built on multiplicity of assertions. Current moment in pandemic points to systematic undermining of countervailing institutions



HARSH MANDER

WITH OUTRAGE, FEAR and grief, we witness burning pyres on pavements and mass graves of many whose lives a more caring and efficient government could have saved. Images haunt us of desperate families driving from hospital to hospital in vain searching for their loved ones die only because the state did not care or prepare.

Even after over a year of the pandemic, we find the government is finally unprepared with elementary protections like sufficient hospital beds with oxygen and ventilators. The interests of private profit weigh conspicuously more with the government than the public good even in the procurement of vaccines and medical oxygen and the regulation of private health systems. The Indian republic is today profoundly enfeebled.

In the turmoil and chaos in the second wave of Covid-19, we observe the perilous consequences of the systematic attacks of the executive to weaken and ultimately decimate each countervailing centre of power. A democracy is built on the idea of a multiplicity of assertions that would prevent the runaway hubris, callousness, incompetence and corruption of the elected executive. These alternate centres of power include the political opposition, higher judiciary, higher civil service, media, university, trade unions and other collectives of working people, and peaceful resistance of the people themselves. These are the oxygen of any democracy.

In India today, we find that these institutions of countervailing power to the executive, spaces for peaceful disagreement with power, its accountability, and above all its collective compass, each have been virulently decimated. This did not happen overnight. In the seven years of the present regime, people who felt privileged by the new equations of power—the growing ranks of radicalised Hindus, big capital and the middle-classes—condoned, even celebrated, the destruction of these other power centres, and fuelled the politics of hate and inequality.

We were unmoved when a Muslim boy was thrashed for entering a temple because he was thirsty. We saw an alarming rise of instances of lynching and hate attacks, targeting mostly Muslims and Dalits, the attacks often videotaped by the perpetrators who were confident that they would not be punished. We remained silent as a climate of hate was systematically built by the hate speech of senior members of the ruling party including cabinet ministers, chief ministers and elected representatives. This targeted mainly India's Muslims, and left-liberal voices that stood in public defense of the rights of minorities.

History tells us that the majority in a democracy can turn dangerously majoritarian and ultimately fascistic if institutions of democracy do not hold accountable the executive and actively defend the rights of minorities. Why today, then, our bewilderment, our outrage and our grief at where our elected autocrats have brought us? This is the India we helped build. As long as we consent to dividing people into the privileged "us" and the "other"—the Muslim, working poor, "low-caste", slum dweller—and celebrate authoritarian governments that ostensibly protect "us" against the "other", we consent to and participate in the dilution and undermining of democracy itself.

Today, we find ourselves not to be gripped by fear and anger when a friend or relative suffers or even perishes. Let us hope he never feels the pain of losing someone to the virus.

Mander is a human rights activist and writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HATEMONGER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "The other virus" (IE, May 7). Tejasvi Surya is a serial hate monger. He spits venom both in his public statements as well as from his social media accounts against minority communities. In fact, it is a party tradition that he follows. The more hate you spread, the higher you seem to ascend in his party. We as a nation are battling the virus, not particular communities or political parties.

Sayed ur Rahman, Darbhanga

VP'S BLINDS POT'S

THIS REFERS TO the article, "All hands on deck" (IE, May 7). Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu is wrong when he says India has the arsenal to overcome this challenge. It is the flood of foreign aid which is helping us cope. I would also like to suggest that he first ask the members of the government of the party he used to belong to, to tender an apology to Mammootty Singh who sent a polite note to the PM to which Health Minister Harsh Vardhan gave a less-than-polite reply.

When there is a crisis, the BJP wants all hands on deck yet when they are organising huge election rallies and crowding about the large crowds they don't listen to the voice of sanity. Stop building Central Vista and put this money into fighting Covid. Perhaps then the people of India will take you seriously.

Raj Khalid, Banda

THIS REFERS TO the article, "All hands on deck" (IE, May 7). It is shameful that the

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

- SC ON SCHOOL FEE RELIEF: VINODINI SRINIVASAN AND DHRUVA GANDHI

- DON'T MAKE VACCINE MANDATORY: GATHA AND TANVI SINGH

www.indianexpress.com

Vice President asks us not to be gripped by fear and anger when a friend or relative suffers or even perishes. Let us hope he never feels the pain of losing someone to the virus.

Mahadev Gore, Solapur

PRISONS AND VIRUS

THIS REFERS TO the article, "From prison, a Covid alert" (IE, May 6). The High Powered Committee to decompose the prisons adopted scalable criteria for recommending parole to a class of incarcerated individuals. The terms of conditional release had already expired at many institutions and surrenders summons had been issued. The correctional facilities can very well test the existing inmates and staff for Covid and take measures to build a bio-secure bubble.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

How wheels moved overnight from Odisha to AP to trace oxygen tanker

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, MAY 7

A MIDST the precarious oxygen supply situation, a government hospital in Andhra Pradesh spent a sleepless night Thursday trying to trace a tanker that went "missing", with officials using the phones up and down the route the driver was to take from Odisha to Vijayawada. The medical oxygen tanker finally made it in time to the hospital with 400 Covid-19 patients, as the tired driver was traced parked next to ahaba, sleeping.

Government General Hospital at Vijayawada was counting on the 18-tonne oxygen tanker to land from Angul in Odisha after a refill by Friday morning. The hospital which has 600-plus Covid beds received several cases from nearby areas and all its 400 patients are currently on oxygen support. It gets oxygen supplies from Odisha and the Vizag Steel Plant. Thursday night, as it tried finding the tanker to ensure that all was well, the hospital discovered that its on-board tracking system was off. It next called the mobile phone of the driver, Vidya Singh, but that too was switched off.

The hospital rang the alarm bells, with Medical Superintendent Dr Siva Shankar Rao and Joint Collector I. Siva Shankar contacting Vijayawada Police Commissioner B. Srinivasulu. The latter took quick action, alerting all the senior police officers, including District Superintendents of Police, of areas falling on the 800-km route from Angul to Vijayawada.



The driver, Vidya Singh, and his tanker on Friday. Express

When it was determined that Singh had crossed Visakhapatnam, on the basis of his mobile phone tracking, the search was narrowed down.

Around 2 am, the Circle Inspector of Prathipadu in East Godavari, Y Ramababu, got a call from SP Adnan Naeem Asmi. He said an oxygen tanker was missing and it could be in our area."

Rambabu says the officer pressed the urgency of the situation. "He said it was important that

the tanker reach Vijayawada hospital by 6 am, or the lives of patients could be in danger."

After a search later, Rambabu and his team finally found the tanker around 2.30 am, parked outside ahaba at Dharmavaram, along with several other trucks. "Vidya Singh said he had gone off to sleep because he was extremely tired. He told us he had been driving long hours since several days to deliver oxygen, and he was fatigued and felt drowsy. So he stopped the tanker and slept."

Singh, 40, is employed with S5 Movers and Logistics. Due to the growing demand for oxygen, shortage of drivers, as well as Covid-19 protocols, the tanker did not have an additional driver or attendant.

Rambabu said Singh told them he was well rested and could drive

AFTER HC RAP Chhattisgarh to resume Covid jabs for 18-44 age group

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, MAY 7

DISAPPROVING OF the state government's decision to stop vaccination in the 18-44 age group, the Chhattisgarh High Court on Friday ordered that the state should resume the vaccination drive immediately, and provide vaccination to Antyodaya card holders, BPL and APL in a 1:3 ratio. The state will resume vaccination for all three categories from Saturday, sources said.

Chhattisgarh, that is among the states witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases, requires about 1500 metric tonnes of oxygen daily with over 20,000 patients on oxygen support at various government and private hospitals.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Jharkhand: Woman dies after oxygen leak; hospital says probe on

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, MAY 7

A 43-YEAR-OLD woman who was undergoing treatment for a Covid-19 infection died on Thursday shortly after a leak in the manifold supply system for oxygen in Ranchi's Sadar Hospital.

Shailendra Tiwary, the brother-in-law of the deceased woman, Shobha Tiwary, said she started showing signs of breathlessness after her oxygen supply was interrupted due to a leak around 5.30 am on Thursday.

Hospital authorities confirmed the leak but said that it was still being examined if Shobha died because of the interruption of oxygen supply.

Shailendra said that as the oxygen supply dipped on Thursday: "In the next 20 minutes my sister-in-law was dead. She was in the ICU, but had shown signs of improvement, and we had a chat at night. In the morning, when the hospital ran out of oxygen, the health workers tried hard to put her on oxygen cylinder, but it was too late. She passed away because the oxygen supply was interrupted."

If these allegations are proven right, Shobha's death is the first in the state which occurred in hospital premises due to interruption of oxygen flow.

Tiwary also alleged: "Apart from my sister-in-law at least four others died Thursday morning due to interruption." However, The Indian Express was unable to independently verify these allegations.

Ranchi Deputy Commissioner Chhavi Ranjan denied that oxygen interruption had caused any deaths.

Sadar Hospital's deputy medical superintendent Sabaschi Mandal said: "There was a leak in manifold system of oxygen supplies, after which oxygen pressure dropped for around half an hour. However, it is difficult to say that people died because of this. There is a team who are looking into the matter."

A Health Department official who did not want to be named said there is no shortage of oxygen in the hospital. "We have a jugaad system of a manifold where many jumbo cylinders are connected to a pipeline supplying oxygen to the ICU patients. It is more of a technical issue where we have put more burden on a system with less capacity. This manifold was supposed to cater to only five patients on ventilators, but with a view to save more lives during a crisis time with had put 20 people in it. There is no malafide intention here, but a technical problem with intent to save lives."

Ranchi is facing one of the highest caseloads in the state with 19,613 active cases and 42 deaths reported on May 6.

WESTERN RAILWAY

CORRIDENDUM TO E-AUCTION
SALE PROGRAM DURING MAY 2021
MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
Please refer to e-Auction Sale
Notification No. 5 III/Auction
Programme-1/May/2021 Dated
22.04.2021, the following Corridendum
to above mentioned E-auction program
is being issued: "The E-auction Sale
Program scheduled to be held in the
month of May 2021 at PRTN, DHD &
MX depots and ADL, RTM & MMCT
Division is cancelled".
<http://etender.up.nic.in>

Like us on: <https://facebook.com/WesternRailway>

3 injured as plane with remdesivir load crash-lands at Gwalior airport

passed any order restraining the state from continuing its vaccination drive, the bench said. "We do not appreciate the action of the state government in totally stopping the vaccination to the residents of the state coming within the age group of above 18 years and less than 45 years. The vaccination is a life saving measure from the disastrous corona virus. Considering the life threat due to Covid-19 pandemic, need of hour is maximum vaccination in the shortest possible time."

The liberty granted by this court for continuing with the vaccination in the ratio of 1:3 to each class specified by the state government, shall govern the field for the time being. The state government shall start the vaccination immediately."

Secretary, health department, Alok Shukla said, "The court's order shall be complied with, no question in that."

Later in the day, district health officials were informed to restart the vaccination of 18-44 age group.

On Friday, the bench of Chief Justice P R Ramachandra Menon and Justice P P Sahu expressed their disapproval of the state's decision to stop vaccination.

Stating that the court had not

Week after his father's death, sitar player Prateek Chaudhuri dies

IRAM SIDDIQUE

BHOPAL, MAY 7

A MADHYA Pradesh government aircraft, carrying 71 boxes of remdesivir from Ahmedabad, crashed-landed on the runway at the Gwalior airport Thursday evening. Three people, including pilot Majid Akhtar and co-pilot Shiv Jaiswal, escaped with minor injuries.

The incident took place around 8.30 pm on Thursday when the Beechcraft King Air B-250 GT hit the arrestor barrier at the end of the runway while landing.

The aircraft was to drop a part of the remdesivir consignment in Gwalior before taking to Jaipur.

Gwalior SP Amit Sanghi told The Indian Express, "The pilot was unaware of the arrestor barrier and collided with it before crash-landing."

While a DGCA inquiry will establish the reasons of the crash, prima facie it appeared that the ATC did not inform the pilot about the arrestor barrier.

In conversations that he had with family and friends from the hospital, he was a cutely distressed after his father's demise.

Less than a week later, Prateek also died due to Covid and cardiac arrest. He was 49. He is survived by wife Rauna, daughter Rayana and son Adhiraj.

Prateek was admitted along with his father last week. He was improving and was to be cremated on Monday but his vitals began to deteriorate and he was admitted to the ICU where he could not pull through and died of a cardiac arrest.

In conversations that he had with family and friends from the hospital, he was a cutely distressed after his father's demise.

On Friday, positivity rate in Goa was 51.34 percent. In a month, Goa has seen an over 10-fold rise in infections reported.

"We had the whole of India coming to Goa in December (2020) to February (2021). I had already alerted our health authorities that we need to be prepared because we are going to face a situation at some point in time," Rane said in an interview to a news channel.

He said, "Opening up of tourism without any restrictions in December has led to the situation in Goa. The positivity rate of 51 percent and above is the highest in the country..."

Rane also said restrictions should have come "much earlier".

Senior Congress leader Digambar Kamat, however, said in a tweet, "Goa needs bigger measures. Lip service will not work."

While both Sawant and Rane have denied any differences or lack of communication between them, the CM had earlier said that he had read Rane's pleas for a lockdown only over Twitter.

Goa curfew May 9-23, minister says winter tourist flow led to crisis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, MAY 7

GOA CHIEF Minister Pramod Sawant on Friday announced that there will be a state-level curfew from May 9 to May 23, even as the state Health Minister, The announcement comes on the day the number of active Covid-19 cases in the state exceeded 30,000 for the first time and recorded 4,195 new cases – its highest single-day increase in active cases.

"People have not been taking as much care of themselves and their families as they should... the government has made several appeals but people have not followed safety protocols properly," Sawant said. He said curfew, which will be "stricter than a lockdown", will be in effect for two weeks starting May 9.

Sawant also said tourists entering Goa will have to furnish a negative report of RT-PCR test or a certificate of vaccination.

Meanwhile, state Health Minister Vishwajeet Rane said the surge in Covid-19 cases in Goa, which now has the highest positivity rate in the country, was on account of unrestricted entry granted to

कर्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमण्डल, पलामू

शुद्धि – पत्र

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कार्यपालक अभियंता
ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमण्डल
पलामू

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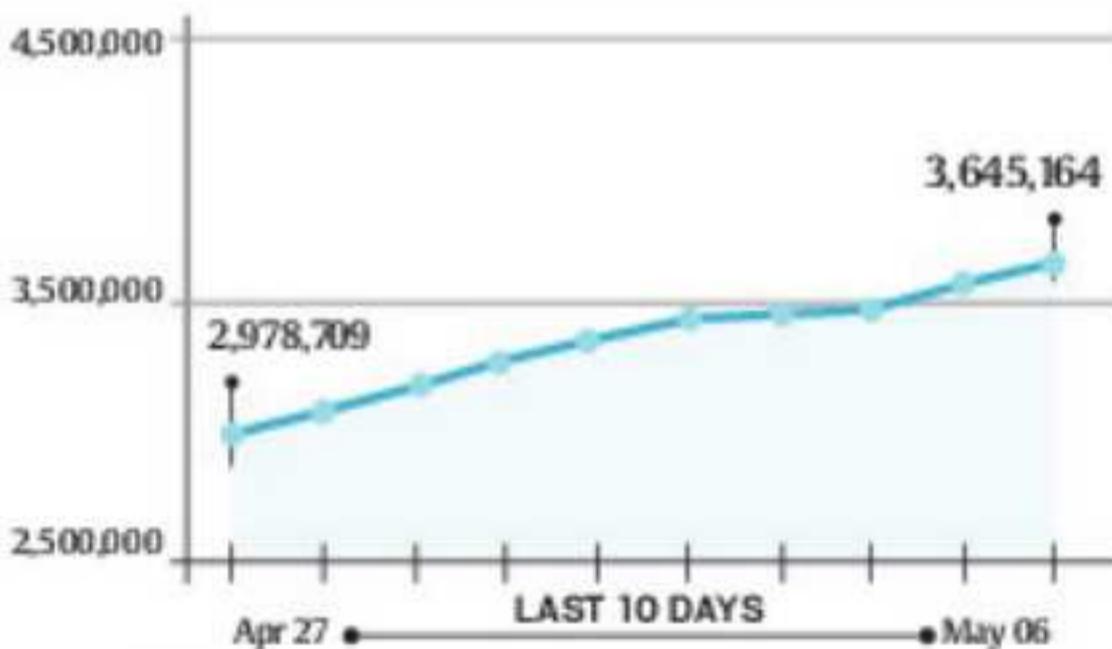
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CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

3,645,164



INDIA TOTAL CASES

21,491,598

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on May 7

WORLD TOTAL CASES

156,233,888

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on May 7

Non-steroidal inflammatory drugs are safe for patients with Covid-19, study finds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

PUNE, MAY 7

THE USE of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, does not lead to higher rates of death or severe disease in patients who are hospitalised with Covid-19, according to a new observational study of more than 72,000 people in the UK published in *The Lancet Rheumatology* journal.

NSAIDs are common treatments for acute pain and rheumatological diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Early in the pandemic, there was debate on whether the use of such drugs increased the severity of Covid-19, which led to urgent calls for investigations.

The ISARIC CCP-UK (International Severe Acute Respiratory and Emerging Infection Consortium Clinical Characterisation Protocol United Kingdom) study found evidence that the continued use of NSAIDs in patients with Covid-19 is safe.

In the study, around a third of patients (30,481, 12.79 out of 42,111) who had taken NSAIDs prior to hospital admission for COVID-19 died, a rate which was similar (31.3%; 21,256 out of 67,968) in patients who had not taken NSAIDs. In patients with rheumatological disease, the use of NSAIDs did not



PAPER CLIP

NEW RESEARCH

12

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD

Ali Sherif al-Emadi

THE GULF

Qatar finance minister held

QATAR FINANCE Minister Ali Sherif al-Emadi was arrested over embezzlement allegations and stripped of his duties, officials said on Thursday. In a statement carried by state news agency QNA, the public prosecutor said Emadi was being questioned over allegations of embezzlement, abuse of power and crimes related to the public sector. A probe is under way.

REUTERS

UNITED KINGDOM
Conservatives win key seat

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson of Britain scored a striking political victory when his Conservative Party won a by-election in Hartlepool, snatching a bellwether parliamentary seat from the opposition Labour Party, which had held it since the 1970s.

NYT

BRAZIL
25 killed in Rio shootout

AT LEAST 25 people were killed in a shootout between suspected drug traffickers and police in Rio de Janeiro Thursday, one of the state's deadliest police raids, police said. The bloodbath prompted criticism from human rights groups including Amnesty International.

REUTERS

Australia to lift ban on citizens returning from India: Morrison

Repatriation flights from next week

COLIN PACKHAM
CANBERRA, MAY 7

AUSTRALIA WILL lift a ban on its citizens returning from India next week, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Friday. The ban was imposed amid a surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths in India.

Morrison stood by his decision to impose a biosecurity order last month barring all travel to and from India, a policy that drew heavy criticism from lawmakers, expatriates and the Indian diaspora.

Morrison said the travel ban, which was controversially backed by jail terms and financial penalties for anybody who attempted to circumvent it by flying via a third country, had prevented Australia's hotel quarantine system from being overwhelmed.

"The order that we have put in place has been highly effective, it's doing the job that we needed it to do, and that was to ensure that we could do everything we can to prevent a third wave of Covid-19 here in Australia," Morrison told reporters.

Australia will charter three

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison

repatriation flights between May 15 and May 31, prioritising around 900 people deemed most vulnerable, Morrison said. The government estimates around 9,000 Australian citizens and permanent residents are in India.

Prospective travellers will need to return a negative Covid-19 test, and will be required to undertake the standard 14-day hotel quarantine imposed on incoming travellers. Morrison said his government is unlikely to allow the resumption of direct commercial flights from India in the near term.

The Australian leader has rejected suggestions the hard-line approach will damage the country's bilateral relations with India.

REUTERS

4 ex-cops indicted on civil rights charges in Floyd death

AMY FORLITI &
MICHAEL BALSAMO
MINNEAPOLIS, MAY 7

A FEDERAL grand jury has indicted the four former Minneapolis police officers involved in George Floyd's arrest and death, accusing them of willfully violating the Black man's constitutional rights as he was restrained face-down on the pavement and gasping for air.

A three-count indictment unsealed Friday names Derek Chauvin, Thomas Lane, J. Kueng

and Tou Thao. Specifically, Chauvin is charged with violating Floyd's right to be free from unreasonable seizure and unreasonable force by a police officer. Thao and Kueng are also charged with violating Floyd's right to be

free from unreasonable seizure, alleging they did not intervene to stop Chauvin as he knelt on Floyd's neck. All four officers are charged for their failure to provide Floyd with medical care.

Floyd's May 25 arrest and

death, which bystander captured on cellphone video, sparked nationwide complaints about the police treatment of Black people and protests calling for an end to police brutality and racial inequities.

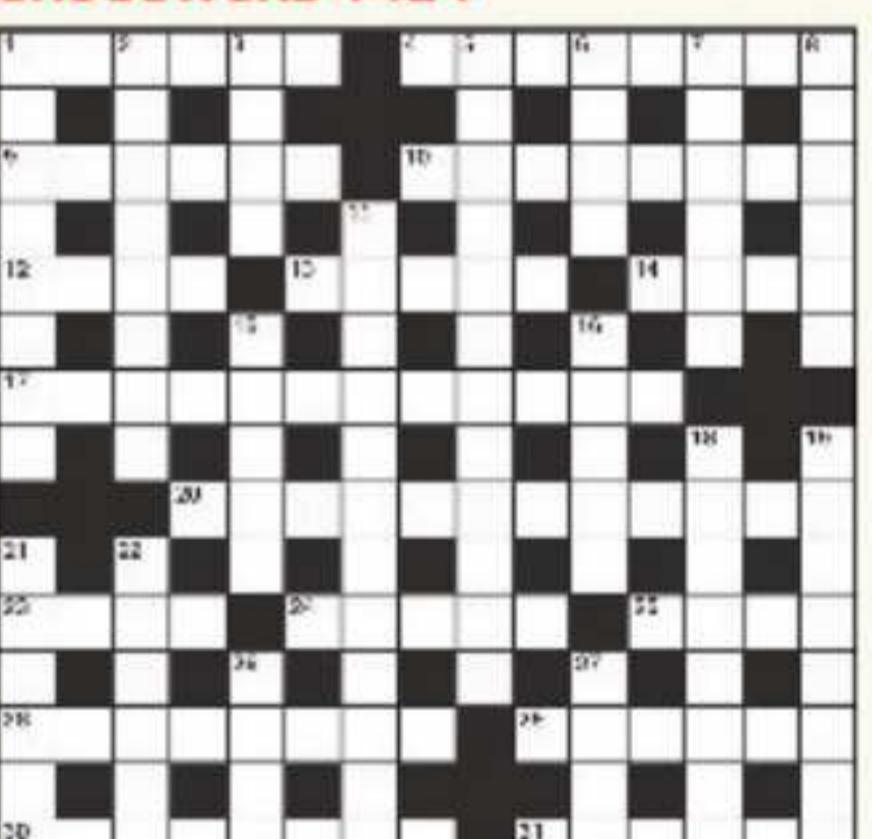
Chauvin was also charged in a second indictment, stemming from the use of force and neck restraint of a 14-year-old boy in 2012.

Chauvin was convicted last month on state charges of murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death and is in Minnesota's only maximum-security prison as he awaits sentencing.

AP

Floyd's May 25 arrest and

CROSSWORD 4424



ACROSS

1 It's there at the start and finish (6)

4 Switch positions from time to time (3,3,2)

9 Pulls everything into his car (6)

10 Private escort that is always good (8)

12 No natural reaction of gas going running out of gas (4)

13 Throw away a fight (5)

14 Be my alias, I assume, will include in (4)

17 Though frames make capital investments (12)

20 What the king does when his coat comes in (5,25)

23 Wokeman in stone (4)

24 The tree by the way is elder (5)

25 Offshore spot I stole away to (4)

28 Hunting around in the daytime (8)

29 Let hope be unconfined for the moon goddess (6)

30 People may have to put up with her (8)

31 Sent us out at the end of the day (6)

36 Yelled to be graced (4)

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BRIEFLY

Sushil's father-in-law, Satpal, questioned

New Delhi: Two days after a 23-year-old wrestler, a former junior national champion, was beaten to death during a brawl at the Chhatrasal Stadium parking area.

Delhi Police has questioned **Satpal Singh**, father-in-law of two-time Olympic medallist **Sushil Kumar**. Additional DCP (North-West district) Dr Gurjeet Singh Sidhu said, "We have questioned Satpal and Sushil's brother-in-law at Model Town police station. We are conducting raids to nab Sushil and his associates." Satpal, a 1982 Asian Games gold medal-winning wrestler, was questioned for around two hours, police said.

On Tuesday, Sagar Rana, who had competed in the 97-kg Greco-Roman category, was beaten to death in a clash involving two groups. "We have found during investigation that a quarrel had allegedly taken place between Sushil Kumar, Ajay, Prince Dalal, Sonu Mahal, Sagar, Amit and others in the parking area of the stadium," Sidhu said. On Friday, one of the injured, Sonu Mahal, tested positive for Covid-19. Police recorded the statement of another victim identified as Amit. Investigation revealed that Sagar and his friends were staying in a house linked to Sushil near the stadium and had been asked to vacate recently. "In the initial probe, it has come out that... Sushil Pehelwan and his aides committed this crime..." reads the FIR in the case registered on the basis of a PCR test and filed by Assistant Sub-Inspector Jitendra Singh. **ENS**

Saina, Srikanth's Olympic hopes take hit

New Delhi: The Malaysia Open Super 750 tournament, one of badminton's last two Olympic qualifying events, was on Friday postponed due to a recent COVID-19 surge in the host country, dealing a severe blow to the Tokyo hopes of Indian stars like Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth. The \$600,000 event was scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur from May 25 to 30. The decision came as a huge setback for London Olympics bronze-medalist Saina and men's star Srikanth's last hopes of Olympic qualification. Following the postponement of the India Open, Saina and Srikanth's qualification for the Tokyo Games hinged on the Kuala Lumpur event followed by the Singapore Open. **PTI**

Indian rowers make the cut for Tokyo

New Delhi: Indian rowers Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh qualified for the Olympics in men's lightweight double sculls event after finishing second in the final race of the Asia/Oceania Continental Qualifying Regatta in Tokyo on Friday. Another Indian, Jahan Khan finished fourth in the men's singles sculls final which offers five Olympic quotas but the missed out as a country gets only one qualifying spot from this regatta. The top three qualify for Olympics in men's lightweight double sculls event. **PTI**

Selectors reward performance and avoid risks while picking 20-man squad for WTC final and 5-Test series vs England

SANDIP G

NEW DELHI, MAY 7

To scale the twin peaks of clinching the World Test Championship and winning a series in England, India's month-long stay in that country, India's selectors have broken away from the much-trodden horses-for-courses path as well as their fixation with seam-bowling all-rounders and wristspinners. Instead, they have picked the squad on the tangible yardsticks of consistency, continuity and form—the currency of wickets and runs considered more valuable than promise and potential.

At most other times, Hardik Pandya and Bhuvneshwar Kumar might have been perceived as central figures in the selectors' design for an England tour even if Pandya is not fully fit to bowl in Tests and Bhuvneshwar has not played a first-class game in more than three years. But such is the range and depth at their fingertips that they could afford to overlook two highly-prized and rare accolades. Little doubt that both Pandya and Bhuvneshwar, at their peak, could be automatic choices in the eleven, but with doubts over their fitness (Hardik) and Test-match form (Bhuvneshwar), the selectors were unwilling to embrace risk. Instead, merit and form were the guiding stars, they merely rewarded those that have been redefining games and moments for the country, without overthinking about whether their skills would suit the likely conditions in England.

A case in point is Axar Patel. Had he been overlooked, it would have barely caused a flutter. Even in a 20-member squad, a third spinner looks like a luxury, least of all someone who is perceptually conditions-reliant. With Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin back, and Washington Sundar to support them, these selectors could have ignored Patel. He could have been pushed aside with an 'oh-so-unlucky' apology. But a haul of 27 wickets in three Tests, irrespective of conditions, merits acknowledgement, and so the selectors stuck with him. He is not a complete stranger to bowling in England either, as he had served Durham in 2018.

Heroes Down Under

Like Patel, who was instrumental in orchestrating the series win over England, the selectors did not ditch the unlikely protagonists of the most thrilling contest in Australia. Alvin Shandu Thakur, Mohammed Siraj and Washington have confirmed their seats. Not just for filling numbers, but as serious contenders for the playing eleven. Thought the nucleus of the Indian bowling has reassembled, Siraj, with his ability to swing the ball both ways at pace, stands a great chance to feature in the World Test Championship final against New Zealand, followed by five Tests against England.

It is Siraj's exploits in Australia and against England that might have blocked Bhuvneshwar's Test re-entry. Siraj might not swing the ball as prodigiously as Kumar, or be as accurate, but he can procure movement in their air as well as off the surface in either direction. Moreover, he is sharp and has that valuable spirit of feistiness that makes a bowler indomitable. Add to the bowling brigade, the cunning and craft of spinners Ashwin and Jadeja, and it should recall another lethal or gifted band of Indian bowlers, insidiously heart and intelligence. They are all-course horses. And in them would primarily reside Virat Kohli's team of winning a Test series in England.

All bases covered

One could argue that a seam-bowling all-

WHY THEY MISSED OUT

PRITHVISHAW: The opener revived his touch by scoring truckloads of runs in Vijay Hazare and IPL, but with Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill and KL Rahul in the squad, another opener would have been redundant.

KULDEEP YADAV: Patience has begun to wear thin on him, as the wrist-spinner has looked in wretched form in every form he has played in the last couple of seasons. Such has been his torrid run that he couldn't get a single IPL game either.

HARDIK PANDYA: With the all-rounder not fit enough to bowl on a regular basis in Test matches, he was ignored. Pandya, as a batsman alone, does not merit a place in the team.

BHUVNESHWAR KUMAR: Lack of recent experience in first-class games (he has not played one in three years) and the emergence of Mohammed Siraj might have cost him a shot at redemption. The selectors' message was clear: Prove yourself on the domestic circuit and force a comeback.

NAVIDEEP SAINI: He was the obvious casualty once the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav returned. The toss-up might have been between Shardul Thakur and Saini, but the former has clearly latched onto his breaks.

rounder and a wristspinner could have given a roundedness to the squad. A valuable asset, as Pandya, or someone of his ilk, would have been, there's no fussing or lamenting about the dearth of one. Neither was there any temptation to pick someone of inferior quality who can multi-task. For these is considerable all-round utility among the ranks, as Ashwin has rekindled his batting touch while Jadeja has upgraded his own. It's high time the latter is categorised as a genuine all-rounder. The likes of Siraj and Thakur too are no pushovers either. As for a batting all-rounder, there is Washington, whose maturity and calm in duress seem beyond his age. In his case too, the selectors could have drafted in a specialist batsman, but Washington was duly rewarded for his competent batting in Brisbane, Chennai and Ahmedabad. It's difficult to dislodge someone who averages 66 in this format.

The over-long Kuldeep Yadav experiment too seems to be over, at least temporarily, as the left-arm wrist-spinner has shown little signs of resurgence in any format. Kohli is a big admirer of wrist-spin (most captains are because of their unique gifts), but he has realised that there is no need for one when he has two of the finest finger-spinners of this generation.

The selectors also persisted with Shubman Gill, despite his failures against England (19 runs in seven innings), while KL Rahul too is afforded to redeem his Test career. Gill's fellow U-19 World Cupper Prithvi Shaw lost out, despite a rich vein of form in the domestic circuit and IPL. Otherwise, there has not been much tinkering in the batting department, though several careers will be made and unmade over the course of the four months in England in India's bid to scale the twin peaks.

Arzan rewarded for exploits on domestic circuit

Form over potential

Selectors reward performance and avoid risks while picking 20-man squad for WTC final and 5-Test series vs England



Hardik Pandya and Bhuvneshwar Kumar miss the bus. Express file

Arzan rewarded for exploits on domestic circuit

DEVENDRA PANDEY

MUMBAI, MAY 7

After nearly half a century, a Parsi cricketer is all set to board an Indian team flight. At least as a standby. Not since Farokh Engineer last played for India in 1975 has there been a Parsi man as part of the national set-up before Gujarat's left-arm medium pacer Arzan Nagwaswalla found his name among the reserves for the World Test championship final against New Zealand and five-Test series against England.

He picked 41 wickets in eight games at 18.36 during the 2019-20 Ranji Trophy season. YouTube has visual evidence of his skills: booming inswingers to right-handed batsmen, stump-crashing Yorkers, and throat-threatening bouncers.

There is a bit of Zaheer Khan in the way Nagwaswalla bowls up and it comes as no surprise that Khan was his idol. Nagwaswalla met the former India pacer one day in the Mumbai Indians net. "He (Zaheer) came and said that I bowled like him. This tour will be a great learning experience for me and I'm looking forward to it," he told The Indian Express.

The 23-year-old left-arm pacer is the youngest member of the Parsi community in the village of Nergal, situated a few kilometres from the border town of Umbergaon in Gujarat. In fact, he's the only one of his generation who's stayed back. The rest, he reveals, left for the greener pastures of Mumbai a long time ago. But his family never wanted to migrate to a big city. The decision to stay put paid dividends as he



Arzan Nagwaswalla prised 41 wickets in eight games during the 2019-20 Ranji Trophy season. File

rose rapidly through the junior ranks in Gujarat.

In the here and now, Nagwaswalla is happy and proud of coming through from the Parsi community. "It will be a proud moment for our community, for sure. Since the time I started playing cricket, I always wanted to be a cricketer. I know what my community's legacy has been. I will try to carry the same ahead," he says. His Gujarat team-mate Priyank Panchal details out Nagwaswalla's key attributes.

"The best part is that he can swing the ball both ways. At the same time, he clocks 135-plus on a consistent basis. He is one of the few bowlers on the domestic circuit with a deadly bouncer. Fast bowlers bowl

short by pitching around the half-way mark, but Arzan can get bounce by pitching between half-way and the good-length area. The way he bowled in Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy, I thought someone will pick him for the Indian Premier League but he went just as a net bowler for Mumbai Indians. The good thing is that now Arzan will grow from here. Initially, he had pace but didn't have control over line. Even a stint as a net bowler with the Indian team will boost his confidence. He will come back a better bowler after the tour," Panchal told this newspaper.

The left-arm medium pacer I picked up the sport at an early age from his elder brother Vispi. The pacer was returning from Mumbai where he was part of the Mumbai Indians team as a net bowler when he got a call from the selector.

"I had received a call this morning that I will be picked, it was the best day of my life. I will be going home after two months of IPL. I never thought that I will be with the Indian team," Nagwaswalla said.

INDIA'S SQUAD: Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli (Captain), Ajinkya Rahane (vice-captain), Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, KL Rahul (subject to fitness clearance), Wriddhiman Saha (wicket-keeper; subject to fitness clearance).

STANDBY PLAYERS: Abhimanyu Easwaran, Prasidh Krishna, Avesh Khan, Arzan Nagwaswalla.

Fighting on one leg, Malik books Olympic spot

on one leg, he didn't do too badly.

At Almaty in April, Malik had progressed to the semifinals after a win over Makhmud Vaysakov of Uzbekistan. But he suffered a 0-2 loss against World No.14 Yusup Batyrmurzaev of Kazakhstan in the last-four round. Malik won a bronze medal with a 5-0 win over Kim Donghwan of Korea. At the Asian Championships, at the same venue, Malik reached the quarter-finals before losing 1-7 to world No.13 Oleg Boltin of Kazakhstan.

The Haryana wrestler from Kurto, Rohtak, believes the experience of wrestling against the likes of Boltin and Batyrmurzaev held him in good stead. "Initially, I could not practice for more than a week after the injury. But I knew that I had to take a chance. We focused on the upper body movements but was restricted by slow knee movements. Lots of ice packs were applied on the knee. The loss against Batyrmurzaev was a narrow one but it also gave me a chance to analyse my game. The injury meant I was focusing more on defending during practice and had to visualise attacking moves so I could implement them if it was really necessary," Malik said.

Malik conceded the final against Russian Sergei Kozyrev due to injury on Friday. "It was my last chance to qualify for Olympics and there was the worry about the injured knee too. I had been wrestling after taking painkillers in Almaty and here too. When I learned the Olympic spot, it made me forget all the pain," said Malik while speaking to The Indian Express from Sophia, Bulgaria.

Malik's movement, especially the lower body was restricted, because of the knee injury. He focused on upper-body moves which meant he had to constantly think on his feet during a bout. For a man who was literally fighting

against Lazarev and Romanov before but I watched their videos prior to the world qualifiers. Now I had to show some patience and it helped me here," Malik said.

Malik is a product of the Chhatrasal Stadium conveyor belt of wrestlers. He moved to the wrestling nursery in Delhi, along with his uncle, after his mother passed away.

At Tokyo, Malik knows he will be up against the best. World No.1 Robert Baanof Poland, two-time Olympian and Rio Olympics quarter-finalist Daniel Ligi of Hungary and reigning European Championships silver medalist Sergei Kozyrev of Russia were in the other half of the field in the world qualifiers. Only two of the world's top-20 wrestlers in 125 kg competed in the event.

National coach Jagmender Singh said Malik's task will be cut out in Tokyo. But the coach is confident about his ward holding his own. "His biggest strength is his will power and he displayed that last month and this week too by competing despite the injured knee. He had his weaknesses earlier but has improved with time and has competed against some good wrestlers in the world. That's why we expect him to improve further," Singh said.

Seema Bisla qualifies

Last month's Asian Championships bronze medallist Seema Bisla became the fourth Indian women wrestler after Vinesh Phogat, Sonam Mallick and Anshu Malik to seal the Olympic quota with a 2-1 win over Anna Lukasik of Poland in the women's 50 kg semi-finals. The 28-year-old started the day with an 8-0 win over Anna Tasiya Yanotawa of Belarus in the qualification round. In the quarters, Bisla scored a 10-2 win over Emma Malmgren of Sweden before prevailing over the Polish wrestler.

From the unprecedented coronavirus postponement to a raft of sexism scandals and a ban on overseas fans, the path to staging the Tokyo Olympics has been far from smooth. With less than three months to go, here's a turbulent timeline.

24 MARCH, 2020

Historic postponement: With the coronavirus spreading rapidly worldwide, Japan and the IOC make the historic decision to postpone the Olympics. A new date is announced for the opening ceremony – 23 July, 2021 – but the event will still be called Tokyo 2020. Organisers later insist that there is "no chance" the Games will be postponed for a second time.

DECEMBER 2020

Extra costs, new rules: Anti-virus measures and other delay-related costs add 294 billion yen (\$2.7 billion) to the price tag, which has ballooned to at least 1,64 trillion yen (\$15 billion) – making Tokyo 2020 potentially the most expensive Summer Olympics in history. The IOC says it will try to ensure as many participants as possible are vaccinated, but jabs will not be obligatory.

Organisers outline plans for holding the events safely, with athletes facing regular testing and restrictions on mingling, and spectators spared quarantine but banned from cheering.

JANUARY 2021

Virus surges, support drops: Public support for the Olympics plummets in Japan as a virus state of emergency is declared in Tokyo and other regions to halt a winter spike in infections. But organisers and the IOC insist the Games will be held, with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga saying they will be "part of of



The state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of Japan has been extended until May 31. Reuters

mankind's victory over the virus".

FEBRUARY 2021

Sexism row: Tokyo 2020 chief Yujiro Mori resigns after his claims that women talk too much in meetings spark a firestorm of criticism. He is replaced by Olympic Minister Seiko Hashimoto, 56, a seven-time Olympian who is one of just two women in Japan's cabinet.

Just weeks into her tenure, she accepts the resignation of Hirotoshi Sasaki, creative director for the Games' opening and closing ceremonies after a report reveals he suggested a

plus-size female comedian could appear as an "Olympig".

MARCH 2021

No overseas fans, torch relay begins: Organisers announce overseas fans will be barred from the Games to limit virus risks, marking the first time the Olympics will be held without foreign spectators. On 25 March, the cherry blossom-shaped Olympic torch is lit in Fukushima, with no spectators allowed at the launch.

But fans are permitted to line the route as the flame traverses the country's 47 prefectures, borne by 10,000 runners, before arriving for the opening ceremony.

APRIL 2021

North Korea pulls out: North Korea says it will not attend the Tokyo Games to protect its athletes from COVID-19-dashed Seoul's hopes of using the Games to restart talks with its nuclear-armed neighbour.

In Japan, virus rules are tightened as cases spike, including in Tokyo and Osaka, where the torch relay is forced off public roads as a result.

MAY 2021

Japan extends a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and three other areas until at least the end of the month in an attempt to arrest the surge. The