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See which Category you fall in		Classroom Program Available	Admission Criteria	Program Fee (in Rs.)	Fee to be paid by	Remarks
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Category C	Open for all Students who are aiming for JEE Main & JEE Advanced 2022	One Year Extended Classroom Program Batch Commencement Date will be according to the Admission Test Date and may vary centre to centre	Through Admission Test*. Dates given on page 2	Approx. 1,35,000/- + GST (may vary centre to centre) Scholarships are awarded on the basis of Students' performance in the Admission Test	It will be in accordance to the respective Admission Test Date	NA

#Admission Tests will be conducted in proctored online mode (can be taken from the safety of your home) | Register at <http://admissiontest.fiitjee.com>

* Within 7 days of joining the college

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Program	Last Date to Enrol	Program Fee*
Rankers Study Material (RSM) - One Year Version for JEE Main & JEE Advanced 2022	Till 31st May 2021	Rs. 26,800/-
	From 1st June to 31st July 2021	Rs. 27,800/-
	From 1st to 31st August 2021	Rs. 28,300/-
	From 1st to 30th September 2021	Rs. 28,800/-

Program	Inclusions			Last Date to Enrol & Program Fee*
	Details of Tests	Details of myPAT Online Tests	Number of hours of Live Online Concept Strengthening Classroom Program (CSCP)	
All India Test Series# for JEE Main & JEE Advanced 2022	12 (Main) + 10 (Advanced)	24 (Main) + 27 (Advanced)	114	31st May 2021 Rs. 16,000/- 31st July 2021 Rs. 18,200/- 15th Nov 2021 Rs. 19,200/-

For complete schedule, please visit <https://fiitjeenonclassroomprograms.com/aits2022schedule/>

Till tests are allowed at AITS Centres, Test Series will be conducted online. Appear from the safety of your home.

Enrol online at www.fiitjeenonclassroomprograms.com

FIITJEE Non-Classroom Programs Helpline : 9599597454, 9205261239

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Classroom Program for JEE Advanced 2021	NTA Score in JEE Main 2021	Admission Criteria	Program Fee	Test Series for JEE Main & JEE Advanced 2021	NTA Score in JEE Main 2021	Admission Criteria	Program Fee (including GST)
Intensive Contact Program (162 hours) includes All India Test Series & Grand Masters Package As JEE Advanced 2021 has been postponed for a few months, take the advantage of this bonus time and master the entire syllabus of JEE Advanced conceptually. Batch Commencement Date : 9th June 2021 ● Classes by FIITJEE Delhi faculty ● Small batch size for better personal attention ● Regular doubt clearing sessions ● Video lectures will be uploaded for each class ● Weekly performance enhancement test to be conducted with thorough analysis after each test ● Various practice tests to be conducted having unique problems of JEE Advanced level	99.9 or above	Direct Admission	Only Administrative Charges of Rs. 1000/- to be paid	All India Test Series# Last Date to Enrol - 1st July 2021 With Live Online Concept Strengthening Classroom Program (CSCP) by FIITJEE Delhi Centres + Multidimensional Analysis of Performance + myPAT - Online Test Series	99.9 or above	Direct Admission	Only Administrative Charges of Rs. 100/- to be paid
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	> = 99 < 99.5		Rs. 5,000/- + GST		> = 99 < 99.5		Only Administrative Charges of Rs. 1000/- to be paid
	> = 97 < 99		Rs. 9,000/- + GST		> = 97 < 99		Rs. 1500/-
	< 97		Rs. 12,000/- + GST		> = 95 < 97		Rs. 2500/-
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All these programs will be conducted in online mode until receipt of government directives to open classrooms. Thereafter, these programs will run in offline mode. However, students preferring to study through online mode can continue to do so.

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I am a doctor. I did my MBBS from AIIMS, New Delhi. I studied at FIITJEE in class IX and X, which gave me an advantage of enhanced analytical & improved decision-making skills. This gave me enough confidence to pursue the **Medical Stream** later in class XI & XII. The principles learnt at FIITJEE are benefitting me even now. Indeed, joining FIITJEE till class X was the apt decision for me. – **Ira Pachori**



To achieve my aim of building a career in Law, I took **Humanities** in class XI & XII. To develop my analytical & logical thinking and research skills, I chose to study at FIITJEE from class VIII to X. Only because FIITJEE taught me to solve analytical reasoning questions integral to competitive exams, I could clear CLAT. Today, I am enrolled in BA LLB at Nalsar, Hyderabad. – **Barkha Singh**



It was my pre-set goal to choose **Commerce** after class X and make a career in Economics. And, to strengthen my mathematics and critical-thinking skills, I joined FIITJEE from class VII to X. Those 4 years of beneficial learning made me academically abled enough to pursue Economics Honours from Indraprastha University, New Delhi. – **Srishti Chopra**



I wanted to become a Management Professional. I took **Arts** in class XI & XII and to cement my academic foundation, I studied at FIITJEE in class IX & X. FIITJEE developed my IQ, strategic thinking skills & infused in me enough confidence to pursue BBE. Today, I am doing **MBA in Marketing** & the learnings of FIITJEE still remain the biggest support in my life & career. – **Abhishek Sharma**



I am an IAS officer & always wanted to be one. Since I wanted to opt for **Science Stream** in class XI and XII, I joined FIITJEE right in class IX & continued studying till class XII. This enhanced my IQ, developed rational thinking & problem-solving tactics, pre-requisites to crack UPSC exam. The learning at FIITJEE helps me till date in real life applications. – **Keerthi Vasan**

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Classroom / Integrated School Programs for Students of Class IX, X, XI, XII and XII appearing Students aspiring to ace Engineering Entrance and other Competitive & Scholastic Exams or having inclination towards pursuing a career after doing Bachelor's in Science : **Class IX - Four Year Classroom Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2025, RAMANUJAN** - Four Year Integrated Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2025, **SUPREME** - Four Year Integrated School Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2025 ; **Class X - Three Year Classroom Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2024** ; **Class XI - Two Year Classroom Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2023, PANINI** - Two Year Integrated Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2023, **PINNACLE** - Two Year Integrated School Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2023 ; **Class XII - One Year Classroom Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2022** ; **Class XII appearing (presently in XII) - One Year Extended Classroom Program for JEE Main & Advanced 2022**

Admission Test Dates

6th June, 20th June & 27th June 2021 (For Students of Class VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII & XII appearing) ; 11th July & 25th July 2021 (For Students of Class XI & XII appearing) ; 1st August 2021 (For XII appearing Students) ; 8th August & 22nd August 2021 (For Students of Class XI & XII appearing) ; 29th August 2021 (FIITJEE Talent Reward Exam for XII Pass Students).

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The Premier Institute for JEE Main, JEE Advanced, Boards, various Olympiads, KVPY & NTSE



Calcutta HC grants bail to four leaders arrested in Narada case
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PM Modi is responsible for second COVID-19 wave: Rahul Gandhi
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Syrian President Bashar al-Assad re-elected fourth time
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Playing conditions unveiled for WTC final between India and NZ
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NEARBY



Board exam decision may come by June 1: SC

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday orally advised a petitioner, who wanted the CBSE/ICSE Board exams to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 health crisis, to remain optimistic, while saying that the government may resolve the issue by June 1. The Centre is expected to announce its final decision about the CBSE Class XII exams on Tuesday.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

BKU(U) begins 3-day protest in Patiala

CHANDIGARH

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan), one of the largest farmer outfits in Punjab, on Friday started a three-day sit-in protest in Patiala against the Congress government over its alleged failure to deal with the COVID-19 situation. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had asked the outfit not to stage the stir, apprehending the event would turn into a superspreader.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

PRELIMS MENTORSHIP + SELF STUDY PLAN

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Govt. puts off decision on tax relief for COVID-19 supplies

Group of Ministers to meet, recommend rates for individual items

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council failed to agree on immediate tax breaks for critical pandemic relief supplies, including COVID-19 vaccines, and constituted a Group of Ministers to recommend individual items' tax rates by June 8.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, chairing the Council's first meeting in nearly eight months on Friday, said there were protracted discussions with 'varying viewpoints' on the taxation of COVID-related items and these dominated the over eight-hour-parley between the States and the Centre.

"So I have decided and announced a Group of Ministers to submit a report within 10 days so that if there are any further reductions that need to be done, will be done," Ms. Sitharaman said.

States's demand
Opposition-ruled States, including West Bengal, Kerala and Punjab, have been demanding that the GST levied on COVID-related items be scrapped.

The Minister added that revenue implications were not driving the rate cut reluctance, rather the question of whether GST relief on such

Tiding over second wave

- Ministerial group to review demands for GST relief on COVID-19 essentials by June 8
- Entities purchasing goods for donations to get GST exemption on imports of COVID-19 material
- Centre to raise ₹1.58 lakh crore for States in lieu of their compensation dues
- Special session proposed to decide GST Compensation Cess levy extension beyond July 2022
- Small taxpayers to get minor relaxations in compliance



Pandemic challenges: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addressing the media after the GST Council meeting on Friday. ■ PTI

items will benefit the common man. Technical panels reviewing the rates have found that there will be a "collateral impact" of rate cuts on other items, she explained.

"I underline the fact that it is not as if one segment said we should do it on humanitarian grounds and another said we shouldn't do anything on humanitarian grounds," the Minister said.

While Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal said that "GST #COVID19 relief put on hold for lack of compassion by the Union

Government," Ms. Sitharaman refused to react directly.

"If we are quick to say that the Centre has no compassion, I have nothing to say. Ultimately, we are all responsible for our citizens' welfare. I humbly submit that the interest of all the States and the Centre is towards making sure that Indians get the vaccine on time and the States get their fair share of revenues in time," Ms. Sitharaman said.

SPECIAL GST MEET TO BE CONVENED ▶ PAGE 10

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GST on vaccines, cylinders not justified: States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"The imposition of 5% GST on vaccines and 12% GST on oxygen cylinders, medicines and other material required for treatment of infection is unjustified," said Shanti Dhariwal, Urban Development and Housing Minister, representing Rajasthan at the GST Council meeting.

Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia said Punjab, West Bengal, Kerala and many other States echoed his proposal to make essential COVID-19 supplies tax-free, but Finance Ministers of several BJP-ruled States strongly opposed it.

Odisha Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari demanded reduction in tax rates on items such as vaccines. He cited twin challenges the State was currently battling, the pandemic and the aftermath of Cyclone Yaas.

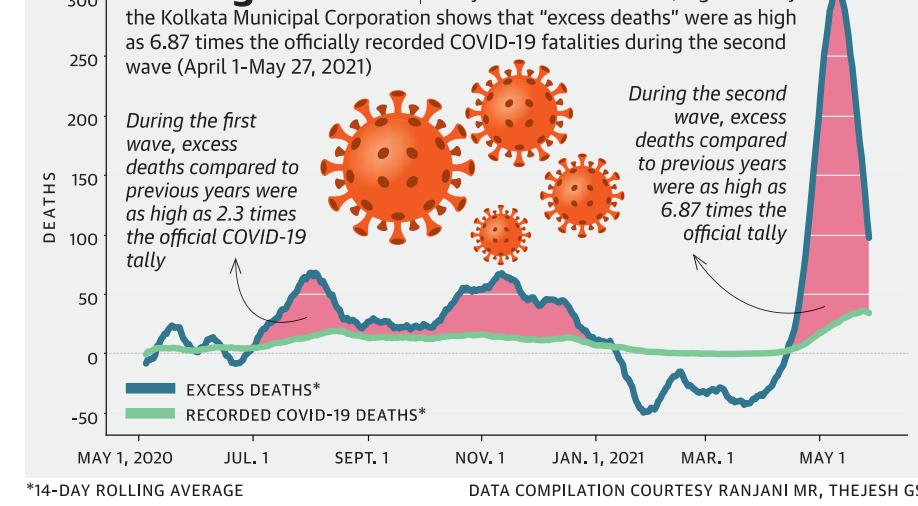
Batting for small States, Arunachal Pradesh Deputy CM Chowna Mein requested that they be allowed to levy COVID cess to tide over financial difficulties.

Kolkata's COVID deaths in 2021 could be 4 times more

April-May excess deaths were 7 times more than official count

Missing numbers

Analysis of deaths certified/registered by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation shows that "excess deaths" were as high as 6.87 times the officially recorded COVID-19 fatalities during the second wave (April 1-May 27, 2021)



SRINIVAS RAMANI
VIGNESH RADHAKRISHNAN
CHENNAI

1,198 deaths. During this period when the second wave raged in Kolkata, there were 8,234 "excess deaths" compared to 1,198 reported COVID-19 deaths. These "excess deaths" were calculated as the difference between the 17,587 certified deaths in April and May 2021 and the average number of certified deaths in the pre-pandemic years between 2015-2019 (9,353).

If data on certified deaths in Kolkata in 2021 so far are any indication, the number of excess deaths compared to previous years was as high as 4.5 times the official recorded figure of 1,371 COVID-19 related deaths, indicating a much higher toll from COVID-19.

Excess deaths were estimated from data on death certification from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation accessed by *The Hindu*.

In April and May 2021 (till May 27) of the second wave alone, excess deaths were as high as 6.87 times the officially recorded figure of

peak should largely be COVID-19 related deaths.

The lower multiple of 4.5 for January-May 2021 as opposed to April-May 2021 was because of a low number of certified deaths in March 2021 – 4,384 compared to the pre-pandemic years' (2015-2019) average of 5,520. This could also be because of lower certification numbers as deaths during recent months are certified with a lag – a pattern that holds true for April and May as well. Thus, 2021's excess deaths could increase further as more data is available.

(With inputs from Shiv Sahay Singh in Kolkata)

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Covaxin output cycle may hit Centre's deadline

Each batch takes 4 months, says firm

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Amid claims by the Centre that "all Indians" would be vaccinated by the year-end, Bharat Biotech, the manufacturer of Covaxin, has disclosed that it takes 120 days – or about four months – for a manufactured batch of vaccines to be released for supply.

"Thus, production batches of COVAXIN that were initiated during March this year will be ready for supply only during the month of June," the company said in a statement on Friday.

2.5 crore doses supplied
So far between 2.25 crore doses of Covaxin have reportedly been supplied.

Earlier this month, V.K. Paul, who heads India's National Empowered Group on Vaccines, stated that 216 crore doses of vaccines



Only about 11% of India's population has got at least one dose. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

would be available by December. Nearly 60%, or about 130 crore doses and enough to inoculate every Indian once, is premised on quantum jumps in the supply of the two vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, with 50-55 crore of the latter.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Flight time



Flamingos at DPS Lake in Navi Mumbai on Friday. They will leave the city by the time monsoon rolls in. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Mamata skips PM's review meet on Yaas

She met Modi separately and submitted report on the damage caused by cyclone

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday skipped the review meeting on Cyclone Yaas presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kalikunda airbase in the State, even though she met Mr. Modi at the same venue. The Chief Minister also handed the Prime Minister a report on the disaster caused by the cyclone.

"After having review meetings in Hingalganj & Sagar, I met the Hon'ble PM in Kalikunda & apprised him regarding the post-cyclone situation in West Bengal. The disaster report has been handed over for his perusal. I've proceeded now to review the relief & restoration work at Digha," Ms. Banerjee said on social media.

The Chief Minister told mediapersons that she could not participate in the review meeting as she had to attend a meeting on the damage caused in Haldia.

"We went to Kalikunda, Chief Secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay accompanied me. We submitted a report and urged the Prime Minister that

what he deems fit he should implement on the basis of the report," Ms. Banerjee told mediapersons later in the day. She said that the State government has sought implementation of two schemes each of ₹10,000 crore for Digha development and Sundarbans development. This was the first meeting between Mr. Modi and Ms. Banerjee after the Assembly election.

Sources said Ms. Banerjee was upset about BJP leaders, particularly Leader of Opposition and Nandigram MLA, Suvenu Adhikari, being present at the meeting.

The developments evoked a strong response from the BJP leadership. Party chief J.P. Nadda said Ms. Banerjee's absence is "murder of constitutional ethos & the culture of cooperative federalism".

Reacting to the developments, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said it would have served the interests of the State and its people "for CM and officials @MamataOfficial to attend Review Meet by PM". "Confrontational attitude ill serves interests of State or democracy. Non-participation by CM and officials not in sync with constitutionality or rule of law," he said on Twitter.

Cyclone Yaas swept past the coastal areas of West Bengal and Odisha on May 26, causing widespread damage. Ms. Banerjee had estimated the damage in West Bengal to the tune of ₹20,000 crore.

CENTRE TELLS W.B. CHIEF SECY. TO REPORT TO DELHI ▶ PAGE 10
SHAH, RAJNATH FLAY MAMATA FOR HER ABSENCE ▶ PAGE 10

Help children orphaned by COVID-19, orders SC

Identify those in distress, officials told

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said precious time was being lost as children orphaned, abandoned and traumatised by the COVID-19 pandemic were starving on the streets of "this large country".

The court ordered district authorities across the country to immediately fan out and identify these children in need of care and provide them with basic needs like food, shelter and clothes.

"Days are passing by without children getting any food... Hope you will understand [to the Centre and the States] the agony these children are undergoing on the streets... We do not know the age of these children starving on the streets or how many of them are there in such a large country," a



A volunteer handing over food packet to a child in Odisha. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

visibly anguished Justice L. Nageswara Rao, accompanied by Justice Aniruddha Bose on the Bench, said.

The hearing on Friday was based on an urgent application filed by the *amicus curiae*, advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who placed on record a report in *The Hindu* about the plight of children during the pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Mamata skips PM's review meet on Yaas

She met Modi separately and submitted report on the damage caused by cyclone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said the Delhi government will start the 'unlock' process in a phased manner from May 31 as the number of daily COVID-19 cases is decreasing.

Construction activity and factories will start from the coming week as daily wagers and labourers were the worst affected due to the lockdown, Mr. Kejriwal said in a video message.

The city was placed under a six-day lockdown on April 19. As infections and deaths continued to spike and pushed the city's health infrastructure past its limits, the lockdown was extended several times. "This lockdown is till May 31, 5 a.m. On Friday, a Delhi Disaster Man-

agement Authority meeting was conducted under the leadership of the Lieutenant-Governor wherein it was decided that we will slowly and steadily begin the process of opening up," he said.

Over the past 24 hours, the city saw around 1,100 cases and the test positivity rate dipped to 1.5%. "With great effort and difficulty, the situation has somewhat come under control, but the battle is not won yet. We should not lose all the gains of the lockdown by suddenly opening up. It is a unanimous belief among experts that the lockdown be opened up slowly," he said.

A balance must be struck

between controlling the pandemic and allowing as much economic activity as possible, said the Delhi CM.

Weekly assessment
Recognising the 'dire situation' of daily wagers and migrant labourers, Mr. Kejriwal said: "Such workers are found mostly in construction activities and factories. So, it was decided that these activities will be opened from Monday for one week."

The unlock process will be assessed weekly based on public feedback, he added.

IN BRIEF

'Ration from anganwadis reached 91% beneficiaries'

NEW DELHI The Delhi Commission For Protection of Child Rights on Friday said it conducted an independent survey to evaluate the distribution of Take Home Ration (THR) through anganwadis and 91% of the beneficiaries reported that they are receiving nutritional supplements. "In May 2020, only 23% of the beneficiaries received ration under the ICDS Scheme. However, in May 2021 91% of the beneficiaries have reported that they have received the right quantity of ration at the designated time," an official statement said. The scheme is to ensure that lactating mothers and kids below six years receive nutritional supplements from anganwadi centres.

R-Day violence: court adjourns chargesheet cognisance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI A Delhi court on Friday deferred till June 17 its order on the cognisance of the chargesheet filed against actor-activist Deep Sidhu and 15 others in connection with the Republic Day violence case, saying that the prosecution sanction is awaited.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate said sanction under the Epidemic Diseases Act, the Disaster Management Act and Arms Act is still awaited from the authorities. The judge, who directed the police to expedite the process, also refused to provide the copy of the chargesheet to the counsel of the accused. However, they have been allowed to inspect the final report on visiting the court. The prosecutor informed the court that the process for getting sanction has been initiated by them. On Jan. 26, protesting farmers clashed with the policemen during a tractor rally against three agricultural laws and stormed into the Red Fort, injuring scores of policemen.

City's poor wait for food and CM's scheme to reach them

Delhi food rights group writes to Kejriwal raising concerns over date of roll-out

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

Gautam Giri, a resident of a slum cluster in Malviya Nagar, has been hit by the pandemic in more than one way. While he lost his job during the nationwide lockdown in 2020, the past month has been especially difficult after he lost his mother – the sole breadwinner of the family.

Ensuring meals for the family has proved to be a difficult task during the current lockdown, he said.

"Currently, I am dependent on my friends who have graciously agreed to help us. There is no existence of 'cash' in my life at this point. My mother was the sole earner in the family, but she succumbed to COVID-19. Now, I do not know how to sustain my family," he added.

'No milk for toddler'

"For the past month, I have not even been able to buy milk for my 18-month-old child. I cannot put into words how we are trying to sustain ourselves," said Mr.



A man carries ration through waterlogged roads in the city. ■ FILE PHOTO

Giri. Over the week after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced the distribution of ration to non-cardholders, several people complained of benefits not having reached them yet.

Noting that over 69 lakh people who did not possess ration cards had registered last year for the scheme, the Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyaan (DRRAA) in its letter to the Chief Minister on Friday said, "The guidelines state that in the initial phase of distribution, grains will be provided to two lakh beneficiaries and later as per demand

and need assessment from the field, up to the maximum of 20 lakh beneficiaries. This is grossly inadequate." While welcoming the move on May 25, the DRRAA on Friday also said it was concerning that no date had been provided as to when the scheme would be rolled out.

Nazia Khatun, who works as a domestic help in the city said, "I have a family of six to feed. At present, we can eat only one meal a day. I am also required to pay ₹5,000 as rent. Where am I supposed to get the money from? What has the government done in

this entire lockdown period for the poor?" For Santosh Mandal, another domestic worker who has lived alone in the Capital for over a decade, meals sometimes mean only puffed rice.

"I had returned from my hometown three months back. I am sustaining myself from whatever little grains I brought back at that time. The employers have said that they will not pay for the one month that we could not work due to the lockdown. If we receive aid from the government, it will ease our problems to a great extent," said Ms. Mandal.

For Rani (65), who lives with two of her minor grandchildren, depending on neighbours is the only way to ensure daily meals, she said. "There is nobody else in my family to look after us. We are completely dependent on neighbours. Whatever little they can provide, we divide it. If they don't do that on a particular day, we have nothing to eat," said Ms. Rani.

COVID-19 jitters in families keep house helps at bay

Most workers worried, say families bearing brunt of loss of pay

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

With the COVID sword hanging over their heads, several house helps across the city are worried about their job security irrespective of the lockdown status. However, a majority of them believe that the current situation is significantly better than the lockdown in 2020.

Savitri Devi from Shahdara's Nand Nagri said two of her employers had told her not to come for work during last year's lockdown. "But this year, only one of them has refused me. In the other house, I clean utensils in the gallery and water the plants as my employer doesn't ask me to work inside the house.

She has not cut my salary, but I am bearing the loss of not working in the other house," she said.

Rita from West Bengal, who stays in Seemapuri here, said all the three households where she worked have asked her not to come, and only one of them is still paying her salary.

"My husband works in a



A house help at work during the pandemic in the Capital. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

small factory, due to which we were able to manage food and daily requirements. But the loss of pay is affecting my children's needs. I hope they call me back soon. Till the time the virus is here, I don't feel secure," she said.

Simran, a 19-year-old resident of west Delhi's Sudhamapuri, and her mother used to work in six houses. She said three of the houses didn't call them for two weeks when the pandemic was at its peak.

"Barring two weeks, all employers called us and there was no monetary issue. However, due to COVID,

the treatment has changed. I understand everyone is scared but people from our strata have been least affected by COVID then why treat us like untouchables," she said.

'Spending time at home'

For 20-year-old Jyoti, who lost work at two households, the lockdown is like a vacation. "Now, I am used to this. Till the time COVID exists, people may or may not call us. I hadn't spent time with my grandmother in our village in Unnao and now I am here using this time in the best way possible," she said over the phone.

Two more arrested in wrestler death case

Total nine held, four more on the run

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two more persons have been arrested in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium incident in which a wrestler died, the police said on Friday.

The accused have been identified as Rohit Karoria and Virender, they said. Virender, a wrestler, used to practice at the stadium. The arrested accused acted at the behest of the main accused Sushil Kumar, an officer said.

Nine persons have been arrested so far and four are on the run. Sushil and his accomplice Ajay were taken to Bathinda and Chandigarh in connection with the investi-

gation. On Wednesday morning, the police had said that four accomplices of Sushil were arrested. Another accused Prince Dalal was held from the crime spot on the day of the incident.

Wrestler Sagar died while two of his friends were injured after a brawl broke out between them and the accused due to a property dispute on intervening night of May 4-5.

Involvement of gangster

The police said they are probing if gangster Kala Jathdi is directly linked to the incident. The police also said they are yet to recover Sushil's mobile.

HC declines to entertain plea on 'media trial'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday declined to entertain a plea to restrain the media from 'sensationalising' the trial of Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar in connection with the death of a 23-year old man, and seeking rules for reporting criminal cases, saying a PIL cannot be filed for an individual who is a "vigilant person".

An HC Bench said the petition has been filed on behalf of a "vigilant person" – Kumar – claiming that media has defamed him by its reportage of the murder case in which he is an accused. "You cannot file a PIL for an individual...," the court said.

Man arrested for illegal sale of black fungus drug

Accused had amassed ₹10 lakh so far

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man was arrested for allegedly duping several people on the pretext of delivering Liposomal Amphotericin B injection at ₹25,000, the police said on Friday. The injection is used to treat black fungus.

Ayush Singh was arrested from U.P. on Tuesday, the police said, adding he has cheated several people in Najafgarh, Dwarka, Mayur Vihar, Gurugram, Noida and other States. He has cheated people to a tune of ₹10 lakh so far.

The case came to the fore

following complaints against him. The victims told the police that they got Singh's number on social media and when contacted, he assured to provide the injection at ₹25,000 each.

He also asked for an advance payment. Soon after payment was made, he blocked their numbers.

DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said: "During interrogation, he confessed to the crime. Two mobile phones, two ATM cards and ₹17,500 cash were recovered from him and ₹96,000 cheated money was frozen in his account."

St. Stephen's student dies of COVID

Following his demise, principal pens note on college website

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A first-year student of St. Stephen's College, Satyam Jha, died of COVID-19 on Tuesday.

The 18-year-old student of the History department was a member of the college's Gandhi Ambedkar Study Circle, debating society and the organising committee of the college's Students' Federation (SFI) unit.

Following Jha's demise, St. Stephen's College principal John Varghese penned a note – 'From Pandemic to Panacea' – on the college website.

"The pandemic has brought the world to its knees. The second wave of the pandemic has been heartless in its ruthless ram-



The 18-year-old was a member of the college's debate circle. ■

paging through our country exposing our hollow claims of being prepared, of being one of the largest producers of pharmaceutical products in the world, of even being a civilization that places value on the higher things in life. But if life itself is gone, then

Buckets full of hope



Seemapuri residents fill water from a Delhi Jal Board tanker on a hot day in Delhi. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Student held for cheating many by 'selling' Remdesivir

18-year-old accused assured medicine but never delivered it after getting paid

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An 18-year-old girl has been arrested from a city in Madhya Pradesh on Monday for allegedly cheating 11 people to a tune of ₹2,25,000 on the pretext of providing Remdesivir injections, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said the accused, a resident of M.P.'s Seoni, is pursuing Psychology through distance learning

tions and found a number

online. Kumar was promised the delivery of five injections for ₹32,400 following which he transferred the amount to the said bank account but never received the drug.

During probe, bank account details and technical surveillance helped in tracing the accused.

"Two mobile phones, bank passbooks and four ATM cards were recovered from her possession and her bank account with a total ba-

lance of ₹1,33,000 has been seized," the officer said.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly told police that she made money by promoting Instagram pages.

"Her father runs a medical store and her uncle had suffered from COVID. She saw an opportunity to earn money during this emergency situation and used social media to cheat people who were in urgent need of COVID-19 medicines," DCP said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Civic body Mayors say desilting work will be completed before June 20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Civic body Mayors on Friday said the Municipal Corporations of Delhi would complete the desilting work of drains under the jurisdiction before June 20 prior to the onset of monsoon.

North body Mayor Jai Prakash said drains are mainly under the jurisdiction of five agencies in Delhi: the major ones are under the Public Works Department, DSIIIDC, Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Delhi Jal Board and then the municipal corporations.

"We will not live forever. No, one of us is eternal; but if we can pass on the wisdom of our collective experiences then perhaps, there is a possibility for redemption from the curse of arrogance. Are we willing to listen?" wrote Mr. Varghese.

The outfall of small drains under the municipal corporations is in the bigger drains of these departments of the Delhi govern-

ment. If all agencies work together before the monsoon, Delhi can be saved from waterlogging," he said.

According to Mr. Prakash, there are 192 big drains with a depth of above four feet under the jurisdiction of North body and their length is 112.25 km, and the work of desilting of these drains is almost complete.

Request to Delhi govt.

"I request the Delhi government to take advantage of this lockdown and complete the process of desilting from its drains and about 10,000 MT silt has already been removed so far and the remaining work will be completed by June 20.

South DMC Mayor Anamika Mithilesh said the corporation had completed silt removal up to 60-65% adding that she had visited several locations to inspect silt removal work from the drains. She said there are 272 drains under the SDMC with a total length of 188.38 km, and about 16,000 metric tons of silt had been extracted from these drains.

East body Mayor Nirmal Jain said there are 219 drains under its jurisdiction with a total length of 121 km. He said the EDMC had a target of removing 46,000 MT silt from its drains and about 10,000 MT silt has already been removed so far and the remaining work will be completed by June 20.



NSUI members during the protest outside the Education Ministry in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

NSUI holds stir outside Ministry, seeks cancellation of Class XII board exams

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Student-activists of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) organised a protest outside the Ministry of Education on Friday demanding cancellation of Class XII board examinations that have been postponed due to the second COVID wave.

As some students in PPE kits gathered outside the Ministry, the NSUI on social media amplified its demand to find an alternative to physical examinations. The students raised the slogan – *Pehle Suraksha, Phir Pariksha* [first safety then examination].

NSUI's national president Neeraj Kundan said they had written to the Ministry that conducting an examination in such a situation could be life-threatening. "The government has already failed to procure the vaccines and there seems no definite plan for that, and now this lack of planning for the board exams will harm the academic year

Timings

DELHI

SATURDAY, MAY. 29	RISE 05:25 SET 19:13
SUNDAY, MAY. 30	RISE 22:35 SET 07:58
MONDAY, MAY. 31	RISE 05:25 SET 19:14
TUESDAY, MAY. 31	RISE 23:28 SET 09:04
MONDAY, MAY. 31	RISE 00:00 SET 10:09

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	40 25
Safdarjung	40 25
Palam	39 26

Delhi Palam Today
39°C Comfortable morning and hot day with partly cloudy sky. A spell of thunderstorm possible at few areas.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
39°C Comfortable morning and hot day would prevail. A spell of rain and thunderstorm likely with partly cloudy sky.

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IN BRIEF

Why are mohalla clinics not open, asks BJP

NEW DELHI
The BJP on Friday said the "world class" mohalla clinics at the core of Delhi government's claims of providing a robust health infrastructure stood exposed. Instead of treatment, one only sees closed doors at these clinics, alleged Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta. "When other doctors were giving consultations from their homes why were these clinics not even treating patients with other issues or giving virtual consultation?" he asked.

1,141 fresh COVID-19 cases emerge; positivity rate continues to plunge

AAP alleges scam in vaccine distribution, says only private hospitals getting stock

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 1,141 new COVID-19 cases, out of 71,853 tests, in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,23,690, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday. At the same time, 139 deaths were reported, which takes the count to 23,951.

Of the total cases, 13,85,158 people have recovered and there are 14,581 active cases. As many as 2,799 people recovered in the past 24 hours.

The test positivity rate fell to 1.59%, which means only one to two people out of 100 people taking tests are positive.

The TPR had peaked at 36% on April 22 but has been coming down since then. Out of the total 25,032 hospital beds for COVID-19, 75.88% of beds were vacant. At the peak of the second



Vaccination drive going on at one of the centres in Mangolpuri on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

wave in April, only 5-6% of beds were vacant on many days.

Oxygen bulletin

There was no vaccine stock for the 18-44 age group for the fifth consecutive day, according to a bulletin by the government. Also, there is no stock of Covaxin left for vaccinating people of 45 years of age and above, healthcare, and front-line workers, the bulletin said.

The Aam Aadmi Party alleged that there was a "scam" in COVID-19 vaccines and the Central government was favouring only Bharat Biotech and SII and was supplying vaccines only to private players who are immunising people at "expensive rates".

"How are vaccines available in private hospitals, which are vaccinating youth at expensive rates, but not available for State govern-

ments? Centre is answerable for this vaccine scam. Private hospitals giving vaccines at ₹1,000-₹1,350 are getting huge stock, but not the State governments," AAP leader Atishi alleged.

The AAP leader said an artificial scarcity of vaccines has been created by the Central government as they did not approve other vaccines such as Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson, which have been approved by WHO and other countries.

"Lakhs of lives have been lost in the face of the second wave of COVID-19, religious and social organisations are coming forward to aid people, but the Centre continues to play dirty politics at the cost of people's lives. The lives of so many young people would have been saved if the Centre had not done such a downright vaccine scam," Atishi said in a statement.

Apollo begins antibody cocktail for mild cases

65-year-old man first to be treated

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Apollo Hospital on Friday said they have started an "antibody cocktail treatment" for COVID-19 patients, who have mild symptoms and comorbidities. These are people who have the risk of developing a severe illness, the hospital said.

A 65-year-old man from Delhi, who has multiple comorbidities, was the first COVID-19 patient to receive "monoclonal antibody therapy".

"Apollo Hospitals begins offering the antibody cocktail [Casirivimab and Imdevimab] to patients with mild and moderate COVID and at high risk of developing severe COVID," the hospital said in a statement.

Anupam Sibal, Group Medical Director of Apollo Hospitals Group, said: "We are glad to launch a pan India programme for advanced treatment, comprising neutralising monoclonal antibodies for our patients with CO-

VID-19. Monoclonal antibodies bind to and 'neutralise' the SARS-CoV-2 virus. We are confident this treatment option will significantly boost our efforts to bring the pandemic under control and help prevent progression of the disease in those with mild to moderate COVID-19".

Rajesh Chawla, Senior Pulmonologist at the hospital, said the reason this therapy is termed as an antibody cocktail is because it comprises a mixture of more than two biological drugs (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) that mirror the human antibodies in the immune system.

"This consequently help fight the infection, similar to the natural antibodies produced when one gets infected with COVID. Both strengthen the immune defence system.

This drug is said to restrict pathogens and virus from entering the patient's body, from where they otherwise would have derived nutrition and multiplied," Dr. Chawla said.

NGO provides oxygen to city hospitals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An initiative that began in the wake of acute oxygen shortage across the Capital when the second wave of the COVID-19 surged is still providing oxygen to almost a dozen hospitals in west Delhi.

The Udaan Charitable Foundation, with the West Delhi administration, had rolled out oxygen supply vehicles to assist hospitals.

The initiative is functional 24x7 for all hospitals in the district, said Harish Sahni. A carrier vehicle called an 'oxygen supply vehicle' is loaded with oxygen cylinders and then dispatched to hospitals which require urgent supply.

THE HINDU

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Focus on implementing restrictions only in containment zones: Delhi Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Friday said it was in favour of lifting the lockdown restrictions

across the city as a prolonged lockdown has caused irreparable damage to the economy and lives of the people.

The party suggested that

the government should focus on putting restrictions in containment zones, instead of keeping the Capital shut, so that economic activity can be

resumed, and people can earn their livelihood.

Former Union Minister Krishna Tirath said that the Delhi government has an-

nounced it would allow resumption of construction and industrial activity from May 31. But it had not specified what steps are being taken to

ensure that the workers are protected from the sweep of the virus and how these sectors would function with the raw material shops shut.

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LAKSHADWEEP USHERING INTO A NEW ERA OF PROGRESS, PROSPERITY & OPPORTUNITIES

Lakshadweep, which is situated in the Arabian Sea off the south western coast of India, is bestowed with scenic beauty and holds great importance from the point of view of tourism and strategic location. It has 36 islands out of which 10 islands are inhabited. But even after completion of 73 years of independence, the level of development here has not been commensurate with its potential. The steps taken by the Administration in the recent past has ushered in new direction and momentum to the development in the island. The administration has laid the foundation for the future of Lakshadweep in a planned way.



Inauguration of Fish Market at Androth -17.01.2021

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

In today's modern era, it is very important to have net connectivity for the overall development of any region. But even after 73 years of independence, net connectivity is a very big problem in Lakshadweep. Keeping in mind the overall development of Lakshadweep, the Hon'ble Prime Minister has awarded a submarine optical fiber cable project of Rs 1072 crore, which will be completed by 2023-24. With this, online education, e-medicine and various types of technical facilities will be available here, so that the local people of this place will get new opportunities in the field of education, employment and business.



Visit to Solar Plant at Androth on 17.01.2021

TOURISM

Maldives with the same natural beauty and similar geographical location as Lakshadweep has emerged as great tourism location in the world map. But even today there are friendly facilities for tourism in Lakshadweep. Three eco friendly tourism water villa projects are being developed for tourism development by the Lakshadweep Administration in collaboration with NITI Aayog on the lines of Maldives in Minicoy, Kadmat and Suheli and the progress on the same shall start from the month of August, 2021. With this, tourism will get a new dimension



Hospital visit at Ammin on 12.12.2020



Hon'ble Administrator Shri Praful Patel and Students GSSS Minicoy on 19.01.2021

EDUCATION & HEALTH

There is inadequate facilities of higher education for the youth here, for this, the Administration has taken the initiative to set up a nursing college and paramedical college in Kavaratti and a polytechnic college in Minicoy to provide higher education opportunities in Lakshadweep itself. The youth of these islands shall get a chance to make a career in the Mechanical, Electrical and Marine engineering streams at the Polytechnic College. This shall provide a golden opportunity especially for the youth of Minicoy who are aspiring to join the Merchant Navy. These courses will start in the ensuing academic session this year.

In this direction, a process has been initiated in the field of education for establishment of a new modern High School in Kavaratti, the need of which was felt by the local residents over the years.

Hitherto, the health infrastructure here was not developed upto its full potential even after 73 years of independence. Keeping this in mind, sea facing hospitals are being constructed in Agatti, Minicoy, Andrott and Kavaratti. Administration has taken special initiative to deal with COVID epidemic. With the efforts of the administration, 2 oxygen plants are being installed by the Government of India in Agatti and Kavaratti. Along with this, 1 oxygen plant is being set up in Minicoy through CSR. This is an important step towards making the Union Territory of Lakshadweep, which is about 500 KM away from the mainland, self-reliant in the field of health.

Tuna fish is found in abundance in the sea here. Approximately 25,000 metric tons of fish are caught every year, of which 92% is Tuna Fish. But due to lack of proper arrangement of ice and fish processing here, fishermen do not get fair price for their catch. Taking steps in this direction the Administration has set up an ice plant in Minicoy, Bitra, Agatti (in addition to Kavaratti and Kadmat) and an ice plant is being set up in Amini. This will help preserve the value and quality of Tuna Fish.

MOU has been signed with NCDC for state-of-the-art promotion to increase exports of Tuna Fish.

Along with this, new markets are being explored by NCDC, MPEDA and other institutions for fish exports, so that fishermen can get fair value for their products.

For economic empowerment and self-reliance of women in the Union Territory, the process has been started to make Lakshadweep, the nation's largest hub of Seaweed farming through formation of Women Self Help Groups in the Union Territory.

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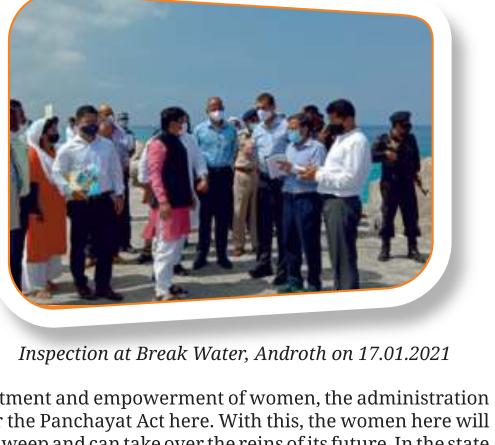


Visit to Handicraft Center, Kavaratti on 10.12.2020

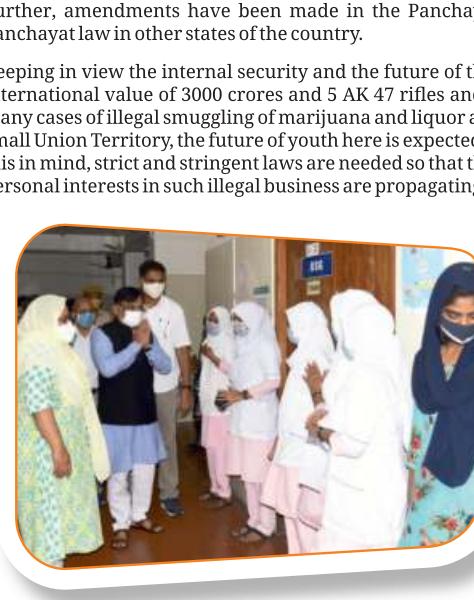
OTHERS

Just as petroleum products are sold by PSUs (PSUs such as IOCL) across India, similarly retail outlets will be run by them in Lakshadweep providing employment to the local people.

Electricity for the entire Lakshadweep is generated from diesel generator which has a very adverse effect on the environment here. To save the natural environment and to promote green energy and clean energy here, the Government of India has started the process of privatization for the production of electricity.



Inspection at Break Water, Androth on 17.01.2021



Agatti Hospital Visit on 10.12.2020

Administration are propagating misinformation campaign against the administration. All citizens are requested to participate in this journey of development led by the administration.

Issued by Lakshadweep Administration

As many states of the country have enacted cow protection laws, a law has also been introduced in Lakshadweep on the same lines. Only those who are associated with its illegal business and those who have personal interests are propagating against this legislation.

The administration have started continuous work for the prosperity and bright future of all its citizens, especially fishermen, women and youth of this blessed Union Territory, which is being left behind in the race for development from its brothers and sisters of the other Indian States/UTs. In such a situation, the people whose vested interests are hit by the

Cyclone Yaas-induced rain floods areas in Odisha

Two rivers in spate; rescue efforts on

STAFF REPORTER

BHUANESWAR

Thousands of people were marooned in four Odisha districts following the rise in the water level in two rivers which were in spate due to Cyclone Yaas-induced heavy rain.

While the Subarnarekha river caused limited scale flood in Balasore district, the overflowing waters of the Baitarani river contributed to the floods in Bhadrak, Keonjhar and Jajpur districts.

About 20 panchayats under Balipala, Jaleswar and Bhograi blocks of Balasore could face flood due to the rising water level in the Subarnarekha. The district administration has urged people living in low lying areas

to move to safer places.

"Jharkhand has released water from the Galidih barrage due to which the flow has increased in the Subarnarekha river," said P.K. Jena, Special Relief Commissioner.

Many villages in Korei, Dasrathpur, Jajpur and Binjharpur blocks in Jajpur district were affected by flood in the Baitarani. People were taking shelter on the river embankment. A breach has occurred on the embankment of Kani river, a distributary of the Baitarani, at Malikapur that led to submergence of a vast area.

The Baitarani also caused flood in several villages in Bhadrak district. Two units of the ODRF were deployed for rescue operations.

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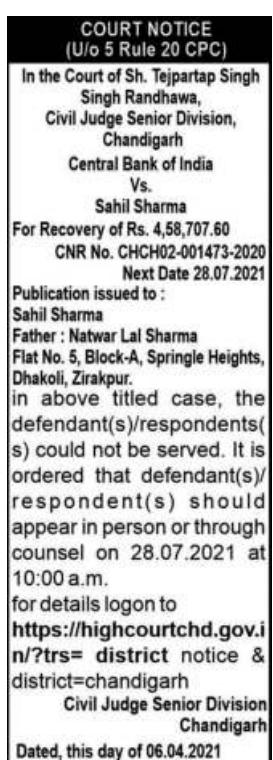
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Gehlot rubbishes BJP charge on vaccine wastage

Accusation will demoralise front-line workers: Rajasthan CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPIUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday refuted the allegations of the Opposition BJP that 11.50 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines in Chhattisgarh and 37.3% in Jharkhand had been wasted, while the Chief Ministers of the two States had reported wastage of only 0.95% and 4.65%, respectively.

"The BJP is trying to bring down the morale of frontline workers by spreading lies and creating confusion among the public," he said.

Mr. Gehlot pointed out that as many as 1.63 crore people had been vaccinated in Rajasthan as of May 26. "Of them, 3.38 lakh doses have got wasted, which is just 2% of the total number of vaccines. This is much lower than the national average of 6% wastage, while the Centre



CM Ashok Gehlot

has set the limit at 10%," he tweeted.

Mr. Gehlot accused the BJP of indulging in "politics of lies and deceit" during the pandemic and said the party was making "deliberate attempts" to mislead the public at large. He asked BJP leaders in the State to instead put pressure on the Centre to supply more

doses to make the vaccination drive successful.

Referring to the issue of vaccine wastage raised in other States, Mr. Gehlot said it was alleged earlier that 30.2% vaccines in Chhattisgarh and 37.3% in Jharkhand had been wasted, while the Chief Ministers of the two States had reported wastage of only 0.95% and 4.65%, respectively.

"There is a shortage of doctors and health workers in the hospitals and people are not getting proper treatment. In the absence of staff, ventilators and other equipment in government hospitals are not being put to optimum use. Medicines and oxygen are being black-marketed in the State," he said.

Farmers associated with the BKU(U) demanded with the State government take effective steps to control COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, farmers also urged the Congress government to rally round to strengthen the farmers' struggle against the three new farm laws and other de-

BKU(U) begins protest in Patiala

3-day-long sit-in seeks effective steps to control pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan), one of the largest farmer outfits in Punjab, on Friday started a three-day-long sit-in protest in Patiala against the Congress government over its alleged failure to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had asked the outfit not to go ahead with the protest, apprehending the event would turn into super-spreader of COVID-19.

Farmers associated with the BKU(U) demanded with the State government take effective steps to control COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, farmers also urged the Congress government to rally round to strengthen the farmers' struggle against the three new farm laws and other de-

mands made to the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre.

Sukhdev Singh, general secretary of BKU(U), said the protest was being held with all COVID-19 precautions in place. Mr. Singh said the State government had failed to control the situation arising out of COVID-19 pandemic.

"There is a shortage of doctors and health workers in the hospitals and people are not getting proper treatment. In the absence of staff, ventilators and other equipment in government hospitals are not being put to optimum use. Medicines and oxygen are being black-marketed in the State," he added.

"**Lift restrictions'**

Mr. Singh said that amid the lockdown restrictions almost all sections of the society were suffering, and therefore the restrictions should be immediately lifted. "The State government should ensure adequate financial support for the livelihood of the people as they have been adversely impacted by the curbs," he said.

Mr. Singh demanded that new recruitment should be done immediately in the Health Department and vaccines should be made availa-

ble to all free of charge. Free COVID-19 tests should be arranged in every city, town and village.

"All large private hospitals should be brought under government control. The rates of treatment of corona patients in small private hospitals should be capped. We want the State government to resolve all the issues," he added.

'Lift restrictions'

Mr. Singh said that amid the lockdown restrictions almost all sections of the society were suffering, and therefore the restrictions should be immediately lifted. "The State government should ensure adequate financial support for the livelihood of the people as they have been adversely impacted by the curbs," he said.

Mr. Singh demanded that new recruitment should be done immediately in the Health Department and vaccines should be made availa-

Punjab govt. reduces domestic power tariff

It will provide relief to the poor: CM

cial consumers as well as small and medium industry amid COVID-19.

The hike in tariff for industrial users was quite marginal, he said, adding that this would also come as a relief to industry, which had also been severely impacted by the lockdown and demand crisis.

He said the reduction in domestic tariff for load up to 2 KW (₹1.00 per unit and 50 paise per unit for consumption slabs of 0 to 100 units and 101 to 300 units respectively) and 2 KW - 7 KW (75 paise per unit and 50 paise per unit for consumption slabs of 0 to 100 units and 101 to 300 units respectively) works out to 22.30% cut in tariff for the first slab up to 2 KW load.

This would benefit the poor and vulnerable sections the most, he added.

'Ensure humanitarian aid for Myanmar refugees'

Civil society group writes to PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A civil society group in Manipur has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide specialised humanitarian agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, unhindered access to Myanmar nationals who fled military repression in their country and crossed over to India.

In a memorandum to the Prime Minister on Thursday, the Citizens Committee Manipur (CCM) also resented the indifference of the Manipur government to the plight of the Myanmar nationals who took refuge in the State, unlike its Mizoram counterpart that took a "natural and culture-bound decision" to help the refugees.

More than 16,000 people living in areas close to the 1,468 km India-Myanmar border are estimated to have crossed over into Mizoram, the CCM said.

and Manipur since the military takeover of the country in February. Clashes between the Myanmar army and pro-democracy protesters and militias have claimed scores of lives.

'Historic, cultural ties' CCM chairman and former Manipur Chief Minister Radhabinoi Kojam said the people on either side of the international border have a long historical, demographic and cultural links. "Keeping these in mind, we formed a humanitarian sub-committee under the chairmanship of former Manipur University Vice-Chancellor Amar Yumnam toward mobilising financial and material support for the refugees," he said.

NGOs and local activists have been providing food, medicine, clothes and other essential items to more than 500 refugees in border villages, the CCM said.

G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE)

Kosi-Katarmal, Almora - 263 643, Uttarakhand

TENDER NOTICE No. -GPBNIHE/2021-22/06

E-tenders/bids are invited on behalf of the Director, GPBNIHE, Kosi-Katarmal, Almora from bidders who proposes to buy Institute old vehicle 32 Seater Swaraj Mazda Bus no UK-01-7669 (2008 Model).

The last date of submission of online tender is 21.06.2021 at 3.00 P.M. The documents shall be submitted online at website

<https://moefcc.euniwizard.com>.

The full details of equipments and documents are available in the Institute Website <http://gbpihed.gov.in>.

Office Superintendent (Store)

Email: Store@gbpihed.nic.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from eligible contractors / firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes / amendments & corrigendum etc.

(1) 01/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/2021-22	Cleaning & Desilting of main drain and culvert of various sectors/villages of PH-II Area Zone-I, Noida.	Rs. 9075040.25
(2) 02/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/2021-22	Cleaning & Desilting of main drain and culvert of various sectors/villages of PH-II Area Zone-II, Noida.	Rs. 7434834.85
(3) 03/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/2021-22	Cleaning & Desilting of main drain and culvert of various sectors/villages of PH-II Area Zone-III, Noida.	Rs. 6108102.24
(4) 04/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/2021-22	Cleaning & Desilting of main drain and culvert of various sectors/villages of PH-II Area Zone-IV, Noida.	Rs. 7710456.20
(5) 05/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/2021-22	Cleaning & Desilting of main drain and culvert of various sectors/villages of PH-II Area Zone-V, Noida.	Rs. 6848578.44

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 07/06/2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-Qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 08/06/2021 at 11.00 AM. (S. C. Mishra)

Sr. Project Engineer, (Public Health), Noida.

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B Nagar, (U.P.)

Website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://noidaauthorityonline.com)

E-TENDER NOTICE

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(1) 01/SPE/PE(PH-II)/ET/202

IN BRIEF



Award for Vairamuthu to be reviewed

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The recent announcement of the ONV Literary Award to Tamil poet and lyricist Vairamuthu has kicked up a row, with several actors, writers and women's rights activists criticising the jury's decision to confer the award on a person facing multiple #MeToo allegations.

80:20 scholarship struck down by Kerala HC

KOCHI
A 2015 Kerala government order allocating the merit-cum-means scholarship for minority communities to Muslims and Latin Catholic Christians and Converted Christians together in the 80:20 ratio was struck down by the Kerala High Court on Friday.

Prominent people write to Venkaiah, Kerala Governor

JOHN L. PAUL

KOCHI
The Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 (LDAR) will destroy the delicate ecosystem of the coral isles, and the life and livelihood of the islanders, three prominent people, including former administrator of Lakshadweep Wajahat Habibullah, who also served as Chairman of National Commission for Minorities, have said in a letter submitted to Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu and Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan.

The other signatories are Mohini Giri, former Chairperson of National Commiss-

Rape survivor traced to Kerala

Bengaluru police arrest four men and two women for torture, sexual assault

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU
The Bengaluru City Police traced the woman from Bangladesh, who was tortured and sexually assaulted, to Kozhikode, Kerala, where she was reportedly running a massage parlour. Special teams had been formed to find her after a video clip of the incident went viral on social media.

Six people – four men and two women – have been arrested. The woman, believed to be in her 20s, had not only been tortured and raped but was also being blackmailed by the gang which threatened to upload the video on social media if she did not pay them, said senior police officials. The victim underwent a medical examination in the city on Friday night. The police are yet to question her, informed sources



In the net: Police taking into custody four of the accused in the gang rape case in Bengaluru. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

said. Two of the six arrested were shot in the leg when they allegedly tried to attack police personnel with stones and flee during the crime scene reconstruction early on Friday. The police fired three rounds, one in the air and two at the legs of the two accused, reportedly in self defence. The two – Ridoy Babu, 26, and Sadar, 23 – are

recovering at Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital.

Distant relative

Police Commissioner Kamal Pant said one of the two women who was arrested was a distant relative of the victim and the wife of another accused. The two women were in the house when the victim was sexually abused and

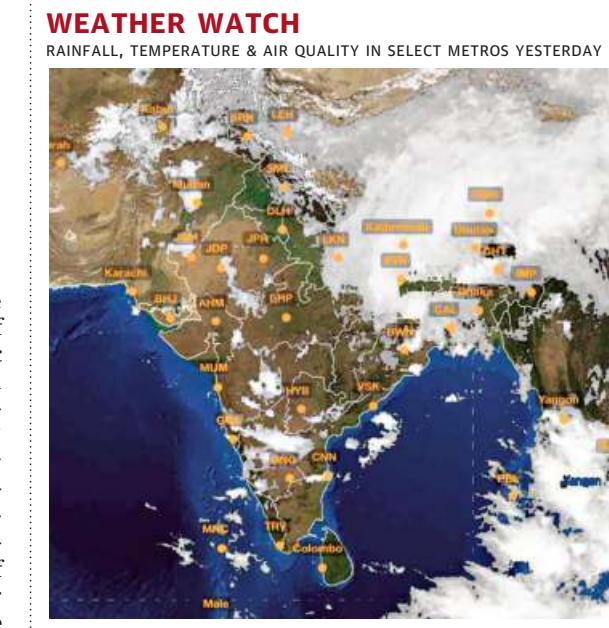
brutalised, and in fact, they egged on the men and assisted them. "All six of them hail from Bangladesh, and are part of the same group. They brutalised the victim over financial differences," a statement from the police said. It is yet to be ascertained whether the accused and the victim have valid travel documents, sources said.

The case received wide attention across south Asia, prompting Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai to personally monitor the case, sources said. Mr. Yediyurappa termed the crime "a brutal and inhuman act".

"Those who have perpetrated this crime have already been arrested and the State will ensure they get stringent punishment," he said.

The Teynampet zone administered the highest number of vaccines among the 15 zones on Thursday in the two age groups: 3,495 (18 to 45 years) and 3,490 (above 45 years).

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP; INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Uttrakhand, Jharkhand, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, coastal Karnataka, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 35.8...	26.9	...	Kozhikode	... 33.4...	24.5	...
Ahmedabad	... 38.9...	29.0	...	Kurnool	... 38.1...	26.6	...
Aizawl	... 29.0...	18.8	...	Lucknow	14... 27.8...	23.7	...
Altahabad	... 28.2...	21.1	...	Madurai	... 40.4...	26.0	...
Bengaluru	... 29.2...	20.4	...	Mangaluru	0.6...	31.2...	23.9
Bhopal	... 41.1...	25.4	...	Mumbai	... 33.8...	28.9	...
Bhubaneswar	... 35.2...	27.0	...	Mysuru	... 33.0...	20.2	...
Chandigarh	... 39.1...	28.2	...	New Delhi	... 40.1...	25.3	...
Chennai	... 39.3...	30.0	...	Patna	92... 27.8...	22.4	...
Coimbatore	... 34.9...	23.4	...	Port Blair	6... 31.5...	25.8	...
Dehradun	... 33.9...	25.1	...	Puducherry	... 38.4...	26.3	...
Gangtok	53... 16.2...	15.0	...	Pune	... 35.5...	24.6	...
Goa	6... 33.0...	26.5	...	Raipur	... 41.0...	27.0	...
Guwahati	0.1... 35.6...	25.4	...	Ranchi	42... 30.6...	21.9	...
Hubballi	... 30.0...	22.0	...	Shillong	4... 26.6...	17.7	...
Hyderabad	... 36.5...	24.9	...	Shimla	... 30.1...	19.9	...
Imphal	2... 26.4...	20.5	...	Srinagar	... 31.4...	12.8	...
Jaipur	... 42.6...	29.2	...	Thiruvananthapuram	30... 32.7...	24.4	...
Kochi	1... 31.8...	24.4	...	Tiruchi	... 39.6...	27.0	...
Kohima	... 26.6...	17.0	...	Vijayawada	... 40.0...	29.0	...
Kolkata	91... 34.8...	26.0	...	Visakhapatnam	... 40.4...	28.6	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	21	42	37	.49	69	...
Bengaluru	.6	37	64	.75	71	...
Chennai	73	6	35	.50	60	...
Delhi	13	55	31	.96	160	...
Hyderabad	1	70	19	.34	62	...
Kolkata	11	19	15	.43	62	...
Lucknow	.7	41	81	.50	60	...
Mumbai	..	119	57	.56	65	...
Pune	..	35	90	.56	57	...
Visakhapatnam	..	52

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ankleshwar, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 400. In contrast, Muzaffarpur, Bihar recorded a healthy AQI score of 23

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

More voices against Lakshadweep changes



UDF leaders staging a stand-in to express solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep on Friday. ■ S. MAHINSHA

HC seeks Centre's views

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court has sought the views of the Central government on a petition challenging the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation, 2021, issued by the Lakshadweep

The case has been posted for June 15.

Administration. The petitioner contended that the amendments gave the authorities the powers to remove or usurp small holdings or properties owned by the islanders, who belonged to the Scheduled Tribes.

by intervention into their food ethos (beef ban, opening liquor shops etc).

They would also tear apart their traditional methods of decision-making based on democratic decentralisation, the letter said.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 8

the inhabited isles would be stretched to their limit by the indiscriminate expansion of tourism and various projects proposed under the euphemistic title of 'planning and development', they said. In a nutshell, these projects would destroy the life of the people who lived there had been violated

The recent policy changes, proposed unilaterally and arbitrarily, had given no consideration to matters like land use, land ownership, ocean-resource utilisation, and livelihood practices of the community. The culture and traditions of people who lived there had been violated

der MakeInIndia ventilators and that they are in perfect condition."

The court said, "As such there is a complete denial that these ventilators are supplied through PM Cares as announced earlier. We find such statements demonstrating insensitivity on the part of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare."

The Centre was asked to file an affidavit after it was brought to the notice of the court that 113 of the 150 ventilators provided to Maharashtra under the PM Cares Fund were faulty.

After reading the affidavit, the court remarked, "The tenor of the affidavit doesn't show you are worried about the lives of the patients. The affidavits stated that the ventilators are not provided under PM Cares Fund but under

Cases piled up in Satara, which reported 2,398 new infections and 24 deaths, taking its tally to 15,658, of whom 21,591 are active. The death toll has risen to 2,992.

Kolhapur reported 38 deaths and more than 2,000 cases as its toll rose to 3,318.

Nagpur district reported its lowest surge in over two months, recording less than 400 cases to take the tally to 4,88,805, of whom 14,593 are active. Twelve deaths were reported to the toll of 14,750.

The court said, "As such there is a complete denial that these ventilators are supplied through PM Cares as announced earlier. We find such statements demonstrating insensitivity on the part of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare."

Mr. Talhar said teams were constituted to check the functioning and working of the ventilators. An independent team was sent on May 22. The court interrupted him and said, "What you are saying sounds superficial and without conviction."

Mr. Talhar went on to say that those operating the ventilators lacked training and

did not have the knowledge and training to do so, which was why the ventilators were turning faulty.

In its order, the court recorded the day-to-day report from the Government Medical College and Hospital Aurangabad that was signed by eight doctors.

The report said the ventilators developed errors from the day they were installed by the company. As they were not functioning properly, patients started complaining of breathlessness within hours of ventilators being switched on.

According to the hospital, 58 of the 150 Dhaman III ventilators received from Jyoti CNC were faulty and could not be used.

The court noted, "You (the Centre) may think of it as a trivial issue, but we will not close our eyes to this."

The court directed Mr. Talhar to mention on an affidavit the remedial and corrective steps taken by the Centre to rectify the issue.

Maratha quota: BJP MP warns of protest if demands not met by June 6

Bhosale seeks district-level hostels for Maratha students and two-day Assembly session on giving benefits to community

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Sambhajiraje Bhosale on Friday warned that if the Maharashtra government does not approve his demands concerning the Maratha community by June 6, he would launch an agitation from Raigad fort regardless of the COVID-19 restrictions, he said. Speaking to reporters in Mumbai, Mr. Bhosale, a descendant of Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji, said he submitted a list of his demands to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday.

Letter to CM

"I submitted a list of five demands to CM Uddhav Thackeray today. If the state government does not approve it till June 6, I will personally start an agitation from Raigad fort regardless of the COVID-19 restrictions," he said. Mr. Bhosale submitted the list of demands over three weeks after the Supreme Court struck down the law granting quota to the Ma-

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Timely windfall

The RBI's transfer is a much-needed buffer, but there are risks in banking on these surpluses

The Reserve Bank of India's decision to transfer ₹99,122 crore of surplus to the Centre comes as a windfall to the government, at a moment when the ferocious second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has likely upended most projections for the economy including revenue assumptions. The payout is almost double the ₹53,511 crore that the Finance Minister had budgeted for by way of dividend receipts, including from nationalised banks and financial institutions. That the RBI has generated a surplus that is over 73% higher than what it posted for the previous 12-month period ended June 2020, is also noteworthy when one considers that the bank just changed its accounting calendar from July-June to an April-March format by truncating its last financial year to a nine-month period. The RBI's annual report, released on Thursday, shows that a sharp 63% contraction in expenditure was a major factor in boosting the surplus, especially as income fell by 11%. However, the biggest contributor in real terms was the ₹50,629 crore of exchange gain realised by the central bank from its foreign exchange transactions. The central bank, which admits to intervening in the foreign exchange market to smooth volatility, clearly had a very busy time mopping up the record foreign direct investment inflows that exceeded \$81 billion (at a gross level) in the last financial year, as well as the sizeable portfolio investments from overseas. Still, a 69% increase in exchange gain, over the preceding 12-month period, prompts the question as to whether the RBI's foreign exchange transactions were all entirely aimed only at stabilising the rupee's value.

Given the magnitude of economic disruption caused by the ongoing pandemic and the lack of visibility on the costs that the economy is going to have to bear in the coming months, the RBI's transfer surely provides a much-needed buffer to the government's finances. However, both the Centre and the central bank need to be cognisant of the risks in making a habit of banking on these surpluses to cushion the government's coffers. After all, just two years ago, the RBI had transferred a record ₹1.76-lakh crore to the exchequer. While the Reserve Bank has ensured that it maintains contingency reserves at exactly 5.5% of the overall size of its balance sheet, the level of its reserves provides little wiggle room to safeguard against a sudden, unexpected financial crisis and is at the lower end of the 5.5%-6.5% band recommended by the Bimal Jalan committee. With the government facing the likelihood of overshooting its budgeted borrowing, given the higher spending needed to bolster vaccinations, health care and direct fiscal support, the RBI's balance sheet could swell in size this year too. It would behove policymakers to remember that the central bank is ultimately the lender of last resort to the nation as a whole and can ill-afford to be less than adequately funded to meet every conceivable contingency.

In two minds

The IOC is walking on the razor's edge in its bid to conduct the Olympics in Tokyo

Not everyone is enthused about the biggest sporting event of the world, due in a couple of months in Tokyo. Less than a fortnight ago, Roger Federer spoke about the uncertainty looming over the Olympics, saying 'athletes need a firm decision' and that he is in two minds about the event. There are two diametrically opposite voices emerging from Japan. As the coronavirus pandemic rages across the island nation, a BBC report stated that only 1.9% of the population has been fully vaccinated while COVID-19 infections and current deaths stand at over 7,00,000 and 12,000, respectively. Hospitals are overwhelmed and fully aware of that grim context; a majority of Japanese citizens emphasised that the Olympics should either be postponed or cancelled while their collective voice found resonance through opinion polls. As a counter, local officials and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) held firm that the Games will be conducted from July 23 to August 8. The quadrennial showpiece championship originally slated for 2020 was postponed by a year during the first wave of the pandemic, and organisers believe that an event with a staggering \$15.4 billion budget cannot afford another reworking of the dates.

The Olympics has always been about striving for the impossible as evident in its motto – faster, higher, stronger – which defined the Games even since its modern version commenced at Athens in 1896. It braved past the gaps caused by the World Wars as the 1916, 1940 and 1944 events were shelved and also coped with the Cold War years when the Western and Eastern blocs took turns to boycott the 1980 and 1984 Games. But the pandemic is a bigger obstacle even while vaccination drives continue at varied speeds. People do yearn for normalcy and sport offers that illusory thrill of everything being fine with the world. Seen through that prism, the Olympics is the highest benchmark. European football, international cricket and Grand Slam tennis have all resurfaced while following COVID-19 protocols. But there are no fool-proof measures as the latest truncated Indian Premier League edition clearly revealed. Despite best practices and bio-bubbles, sportspeople are vulnerable to the virus and the Olympics with an expected attendance of 11,091 athletes, can be a logistical nightmare. The IOC is walking on the razor's edge in its bid to conduct the Olympics in a reluctant nation, where even an event partner, *Asahi Shimbun* daily, sought the cancellation of the Games citing the strain on the health sector. So far, the most pessimistic of the experts have been the ones being proved right.

Democracy at stake in Nepal

If the political Opposition resolves to fight back, it is likely that the new republic will gain in the long term



BABURAM BHATTARAI &
ATUL K. THAKUR

NePAL is facing its severest political crisis in decades. The repeated dissolution of Parliament, from last December to May this year, is not just a manifestation of the power struggle between political parties and leaders in Nepal but also a dangerous game plan by national and international forces to dismantle the federal republican democratic Constitution and restore the old Hindu monarchical state. It is really anachronistic that the so-called Marxist-Leninist party headed by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is in collusion with Hindu monarchial forces in Nepal and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in India. A section of the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) led by Mahanta Thakur and Rajendra Mahato have been lured or forced to join hands with Mr. Oli, who is notorious for his anti-Madhesi tirade till the other day.

Autocratic splash

Even when India's political and diplomatic culture saw a departure from best past practices, it was expected that its official regime would always support multiparty democracy, progressive political action and changing fundamentals.

Contrary to this, India is being seen backing an autocratic and unconstitutional regime, surviving in 'caretaker mode' with the connivance of Nepal's President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Mr. Oli. In helping an unpopular and illegitimate regime in Kathmandu, the gameplan seems to be to derail the Con-

stitution and plunge the country into endless crisis. It is impossible to understand how this will benefit either India or Nepal, especially when the establishment in New Delhi is perceived here to be hell bent on turning Nepal into a Hindu state and scrapping federalism as well (ultimately disempowering oppressed Madhesis, Tharus, Janajatis, women and others). The statement by India's Ministry of External Affairs, that "political developments in Nepal are the country's internal matters" did not help too in changing the popular perception.

If the objective is to scrap the present Constitution to undo the Kalapani-Limpia border map episode, why throw the baby out with the bathwater? The India-Nepal boundary issue can be resolved through serious political dialogue. There should be a trade-off between the developmental aspirations of Nepal and the strategic concerns of India, in the light of changing geopolitical dynamics in the Himalayan region. India should do course correction and should not throw its weight behind an autocratic regime; it must reassure all who care for the peace and the prosperity of Nepal by reposing faith in Nepal's democracy and due processes. Also, India must fulfil the promises it made for COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal. The glaring gap between the promises made and delivery has been a big disappointment; people should never be kept in lurch like this.

The twists and turns

It is in the public domain that the Opposition alliance in Nepal filed a petition in the Supreme Court last week demanding that the Nepali Congress's Sher Bahadur Deuba be declared the new Prime Minister and the House of Representatives be reinstated. As many as 146 members of the dissolved House



of Representatives – 61 from the Nepali Congress, 49 from the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), 23 from the Madhav Nepal faction of the CPN-UML, 12 from a section of the JSP and one from the Rastriya Janamorcha Nepal – have signed the petition, challenging Mr. Oli and Ms. Bhandari's House dissolution moved late on the night of May 21 and disqualified Mr. Deuba's claim that he be appointed Prime Minister. Representing the Opposition alliance, Mr. Deuba had presented the signatures of 149 lawmakers to prove that he commanded the majority to lead a new government in this crisis phase when Nepal is witnessing an unprecedented crisis with the novel coronavirus pandemic and an abjectly poor counter-response by the Oli-occupied regime.

Without any delay in subverting constitutionally due procedures, Mr. Oli too made a ridiculous claim that he be appointed Prime Minister, while technically still being the Prime Minister, falsely claiming to have the backing of 153 lawmakers. Since the plot was scripted, he failed to name those lawmakers. After the President disqualified both claims as the most suitable possibility for Mr. Oli, he, through a dramatic midnight Cabinet meeting, recommended the House's dissolution. The President duly obliged him and his autocratic manoeuvring that have hammered democratic principles and nation-

al interest. Alas!

For the manner in which Ms. Bhandari has acted to keep Mr. Oli in power and undermining her constitutional role as the first citizen of the country, impeachment will be the easiest exit route for her.

A graceful exit is not an idea tempting enough for her and Mr. Oli; so going in for the lawful provision of impeachment is a prerequisite to restore eroded faith in the presidential position and due processes. Ms. Bhandari's role in public life has been questioned earlier too, as she, as the President of a new democracy, did all possible to weaken the system and make Mr. Oli a walking authority above the Constitution. Never ever was she deterred by fierce public criticism and continued her business as usual with Mr. Oli. In a press conference recently, Mr. Oli said, "Disrespect for the President is disrespect for the republican system. In a monarchy, there is a King, in a republic system, there is a President. The President is the symbol of republicanism and an attack on the dignity of the Office of the President is an attack on the republic system." This makes things very clear. Ironically, Ms. Bhandari and Mr. Oli are two prominent figures who have consistently disrespected and abused the President's high office for their shared political gains – and made it subservient to the executive whims and fancies.

Mr. Oli's sudden bout of nostalgia for the long gone monarchy is not just his bid to revisit the history but is also something in progress and from the hope he has been given by his invisible handlers and friends, in both the north and the south. He is not an original thinker. He is counting on a plan to drive the country to the brink of a constitutional crisis, stay at the helm as an authoritarian caretaker Prime Minister with

an unreasonably friendly President, and force the country into elections when even the next moment is uncertain. To end their Machiavellian treachery, the Opposition alliance has to rise to the occasion and make all possible efforts to foil the unholy plan.

Nepal at the crossroads

Nepal's quest should be to redeem its lost glory, and for the first time, avail its true development potential – and stop being a 'theatre of the absurd' and hosting the harmful advances of neighbours involved in geostrategic rivalries. On the domestic front, an increased focus should be on homework, instead of leveraging on vulnerabilities and the making of unruly partners. In a functional democracy, statecraft is not supposed to be altruistic till it relies on progressive policy and governance – with an aim to augment the mission of 'greater common good'. Long ago, the People's War was over in Nepal, with a transitory accomplishment of a goal in a new republic. However, the task is still unfinished till the people-centric priorities are not driving the political agenda and action.

Despite all the flaws, Nepal should protect its democracy that is now at stake because of actions by political opportunists. Politicians such as Mr. Oli and Ms. Bhandari have endangered the country's prospects. However, an accomplished democracy like Nepal will rise again.

For sure, the road ahead is not easy and it is going to be one of struggle. If the Opposition alliance makes a resolve and fights back, it is likely that the new republic will gain in the long term. The big powers should take note of this.

Baburam Bhattacharai is a former Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Nepal. Atul K. Thakur is a policy analyst, author and columnist

Humanity matters, capitalism needs an upgrade

The COVID-19 vaccine crisis is an opportune time when companies must rethink the purpose behind their existence



ARUN MAIRA

The COVID-19 vaccine crisis is another tragic instance of a clash between the needs of humanity and the principles of capitalism. Capitalists insist that private producers of vaccines must make profits because that is their compensation for investing in research and production. If the prices they charge are beyond the reach of poor people, they are not morally compelled to serve them at a loss. Then, governments must step in and buy from private producers and subsidise sales to poorer people. For which, governments need revenues of course, and taxes on private companies could be a significant source. However, if private companies also press governments for lower taxes, to make their investments more attractive; and if the government is also pushed by them, on ideological grounds, to stay out of business, viz. not having any "public sector" production enterprises, governments find both their hands tied behind their backs in crises when citizens blame them for breakdowns of public services. The Indian government is facing this crisis now.

Conversion of the commons

How Will Capitalism End? Ask Wolfgang Streeck and his co-authors in their book with that title. It will end, they say, when the forces that support capitalism run out. Capitalism expands by converting "the commons" into private capital. Economists justify this on practical grounds: it is the 'tragedy of the commons', Garrett Hardin

postulated, that people will not care for something unless they own it. This is an ongoing justification for capitalist businesses owning land and forests and water resources. Businesses convert natural capital into financial capital and use it for generating profits and more capital for themselves. Over-exploitation of the earth's resources to produce profits has contributed to the crisis of environmental sustainability and climate change. The concept of ownership of assets for creating wealth had gone too far when slaves without human rights were used in capitalist enterprises as their economic assets until moralists objected.

Creation of monopolies

Slavery is banned by law and the earth's resources are limited. Therefore, capitalism has moved on to convert knowledge into private property. Modern regimes of intellectual property rights (IPR) with armies of patent lawyers help capitalists to create intellectual property monopolies. Thus, people are denied the use of their own knowledge – as they are when natural products, such as neem and turmeric are patented by capitalists. Thereby, communities whose traditions produced the knowledge must pay those who stole it from them, albeit legally. The public contributes to the creation of scientific knowledge in many ways, for example through government research and development grants and subsidies, as Mariana Mazzucato explains in her book, *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy*. In fact, large public assistance in various ways has enabled U.S. pharmaceutical companies to develop their new COVID-19 vaccines at 'wart speed'.

India has been a spoiler in the global Trade-Related Aspects of In-

tellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) regime which was promoted by the World Trade Organization in 1995 for uniform global IPR rules. TRIPS is founded on the principle of "product patents". India had a different approach to IPR based on "process patents". Product patents allow inventors of new drugs to have exclusive rights to produce and sell them for some years. Producers can use their monopoly to fix higher prices and make more profits for recovering their investments in drug development. Thus, the quantum of production is limited by the inventor to keep prices high. On the other hand, the process patents route forced Indian producers to invent better processes for producing larger volumes at lower costs of 'generic' versions of the medicine. This benefited citizens of poorer countries including India. However, Indian generic drug producers became threats to the pricing power of 'innovator' drug producers from the West.

TRIPS does have a provision to enable governments to enforce 'compulsory licensing'. They can demand that an innovator company must allow domestic, lower cost, producers to increase the supply of the drug in an emergency, with compensation to the inventor of course. However, western companies do not like this provision, which has been used before by the South African government, for example, to get drugs for AIDS produced by Indian low cost producers when the AIDS pandemic was raging and Africans

could not pay the high prices charged by western companies. This is the provision that South Africa and India want to invoke now to enable production of the new U.S. invented COVID-19 vaccines whose prices are too high for poorer countries.

There are three stakeholders involved in a system to produce adequate volumes of affordable medicines: citizens who need the medicines, governments who must ensure they get them, and private companies who produce and sell them. If the stand of private companies is that because their business must be only business, and the public good is not their responsibility, governments must step in. They must have the means to regulate the prices and also to enhance production. However, if private companies (and the economists who support them) take the view that any interventions by governments distort the market, and go even further to say that taxes must be reduced to make their investments more attractive, governments have both hands tied behind their backs when they have to step in to help people in distress.

Public sector versus private

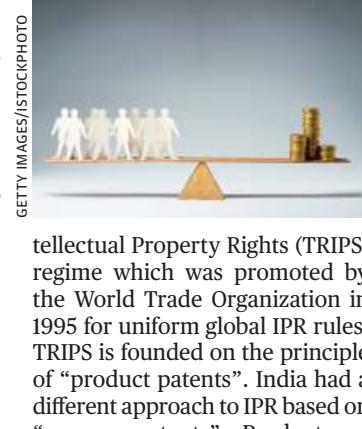
Many economists do not like 'public sector' enterprises. Whenever governments set up 'public sector' enterprises, such as banks, hospitals, and schools, economists can prove that these enterprises do not produce as much shareholder returns as they would if they were 'privatised'. If they were privatised, their owners' objectives would be primarily, if not entirely, to maximise returns to investors. In that case, public benefits are relegated to the background, or even drop right off the table. Therefore 'private' will always be better than 'public' by the limited metric of shareholder returns.

The purpose of governments is to improve the all-round well-being of all citizens; not merely to provide products to customers who can pay good prices for them, which is the means by which private enterprises meet their objective of producing profits for their investors. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the inadequacy of capitalism to fulfil societal needs. If capitalist enterprises are not willing to fulfil public purposes, governments must create more public spirited enterprises to provide public goods equitably to all citizens. Relentless economic growth is devouring the earth that hosts humanity. With artificial intelligence algorithms in social media, capitalist enterprises are able to manipulate human minds. Their investors have become the richest people on the planet. New mRNA technologies on which some new COVID-19 vaccines are based provide the means to manipulate the composition of human bodies. Thus, capitalists can create even more wealth for themselves off human beings.

Time to reflect

Money-driven capitalist values have drifted too far from human values. Money has become the supreme measure of success in all spheres: the wealth of individuals, the size of companies, and the scales of nations' economies. The sustainable health of complex systems – which human beings and societies are – is being lost sight of. The COVID-19 crisis will not end capitalism. But capitalism must mutate to survive. Companies must rethink the purpose for their existence. It is imperative now that more human and less money values are adopted.

Arun Maira is the author of 'A Billion Fireflies: Critical Conversations to shape a New Post-pandemic World'



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Blame game

It was amusing to read of India's top COVID-19 adviser's argument, blaming States for the slowing pace of vaccination. Since we have a strong government at the Centre which knows better and more than anyone else, surely there was no compulsion on it to accede to the States' 'unreasonable demands. After all, this is a government not exactly

known to bow to States' demands in the first place. This shifting of the blame also does not absolve the central government of its responsibility under which it enforced a clearly biased policy of ensuring a certain percentage of the vaccine stock to be supplied to private hospitals. It is equally strange for the External Affairs Minister to argue for global unity and equity while canvassing

abroad for vaccines, while the government he represents asks the States to fend for themselves. FIROZ AHMAD, New Delhi

From being the world's largest vaccine producer to now requesting foreign vaccine manufacturers to supply vaccines is a clear indication of the failure of the Centre. Vaccine politics, misplaced

vaccine jingoism, a flawed and changing vaccine policy, non-inclusion of eminent epidemiologists and virologists in the core advisory team, lack of transparency in vaccine production and usage, an increasing trust deficit between the Centre and States on procurement of vaccines, and now a tug of war between States to get hold of vaccines have all contributed to the present

state of confusion.
Dr. BIJU C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

School examinations
I realise that many people want the Class 12 board examinations to be conducted, but the issue becomes important when we consider that many students have not had a single day of organised schooling. I am now in limbo – between Class 12 and university,

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frustrated and waiting for the exams to be over with. Class 12 students are physically threatened by the coronavirus, mentally exhausted by a lack of definite action, and desperate for an end to this madness. I ask the government to think about this and make a decision.

SAFDAR KILARU, Hyderabad

Turning the COVID-19 tide in Chennai

With an exponential rise in infections, Chennai quickly became a COVID-19 hotspot during the second wave. **Serena Josephine M.** reports on how the situation was stabilised before it could spiral out of control

With the phones ringing off the hook and the queues of the sick becoming longer, S. Sangavi and S. Ramachandran knew better than to put their tired feet up. In their 12-hour shifts, the duo – an emergency medical technician and an ambulance pilot attached to the 108 ambulance network – took on multiple trips in Chennai, ferrying at least 10 patients diagnosed with COVID-19 to nearby government hospitals each day.

Though both Sangavi and Ramachandran, staff of the Vadapalani Depot ambulance, have been handling COVID-19 patients from the start of the pandemic, they soon realised that the unrelenting second wave of infections was unlike the first. With each passing day, they slowly got accustomed to the long queues of ambulances and longer waiting hours outside government hospitals, hoping fervently that the patient on board would get a bed. "It took us at least an hour or two to get a patient into the hospital ward. It became extremely difficult to get an oxygen-supported bed in the last two months," Sangavi says. At times, their shift extended to as long as 15 hours. "There was no time to eat," Ramachandran says.

As they set out to pick up a patient, either from home or from a screening centre, they would go beyond their defined roles. "Many fear the sight of an ambulance in front of their homes. So, we would call them earlier, tell them not to be afraid, and assure them that it is going to be fine," Sangavi says.

Even as one patient was admitted, it would be time to pick up the next. "It was like working at the warfront," says Mohamed Bilal, regional manager, GVK EMRI, which operates the 108 ambulances. "We (the Chennai team) have been on our toes since March. Each ambulance has had to cater to 20 cases a day, doing multiple trips day and night. From May 1 to 24, we handled 9,579 COVID-19 patients in Chennai alone."

The task was far from easy. With many ambulances held up outside hospitals, the team had to ensure that the vehicles reached the patients on time. "Once a call is received, the average response time for a COVID-19 ambulance in Chennai is 10 minutes 25 seconds, while the average turnaround time is 1 to 1.5 hours," he says.

Scramble for beds

Chennai turned into a COVID-19 hotspot in the blink of an eye. The second wave resulted in an exponential rise in the active case load. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 2.36 lakh cases had been reported in the city, as of March 5, 2021. When the State's daily case count crossed 500 marking the beginning of the second wave, more than 2.50 lakh persons were infected in a span of just two and a half months in Chennai.

The rapid rise in cases and the fast deterioration of patients put great strain on major hospitals. Hospitals ran out of beds even as the demand for oxygen-supported and intensive care unit (ICU) beds surged. Chandru (name changed), a resident of Sitalapakkam, was one of the affected. "My father tested positive for COVID-19, and we managed to get a normal bed at a private hospital on May 14. But his oxygen saturation level dropped from 92 to 85, and nothing helped. He required ventilatory support, but no beds were available at the hospital. We had to shift him to another facility," he says.

After frantic and unsuccessful attempts to get him a 108 ambulance, Chandru managed to take his father, 74, to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGH) in an ambulance of the private hospital with oxygen support. "We waited in the ambulance. We managed to get an ICU bed only four hours later. The treatment could not save my father," he says. While the wait and the death of his father was agonising, the number of deaths around him as they waited numbed him.

Over two months, the city saw hundreds of such cases. There were desperate hunts for beds, heartbreaking moments of watching loved ones gasp for breath while waiting in ambulances and private vehicles, and serpentine queues outside counters to pick up vials of Remdesivir. Meanwhile, hospital authorities spent sleepless nights waiting for oxygen trucks to arrive.

"The numbers were huge this time," says E. Theranirajan, dean of RGGH, one of the largest hospitals for COVID-19. Since mid-March, RGGH has treated 12,000 patients with COVID-19. "The 72 beds in the zero-delay ward were just not enough. So, we increased the number to 238 to immediately attend to patients who were brought in ambulances and required oxygen support, as well as to ease the ambulance lines outside the hospital. We had a maximum of 250 ambulances bringing in patients in one day, 40% of which were from the private sector," Dr Theranirajan says.

From April 24 to May 10, the hospital saw its per day oxygen requirement soaring to 40-45 metric tonnes a day.



A line of ambulances carrying patients with COVID-19 at the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital in Chennai. (Below): Healthcare workers check the oxygen saturation levels of people during a door-to-door survey for COVID-19 in Mogappair West. • JOTHI RAMALINGAM; VEDHAN M.



With beds in all seven floors of Tower-3 filled up, Dr Theranirajan and his team started to open COVID-19 wards in other blocks. The number of beds quickly rose from 1,618 to 2,050, with the number of oxygen beds increasing from 817 to 1,522 from May 5 until now.

In the first wave, the maximum number of in-patients we saw in a day was 1,083. This time, it was 1,658. We had over 1,600 in-patients for 15 continuous days. What made the second wave different from the first was the number of people requiring oxygen. We had 1,300 patients on oxygen therapy at a given point in time this year," he says.

The hospitals faced several challenges: decongesting ambulances on campus, starting treatment on time, stabilising patients being wheeled in, and even adding space for the dead.

The doctors knew that they had to think differently. So, a team of three doctors along with technicians was deployed to triage patients waiting in ambulances and a respiratory care team was sent to assess every patient's oxygen needs and provide appropriate dosage, he says.

The surge in cases

The first wave peaked on June 30, 2020 in Chennai, when 2,393 daily cases were reported. They gradually declined after that and were lower than 1,000 a day by mid-October. On February 19, 2021, Chennai saw just 136 cases.

By then, the State was preparing for the Assembly elections and all the COVID-19 control measures taken during the first wave in Chennai and other places were scaled down considerably.

The early signs of a resurgence in cases were noticed in the first week of March. Cases began to go up marginally. By the first week of April, when the State went to the polls, the number of daily reported cases had crossed 1,000. The number continued to rise sharply and on May 2, when the election results brought a change of government, the cases crossed the 6,000-mark.

More than crowding during elections or other factors, the sudden increase was primarily due to the mutant strains of SARS-CoV-2, says Alby John Varghese, Deputy Commissioner (Health), Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC).

P. Ganeshkumar, Scientist D, Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai, says the new variants of the virus, poor adherence to COVID-19-appropriate behaviour such as wearing masks and main-

taining physical distancing, and not seeking early care for COVID-19-like symptoms were the major factors for the rise in cases. "New variants of the virus circulating in the population contributed to the higher transmissibility of the infection in the second wave. This led to higher case load compared to the first wave," he says.

The seroprevalence study conducted during the first wave showed that 44.2% of the population in Tondiarpet and 34.4% in Royapuram, two of the worst-affected zones, had been exposed to the virus. "One would have thought that the second wave would not affect these zones much. But there was a large number of cases here as well, which is likely because of the new strains. We did not expect it to be this infectious with more people becoming sick and requiring hospitalisation," Dr Varghese says. Analysis of zone-wise data showed that while the cases were comparatively lower in these two zones than the others during the second wave, the two nevertheless remained significantly affected.

The spread was more aggressive in the southern and central regions than the northern regions this time. While the northern zone accounted for 34% of all cases in the first wave, it accounted for only 28% in the second wave.

By the time the new government was sworn in on May 7, it was becoming impossible for many patients to get oxygen-supported or ICU beds in hospitals.

Social media was flooded with requests for beds or oxygen. It appeared as if the city was heading towards the crisis faced earlier in Delhi and Bengaluru.

"We had two main challenges in the city," says J. Radhakrishnan, Health Secretary. "People threw the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to the wind. When cases surged, the situation put the oxygen and ICU bed capacity to test. Despite having the best hospitals in both the government and private sector, this was a big challenge," he says.

Rise in fatalities

The deaths due to COVID-19 kept rising in the city. A government doctor, on condition of anonymity, said it was agonising to see young persons succumb to the infection, primarily due to respiratory failure. "Some were brought dead to hospitals," he says.

The crisis began to take a huge toll on healthcare workers. "It was very stressful. Some of my friends from other departments who were posted on COVID-19 duty had to take sedatives to sleep as they had never seen so many people dying around them," says a PG student.



On May 12, when Chennai recorded 7,564 daily COVID-19 cases, the highest since the start of the pandemic, Dilli Rajan, the caretaker of Velangadu crematorium, stood beside a hearse, directing his seven assistants to work late into the night to cremate the bodies. Several hearses had lined up at the crematorium. Prior to COVID-19, cremations were held only till 6 p.m. "During the first wave, the number of cremations decreased from eight to two a day at our crematorium. During the second wave, the number increased to 32 a day," says Dilli Rajan, who lost his aunt during the pandemic. The situation was similar in most of the 41 crematoriums in Chennai. GCC data show an increase from 150 death registrations a day to more than 350 a day during the second wave.

Since the last week of March, the city has reported more than 3,300 deaths, almost close to the total deaths reported during the first wave till October 2020. However, the case fatality rate has remained low compared to the first wave. While it was around 1.8% during the first wave, it is currently 1.4%.

"Under-reporting of deaths continues. Very sick patients are not subjected to RT-PCR testing. They succumb to the infection and those deaths are not counted as COVID-19 deaths. This is also true of patients with suspected symptoms of COVID-19," an official says.

Non-COVID-19 deaths have also increased by 300% in many crematoriums, which is a major cause of concern for public health officials. One of the reasons for the rise in the number of deaths during the second wave in Chennai has been the crowding of tertiary care government hospitals by patients who do not require higher-level medical care.

With limited number of beds in government and private tertiary care hospitals, many patients who required emergency care were unable to get admitted to hospitals.

The turnaround

The situation, however, was controlled and stabilised through multi-pronged community-level strategies before it spiralled out of control. The State government imposed a complete lockdown on May 10. While this was aimed at curbing the rapid spread of infection, it also gave the much-needed breather for hospitals and time to scale up the infrastructure.

Door-to-door fever surveillance to proactively identify cases at an early stage was ramped up and so were screening centres for triaging, and tele-counselling centres. While these measures existed during the first wave, new

ones were added to tackle the second surge. Two hundred and fifty-one car ambulances with oxygen support were introduced to address the shortage of ambulances and ensure zero-delay transfers to hospitals.

Another key initiative was field triaging. With the 13 screening centres located in different parts of the city proving inadequate to handle the surge, field triaging was introduced. Two hundred and fifty-one teams, each comprising a doctor and two nurses, were formed.

"The field triaging team visits every person who tests positive at their doorstep. If further examination or hospitalisation is needed, the person is taken to a nearby facility. Else, they are asked to isolate at home. Further follow-ups are done through the telecounselling centres," Dr Varghese says. Every patient in home isolation is called at least once a day by the telecounselling centres, where final year MBBS students along with doctors are deployed.

More than 12,000 fever survey workers have been deployed to visit every household to identify people with COVID-19 symptoms. This is in addition to around 400 fever survey camps across the city, mainly focusing on hotspot areas. A group of volunteers called 'Friends of COVID Citizen Under Surveillance' was deployed to assist those under home isolation. The members provided groceries and monitored adherence to rules.

Apart from these measures, the Medical and Family Welfare Department worked on increasing the bed capacity and set up a Unified Command Centre (UCC) for bed allocation and oxygen monitoring, which was later converted to the State's war room for COVID-19.

From the day it was set up as a UCC on April 30 till May 25, more than 60,000 calls were received requesting beds and oxygen support. An official working at the UCC says that while the UCC was able to fulfil only 30% of the requests in the initial days, it has been able to fulfil more than 60% of the requests in the past one week.

Dr Varghese also says technology was used both for administrative purposes (for efficient monitoring and deployment of resources) and for the public. An example is the GCC VidMed application. Given the difficulties for many to visit a doctor or a hospital, the app was launched to enable patients to consult doctors online.

"While we deployed technology, we were also conscious about technology not becoming a barrier for those from underprivileged backgrounds to seek help. So, we had helpline numbers, proactively called those under home quarantine and also ensured visits by field staff," he says.

By now, a 'Chennai Model' had emerged. Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned that he wanted other cities to emulate some features of this model. GCC Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi says the Chennai Model of COVID-19 prevention and case management has become more effective because it is "community driven".

"We have 200 mobile teams, 10 mobile units, 42 static centres, and 140 urban primary health centres carrying out doorstep COVID-19 testing with a turnaround time of 24 hours," he says.

All laboratories have to report results to residents through the single-window

system adopted by the GCC, for better coordination. The civic body has established oxygen centres, promoted a symptomatic case management system irrespective of the test results, accelerated vaccination services for the elderly, disabled and non-ambulatory elderly, and hired FOCUS volunteers for helping residents who are in home isolation," Bedi adds.

GCC's Deputy Commissioner (Works) Meghanath Reddy says the second wave was managed through several micro-targeted interventions. "We constituted 30 zonal enforcement teams to enforce lockdown SOPs. We launched 100 mask kiosks to distribute seven lakh reusable masks," he says.

Ramping up facilities

Amid the raging pandemic, government hospitals continued to ramp up infrastructure. They needed more beds, oxygen points, oxygen supply and manpower to handle the rising number of patients. "There are 6,500 oxygen-supported beds in institutions under the Directorate of Medical Education in the city. We have oxygen centres with 2,500 beds. There are 20 COVID-19 Health Centres with 3,085 beds and 24 COVID-19 Care Centres in 24 places with 16,000 beds," says R. Narayana Babu, Director of Medical Education.

In the meantime, vaccination has started to pick up in Chennai. While Tamil Nadu's overall performance on vaccination leaves much to be desired, Chennai has done significantly well compared to most other cities with around 70% of the elderly receiving at least one dose of the vaccine.

GCC plans to vaccinate at least 50,000 persons a day from the present 23,000 once the vaccine supply improves. Till date, the city has achieved a coverage of approximately 19 lakh (two doses).

Cases fall in city, rise in districts

Cases have begun to show a declining trend in Chennai, dropping from a peak of 7,772 cases on May 12 to 2,762 cases on May 28. The burden of cases in Tamil Nadu is shifting to the rural areas.

Chennai accounted for 25% of the 30,355 cases reported in the State on May 12, while on May 26, it accounted for 10% of the 33,764 cases reported.

"Chennai has started showing a declining trend. The fall in cases with 30,000-odd tests a day is a welcome sign. But this is the time we need to be extremely careful," Radhakrishnan says.

There is a gradual decline in the weekly percentage change in incidence and daily test positivity observed from the reported data in Chennai. Dr Ganeshkumar says, "This may indicate to us that the spread is limited. When this current trend continues, Chennai will further limit the spread of infection."

Cases have started to rise in a number of districts. As the Health Secretary points out, "Cases are increasing in 19 districts. This included the western districts, Theni, Madurai and Tiruchi. This is definitely a cause for concern as we need to ensure that the spread does not reach rural areas. Containment and public health measures will continue with no let-up."

With inputs from Pon Vasanth B. A. and Aloisius Xavier Lopez

FROM PAGE ONE

Kolkata's COVID deaths could be 4 times more

In 2020, the total reported deaths due to COVID-19 (from April to December) in Kolkata was 2,950. But there were 7,002 "excess" deaths – the difference between the certified deaths registered in the same months for 2020 and the average for the previous five years (2015-2019). This suggests that COVID-19 deaths could have been undercounted by a factor of 2.37 for 2020, much less than the undercount factor in the second wave.

The numbers in Kolkata for the first and second wave follow similar patterns of undercounting in other metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai and States like Gujarat, which were revealed recently (see Aashish Gupta et al, *The Hindu*, May 25; Rukmini S, *The Hindu*, May 26). But the estimated undercount factor of nearly seven in Kolkata in the second wave is lower only than in Gujarat (with an undercount factor of more than 10). That Kolkata is affected more than other metros indicates the severity of the COVID-19 wave in the city in last two months. This could be the result of elections conducted over eight phases in West Bengal,

Covaxin output cycle may hit Centre's deadline

According to a statement from the Department of Biotechnology on April 15, Bharat Biotech is to scale up production to 6-7 crore doses a month from July-August and 10 crore doses, a month from September. This works out to at least 52 crore doses from July-Dec, of which 40 crore is marked out from September-December.

However, from what Bharat Biotech has stated about the time lag between production and supply, it appears this tranche may have to be excluded for this calendar year. The Centre has administered 2.1 crore doses as of Friday and, including doses of Covaxin in the pipeline, has got 3.1 crore doses from Bharat Biotech since the vaccine drive began in January. It had got a commitment for another 1 crore by June end, the Health Ministry said on Friday. The government has placed an order for 7.5 crore doses so far of Covaxin, according to a response from the Health Ministry to a Right To Information request from activist Kanhaiya Kumar on Friday. If the requirement of about 4 crore is fulfilled by June, that still leaves a gap of about 3.5 crore doses.

Thus if the expanded production of July-August (12 crore) numbers (to be available in November and December) are clubbed, that works out to 15.5 crore being available for the year, which is about 30% of Dr Paul's estimate. "The manufacturing, testing, release and distribution of vaccines is a complex and multifactorial process with hundreds of

which registered a sharp spike in cases and deaths during the second wave.

Manas Gumta, general secretary, Association for Health Service Doctors said the organisation has been pointing out that the numbers of infections and deaths both are under-reported. "The actual deaths will be at least three to five times more than the reported deaths. The WHO guidelines point out that deaths in case of COVID suspects should be counted as COVID deaths, which is not the case. Moreover, people living in the slums of the city are not coming in the net of testing and many deaths due to COVID are passed as routine deaths," Dr. Gumta said. He added that under-reporting of deaths is happening across the country.

In January 2021, the WHO had estimated, based on excess deaths data in just Europe and the American continents, that actual deaths were at least 1.6 times more than the recorded ones. Excess deaths information is not released in India, which makes it difficult to assess such data, but obtaining comparisons from death certification data is one way of estimating them.

"The aforesaid accused persons shall make themselves available for interrogation in the course of further investigation, if any, of the alleged offence, as and when required by the CBI. Considering the lockdown im-

posed in the State of West Bengal, the interrogation may be carried out by virtual mode," the order said.

Strict instructions
It also specified that the accused shall not tamper with the evidence or attempt to intimidate or influence the witnesses.

The CBI arrested Ministers Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, MLA Madan Mitra and former Minister Sovan Chatterjee on May 17 and they were granted bail by a Special CBI court the very same day. But it was stayed by a Division Bench of the High Court.

The court later placed

them under house arrest and constituted the five-judge Bench. In the order, the Bench said the accused shall file an undertaking by May 31 before the Registrar General of this court as well as the CBI court to comply with the bail conditions.

The matter will come up for hearing on May 31.

No rift over Lakshadweep 'development' push: BJP

Change necessary for tourism boost, says A.P. Abdulkutty



A.P. Abdulkutty • TWITTER

steps, requiring a diverse pool of human resources. Production scale-up of vaccines is a step-by-step process, involving several regulatory SOPs of GMP (Standard Operating Procedures of Good Manufacturing Practices). There is a four-month lag time for COVAXIN to translate into actual vaccination," the company said.

All vaccines supplied in India are to be submitted for testing and release to the Central Drugs Laboratory, Government of India. It takes two days for vaccine supplies to reach the depots of the State and Central governments from Bharat Biotech's facilities and from there, they are further distributed by the State governments to various districts. This requires additional number of days. From here on, vaccines are administered at the designated vaccination centres.

Secretary, Department of Biotechnology Renu Swarup said while it could take nearly four months for a batch of vaccine to be prepared, the government prepared its estimate based on what the manufacturer had committed to supply. "Vaccine manufacturing is time consuming and complex. But if, as Dr. Paul has said, a certain number of doses would be available in a particular month, it accounts for the time taken to produce it," she told. "However we have to be optimistic about production and mustn't forget that these are companies with long experience in vaccine production."

The BJP has been facing internal backlash after Mr. Patel proposed a series of actions which he claimed were for the development of the islands as a tourist hub, and that reports of a split in the local BJP over the issue were exaggerated.

"There is no split. There are some who are pushing the agenda of some mainlanders whereas the local leaders of the party are united," he said.

The changes include the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation which the Opposition says has undermined the role of the gram panchayats, and the cutting of links with Bey-

pore port, a historic and cultural link, and shifting traffic to Mangaluru port.

"The Opposition is unable to see that these changes are important for the development of the islands; it has great potential as a tourist spot and needs development to attract business. It is only after Narendra Modi's government came to power that investment is being done on things like optic fibre networks in the region," he said.

On the question of why beef, an integral part of cuisine in the area, was being banned and sale of alcohol being allowed when it was previously not, Mr. Kutty said the changes were "just a proposal". "The matter is just a proposal and is open for comments," he said.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Faizal said Mr. Patel's actions were driven by a "corporate mindset" that had also harmed the UTs of Daman and Diu.

"His [administrator's] actions reveal more of a corporate mindset than communal, an attitude that is

autocratic and dictatorial too. In Daman and Diu too, we saw his autocratic and dictatorial behaviour in how traditional shelters of fishermen were destroyed and his actions as administrator there," he stated.

Mr. Patel was the Administrator of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli after the two UTs were merged. "The plans put forward by the administrator are in direct contravention of the Supreme Court and the findings of the Ravindran Committee that specifically said that all development projects relating to the islands have to be discussed and take into account the view of the gram panchayats. The Lakshadweep Development Authority and the powers vested in it are

just being used to push for land grabbing," he alleged.

Fragile ecology

"Not only are the islands designated Scheduled Tribe lands where buying of land by outsiders is prohibited, they also come under government protection, but if you look at the islands, some of which are just over 3.2 sq. km. with a width of possibly 15m, what kind of highway or roads building are you talking about. These are plans that will disrupt the fragile ecology of the area and people are justifiably upset," he said.

"If we don't get relief from the Central government in the withdrawal of these plans or recall of the administrator, we will approach the judiciary," he added.

Freedom fighter T.M. Kaliannan passes away

He was Constituent Assembly member



T.M. Kaliannan Gounder

and various other development activities in unified Salem district including Salem, Namakkal, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri.

Huge loss'
Tiruchengode legislator and Kongunadu Desiya Makkal Katchi leader E.R. Eswaran condoled Mr. Gounder's death and said his demise is a huge loss to Tamil Nadu. He added that Mr. Gounder brought light into the lives of poor children by opening several schools in unified Salem district.

Minister for Tourism M. Mathiventhan, Namakkal MP A.K.P. Chiraj and Congress leader Mohan Kumaramangalam also condoled his death.

Mr. Gounder's mortal remains were cremated with full State honours at Sengodampalayam. Minister for Tourism M. Mathiventhan and other paid their last respects.

He was also instrumental in the construction of the Ghat road to the Kolli Hills, several irrigation projects

Scope of Section 304-B in dowry deaths widened by SC

Court goes beyond literal interpretation of penal provision

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court indicated in a judgment on Friday that a straitjacket and literal interpretation of a penal provision on dowry death may have blunted the battle against the "long-standing social evil".

Dowry deaths accounted for 40% to 50% homicides in the country for almost a decade from 1999 to 2018. The judgment pronounced by a Bench, led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, called dowry harassment a "pestiferous" crime where women are subjected to cruelty by "covetous" husbands and in-laws.

In 2019 alone, 7,115 cases of dowry death were registered under Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code.

But the language used in Section 304-B has always flummoxed courts. Courts have often opted for a strict and narrow reading of the provision, which was one of the many legal initiatives introduced against dowry.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, who authored the judgment, said courts should instead interpret Section 304-B liberally while keeping in mind the law's intention to punish dowry and bride-burning.

According to Section

dowry death, a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or "otherwise than under normal circumstances" within seven years of her marriage. She should have suffered cruelty or harassment from her husband or in-laws "soon before her death" in connection with demand for dowry.

Absurd interpretation

Over the years, courts had interpreted the phrase 'soon before' in Section 304-B as 'immediately before'. This interpretation would make it necessary for a woman to have been harassed moments before she died. Such "absurd" interpretations should be avoided, the apex court noted in the judgment on Friday.

Instead, Chief Justice Ramana said the prosecution needed to show only a "proximate and live link" between the harassment and her death.

"It is safe to deduce that when the legislature used the words 'soon before' they did not mean 'immediately before'. Rather, they left its determination in the hands of the courts. The factum of cruelty or harassment differs from case to case. Even the spectrum of cruelty is quite varied, as it can range from physical, verbal or

Dealing firmly with China: Army chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

In a clear and unambiguous message to China, Army Chief General M.M. Naravane on Friday said there could be no de-escalation without complete disengagement at all friction points in eastern Ladakh, and that the Indian Army was prepared for all contingencies in the region.

Gen. Naravane said India was dealing with China in a "firm" and "non-escalatory" manner to ensure the sanctity of its claims in eastern Ladakh, and that it was even open to initiating confidence-building measures.

Gen. Naravane asserted that the Indian Army is currently holding onto all important areas in the high-altitude region and it has adequate personnel in the form of "reserves" to react to any contingencies.

"We are very clear that no de-escalation can take place before disengagement at all friction points. India and China have signed a number of border agreements which have been unilaterally breached by the People's Liberation Army," he said.

"Though we want peace and tranquillity at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and are open to initiating confidence-building measures, we remain prepared for all contingencies."

He was reportedly the youngest member in the Constituent Assembly then and also a member of India's first provisional parliament.

Mr. Gounder served as a Member of Legislative Council in Tamil Nadu and also as an MLA thrice, between 1952 and 1967, his family members said.

The court directed the district authorities in every State to upload the details of children who were orphans and in a position requiring care and protection after March 2020, the month when the pandemic began in India. The court asked the States to separately provide the facts and figures of such children by Sunday evening. The court scheduled a hearing on Tuesday.

He was also instrumental in the construction of the Ghat road to the Kolli Hills, several irrigation projects

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of care and protection within

India seeks more studies on virus origin

World Health Assembly reviews findings of the WHO special team that visited China earlier this year

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

India on Friday pushed for further studies on the origins of the novel coronavirus, as the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Health Assembly, reviewed the findings of its special team.

The 120-page report submitted by the WHO on March 31 had listed various hypotheses as possible origins, including the "lab leak" theory that it said was "extremely unlikely", but concluded that there was need for further research.

Several countries at the Assembly's ongoing annual meeting from May 24-June 1 have raised the need for further studies, but it is unclear whether the body will pass any resolution on the issue.

"The WHO-convened glo-



Global concerns: The World Health Assembly's annual meeting at Geneva will conclude on June 1. ■ WHO/REUTERS

bal study on the origins of COVID-19 is an important first step. It stressed the need for the next phase of studies, as also for further data and studies, to reach robust conclusions," said Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

On April 1, the MEA issued a statement on the report, which had listed "four pathways" or possible options

that led to the pandemic: a direct zoonotic transmission; the introduction of the virus through another intermediate host or animal; the introduction through the cold chain or food chain; and a laboratory incident.

The inquiry conducted over four weeks by a joint WHO-China study team had concluded that the first two theories were "likely to very likely", the food chain theory "possible" and the lab incident theory "extremely unlikely".

In its statement, India also called for "a comprehensive and expert-led mechanism" to investigate the origin of COVID-19 in cooperation with all stakeholders, and supported the possibility of an additional WHO mission to the Chinese sites to further study the issue.

India's statement comes days after U.S. Health and

Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra called on the WHO to conduct a second and more transparent investigation into the origins of COVID-19.

U.S. President Joseph Biden has also tasked his National Security Advisor and intelligence agencies to redouble efforts to reach a conclusion on the origins of the virus.

China, which has consistently denied the theory that there was a leak from the Wuhan lab, where research on zoonotic transmissions of coronaviruses was taking place, criticised Mr. Biden's statement. Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zhao Lijian accused the U.S. of not caring "about facts and truth...or serious scientific origin tracing," on Thursday, indicating that China considers the "lab leak" theory report closed.

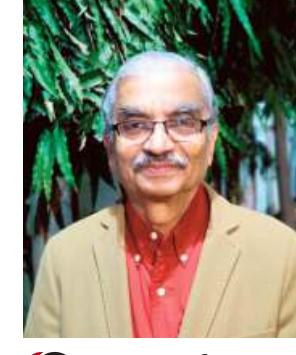
INTERVIEW | NARENDRA KUMAR ARORA

'Children with comorbidities are at higher risk for disease'

Follow-up with doctors is key, says Task Force member

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

Children with comorbidities or on immunosuppressants are at a higher risk of developing COVID-19 complications, said Dr. Narendra Kumar Arora, paediatric gastroenterologist and a senior member of the National COVID-19 Task Force. He warned that there are cases of Long COVID in children as well, in which patient can develop a new disease such as diabetes or hypertension even after three to six months of recovery.



C Everyone above 18 should get vaccinated. If adults are protected, our children will also remain protected

What precautions should the parents or caregivers take to protect themselves from catching the infection from children?

■ Firstly, each member of the family should get tested for COVID-19. The caregiver should wear full protection gear – double masks, face shield, gloves – while caring for the child. Care should be provided under the guidance and supervision of a doctor. The caregiver and the child should isolate themselves from the rest of the family.

We have also seen cases of new mothers contracting the disease. In such cases, how should she protect her child from getting the infection?

■ In such cases any person who is not COVID positive should care for the child. However, a lactating mother should extract her milk and feed the child. If there is no one else to take care of the child, the mother should wear a double mask and face shield, wash her hands and sanitise her surroundings regularly. Mother's milk is important for the child's proper growth and development. The milk of an infected mother has antibodies against coronavirus.

Overall, there is no evidence that children are especially susceptible but due to a larger number of persons getting infected, the absolute number of affected children has also increased.

How is the treatment for children different from that for adults?

■ We don't recommend any medicine for asymptomatic children. In mild cases, we prescribe simple paracetamol to manage fever and other mild symptoms. Similarly, diarrhoea is managed with oral rehydration fluids and plenty of fluid. In moderate to severe cases, the treatment is the same as that for adults.

Prakash Javadekar

Are more children developing severe infection during the second wave?

■ A vast majority of children either remain asymptomatic or develop a mild disease. In a household, if several adults are diagnosed with COVID infection, there is a high possibility that the children will also be infected.

The Congress has registered an FIR against the BJP for alleging that a document by its research department was a toolkit to undermine Mr. Modi. The Congress insists the document was morphed.

"The [Health] Ministry has given a road map of producing 216 crore doses by December and how 108 crore people will be vaccinated," Mr. Javadekar said. With over 20 crore doses being administered so far, India was the second in the world and the vaccination was set to see a big jump from August, he asserted.

Fortunately, in most such cases, the children, particularly those below 10 years old, are usually asymptomatic or have mild, common cold-like symptoms, or diarrhoea.

However, children with congenital heart disease, diabetes, asthma, or those suffering from childhood cancers, or on immunosuppressants are at a higher risk of developing severe dis-

ease. Parents should watch COVID sick children closely. Many of the serious complications in children occur in or after the second week of acquiring the infection.

Overall, there is no evidence that children are especially susceptible but due to a larger number of persons getting infected, the absolute number of affected children has also increased.

National data on the disease tells us that around 3-4% of children were symptomatic during the first wave of COVID-19 and this percentage remains the same during the second wave. However, since the total number of cases has gone up, it has affected more children this time.

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IN BRIEF



Ban on international flights extended

NEW DELHI The DGCA on Friday extended the ban on international flights till June 30. International flight operations have been suspended in the country since March 23, 2020. However, special flights have been operating under 'air bubble' arrangements with select countries.

Raytheon gives 4 oxygen filling trucks to Red Cross

NEW DELHI Four mobile oxygen filling trucks donated by aerospace and defence company Raytheon Technologies Corporation were handed over to the Indian Red Cross Society for further distribution, the company said on Friday. Each truck can transport approximately 270,000 litres of oxygen.

Militant killed in Shopian, another group trapped

Srinagar A militant was killed in an ongoing encounter that broke out in Shopian in south Kashmir after a search party of the security forces came under fire from hiding militants on Friday. Hours after the encounter, security forces trapped another group of militants in Baramulla district.

11 dead after consuming spurious liquor in Aligarh

Aligarh Eleven people died on Friday and some more were taken ill after allegedly consuming spurious liquor sold by a licensed vendor here, a senior official said. The authorities ordered a magisterial probe into the incident and suspended five excise officials, while four people, including the liquor vendor, were arrested. PTI

No third party authorised for Sputnik V: Dr. Reddy's

HYDERABAD Reiterating that it has the sole distribution rights for the first 250 million doses of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine in India, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories on Friday said it has not authorised any third party or intermediary to supply the vaccine on its behalf. In the last few days, there have been several unsubstantiated reports and claims from various quarters in India on alleged tie-ups for the Sputnik V vaccine.

Assam to hike tea workers' wage by ₹38

GUWAHATI The Assam government on Friday decided to hike the daily wage of tea plantation workers by ₹38. The decision was taken at a meeting between CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and representatives of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha and other tea bodies. Officials said the hike will take the daily wage from ₹167 to ₹205, and from ₹145 to ₹183 in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys respectively.

Yaas: PM announces ₹1,000 cr. aid for 3 States

Bengal, Jharkhand to get relief based on damage

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

Bhubaneswar Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced a ₹1000 crore assistance for cyclone 'Yaas'-hit Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

While ₹500 crore would be immediately given to Odisha, ₹500 crore was announced for West Bengal and Jharkhand, which would be released on the basis of the damage, said the Prime Minister's Office in a statement.

The Centre would send an inter-ministerial team to visit the States to assess the extent of damage.

Soon after attending a re-

view meeting with Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Mr. Modi undertook an aerial survey of Bhadrak and Balasore districts battered by 'Yaas', en route to West Bengal. Appreciating the preparedness and disaster management activities by Odisha, which resulted in minimal loss of lives, he, according to the statement, noted that the State embarked on long-term mitigation efforts to deal with such natural disasters. Mr. Modi announced ex gratia of ₹2 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 to the seriously injured in the cyclone.

Earlier, after meeting with Mr. Modi, Mr. Patnaik said Odisha did not want to burden the Centre at the peak of the second wave of COVID-19



Indian Coast Guard personnel carry out rescue and relief works in Odisha. ■PTI

by demanding immediate financial assistance. He instead called for provisioning of assistance for long-term mitigation measures. "As the country is at the peak of COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to manage it through our own resources to tide over the crisis," said Mr. Patnaik.

In a series of tweets, he thanked the Prime Minister

for visiting the State. He said, "I have sought assistance for long-term measures to make Odisha disaster resilient as we are frequented by such climate hazards every year and highlighted State's demand for disaster resilient power infrastructure and resilient coastal protection with storm surge resilient embankments."

After the review meeting, Pradeep Kumar Jena, Special Relief Commissioner, elaborated that disaster resilient power system meant adoption of better technology and design preferably going in for underground power supply and strengthening of the power infrastructure.

Governor Ganeshi Lal, CM Naveen Patnaik, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan and Minister of State of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Pratap Chandra Sarangi were present at the meeting.

Amit Shah, Rajnath flay Mamata for her absence

'She put arrogance over public welfare'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Amit Shah

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik attended the meeting with him in Odisha, while Ms. Banerjee skipped the meeting in her State.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also said on social media that he was "stunned" by Ms. Banerjee's behaviour "as both Prime Minister and the Chief Minister are not individuals and swear by the Constitution to serve the public".

During Mr. Modi's tour,

Centre tells West Bengal Chief Secretary to report to Delhi

Decision comes after CM skips meeting with PM on cyclone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Alapan Bandyopadhyay

Just hours after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee skipped a review meeting on Cyclone Yaas with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the appointments committee of the Union Cabinet attached the State's Chief Secretary to the Centre.

The committee is headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In an unprecedented order on Friday evening, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) invoked Rule 6(I) of the Indian Administrative Service (cadre) Rules, 1954 to

place the services of West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay with the Government of India.

Rule 6(I) states that "provided that in case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the Central Government and the State Government shall give effect to the decision

of the Central Government."

The order asked the State government to relieve the officer with "immediate effect" and directed him to report to DoPT office at North Block in Delhi by 10 a.m. on May 31.

Due to retire

Mr. Bandyopadhyay who was to retire on May 31 was given three-month extension by the State government.

Earlier in December 2020, the Home Ministry had attached three Indian Police Service (IPS) officers of West Bengal cadre but the State government did not relieve them.

Special GST meet on States' compensation

Council rejects calls for tax waiver on vaccines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Exempted: The Finance Minister said amphotericin-B has also been included in the list for tax-free imports. ■FILE PHOTO

A special session of the Council will be held to discuss with the States how long the Compensation Cess levied under the GST regime needs to be extended beyond its current sunset date of July 2022, Ms. Sitharaman said.

For this year's estimated shortfall in compensation cess collections to meet States' dues, the Centre will raise ₹1.58 lakh crore to compensate States via back-to-back loans, like it was done last year. The same formula adapted last year will be used this year. A rough estimate is that the Centre will have to borrow ₹1.58 lakh crore and lend it to States on a back-to-back basis.

Though the Council did

not agree to the demand from Opposition States for a waiver on GST for COVID vaccines and other supplies to tackle the pandemic, it did agree to extend the GST exemption granted on relief material received free from abroad for donations to State-approved entities, to those who want to make such donations by purchasing the material from overseas. The period for availing this exemption has also been extended to August 31.

"With the rising cases of Black Fungus, a particular medicine required for it – amphotericin-B – has also been included in the exemption list (for tax-free imports)," Ms. Sitharaman said.

On the Delhi High Court setting aside the 12% GST levy on imports of oxygen concentrators for personal use, Revenue Secretary Tarun Bagaj said the order has led to a situation where GST levies will be zero if the item is received as a 'gift', but 28% if he said.

Industry was broadly disappointed with the outcomes.

"There were no major announcements and the issue of GST reduction on COVID items has been deferred by a few more days which is disappointing. The Council has failed to address major pain points of the industry and the common man resulting from the pandemic," said Rajat Bose, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co.

"Global tender has been extended by seven days in view of requests from many prospective vendors, cyclones and also for greater participation," said a senior officer here on Friday.

Odisha was among the first few States that considered getting vaccines from the international market.

As per the revised sche-

dule announced by the Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited, the final date for online bid submission, opening of technical bid and opening of price bid would be June 4.

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

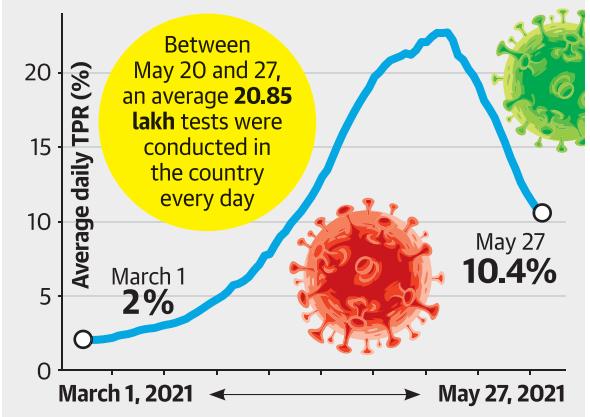
BUHBANESWAR

The Odisha government, which was scheduled to open technical and price bids for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines from the international market on Friday, has extended the global tender process by seven days.

"Odisha was among the first few States that considered getting vaccines from the international market.

As per the revised sche-

Declining trend | India's average daily Test Positivity Rate continues to decrease. It was 10.4% on May 27 compared to the 15.4% recorded a week before



India sees 1.69 lakh new COVID-19 cases

Over 3,500 more deaths recorded

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India recorded 1,69,064 new COVID-19 cases and 3,514 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Friday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,77,23,309 cases and 3,22,438 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 31,079 new infections, followed by Karnataka (22,823) and Kerala (22,318). Maharashtra recorded 973 new casualties on the day, followed by Tamil Nadu (486) and Karnataka (401). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths that were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

This is the first instance in over two weeks when daily vaccinations have crossed the 25 lakh-mark.

Until May 28, about 17.3% of India's adult population, 37.5% of the 45-plus population and 42.6% of those aged above 60 years, had been vaccinated with at least one dose.

Ministry caps deployment of flights at 50%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

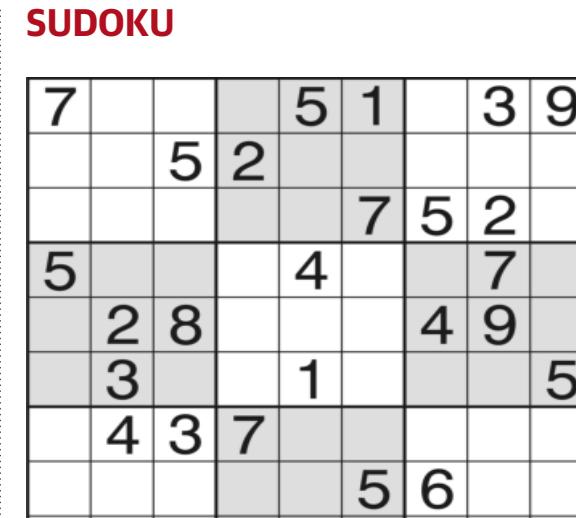
The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Friday revised its cap on capacity deployment by airlines from 80% to 50% of pre-COVID-19 approved flights.

The order comes into effect from June 1, 2021, and will last till July 31, 2021.

The decision comes at a time when daily passenger traffic has registered a sharp decline due to the surge in COVID-19 cases and several States mandating RT-PCR test for arriving passengers.

On May 18, various Indian carriers ferried a mere 39,370 passengers, as compared to nearly 2.5 lakh in March. In December, the government had raised permissible capacity from 70% to 80% when passenger demand was showing signs of recovery.

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13259

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



Instapick

Cannes 2021: The poster for the 2021 Director's Fortnight festival, which takes place alongside the Cannes main event, is up. Part of photographer Daniel Mercadante's *The Enchanted Forest* series, where he 'painted' the trees using coloured lights (from flashlights), and also used long exposure techniques to explore the temporal dimension that photography shares with cinema. @danielmercadante

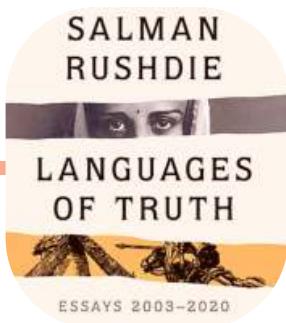


Talking point

New IT rules: The Ministry of Electronics and IT had given Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp three months to comply with the new IT rules announced on February 25. Now, Facebook-owned WhatsApp has moved the Delhi High Court challenging the traceability provision which it says will end user privacy. The Centre is playing down these claims, assuring WhatsApp users they have nothing to fear.

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other events you just can't miss.



Rushdie's new essays

Author **Salman Rushdie** takes on Trump, Covid-19 and more in *Languages of Truth: Essays 2003-2020*, a newly-collected selection of essays, criticism and texts, many of which have not been in print. Rushdie also explores what the work of authors like Shakespeare and Samuel Beckett meant to him. ₹2,639, amazon.in. Listen to actors **Rasika Dugal** and **Pratik Babbar** voice *The Last Girl to Fall in Love*, written by **Durjoy Datta**. Set in a dystopian future, it is a sequel to *The Last Boy to Fall in Love*. Free for Audible members.



OOKIOH says Gah

With summer here, swimwear label **OOKIOH** has teamed up with California-based brand **Lisa Says Gah**. Featuring three prints, the inclusive collection comes in a one-piece and bikini, and is made of sustainable material. ₹8,400 onwards, ookioh.com, lisaysgah.com. For tech and fashion, there's **True Colors Fashion: The Future is Now**, a series on tech wearables and adaptive fashion. Leading tech companies and fashion brands come together with a diverse cast of models. On the True Colors Festival YouTube channel, June 3.



Music for wellness

Free **Music Wellness Sessions** by Pink Lotus Academia, a platform focussing on Indian classical arts and culture, are the new stress busters. The idea behind these one-hour sessions is to encourage well-being via music, dancing, and more. May 29 and 30, 5 pm to 6 pm. thepinklotusacademia.com. Highly imaginative during the pandemic? Give shape and structure to your tales at **The Three Worlds** workshop, designed by theatre artiste Akhshay Gandhi. ₹7,500. May 29-June 27, insider.in. #8971492903



Pride month begins

Veteran film actor Revathy stars in **I, Madhav Baug**, this month's offering by Staged@RS. The acclaimed play by Chetan Datar, tells the story of a mother coming to terms with her son's homosexuality. VoD, ₹150. Till May 30, insider.in. In part three of **One and One Unlocked**, nine playwrights have written about their experiences of solitude, which have been performed by actors like Seema Biswas and Rajit Kapur. Proceeds go to the TheatreDost initiative. VoD, till May 30. ₹299 onwards. insider.in.



Food delivery at doorstep

The Lodhi New Delhi is serving up comfort cuisines for its guests in the safety of their homes. An array of **signature specials**, savoury items, desserts and Indian, European and Oriental selections offered at the three restaurants, **Elan**, **Perbacco** and **Lodhi Bakery**, are delivered to food connoisseurs on order. As part of its **'Stay Safe Assurance** programme, each item is packed and prepared with highest levels of sanitisation and care.



No ordinary hero

Actor **Richa Chadha** turns the spotlight on everyday heroes. Her new community-based initiative, **The Kindry** on Instagram, will celebrate random acts of kindness during the pandemic. The actor started the initiative with designer Krishan Jagota. @thekindry. Meanwhile, the Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, has invited applications from individuals working at the crossings of art and activism for the digital edition of its **Young Curators Academy**. Deadline is May 30. gorki.de



All eyes on Rafa

Fans warm up as 'King of Clay' **Rafael Nadal** eyes a 14th title at **Roland Garros** and a record 21st major. The Spaniard beat Novak Djokovic last year to claim the title. Djokovic, on the other hand, is looking to claim his 19th Grand Slam victory. While teenager Iga Swiatek will be looking to defend her title, 23-time winner **Serena Williams** is aiming to equal Margaret Court's record of 24 Grand Slam titles. This is also the first time night matches will be held at the Philippe-Chatrier court. Main draw from May 30. Star Sports Select and Hotstar.

K-pop on the wall



Designer duo Shivan & Narresh launch art wallpaper prints that bring a slice of their travel diaries to homes

APARNA NARRAIN

Whenever he walks into a room, Narresh Kukreja notices the walls first. "Consciously or unconsciously, your eyes always [go to] the largest surface area, more than the furniture or rugs," says Kukreja, one half of Delhi-based designer duo Shivan & Narresh.

It is no surprise then that following a line of table linens last year, the two now have a series of 10 art wallpaper prints. Drawn from five of their collec-



Seoul vibes to Japanese art The wallpapers feature an eclectic mix of designs, from Renaissance art (Ballerina Carlotta Chabert as Venus on the Dame wallpaper) and Seychellois elements in a distinct Edo Art aesthetic on the Praslin wallpaper, to a seven-coloured print inspired by Korean pop culture on the Mujigay wallpaper. "We're fortunate to have a collection of signature prints. So, it essentially came down to choosing which prints would work and deciding the right scale for it to be used as interior design," Kukreja says, confirming that the material used is non-woven, high-quality paper.

Mujigay (meaning rainbow) came from their 2020 Seoul Series, which was inspired by a 2019 visit to South Korea. "It is called so because of the strong K-pop vibe the city has," he continues, recommending the energetic print for a child's be-

droom, a gym, or a lounge where people mingle. "Other prints like the Hututu is inspired by the traditional folk arts of Korea. You'll see hand-painted birds and temples in the backdrop. There is a sense of traditionality to the wallpaper; it would be nice in a formal space. At the same time, they almost look like vintage stamps."

The Palmera features palm leaves and black panthers, a very Indian aesthetic, but here "inspired by a famous Japanese photo artist called Araki".

Break the white rule Kukreja adds, "As a rule of thumb, if you have a small space, there's no point in painting it white and trying to make it larger. Instead, take the space and make it impactful."

Reiterating that the collection will provide a window to the world, Kukreja shares, "Even if people are stuck at home and not travelling, it will always be the first thing on their minds. That's how important travel is going to be this year and probably the next as well. So to look at the wall, and get lost and discover new elements, is a very good way of escaping".

Starts at ₹15,950 per roll, shivanandnarresh.com.

YARN IT!

Board games

No exams. Shorter exams. Postponed exams... and they say teens can't make up their minds

ball games in lockdown – by being the ball. My life is so kicked around. First, zigzag like soccer – perhaps online class for a month, or not, or three or forever. For a bit, I was a cricket ball on a sixer – a flash of hope, of sailing through the blue sky. Then a few months of Me, the Basketball. Bouncing between Yays and NoWays. We get to go to school? Yay! And now that we're suitably exhilarated (see how I've been studying my vocab, Mum?) – tada! Wave 2 – sorry, loser, go get locked up again.

Right now, it's underwater diving. Who waits longest, breath held, without going Boom! Will months of studying end anywhere when to jump, knowing the chute may not open.

There's the click. Mum on the prowl. She goes,

"They're saying on the parent WhatsApp group that..." Then she says, on cue, "What – you're playing again?" And I say – for once – truthfully – "Yeah, Mum. Wanna join?" And she squeezes in near me, and we play this stupidly awesome game where zombies keep popping out from nowhere and we gotta whack them down. And she gets that it's the most honest and closest thing to what we're all going through now. We play. And it's less basketball now, and more piano.

Where Jane De Suza, author of *Flyaway Boy*, pokes her nose into our perfect lives.



■ SREEJITH R KUMAR



Designers duo Shivan & Narresh launch art wallpaper prints that bring a slice of their travel diaries to homes

PRACHI JOSHI

As you continue to work from home, it's natural to turn to food when you're feeling low. But don't reach for that chocolate bar yet. On May 28, Marriott International introduced the concept of 'Mood Diet', a curated menu of mood-enhancing dishes that will be available via Marriott on Wheels, the hotel group's direct food delivery service.

Eat and stay calm

Chef Himanshu Taneja, Culinary Director - South Asia at Marriott International says that the menu focusses on ingredients that have a longer-term effect on our mood – fermented foods that help with our digestion (more than 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut). Other foods included in the menu are fatty fish like salmon that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids (which have been shown to

vast experience as a chef and his food science studies at



A dish from 'Mood Diet', and (below) chef Himanshu Taneja

Food for your mood

reduce anxiety) and nuts and seeds (which contain tryptophan, a precursor to serotonin). While Taneja has not collaborated with a nutritionist to devise this menu, he says he dipped into his

knowledge of mood-boosting ingredients, along with a little writing up on why it's good for you. There's some focus on well-being, with healthy grains like quinoa making an appearance. Overall, the menu is not wildly inventive but promises comfort in these times.

The Mood Diet will initially roll out across 13 properties in the country.

GEORGINA MADDOX

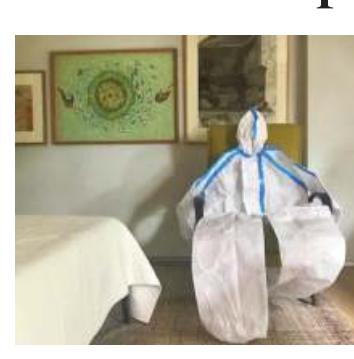
Whether it is the talking microphones, the 'Blame' bottle, or the bag with a label that reads, 'There is no explosive in this', Shilpa Gupta's artworks always speak to their viewer about situations that are socio-politically loaded. And the Mumbai-based artist has found the most interesting spaces to present them – from a railway station in Chemnitz, Germany, where she explored the idea of distance (social, economic or geographic) through flap boards, to her home during lockdown 2020, where a PPE suit became a model to explore pause, anticipation and an-

xity (part of *Architectural Digest's #StillCommaLife* series).

Now the M HKA (Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp) is showcasing her first mid-career survey exhibition, titled *Today Will End*. Curated by Nav Haq, the associate director of the museum, the exhibition looks at the evolution of her work over the last two decades, foregrounding the speculative nature of her practice as well as the depth of her critical engagement with psychology, behaviour, politics and language.

Catch the exhibition online at mukha.be. Read the full story on weekend.thehindu.com

From AD to Antwerp



M ND-NDE

Last of the shaukeen Kayasth men

How my father Rajeev Rishi, a *bon vivant* and amateur chef, gave us life lessons through his food and left an indelible mark on Avadhi cuisine

ANOOTHI VISHAL

The day before he came down with a fever, my dad (72) sent me a bowl of *satpaita*, a typical winter preparation of split *urad dal* and *methi* greens, part of our family's rich repertoire of Avadhi cuisine. "Who eats *satpaita* in summer? It is too heavy," I retorted on the phone, when he called to ask if I wanted some. "We," my dad said, using his royal Lucknowi 'we', 'felt like eating it,' and promptly sent it across. I ate much of it with enthusiasm that afternoon, warm weather notwithstanding, and then stowed away some in the fridge.

The next day, dad tested positive for Covid-19, as did my mother and brother, and the world changed irrevocably. For a few days after, however, I still believed all was well. That dad was



Takey paise, and (top right) Rajeev Rishi

only mildly ill. In fact, it was a delusion the entire family remained under till that last evening when he boarded the ambulance and went into the ICU unescorted – never to come back. The bowl of *satpaita* sits in my refrigerator; now a memory to be preserved.

Passion forward

As a finely-worded obit emailed to me described him, my dad was a *bon vivant*, the last of a line of *shaukeen* Kayasth men, belonging to the liberal community of medieval scribes, known to patronise the arts and culture, and who liked to live life king size. Generous to a fault, fond of cooking and music, dad was happiest when sharing these passions. Before the pandemic made physical gatherings impossible, he and some relatives and friends had been regular with their musical *baithaks* held

once a month, soirees organised in each other's homes in which all participants would sing carefully-rehearsed songs, accompanists having been hired for the occasion. The *baithaks* would end inevitably in a lavish repast prepared by the host, and when my dad's turn came, there would be demands for his *bhuna* meat or *badam parsinde*, recipes going back centuries that he had perfected.

Music and food have been twin legacies of a larger composite Kayasth culture and way of life that I have repeatedly written about. That world is now lost. The legacy lived in dad. My interest was always that of an outsider, of someone examining a slice of life.

Parsinde for the win

Through all of last year, as the pandemic took over and he stopped going to office, instead letting my brother lead his engineering consulting business, he cooked more and more. Treats of *dum ka kathal*, made with tender jackfruit, *bhuna* meat, *takey paise* (*besan* 'coins'), and *bathua* would arrive at our house regularly, along with gifts of the finest man-



sinde. A Delhi Mathur dish, *parsinde* (from *pas*, or choice, connoting the choicest cut of goat meat) doesn't get made often, even in homes. You need to know the best cut, how to score and flatten it, and cook it well. Dad had picked up the recipe from Gopal Pande, a wedding cook, who catered at all my grandparents' functions. Then he tweaked the recipe – which is the version in my book, *Mrs LC's Table*. Despite the recipe, neither I nor any of an impressive list of chefs with whom I collaborated for various pop-ups have been able to cook it satisfactorily.

Like all passionate cooks, dad loved to cook for others. He cooked the toughest and intricate dishes at the many food festivals I put together across hotels in India from 2010 to 2012. They were rigorous affairs, where dad, my aunt Minoo and I cooked for 10 days each in hot kitchens. I got bored and impatient. Dad never did. Finally, I had to stop because the format was too physically demanding. Those who ate his food remembered it for years after, including chef Manjit Gill, who came for our first festival. He sent me a condolence message: "Your father left an indelible impact".

Dad would have been happy to hear it from the country's senior-most chef. But he would have grandly announced, "I only cook for my children". And so it was. Food, that was an extension of his love for us and for life in general.

Anoothi Vishal is a Delhi-based food writer and author.

FOOD SPOT

The joy of EATING OUT

The ambience of dining at home may not be the same but when Diggin home-delivers the food, it whets the appetite



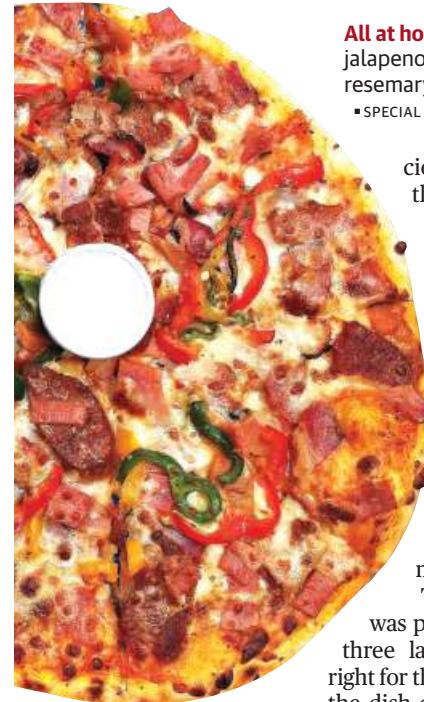
RAHUL VERMA

In these claustrophobic times, one can do nothing but recall happy times spent in the open air. One of the nicest outings we had in recent years was at a place called Diggin in the Santushthi Complex on Race Course Road. I had earlier visited its equally pleasant outlet in Anand Lok. Diggin is so cheerful that it lifts your mood at once. Which is why, while thinking of the outdoors, I looked up the net to see if Diggin was delivering food to my part of town.

To my great happiness, I found that it was. I looked at the menu and was happy to find that it had various kinds of pork dishes – including the sandwich that I had tho-

roughly enjoyed at my earlier sojourns there. Called the all pork sandwich, it comes with bacon, ham and salami. I was toying between that and the porky pizza topped with, you've guessed it, bacon, ham, pepperoni and salami (₹ 485). The pizza won. Along with this, we asked for a chicken and jalapeño pizza (₹ 485), grilled chicken with rosemary (₹ 495) and spaghetti aglio olio (₹ 455). And, for dessert, we called for a tiramisu (₹ 225).

Having the food at home is, of course, not the same as eating at Diggin. The well-lit



All at home Chicken jalapeno pizza and rosemary chicken (below)

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

restaurants have a festive decor and open air seating arrangements. The ambience itself whets the appetite and adds to the taste of the food. This bustling air was missing at home, no doubt, but the food was excellent – a verdict that was shared by the other partakers.

The helpings are so good that our order took us through three meals. We had the pizzas for lunch and the leftover pieces for breakfast the next day. The chicken and the pasta were reserved for dinner.

Despite my fondness for pork, I must admit that I enjoyed the chicken and jalapeño pizza (with arugula leaves) more, mainly because its base was just right. The porky pizza had deli-

This, to my mind, is an aptly named restaurant (Ph no: 011-40800081). You do what it urges you to do – dig in.

.....

The writer is a seasoned food critic

Worlds shaped by laughter

French artist Anais Tondeur's work at Science Gallery Bengaluru's online exhibition explores the contagious power of a hearty guffaw

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

According to Japanese mythology, the world was once saved from eternal darkness due to laughter.

Amaterasu, the Shinto sun goddess, goes into hiding in a cave after her brother, Susanoo, shames her. Because of this, the world becomes dark and cold. Despite many attempts at persuasion by other gods, she fails to return.

Then, Amenouzume, the goddess of dawn, merriment and humour, begins a comical dance. The other *kamis* (Shinto gods or spirits) laugh uncontrollably. Amaterasu, curious about the laugh, steps out of the cave, restoring the world's light.

French visual artist Anais Tondeur's latest work, When the World was a Laugh, was inspired by this mythology. It is being showcased at Contagion, Science Gallery Bengaluru's online art and science exhibition.

The work features a video of fine powder on thin surface vibrated by laughter played from speakers under-



Spread a smile Anais made fine powder vibrate by playing laughter from speakers beneath it

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

neath. The vibrations disturb the powder, causing a change in the landscape. Anais attempts to recreate the formation of mountains. "This is what happens on a geological scale on a much longer timescale," she says via a video call from France. Her miniature world is literally shaped by laughter.

The nine-minute clip has different kinds of laughs including cackles, shorties, snorts, snickers, bellylaughs, a chorus of hysterics and even 'laughter' of animals and birds.

For this project, Anais wanted a collection of laughs from different parts of the world. From France she collected over 30 laughs including those of animals from forests and the countryside. "You can argue if the animals were actually laughing. But it is more of our interpretation," she says. Due to travel restrictions, she could not complete the task in person and asked pe-

ople to send her recordings of laughter. She got 70 laughs from other parts of the world, including Chennai, Bengaluru, Pune, Durgapur and New Delhi. "We classified this collection according to emotions of colours" – she colour-coded the laughs to make a digital mural – "We also wrote a story from all the laughs we received."

Then, with sound artist Floriane Pochone, Anais created a soundscape of laughter. "It was as if we were playing with musical notes but the notes were made of laughter," she explains. "We are planning to add more laughter." She also intends to display a physical installation of her work, wherein the audience can record their laughter and see how it changes the topography.

Register for Anais Tondeur's online workshop for free at eventbrite.com

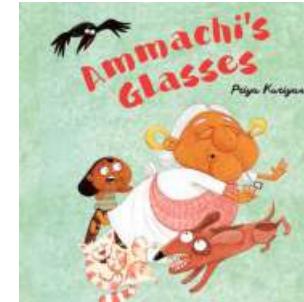
CM YK



A page from *Ammachi's Glasses*, the book cover, and an illustration from *Summer's Children*

More than words

If you haven't tried a wordless picture book yet, now is a good time to leave behind the politics of language and explore



My holiday edit

1. An Indian Beach: By Day and Night, Joëlle Jolivet

Using a limited colour palette, the book captures a beach during the day and at night in marvellous detail.

2. Ammachi's Sari, Nivedita Subramanian

Through varied textures of cloth, the story explores the playful relationship between a girl and her grandmother, and introduces the concept of upcycling.

3. Journey, Aaron Becker

A lonely girl sets off on an incredible adventure in this exquisite book. Rooted in the power of imagination, this is perfect lockdown reading.

4. Summer's Children, Anpu Varkey

Filled with a sense of wonder and languor, this is a depiction of summer, as seen through the eyes of two children.

5. Ikrus First Day of School, Sunaina Coelho

A heartwarming story of a young boy's experience of entering a school for the first time.



YAMINI VIJAYAN

I once stumbled on two wide-eyed children poring over a picture book in their classroom. While they were discovering the details of the story together, one was narrating it to the other in her own words. I knew they couldn't read yet, which made it all the more fascinating to watch them understand the story through the illustrations alone. They were straying from the original plot, which is exactly why I remember it 11 years later: the vivid memory of them making the story their own, unfettered.

As someone who has worked with children's books for over a decade, I've met many parents and teachers who seem mildly baffled with wordless books. "No words?" they ask. With a steady and growing emphasis on teaching reading, we tend to neglect the vast potential of illustrations in developing a child's understanding of the world. Wordless books offer infinite possibilities for children to interpret stories and decode images. In recent years though, the popularity of *Ammachi's Glasses*, a wordless book by Priya Kuriyan, has been encouraging.

The book captures the hilarious events that occur when an old woman is unable to find her glasses one morning, and any text would have been a distraction to its many clever details.

"The feeling that a picture evokes is immediate, that gut impact, the pleasure. Sometimes, words can't create that impact," says Kuriyan.

Beyond language

This makes me think of David Wiesner's almost-wordless book, *Tuesday*, in which frogs fly through the sky and float through houses in the dead of the night. Strange and mysterious, it's easy to imagine how a fantastical book like this can shape a child's view of the world. Earlier this year, Canato Jimo won an award for his book, *Snip*, at the Publishing Next Industry Awards under the best children's book category (ages 0-8). Set in Nagaland, it follows two mischievous siblings as they play with a pair of scissors. *Snip* is special not only because of how relatable it is, but also because of how accessible it is without the constraints of a language.

Stormy by Guojing and Time Flies by

Eric Rohmann also work as a reminder of how vital it is to give illustrators more opportunities and freedom to tell their own stories. Kuriyan, who has won multiple awards for her art, has collaborated with numerous authors over the years. So what was it like to create a narrative entirely on her own, and be both the author and illustrator? "It feels more personal because you can choose the context and take inspiration from characters that you're familiar with in real life," she says, adding, "You can revisit things you like, things you find funny, and even genres. You can put inside jokes. It's your voice, it's who you are."

Freedom for illustrators

As one of the editors who worked on *Snip* and a guest editor for *Ikrus First Day of School*, I know that telling a compelling story using illustrations alone is no easy feat. It requires illustrators to have a very nuanced understanding of sequential visual narratives. "In a wordless book, building the relationship between each frame has to be cohesive. And it's important to have a sense of movement to engage the reader," says Jimo, an art director at Pratham Books.

This dynamism that Jimo suggests runs through 1986 *A Visit to the City Market* by Manjula Padmanabhan. You are briefly transported to the bustling streets of the market, past the mangoes and watermelons, chickens, and buckets of flowers. Priya Krishnan, a senior editor at Tulika Books, says, "Wordless picture books can cross borders more easily, leaving behind the politics of language. They then become windows to different cultures." But somehow, there seems to be this notion that wordless books are meant only for children who aren't able to read fluently. You only have to look at Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (an immigrant's experience) and Peter Van Den Ende's *The Wanderer* (a paper boat's adventure) to know this is untrue.

Wordless books – or perhaps we need to start referring to them as word-free books – are for anyone who enjoys visual storytelling. In a world that is fixed on a child's ability to decipher the written word, I hope that wordfree books find more of an audience.

CM YK

Jaishankar meets U.S. NSA, private sector

Both sides hold discussions on global and regional issues, welcome cooperation in fighting COVID-19

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar arrived in Washington DC on Wednesday for two apparently hectic days which were packed with meetings with officials, including National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai, lawmakers, and the private sector. Earlier in the week, speaking from New York City, the Minister characterised the India-U.S. relationship as one of the major relationships in the world.

Mr. Jaishankar, who is on his first visit to the U.S. during the Biden administration, met with Mr. Sullivan on Thursday. Both sides indicated that there was a discussion on regional (Indo-Pacific) or global issues, with Mr. Jaishankar specifying, via a tweet, that Afghanistan came up.

"Conveyed appreciation for US solidarity in addressing the Covid challenge. India-US vaccine partnership can make a real difference," the tweet said.

The U.S. readout said Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Sullivan "welcomed" cooperation that has resulted in the delivery of over \$500 million in



Stepping up ties: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during a meeting with USTR Katherine Tai in Washington. ■ PTI

relief materials (state, federal and private sector sources) from the U.S. to India.

"They agreed that people-to-people ties and shared values are the foundation of the U.S.-India strategic partnership that is helping to end the pandemic, supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific, and providing global leadership on climate change," it said.

The Hindu had reported that procuring vaccines and sorting out issues around this, such as early Emergency Use Authorisation and liability are central to Mr. Jaishankar's trip, though officials have been keen to stress that this is not the focus of the visit and that discussions would cover a more comprehensive list of topics pertinent to the strategic ties between the two countries.

Economic recovery

Mr. Jaishankar said he had "good discussions" with Ms. Tai, who recently announced that the Biden administration would support an India-South Africa initiative at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to waive intellectual property protections for COVID-19 vaccines.

"Our trade, technology & business cooperation are at the core of our strategic partnership. Enhancing them is vital to post-Covid economic recovery. Welcomed her positive stance on IPR issues & support for efficient & robust supply chains," Mr. Jaishankar said on Twitter.

kar said on Twitter.

Mr. Jaishankar had breakfast and lunch meetings on Thursday organised by advocacy and industry groups, the U.S. India Business Council (USIBC) and the U.S. India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).

The USIBC meeting included a discussion on how the private sector, working via a consortium of 40 companies called the 'Global Task Force for Pandemic Response', could "support India's health infrastructure and further ways to continue relief efforts," said the group.

Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson - both companies that manufacture COVID-19 vaccines of interest to India - are part of the Task Force. The consortium's ongoing efforts include the deployment of 1,000 ventilators and 10,000 oxygen concentrators to India (35,000 of which are scheduled for delivery by June-end), the group said.

Representatives of pharmaceutical firm Abbot and courier and shipping firm FedEx were among the companies present at the USISPF meeting, industry sources told The Hindu.

Mr. Jaishankar also spoke on the phone with the (De-

mocratic) Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Gregory Meeks and its ranking member (Republican) Michael McCaul. He also had a phone call with House India Co-Chairs Steve Chabot (Republican).

Brad Sherman, the other co-chair, was among those present at a dinner for Mr. Jaishankar on Wednesday, at the house of Indian Ambassador Tarun Singh Sandhu. Others present there, according to U.S. official sources, included Senators Tim Kaine, Michael Bennet. Also present was Jon Ossoff, the new Senator from Georgia, a battleground state where the Indian American vote is potentially crucial.

On Friday, the Minister is scheduled to meet with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Mr. Jaishankar met with officials again on Thursday evening. These included Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines and officials from the Departments of State, Energy, Treasury, Commerce, Homeland Security, and the National Science Foundation, according to announcements made by government Ministers said the China-backed \$1.4 billion-

Port City, pitted as a financial hub, had the potential to create 83,000 jobs and bring in up to \$15 billion in investments.

As India watches keenly, Sri Lanka seeks FDI in Port City

Colombo describes it as a 'fully Sri Lankan project'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
SUHASINI HAIDAR
COLOMBO/NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka on Friday invited international investment into the Colombo Port City that it described as a "fully Sri Lankan project", while official sources in New Delhi said they were "keeping a close eye" on the project and its "security implications".

"If it is only a commercial venture then that is their [Sri Lanka's] choice... We will continue to engage Sri Lanka, while watching our national interest," said a government source in New Delhi, awaiting the final version of the Bill whose blueprint the Sri Lankan Parliament's Speaker signed on Thursday. The 'Colombo Port City Economic Commission Act' is yet to be made public.

Addressing concerns around the recently passed legislation on laws governing the Colombo Port City, which critics fear might be a "Chinese enclave" in the Sri Lankan capital, a team of government Ministers said the China-backed \$1.4 billion-Port City, pitted as a financial hub, had the potential to create 83,000 jobs and bring in up to \$15 billion in investments.

to "transparency, openness, and financial responsibility". "No offshore havens...it [the Port City] should respect the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. And respect international norms," the source said, requesting not to be named.

Apart from the high geopolitical stakes in the big-ticket investment project in the strategically located island nation, the Colombo Port City has sparked a raging debate within the country over its China policy. Instances of official signage excluding Tamil, an official language, while including Mandarin, drew wide criticism from the public.

China has been among the top lenders to Sri Lanka, especially since the pandemic struck, offering a \$1 billion in loan and a nearly-\$1.5 billion currency swap facility.

Earlier this week, Sri Lanka's Cabinet awarded a project to build an elevated highway in the capital's suburbs - estimated cost \$1 billion - to the State-owned China Harbour Engineering Corporation (CHEC), on a Build-operate-transfer basis, for 15 years.

Germany apologises for genocide in Namibia

Herero paramount chief slams deal

REUTERS
BERLIN

Germany apologised on Friday for its role in the slaughter of Herero and Nama tribespeople in Namibia more than a century ago and officially described the massacre as genocide for the first time, as it agreed to fund projects in the region.

Namibia's President Hage Geingob welcomed the "historic" move, but Herero paramount chief Vekuii Rukoro dismissed a deal agreed by the two governments as "an insult" because it did not include payment of reparations.

Instead, Germany will fund \$1.3 billion of reconstruction and development projects in Namibia, which German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said would directly benefit the genocide-affected communities.

Jimmy Lai gets 14-month prison term

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG

Hong Kong media tycoon and outspoken pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai was sentenced to more jail time on Friday over his role in an anti-government protest in 2019.

Mr. Lai and nine others were charged with incitement to take part in an unauthorized assembly. Mr. Lai, 73, was sentenced to 14 months in prison.

Man attacks 3 French police officers, shot dead

Assailant was on terrorist watchlist

REUTERS
PARIS

A "known radical" suspect of carrying out a knife attack in France died from injuries sustained in a shootout with police on Friday, hours after he badly wounded a female officer in the latest violence directed at police in recent months.

Eighty officers were dispatched to pursue him and two gendarmes were wounded during an exchange of fire.

No motive for the stabbing has emerged, but the attacker was "a known radical and suffering from a very serious psychiatric illness"

been on the run after the attack in La Chapelle-sur-Erdre near the western city of Nantes.

Eighty officers were dispatched to pursue him and two gendarmes were wounded during an exchange of fire.

No motive for the stabbing has emerged, but the attacker was "a known radical and suffering from a very serious psychiatric illness"

Amid showdown with EU, Lukashenko seeks Russia's help

Belarusian President is scheduled to meet Putin in Sochi

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW

Belarus' authoritarian leader will discuss closer economic ties with Russia on Friday, as he seeks support from his main backer amid a bruising showdown with the EU over the forced diversion of a passenger jet to arrest a dissident journalist.

Belarusian President

Alexander Lukashenko has found himself increasingly isolated after 26-year-old journalist Raman Pratasevich was arrested after his flight was forced to land in Minsk.

EU leaders denounced it as a hijacking and piracy and responded by barring Belarusian carriers from the bloc's airspace and airports

and advising European airlines to skirt Belarus. The bloc's Foreign Ministers sketched out tougher sanctions on Thursday to target the country's lucrative potash industry and other sectors.

Mr. Lukashenko and President Vladimir Putin are set to meet on Friday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

France and the Rwandan genocide

In Kigali, President Emmanuel Macron asked Rwandans for 'forgiveness'

STANLEY JOHNY

French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday asked for forgiveness for his country's role in the 1994 Rwandan massacre in which about 8,00,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis, were killed.

Speaking at the genocide memorial in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, Mr. Macron said France chose "silence over examination of the truth" for too long, but stopped short of issuing an apology.

Close ties

France, which enjoyed close ties with Rwanda's Hutu-led government of President Juvenal Habyarimana, has long been criticised for its role in the killings of the Tutsi minorities in the months of April to June 1994. In May 2019, President Macron, promising a new beginning with Rwanda, set up a 15-member expert committee to investigate his country's role in the genocide.

The committee, which had access to official files and secret documents, submitted its findings to the government in March, which stated that France, which was then ruled by President François Mitterrand, bore "heavy and overwhelming responsibilities" for being "blind" to the events that led to the killings. The report blamed Mitterrand for a "failure" of policy towards Rwanda in 1994. Rwanda had commissioned a separate inquiry, which concluded in a report submitted to the Cabinet in April that France "enabled" the genocide.

EXPLAINER

Rwanda through the Tutsi monarchy. Tutsis were appointed as local administrative chiefs and the ethnic minority enjoyed relatively better educational and employment opportunities, which led to widespread resentment among the majority Hutus. In 1959, Rwanda saw violent riots led by Hutus in which some 20,000 Tutsis were killed and many

President, grew in strength and posed a serious challenge to the regime of President Habyarimana, who was backed by France and had defence ties with Israel. In 1993, Habyarimana, who rose to power in 1973, was forced to sign a peace agreement (Arusha Accords) with the RPF. This led to resentment among Hutu militias, backed by the government, towards local Tutsi population, who were accused of collaborators of the RPF.

On April 6, 1994, a Falcon 50 jet carrying Habyarimana and his Burundi counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down near Kigali International Airport. The Hutu-led government blamed the RPF for the attack on the presidential jet. The military and Hutu militias, mainly Interahamwe, unleashed violence against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Mr. Kagame has denied any involvement in shooting down the plane. The RPF says Hutu extremists ordered the attack to use it as an excuse for the genocide (which they were preparing for long before the plane downing) as well as to capture power.

The killings were a pre-planned extermination campaign. The militias, with support from the government, launched a premeditated violent campaign on April 7, aimed at eliminating the en-

tire Tutsi communities. Interahamwe militants went to cities and villages across the country, hunting down Tutsis, and asking Hutus to join the campaign, killing at a pace of 8,000 people a day. The Hutus who opposed the killings were also targeted. The militias used a radio station to coordinate the killings. Bodies were dumped in the Nyabarongo River. France, which had backed the Hutu government, did nothing to stop the massacre. Thousands were slaughtered in churches where they sought refuge. The Catholic Church had deep ties with the ruling Hutu elites - Archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva was a member of the ruling party's central committee. Many priests were involved in the killings. In a visit to Rwanda in 2017, Pope Francis asked for forgiveness for the Church's role in the killings. The violence continued for three months.

How did it end?
The killings came to an end after the RPF, under Mr. Kagame's command, captured Kigali and toppled the Hutu regime. While the RPF put an end to the Hutu campaign to exterminate Tutsis, the rebels were also accused of carrying out revenge killings during the civil war. When it was evident that the RPF was winning, an estimated 2 million Hutus fled Rwanda, mainly to the neighbouring Zaire (the Democratic Republic of Congo), where Hutu militias are still operating from. The RPF initially went about establishing a multi-ethnic government with Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, being the President. Mr. Kagame, a Tutsi, was his deputy. In 2000, Mr. Kagame assumed the Presidency and continues to be in power till today.

What led to the killings?
The crisis escalated in the 1990s when the RPF, led by Paul Kagame, the current



Grim reminder: The skulls and bones of people, slaughtered at a church where they sought refugee, at an ossuary. ■ AP/FILE

Assad re-elected with 95% of votes: official

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DAMASCUS

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has been re-elected with 95.1% of the votes cast, the Parliament Speaker announced on Thursday.



Bashar al-Assad

The two other presidential candidates, former Minister Abdallah Salloum and Abdallah and Mahmud Merhi, a member of the so-called "tolerated opposition", received 1.5% and 3.3% of the vote respectively, according to the official results of Wednesday's election.

In a country ravaged by war since 2011, 14.2 million people went to the polls, a turnout rate of 76.64%, according to Parliament Speaker Hammoud Sabbagh.

The election went ahead in the two-thirds of the country controlled by the government, and in some Syrian Embassy overseas.

It was the second presidential election in the country since the start of the war which has cost over 3,88,000 lives.

Mr. Assad has dismissed Western accusations that Wednesday's vote was neither "free nor fair".

Dated: 29-05-2021 HPKVN/1(614)/2021 (Procurement) CORRIGENDUM-I
In view of the disruption due to COVID-19 Pandemic, The last date for submission of bids in respect of Contract Package (N C B) titled "HPKVN/CLC/Furniture/01: Supply of the Furniture and related items for Rural Livelihood Centers (RLC's), City Livelihood Centers (CLC's) and Model Career Centers (MCC) in Himachal Pradesh" fixed for 29-05-2021 at 12:30 IST vide advertisement HPKVN/1(614)/2021 (Procurement) dated 29-04-2021 is hereby extended upto 15-06-2021 (12:30 IST). Other terms and conditions of the package shall remain same.

Sd/- Managing Director, HPKVN

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MEERA SRINIVASAN
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COLOMBO/NEW DELHI

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On

MARKET WATCH

	28-05-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51,423	-0.60
US Dollar	72.45	-0.21
Gold	47,900	-0.65
Brent oil	69.74	-1.22

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE	
Adani Ports	776.15	+2.75	
Asian Paints	2940.70	-8.65	
Axisc Bank	739.85	-10.50	
Bajaj Auto	4199.50	-46.60	
Bajaj Finserv	11713.20	-175.60	
Bajaj Finance	5610.75	-71.45	
Bharti Airtel	523.60	3.80	
BPCL	471.50	3.65	
Britannia Ind	3423.45	8.80	
Cipla	934.35	-8.00	
Coal India	146.90	2.35	
Divis Lab	4120.25	41.05	
Dr Reddys Lab	5194.55	-74.30	
Eicher Motors	2638.45	34.40	
Grasim Ind	1465.45	48.30	
HCL Tech	942.55	0.15	
HDPC	2541.35	32.50	
HDPC Bank	1503.45	20.80	
HDPC Life	668.95	4.90	
Hero MotoCorp	2991.55	0.25	
Hindustan	387.75	1.90	
Hind Unilever	2321.70	-4.70	
ICICI Bank	643.05	-9.20	
IndusInd Bank	1019.35	12.50	
Infosys	1405.05	2.80	
Indian Oil Corp	109.85	-0.40	
ITC	212.90	1.75	
JSW Steel	689.80	7.95	
Kotak Bank	1800.75	23.50	
L&T	1478.10	-4.75	
M&M	845.85	17.25	
Maruti Suzuki	6970.00	-1.10	
Nestle India Ltd.	17509.40	-237.30	
NTPC	108.95	-1.35	
ONGC	112.35	0.50	
PowerGrid Corp	225.45	-2.85	
Reliance Ind	2094.80	118.70	
SBI Life	976.85	-5.25	
State Bank	422.05	-3.15	
Shree Cement	27655.10	-410.95	
Sun Pharma	669.75	-29.75	
Tata Consumer	Products Ltd.	654.95	6.40
Tata Motors	318.75	0.15	
Tata Steel	1103.50	6.85	
TCS	3143.60	-36.40	
Tech Mahindra	1026.25	6.45	
Titan	1577.00	-17.25	
UltraTech Cement	6598.50	-74.75	
UPL	811.70	-8.05	
Wipro	538.70	-2.20	

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.24	72.56
Euro	87.79	88.18
British Pound	102.25	102.71
Japanese Yen (100)	65.64	65.94
Chinese Yuan	11.34	11.39
Swiss Franc	80.10	80.46
Singapore Dollar	54.51	54.76
Canadian Dollar	59.63	59.90
Malaysian Ringgit	17.47	17.57

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Canara Bank to raise ₹9,000 cr. in equity, debt

BENGALURU
Canara Bank on Friday said it would raise ₹9,000 crore through equity and debt in FY22. The board of directors had approved to raise equity share capital up to ₹2,500 crore (inclusive of premium) by way of Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) while the balance ₹6,500 crore would be raised through debt instruments, the bank said in a statement.

RBI fines HDFC Bank for flouting auto-loan norms

MUMBAI
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹10 crore on private lender HDFC Bank Ltd. for contravention of provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. After considering the bank's reply to the show-cause notice concerning alleged irregularities in its auto loan portfolio, the RBI said it came to the conclusion that the action warranted an imposition of penalty.

HCL to spend ₹100 cr. to vaccinate staff, families

NEW DELHI
HCL Group said it is planning to vaccinate 3.5 lakh staff and their families in India with the administration of the first dose before June 30. It is investing more than ₹100 crore to ensure free vaccination for employees, their families and third-party vendors. "HCL plans to have administered approximately 7 lakh (2 doses per person) by the end of the drive," said the company in a statement.

Sun gets rights to AstraZeneca's diabetes drug

NEW DELHI
Sun Pharma said it has acquired the rights to trademarks of diabetes drug Dapagliflozin under brands Oxa, Oramet and Oxdaduo in India from AstraZeneca Pharma India's parent firm. "Sun Pharma has now acquired the rights to trademarks Oxa, Oramet and Oxdaduo in India from AstraZeneca AB, Sweden, with effect from May 28," it said in a regulatory filing.

COVID toll on economy deepens: poll

Respondents in Reuters survey say jobs crisis may worsen; on average see full-year growth at 9.8%

REUTERS

BENGALURU

India's economic outlook has weakened again, albeit slightly, with worst-case scenario forecasts suggesting the toll from the COVID-19 pandemic could be much deeper, stoking fears the job crisis may worsen over the coming year, a Reuters poll found.

Renewed restrictions to curb the current wave have stalled economic activity, leaving many millions out of work and pushing economists – who have broadly been bullish – to downgrade their views for the second time since early April.

The May 20-27 poll showed the outlook for the current quarter was lowered to 21.6% annually, and to 9.8% on average for this fiscal year, down from 23% and 10.4% respectively a month



Jab key: Until a large share of the population is vaccinated a risk of new waves and lockdowns remains. ■ S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

ago. The economy was then forecast to grow 6.7% next fiscal year, compared to 6.5% predicted previously.

While the consensus pointed to healthy growth figures later this year, all 29 economists, in response to

an additional question, warned the outlook was either "weak and prone to further downgrades" or "fragile, with a limited downside".

"Recovery in India was strong in the months before the second wave," said Wou-

ter van Eijkelenburg, an economist at Rabobank. "This leads us to believe the recovery can rebound quickly after the number of new infections have come down. But vaccination implementation needs to pick up pace in order to have an effect."

Sword of Damocles'

"Therefore new surges of the virus hang above recovery like the sword of Damocles. Until a large share of the population is vaccinated there remains this downside risk of new waves and subsequent lockdowns hampering the recovery," he added.

Underscoring concerns that a slow vaccine rollout may make a bigger dent in the economy, the consensus showed in a worst-case scenario the economy would average just 6.8% growth this fiscal year after its deepest

ever recession last year.

"Let's hope the situation doesn't go there," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at Capital Economics. "If it does and we do have another wave ... after this one, maybe the government will learn some lessons – that it is better to lock down the economy sooner, rather than later. The threat of further waves will hang over the economic outlook so long as India's vaccination progress remains lacklustre," he added.

"There is going to be a significant demand shock to the economy, some of that could be permanent demand destruction, thereby pushing more out of the jobs market and keeping the unemployment rate elevated over the coming year," said Prakash Sakpal, senior Asia economist at ING.

M&M turns ₹163 cr. net, plans ₹17,000-cr. outlay

Board approves dividend of ₹8.75

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M), together with its wholly owned subsidiary Mahindra Vehicle Manufacturers Ltd., reported net profit of ₹163 crore for the quarter ended March 31, compared with a net loss of ₹3,255 crore a year earlier.

M&M is also planning to deploy ₹17,000 crore over the next three years, including in capital expenditure on new models and investments in group companies besides its auto and farm sector businesses, Mahindra Group MD and CEO Anish Shah said in a media call on Friday.

Unadjusted net profit for the quarter stood at ₹1,002 crore as the company made an exceptional loss of ₹839 crore due to impairment

(With PTI inputs)
provisions for certain long-term assets and other exposures, the company said in a regulatory filing. Revenue rose 48% to ₹13,338 crore.

For the financial year, net profit rose 25% to ₹923 crore. Revenue declined 1% to ₹44,574 crore. The board approved a dividend of ₹8.75 per share, which is 3.7 times the previous year's dividend.

Paytm board likely to discuss IPO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The board of One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, is expected to deliberate on plans to go public with an initial public offering (IPO) worth \$3 billion, at its meeting on Friday evening, sources said.

The company, which operates the digital payments platform and is backed by Japanese conglomerate SoftBank and China's Alibaba, however, declined to comment on the matter.

Paytm's competitors in the country's rapidly expanding digital payments space include Google Pay and Walmart-owned PhonePe.

Sundaram Finance Q4 net rises 60%, NPAs decline

COVID wave may delay recovery to Jan.-March: DMD Raju

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Sundaram Finance Ltd. reported a 60% rise in standalone net profit for the quarter ended March 31 (Q4) to ₹209 crore. Disbursements climbed 13% to ₹3,305 crore.

For FY21, the company saw net profit grow to ₹809 crore, from ₹724 crore in the previous year. Disbursements declined to ₹1,174 crore (₹15,175 crore).

This was primarily due to the COVID-led lockdown and associated disruptions to the overall economy in Q1 and Q2 of FY21, and the adverse impact to the automotive sector, said Rajiv Lochan, managing director.

Assets under management grew 3% to ₹30,882 crore as on March 31.

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) fell to 2.28% from 2.77%. The board recom-



Rajiv Lochan

mended a final dividend of ₹6 per share.

Deputy MD A.N. Raju said the pandemic was spurring some small operators of trucks to move across segments. "Some who operated in the large commercial vehicles (CVs) space have moved into the light CV segment."

"Four weeks back, we had hoped... for a recovery in the CV sector by the second half of this year. Wave two has pushed recovery back by about three months," he said. "We expect tippers to remain strong this year. Overall, we are confident of a recovery in the fourth quarter of this year."

Net interest income in-

CUB turns ₹11.2 cr. net as provisions fall

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

City Union Bank (CUB) reported standalone net profit stood at ₹11.18 crore for the fourth quarter ended March, against a net loss of ₹5.29 crore in the year-earlier period on account of lower provisioning.

Provisions and contingencies declined to ₹239 crore from ₹450 crore. Total income contracted to ₹1,121 crore from ₹1,221 crore, it said.

Total business grew to ₹81,558 crore from ₹75,408 crore. Deposits rose 9% and advances 7%.

Gross non-performing assets rose to 5.11% from 4.09%. Net NPAs rose to 2.97% from 2.20%. Provision coverage ratio stood at 64%. Net interest income rose to ₹1,830 crore.

It declared an interim dividend of ₹0.30 per share.



Padmaja Chunduru

creased 1% to ₹3,334 crore.

Gross non-performing assets dropped to 9.85% (11.39%) and net NPAs to 3.37% (4.19%).

Total deposits grew 10% and advances by 6% respectively. "Going forward, the emphasis would be on transformation in digital, operations and HR front," she said. The bank declared a dividend of ₹2 per share for FY21.

Karur Vysya Bank Q4 net jumps 25%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Private sector lender Karur Vysya Bank Ltd. reported a 24.69% increase in standalone net profit for the fourth quarter ended March to ₹104.37 crore.

Total income contracted to ₹1,566 crore from ₹

A joint winner in case of a draw or tie

Reserve Day allocated for India-NZ clash to make up for any lost time during the regular days

WTC FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI
India and New Zealand will be adjudged the joint winner of the inaugural World Test Championship if their final clash in Southampton ends in a draw or tie, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday.

According to the playing conditions unveiled by the global body, "a draw or a tie will see both teams crowned as joint winners..."

The ICC has also allocated a Reserve Day to make up for any lost time during the regular days of the Final, scheduled to be played from 18 to 22 June, with 23 June set aside as the Reserve Day.

The Reserve Day has been scheduled to ensure five full days of play, and it will only be used if lost playing time cannot be recovered through the normal provisions for each day. "There will be no additional day's play if a pos-



Much at stake: Though a stalemate would make their teams champions, Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson would strive to lead India and New Zealand to victory in the inaugural WTC final. • AFP

itive result is not achieved after five full days of play and the match will be declared a draw in such a scenario," the ICC stated. In the event of

time being lost during the match, the ICC match referee will regularly update the teams and media about the way in which the Reserve

Day may be used. While India plays at home with SG Test cricket ball and New Zealand uses Kookaburra at home, the final will be played

India women get first dose of vaccine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

All members of the UK-bound Indian women's cricket team have been administered the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine ahead of their upcoming away series against England beginning on June 16.

The Indian team, which is currently in quarantine in Mumbai, will begin its UK tour with a one-off Test in Bristol from June 16. It will be followed by two T20Is on July 9 and 11 in Northampton and three ODIs beginning June 27.

"I couldn't sleep for almost 8-9 days. Since I couldn't sleep, it was really stressful for me. I was playing matches without getting any sleep. And since I found it really taxing, I had to quit IPL and go home midway."

Couldn't sleep for 8-9 days during IPL, says Ashwin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Ravichandran Ashwin had "sleepless nights" inside the IPL bio-bubble when most of his family members were suffering from COVID-19 and said he "had to" leave the tournament midway to help his close ones fight the deadly virus.

Ashwin is now back in another bubble, this time with the Indian team which leaves for a 104-day UK trip on June 2.

"I couldn't sleep for almost 8-9 days. Since I couldn't sleep, it was really stressful for me. I was playing matches without getting any sleep. And since I found it really taxing, I had to quit IPL and go home midway."

"In fact, when I left around at that time, I had thoughts on whether I will



R. Ashwin. • SPORTSPICS/IPL

be able to play cricket thereafter.

"But still, I did what was required at that point of time," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

The IPL was eventually suspended after multiple cases were found in its bio-bubble.

Consolation win for SL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

DHAKA

Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera's career-best five for 16 helped Sri Lanka thrashed Bangladesh by 97 runs to clinch a consolation victory in the third One-Day International on Friday. The host won the series 2-1.

Electing to bat, skipper Kusal Perera hit 120 (122b, 11x4, 1x6) to guide Sri Lanka to 286 for six, a total the visitors defended by bowling out Bangladesh for 189 in 42.3 overs.

Mahmudullah topped with 53.

The scores:

Sri Lanka 286/6 in 50 overs (Danushka Gunathilaka 39, Kusal Perera 120, Dhananjaya de Silva 55 n.o., Taskin Ahmed 4/46) bt Bangladesh 189 in 42.3 overs (Mahmudullah 53, Mosaddek Hossain 51, Dushmantha Chameera 5/16). MoM: Chameera; Toss: Sri Lanka.

with Grade 1 Dukes balls.

The final will also feature the implementation of three changes to international playing conditions, which were brought into effect with the ongoing World Cup Super League series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka:

Short runs: The Third Umpire will automatically review any call of a 'short run' by the on-field umpire and communicate the decision prior to the next ball being bowled.

Player Reviews: The fielding captain or the dismissed batsman will be able to confirm with the umpire whether a genuine attempt has been made to play the ball prior to deciding whether to initiate a review for LBW.

DRS Reviews – For LBW reviews, the height margin of the wicket zone has been lifted to the top of the stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps for both height and width.

BCCI SGM to discuss IPL, T20 WC

To propose two options to the ICC for the world event

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

Representatives of each of the 38 full members of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)'s will, on Saturday, explore the options in resuming the suspended Indian Premier League (IPL) and the venues for the T20 World Cup in a virtual Special General Meeting (SGM).

With the COVID-19 breaching the IPL bio-security bubble, the IPL was suspended with 31 matches remaining in the tournament. It has led to doubts over India's ability to host the T20 World Cup in October-November.

With the International Cricket Council (ICC) scheduled to discuss the T20 World Cup venues, the BCCI hierarchy is hoping to get its members on board in case the tournament cannot be played in India.

Venues shortlisted

Despite earmarking the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as an alternate venue for the

World Cup, the BCCI apex council last month shortlisted nine venues for the marquee event.

The Hindu understands that the members will be presented with two options that the BCCI intends to propose to the ICC on June 1.

The first is to host the tournament in the "west zone corridor" with Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad as venues to minimise air travel.

However, with England and Australia boards unlikely to make players available at the cost of their respective national teams' build-up for the T20 World Cup, it will be interesting if the September window gets a go-ahead on Saturday.

If IPL has to be played without Australia and England cricketers anyway, wouldn't it be better to schedule it after T20 World Cup?" queried another State association official. "All these issues will be discussed but I doubt if there will be any concrete decision considering the COVID-19 dynamics and the BCCI politics."

Milkha and his wife stable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH

Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh and his wife Nirmal Kaur continued on the road to recovery, leaving their golfer son Jeev Milkha Singh hopeful of getting them discharged in the coming days.

Milkha and his wife, who led the Indian women's volleyball team, are currently undergoing treatment at Fortis hospital in Mohali, which, in a fresh update, said that they are stable and symptoms are on a downward trend.

In its latest update about the condition of the couple, the hospital said both were stable.

"Mrs. and Mr. Milkha Singh are stable and their symptoms are on a downward trend. Mr. Milkha's appetite has also improved," the hospital said in its bulletin.

Panghal, Thapa inch closer to title

ASIAN BOXING

SPORTS BUREAU

DUBAI

Amit Panghal (52kg) and Shiva Thapa (64kg) gave impressive performances to make it to the finals of the Asian boxing championships here on Friday.

Defending champion Panghal, who had beaten Saken Bibossov in the World championships semifinals, again showed his supremacy over the Kazakh to record a 5-0 victory. Thapa landed some accurate combinations to get the better of top seed Bakhodur Usmonov 4-0.

Three women in final

Three Indian women, Lalbuatsihai (64kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) and Anupama (+81kg), had reached the finals on Thursday night.

The result of the 54kg semifinal contest between Sakshi Chaudhary and Dina Zholaman was overturned following Kazakhstan's ap-



On the attack: Amit Panghal, left, asserted his supremacy over Saken Bibossov to stay on course to retain his title.

peal to review the bout.

The results (semifinals): Men:

52kg: Amit Panghal bt Saken Bibossov 5-0; 60kg: Varinder Singh lost to Daniyal Shahbakh (IR) 3-2; 75kg: Pooja Rani w.o. Munkhbat Myagmarjargal (Uzb) 3-2; 81kg: Shiva Thapa bt Bakhodur Usmonov (Tjk) 4-0.

Thursday: Women: 64kg: Lal-

buatsihai bt Noura Almutairi (Kuw) ABD; 69kg: Lovlina Borgohain lost to Navbakhor Khamidova (Uzb) 3-2; 75kg: Pooja Rani w.o. Munkhbat Myagmarjargal (Uzb) 3-2; 81kg: Sawetee lost to Fariza Sholtay (Kaz) 4-1; +81kg: Anupama bt Mokhira Abdullaeva (Uzb) 4-1.

Belgium should be everyone's top bet

Coach Martinez has an impressive array of players who are at the top of their game

EURO 2020

JUNE 11-JULY 12

REUTERS

Belgium has its best chance to win its first major trophy, and underline a long-standing status as the top team in the FIFA rankings, with the European Championship set to run from June 11 to July 12.

An impressive array of talented players, many at their peak, are available to coach Roberto Martinez as Belgium is expected to ease past Russia, Denmark and Finland in Group B and become the team to avoid in the knockouts.

Kevin De Bruyne, Eden Hazard and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois are world stars while Romelu Lukaku's impressive scoring form this season helped Inter Milan become Italian champion and extended his record as Belgium's top marksman to 59 goals.

The right mix

The rest of the team is populated with a mix of vast experience and exciting, emerging talent.

Captain Jan Vertonghen, 34, in defence has 126 caps, midfielder Axel Witsel 110 and Napoli forward Dries Mertens 96 while 24-year-old Youri Tielemans, who scored Leicester City's FA Cup final winner, is cast as the team's future talisman.

But despite his heroics at club level this term, Tielemans is not guaranteed to start for Belgium such is competition for places in a polished outfit that won all 10 games in its Euro 2020



qualifiers, scoring 40 goals – more than any other country.

Extra motivation

There is also the extra motivation for the Belgians of making up for their bitter loss to France in the World Cup

semifinals three years ago when they felt they let a chance for glory slip.

Far from certain
But Martinez has warned that winning the Euros is far from certain.

"It's a bit of a bizarre tour-

nament because we as the top seeds in our group have no protection.

"It has never happened in the history of the Euros, or the World Cup for that matter, that we play against two home teams. Most strange," he added.

Media made us what we are: Nadal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

Rafael Nadal said on Friday that without the media "we will not be the athletes that we are today" as Naomi Osaka became increasingly isolated over her decision to boycott all French Open press commitments.

Nadal, the 13-time French Open champion, said that even though he respected Osaka's decision, media coverage has driven the success of the sport.

"I understand her, but for me, without the press, without the people who are writing the news and achievements that we are having around the world probably we will not be the athletes that we are today," said Nadal, a 20-time Major winner. "We won't have the recognition that we have around the world, and we will not be that popular."

Djokovic reaches Belgrade final

Overcomes a second-set blip to reach his third final of the year

TENNIS ROUND-UP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BELGRADE

Rafael Nadal eased into the final of the ATP tournament in Belgrade on Friday despite losing his form in the second set, beating Slovakia's Andrej Martin as he steps up his preparations for Roland Garros.

Nadal, the World No. 1 saw off his 119th-ranked opponent 6-1, 4-6, 6-0.

It will be the Serbian's third final of the year after his Australian Open triumph and his final loss to Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open last week, but his first on home soil since 2011.

"I'm super excited to play in front of a Serbian crowd. This is my home town. I'm always excited, but also nervous, coming out on the court and playing in front of my home crowd," Djokovic said.

"It's a very unique feeling.



Digging deep: Marco Cecchinato beat Jaume

TV PICKS

Champions League (final):
Sony Ten 2 & 3 (SD & HD),
12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

IN BRIEF



It's official: Allegri replaces Pirlo

TURIN
Massimiliano Allegri returned to Juventus on Friday, taking over as coach only hours after Andrea Pirlo left the job. Allegri won five straight Serie A titles with Juventus. He was fired by the club two years ago. Allegri has reportedly signed a three-year deal with the club. **AP**



Laporta opens up about Messi's Barcelona future

BARCELONA
With a month left on Lionel Messi's contract, club president Joan Laporta is "moderately optimistic" that Barcelona's greatest player will stay put. "There will be a new contract for Messi, but it is not done yet," Laporta said on Friday. Laporta did not reveal what salary the club can offer Messi. **AP**

Banthia-Rai duo moves into the final

TUNISIA
Siddhant Banthia and his Kiwi partner Ajeet Rai, seeded fourth, made the final with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over Jacob Brumm and Yuta Kikuchi in the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis on Friday. In the final, Banthia and Rai will play third seeds Jeremy Beale and Thomas Fancutt of Australia. Sixth seed Riya Bhatia was beaten 6-2, 6-3 by qualifier Federica Arcidiaco of Italy in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Liepaja, Latvia.



Tottenham in talks with Pochettino

LONDON
Tottenham has made contact with former manager Mauricio Pochettino — currently boss of Paris Saint-Germain — about a return to the club, according to widespread reports in the British press on Friday. Media reports say it is understood the London club have spoken to the Argentine regarding the potential prospect of a second spell in charge in London. **AFP**

Marcel Nguyen to miss Tokyo Olympics

FRANKFURT
German gymnast Marcel Nguyen, who won Olympic all-around and parallel bars silver in 2012, will miss the Tokyo Olympics and fears his career may be over after injuring his right knee. Nguyen tore a cruciate ligament in his right knee on his dismount from the rings while training on Thursday. **AP**



Liverpool signs Leipzig's Ibrahima Konate

LONDON
Liverpool signed France Under-21 international defender Ibrahima Konate from RB Leipzig on a "long-term contract" on Friday. Konate, 22, will compete for a centre-back position in Jurgen Klopp's side after it suffered a host of injuries in that position this season. **AFP**

Venezia back in Serie A after 20 years

ROME
Venice will have a team back in Serie A for the first time in 20 years after Venezia won a promotion play-off on Thursday. A 1-1 draw with Cittadella was enough for a 2-1 aggregate win despite playing most of the tie with 10 men. Venezia joins Empoli and Salernitana, who were automatically promoted from Serie B. **AP**

Chelsea stands in City's way

The London-based team will aim to deny the Mancunians their maiden title

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PORTO



Cup that matters: Thomas Tuchel will look to go one better with Chelsea, while Pep Guardiola will be hoping this is the year that City finally wins it. **GETTY IMAGES**

der Guardiola, the man who was hired principally to win it.

Similar team
"We are quite a similar team to what we were in the past when we were knocked out. The margins and little details this year fell down on our side whereas before it was the opposite," said Guardiola, who is looking to win his

third Champions League as a coach, a decade after his last victory with Barcelona.

City starring the likes of Kevin De Bruyne and Ruben Dias is the clear favourite at the Estadio do Dragao.

Chelsea, though, has beaten City twice in the last six weeks, first in the FA Cup semi-final and then at the Etihad Stadium in the league. "I could not expect a

It is the third final of Europe's elite club competition to be played between two Premier League sides, and the second in just three seasons.

The west London club has the experience of this stage before, having beaten Bayern Munich on penalties on its own turf in the 2012 final.

It has also won the Europa League twice since then.

City, though, has never made it this far but is finally here, after four previous years of disappointment un-

Stimac's tenure extended till Sept.

FOOTBALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI



Igor Stimac. **GETTY IMAGES**

national team head coach Igor Stimac's contract till September 2021," the AIFF said in a release after its technical committee's virtual meeting.

NBA PLAYOFFS

REUTERS
MIAMI

Khris Middleton recorded 22 points, eight rebounds, and five assists as a surging Milwaukee Bucks beat host Miami Heat 113-84 to take a 3-0 lead in their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series. The Bucks will try for a sweep on Saturday in Miami.

Behind another strong defensive performance, host Los Angeles Lakers smothered Phoenix Suns for a 109-95 victory and a 2-1 series lead in the opening round of the Western Conference playoffs. Anthony Davis led the way for the Lakers with 34 points.

Nikola Jokic had 36 points as the visiting Denver Nug-

tougher opponent," Guardiola said.

Transformed side

Chelsea has been transformed since Thomas Tuchel replaced Frank Lampard as coach in January, even if it did finish the domestic season with three defeats in four games including the FA Cup final against Leicester City.

"We have arrived here. This is an incredible achievement and once you arrive you want to be on your very best, but it's City with Pep on the other side who are maybe at the moment the best in Europe, maybe in the world," said Tuchel, who was given a boost as fitness concerns Edouard Mendy and N'Golo Kante returned to training on Wednesday.

"It is on us again to close the gap for 90 minutes and the good thing is we did it already."

Five substitutes extended to 2022 end

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ZURICH

A pandemic-era rule giving competition organisers the option to let teams use five substitutes in a match was extended on Friday through 2022. FIFA can now apply the policy at next year's World Cup.

"The decision follows a global analysis of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on football," the International Football Association Board said in a statement.

The latest extension covers competitions "scheduled to be completed by Dec. 31, 2022" — but not domestic competitions that start in 2022 and run into 2023.

Teams can use five substitutes instead of three in the regulation 90 minutes and a sixth in extra time of knockout games.

Iniyan joins Gukesh in lead; Adhiban trails

A day to forget for Ganguly

CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

P. Iniyan's four wins on the trot saw him catch up with D. Gukesh in the lead after a dramatic third day of the AICF World Cup qualifier on Friday.

As a result, Ganguly kept Adhiban company at the sixth spot with six points.

Saravana Krishnan, Narayanan, Deepa and Soumya were given a bye.

The standings (after Day Three): 1-2. D. Gukesh, P. Iniyan (8.5 points each); 3-4. Rithvik Raja, S.P. Sethuraman (7.5 each); 5. S.L. Narayanan (6.5); 6-7. B. Adhiban, Surya Shekhar Ganguly (6 each); 8-9. Rahul Srivatshav, S. Nitin (5.5 each); 10. Deep Sengupta (5); 11. Aditya Mittal (4.5); 12. C.R. G. Krishna (4); 13. Vishnu Prasanna (3.5); 14-15. M. Vinay Kumar, Krishnan Saravanan (3 each); 16. Soumya Swaminathan (2.5); 17. Vatsal Singhania (1).

Ganguly had a forgettable day. Ganguly suffered three stunning defeats to Adhiban, M. Vinay Kumar and Rahul Srivatshav before signing off with a consolation win over S. Nitin.

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Bucks go 3-0 up on the Heat

NBA PLAYOFFS

REUTERS
MIAMI

Khris Middleton recorded 22 points, eight rebounds, and five assists as a surging Milwaukee Bucks beat host Miami Heat 113-84 to take a 3-0 lead in their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series. The Bucks will try for a sweep on Saturday in Miami.

Behind another strong defensive performance, host Los Angeles Lakers smothered Phoenix Suns for a 109-95 victory and a 2-1 series lead in the opening round of the Western Conference playoffs. Anthony Davis led the way for the Lakers with 34 points.

Nikola Jokic had 36 points as the visiting Denver Nug-

gets beat Portland Trail Blazers 120-115 in Game 3 of their Western Conference first-round series. Nuggets lead 2-1.

Stepping up: Khris Middleton rose to the occasion for Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday. **AFP**

The results: Bucks 113 bt Heat 84. Bucks led 3-0; Lakers 109 bt Suns 95. Lakers lead 2-1; Nuggets 120 bt Trail Blazers 115. Nuggets lead 2-1.

Japan extends COVID state of emergency

GENERAL

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

A scene in Tokyo. **GETTY IMAGES**

Japan extended a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and other areas for 20 more days on Friday, with infections still not slowing as it prepares to host the Olympics in just over 50 days. Cases remain high and medical systems in Osaka, the hardest-hit area in western Japan, are still overburdened, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in announcing the decision.

Olympic organisers must decide at that time whether to allow any fans at all, after overseas spectators

Preparations not ideal: Stimac

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

2023 Asian Cup in China. The Sunil Chhetri-led Blue Tigers, who were originally slated to reach Qatar on May 30, advanced their arrival to May 19. As per the strict quarantine, they are not allowed to train in the gym, use the meeting hall or even eat together.

"If I knew that everything will be like it is today, I would never accept, to be honest. We could organise such games in such way in India also. At the end we lost possibility of playing two home games," Stimac told

reporters during a virtual interaction.

"Here we are now, not in great conditions. This is far away from a proper preparation for the World Cup qualifiers, but it is what it is. This is not a proper football work which needs to be obtained before the World Cup qualifiers."

Under the current circumstances, the Indian players are forced to practice in the corridor, in front of their respective rooms, the 53-year-old Croatian World Cupper said.

We will have a base for world-class training: Aruna

Gaudium Sportopia centre for excellence to be operational

GYMNASICS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD



Sweating it out: B. Aruna Reddy with her coach Manoj Rana. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

Aruna is currently back home for a week's break from personal training under the guidance of Rana in Ambala where she is preparing for the Slovenia international championship scheduled in September.

"Yes, well-known coach Manoj Rana will be the mentor of the gymnastics complex in Gaudium and I can tell you not many Indian gymnasts will even think of going abroad for training given the kind of facilities that are coming up there," Aruna said in a chat with *The Hindu* on Friday.

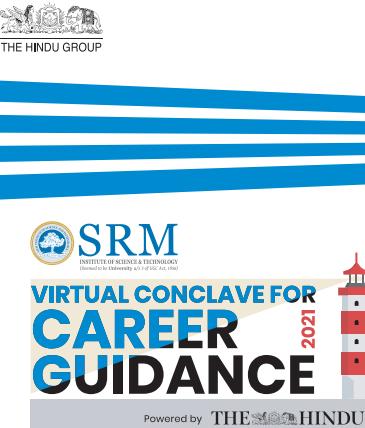
"I worked hard to come back from two knee surgeries and feel really good. But, again, I am also desperate to test my fitness levels in a major event," she said.

ma's K. Nityanand Reddy for the financial support being extended to her to continue her training on her own to realise her dream of winning medals at the highest level.

Test fitness levels
"I worked hard to come back from two knee surgeries and feel really good. But, again, I am also desperate to test my fitness levels in a major event," she said.

"It is difficult to keep training without any targets, especially with the events getting cancelled because of the pandemic," she said.

The 25-year-old says she is grateful to Aurobindo Phar-



HOTEL MANAGEMENT: IMPACT OF PANDEMIC ON THE INDUSTRY AND WAY FORWARD FOR STUDENTS

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu Group brings a 15-part webinar series to provide expert career guidance to Class 10, 11 and 12 students.

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