Read & Lead



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**ALCOHOL CAN BE DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME IN DELHI, BUT** WITH RESTRICTIONS



CONSTITUTIONAL **BENCH TO HEAR WRITS ON NEPALESE HOUSE DISSOLUTION** 

# Petrol hits Rs 100 per litre

THIS IS THE 14TH **INCREASE IN PRICES SINCE MAY 4, WHEN** STATE-OWNED OIL FIRMS ENDED AN **18-DAY HIATUS IN** RATE REVISION THEY **OBSERVED DURING ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN STATES LIKE WEST BENGAL** 

**NEW DELHI:** Petrol price on Thursday crossed the Rs 100-a-litre mark in Thane district of Maharashtra, while it was hovering a tad below that level in Mumbai, after fuel prices were raised again. Petrol price was increased by 24 paise per litre and diesel by 29 paise a litre, according to a price notification of stateowned fuel retailers.

The increase 14th this month took petrol and diesel prices to an all-time high across the country. The price of petrol, which had already crossed the Rs 100-mark in



THERE IS EROSION OF 'TRUST'

AND 'TRUSTWORTHINESS'

**BETWEEN STATES** 

**AND CENTRE** 

Madhya Pradesh and Ma- as VAT and freight charges. chological barrier in Thane district of Maharashtra. In Thane, petrol now comes for Rs 100.06 a litre and diesel In neighbouring Mumbai, petrol price increased to Rs 99.94 per litre, while diesel rates soared to Rs 91.87. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the in- an 18-day hiatus in rate revi-

harashtra, breached the psy- Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT) on petrol in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.In Delcomes for Rs 91.99 per litre. hi, petrol price rose to Rs 93.84 a litre and diesel to Rs 84.61.

This is the 14th increase in prices since May 4, when state-owned oil firms ended several cities in Rajasthan, cidence of local taxes such sion they observed during

### 'Govt should focus on converting 30 cr on-road vehicles to clean fuels'

NEW DELHI: The government should focus on converting around 30 crore vehicles currently running on petrol and diesel to clean fuels in a bid to improve the air quality, said Indian Auto LPG Coalition, apex body of Auto LPG stakeholders.

In a statement, the industry body said that with mass adoption of electric vehicles still a distant future, an absence of a near term strategy to convert existing vehicles to cleaner alternatives is a crucial policy oversight.Indian Auto LPG Coalition has said that government's indifference towards immediately available clean alternative fuels is proving to be a major health bane for the country.

"Electric Vehicles are still in very early stages of adoption and even the most optimistic

Assembly elections in states like West Bengal. Oil companies revise rates

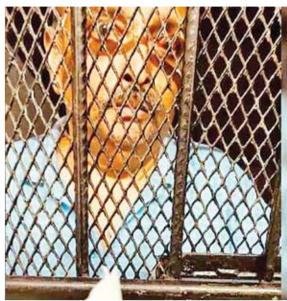
projections suggest that a mass at least till another decade. Meanwhile, around 300 million vehicles including two wheelers continue to produce toxic emissions," said Suyash dian Auto LPG Coalition.

that there remains a large

untapped market for vehicle adoption is not likely to begin conversions in India with consumers actively looking to cleaner as well as cheaper al ternatives to petrol and diesel In this situation, a positive messaging from the govern-Gupta, Director General, In- ment supported by regulatory easing and fiscal incentives The statement also noted can bring about a largescale clean switch.

of petrol and diesel daily ternational market in the prebased on the average price ceding 15-days, and foreign of benchmark fuel in the in- exchange rates. AGENCIES

# Fugitive bizman Mehul Choksi moved to govt quarantine facility in Dominica: Sources



**NEW DELHI:** Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi has been moved to the government quarantine facility in Dominica, sources said on Sunday.

On Saturday, pictures of Choksi released by Antigua Newsroom showed him behind bars and with injuries on his hands and a swollen and bruised left eye.

back channel and

diplomatic route has

clearly told Dominica

that Choksi should be

treated as a fugitive

Indian citizen who

has an Interpol Red

**Corner notice against** 

These were the first public pictures of Choksi, who had reportedly gone missing on Sunday (May 23) evening. India through

He was later apprehended by Dominica Police on Wednesday and had been in their custody since then. On Friday, the Eastern

Caribbean Supreme Court allowed Choksi to be transported to a hospital for medical attention and for the administration of a Covid-19 test.

Efforts have been scaled up to bring back the fugitive businessman to India. ANI

has learnt that multiple agencies are in touch with the government of Dominica on the issue, which has been told that Choksi is originally an Indian citizen and had taken new citizenship to escape the law in India after having

matic route has clearly told Dominica that Choksi should be treated as a fugitive Indian citizen who has an Interpol Red Corner notice against him and he should be handed over to Indian authorities for deportation and to face the law in India for his alleged deeds which have robbed the

restraining the extradition of Choksi from Dominica. The High Court will also hear the Indian fugitive's habeas corpus plea on that date.

#### Covid second wave rendered One crore Indians jobless: CMIE of the national lockdown. Many

MUMBAI: Over 10 million Indians have lost their jobs because of the second wave of Covid-19, and around 97 per cent of households' incomes have declined since the beginning of the pandemic last year, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) chief executive Mahesh Vyas said on Monday.

The unemployment rate measured by the think-tank is expected to come at 12 per cent at the end of May as against 8 million or 1 crore Indians have lost jobs in this period.

Stating that the main reason for the job losses is "mainly the second wave" of COVID-19 infections, Vyas said, "As the



problem will be solved but not entirely". He explained that peoget employment, specifying that before the situation improves. ing this signifies that about 10 come back quickly, the formal sector and better quality job opportunities take up to a year to come back.

Unemployment rate had touched a record high of 23.5 per cent in May 2020 because

experts opine that the second wave of infections has peaked and states will slowly start to ease the economic activityimpacting restrictions in a calibrated fashion. Vyas further said an unemployment rate of 3-4 per cent should be considered as "normal" for the Indian economy, hinting that the unemployment number ple who lose jobs find it hard to will have to decline for longer

> He said CMIE has a a nation-wide survey of 1.75 lakh households in April which throws up worrying trends on income generation during the last one year—which has witnessed two waves of the pandemic. **AGENCIES**

## Core sectors' output jumps 56.1 per cent in April

**NEW DELHI:** The output of eight core sectors jumped by 56.1% in April mainly due to a low base effect and uptick in production of natural gas, refinery products, steel, cement and electricity, official data released on Monday showed.

The eight infrastructure sectors of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity had contracted by 37.9% in Ap due to lockdown restrictions imposed to control the spread of coronavirus infection. In March this year, the eight sectors had recorded a growth rate of 11.4%. "This high growth rate in April 2021 is largely due to low Index

to the low industrial production finery products, steel, cement across all sectors caused by nationwide lockdown imposed to contain spread of Covid-19 last year," the ministry said.

According to the commerce

and electricity jumped by 25%. 30.9%, 400%, 548.8% and 38.7% in April, as against (-) 19.9%, (-) 24.2%, (-) 82.8%, (-) 85.2% and (-) 22.9% in April and industry ministry data, 2020, respectively. AGENCIES

### committed a fraud of almost two billion US dollars. It is learnt that India through back channel and diplo-

Indian public of billions of dollars. A Dominican court has extended till June 2 its order

CII elects Tata Steel CEO, MD as its new president NEW DELHI: Tata Steel

CEO and MD TV Narendran has been elected CII president for 2021-22. He takes over from Udav Kotak. MD & CEO, Kotak Mahindra Bank, the CII statement said. He has been engaged with CII for many years at various levels. Sanjiv Bajaj, CMD, Bajaj Finserv Ltd., has been elected presidentdesignate of CII for 2021-22. He has also been engaged with CII for many years and was chairman of CII Western Region during 2019-20. Pawan Munjal, chairman, Hero MotoCorp, will take over as CII vice-president for 2021-22. He was chairman of CII Northern Region during **AGENCIES** 1996-97.

#### Banks shouldn't cite 2018 crypto note: RBI

**NEW DELHI:** The clarification comes after major banks such as HDFC Bank and the State Bank of India issued warnings to their customers through email in recent days, citing the circular, to avoid trading in virtual currencies such as bitcoin. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) confirmed on May 31, 2021, that its 2018 directive urging lenders to halt dealing in virtual currencies was invalidated by the Supreme Court in March last year and that banks cannot use it as a reason to refuse services to consumers who use crypto-**AGENCIES** 

## Kala Diwas: Farmers mark six months of their morcha



**CHHAVI BHATIA** 

On May 26, the otherwise green and yellow hues of Tikri border had turned black as farmers marked completion of six months of their protest on Delhi borders with Kala Diwas or Black Day. Lakhs of farmers including women wore black to register their indignation towards the Centre for not heeding to their demands of repealing the three controversial Farm Laws and assured MSP. raising our voices against

Wearing Black turbans and dupattas, a departure from their usual green and yellow-representing colour of kisaniand farmers' union, thousands of agitating farmers raised black flags and burnt effigies of the central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for fail- Haryana and western Uting to address their issues. They also put black flags atop their tractors and trolleys, their makeshift homes, as a sign of protest. "We are

anti-farmer policies of this corporates driven government. We will continue to do so till the laws are rolled back," said Abhimanyu Kuhar, member, Samyukta Kisan Morcha.

For six months now, lakhs of farmers from Punjab, tar Pradesh are camping on various Delhi borders, demanding a rollback on the new farm laws which farmers say will put them at mercy of corporates. The sit-in began repeal.

dreds of farmers from these parts of the country reached he outskirts of Delhi. A lot of these peasants have now even set up homes of bricks and mortar to deal with the vagaries of weather, expecting the battle to go on for long. "If this government is so obstinate, we are no less. It is hond di ladai (it is a fight for our existence). We can live here for six years if need be," 51-year-old Ranjodh Singh, a farmer from Moga district, Punjab.

Thousands like Singh are unanimous in this decision, swearing to fight to finish. We are being forced to do this. Who wants to live on the roads for months, away from families? The moment the government accepts our demands of dissolving the new Act and gives us assurance of MSP, we will go back," said Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president, Bharatiya Kisan Union(Ugrahan).

Multiple rounds of talks between the farmers' unions and the government have hit a roadblock.

Earlier this year, Modi's government had offered to put the farm laws on hold for 18 months, but the farmers rejected the offer, saying they want a complete





# Cyclones may blow away the economic sheen

ndia's capacity to withstand multiple, near-simultaneous shocks is being tested, with a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm, Yaas, striking Odisha, just a week after an even stronger Cyclone Tauktae wreaked havoc along the west coast. Yaas, which put up an unnerving display of tornadoes and rain, smothered the north Odisha coast as it made landfall, but the preparatory mass evacuation from habitations appears to have limited the loss of life. Yet, thousands have lost houses and property. West Bengal and Jharkhand also bore the brunt of the weather system's force, as it punched its way inland from May 26, weakening into a deep depression. All coastal States facing the Bay of Bengal have always been in the path of severe cyclones, the majority following the withdrawal of the monsoon, but their vulnerability may be growing as premonsoon and post-monsoon storms increase in frequency and strength. Moreover, for the second year running, States have been hobbled by the CO-VID-19 pandemic. The 2021 season comes as another reminder that India will have to improve its resilience to cyclones. Governments are, no doubt, more sensitive to loss of life today and are raising the capacity of the disaster response forces, but much work needs to be done when it comes to protecting assets and creating fiscal instruments to help people rebuild their lives. While the full extent of displacement and losses from Cyclone Yaas is yet unknown, past experience points to a growing threat to overall well-being from such catastrophes. The challenge is to address the risk of cyclones and other extreme weather events using specific funds, making citizens members in a social insurance model. Moreover, considering the negative climate change impact on tropical cyclones, rebuilding should use a green, build back better approach. Cyclones will otherwise take the shine off economic progress.

#### FIVE OBSERVATIONS

ON WHATSAPP PRIVACY POLICY AND NEED FOR DATA PROTECTION LAWS

**CHINA'S NEW THREE-CHILD POLICY** Experts blamed the policy for making China's population age faster than other countries, impacting the country's growth

> **OLYMPICS DURING PANDEMIC** A green signal to the games by IOC and the Japanese govt, despite the raging pandemic, is unwise. If Japan is the first to call off the games, it has to pay a hefty

**POWER CUTS DUE TO STORM IN PUNJAB** Storm bares Punjab's power; blackout in several districts' is grim reminder of the bad condition of PSPCL. With paddy season about to start, power engineers are worried how to cope with the situation.

THE REAL HEROES It is heartening to see the gurdwaras stepping up the essential facilities for Covid patients. Such places of worship had become hospitals and were giving 24-hour service to all.

**CORONA- DON'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED** The second wave seems to be subsiding, but it's way too early to take it easy. Nobody is safe until everyone is safe — it's as simple as

#### **LETTERBOX**

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#### THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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PRAVEEN CHAKRAVARTY SAYS THERE IS EROSION OF 'TRUST' AND 'TRUSTWORTHINESS' BETWEEN STATES AND CENTRE

## The end of the road for India's GST?



he 43rd meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is to be held on May 28. Representatives of 31 States and Union Territories are expected to attend. They belong to 16 different political parties. Of the 31 representatives, 17 members are from the ruling BJP or its alliance partners. Ideally, this nugget about political affiliations should not matter in a Council set up to decide indirect taxes. But in today's India, 'the economic is political', to paraphrase the American saying.

States are dependent on GST collections for nearly half of their tax revenues. The GST Council was mandated to meet at least once every quarter, but it had not met for two quarters ostensibly due to the pandemic. Several of the 14 members of the non-BJP group implored the Finance Minister to convene the GST meeting to help them manage their finances but none of the 17 members of the ruling group deemed it necessary. Even the need for a meeting to determine tax revenues for States is evidently a political decision

The representative from West Bengal will attend the meeting against the backdrop of the Centre using investigative agencies to selectively target and incarcerate some of the State's ministers, soon after their election victory. The Kerala representative will attend the meeting in the knowledge that his predecessor complained bitterly about the Centre reneging on its promise to pay guaranteed GST compensation to the States. The Chhattisgarh representative will attend this meeting aware of how the Centre imposed sudden and stringent policy conditions to grant approval to States for extra borrowing in the middle of the pandemic last year. The Maharashtra minister will attend the meeting with a feeling of betrayal over how the States have been forced to pay a much higher price for COVID-19 vaccines than the Centre. The Punjab Finance Minister will be cognisant of how the Centre legislated new farm laws unilaterally that affected Punjab's farmers deeply. The Rajasthan representative will be aware of how a sudden lockdown imposed by the Centre with no consultations with the States threw millions of Rajasthani migrant workers in disarray. The Tamil Nadu representative will be wary of the Centre's duplicity in levying cesses that garner significant revenues for the Centre without sharing them with the States. The Delhi representative will be suspicious of the Centre's motives after it



stealthily passed legislation to strip the elected Delhi government of its governance powers. The list is endless. These are not acts in the spirit of cooperative federalism'. The catchy phrase 'cooperative federalism' was introduced into India's political lexicon to justify the transition to GST in 2017. Sadly, like other catchy phrases such as 'Minimum government, maximum governance' and 'Make in India', this too has turned out to be hollow. Cooperative federalism has a larger meaning beyond just fiscal federalism. It also entails cooperative political, administrative and governance federalism between the States and the Centre

#### The Trust Game

The GST Council is not an inanimate economic body. It is a compact of trust between the States and the Centre, set in the larger context of India's polity. Behavioural economists, such as the Nobel Laureate, Daniel Kahneman, have articulated the critical role of the twin attributes of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' among heterogeneous participants in an economy. Using a tool called 'The Trust Game', they have demonstrated that the motive of 'altruism' leads to the most optimal economic outcome for everyone in the group while a motive of 'spite' leads to the worst outcome for all. The tragedy of the GST Council is that it is afflicted with spite and forced to function under the prevailing cloud of vendetta politics

The 17 members of the ruling dispensation and the 14 members of the non-BJP dispensation in the GST Council represent exactly one half of India's population each. However, the non-BJP group contributes a higher share of 60% of overall GST revenues and accounts for 63% of the country's GDP. With elections to another seven States due next year, these numbers could change dramatically again. If the functioning of the GST Council is subject to the vagaries of elections and consequent vendetta politics, GST will continue to be just a caricature of its initial promise.

The 15th Finance Commission report formally acknowledges that GST has been an economic failure that did not deliver on its early promises. GST, as postulated by technocrats, was supposed to be the panacea for India's throttled economy to deliver enormous economic efficiency gains, improve tax buoyancy and collections, boost GDP growth and usher in greater formalisation of the economy. Three years after its launch and even before COVID-19, GST had failed on all those promises.

#### Problems underpinning GST

Economists and commentators point to the multiple rates structure, high tax slabs and the complexity of tax filings as the problems underpinning India's GST. These were indeed the initial problems in the way GST was implemented, leading to some of its current woes. But now, GST has a more fundamental problem the erosion of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' between the States and the Centre. Technical

fixes such as simplification of GST rates and

tax filing systems to restore GST to its initial promise is akin to applying a pain balm to an injury that needs surgery.

The States paid a huge price for GST in terms of loss of fiscal autonomy. The promised economic gains are invisible, and India's federalism has been ruptured. GST in today's politically acerbic, hate-ridden and divided India is an

unviable and unworkable proposition. GST has endured so far primarily because the States were guaranteed a 14% growth in their tax revenues every year, which minimised their risks of this new experiment and compensated for their loss of fiscal sovereignty. This revenue guarantee ends in July 2022. This can lead to a crumbling of the precarious edifice on which GST stands today

In a situation where the States have no taxation powers, their GST revenues are uncertain, the supposed economic benefits seem phantom, and the hypocrisy of 'cooperative federalism' looms large, what is the incentive for States to continue in a GST regime? When the Prime Minister can impose a draconian lockdown in a ham-fisted manner without consultation or play favourites with critical oxygen supplies during an emergency, there seems very little motivation for the States to cooperate in a chase for an elusive economic goal by sacrificing their significant economic powers of taxation.

Technocratic cheerleaders of GST failed to factor in India's unique political economy and its ramifications. Striking a balance among diverse interests of India's numerous parties in a larger political climate of spite and suspicion to arrive at a uniform tax policy for the nation is a near impossibility. Tamil Nadu's new Finance Minister P.T.R. Thiagarajan and I had warned of these exact issues in an article in 2017 in this newspaper.

The tapestry of India's GST was stitched on a fabric of implicit trust and painted with vibrant economic colours. The fabric is now torn and the colours have faded. The loose thread of guaranteed revenues that holds this together is about to snap. The end of India's grand GST experiment seems inevitable unless there is a radical shift in the tone and tenor of India's federal politics, backed by an extension of revenue guarantee for the States for another five years.

Praveen Chakravarty is a political economist and Chairman of the Data Analytics department

**DEBMALYA NANDY** HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND THE MGNREGS

## Tackling the country's rural economic distress



everal States are under lockdown again. This will have severe implications for the livelihoods of those in the informal sector. There is adequate evidence that migrant workers and the rural poor have been facing great distress over the past one year and the crisis for food and work is only going to intensify further.

campaign and the Centre for Equity Studies published a 'Hunger Watch' report which compared the pre-lockdown situation last year to the situation in October 2020 to assess the impact of the nationwide lockdown. The survey involving 4,000 respondents across 11 States exposed the life and livelihood uncertainties of people belonging to low-income categories in the informal sector. In October 2020, 27% of the respondents said that they had no income: 40% respondents said that the nutritional quality of food had become "much worse"; and 46% of the respondents said they had to skip one meal at least once in the day in October 2020.

The migrants have again become vulnerable due to the lockdown in different cities. While many have once again headed to their villages, a large population has got stranded in different parts of the country without work. The Stranded Workers Action Network, a group of individuals helping distressed migrant workers since last year, has been



essential help. According to them, 81% of the people whom they reached out to said that work had mostly stopped since April 15, 2021 and 76% of the workers said they are short of food and cash and require immediate support.

In this context, there is an urgent need to strengthen the public distribution system (PDS) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The government announced 5 kg free foodgrains for individuals enlisted under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), for May and June 2021. The government should expand

PDS coverage immediately and include all eligible households under the schemes. According to an independent study, about 100 million people are excluded from the ration distribution system owing to a dated database based on the 2011 Census.

The Centre should also extend the free foodgrains programme to a year instead of limiting it to two months. The economic crisis is likely to last for a long time. It is being reported that India procured record amounts of rice and wheat last year through mandis. The total procurement is way more than the current requirement for PDS. It is thus quite possible to expand the safety net of the NFSA.

#### **Inadequate provisions** The Centre had allocated Rs 73,000

crore for 2021-22 for MGNREGS and notified an annual increment of about 4% in wages. Both these provisions are inadequate to match the requirements on the ground. The central allocation for MGNREGS is about Rs 38,500 crore less than last year's revised estimate. Of the 56 crore households which wo MGNREGS in 2020-21, even if 1 crore households opt out of the scheme this year, the Centre should still budget for 75-80 days of employment in the year for 6.5 crore families given the current scale of economic distress. By this rationale, at the current rate of Rs 268/day/person, at least Rs 1.3 lakh crore will have to be budgeted. The government should also reconsider its decision of a mere 4% increase in MGNREGS wages and hike it by at least 10%. This will mean another Rs 10,000 crore. Therefore, at least Rs 1.4 lakh crore will be required to ensure uninterrupted implementation during the year.

A large population is facing hunger and a cash crunch. The situation is only becoming more dire as the pandemic continues to rage on. Therefore, the Union government should prioritise food and work for all and start making policy reforms right away.

> Debmalya Nandy is member of NREGA Sangharsh Morcha. Views expressed are the author's own



BOOKS: REVIEW

## Book documents how 7 migrants pedalled home

ilmmaker Vinod Kapri has come out with a book that documents a seven-day arduous journey undertaken by seven migrant workers on their bicycles from Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, battling hunger and exhaustion to reach their homes in Bihar during the 2020 lockdown.

"1232 km: The Long Journey Home" is about this trip by Ritesh Kumar Pandit, Ashish Kumar, Ram Babu Pandit, Sonu, Krishna, Sandeep Kumar and Mukesh to Saharsa in Bihar that spanned 1,232 km. A documentary based on this journey, directed by Kapri, has just been released on Disney+ Hotstar.

When I set out on this journey, I had a deep curiosity about what makes the migrant labourers bi-

cycle 1,232 km without food or any help in such extreme circumstances. I wanted to know who these people are. I wanted to see them up close," Kapri says about his book, published by HarperCol-

"This is not only a journey about courage, willpower or grit. It is about good and bad people in our society. The migrants I filmed were getting unexpected help from strangers, while the authorities, who one would expect cooperation from, were harassing them," he says

Kapri, who has won a National Award for his film "Can't Take This Shit Anymore" (2014), says as a filmmaker, he saw the migrant exodus right from day one through

'... All I can say is these seven labourers represent the desperate millions you saw during the lockdown on your television screens, crying, hassled and dejected'

the perspective of a documentary. "I initially had no plans of writing a book, though I did feel that the camera couldn't catch many aspects of the journey (partly because I had set strict rules for shooting that gave the seven men their privacy and the right to speak to the camera at a time of their choosing and only if



1232 km: The Long Journey By Vinod Kapri; **HarperCollins** 

232 pages; Rs223

they wished to)," he says. He had used his phone to jot down his thoughts, observations and notes of what the men had shared at other times. "I felt this aspect, not caught on camera, should be documented too.'

He thus decided to write about this "memorable and unbelievable journey". "They had cycled, walked, and occasionally been given a lift by a kind truck driver. They had covered 1,232 kilometres in unimaginable conditions - braving police lathis, starvation and heat - wavering between fear

and hope," Kapri says. According to Ridhima Kumar,

commissioning editor at Harper-Collins India, "The painful images of labourers (often with children) walking or cycling home at the peak of summer will long remain implanted in my memory. Here's an incisive reportage of the seven of them, angry and frustrated yet full of hopes and dreams, on their way home - 1,232 kilometres away." Kapri says the exodus was covered on TV and by the

newspapers. "But it's very hard to understand just how hard these journeys were. They were difficult, life-threatening and almost impossible - as much for these seven men, as for those millions who undertook them.

But, why only these seven labourers?

"... All I can say is these seven labourers represent the desperate millions you saw during the lockdown on your television screens, crying, hassled and dejected," he

## Alcohol can be delivered to your home in Delhi, but with restrictions

**NEW DELHI:** Under the modified excise rules governing the sales of alcohol in the national capital, the Delhi government has permitted home delivery of liquor via mobile applications or websites.

"The licensee shall make delivery of liquor at the residences only if order is received through mobile app or online web portal and no delivery shall be made to any hostel, office and institution, read the government noti-

However, the order made it clear that only holders of L-13 licence will be allowed to carry out home deliveries. and not every liquor outlet in the city.

The rules also permit the holders of the necessary licences to serve liquor in open spaces such as terraces, the courtyards of clubs, bars and

The provision to home deliver liquor was there in excise policy of 2010 as well, but a request could be made only through fax or email. However, the exercise never

The national capital, which has started the process of 'unlocking', went into lockdown on April 19 and has been reporting a significant dip in COVID-19 cases. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has

made it clear that 'unlocking' Delhi will be a gradual process. The lockdown period

Ahead of the first lockdown announcement, large queues were seen at several liquor stores in the city as people raced to stock up on alcohol.

was extended till June 7.

Announcing a new liquor policy in March, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the legal age for drinking in Delhi has been brought down from 25 to 21, a move aimed at shoring up annual excise

Sisodia also said the Delhi government will not run liquor stores, adding that no new

liquor shops will be opened in the national capital.

When the third phase of nationwide lockdown began last year, the Delhi government allowed the sale of liquor but imposed the "special corona fee" on it. However, as the sale was affected, the government subsequently withdrew the fee within a month.

Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Jharkhand, Odisha are among states where home delivery of liquor is allowed. (Agencies) BJP trying to stop CM ef-

forts to give Covid jabs to all, says Sisodia Manish Sisodia, the Dep-

uty Chief Minister, accused Bharativa Janata Party (BJP) leaders and ministers of criticising Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for his "relentless efforts" to vaccinate every adult in the national Capital instead of offering their support.

"It is the prerogative of the Delhi government to ensure each and every citizen gets vaccinated at once. Every time CM Kejriwal begins his work towards helping people and managing the Covid crisis, BJP leaders, instead of following his lead, start attacking him and try to stop his efforts,' Sisodia said in a digital press

the charges, and said the turnout at vaccinations centres in Delhi was low. Sisodia's statement came hours after Haryana CM ML Khattar accused Kejriwal of playing politics over Covid vaccines, saying Delhi is exhausting its supply too soon while his state is stretching it over a longer period.

Kejriwal also responded to this through a tweet in Hindi: "Khattar sahab, it is only with vaccines that we can save the lives of people. The sooner vaccines are administered, more people will be protected (from the virus). My goal is not to save vaccines, but to save people's lives."

Khattar's comment was also criticised by the Congress. "Deliberate delay in administering vaccines is also being termed as a strategy. He (CM) says the government has vaccines, but these will be administered to people in small numbers over several days. This is the reason why the people of Haryana are not able to get the vaccines..., said Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala in a tweet in Hindi.

On May 30, BJP national president JP Nadda, ostensibly alluding to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), had said it was creating "hindrances"

### Delhi Police initiate action in another case against wrestler Sushil Kumar

Police have started taking action in another case registered against wrestler Sushil Kumar in September last year by a grocery shop owner in Delhi who has accused the wrestler and his associates of beating him up at Chhatrasal Stadium for asking for payments of dues, according to police.

The complaint was lodged by Satish Goyal, who runs a grocery shop in the Model Town area of the national capital. In his complaint, Goyal had alleged that he was beaten badly by wrestler Sushil Kumar and his associates at Chhatrasal Stadium for asking for payments for the dues, according to police.

Speaking to Agencies, Goyal said, "The ration for the stadium used to be supplied from my shop. Around 300 children lived before the lockdown. All the rations for them used to go from my shop. My money was due before the last lockdown. Virendra ji, who used to be the coach was transferred a couple of days before the lockdown. A new coach Ashok Kumar replaced him. He said that the money will

I felt I should die by jumping to the Yamuna. What to do with such a life if you are beaten up just for demanding your own

come. He kept postponing it for two months.'

Goyal said coach Ashok later took the due slip from him and made a calculation of Rs 4,05,950. Ashok had promised to make the payments but it was not made. Goval further said he was

be paid when the children called to the stadium by an influence.

"When I reached there,

Sushil Kumar and 30-40 wrestlers were standing with him. He asked me the whole thing and then refused to pay. Then I said I would die if do not get the payment. Soon after this, Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers beat me heavily. After the assault, I felt I should die by jumping to the Yamuna. What to do with such a life if you are beaten up just for demanding your own money," explained Goyal.

Goyal then complained with the Model Town Police Station. However, no action was taken at that time due to Sushil Kumar's

# Only 3.4% vaccinated, Priyanka points out flaws in vaccination policy



NEW DELHI: Congress Gen-received the first dose and only eral Secretary Priyanka Gandhi 3.4 percent have been fully vac-Vadra addressed the flaws in cinated in India, she said. vaccination distribution in her is Responsible) held on June1.

In her Facebook post she wrote, "Experts believe that to defeat coronavirus, vaccination is the key and the countries which have vaccinated its people have seen less impact of the second wave, but in our country, it was 320 percent more than the first wave.

She said that the citizens are asking why the situation has come to this that the state governments have to go for global tender and compete for different rates for the same vaccine. How the government is claiming to vaccinate every Indian by the end of this year and what is the plan to vaccinate those who are deprived of digital connectivity?

"In this country, vaccines for smallpox and polio were distributed to every household but due to the Modi government's inefficiency, the production and distribution have been in a mess," She said.

In 2020, Modi had said hat he will vacc citizen and the plan is ready. But in April during the second wave, responsibility was shifted to the States and till May 1, only 34 crore vaccines have been ordered and many state governments have been forced to go for global tender and many companies have refused to deal with them, she said, adding this is the reason and there are different rates

for the vaccines. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday said that more than 23 crore vaccine doses have been provided to the States/UTs and approximately 1.75 crore doses are still available with them to be administered.

The Centre has so far provided, both through the free of cost category and through the direct state procurement vaccine doses (23,11,68,480) **AGENCIES** to States/UTs.



vironmentalist Juhi Chawla Delhi High Court against the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country, raising issues related to the radiation impact on citizens, animals, flora and fauna. Justice C Hari Shankar,

before whom the matter came up for hearing, transferred the suit to another bench for hearing on June 2. Chawla said if the telecom-

munications industry's plans for 5G come to fruition, no person, no animal, no bird, no insect and no plant on Earth will be able to avoid RF radiation that are 10x to 100x times greater than what exists today.

These 5G plans threaten to sought a direction to the and fauna.



Earth's ecosystems, she said. The suit, filed through infant, animals and every advocate Deepak Khosla, type of living organism, flora

provoke serious, irreversible authorities to certify to the 365 days a year, to levels of manent damage to all of the nology is safe to humankind, man, woman, adult, child, **AGENCIES** 

## Delhi man turns his car into 'emergency response vehicle' to help Covid patients

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi resident has turned his car into what he calls an 'emergency response vehicle' to help CO-VID patients amid the second wave of the pandemic. Nagia, who is working at

an IT company in Noida, has equipped his car with all the necessary equipment like oxygen cylinders, medicines, oximeter, food, water, and oxygen cans.

Talking to Agencies, Nagia said, "It has been one month now since I started this service. I am trying to help people in need by providing a variety of help and support. I have converted my car into an ambulance. I have provided transport to around 23 Covid positive patients to different hospitals free of cost."

"It started in April. I was as they needed oxygen. There was no oxygen cylinder available in the market at that time. from home these days I have Somehow, we arranged an some time to devote to helping oxygen cylinder from a Gu- people," Nagia explained the said.



rudwara in Rajouri Garden,"

"When I was going all the way from East Delhi to Rajouri Garden, I saw I am not the only one who is struggling for oxygen. Like me, there were hundreds of people who were going with cylinders in their cars, autos and cycles as well in search of ovvgen. The idea popped up in my mind as I spent almost a month mostly thought since I am working

inspiration behind the move. He said that now since CO-VID-19 cases have decreased and there is a lesser demand for oxygen cylinders.

"I am serving policemen and families with free clean drinking water and food as well. I have even provided costly medicines to multiple families free of cost in my car, away from my family and kids just to serve people who are facing issues," he

**AGENCIES** 

## Pray all are vaccinated, then we can resume physical hearing: SC judge

preme Court that it expects the entire country's population over the age of 18 to be vaccinated against CO-VID-19 by the end of the year, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, a senior top court judge expressed hope that everyone will be vaccinated, allowing the court to resume physical hearings.

Justice Chandrachud, while hearing a bail matter, category, more than 23 crore made these remarks after counsel expressed hope that physical hearing in the top

vaccination centers are closed **NEW DELHI:** A day after court is resumed by August. the Centre informed the Su- The counsel appearing for a petitioner in the matter said, "Let us pray to God that physical hearing begins, the next time this case comes up for hearing in the top

> Justice Chandrachud, sitting beside Justice M.R. Shah on the bench, replied: "Let us pray to God that vaccination takes place for all. Then we can commence physical

> In another matter, Justice Chandrachud shared his experience when he was



isolated after contracting viral infection. He added

books around him during isolation. "I was in isolation for 18 days. I was all alone reading books," said Justice Chandrachud.

Senior advocates Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Sidharth Dave and Sidharth Luthra, and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta were also present, and the lawyers shared their views on the utility of N95 mask against the viral infection and vaccination. The Supreme Court has been taking up matters virtually since the beginning of the lockdown

On May 31, Justice Chandrachud had grilled the Centre over its vaccine policy and asked it to bring on record policy document regarding vaccination. The top court had asked, what is the rationale behind the Centre procuring vaccines at a price that is higher for state governments, and also why states and municipal corporations are floating global tenders to procure vaccines? The top court gave the Centre two weeks to respond to these issues and concerns.

#### Only 12 percent of people Fungus infection: 30100 vials of Amphotericin-B

allocated to all states, UTs **NEW DELHI:** Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers DV Sadananda Gowda announced that an additional 30,100 vials of Amphotericin-B have been allocated to all the States/UTs and Central Institutions. The injection is used for treatment of Mucormycosis, a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes that has been developing in Covid-19 patients. The fungal disease is commonly observed in patients who were given steroids for a long time; those who have been hospitalised for a long time, were on oxygen support or ventilator, faced poor hospital hygiene or those who have been taking medication for other illnesses such as **AGENCIES** diabetes

### AIIB finances US\$260 million B'desh bridge construction THE KEWATKHALI

BRIDGE, SET TO BE THE FIRST ARCH STEEL BRIDGE IN BANGLADESH, WILL SUBSTANTIALLY **EASE CONGESTION IN** THE NORTHERN CITY **OF MYMENSINGH BY** DIVERTING TRAFFIC FROM THE BUSY CITY CENTER. THE NEW BRIDGE WILL BE PART OF THE DHAKA **MYMENSINGH-INDIA** BORDER CORRIDOR, WHICH IS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES** Beijing

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved a US\$ 260-million loan to Bangladesh for the construction of a bridge that highlights usage of latest technology for improved safety and early detection of structural damage.

The Kewatkhali Bridge, set to be the first arch steel bridge in Bangladesh, will substantially ease congestion in the northern city of Mymensingh by diverting traffic from the busy city center. The new bridge will be part of the Dhaka-Mymensingh-India border corridor, which is strategically important for for residents and motorists,' local and regional connectivity.

Once completed, over 11 million people in Bangladesh's northern region will benefit from increased mobility and integration of local and regional markets. The bridge will also shorten the travel time for people and vehicles and contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions

"As in other river delta environments, bridges play a strategic role in Bangladesh's transport network. AIIB considers the financing of the Kewatkhali Bridge at Mymensingh an opportunity to use the latest technology in bridge maintenance and management to improve its structural performance, service life and the safety of the bridge said AIIB Senior Investment



Operations Specialist Natalia

The project includes a proposed Bridge Health Monitoring System (BHMS), which, Sanz explains, will be used be captured in real time and

structural issues in the main bridge. Data on load and environmental effects, as well as the bridge responses, will

to provide early warnings of

interfaced with a bridge rating system, allowing for more effi-BHMS is a core component cient monitoring and will help in formulating a systematic approach to periodic inspection.

"By studying the changes observed in bridge conditions over time, engineers can develop models to distinguish the effects of maintenance activity from normal wear and tear. State-of-the-art work in this area includes deepening our understanding of physical deterioration processes, especially the effect of structural damage on the reliability and performance of structural components," Sanz said.

Training and institutional development of the national Roads and Highways Department on the maintenance and operation of an arch steel

of the project, an AIIB release stated The Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank whose mission is financing the Infrastructure for Tomorrowinfrastructure with sustainability at its core and began operations in Beijing in January 2016 with present growth to 103 approved members worldwide. It is capitalized at US\$100 billion and Triple-A-rated by the major international credit rating agencies. Working with partners, AIIB meets clients' needs by unlocking new capital and investing in infrastructure that is green, technology-enabled and promotes regional connectivity.

There is a provision of a five-member Constitutional Bench to settle the disputes over constitutional matters.

As many as 30 writ petitions have been registered at the apex court against President Bidya Devi Bhandari's May 22 move to dissolve the lower house of Parliament on the advice of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, who is heading a minority government.

The newly-formed bench includes justices Dipak Kumar Karki, Aanand Mohan Bhattarai, Tej Bahadur K.C. and Bam Kumar Shrestha, besides the Chief Justice, The Kathmandu Post reported.

"Chief Justice Rana has formed the bench comprising seniormost justices," Kishor Poudel, a communication expert at the Supreme Court, told the Post.

Currently, there are 13 senior justices, besides chief justice, in the Supreme Court.

The initial hearing on 19 of such petitions was conducted by the CJ Rana-led bench on Thursday. The single bench, however, forwarded the writ petitions to the Constitutional Bench for further hearing.

Some of the petitioners had demanded an interim against the dissolution and calling of the House meeting to present the national budget. Mr. Rana, however, refused.

According to the constitutional provision, the government must present the federal budget at the federal Parliament by May 29.

Since there is no Parlia- House of Representatives Minister Oli. ment, the government is on Saturday for the second



Legal twist in **epal politics** 

in the Supreme Court demanding restoration of the House of Representatives and appointment of Mr. Deuba as the Prime Minister. Others had also filed petitions against the dissolution of the House of Representa-

to the premiership, saying

a writ petition

Earlier on December 20, the President had dissolved the Parliament and called snap polls on April 30

and May 10. However, two months later, the Rana-led Constitutional Bench on February 23 overturned the decision and reinstated the

Constitutional experts have criticised Mr. Oli and Mr. Bhandari for their complicity in trampling upon the Constitution.

Nepal plunged into a political crisis on December 20 last year after President Bhandari dissolved the House and announced fresh elections on April 30 and May 10 at the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli, amidst a tussle for power within the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

Mr. Oli's move to dissolve the House sparked protests from a large section of the NCP led by his rival Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'. In February, the apex court reinstated the dissolved House, in a setback to Mr. Oli who was preparing for snap polls. AGENCIES

### **POTPOURRI**



## **Sonakshi Sinha Current situation makes**

**CLIMATE CHANGE** 

us think hard about

Sonakshi Sinha savs important to value the environment we live in.

"We end up in the environment we create for ourselves, and we must make sure that it's beautiful. The current situation around us is making us think hard about climate change, and the kind of effect it has on our planet. As responsible individuals, if we make small sustainable changes to our daily routine then together, we can create a healthier environment to live in," she says.

On the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5, Sonakshi, along with actress Tara Sharma, will be seen on the digital property "Earth Champions", which streams on the Sony BBC Earth Instagram page.

On screen, Sonakshi is all set to make her web series debut with "Fallen", where she plays a cop. She is also part of "Bulbul Tarang", which will have a digital release, and will be seen in the film "Bhuj: The Pride Of India" co-starring Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt and Nora Fatehi. AGENCIES

### Japan to extend virus curbs with safe Olympics at stake

through an ordinance.

President Bhandari dis-

solved the 275-member 19 on the advice of Prime

TOKYO: Japan is set to extend a coronavirus state of emergency in Tokyo and other areas with infections not yet slowing to levels it can safely host the Olympics opening in just over 50 days. The extension is needed

as people are increasingly roaming in public, especially in Tokyo and Osaka, when they should be doing the opposite, and it's feared that lifting the emergency would cause an instant rebound in infections, Economy Revitalization Minister Yasutoshi

ne capital and eig



overflowing with COVID-19 patients and serious cases hit The current emergency in new highs recently.

preliminary approval from experts ahead of an official announcement later Friday. The southern island prefecture of Okinawa is already under emergency status through June 20.

CONSTITUTIONAL BENCH TO HEAR WRITS ON

NEPALESE HOUSE DISSOLUTION

planning to bring the budget time in five months and an- both Prime Minister Oli and

nounced snap elections on

November 12 and November

Olympic organisers have to decide around that date whether to allow any fans at all, after overseas spectators were banned months ago. A plan to prioritise vaccinations for Japanese athletes also is being delayed to around that time, according to media

metropolitan areas was to ers the government proposal to the pandemic, and wor- about 7,30,000 cases of infecend next Monday, but hos- of a 20-day extension to June ries about the new variants tion and more than 12,700 pitals in some areas are still 20 in the nine areas received and Japan's slow vaccination deaths.

rollouts have triggered calls from the public and medical experts to cancel the Games.

the Opposition alliance's

claims to form a government.

Mr. Oli and Nepali Congress

President Sher Bahadur Deu-

She rejected the bids of bahad staked separate claims

Experts have warned that more contagious variants are infecting more people, leaving them seriously ill and flooding hospitals.

Meanwhile, Japan has

lagged on vaccinations due to bureaucratic and planning missteps and shortages. Only 2.3% of the population has been fully vaccinated, and the current phase targeting older adults is not scheduled to finish before the Games.

Still, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and his government are determined to host the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee has also said the Olympics would go The Olympics are sched- ahead even if the host city uled to start on July 23 after Tokyo is under emergency

# **SAMEERA REDDY**Love your flaws for a happy you

ameera Reddy took to Instagram on Friday to address bodyshaming and its effects on mental health. The actress said we sometimes tend to shame and question ourselves, too.

Sameera suggests loving one-self, with one's flaws and imperfections, can lead to mental

some point: sometimes by sociand listen to someone. It's ok ety. Sometimes we do it to ournot to feel ok all the time. We is dedicated to #mentalhealtha- suggested.

warenessmonth Pause and ask. 'is hate, fear, expectation, shame, self-doubt driving you to question yourself? We all do it. I do too. It's only human. But going past it with kindness and acceptance of yourself and others can set you free," she wrote.

"Loving your 'flaws' and 'imperfections' as they call it is ppiness. your ticket to move towards a happy you. Take time to talk selves. Today's #fitnessfriday post are all #imperfectlyperfect," she



### Pak Taliban leader killed in Balochistan



AT LEAST 80 PEOPLE WERE **KILLED AND NEARLY 150 WERE INJURED DURING** THE SUICIDE BOMBING AND **GUN FIRE BY MILITANTS** AT THE CIVIL HOSPITAL IN QUETTA IN 2016

KARACHI: A top commander of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), who was believed to be involved in the deadly attack on the Civil Hospital in Quetta in 2016, has been killed, along with three members of the banned militant outfit in Balochistan province, police said

on Thursday. Based on a tip-off, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) launched an operation in Agbara area of the restive Balochistan province on Tuesday and killed Riaz Thekedar "Four of the terrorists were

killed in heavy firing, while two of them managed to es-

cape," police said. A large cache of guns, ammunition and weapons was seized from the spot.

A CTD spokesman said top TTP leader Thekedar, was killed in the encounter.

At least 80 people were killed and nearly 150 were injured during the suicide bombing and gun fire by militants at the Civil Hospital in Quetta in 2016. AGENCIES

## Novak Djokovic reaches Belgrade final



**BELGRADE**: Novak Djokovic 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.

The World No. 1 saw off his 119th-ranked opponent

It will be the Serbian's his Australian Open triumph and his final loss to Rafael

Nadal at the Italian Open first set against Martin, 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. You feel a lot of pressure and expectations. But third final of the year after I'm just happy to fight for a

trophy tomorrow. After racing through the

Djokovic uncharacteristically took his foot off the gas and was broken three times in the second set. The 34-year-old was back to his best in the decider, though, quickly ending any thought of a surprise comeback. Meanwhile at Parma.

Italian Marco Cecchinato made the finals of the Emilia-Romagna Open, putting up a fight to beat Spain's Jaume Munar 7-6(2), 1-6, **AGENCIES** 

### Couldn't sleep for 8-9 days during IPL, had to pullout: R Ashwin

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 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 multiples cases were found in its bio-bubble.

14-day quarantine in Mumbai, Ashwin gave an idea of the Indian team's life in the protected environment. "It's really difficult, guys. It might look from the outside that we are staying at a luxurious five-star hotel. But it is not that easy. Like I said earlier, it is not 7 days, but 14-days quarantine," the star spinner said.

"So, basically, we came here on 19th and we are leaving to England on only June 2 from Mumbai. So, basically, we will finish our 14-day quarantine here in India. And we will have a test here every two days," Ashwin said.

Ashwin also explained that bubble breach doesn't mean that someone has entered the bubble

"Many of you would have heard about the term bio-bubble breach. Bio-bubble breach doesn't mean someone from outside has entered the bubble.

Talking about the ongoing This is a virus and we still don't know how it enters." While most of the Indian players have received their first jabs, Ashwin has got two jabs of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Ashwin also narrated the exerience of reaching the Mumbai bubble from his Chennai

"The way we reached Mumbai in itself was a different experience. With each passing day, the struggle is only getting worse. Hopefully, you will get joy as we play. Seven days quarantine, three tests in seven days and after that, we can practice. It is difficult, but when comared to what people are going through, it's nothing," he said.

"From Chennai, we took one charter flight. Before taking the charter, we had to take three (RT-PCR) tests. There were three tests on May 14th, 16th and 18th and we (his family) left from Chennai on May 19. From Chennai, next we landed



in Hyderabad. Fielding coach R Sridhar, Indian women's captain Mithali Raj and others also joined us. The flight that took off at 2 pm from Chennai, landed in Mumbai at 6 pm on May 19th.

Ashwin also recollected how the weather impacted their chartered flight.

"The flight was there in the



runway for a while and the reason was that was due to the heavy rains on that particular day, the bus that was supposed to pick-up one of the players got stuck.

"And to arrange another bus, the driver should have been in the bubble and they should also sanitize the bus and since these problems were also there. It

took one to one and half hours and after that, we got picked in another bus. We came here and checked-in at the hotel." After seven days of room

quarantine, Ashwin is now allowed to hit the gym.

"So, I have my done my first gym session on the 25th. They have made the equipment available in our rooms too. The gymnasium has been made ready for us. Everyone have been allotted different time slots.'

With 24 member team going for the UK tour, Ashwin said that there would be an intrasquad practice game before the June 18-22 World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton.

"The WTC final is played at Southampton. The beauty is that there is a hotel at the ground. The teams will stay there. Exact details about the tests are not known, after that we can practice. I think we will play a **AGENCIES** practice game."