



# THE TIMES

#AShotOfHope

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PRESIDENT APPOINTS JUSTICE N V RAMANA NEXT CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA; SENIOR-MOST SUPREME COURT JUDGE WILL TAKE OATH ON APRIL 24 9

## CBI registers enquiry against Deshmukh day after HC order

May Record Statement Of Ex-CP Today

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New Delhi: The CBI on Tuesday registered a preliminary enquiry in connection with the Bombay high court order to investigate allegations levelled by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh against former state home minister Anil Deshmukh.

A special team from the anti-corruption unit of the agency flew from Delhi to Mumbai on Tuesday to start the investigation. The team is likely to record Singh's statement on Wednesday and take any evidence furnished by him on record.

Sources said the CBI will also question a junior Mumbai police personnel mention-

### 'HC ORDER MAY GIVE CENTRE A HANDLE'

The state government said it feared the Union government would misuse the order to wreak vengeance. It also said the HC should have taken note of the fact that it (Maha) had withdrawn general consent for a CBI probe into cases within the state

In the annals of judicial history, there has hardly been an occasion when the court has taken statements made against a sitting minister at face value and proceeded to direct an outside agency, without calling for a response from the minister, to conduct a preliminary inquiry

—Anil Deshmukh | Maha Ex-Home Minister

### ► WILL ENSURE NO POLITICAL MEDDLING: WALESH PATIL, P 5

ned in the former top cop's complaint as a potential witness. Singh has enclosed his purported chats with the policeman in his complaint.

The CBI needs to submit its report to the HC within 15 days before deciding its next course of action.

Next week, the agency may record Deshmukh's statement apart from question-

### Directive against our fed structure: MVA govt to SC

New Delhi: The Maharashtra government and its former home minister Anil Deshmukh moved the Supreme Court on Tuesday seeking stay of the Bombay high court order for a CBI probe into Mumbai ex-CP Param Bir Singh's allegations against the minister of extortion, bribes for transfers and interference in investigations into important criminal cases, reports Dhananjay Mahapatra.

The MVA government said the HC's order breached the norms of federal structure of governance by entrusting the probe to a central agency. Indirectly suggesting Mumbai police or the inquiry committee headed by a former Bombay HC judge were not competent.

### ► 'I could be stigmatised', P 5

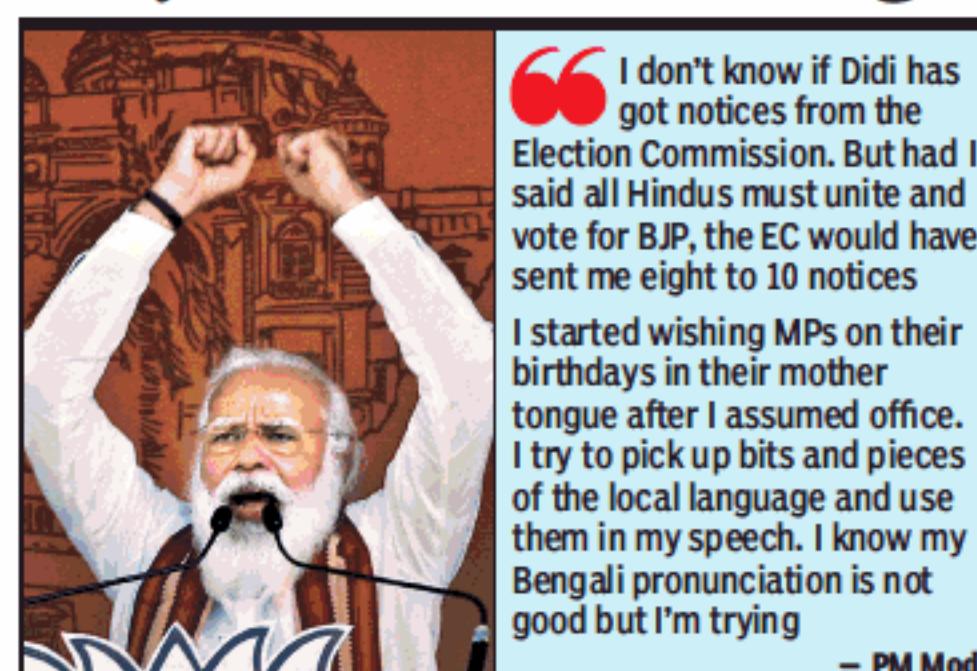
## Modi to Didi: Your minority vote call shows you've lost, 'game over'

'Muslim Vote Bank Slipping Away From You'

Pinak Priya Bhattacharya & Rupak Banerjee | TNN

Coochbehar/Howrah: PM Narendra Modi on Tuesday said West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's "desperate" appeals to Muslims "not to split minority votes" showed she knew TMC had already lost the polls and "her game" was over.

In response to Mamata asking two days ago how he knew the poll outcome—"Are you god or superhuman?"—Modi said at a rally in north Bengal's Coochbehar, "Recently, you appealed against splitting Muslim votes. It shows that the Muslim vote bank, once your strength, is slipping away. Muslims too



I don't know if Didi has got notices from the Election Commission. But had I said all Hindus must unite and vote for BJP, the EC would have sent me eight to 10 notices. I started wishing MPs on their birthdays in their mother tongue after I assumed office. I try to pick up bits and pieces of the local language and use them in my speech. I know my Bengali pronunciation is not good but I'm trying

—PM Modi

### ► 'MR PM, I RESPECT CENTRAL FORCES, IF NEUTRAL', P 13

have started distancing themselves from you."

"I don't know if Didi has got notices from the Election Commission. But had I said all Hindus must unite and vote for BJP, the EC would have sent me eight to 10 notices. Remember what Didi had once said? I am ready to be kicked by the cow that gives me

milk," Modi said at a Howrah rally later in the afternoon. "She has broken the hearts of the people of Bengal."

According to him, Mamata's "Khela (game)" at a Nadia booth last week was enough to indicate that she had lost.

### ► Leaked 'tapes', P 13

## Five candidates attacked in WB on polling day

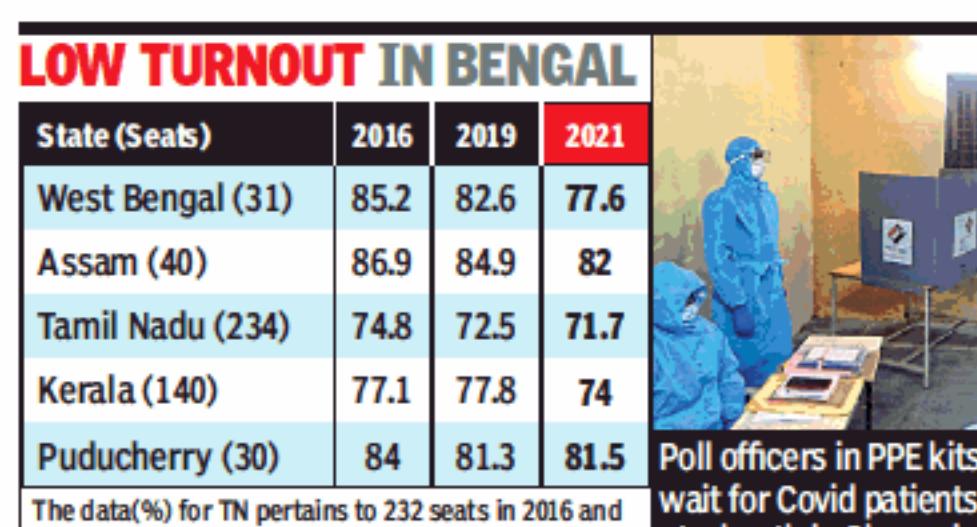
At least five candidates were attacked, their vehicles damaged and polling agents thrashed, with reports of clashes coming in from constituencies in Howrah and South 24-Parganas in Bengal. At Arambagh in Hooghly, Trinamool candidate Sujata Mondal was attacked by BJP workers armed with bamboo poles and bricks. At Khanakul, also in Hooghly, TMC candidate Nazbul Karim allegedly came under attack and in Howrah's Uluberla North, TMC nominee Nirmal Majhi was attacked by BJP workers. BJP's Uluberla South candidate, Papilya Adhikary, said she was slapped by TMC workers. P 13

## EC shunts 8 Kolkata returning officers ahead of Apr 26, 29 polls

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Kolkata: The Election Commission on Tuesday replaced the returning officers (RO) of eight assembly seats in Kolkata that go to the polls on April 26 and 29.

An EC official said the change was necessary as the eight officers—ROs of Chowinghee, Entally, Bellaghata, Jorasanko, Shyampukur, Kashipur-Belgachia, Kolkata Port and Bhowanipore—had been holding the post for four or more years. EC sources said the norm of removing officers who had held the same post for over four years had been stringently followed



In the districts, but not in the case of these officers posted in Kolkata. Of these assembly segments, Kolkata Port will vote on April 26, and the others on April 29—phase seven and eight of the eight-phase Bengal polls. The nomi-

nation process for these phases is currently underway. During phase seven, a total of 36 assembly constituencies go to the polls, whereas 35 do so in the last phase.

### ► 'Poll process sanctity', P 13

## Jawan's widow to get pension after 70 years

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In the summer of 1952, when Paruli Devi was 12, her husband Gagan Singh, a soldier with the Kumaon Regiment, killed himself, reports Prem Punetha. She never knew why. They had been married for just two months.

Years went by. Then, a chance conversation about a woman in her village—a soldier's widow like herself—finally getting pension sparked hope. Now, after a seven-year battle, Paruli, 82, has been declared eligible.

Citing 1985 judgment, Paruli filed for pension with the Army. After seven years of correspondences, the Kumaon Regiment Centre has finally accepted her claim. Apart from a pension of Rs 11,700, she will get Rs 20 lakh as accumulated arrears. P 4

## Single dad freed in sex case as 11-yr-old recants

Mumbai: In a trial that took only 45 days and 10 court dates, a PoCo Act court acquitted a 35-year-old single father accused of sexually assaulting his 11-year-old daughter, after the child told the court she had made the allegations at the behest of her paternal cousin. The accused said the cousin was upset with him as he had made remarks about her character.

Leged to have taken place in August and he was arrested in October. "It is brought on record that the accused being her father would take care of her, even focusing on her studies and cooking for her... So, it is not digestible and is difficult to believe that the father did any wrong thing with the prosecutrix," the court said.

### ► 'Not case of pressure', P 4

## Russia wants to make military gear in India

While the US tries to discourage India from procuring advanced weapon systems from Russia, visiting foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said Delhi and Moscow are in talks to manufacture "additional" Russian military equipment in India, reports Sachin Parashar.

At a meeting with foreign minister S Jaishankar to lay the groundwork for PM Modi's summit with President Vladimir Putin, Lavrov didn't mention the Quad, but described as counterproductive efforts to cobble together 'Nato-like' alliances in Asia and said this issue had been discussed. P 7

# COVID VACCINES OR VIRUS, WHAT'S SPREADING FASTER IN INDIA NOW?

India is in the middle of the world's biggest Covid vaccination drive, and also fighting a second wave of infections that looks bigger than the first. In fact, on Monday, India became only the second country after the US to report more than 1 lakh cases in a day. Vaccines are crucial for slowing down the coronavirus's spread and, by some estimates, vaccinating 60-70% of the entire population could get us to herd immunity. But three months into the drive, only three states have covered 5% of their population. **Atul Thakur** compares the pace of vaccination and the spread of coronavirus cases across the country.

## Only 2 states past 20% of target

The current target is to vaccinate everyone in the 45+ age-group, and two doses are needed, per person, for complete vaccination.

With 30 lakh doses administered among 69.6 lakh people in the 45+ age group, Chhattisgarh is at 21.6% of its target. Gujarat is the only other state to have covered more than 20% of its target population.

At the other end, big states like Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Assam and Andhra Pradesh have not met even 10% of their target.

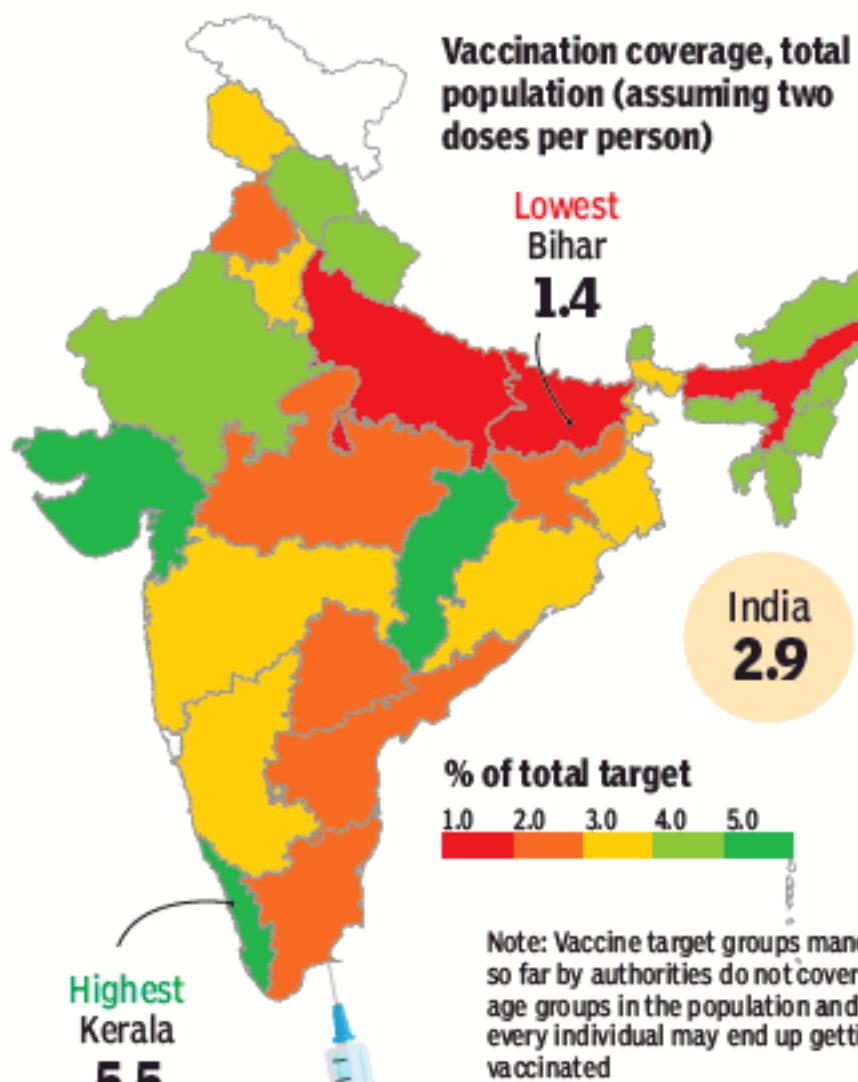
### Vaccination coverage, 45-plus population (assuming two doses per person)

State	Total Doses (as of Apr 4) (in lakhs)	45+ popn (in lakhs)	% of 45+ target vaccinated	State	Total Doses (as of Apr 4) (in lakhs)	45+ popn (in lakhs)	% of 45+ target vaccinated
Chhattisgarh	301	69.6	21.6	Madhya Pradesh	42.3	189.7	11.1
Gujarat	73.9	181.7	20.3	Jharkhand	18.7	84.0	11.1
Rajasthan	68.7	173.5	19.8	Maharashtra	76.9	351.6	10.9
NE (excluding Assam)	13.2	38.3	17.2	West Bengal	61.1	284.1	10.8
Uttarakhand	9.2	28.5	16.1	Andhra Pradesh	30.5	159.0	9.6
Delhi	15.8	51.8	15.3	Assam	12.2	81.1	7.5
Kerala	38.8	127.8	15.2	Telangana	14.9	103.7	7.2
Jammu & Kashmir	9.5	32.8	14.5	Uttar Pradesh	67.6	477.9	7.1
Himachal Pradesh	6.3	22.6	14.0	Punjab	12.5	89.2	7.0
Haryana	18	71.8	12.6	Bihar	33.7	244.5	6.9
Odisha	31.2	127.8	12.2	Tamil Nadu	31.9	249.9	6.4
Karnataka	46.1	189.0	12.2	India	791.1	3,443.9	11.5

Among large states, Himachal has the smallest 45-plus population, followed by Uttarakhand. Uttar Pradesh has the largest 45-plus population, followed by Maharashtra. Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan have administered the most vaccine doses as of April 4.

## More than 5% population vaccinated in only three states

No state has vaccinated even 10% of its overall population. Kerala leads with 5.5% coverage. Gujarat and Chhattisgarh are the two others past the 5% mark.



Source: covid19india.org  
Graphic: Anil Dind

## 4 large states at less than 20% of peak

While daily cases are increasing everywhere, they are still far from the last peak in some major states. In Delhi, West Bengal, Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir, cases are between 30-40% of the peak. Odisha and Assam are still averaging less than 10% of the peak.

## Four states past their previous peaks

If India's first wave last September was big, the second is turning out to be bigger. The coronavirus is spreading much faster this time. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh have already crossed their last year's peak in daily cases. Punjab is almost there while seven other states have crossed 40% of their last peak.

### 7-day average of cases on April 5 and during previous peak

State/UT	7-day avg on April 5	7-day avg on previous peak date	Current 7-day avg as % of previous peak
Punjab	2,793	2,851	98
Haryana	1,637	2,566	63.8
Himachal Pradesh	404	820	49.3
Tamil Nadu	3,104	6,803	45.6
Rajasthan	1,454	3,196	45.5
Karnataka	4,376	10,039	43.6
Jharkhand	749	1,812	41.3
Uttar Pradesh	2,708	6,581	41.1
India	84,160	93,277	90.2

Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, MP and Maharashtra have all set new peaks for daily infections during the second wave. For instance, the 7-day average of cases for Maharashtra on April 5 was 44,624, which is also the highest rate of daily infections reported in the state since the first infections last year. Punjab on April 5 recorded new cases that were at 98% of its previous peak and the state stands on the brink of breaching its previous high of daily average cases.

### 7-day average of cases on April 5 and during previous peak

State/UT	7-day avg on April 5	7-day avg on previous peak date	Current 7-day avg as % of previous peak
Delhi	2,906	7,341	39.6
West Bengal	1,467	4,113	35.7
Telangana	928	2,718	34.1
J&K	461	1,536	30
Kerala	2,578	8,728	29.5
Uttarakhand	403	1,393	28.9
Bihar	588	3,797	15.5
Andhra Pradesh	1,313	10,500	12.5
Odisha	409	4,272	9.6
NE (excluding Assam)	53	1,163	4.6
Assam	61	2,875	2.1

# Spread faster than in 1st wave, next 4 weeks very critical: Govt

## 'Positivity Rates Are Higher Now Due To Reduced RT-PCR Testing'

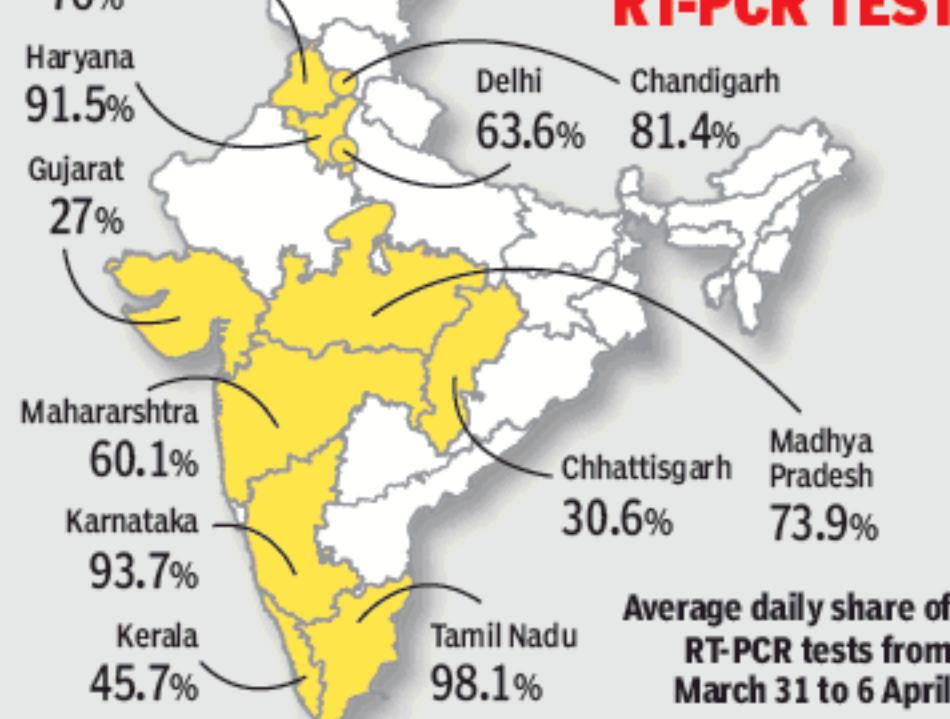
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New Delhi: A worryingly low share of RT-PCR tests in most high burden states, including Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Gujarat, Delhi and Kerala, is resulting in higher positivity rates and hurting containment measures to control Covid-19, officials said.

Senior government officials emphasised that the next four weeks are going to be critical as the pandemic is spreading faster than it did earlier as cases rise across the country. "The intensity of the pandemic has increased. In some states, it is worse but the upswing is happening all across the country... The next four weeks are very critical," Niti Aayog member Dr VK Paul said.

Maharashtra, which is witnessing a swift rise in cases and accounts for 57.42% of to-

## PERFORMANCE IN RT-PCR TEST



Seven of the top 10 districts with high active cases are in Maharashtra. Apart from it, the Centre again expressed concern over Chhattisgarh & Punjab

tal active cases, saw a fall in RT-PCR tests over the last few weeks. Only 60% of tests were RT-PCR last week, as against 71.6% during Feb 10-16.

Seven out of top 10 districts with high active cases are in Maharashtra and apart from the state, the Centre again expressed concern over Chhattisgarh and Punjab.

"We have suggested that the state governments increase the percentage of RT-

## ICMR: Only 1% of cases in India are re-infections

Around 1% of the Covid-19 cases in the country were of re-infection, defined as one positive test followed by one negative and then another positive within 102 days, Balram Bhargava, director general, Indian Council of Medical Research said on Tuesday. Earlier the period was 86 days but has been recently changed to 102 days, Bhargava added. The new definition was suggested by ICMR after studying 1,300 people, 4.5% of whom appeared to have been infected by the virus twice. The definition has been accepted globally.

PCR tests...to take it to 70% or above," Bhushan said. Officials said though the number of cases is increasing as are mortality numbers, India is still doing better than other countries. "In terms of the population size and in terms of deaths per million, we are doing well and the pandemic is in control," Paul said.



## 24-hour Covid count in state breaches 55,000 mark again

Malathy Iyer & Bhavika Jain | TNN

Mumbai: As the Covid-19 crisis prompted the Centre to despatch 30 teams of two experts each to the state, it was another day of more than half-a-lakh detections on Tuesday. At 55,469, it was the state's second highest single-day case count. Of these cases, 10,040 were added in the city.

Deaths numbered 297 in the state, the highest single-day figure in the nearly six months since October 16, when the number was 306.

The total caseload in the state touched 31.1 lakh and the

### Ambedkar Jayanti to be low-key: CM

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has appealed to people to keep celebrations of 130th birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on April 14 low-key. Thackeray said people should celebrate at home and not crowd at Chaityaboomi or Rajgruha, the residence of Ambedkar. There will be a live telecast from the memorial site at Chaityaboomi. TNN

death toll rose to 56,330. The caseload in the city reached 4.7 lakh and deaths, 11,832.

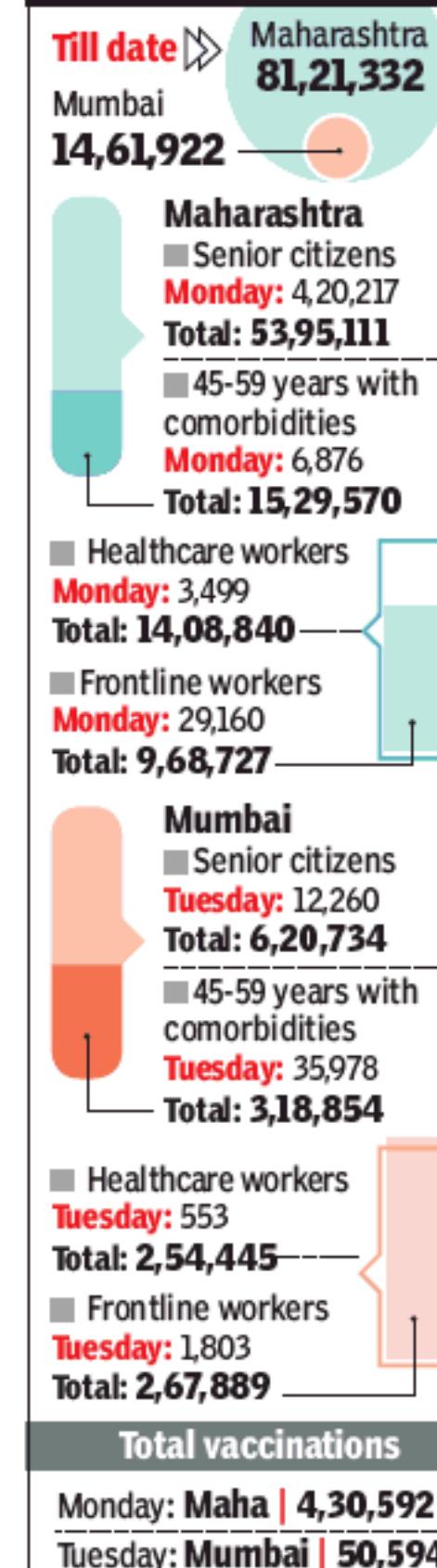
In the city, the BMC made efforts to increase the bed strength in each ward. "We have increased beds in our jumbo facilities and roped in nursing homes in every ward to ensure patients get care," said BMC executive health officer Dr Mangala Gomare.

A senior doctor from a private hospital said 10,000 daily detections had the potential to cripple any healthcare system. "We may have healthcare to treat the worst-hit patients, but what about the numbers?" the doctor said.

Even if a tenth of the daily detected patients need hospitalisation, the system will

### CASES IN CITY BACK IN 10,000-PLUS REGION

#### VACCINATION COUNT



A road in Sector 17 in Vashi sealed by the NMMC on Tuesday

#### Top 5 states with highest vaccinations

State	Cases
Maharashtra	81.3 L
Gujarat	76.9 L
Rajasthan	73 L
Uttar Pradesh	72 L
West Bengal	65.4 L

There are many centres where vaccination has stopped due to lack of doses. People are going back just because the Centre has not supplied adequate doses

Rajesh Tope | STATE HEALTH MINISTER

#### States leading in second doses

State	Cases
Uttar Pradesh	11.3 L
Rajasthan	9 L
Gujarat	8.7 L
Maharashtra	8.2 L
West Bengal	7.5 L

#### Covid-19 Update: April 6

	Maha	Mumbai
New	Cases	55,469 / 10,040
	Deaths	297 / 32
Total	Cases	31.13 L / 4.72 L
	Deaths	56,330 / 11,832
Discharged	Cases	25.83 L / 3.82 L

#### Case fatality rate (in %)

MAHARASHTRA 1.81 MUMBAI 2.55

Active cases 4.72 L 79,368

#### collapse within two weeks.

"Each moderate to severe patient needs a week or two in hospital. It is overwhelming to consider how many beds we need," the doctor said.

Each of the expert teams from the Centre comprises a clinician and a public health expert and will tour one Covid-battered district for three to four days. All teams will send the Centre daily reports.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the te-

ams would reach the state by Wednesday. The Centre justified the teams' visit with statistics: the weekly case tally in the state has ballooned 14 times since the second week of February; from 3,051 cases registered in the February 10-16 week, 44,634 cases were detected between March 31 and April 6; deaths soared eight times from 31 in the second week of February to 250 between March 31 and April 6; of the total active cases in the count-

ry, 58% were from the state and 34% of the total deaths were from the state; there are over 4.7 lakh active cases in the state, of which 79,368 were stated to be in the city.

Public health minister Rajesh Tope raised several issues with union health minister Harsh Vardhan in a meeting. He said the Centre should direct neighbouring states where oxygen need for medical purposes was low to divert their supply here.

### 'Set up vax & test centres in industrial areas, MIDC'

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Mumbai: The government must set up vaccination and RT-PCR centres in industrial areas and MIDC estates, industry associations have demanded.

Last week, a vaccination camp was organised on the Tata Motors campus in Pune where 1,000 workers got jobs. Associations have also said industries should not be burdened with providing quarantine facilities and paying workers who cannot attend work when isolated.

Meanwhile, industries stare at a four-day week as the government has announced a lockdown on weekends. Industries have their weekly off on Friday due to power shutdowns for regular maintenance.

"Though industries are allowed to operate all days, if there is a complete lockdown from 8pm Friday night to Monday 7am, then workmen and staff will not be able to travel to their place of work. Friday is the weekly holiday in the area. This in effect means a four-day working week. This will break the back of the industry," said R Srivivasan, chief executive officer, TTC MIDC Industries Association, in an email to the state government.

"There are many centres where vaccination has stopped due to lack of doses. People are going back just because the Centre has not supplied adequate doses

Rajesh Tope | STATE HEALTH MINISTER

#### SHOT OF HOPE

centres where vaccination has stopped due to lack of doses. People are going back just because the Centre has not supplied adequate doses. It is very embarrassing to send back senior citizens without vaccination," he said.

If workmen are covered under the Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESIS), then payment of wages for quarantine period must be borne by the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIS)," states the letter.

The association said MIDC must arrange e-passes for workers. P Anbalagan, CEO, MIDC, said travel passes are not required as the government order allows movement of factory workers.

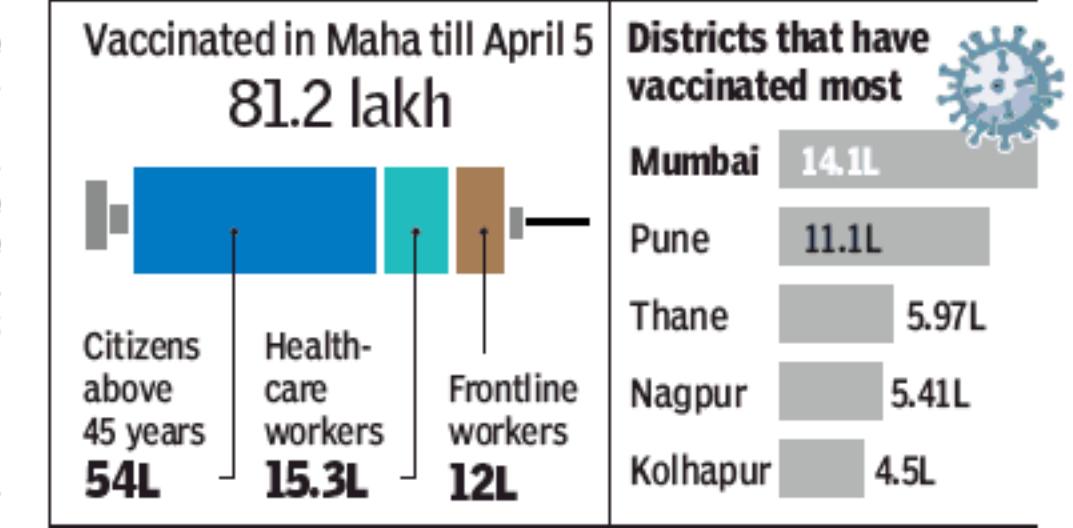
"They need to carry IDs. For vaccination and RT-PCR tests, we are coordinating with district authorities. We are taking up the issue of providing oxygen to industry with the government. Our field staff is coordinating with industry representatives."

Chief secretary Sitaram Kunte chaired a meeting with top state officials to discuss ways to speed up the drive. Average vaccination is 12.3%, though districts such as Bhandara, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Mumbai, Pune, Sangli, Gondia, Washim and Wardha are vaccinating much more.

Union health officials sa-

## Maha accounts for 10% of 8cr vax doses in country

### MOST JABS IN MUMBAI, PUNE



## Zero vax stock to halt drive in many districts

Anjaya Anparthy & Sumitra Deb Roy | TNN

Nagpur/Mumbai: Despite claims from the Centre of adequate vaccine doses, vaccination is set to come to a halt in several districts from Wednesday due to shortage. The vaccination programme in Gondia is set to stop on Wednesday as it was not left with any stocks after Tuesday's drive. Akola, Yavatmal, Buldhana and Washim—all in Amravati Division—along with Nagpur Rural and Nagpur's Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) have stocks for one more day. Without fresh supplies, they will stop vaccinating recipients from Thursday.

Mumbai has vaccine doses to last only 3-4 days while Covaxin has been out of supply in most centres. A state official said the Centre was not replenishing stock frequently, leading to this situation.

In Mumbai, a civic official confirmed they were worried about stocks. Additional municipal commissioner Suresh Kakani had said on Monday the city had 2.3 lakh Covishield doses, of which over 50,000 doses were utilised on Tuesday. Data showed less than 300 people were given Covaxin. Dr Vidya Thakur, medical superintendent of Rajawadi Hospital, said they don't have any doses of Covaxin.

Officials from Gondia told TOI the district had to reduce the number of centres from 104 to 80 on Monday due to shortage of doses.

Officials of Amravati division said the four districts have no vaccine. "Instructions have been given to all districts to stop vaccination at primary health centres in villages and continue only at district general hospitals and rural hospitals on Wednesday. If no fresh stock is received by Thursday, no one will get vaccinated. Amravati district has doses for two more days," they said. The Nagpur zilla parishad store room was emptied on April 4. State immunisation officer DN Patil said, "Today I do not have any stock. The Centre needs to continuously replenish. We are touching over 4 lakh vaccination daily."

id India, which is vaccinating 26 lakh people a day, was second only to US's 30 lakh. Within the country, Maharashtra has been contributing to over 4 lakh vaccinations since a week. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said states have been given the flexibility to design micro strategies. Data presented by principal health secretary Dr Pradeep Vyass shows the state has used 88 lakh of the 1.1 crore doses received. On Tuesday, Mumbai vaccinated 50,594, taking the count to 14.6 lakh. (With Bhavika Jain)

## No vaccination for all, say union health officials a day after CM's 25+ request

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Mumbai: A day after Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow everyone above 25 years to get vaccinated, union health officials made it clear that the drive will not be opened for all. Thackeray had said inoculating a larger number of young and working population could reduce the intensity of the spread.

The Centre said on Tuesday the vaccination policy was based on scientific principles and was intended to secure vulnerable population first keeping in mind vaccine supplies, and is no different from the approaches adopted by developed countries such as the US, the UK and Australia. Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the objective of

vaccination was to inoculate "those who needed and those who wanted it".

Bhushan said in the current phase of vaccinations till July vaccines will be in limited supply and this meant that priorities had to be drawn up to protect those most vulnerable. "The primary objective is to reduce deaths and protect the healthcare system involved in combating the pandemic," he said.

Pointing out that India has lowered the vaccination age to 45, officials cited data to show several western countries with advanced facilities have not opened vaccination to all beyond age 50. While the UK has prioritised those between 16-64 years, it is only for those with underlying health conditions and unpaid carers for the elderly and the disabled. Similarly, Australia has opened it for adults but with underlying disability or me-

dical conditions, Bhushan said.

Bhushan further said the US was targeting people in the 65-75 years bracket till mid-April. Sweden and Switzerland, which have among the most advanced healthcare, are still only targeting the 65-plus groups and in Australia it is the 70-plus and the aborigines.

Public health minister Rajesh Tope, though, once again discussed the idea of vaccinating people above 25 years with union health minister Harsh Vardhan. "Most infected patients are from the age group of 25-40 years in the state and even the country," said Tope. The state Covid taskforce, too, has demanded that an exception should be made for Maharashtra that is currently the worst affected in the country, reporting an average of 50,000 new cases everyday.

## Students of Class IX and XI may not have to take exams

Sujit Mahamulkar & Vinamrata Borwankar | TNN

Mumbai: Students of Class IX and XI in the state may be promoted to the next grade without having to appear for examinations, said an education department official on Tuesday.

The official said a decision would be taken in a day or two.

Earlier in the day, school education minister Varsha Gaikwad met officials from the education department to discuss the matter.

The official said the state could not conduct online board exams for Class X and XII as infrastructure for it was lacking.

"Even if the state decides to conduct the board exams onli-

ne, every student will have to go to school to appear for the exams using the school computer,

as is the case with competitive exams. The department will have to make those many computers available for every student.

Network issues may create problems in many rural areas.

These practical issues should be taken into consideration while parents demand online exam," the official said.

Over the course of the day, students and parents took to Twitter to demand cancellation of the Class X and XII board exams.

By evening, four lakh tweeters had used the hashtag #cancelboardexams2021.

"Students, parents and teachers are very worried about

## Min: Send meter readings, avoid hefty power bills

Mumbai: Energy minister Nitin Raut on Tuesday made an appeal to the 2.6 crore consumers of MSEDCL to check their meter readings and send them online or via mobile app for computation of monthly bill charges, to avoid getting 'hefty' bills like last summer. During the 2020 lockdown, meter readers did not go to societies in containment zones for two to three months, re-

sulting in hefty bills in June.

Raut said MSEDCL was making efforts to reduce tariff and for this, it had to bring down power purchase costs. Power purchase agreements were being reviewed and 1100MW to 1800MW electricity was being procured from the power exchange for which the costs were "being negotiated" to reduce expenses. TNN



**Govt to talk to collectors on feedback from traders**

# It's a trade-breaking, not a chain-breaking order: Assn

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai/Pune/Nagpur/Kolhapur:



## AHAR clarifies on food deliveries

AHAR said takeaways are not allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, and home deliveries will continue till 8pm. "Monday to Friday takeaways and home deliveries are allowed till 8pm; on Saturday and Sunday, only home delivery is allowed," said AHAR president Shivam Shetty. TNN

tions of Maharashtra Industry and Trade) warned that traders would launch an "aggravated statewide agitation" from Thursday if the state did not end the "illogical lockdown" by then.

"If the government fails to withdraw its order, traders across the state will go ahead and open their shops," MACCIA president Santosh Mandlecha told TOI. Mohan Gurnani, president of CAMIT said this was not a "chain-breaking but trade-breaking" order.

The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Western India (HRAWI) said 90% of restaurants in the state will be forced to shut down due to the latest 'Break the Chain' guidelines. Maharashtra has 10,500 hotels and 2.10 lakh restaurants. "Already small and medium-sized hotels and eateries are in deep financial trouble. Without government support, the industry is staring at disaster," the association stated. Poultry farmers and breeders urged the CM to permit egg and chicken shops to function.

Opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis, MNS chief Raj Thackeray and AAP have demanded that some relaxations should be given to shops. Fadnavis said the state should consider the state's economy and livelihood of small traders, while Raj suggested to CM Uddhav Thackeray that some shops should be given relaxations at least for 2-3 days in a week.

## Don't enforce blanket curbs: Civil soc groups

Mumbai: Civil society groups and activists have appealed to CM Uddhav Thackeray not to enforce Covid-19 curbs in a blanket manner. In a joint letter sent by around 40 organisations to the CM, the activists have offered to collaborate with the government to find solutions for an effective response to the pandemic.

Bilal Khan from the Working People's Charter said the guidelines do not suggest any measures to tackle the hunger crisis or compensation for the loss of livelihood. Lara Jesani from the People's Union for Civil Liberties said shutting down non-essential services will result in massive loss. "In our view, the restrictions should be put minimally and only as required, in areas that are most affected, and not in a blanket manner. Restrictions should be imposed as per trends and clinico-epidemiological profile of Covid-19 in the state. It would be more effective to adopt a decentralized approach, in consultation with communities," they said. They have suggested waiver of documentary proof to give benefits of relief packages to poor neighbourhoods under lockdown. They have also sought adequate notice to ensure safe travel of migrant workers to their hometowns. Better healthcare access, vaccination awareness drives, 24-hour helpline to deal with the pandemic and lockdown-related issues are among other suggestions. TNN

the CM alerting him to the public unrest, saying small shopkeepers, traders and retailers had not been taken into confidence. Fadnavis said he had been informed of lockdown only on the weekends, to which he had agreed, but the rigid lockdown restrictions during the week had led to anger and in several places people had come out on the streets. The Aam Aadmi Party also appealed to Thackeray to withdraw

draw the order.

Rajendra Bhatiya, Maharashtra president of Confederation of All-India Traders, said the state has allowed e-commerce and home delivery of food but ordered closure of non-essential shops. Bhatiya said they may consider moving court against the state government.

Jeweller Raichand Jain, president of Lokhandwala Vyapari Mandal, said, "On what basis do we say what is essential and what is not? If marriages are allowed, sarees and jewellery are essential for that family." Ankit Jain of the Borivali East Vyapari Association said, "Trains, buses, markets and hawkers are a far worse pandemic risk than organised businesses which implement safety norms. How will we feed our families and support our workers?"

In Girgaum, Tanaji Malusare, who runs a computer maintenance shop, said, "We service computers of hospitals and private offices, so shutting down is not feasible." Tea vendor Jeetendra Ghadge of Opera House said this was a "complete lockdown" in his view. Bandra corporator Asif Zaria said police made shops close on Linking Road and Hill Road. At Lamington Road, the hub of electronics and computer hardware, dejected traders lined up outside their shuttered shops.

Kolhapur Chamber of Commerce and Industries president Sanjay Shete said the state should either close all shops or allow all to operate. Kolhapur district guardian minister Satej Patil requested traders to shut shops after assuring them a meeting with district authorities will be called on Wednesday.

Viren Shah of retailers' association FRTWA said confusion reigned as they realised the lockdown for non-essential shops was complete. In Seawoods, Navi Mumbai, protesters said it was with difficulty they went through the lockdown last year, so another lockdown would break their backs. In Vasai-Virar, huge crowds were visible outside wine shops and vegetable markets and grocery shops were bustling.

► Also see P4

# Lamington Road restive as shops shut amid laptop boom

Priyanka.Kakodkar  
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Mumbai: The restive traders on Lamington Road in south Mumbai confront the ultimate irony: Work-from-home booms once again with the state's lockdown-style curbs, but their electronics and computer hardware shops are shut.

"This should be our time to sell laptops, routers and computer parts. But the gains will now go to e-commerce platforms," said Ravi Bohra of Libra Infotech. "They offer cheaper deals and the laptop comes home," he added bitterly.

On the first day of the 'mini-lockdown', scores of traders opened their shops, unaware the rules had kicked in. But with the police shutting them down, they stuck notices with their contact numbers outside their shops and stood huddled in silent fury.

Lamington Road has over 1,200 shops dealing with computer peripherals, electronic goods, sound, television equipment and even medical equipment/hardware.

## Now, final year students can send MU email

Mumbai: Students, whose final year results were not released, can email Mumbai University. With a surge in Covid cases and state curbs, MU made the e-mail facility available to avoid visits to campus. Students can attach scanned documents to seek results.

Arts students can email artsresult34a@gmail.com for results, scincereresult34b@gmail.com (science), commercesresult36@gmail.com (commerce), lawresult29a@gmail.com (law), enggresult36a@gmail.com (for engineering).

TNN

**TIMES ascent**  
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Pages 11-12

Tushar Jain, who set up Nax Infotax shortly before the lockdown last year, has faced nothing but losses. "I had no time to break even. As soon as I set up, I had to pay monthly rent of Rs 1.35 lakh and employee salaries worth Rs 1 lakh," he said. After October 2020, sales started looking up, but now there is another speed-breaker.

"There are two kinds of injustice that we can see in the closure of shops," said Mitesh Mody, president of the All India Electronics Association. "One is that the government is allowing e-commerce platforms to get the better of retailers, and the other is that Make in India is facing a setback. Indian manufacturers of LED televisions who sell through retail shops are at a disadvantage compared to international brands who sell via e-commerce platforms."

The 87-year old Hotel Vasant Bhuvan in the locality is also struggling for customers. "We are only allowed to do home delivery, but how many people will order now that the shops are closed?" asked owner Rajesh Yadav.

## Architects to CM: Allow us to run with 50% staff

Mumbai: The Practising Engineers, Architects and Town Planners Association (PETA) has urged the government to allow offices of architects, licensed surveyors, plumbers, engineers and other private consultants related to the construction industry to function at 50% capacity.

Architect Harshad More said construction sites are allowed to operate, but if no drawings, plans and designs are received, work will be hit, which the industry cannot afford at this stage. "The government has allowed discount in premium for a limited period and crucial time will be lost in this Break the Chain order," he said.

The Builders Association of India said festivals like Guḍí Padwa, Akshaya Tritiya, considered auspicious to book new homes, are round the corner. "If our sales office is closed, buyers will face a lot of problems. Hence, these offices need to be allowed to remain open by observing all SOPs," said the association in a letter to the CM. TNN

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## Journalist and educationist Fatma Zakaria passes away

Mumbai: Noted journalist, a former senior editor with The Times of India and educationist Fatma Zakaria died of Covid complications at Aurangabad on Tuesday. She was 85. She was admitted to a private hospital three days ago.

Widow of former minister, educationist and Islamic scholar Dr Rafiq Zakaria, Fatma Zakaria worked with The Illustrated Weekly of India and The Times of India where she was a senior assistant editor.

She also headed several institutions in Aurangabad and Mumbai, including Maulana Azad Educational Trust, Maulana Azad Educational Society, Maharashtra College and All India Khilafat Committee. "She was an able administrator, agile and active and meticulous...After Dr Zakaria's death in 2005, the mantle had fallen on her and she lived up to the expectations," said Sarfaraz Arzoo, acting chairman, Khilafat Committee. Her US-based sons, Arshad and Farzeen Zakaria, have left for India. **TNN**

## BMC to check air passengers twice a week

Mumbai: BMC officials will check international passengers at their hotels twice a week when in institutional quarantine. It on Tuesday revised the SOP for handling international passengers arriving from UK, Brazil, Europe, South Africa and Middle East.

BMC rules state that passengers from those countries are quarantined in hotels for seven days, and allowed to leave only after they test negative for Covid-19. But recently there have been cases of passengers going missing from hotels. BMC made it mandatory for its officials to visit hotels twice during the stay of a passenger, followed by maintaining a weekly report of the visits.

In case of violation of rules, the assistant commissioner will take action. —Chaitanya Marpakwar

## Nair won't be all-Covid hosp, docs end stir

Mumbai: Resident doctors at Nair Hospital withdrew their call for mass leave on Tuesday after the BMC assured that Covid beds in the hospital will not exceed the current capacity of 581. The civic body had earlier planned to dedicate over 1,000 beds for Covid.

The junior doctors went on mass leave at around 4pm on Tuesday but called it off a few hours later after their demands were met. They have been opposing turning Nair into a complete Covid hospital, saying it would hamper their training in specialised branches of medicine. Doctors from GMC in Nagpur had threatened to withdraw services from Wednesday and KEM and Sion hospital doctors had backed the Nair residents.

A Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors-Nair representative said one building on the campus and the OPD will be dedicated to Covid. A MARD statement said if BMC goes back on its word, they will revert to mass leave. Civic officials were unavailable for comment. **TNN**

## Shiv Bhojan thalis to be takeaways

Mumbai: Following closure of restaurants and eateries in the state due to a surge in Covid cases, the government decided to make available Shiv Bhojan thalis as parcels. Food & civil supplies minister Chhagan Bhujbal said the subsidized meal will be given as takeaways but the price will continue to be Rs. The thali has two chapatis, a vegetable, rice and dal. **TNN**

## Polls to co-ops pushed back

Mumbai: Considering the surge in Covid-19 cases, the state government has once again postponed elections to all cooperatives, including housing societies, this time till August 31. The state has been postponing elections to all cooperative institutions since May. Officials said the lockdown-like restrictions in the state were not conducive to holding elections. **TNN**

# Hotel bookings drop by 10% but peak season still a month away

Manju.V@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Hotel bookings dropped by around 10% between March 29-April 4, compared to the week before, following a new wave of Covid cases and restrictions, according to data shared by RateGain, a travel technology company.

But peak season for leisure travel is May, which is a month away, and more vaccinations in urban centres will help recovery, it said.

A travel agent said, "A small percentage of people booked to travel to Kashmir and south India in April but cancelled their trips. The travel sector has once again been hit due to rise in Covid cases."

Traditionally, leisure travel peaks in May, so there is time, and bookings may pick up. "Bookings reduce drastically after Holi and stay constant throughout March and April due to exams and financial year-end. This means overall leisure travel activity sees a lull after Holi and the wedding season, and picks up in May-June as school vacations start," it added.

Around five lakh passeng-



NOT DETERRED BY COVID?

ers flew to/fro Mumbai-Delhi in April 2019, while in May 2019 the number went up to six lakh, according to Directorate General of Civil Aviation passenger traffic data. Other domestic routes too registered higher traffic in May, like on Mumbai-Goa route, it was 1.6 lakh in April and 1.8 lakh in May.

"Therefore, the industry will not lose out on a good season but will see a decrease of 10-15% week-on-week in bookings in a period that witnesses lower demand traditionally," the company added. The travel

agent pointed out that the latest wave impacted forward bookings. "People will now want to wait and watch before they book for May travel," he said.

Indians are not too deterred by rising cases, said the company. "Bookings dropped by only 10% even though Covid cases are the highest recorded, telling us that the Indian traveller is being cautious but not deterred from undertaking trips," it added. Also, by May-June, India is expected to vacate 30-40 crore people, adding that hotels can expect more bookings again.

## DOORS ARE SHUT, HEARTS OPEN WIDE

Shalabh Jadhav



As all places of worship, including the Siddhivinayak temple, have been closed after curbs imposed by the state following a surge in Covid cases in the city, devotees were forced to offer prayers from outside

# BMC retaking pvt hosp & centres, starting at Dharavi

Chaitanya.Marpakwar  
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Mumbai: With a surge in Covid-19 cases, BMC is reacquiring private hospitals and centres it had shut down last year after cases started ebbing. BMC reacquired Sai Hospital, the first dedicated Covid-19 hospital, for Dharavi.

"We decided to reacquire the entire hospital. This will once again be a dedicated Covid hospital for patients from Dharavi. It has regular and ICU beds with ventilators and oxygen support beds," said Kiran Digbavkar, assistant municipal commissioner (G-South ward).

BMC had last April taken over the 51-bed private hospital for an isolation centre for patients from Dharavi. This was the first time BMC took over an entire hospital with doctors, technicians, nurses and other staff under Epidemic Diseases Act to tackle the outbreak in Asia's largest slum.



Fresh surge in Covid cases

Last year, BMC also acquired District Sports Complex near Dharavi for housing high-risk contacts. The facility was used as an isolation centre. BMC had set up a 300-bed facility at the sports complex.

On Monday BMC said Dharavi recorded 47 new cases. The number of cases in Dharavi was 5,239 on Monday.

In G-South ward (Worli, Lower Parel and Prabhadevi), BMC has taken back space at Nehru Science Centre, where it will add 200 beds, more space

at NSCI complex to add 250 beds and Podar Hospital, 200 beds.

"We will add 650 more beds in view of a rise in cases. We want to ensure patients from the ward get a bed in the ward itself. Most beds will have oxygen support and some at NSCI will have an ICU," said Sharad Ughade, assistant municipal commissioner (G-South ward).

In T ward (Mulund), BMC recently opened its 275-bed Covid centre at Mithagar School after two Covid hospitals in Mulund Bhandup belt were shut down following fires, to tackle a scramble for beds. Kishore Gandhi, assistant municipal commissioner (T ward)

said, "We restarted the centre at Mithagar. We started 60 beds and in a week, we will increase it to 275. We are also starting dialysis for Covid patients here. We will restart the Covid centre at Mulund octroi naka if there is a shortage of beds."

## 2 auto drivers who molested woman in vehicle arrested

V.Narayan@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: A month after a 39-year-old homemaker was molested in a moving autorickshaw, Andheri police on Tuesday arrested two autorickshaw drivers. The victim suffered injuries on her head and hands after she jumped off the moving vehicle. The accused, Aniket Jaiswal, 21, and Surajkumar Rajbhar, 24, were tracked with the help of a sketch made based on the victim's description. Jaiswal, who had been arrested in February 2020 for molesting a minor, was out on bail.

The incident occurred on March 7 afternoon when the Kandivali resident took a shared rickshaw from Gundavali bus depot at Azad Nagar, Andheri (east). "I was heading towards the bus depot when the auto driver halted nearby. I agreed to travel on seat-sharing basis

when the driver told me the passenger already seated was headed towards Kandivali. When the auto reached Western Express highway, the passenger started touching me inappropriately. I asked the driver to stop but he didn't. Suddenly, the driver stopped the auto and sat

next to me, while the passenger started driving. I jumped off the auto near Jogeshwari (east), the victim has stated in her complaint.

Lokals took the victim to a hospital nearby and called the police. Based on the complaint, DCP Maheshwar Red-

dy supervised a team led by Andheri police senior inspector Vijay Belge. The woman, who was traumatised by the incident, was provided counselling too. "Nearly 30-40 autorickshaw drivers were questioned. One of them identified Jaiswal whose arrest led to Rajbhar. It was learnt that Samta Nagar police in Kandivali had arrested Jaiswal last year under the Pocso Act for molesting a minor girl. In September, the court released him on bail due to the Covid-19 pandemic," said assistant police inspector, Ganesh Pisal.

The duo has been booked under the Indian Penal Code sections 34 (common intention), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety) and 354 (outraging modesty). They will be produced before the Andheri court on Wednesday.

**HELPLINES:** BMC | 022-24131212, 91-2242131212; Vanawala Foundation | 1860 266 2345, 022-25706000 & 022-25706000. **TNN**

## Beaches shut for visitors till April 30

# Hospitals, patient families flag Remdesivir shortage

Sumitra.DebRoy  
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Mumbai: Antiviral drug Remdesivir is again in short supply in the city and parts of the state as Covid cases soar. There is an estimated deficit of nearly 20,000 doses with the state getting 50,000-55,000 against a daily requirement of 70,000-plus, officials told TOI.

Urban development minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday directed beaches to be shut till April 30 in view of the second wave of Covid-19.

Last month, with crowds thronging to beaches in the city, especially on weekends, throwing Covid-19 restrictions to the wind, BJP MLA Ameet Satam from Andheri (W) had demanded that Juhu beach be made out of bounds on weekends. In a letter to Chahal, Satam had said in the wake of the rising cases, the beach should be shut for visitors from Friday to Sunday evening till the Covid situation in the city comes under control, since visiting the beach is definitely not an essential activity.

"There is a huge gathering in the evening on Juhu beach, which may lead to further spread of virus," Satam said. —Chaitanya Marpakwar

## HAVE ENOUGH STOCKS: FDA

for each dose of Remdesivir than the base price, FDA has found

Zydus Cadila reduced the drug's MRP from ₹2,800 to ₹900, while Mylan slashed it to ₹600 for government procurement

Patients are shelling out at least 250% more



## IMA: Give drug in OPDs to home-isolated patients

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has suggested that the use of Remdesivir be allowed for selected home-isolated patients on an OPD basis, either at clinics or hospitals, reports Umesh Isalkar. Currently, the drug is given only to those hospitalised with Covid.

The suggestion by IMA members at a recent meeting with the Pune Covid task force and civic health officials is significant as a large chunk of patients during the second wave has opted for home isolation. If some of these patients experience drops in blood oxygen levels, they'll have to seek out hospital beds to get Remdesivir.

Claiming there is no shortage, FDA commissioner Abhilash Manohar Kale told TOI that the state had 1.3 lakh doses as on Tuesday. Of that, 12,202 vials were with the distributors for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Public health minister Rakesh Tope, in a meeting with the Union health minister Harsh Vardhan, asked the Centre to ensure enough supply of Remdesivir. Tope also flagged hoarding and unnecessary use of the drug. "I have come across hospitals giving Remdesivir to asymptomatic or even mild patients to make money," he said, adding that district officials have been asked to visit private hospitals to check misuse of the drug. A committee under Dr Sudhakar Shinde has been constituted to cap Remdesivir.

Doctors at the LifeLine Medicare Hospital in Kandivali said they didn't have a single dose of Remdesivir as on Tuesday evening. Dr Shilpa Ambekar, hospital head, said they hadn't received any Remdesivir stocks in the past 10 days. Around Tuesday noon, Sanjeevani Hospital in Malad, which has over 100 patients, had run out of Remdesivir stock. We had no choice but to tell the relatives to procure it using their contacts," she said. Ambekar said she got messages from some stockists claiming they could arrange for stocks for a higher price, but she declined. Ranjit Ranawat, owner of Red Rose Chemist in south Mumbai, hospital head, said they hadn't received any Remdesivir stocks in the past 10 days.

Doctors at the LifeLine Medicare Hospital in Kandivali said they didn't have a single dose of Remdesivir as on Tuesday evening. Dr Shilpa Ambekar, hospital head, said they hadn't received any Remdesivir stocks in the past 10 days.

Sanjeev Wavare, PMC's nodal officer for Covid-19, said, "The suggestion is currently under consideration."

"Nearly 50% are on the drug," said hospital head Dr Sunil Agarwal. It had placed orders for 200 vials on Saturday, which finally arrived on Tuesday evening.

An FDA official said the state was receiving a daily supply of up to 55,000 doses but the demand was way more. "Many companies, which had slowed down manufacturing, are now increasing production again," the official said. Six pharmaceutical companies are currently manufacturing Remdesivir.

Doctors at the LifeLine Medicare Hospital in Kandivali said they didn't have a single dose of Remdesivir as on Tuesday evening. Dr Shilpa Ambekar, hospital head, said they hadn't received any Remdesivir stocks in the past 10 days.

Around Tuesday noon, Sanjeevani Hospital in Malad, which has over 100 patients, had run out of Remdesivir

## Anil Ambani's son tears into govt's lockdowns

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Industrialist Anil Ambani's eldest son Anmol, who is executive director of Reliance Capital, on Tuesday created a flutter on social media with a string of Twitter posts that not only tore into lockdowns—which he said "destroy the very backbone of our society and economy"—but said they were "about control" and were "part of a much larger and very sinister plan...to control every aspect of your life".

The 28-year-old Ambani's posts began at 8.36pm on Monday, hours after Maharashtra announced a partial-to-total lockdown through the week. The first tweet said: "Professional 'actors' can continue shooting their films. Professional 'cricketers' can play their sport late into the night. Professional 'politicians' can continue their rallies with masses of people. But YOUR BUSINESS or work is not ESSENTIAL. Still don't get it?"



The fourth said, "This is not about health. This is about control, and I would think most of us are unknowingly and unconsciously falling into the trap of a much larger and very sinister plan. To control every aspect of your life—A technocracy exactly like China—A totalitarian bio-surveillance fascist (sic) state-controlled from the outside. But I have faith in India and Indian people. That we will resist this global coup d'état and not let our country get colonised even more. All we need to do is wake up to the truth. Stand for love, peace, unity and compassion."

The third said, "These lockdowns were never about

## Not a case of child being pressured by parents: HC

► From P 1

The court further observed the accused had not engaged an advocate and had maintained that he was being falsely implicated at the instance of the relative. He had also denied all allegations levelled against him before a doctor.

The court observed there was no reason for the child not to narrate the incident to her mother when she visited her. "Prosecutrix (child) was not ready to go with her mother after her. Not only the prosecutrix, but her other two sisters were also staying with their father," the court pointed out.

**HELPLINES:** BMC | 022-24131212, 91-2242131212; Vanawala Foundation | 1860 266 2345, 022-25706000 & 022-25706000. **TNN**

with her cousin and the accused was behind bars since his arrest, this was not a case of the child being pressured by her parents to depose in favour of the father.

The court also observed that since the child was living

## 19 yrs later, SBI staffer gets 3 yrs' jail for fraud

Mumbai: Almost 19 years after an SBI clearing department employee was accused of cheating it of Rs 3.4 lakh, a magistrate court convicted and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for sexually assaulting his four-year-old neighbour in 2015. Refuting the defence that a four-day delay in registering the FIR was fatal to the case, the court held in cases of sexual assault, families hesitate to inform the police. The court said while eventually some reach the level of legal proceedings, only few defend the case until the end. **TNN**

&lt;p

## Delhi carpenter cheats Malad accountant of ₹2.8L; arrested

Mumbai: A 22-year-old carpenter from New Delhi was arrested by Malad police recently after an accountant was defrauded of Rs 2.8 lakh. At least two others are wanted, including a female 'bank employee' who called up the accountant. In July 2020, the accountant got calls from 'bank employee' Priya Sharma, offering a Rs 12 lakh personal loan. When he gave in, Sharma asked for Rs 12,600 to be paid for instant loan approval. The accountant did so but her demands escalated. He went to Delhi to verify the identity of the account-holder to whom he had been making transfers totally Rs 2.8 lakh. On finding no such individual existed, he lodged a complaint with police. Police said the money was transferred to Manish Sharma, a carpenter. Sharma was held on March 23, said senior inspector Dhananjay Ligade. **TNN**

# New home minister promises no 'political interference' for police

Bhavika.Jain1@timesgroup.com



Dilip Walse Patil takes charge as state home minister on Tuesday

Mumbai: Senior NCP leader Dilip Walse Patil, who took charge as Maharashtra home minister on Tuesday, said he will work towards strengthening the image of the police force and ensure that there is no political interference in the working of the department.

Patil has replaced NCP's Anil Deshmukh who tendered his resignation to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday after the Bombay high court ordered a CBI investigation into the corruption allegations levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

"My focus will be to maintain a clean image of the police and bring out transparency in their working,"

The common man should be able to trust the police. The department is a profession system and it should work like that without any political interference," said Patil. On the HC-directed pre-

liminary inquiry against Deshmukh, Walse Patil said that his ministry will extend full cooperation to the CBI. However, he added, the Maha Vikas Aghadi government will challenge the HC

order in the Supreme Court.

The minister assured that police transfers will be done as per the norms, and that police housing and recruitment will be expedited. "This is a very challenging and difficult time for the department. Due to pandemic, the entire force is on the street today to implement the restrictions announced by the government. Steps will be taken to strengthen the police force," he said.

When asked how sensitive information from the home department seems to be leaked to leader of opposition Devendra Fadnavis, Patil said that since Fadnavis was the chief minister and also the home minister for five years, it is obvious that he is in touch with people in the department.

**Draft coastal zone mgmt plans get nod**

Mumbai: The draft Coastal Zone Management Plans (CZMP) for the city and suburbs have been approved by the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA).

As per the minutes of the meeting, the CZMPs have been adopted in line with the provisions of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2019. The draft CZMPs show the demarcation of the high tide line, low tide line and hazard line along with the various classification of CRZ categories as well as coastal land use maps indicating eco-sensitive areas. Land use information pertaining to fishing villages, fishing infrastructure, highways and roads would be superimposed on the CZMP by local bodies, said the MCZMA.

With regard to any disparity in the CZMPs, the issue is to be referred to the ministry of environment, forest and climate change for rectification along with valid reasons for the same. The ministry will, in turn, refer the matter to the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management for verification based on latest satellite imagery and ground truthing. **TNN**

## Cops called to evict 15 corporators from Panvel civic house

Umesh K Parida

Navi Mumbai: Fourteen opposition corporators and one from BJP were suspended for a month by Panvel mayor Dr Kvita Choutmol on Monday. Police were used to evict them during the special general body meeting of the Panvel City Municipal Corporation convened to debate property tax.

Opposition members were demanding a physical session instead of an online one. The house was adjourned thrice. "BJP-ruled PCMC used police to evict us after turning down our demands for a physical general body meeting. Fourteen corporators, who are members of parties which are constituents of MVA, and one BJP corporator, Leena Garad, have been suspended for a month in blatant violation of laws. It is a black day and PCMC general body should be dismissed," said suspended corporator Ganesh Kadu.

"I will not comment on police action," said senior police inspector Ajaykumar Lande. "Security guards and poli-

cemen were pressed into service in the house during the meeting in violation of the law. Corporators cannot be suspended for any unruly situation in just one session," said Garad.

"After issuing warnings and adjournments, the suspension was ordered. The Corporation Procedure Rules (CPR) have not been framed," said Choutmol.

"Mayor and deputy mayor have no authority under the Municipal Corporation Act to call any force into the house in whatsoever situation. Framing of the CPR is mandatory to conduct house business," said former BMC secretary Narayan Pathare. "Mayor has to consider the behaviour of the corporators for two or three consecutive sessions before suspending any corporator. Police forces cannot be used in the house," said NMMC secretary Chitra Baviskar.

"I will not comment on police action," said senior police inspector Ajaykumar Lande.

**Probe actor's tweets against student: Court**

## Deshmukh: HC order could stigmatise me

From P 1

order on the appeal without hearing the respondents.

Deshmukh apprehended that the order would adversely impact the country's federal structure. He also said the HC did not adhere to the basic principles of natural justice in adjudication of petitions. Hesaid the HC ordered a CBI probe without even bothering to hear him, and this had the potential of stigmatizing him and supplanting the entire state machinery. "In the annals of judicial history, there has hardly been an occasion when the court has taken statements made against a sitting minister at face value and proceeded to direct an outside agency, without calling for a response from the minister, to conduct a preliminary inquiry," he said.

Accusing Singh of making the allegations after his transfer to the home guard department and creating evidence with intent, Deshmukh said, "These aspects were required to be looked into...that the CBI at present is headed by an interim director...ought to have been taken into account by the HC before entitling the preliminary probe to the central agency."

It said the HC should have taken note that Maharashtra government had withdrawn general consent for a CBI probe into cases in the state. It said the HC erred by directing a CBI probe through an interim order. Though the HC and the SC had powers to direct a CBI probe even when a state had withdrawn general consent, it could be done only after hearing all parties and through a final order, the Maharashtra government said.

Since the respondents in the SLP filed by Maharashtra government already filed caveats, the HC before entitling the preliminary probe to the central agency.

## Guard loses his life over a game of Ludo

Mumbai: A security guard, Tukaram Nalawade (62), lost his life over a mobile Ludo game.

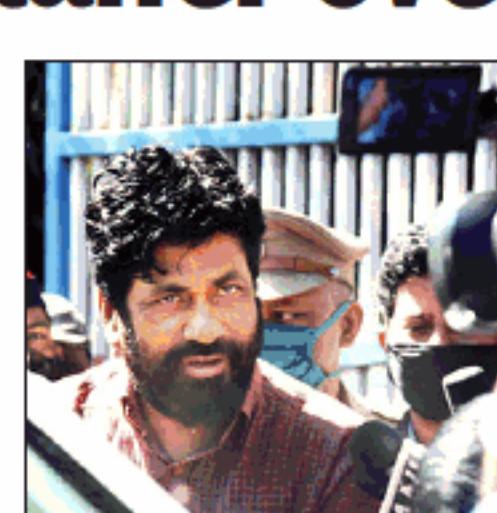
Nalawade, who lived with his family in a chawla at Darwala Compound in Malad (W), often met his friend Amit Rajpopat (34) and they would play games on their phones. "On March 17, around 10.30pm, they met on an open ground and were playing Ludo on their phone. When Nalawade, who usually lost, started winning every single game, Rajpopat lost his cool and rained kicks and blows on him," said a police officer.

While heading back home, Nalawade collapsed. His family members rushed him to hospital where he was pronounced dead. "Concerned about the pandemic restrictions, his family conducted his last rites without informing the police or sending the body for an autopsy. But during the funeral, a neighbour informed Nalawade's kin that he had been beaten up by Rajpopat," said the officer.

On March 20, the family filed a complaint, and the Malad police registered a murder case and arrested Rajpopat. **TNN**

## Junior min slaps Covid hosp mess staffer over 'scam'

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ses daily. After inspection, Kadu got the contractor and employees together and again asked the question. This time, Morey said they cook 10kg pulses daily, which made Kadu angry. After repeatedly asking him to tell the truth, Kadu slapped Morey.

Kadu, minister of state for water resources and school education, told **TOI** there was a 'scam' at the mess. "A month's

supply of grains was demanded as per the register, but only eight days' foodgrains were supplied. For eight months, there has been no record of foodgrains arriving at the district hospital for Covid patients," said Kadu, adding that he had ordered an inquiry.

"Instead of the slapping incident, one must concentrate on gross corruption noticed during inspection," the minister said. Kadu tasked Akola sub-divisional officer Nitesh Apar with the inquiry. Sources said suspension was proposed. The person slapped was a contractual employee.

"Does the rule of law exist in the state? How can a minister beat an employee over a meal issue?" tweeted BJP MLA Atul Bhathalkar. "File a case against Bachchu Kadu for assaulting a government employee," he added.

Finding the quality of pulses poor, he asked how much pulses was cooked daily for the hospital, where more than 1,500 patients are. Contractor Sahebrao Kumte said they needed 10kg pulses daily. Kadu asked the same question to kitchen in-charge Sunil Morey, who said they cook not more than 6kg pulses.

# Sarnaik's aide held in money laundering case

VijayV.Singh@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Thane-based builder Yogesh Deshmukh, an associate of Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik, in the money laundering case related to NSEL scam.

The ED produced Deshmukh before a special court on Tuesday which remanded him in ED custody till April 9.

The ED is investigating Sarnaik, whose company allegedly received Rs 11 crore from NSEL scam money.

The ED had attached the Titwala plots in 2014 and afterwards the adjudication authority had confirmed the attachment. The ED officials informed the local revenue authority about the attachment to ensure that no further transactions related to the land take place. But the revenue officials failed to take the ED's attachment order notice on their record.

Recently, the ED officials learnt that Deshmukh with the help of Sarnaik was developing the attached plots for sale. The ED followed up the issue with the revenue official to take the attachment order on the revenue department record and took possession of the lands in January.

## 200 double-deckers, no power cuts: BEST



AT ITS BEST?

Chemburkar said he directed electricity wing officials to strengthen the network and cabling in the island city, and ensure against power cuts during summer.

Chemburkar said he will push for Rs 406-crore 'assistance' from BMC to settle gratuity claims of retired BEST staffs and pending Covid allowance (daily Rs300) for drivers and conductors for the last few months. —Somit Sen

## Dalit scholar, poet pan Ambedkar committee

Ambarish Mishra

Mumbai: Two members of the state-backed committee to gather and streamline the unpublished writings of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar have written to the government, venting grievances about its composition.

Noted Dalit ideologue JVP Pawar has questioned the credentials of Krishna Kamble, who has been appointed member-secretary of the high-profile panel and will be helming the committee meetings. In a letter to higher education minister Uday Samant, Pawar said he was not willing to work under Kamble, whose credentials as Ambedkar researcher were dubious. "Not many members know about Kamble... In view of this, it would be humiliating for me to work as a committee member," he said.

On the other hand, noted Dalit poet Pradyumn Pawar has regretted the inadequate representation of women researchers. In a letter to Samant, she pointed out that in view of Dr Ambedkar's prolonged crusade to uplift women, the panel should have offered more seats to them. "I am the only woman in the 23-strong committee," she pointed out.

With the Maha Vikas Aghadi government passing through a rough patch, political observers said the coalition cannot afford to rub Dalit community leaders the wrong way.

Ambedkar scholar Pawar has edited several volumes on the iconic Dalit movement, which altered the state's socio-political narrative. "Not only is Kamble far junior to me in the field of Dalit studies, he hasn't made any remarkable contribution to the subject," Pawar, who has been researching Dr Ambedkar's writings since 1970s, told **TOI** on Tuesday.

## Former Shiv Sena MLA joins BJP

Former Shiv Sena MLA from Bandra (E) Trupti Sawant joined the BJP in the presence of former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and opposition leader Pravin Daharker on Tuesday. Sawant was expelled from the Sena for rebelling against its official candidate in the state assembly polls in 2019. **TNN**

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SHIVRAJ SITS FOR 24HRS IN FRONT OF GANDHI STATUE TO PROMOTE AWARENESS ON CORONA PRECAUTIONS

1ST TIME AFTER CM SAWANT ANNOUNCED FORMATION OF GOA MINING CORPORATION, SC TO HEAR MATTER



## Russia may make 'additional' military equipment in India

Mantris Hedge Query On S-400 System Delivery

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New Delhi: Even as the US continues to discourage India from procuring advanced weapon systems from Russia, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to military-technical cooperation with Moscow, saying discussions were underway to manufacture "additional" Russian military equipment in India under the Make in India initiative.

A meeting between foreign minister S Jaishankar and his visiting counterpart Sergey Lavrov saw the Indian side explaining its understanding of the Indo-Pacific, a concept Moscow does not share, and also discussions on the developing situation in Afghanistan, with Lavrov underlining a "similarity of Russian and Indian approaches".



External affairs minister S Jaishankar (right) with his Russian counterpart at a meeting in Delhi on Tuesday

After the meeting that laid the groundwork for PM Narendra Modi's summit with President Vladimir Putin later this year, Lavrov also described as counter-productive alleged efforts to cobble together what he described as Nato-like alliances in Asia and said this issue had been discussed in the meeting. Lavrov didn't directly mention the Quad and said India too held the same position on military alliances. His visit came in the middle of the three-day Quad plus France naval exercise in

the Bay of Bengal.

Lavrov's remarks on the proposal to manufacture more equipment here came in response to a question about the threat of sanctions on India by the Biden administration if the Modi government went ahead with the purchase of S-400 air defence system from Russia.

Both leaders were not forthcoming on when the delivery of S-400 system will take place with Jaishankar saying the issue would be discussed when the defence ministers meet later this year.

### Quad drill must keep peace in mind: China

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Tuesday that military cooperation between countries should be conducive to regional peace and stability, a day after Quad members, including India, joined France in a mega naval wargame in the Indian Ocean amid Beijing's aggressive actions in the region. The Indian Ocean, considered the backyard of the Indian navy, is critical for India's strategic interests. China has been making concerted efforts to increase its presence in the region. PTI

### Making Indian vaxin Russia can't be ruled out'

Russia has signed several contracts with Indian firms to manufacture over 700 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday, as he didn't rule out the possibility that "further cooperation could cover manufacturing of the Indian vaccine in Russia".

## Bus passengers robbed of ₹1.7L at gunpoint

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

Agra: At least six armed unidentified miscreants boarded a double-decker private bus near milestone 89 on Yamuna expressway in Mathura's Surjpur area early on Tuesday and looted Rs 1.7 lakh from the bus conductor and passengers after thrashing them. The bus carrying 25 passengers was heading from Delhi to Hamirpur in Uttar Pradesh.

Mathura SSP Gaurav Grover said at 12.30 am, some unidentified persons, posing as passengers, boarded the bus at an unauthorised stop in Surjpur. They assaulted the bus conductor and then looted the passengers at gunpoint.

An FIR has been registered, and a forensic team as well as dog squad were set to the crime spot to collect evidence. "Five teams have been formed to trace the suspects," said Grover.

Major (retired) Manish Singh, in charge of the Yamuna expressway corridor control (Mathura-Agra section), said it is a common practice among bus drivers to pick up passengers from unauthorised locations on the expressway. "If this is not stopped, such unfortunate incidents will keep happening," he said.

## Wholesale onion price falls below ₹800 a quintal

Nashik: The average wholesale price of onions dropped below Rs 800 per quintal at Nashik's Lasalgao APMC, the country's largest wholesale onion market, in the past two days, reports Tushar Pawar. The average wholesale onion price was recorded at Rs 750 per quintal on Tuesday at Lasalgao.

According to APMC officials, the rise in supply has led to the drop. "Supply has increased to almost 30,000 quintal a day at Lasalgao. However, the demand is comparatively low. The trend is the same in all onion-growing states in the country, which has reduced the demand for Nashik onions," said an official. "Exports are also not satisfactory. The demand is low on that front as well."

Traders said the price will be in the range of Rs 700-850 per quintal for the next fortnight.

## Ladakh inks land deal for 50MW solar project

Leh: Ladakh began its quest for carbon-neutral status initiating a first-of-its-kind battery storage-based solar project of 50MW capacity to make Leh self-sufficient in power.

SECI, the central agency implementing the National Solar Mission, and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council on Tuesday signed a land agreement for the project that will supply power at Rs 2 per unit, among the cheapest in the country. — Sanjay Dutta

<http://www.nimhans.ac.in>

## Refiners fear demand dip, cut Saudi oil imports

Sanjay.Dutta@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Indian refiners are reducing crude shipments under term contracts, including from OPEC lynchpin Saudi Arabia, and are looking at raising spot purchase to better manage expected contraction in demand in the coming months as several units head for maintenance shutdowns and a resurgence in Covid cases prompts lockdowns.

Sources said May shipment orders for Saudi crude from Indian Oil Corporation and three other refiners stood at 65% of the monthly average of about 15 million barrels.

The reduction comes after Saudi Aramco raised the May 'official selling price' for Asian buyers, and Riyadh ignored India's persistent calls to reverse production cut.

A term contract binds refiners. Though they can defer shipments in case of a fall in demand, they have to meet the annual offtake commitment. Spot purchase offers flexibility in managing demand and opens windows for procuring distress cargos at discounts.

## Parents struggle to get birth certificate of boy born on flight

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Jaipur: Parents of the boy who was born on a Bengaluru-Jaipur flight last month have been running from pillar to post to get a birth certificate for their child who is now 20 days old.

The couple boarded the flight around 5.45am from Bengaluru and landed in Jaipur airport around 8am on March 17 with their newborn. As per the rule, the document must be issued within 21 days of birth.

Bhairu Singh, the father, said, "After the delivery, we were taken to a private hospital in Jaipur but I didn't get my wife and child admitted as it was very expensive... So after an initial checkup, we came straight to my village Jaliya Rupabas in Beawar district."

Bhairu then started the process of getting his son's birth certificate. "I went to the sarpanch, who told me to go to the government ho-



The baby is 20 days old. The document has to be issued within 21 days of birth

spital, from where I was sent to another hospital. Both hospitals' officials were confused as soon as I said that my son was born mid-air. They told me to go to the gram panchayat," he said.

The gram panchayat initially declined to issue the certificate, citing jurisdiction. "Although the certificate should be issued in Jaipur, we will start the process as now there is no other option left," said sarpanch Dilip Singh.

District administration officials assured TOI that the birth certificate would be issued at the earliest.

## Take action against temple priest: Jamiat chief to PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



New Delhi: Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) general secretary Mahmood A Madani has written a letter to PM Narendra Modi, urging him to take punitive action against Yati Narshingharnand Saraswati for using "the filthiest and most abusive epithets to insult the Prophet".

### 'INSULT TO PROPHET'

Madani said in his letter that "due to the inaction of the police and law enforcement agencies, more and more such hate mongers are getting emboldened day by day". He said despite an FIR being filed, no action has been taken against Saraswati.

A video of Saraswati, who is reportedly the chief priest of Ghaziabad's Dasma Devi temple, went viral last week. He and the temple hit the headlines recently after a 14-year-old Muslim boy who went inside the premises to have water was thrashed.

## 70 years after soldier's suicide, U'khand widow to get pension

Prem Punetha | TNN



Paruli Devi, 82, said the payout is an acknowledgement of her loss

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Pithoragarh: In 1952, when Paruli Devi was 12, her husband, a soldier, killed himself. She never knew why. They had been married for just two months. Years went by. But a chance conversation about a woman in her village, a soldier's widow like herself, finally got her hope sparked. And after a seven-year battle, Devi, now 82, has been declared eligible as well.

"It is not just about money. It is about recognition of my loss," said Devi. Her husband, Gagan Singh, 20, joined the army's Kumaon regiment in 1946. After his death, she went to live with her brothers, and never thought of compensation.

In July 1977, a woman had challenged the rule in the Allahabad HC that only war widows were eligible for pension. In 1985, the judge ruled in her favour.

Kumaon Regiment Centre has now finally accepted Devi's claim. "Her pension of Rs 11,700 starts immediately. She will get Rs 20 lakh as arrears since July 1977," Bhandari said.

It was a difficult case—it was very old and her husband

had not died fighting or at a posting. As per the rules, pension for death is given when someone dies in service, or because of causes attributable to military service, or in war or counter-insurgency operations. Family pension is given in case of "natural death of the individual", at 30% of the last drawn pay.

In July 1977, a woman had challenged the rule in the Allahabad HC that only war widows were eligible for pension. In 1985, the judge ruled in her favour.

Kumaon Regiment Centre has now finally accepted Devi's claim. "Her pension of Rs 11,700 starts immediately. She will get Rs 20 lakh as arrears since July 1977," Bhandari said.

## Teen married off for ₹6k under lockdown cover

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@timesgroup.com

Dehradun: When school reopened in February at a village in Chamoli, one girl was missing. The teacher asked around. Exams were around the corner and she was nowhere to be found.

After relentless questioning, the girl's father finally confessed that the 14-year-old had been married off to a 32-year-old man, for which Rs 6,000 had exchanged hands, during the lockdown. For a year, she was tortured and raped.

The teacher persuaded the father to bring her back from Dehradun. In a video, he narrated her plight. After seeing the clip, the state ordered an investigation and an FIR is being filed.

On Monday, the girl was back at school, to sit an exam. "My husband would beat me up. He never treated me well," she told TOI.

The teacher said the girl's mother died a few years ago. "She has three younger siblings at home. Her elder sister too, was married off before she turned 18," he added.

## CONGRATULATIONS and welcome to the circle of smarts!

Winners of the TOI Crossword contest dtd. 4th April

• Anuj Jain, Ahmedabad	• Rima Sau, Howrah
• Anurag, Gurgaon	• Sandeep, Jaipur
• Balwant Kumar Singh, Patna	• Swarupa Bhagwat, Mumbai
• C. Dilip Viswaraj, Chennai	• Viswanathan Sundaresan, Mumbai
• Dr. Sushama Shankar, Lucknow	• Zeeshan Fatima, Hyderabad
• Gagan, Delhi	The Times of India
• Jaya Bali, Pune	CROSS WORD
• JR Anitha, Bengaluru	EVERY SUNDAY
• Lata V S, Bengaluru	THE TIMES OF INDIA
• Nimish Sharma, Vadodara	CHANGE Begins Here

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SAD DEMISE

Sad Demise



**Mr John Samuel**  
(John - 70 years)  
of Thyel House, Koper  
Khairane (Navi Mumbai),  
left for heavenly abode on  
6th April 2021  
The funeral service will be  
held on Wednesday, 07 April  
2021, 11:00am at Sewri  
Cemetery.

Deeply mourned by  
Sharon (Daughter), Susha  
(Wife), Family & FriendsWith profound grief  
we inform the Sad Demise  
of our mother

## Obituary



**Mrs. Shyamal Kulkarni**  
Professor, Author, Stage  
Actor, Humorist, Mimicry  
Artist, Radio & TV Producer  
and Coach left for her  
heavenly abode on April  
2nd, 2021. She is survived  
by her husband Mr. A. K.  
Kulkarni

(former Financial Advisor  
and Chief Accounts Officer -  
Mumbai Port Trust).Please keep us in your  
Prayers.Residence-101, Balaji  
Kalash CHS, Plot no.28  
&29, Sector 28, Nerul,  
Navi Mumbai-400706

Tel +91 98679 92413

In Grief:  
Srija Shahit (Wife)  
Shefina Shahit (Son)  
Family and FriendsDeeply Mourned by  
Son -

Dr. Harshvardhan Ajaonkar

Daughter- Dr. Hemangi Ullal

Son in law- Dr.Umesh Ullal

Daughter in law -

Dr.Roopali Ajaonkar

Grandchildren - Aryan Ullal

and Viraj Ajaonkar

With profound grief, we  
inform you the sad  
demise of

Shajit P Bhaskaran

on 05/04/2021 in  
Navi Mumbai.Please keep us in your  
Prayers.Residence-101, Balaji  
Kalash CHS, Plot no.28  
&29, Sector 28, Nerul,  
Navi Mumbai-400706

Tel +91 98679 92413

In Grief:  
Srija Shahit (Wife)  
Shefina Shahit (Son)  
Family and FriendsYou will always be in our  
hearts and deeply missed.A. K. Kulkarni  
Amol-Meghana,  
Anuja-Umesh,  
Dhruv, Janhvi, AdhitIN LOVING  
MEMORYYou are our  
inspiration and  
guiding lightMONTHS MIND  
IN MEMORY OF

PHILOMENA FERNANDES

BORN - 5 JULY 1934  
DIED - 7 MARCH 2021.WIFE OF LATE FELIX  
FERNANDES  
(EX. CADBURY'S)MOTHER OF VIJAY/JILLIAN,  
SANJAY/ESHU,KIRAN/NAFEES &  
CLEMENTINE.GRANDMOTHER OF ANAL/  
ANU, DWAYNE, NAESER,

DARRYN, AYESHA &amp; JAY.

MASS AT HOLY CROSS CHURCH  
KURLA AT 7PM TODAYSHRI V S  
AMARNATH  
SURYPassed away  
peacefully on  
2nd Apr 2021  
in Mumbai.A gentle soul,  
remembered for his  
warm generosity,  
magnetic personality,  
endless gratitude,  
unshakeable faith and  
a life well lived in  
service of music and  
the artsShyamala Sury,  
Arvind & Lata,  
Anupama & Rajesh  
Vishal & Varun,  
Adhvay & Arav,  
siblings Lalitham,  
Krishna, Pankaj  
and familiesEmail :  
asarvind2006@gmail.comWith Profound Grief  
we wish to inform the  
sad demise of our belovedMURLIDHAR  
GIRDHARIDAS KATARA

5th Feb. 1945 - 4th April 2021

Husband of Smt. Neelu,  
Father of Miss. Tina & Smt. Madhu  
Father in law of Kamal Bathija  
Brother of Rani, Prakash,  
Ramchand, Hareesh & Hina  
Grand Father of Harsh & RynaShyamala Sury,  
Arvind & Lata,  
Anupama & Rajesh  
Vishal & Varun,  
Adhvay & Arav,  
siblings Lalitham,  
Krishna, Pankaj  
and familiesEmail :  
asarvind2006@gmail.comRequest Condolences  
In form of Prayers/Message  
on : 9322395060

# Vulnerable population given priority for vaccination: Govt

## 'Eligibility Based On Scientific Principles'

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New Delhi: The vaccination policy is based on scientific principles and is intended to secure vulnerable population first keeping in mind vaccine supplies and is not different from the approaches adopted even by developed countries like US, UK and Australia, the Centre said on Tuesday.

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, in an interview to ANI, also clarified his remarks that the objective of vaccination is to inoculate those who need and not those who want it. He added in the current phase of vaccinations till July, July,

## Where younger populations are now getting vaccines

In 31 American states, as of April 6, vaccination

eligibility has been expanded to everyone older than 16

Alaska was the first state

to open up vaccine eligibility to 16-plus. Major states like

New York, Florida and Texas

have done the same

California and

Massachusetts will lift

restrictions by mid-April,

and the entire country will

vaccinate everyone 16 and



above by April 19

Among others also

vaccinating the general

population are Israel, which

has covered almost 60%

of its population, Hong Kong,

Bulgaria, Morocco, Serbia

and Hungary. Bahrain has

been vaccinating everyone

above 16 from the beginning

is to reduce deaths and protect the healthcare system involved in combating the pandemic," Bhushan said. Sources said efforts were on increase capacities so that there could be a further expansion of eligible beneficiaries.

But in the meanwhile, the government did not want a situation where second dose supplies fell short.

India - which started its mega vaccination drive on January 16 with health and front-line workers prioritised for receiving the jabs in the first round - has administered over 8.4 crore doses till Tuesday 8 pm, which includes first dose to over 5.44 crore people of 45 years and above of age.

Bhushan said India has been fastest in ramping up of vaccination with over 7.9 crore doses administered in merely 79 days, whereas the US - which has the highest daily rate of doses administered - has taken 112 days to give 16.5 crore doses.

Pvt TV channels told to air PM's mantra of 'dawai bhi, kadai bhi'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Following the surge of coronavirus cases in the country, the ministry of information and broadcasting on Tuesday issued a fresh advisory to all private television channels, asking them to disseminate information about the government's five-fold strategy to contain the pandemic, which involves 'Testing, Tracing, Treatment', following the Covid-appropriate behaviour and getting vaccinated.

In an advisory issued on Tuesday, the ministry reiterated the leadership role that has been played by private TV channels in spreading the message in public interest. The ministry also urged broadcast networks to generate greater awareness on the Prime Minister's message of 'Dawai Bhi, Kadai Bhi (Vaccination and Discipline)' by disseminating messages for Covid-appropriate behaviour and vaccination of eligible persons.

# Experts divided over vaccine for all

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## Night curfew in 20 Gujarat cities

Ahmedabad/Surat: Hours after the Gujarat high court on Tuesday recommended imposing three to four days of lockdown in the wake of the Covid-19 situation "going out of control", the government effected a night curfew - 8 pm to 6 am, from April 7 night to April 30 - across 20 cities in the state. TNN

made perfect sense to first cater to the vulnerable age groups. "By opening vaccination to all age groups, the threat to those at higher risk still remains. A higher number of vaccinations will not translate into rapid reduction of hospitalisations and deaths," he added.

Another argument for opening up vaccination to all was to dent the second wave. Kant said the impact of vaccination on severe cases and deaths would be visible after 8-10 weeks of administering the vaccine, as seen in Israel. So, it was unlikely to have a major influence on the ongoing second wave.

## IIT-Kgp kit ready for mass production

Kolkata: IIT-Kharagpur has

come up with a Covid testing kit, complete with a machine that will bring down the cost of each diagnosis to anything between Rs 100 and Rs 150, and the results will be made available in 45 minutes reports Jhimili Mukherjee.

Covirap, as the kit has been christened, is going in for mass production by the end of the month. Two faculty members, Suman Chakraborty and Arindam Mondal, have received an international patent for Covirap. They are in the process of going in for technology transfer.

## Vax shortage hits Noida, Gzb drive

Ghaziabad/Noida: Their

vaccine stocks fast depleting, and supply of fresh doses expected only on Wednesday morning, Noida was left with barely a day's supplies of Covishield while Ghaziabad scraped the bottom of the barrel on Tuesday and was unable to provide vaccines to several private hospitals.

Ghaziabad's main centre had used up all its doses, report Aditya Dev and Snehal Sinha.

## 2 domestic cos to roll out 1.6bn syringes in 6 mths

Rupali.Mukherjee  
@timesgroup.com

The global demand for syringes could be around 10 billion units

## C'garh reports its highest-ever rise in new cases

► From P1

On Tuesday, at least 16 states reported their biggest daily counts of new cases since at least December last year. Chhattisgarh was among three states that reported their highest ever single-day rise in cases. It added 9,921 fresh cases, becoming the second state after Maharashtra to cross the 9,000 mark. Madhya Pradesh with 3,722 new infections and Gujarat with 3,280, also posted their highest ever daily counts.

Meanwhile, Karnataka reported 6,150 fresh cases, the highest since October 20 and Uttar Pradesh added 5,922 infections, the most since September 18. The count in Delhi was 5,100, the highest since November 27.

Punjab reported 62 fatalities, Chhattisgarh 53, Karnataka 39 and Uttar Pradesh 30.

## 'Lockdown order' prank lands Hyd man in jail

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: A chartered accountant employed with Karvy & Co, a Hyderabad-based broking firm, was arrested on Monday for creating a fake GO, claiming an evening curfew in the city to curb the spread of coronavirus. Sreepathi Sanjeev Kumar, 48, who lives in Madhapur, wanted to pull a fast one on All Fools Day, but instead cooling his heels in jail after his prank backfired.

Police commissioner Anjali Kumar said sleuths of Commissioner's Taskforce along with Cyber Crimes scanned some 1,800 mobile phones and finally zeroed on Sanjeev Kumar, a CA working in Karvy & Co in Banjara Hills, for his role in forging an old GO and circulating it in WhatsApp groups. "He is now in judicial custody," a cop said.

On April 1, a fake GO claiming a shutdown in Hyderabad was in force went viral.

## REMEMBRANCE SHARING MEMORIES



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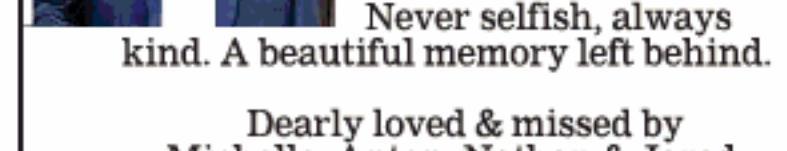
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Online Mass at Sacred Heart Church, Andheri at 7.30 am on 8 Apr 21

SagarKumar.Mutha  
@timesgroup.com

gar districts. "Your testing is pathetic in these three districts. Out of the 9 lakh tests conducted so far, only 1 lakh are RT-PCR tests. The rest are rapid antigen tests. You have to increase the RT-PCR tests to tackle the pandemic effectively," a bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B Vijayreddy said.

The judges sought answers within 48 hours from the government as to why it was conducting more rapid antigen tests and has reduced RT-PCR tests to a mere 10% of

**Now, judges to get AI help for deciding on cases**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Indian judiciary embarked on an "ambitious and pioneering" plan to allow judges to take assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) in deciding cases with Chief Justice S A Bobde on Tuesday launching a specially designed software which will assist judges by furnishing all relevant documents and records of a case at a click.

The CJJ, however, allayed apprehensions that the new technology will in any manner influence the outcome of litigation as the "autonomy and discretion" of judges will remain intact with no interference from the software.

#### 'JUDGES' AUTONOMY TO REMAIN INTACT'

Justice Bobde has advocated the use of AI in judicial work. He said that the software SUPACE (Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Courts Efficiency) is a perfect blend of human and machine intelligence. "We are not going to let the use of AI spill over to decision making. It will fully retain the autonomy and discretion of judges to decide cases, though at a much faster pace at which the readiness of information is made available by AI. ... I believe that an artificial intelligence system that decides the case could be disastrous to the judiciary. ... It is not designed to take a decision but only to provide information as asked," he said.

# Women advocates move SC for fair share of HC judgeship

Dhananjay Mahapatra  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Nearly 100 years after women were allowed to become lawyers, an association of women advocates moved the Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday seeking fair representation of women among high court (HC) judges and cited their abysmally low presence in constitutional courts.

The SC Women Lawyers' Association, through advocate Sneha Kalita, said in the last 71 years of the SC's functioning, only eight of the 247 judges were women. At present, Justice Indira Banerjee is the lone woman judge in the SC. The first one was Fatima Beevi, appointed in 1987. Seeking to intervene in a pending case in which the SC is taking stock of delay in completion of the

process for appointment of HC judges, the association said as against the sanctioned strength of 1,080 HC judges, only 661 were in place, including 73 women, who constituted 11% of HC judges. While Madras HC has 13 women judges, the highest among the HCs, there are no women judges in HCs in the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Bihar, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

#### Guj HC directs sessions judges to follow CrPC norms for trials

Ahmedabad: The Gujarat high court (HC) has quashed a Bhachau court's order for framing of charges in the Jayanti Bhanushali murder case and ordered that all sessions judges of Gujarat be reminded how a trial starts according to CrPC.

One of the six accused in the Jayanti Bhanushali murder of 2019, Manisha

Goswami, approached the HC complaining that the sessions court in Bhachau on February 2 ordered framing of charges in the case. Her advocate J M Panchal submitted that the prosecution did not make any opening statement, nor was any opportunity granted to the accused to seek discharge and the court directly ordered framing of charges. TNN

**TIMES VIEW:** The statistics regarding women judges in the high court is downright abysmal. The steps towards a more gender-balanced judiciary should begin at the earliest. Parity of the sexes in every institution should be the goal of any modern progressive state.

The association said in the US, women state judges numbered 6,056 of the total 17,778 judges (34%) and the International Court of Justice had three women among its 15 judges. Quoting a TOI report of December 6, the association said even attorney general KK Venugopal recommended appointment of more women judges and added that the ideal position would be to have wo-

men occupy 50% of total judges' posts. Venugopal had said that improving the representation of women in judiciary would go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence.

The association said its president Mahalakshmi Pavai had recently written a letter to CJI S A Bobde highlighting the need for adequate representation of women in constitutional courts as a measure towards gender justice and equal participation of women in the important task of justice dispensation. The applicant said the SC collegium should tap the talent pool of women advocates in the SC and HCs and select them as judges of HCs where there was inadequate representation of women.

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Pawanjeet Kaur Rishi  
Deputy General Manager

## 'Collegiums yet to recommend names for several vacancies'

► From P 1

On March 27, a bench of CJ S A Bobde and Justices S K Kaul and Surya Kant had asked attorney general K K Venugopal to explain on April 8 why the government was sitting over 45 names recommended by HC collegiums for appointment as HC judges for periods ranging from six to 14 months and not sending them to the SC collegium for scrutiny.

Justice Kaul had pointed out that the government was sitting over 10 names, cleared by the SC collegium for appointment as HC judges, for periods ranging from seven to 19 months. He said the SC collegium's recommendation for appointment of five advocates as judges of Calcutta HC was sent to the government on July 25, 2019, and these were yet to be

cleared. Similarly, an advocate's name cleared for appointment as J&K HC judge has been pending for 17 months and four names for Delhi HC cleared have been pending for seven months with the Centre. The law ministry recently sent the 45 names, recommended by various HC collegiums, to the SC collegium for scrutiny. The SC bench is scheduled to hear the case relating to delay in appointment of judges on April 18.

A law ministry source said, "The oldest vacancy, to be filled from among advocates' quota, dates back to October 14, 2014, in Orissa HC where the HC collegium is yet to make a recommendation. There are at least nine other HCs where against the oldest vacancy from bar quota, no recommendation has been made for more than five years."

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## Kovind picks Justice Ramana as next CJ, oath-taking on Apr 24

Dhananjay Mahapatra  
@timesgroup.com

**A soft-spoken person, Justice Ramana has given many important and hard-hitting judgments, including the ruling on providing 4G internet services in J & K**

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday appointed Justice Nithulapati Venkata Ramana, the senior-most Supreme Court judge, as the next Chief Justice of India. Justice Ramana will take oath as the 48th CJ on April 24 and will have a tenure of one year and four months.

A staunch advocate of the right to access to justice for the last person in the socio-economic hierarchy, Justice Ramana was a first generation lawyer born in an agriculturist family in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh (AP). Leaving behind his stu-

dent activist days, he had briefly experimented with journalism by working in a leading Telugu newspaper before becoming an advocate.

He was appointed as a judge of AP HC in 2001, as chief justice of Delhi HC in September 2013 and an SC judge in February 2014.

A soft-spoken person, Justice Ramana has given many important and hard-hitting

judgments, including the ruling on providing 4G internet services in Jammu and Kashmir where the government had suspended high-speed internet services after scrapping the state's special status under Article 370. The Justice Ramana-led bench's ruling that "access to internet" is a fundamental right of citizens found many admirers for him and the SC.



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## Cos busy with Covid must look at staff's mental wellbeing too

### Top Talent Will Remember Firms That Took Care Of Them

By Rajeev Bhardwaj

The long-standing impact of the Covid pandemic on people's day-to-day lives is transcending beyond worries of physical illness into a more psychological and emotional realm.

Organisations that were agile enough to adapt and learn were able to achieve significant levels of productivity in 2020 with their remote work force. Companies that had great focus on their digital transformation were able to set up collaboration and engagement tools, and that helped people navigate the journey over the last year. Yet, as the situation is changing, the aspect of 'worry' is still looming.

According to a recent survey done by EY, of nearly 13,000 consumers in 13 countries, 37% indicated it would be months or years before normally returned to the work environment, with 64% saying they are more cautious in terms of their physical health. Indeed, over two-thirds of people (57%) noted they would be extremely uncomfortable or just uncom-

fortable using public transport because of the potential for Covid exposure.

The 'burn-out' of employees is rather becoming a considerable topic of concern, with work-life structures collapsing into people's personal lives. But talking about a possible impact on one's mental health is still considered a taboo in both personal and professional space.

Past surveys indicate many workers have been afraid to take this step. A majority of employees (68%) worry that reaching out over a mental health issue could negatively impact their job security, according to a study done by Businessolver.

Another key aspect of this period also highlighted that the millennial and Gen Z population, known to thrive on social media and digital interactions, also felt a severe blow to their social lives. Workplaces had become their second homes and colleagues were operating as their friendship networks. Increased screen time has affected their ability to manage their professional and personal

work-life balance.

There is definitely need for progressive organisations to take critical steps in order to not only retain their talent but also ensure a nurturing culture and environment for its people...

**Hybrid working models:** Organisations will need to look at working models wherein there is modular availability of networking possibilities, online or physical. And if people want to get together in small groups to brainstorm or if they have a choice to continue working remotely.

**Flexibility:** Communicating about flexibility around the day's management and focusing on outcomes is a way of letting people catch frequent breaks and take time off during work days as well.

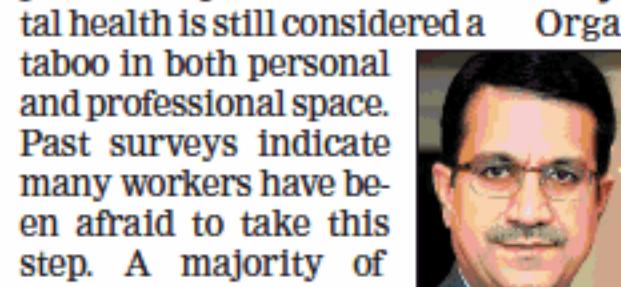
**Mental health awareness:** It's also critical to sensitise managers about mental health and educate them about biases and prejudices that may underplay the situ-

ation. They also need to be soft-trained on how to handle matters of concern when team dynamics are affected.

**Regular support:** Organisations will need to invest in long-term platforms and tools that can help employees reach out for help if needed. The HR community would need to learn, un-learn and re-learn about matters of mental health and how to handle such situations with care and responsibility.

It's noteworthy that this period will help top talent acknowledge organisations that have wellness of their people at their heart. It would further build the positive brand besides driving the attrition and attraction agenda. But most importantly, it's imperative that while humanity tries to cross this bridge to the other side, companies and employees co-create an environment that's safe and healthy for them to survive and thrive.

(The writer is the CHRO, Asia Service Centres, Sun Life Financial)



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## Taslima's tweet on England cricketer Moeen Ali draws flak

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen outraged many social media users after a controversial tweet on England and Chennai Super Kings cricketer Moeen Ali. Her post drew widespread condemnation from many, including Ali's current

and former teammates Jofra Archer and Ryan Sidebottom.

"If Moeen Ali were not stuck with cricket, he would have gone to Syria to join ISIS," she wrote on Monday around 3am. English pacer Archer replied to Nasreen and wrote, "Are you okay? I don't

think you're okay." Several other cricketers also castigated Nasreen. "I think you might need to check if you're feeling ok!! Maybe delete your account too," wrote former England pacer Sidebottom.

Moeen Ali was one of the top trends in India on Tuesday, with several people, including politicians and activists tweeting in solidarity with the cricketer.

posted on the subject. The exiled author later deleted the tweet and also issued a clarification of sorts around 5pm on Tuesday saying her tweet was "sarcastic".

Moeen Ali was one of the top

## TIMES ascent

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10 Overman (VT) S-2 (35,400-1,12,400) 01

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## TIMES NATION

# Moms in jails, no proper data on their kids in shelters: Study

### 'Prison Officials Fail To Keep Updated Records'

Ambika Pandit  
[@timesgroup.com](http://timesgroup.com)

**TIMES VIEW:** Every convict has certain inalienable human rights. Also, let us not forget that the child too has a right to see his jailed mother. The Supreme Court guidelines must be followed to ensure a more humane prison system.

report. While conducting the pilot study in Delhi where they covered Tihar and Mandoli jail, the commission found gaps in the existing prison management system. The report notes that there were cases of children placed in hostels without the proper orders of child welfare committee, district authorities or department of social welfare.

The NCPNR in its recommendations to the Inspector General (Prisons) states that they must ensure that the children of women prisoners are only admitted to CCIs on the orders of the CWC.

in the home described in the primary document submitted by the prison authority.

These children were already transferred to some other CCIs and list was never revised. Similarly, the prison authorities in Bihar were not aware of the children of female inmates above six years of age living outside the prison with their siblings without the supervision of the elders or guardians," it is highlighted in the

### Amnesty Int'l slams India in its rights report

Naomi Cantor

Vishwa.Mohan  
[@timesgroup.com](http://timesgroup.com)

London: Amnesty International has released a report slamming India for its "punitive" lockdown in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, as well as its handling of the anti-CAA protests, farmers' protests, Delhi riots and alleged clampdown on civil liberties in Kashmir. The report "The State of the World's Human Rights 2020/2021" examines the human rights situation in 149 countries.

In the section on India, it said: "There was widespread impunity and lack of accountability for murders and attacks carried out by vigilante mobs and police officers against religious minorities."

Referring to the lockdown, it said: "In March, migrant workers who were travelling back home were forced by the Uttar Pradesh police to crawl on the road carrying their belongings, as punishment for breaching lockdown guidelines.

In their discussions, Sitharaman and Kerry agreed on the need for enhanced climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building. Both the FM and environment minister Prakash

... stressed on the need for assessment of the \$100 billion commitment per year from developed countries to developing countries to take the world to a low carbon growth path.

The meeting assumes significance in view of the upcoming virtual leaders' summit on climate on April 22-23, called by US President Joe Biden to urge world leaders to come

to the Paris Agreement under the time of the Summit.

Asked whether Indian delegation committed anything to Kerry, environment secretary Rameshwar Prasad Gupta told TOI that the country has not committed anything. On when would India raise its climate action target, he said it has not yet been decided.

Kerry will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday. Modi will be among the 40 world leaders to attend the summit. The US will announce an ambitious 2030 emissions target as its new climate action pledge under the Paris Agreement by the end of the year.

Ratnagiri: Four days after the deadly Maoist ambush that killed 22 security personnel in Bastar's Dantewada, CPI(Maoist) on Tuesday admitted that five of its cadres, including a woman, were killed in the gunfight.

CPI(Maoist) Dandakaranya special zonal committee spokesman Vikalp released names and photographs of four of them. The Maoists admit that they could not take away the body of their slain comrade, Odi Sunny, a member of South Bastar division company-I. The others were named as Nupo Surendra, Kawasi Badru, Padam Lakshmi and Mandvi Sukku.

After the April 3 ambush, security forces had said that they had found the body of a woman Maoist from the battle zone and many of the insurgents were killed or wounded. CRPF DG Kuldeep Singh had said that "at least 25-30 Maoists" were killed in the valiant fightback by forces, and the insurgents had carried away their casualties in tractors.

(Inputs from Rashmi Drolia)

## In rejig, Bajaj is revenue secy & Seth DEA secy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In key changes in the finance ministry, the government on Tuesday shifted Tarun Bajaj from the department of economic affairs to the revenue department as the new secretary, while appointing Karnataka cadre IAS officer Ajai Seth as replacement.

# 2 killed, 5 candidates attacked as violence rocks third phase

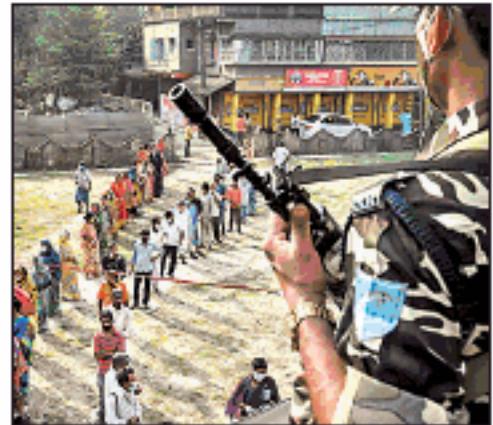
**Badlands Of Hooghly Live Up To Name**

Tamaghna Banerjee and Falguni Banerjee | TNN

**Arambag:** Violence rocked the third phase of polling in Bengal on Tuesday with two from different parties killed and several injured. At least five candidates from different parties were attacked, their vehicles damaged and polling agents thrashed.

While clashes were reported from multiple constituencies in Howrah and South24 Parganas, two of the three districts that went to polls, it was the badlands of Hooghly that lived up to its reputation of poll violence.

At Arambag, Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate Su-



**STRICT VIGIL:** A polling station in South 24 Parganas district

## Such attacks can't break me: TMC neta

**Arandi:** Hit on the head with a bamboo pole, pelted with bricks, kicked into a paddy field — this summarises TMC's Arambag candidate Sujata Mondal Khan's first poll day experience of her career. But that didn't deter the 34-year-old poll debutante from visiting sensitive booths even as purported BJP workers kept on injuring her through the day and also damaged her car windshield. Trinamool's Mondal, who happens to be the wife (currently going through divorce proceedings) of BJP MP Saumitra Khan, vows to change the history. "I will be the first woman, that too from ST, to become an MLA from here," she said. "I consider myself an iron lady who goes by the principles of Rani Lakshmi Bai. Such attacks cannot break me physically and mentally," Mondal said. TNN

attacked by BJP workers with sticks and iron rods.

BJP Uluberia South candidate, actor Papiya Adhikary, claimed she was slapped by some TMC workers when she went to meet injured party workers at Uluberia hospital. "I was slapped repeatedly and hit on the head. My supporters were attacked with swords. I went to the hospital to check on them. I am astonished people with arms can be present in a hospital," she said. Two men were arrested.

At Falta in South 24 parganas, BJP candidate Bidhan Pan-

rui claimed bricks were hurled at him when he tried to enter a booth. While cars of multiple candidates were attacked, the ones belonging to the polling agent of BJP's Tarakeswar candidate Swapnil Dasgupta were most damaged.

In Hooghly, the day began on an ominous note with a BJP worker alleging that his 43-year-old mother was killed by TMC goons in a pre-dawn attack. In

South 24 Parganas, BJP alleged that one of its booth presidents was assaulted and forced out of the village.

**Don't want my son to step into politics: Himanta**

Prabin.Kalita@timesgroup.com

**Guwahati:** BJP's strongman in Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma is a first-generation politician but unlike many in the fraternity, he is not keen on seeing his son, Nandil, a first-time voter this election, to follow in his footsteps.

But Sarma, who is seeking his fifth consecutive victory from Jaiukbari constituency, has different plans for his son. "He is just 18 years. It is good for him that he stays away from politics as much as possible," he said, while accompanying his wife and Nandil to cast their votes in Jaiukbari constituency.

So, what is holding back Sarma from introducing his son to politics? "I do not want my son to step into this world... the challenges we have faced have faced so much, I don't think they will be able to face such challenges," Sarma said.

# Centre running polls with goons and guns: Mamata

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

## Minister goes on stretcher to file nomination

**Bengal minister Jakir Hossain** — who was grievously injured in an explosion at Nimbital railway station on February 17 — took a helicopter ride from Kolkata to Murshidabad, sat through a 2.5km drive to the SDO office and covered a flight of stairs on a stretcher to file his nomination on Tuesday as a Trinamool Congress candidate from Jangipur assembly constituency. The minister is due for a reconstructive surgery on his right hand. It will take at least three more months for his treatment to be over at SSKM Hospital in Kolkata. On a four-day "leave" from hospital to complete his candidate duties, Hossain furnished certificates signed by eight doctors so that he could put his left thumb impression on the nomination paper. TNN

Alleging that of the eight people killed since the polls were announced, four were TMC workers, Banerjee said. "You keep citing the Bengal panchayat polls, but not so many people lost their lives during that election." She urged the EC to take note of the way the polls are being conducted. "Democracy is being abused and throttled here. *Kintu go-andam kore jeth jay na* (You can't win elections by hooliganism)," she said.

"Realising that they will lose all the 31 seats that went to the polls today, they have unleashed terror. They have beaten up my party candidates, one of them a Scheduled Caste woman. Central forces are intimidating people saying, 'BJP ko vote nahi diya to dekh challenge' What will you see? You are here for a few days. I urge people to lodge FIRs against these personnel and their local commanders," the Trinamool chief said.

# Hours before poll, EVMs found at TMC man's home

Debashis Konar & Rupak Banerjee | TNN

**Howrah:** The election commission on Tuesday suspended three poll officials and a cop and removed three home guards after three EVMs and four VVPATs were recovered from the home of a local Trinamool Congress functionary in Uluberia North in Howrah, hours before it went to polls.

Residents raised the alarm after they spotted the EVMs and VVPATs being carried into the house of Gautam Ghosh in Tulsiheria around 2.30am. They gheraoed the place and launched an agitation. The local cops rushed to the spot and had to launch a lathi-charge to disperse the mob.

Suspended sector officer Tapan Sarkar has said, in his defence, that an assistant sector officer, who is a relative of Ghosh, had suggested they go

## 'ROs shifted in order to maintain sanctity of the polling process'

► From P 1

**A**n official said the ROs — who play a key role in the election process — have been shifted in order to maintain the sanctity of the polling process, so that no question of bias could be raised later.

ROs are tasked with conducting polls in a free and fair manner. They also hand over winners' certificates to candidates and manage everything on behalf of the EC. They need to ensure that the staff and on-duty police are properly

posted through a process of randomisation so that no one feels threatened and electoral malpractices and complaints are properly handled, the official added.

In end-March, the EC had removed the RO of Ballygunge, Arindam Mani, as he had been in the same post of additional director of directorate of land revenue for over three years. He has been posted as an officer on special duty of the PAR department. A new set of eight WBCS (executive) officers will take charge immediately.

Yours anger at everything — from someone wearing a tika to the EC to EVMs — shows that you have lost," he said. "Didi asks me how I know about the outcome? Am I God or superhuman?" say TMC's defeat is written on the faces of Janta Jarnan (the masses). And Didi's anger, her desperation, the language she is using, say it all."

## Modi refers to leaked 'tapes' to target Didi

► From P 1

**Y**our anger at everything — from someone wearing a tika to the EC to EVMs — shows that you have lost," he said. "Didi asks me how I know about the outcome? Am I God or superhuman?" say TMC's defeat is written on the faces of Janta Jarnan (the masses). And Didi's anger, her desperation, the language she is using, say it all."

Modi also pointed to how the Bengal chief minister's tone

and tenor in the time of elections had changed. "People say you love to play football. But this time you have scored a self-goal," he added. Modi then referred to the leaked "audio tapes" on illegal coal-mining in Bengal that was cited by BJP a couple of days ago as "proof" of corruption. "Koila dhule matla jay na (Washing away coal grime will not wash away the filth)," he said, connecting the alleged scam to the "Bhalpo Service Tax" (a reference to the CM's nephew, Diamond Harbour TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee).

Midnapore, is one of the biggest flower producing regions in eastern India.

Given a substantial population of Muslims in rural Hooghly, there have been attempts of polarizing the atmosphere on religious lines in some places. "We do not know what the poll results will be, but members of both communities have stayed together for decades. Any attempt to damage communal harmony is unfair," Aashik Mondal, a flower grower in Uluberia (south), said.

**Accused gets protection from arrest**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

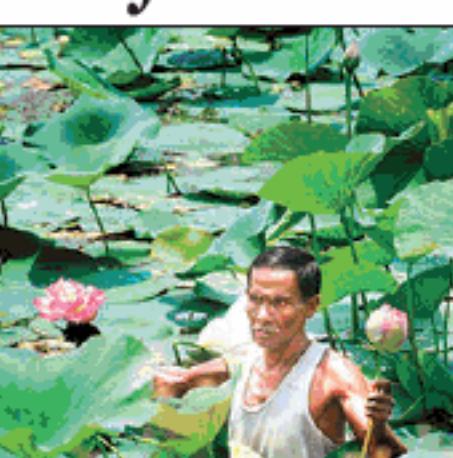
**Kolkata:** The SC on Tuesday extended the interim protection from arrest for Anup Majee alias Lala, prime accused in the illegal coal mining case, till April 13. But the order does not restrict the probe.

## COAL SCAM

The extension order came while Lala was being questioned at the CBI's Nizam Palace office. He had moved the SC against the Calcutta HC order, allowing the CBI to investigate a case related to illegal mining and transportation of coal through railways in Bengal without the state's consent. The bench, headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud, had earlier mentioned the order was passed without expression of any opinion on the merit of the rival contentions.

## Lotus in full bloom, good news for Muslim farmers

Zeeshan.Jawed @timesgroup.com



Howrah: A flower, which is offered to Goddess Durga on Ashtami and signifies long life and prosperity, has bloomed exceptionally well in the hinterland of Howrah this season, but locals are careful not to consider it a political prophecy. At least, not yet.

While a political lotus is trying hard to encroach the space of the twin flower in Hooghly, the flower growing belt of Baghna-Uluberia-Kulgachia in rural Howrah, which went to polls on Tuesday, has reported a good lotus harvest this season. Those growing the lotus say the entire area will be covered in pink in the next three weeks by when it will also be time for the verdict.

The region in Howrah is predominantly Muslim and most are associated with flower farming. "Lotus flowers grown by Muslims are used for puja," Ramzan Molla, a resident of Malarpur in Baghna, said. Howrah, along with East

Midnapore, is one of the biggest flower producing regions in eastern India.

Given a substantial population of Muslims in rural Hooghly, there have been attempts of polarizing the atmosphere on religious lines in some places. "We do not know what the poll results will be, but members of both communities have stayed together for decades. Any attempt to damage communal harmony is unfair," Aashik Mondal, a flower grower in Uluberia (south), said.

**Ball of a time**

## Rivals trying to spread false narratives: PM

Akhilesh.Singh@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** PM Narendra Modi, on the first foundation day of BJP on Tuesday, said the party's opponents were trying to create political instability by spreading "false narratives" over the Centre's policy initiatives, and called upon the cadre to take on the challenge by launching an awareness campaign among people.

"I want to draw your (workers') attention towards a grave challenge. Today, false narratives are being floated. Be it on farm laws, CAA or labour laws, such rumours aim to create political instability. Sometimes they say citizenship will be snatched, sometimes it's farmers' land, but these all are pure lies," Modi said in an address to party workers.

He also used the occasion to again criticise the yardstick used for characterising parties as "secular" and "communal" and said, "Those who work for a community are termed secular while the one which makes plans for all sections is labelled communal." He also said the mask of "secularism" had begun to slip and people could see the reality.

## Mother of slain girls alleges drive to defame her

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kozhikode:** The mother of the murdered Walayar sisters has filed a complaint with the chief election officer alleging that a social media campaign was afoot to defame her. According to her complaint, the campaign began on Monday night and it was an attempt at character assassination. A link to a Facebook post, allegedly by advocate Harish Vasudevan, was attached with the complaint.

"I am bringing to your attention a campaign against me since. The said post pictures me as an accused in the cases related to the murder (in 2017) of my children in which I am not an accused. It was published in a way that I couldn't even respond to it. This needs to be seen as a defamatory campaign against me. I request you to take action immediately," the woman wrote.

# Three states, one UT fail to match 2016 poll turnout

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**B**engal on Tuesday completed its third and so far most violence-marred round of polling out of eight phases with a voter turnout of 77.6% across 31 seats, several notches lower than the statewide figure of 85.2% in the 2016 polls. Assam wrapped up its third and final phase with 82% polling in the last 40 of its 126 seats, again lower than the overall turnout of 86.9% five years ago. Two southern states and a UT—Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry—sealed single-phase polls across 404 constituencies with voting figures of 71.7%, 74% and 81.5% respectively, all trailing the 2016 turnout by close to three percentage points.

When compared with the 2019 Lok Sabha poll numbers, only Puducherry exceeded the previous turnout of 81.3%. Barring Kerala, voting in the general elections had been marginally lower than in the assembly polls three years earlier. In Bengal, the eight Hooghly constituencies that reported the most law-and-order disruptions on Tuesday

also recorded the highest voting percentage of the third phase at 79.3% till 5pm. Assam's predominantly urban constituencies witnessed the lowest turnout among those that went to polls in the final phase. Seats where migrant Muslim voters comprise the bulk of the electorate had the highest voting numbers. BJP ministers Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chandra Mohan Patowary, Siddhartha Bhattacharya and Phani Bhushan Choudhury and BPF's Chandan Brahma and Pramila Ranjana Brahma were among those in the fray in the last phase.

Kerala's Kozhikode repea-

ment work in Sabarimala during the last five years. So, believers are coming in droves to vote for LDF." The CM's comments sparked a series of reactions. Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala lashed out at Vijayan, saying the wrath of god would fall upon the LDF government for trampling on the faith of Ayyappa devotees.

BJP president K Surendran said Vijayan made a U-turn on Sabarimala on polling day as he was frightened about losing.

CPI politburo member Kodiyeri Balakrishnan concurred with the CM, saying if gods had votes, they would have voted in LDF's favour. "The LDF government had ensured protection to all believers belonging to the Muslim, Christian and Hindu religions. The LDF government had carried out unprecedented developments to make such a statement.



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**A thought for today**

The sight of so many people from various social backgrounds coming out to vote, and all together, is beautiful. Democracy is aesthetic!

TM KRISHNA

## Size Enemy Right

**Movement curbs only stop healthcare access and economic activity, not this Covid wave**

In a week marked by sharp contrasts, India demonstrated its awesome vaccination capacity notching 4.3 million inoculations in a day, while also recording the highest daily infection count globally. The fatality rate is also uncomfortably high. Clearly 5, 6 or 10 million daily vaccinations are within our reach. Yet we are stumbling badly. Despite beating down the first peak without lockdowns, panicky reactions to the second wave have set in. Markets, consumption trends and service sector pillars like retail chains, hotels and malls have begun to feel the pressure of a new round of lockdowns, movement restrictions and night curfews acutely. A repeat of last year's dehumanising migrant worker exodus mustn't happen.

The emergent situation calls for rational responses, with a keen understanding of what each stakeholder can promise and deliver. Indian

Medical Association has urged that vaccination be opened to all adults. In response Centre must reveal the constraints, including doses in stock or other limitations of supply, that justify continuing with highly restrictive age-wise inoculation. Citizens will accept government's explanation and patiently await their turns if production capacity needs ramping up. As of now, however, information asymmetry and over-centralisation make long-term vaccination planning a near impossibility for other stakeholders, even giving states excuses for irrational lockdowns.

Bharat Biotech has reportedly sought Rs 150 crore to expand Covaxin manufacturing capacity. Funds must be sanctioned quickly for all such reasonable demands. Centre must also encourage administrations down the line to innovate local vaccination strategies. Maharashtra wishes to inoculate the 25+ age group, Delhi is looking at all adults. These plans are on hold pending central concurrence, even as several instances of local governments quietly improvising to widen vaccine access are known.

But to be clear, states' projecting tough love by announcing quasi lockdowns is a cure truly worse than the disease. Take, for instance, preventing Mumbai food delivery executives from working after 8pm. Such whacky moves will not stop the coronavirus but will certainly wound the economy and livelihoods. Instead, states should do themselves a favour by promoting masking and freely distributing masks, pressuring Centre to decentralise vaccination, and improving access to medical facilities, which the mobility curbs retard. Delhi simultaneously allowing 24x7 vaccination and announcing night curfews exemplifies governance on steroids, as if "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". We can beat this wave too – but with common sense and civic responsibility, masks and vaccinations at full tilt.

## Expanding Frontiers

**Edtech has the potential to partially even out access among students**

As the pandemic has accelerated society's shift towards digitalisation, education has been forced to go online and seen interesting changes. One symptom of the important transition underway is the growing frequency of acquisitions among online education firms, or edtechs. The most recent instance is the acquisition of brick-and-mortar test preparation firm Aakash Educational Services by edtech major Byju's, in a deal valued at nearly \$1 billion. Such animal spirits underline new pathways for improving the quality of education.

India's edtech companies work around a hybrid model, one that combines offline and online methods of teaching. Schools remain irreplaceable in providing education in a comprehensive sense. Even India's flourishing tuition market involves in-person lessons. What the advent of edtech may accomplish is to tailor lessons for a diverse universe of students. The diversity is not just on account of language, it also arises from sharp differences in educational quality across schools. The gap between students, which often arises on account of economic inequality, may partially be bridged through the use of technology.

A common thread running through all schools in India is that they don't prepare students for what follows. The highly competitive environment of entrance tests specifically spawned a coaching industry, with Kota in Rajasthan transforming into an epicentre. Now the pandemic has catalysed an overlap between the offline and online worlds. Forced closures of physical centres have created a situation in which edtech firms tap into the available teaching resources in coaching centres. This trend is bound to accelerate in India's hybrid edtech models. But while edtechs are a way to partially level sharp differences in the school system, significant overall uplift in learning outcomes can come only when the quality of brick-and-mortar schools everywhere improves. Technology is only an enabler, and only among students who have access to it.

## Fax about vax

**Scared of being inoculated? Don't be – there's nothing to fear but your fear itself**

Jug Suraiya



The trouble with Covid-19 is that, as fearful as it is, it's not fearful enough and many are not as frightened of it as they ought to be. Only this can explain why, even as India records the highest number of cases globally, too many people neglect masks and social distancing, and are reluctant to be vaccinated because of suspected side-effects, such as blood clots.

As someone who from childhood has been averse to needles, I was what is called an anti-vaxxer, a person scared of vaccination. When I recently gritted my mental teeth and took the first dose of the vaccine, it was a load off my mind.

Before being inoculated, it's best to eat something light, like fruit or a piece of toast. You barely feel the needle and it's all over in less than ten seconds. The injection is administered not in the arm but in the deltoid shoulder muscle.

I took a paracetamol tablet to ease the soreness which is an after-effect at the site of the inoculation, and was advised to keep myself well-hydrated by drinking a lot of water.

Unlike others who have complained about fever after being vaccinated, I had no rise in temperature. I did feel a sense of fatigue, but managed comfortably to do my daily walk of four kilometres.

The vaccine can cause gastric bloating of the stomach in some cases, and alcohol should be avoided for 48 hours, other than that there are no dietary restrictions.

One of the reasons many are afraid of the procedure is because of the omnipresent description of it as a 'jab', a staccato word the very sound of which conveys a sense of sharp hurt, and is a term used in boxing to describe a painful punch.

'Shot' is the other commonly used word to describe inoculation and is no better, being associated with the trauma of being struck by a projectile such as a bullet.

Perhaps a campaign should be launched to make vaccination sound less fear-somewhat painful, which in reality it isn't at all, barring some localised soreness and stiffness which eases after a day or two. Perhaps 'vax' might be a good substitute for 'jab' or 'shot'. As in: Don't vacillate, vax-inate.

[blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/juggelbandhi](http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/juggelbandhi)

# Why Haryana's Wall Hurts

Talent mobility is pivotal to higher competitiveness of the Indian tech sector

Debjani Ghosh

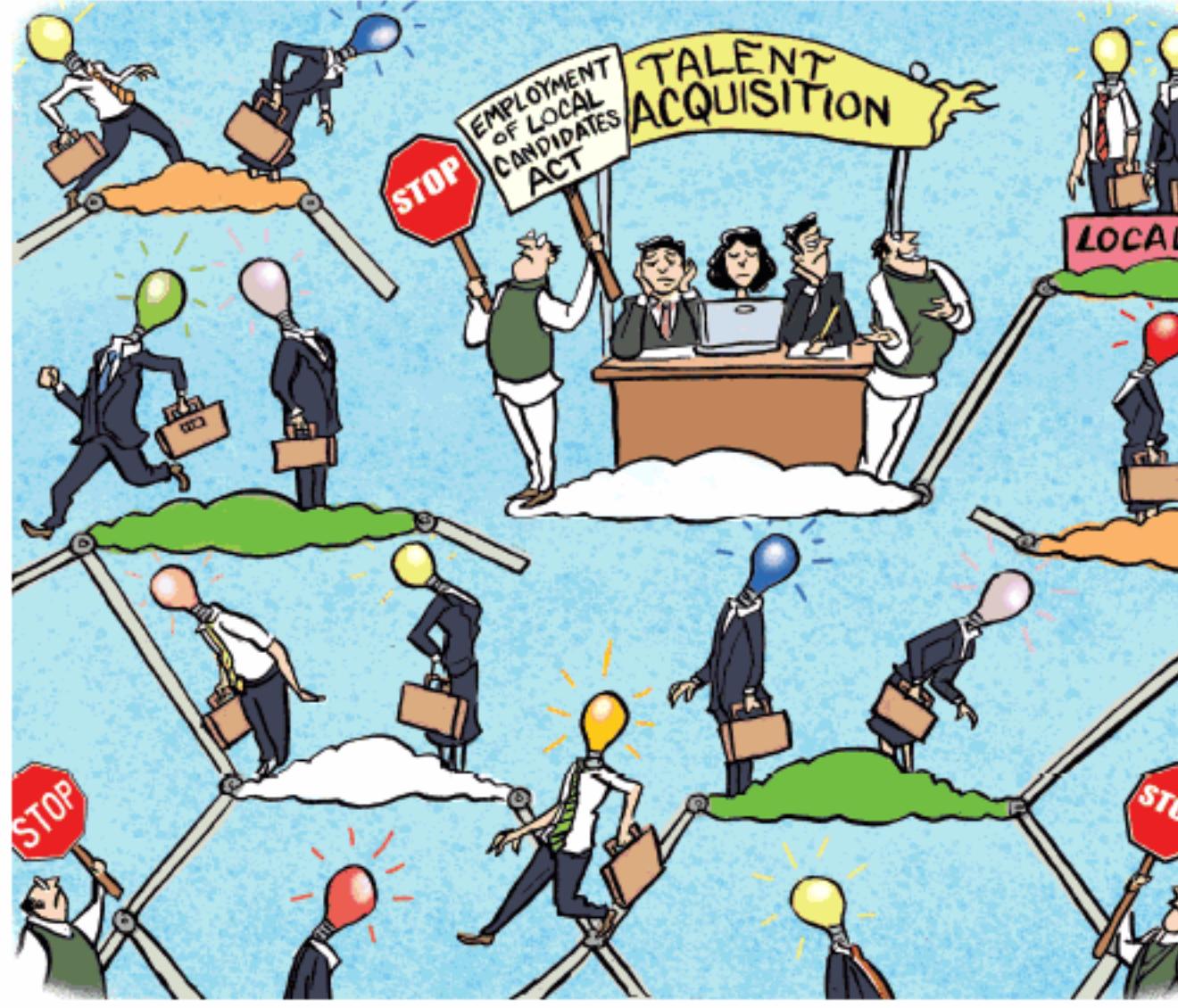


The Indian tech sector has been super competitive because it has always put a premium on innovation, the foundation of which has been laid on new-age skills, particularly digital. Even in the pandemic year, we were amongst the few industries to grow and our secret sauce was the unwavering focus on our most important asset – our people. Through the crisis, the companies never stopped investing heavily in upskilling their people. In fact, they did even more than before.

That's why, deep concerns were raised when the new Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020, came to light. Ours is an industry that puts talent above everything else, and it wasn't surprising that 80% of IT-ITEs companies surveyed by Nasscom were worried about the negative impact on future business operations and the overall investment climate – due to a reservation-based approach. A majority have expressed that shifting operations to other states/ countries is an option. Since the Act applies to new hires, the impact will be felt in 1-2 years, so we don't have much time.

The state of Haryana houses 500-odd IT-ITEs companies employing 4 lakh people directly, of which 37% or roughly 1.5 lakh current jobs will be impacted by this Act. The survey also revealed that 81% of current employees earning up to Rs 50,000 per month are from outside the state – a reflection of what the overall salary pie chart looks like. Under this Act future recruitment will be under immense pressure because the compliance burden will increase disproportionately, and talent diversity will come a cropper.

But the onerous challenge is the skills gap, both soft and technical, seen in the state where salaries are less than Rs 50,000 a month with huge inadequacy particularly in AI, ML, R&D skills, data science and the like. In the borderless world, even a faint whiff of protectionism to safeguard local jobs is going to be counterproductive. Instead,



guidelines issued for other service providers or OSPs last year have hugely facilitated remote working, and in the process, the industry expanded the available talent base. Besides, and while continuing to work extensively with both the Centre and state governments, it is so encouraging to see their immense enthusiasm in driving a trillion-dollar digital economy and positioning India as a global hub for digital talent.

Hence, this Act is utterly surprising. FY21 notched 1.7 million people as digitally skilled and in less than 4 years, this number should double. Today, there's a massive unmet digital demand – almost 8x the size of the available fresh digital talent pool – and talent mobility restriction is the last thing we want.

A major shift is also about having a flexible workforce and the rise of the gig economy. 60% of tech companies (much higher than the overall average, which is 49% of Indian companies) engage with gig workers who aren't constrained by borders. Software product companies, in particular, are emerging as gig employers – nearly 30% have more than 40% of the overall headcount as gig talent. Again, extrapolating the Nasscom survey results, in Haryana, roughly 14% of the IT industry segment are software product companies.

Startups, in particular, are symbolic of flexibility. Putting constraints on who they can hire will only impinge on their speed and their ability to outmanoeuvre larger competitors. I am not implying that they can get away without investing in talent upskilling, but is there a need to put an extra compliance burden while they continue to scout for best-in-class talent?

The extreme confidence and brand equity that this industry has earned from its global and domestic clients is laid on a robust foundation of best-in-class talent which is also celebrated for diversity and inclusivity. The goal that we have set for ourselves – great economic prosperity through tech adoption – will be met, when there's a premium on fresh ideas leading to innovation, and that's why putting restrictions on talent mobility is not going to cut it.

The writer is President of Nasscom

**When MNCs set up massive operations in a particular state, they do so by looking at "Indian talent". The canvas is always much larger and never of restrictive state boundaries**

It is also worthwhile to note that more than 21% of the IT industry segment in the state of Haryana are GCCs (extrapolating survey findings). The government is seen as a great enabler in these transformational journeys, and it is for good reason that the ease of doing business index continues to be improved upon greatly, every year.

The hybrid model that we have adopted to emerge stronger from the crisis is largely contact-less and to date, a vast majority of the IT companies continue to operate efficiently through remote-working. The fresh telecom

## 'Sport teaches you to interact with each other on a human level ... One shouldn't be mixing politics or religion with sport'

Pakistan's Atsma ul Haq Qureshi and India's Rohan Bopanna, the 2010 US Open doubles runners up, recently announced the resumption of their partnership after a gap of seven years for a tournament held last month. Qureshi spoke to Siddharth Saxena about it:

■ What does this partnership mean in the larger context of animosity between the two countries?

The feedback, the positivity, we have received from everybody has been unbelievable. I never thought us getting together for just one tournament would create such a buzz and goodwill. The fact that we are getting such positive feedback from everybody – the fans, the media – means that everybody wants us to play, everybody wants us to do well together and perhaps, everybody loves to see an Indian and a Pakistani play together, as a team. I think the message there is clear enough. Both Rohan and I are ambassadors of peace for our countries, we do our best to promote peace between the neighbours. If someone can see this partnership for what it is, in a positive way and it can help change their thinking about India or Pakistan or Pakistanis or Indians, I would see it as a big win in itself.

■ You and Bopanna started the Stop War, Start Tennis campaign. Could you talk a bit about that?

## Q&amp;A

We started the Stop War, Start Tennis initiative to promote peace across the border and across the world as well. The idea was trying to promote peace through our sport, our friendship, our partnership. I still stand by it, in fact I've turned it into a charity now, with the same name, which aims to help and support people

all over the world affected by war and natural disasters. I try to provide tennis equipment and tennis-specific wheelchairs for those who lost their limbs to war.

The foundation was very active during the Covid time with food ration packets.

But Stop War, Start Tennis isn't just narrow in scope to tennis alone. It includes other sports as well, because we believe if every person on this planet is involved in some sport of any kind, war becomes a distant memory. Sport teaches you to interact with each other on a human level and not because of the culture, religion or country they are from.

■ Do you think it's possible for the two countries to continue playing each other even when things are turbulent?

For me, it's an obvious thing to do, it's definitely possible. To me, playing each other is never off the table. I've always believed one shouldn't be mixing

politics or religion with sports or the arts. The governments shouldn't be doing the cancelling and banning. It's sad that India has imposed this ban on Pakistani artists and sportspersons to come to India to perform or play.

Discrimination towards a certain nation or country or a group of people is a very unfortunate fallout. I love coming to India, whenever I have visited or to play or compete. I don't think sports, the arts and culture should ever be affected by political differences.

■ You boycotted the tie when India refused to travel

This had nothing to do with the Davis Cup issue. Rohan 'Bops' is a very good friend of mine, on and off the court. I've known him for a very long time. Nothing changed in our relationship, our friendship stays the same as always.

■ Now that the partnership with Rohan is over, where does it go from here?

It was great fun partnering Rohan again in Mexico. Rohan and I didn't get to speak too much about the future. I think he's already set with certain players to play with this season and the Mexico Open was just a one-off.



dilbert

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## How Did The Buddha Stay Mentally Fit

Shuvendu Sen

My first meeting with Walter Jackson Freeman III took place in October 1999, under a cloudy Brooklyn sky on the premises of Long Island University. He was a semi-retired theoretical neuroscientist, biologist and philosopher who worked in the labs of the University of California at Berkeley, pioneering research in how brains generate meaning... Freeman talked about his landmark article, 'Consciousness, Intentionality and Causality'. In it, he had defined consciousness as "a global internal state variable composed of a sequence of momentary state of awareness".

This conclusion takes on tremendous importance when considering the art of meditation. Unlike a pharmaceutical drug that is swallowed with little personal initiative, meditation is an individual process that requires one's own motivation and commitment. You are challenging your mind, thus repairing it.

Freeman had often quoted British mathematician Roger Penrose, who in his

1994 book titled 'The Emperor's New Mind' argued that known laws of physics are inadequate to explain the phenomenon of consciousness. He based this on claims that consciousness transcends formal logic. He took refuge in the principles of quantum theory as an alternative process through which consciousness could arise.

In a grand coincidence, thousands of miles away across the Atlantic Ocean, anesthesiologist and University of Arizona professor Stuart Hameroff was investigating all his intellectual and creative energy on the essence of microtubules – subneuronal and vital cytoskeleton components that he believed could be the cradle of our information processing system. He reasoned that the mystery of consciousness might lie in understanding these microtubules in brain cells, functioning at both the molecular and supramolecular levels.

In undeterred audacity, they dumped mainstream ideas to demonstrate that

consciousness was based on computable quantum processing, and hence, cannot be reproduced by computer logic performed by qubits, a unit of quantum information, formed collectively on cellular microtubules, a process significantly amplified in the neurons.

"Did consciousness evolve from complex computations among brain neurons, as most scientists assert," a euphoric Hameroff and Penrose asked the world, "or has consciousness, in some sense, been here all along, as spiritual approaches maintain?"

Science had suddenly stumbled into the backyard of a beyond that is also infinitely close. In an instant, microtubules smelled like the grass where Buddha and his consciousness once sat and all this became infinitely relevant to sufferers of Alzheimer's. The terrifying spectacles of amyloid plaques wrecking these very microtubules confronted us in unblinking stare.

Can meditation, with its potential for

neuroplasticity, alter the structure of nerve cells, replenish the dwindling quantum energy of the microtubules plagued by the onset of Alzheimer's?

Can meditation prevent degeneration, with its boundless capability to crystallise energy, before Alzheimer's arrives?

Can meditative electrical waves be present in the microtubules?

The possibilities are endless, and going by the outpourings of positive research, we have every reason to be hopeful.

We have seen this process before. Ancient sages advocated practices that rigorous scientific study later found immeasurably beneficial. Siddhartha lived in an age where nerve endings, let alone microtubules, were unknown. Yet the calm and increased focus of sitting alone and concentrating for long periods produced results that performed better than any laboratory-produced compounds.

It is time to prescribe meditation. The writer is vice-chair, Research, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, US



THE SPEAKING TREE

Can meditation, with its potential for

## Healthcare Expenses May Treble In 10 Yrs

In India, the share of out-of-pocket expenditure in health is more than 60%. This indicates how much ground health insurance has yet to cover. Healthcare expenditure has grown at a 12% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) to Rs 8 lakh crore during FY2015-20. The CAGR is expected to pick up to 13% during FY2021-31 aided by increasing urbanisation, improving affordability, high medical inflation (8-10%), availability of better medical infra coupled with the rise of non-communicable diseases.

Source: WHO, Census, Irdai, Kotak study

# RBI to stay with easy money policy over 2nd Covid wave

**May Hold Rates, Likely Inflation Forecast Cut Adds To Dovishness**

Mayur.Shetty  
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Mumbai: The second wave of Covid in India will compel Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das to stick to an accommodative monetary policy even as he is expected to announce status quo on policy rates on Wednesday.

The accommodative stance is expected to be buttressed by long-term repos and the purchase of government bonds from banks. Adding to the dovishness in the RBI's stance would be a likely reduction in inflation forecast.

According to a Bank of America global research, a month of nationwide lockdown costs 100-200 basis points (100bps = 1 percentage point) of gross domestic product (GDP), "given the high economic cost". The research report by Bank of America Securities said that it expects the RBI to infuse liquidity through a combination of

MEASURES MPC MAY UNVEIL TODAY	
► Facilitation of National Asset Reconstruction Co	RBI had last reduced rates on May 22, 2020 (Rates in %)
► Further push for promoting digital payments	5.75
► Steps to bring rupee derivatives onshore	5.5
► Naming the applicants for New Umbrella Entity (NUE)	4
	3.35
	Jun 6, '19 May 22, '20

bond purchases, long-term repo operations and by allowing banks to hold more bonds to maturity, thereby reducing the risk of having to provide for lower valuations.

HSCB's India economist Pranjal Bhandari feels that the second wave will result in GDP growth numbers in FY22 being more evenly spread. Earlier, a growth spike was expected in the first half because of the base effect resulting from the lockdown in Q1FY21. "We think new growth impulses will be delayed, not lost. To be sure, even if the pace of economic re-

construction Company (ARC) by private sector banks. Since the RBI is not in favour of revising rules based on ownership, it is likely to re-jig the norms for ARCs.

The finance minister has in the Budget announced measures to support digital payments. The central bank had last year announced the operationalisation of the payment infrastructure development fund and is now likely to review the same. The RBI has been working hard to bring onshore the trade-in rupee derivatives (non-deliverable forwards). More measures to deepen this market are likely to be taken.

Earlier this month, the central bank had expressed its displeasure with banks over their inability to prepare themselves for a new regime of bank-led authentication of recurring card payments. While the RBI has extended the deadline for compliance, it could come out with a framework for penalising non-compliance.

## KKR raises \$15bn in Asia's biggest fund

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Singapore: Private equity major KKR said on Tuesday it has raised \$15 billion for its fourth Asia-Pacific focused fund, marking the region's biggest PE fund at a time when buyout-backed deals are on the rise.

US-based KKR started marketing the new Asia fund towards the end of 2019, initially targeting \$12.5 billion, sources said previously. "Companies across Asia-Pacific are recognising their potential to become not only national and regional champions but also global leaders in their industries," Ashish Shastri, KKR's co-head of Asia-Pacific PE, said. KKR said the fund exceeded its target size to reach its hard cap for investors' commitments and received strong support from new and existing global investors, including significant representation from Asia-Pacific ones. REUTERS

## HC allows ByteDance to operate a/cs

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Mumbai: The Bombay high court on Tuesday allowed TikTok parent ByteDance (India) Technology to operate its bank accounts "for an amount over and above Rs 79 crore" after the company assured to secure the central department of revenue's interest.

Senior counsel Rafique Dada and VKram Nankani said the Chinese company would secure the central department of revenue's concern of Rs 79 crore by depositing additional amount in its frozen bank accounts. Additionally, "the bank account will remain frozen to the extent of Rs 79 crore and it may be allowed to operate the bank accounts over and above" that amount.

## 30% disputes in tax scheme Vivad settled

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The income tax department has managed to settle nearly 30% of disputes under the Vivad Se Vishwas scheme, with the disputed amount toppling Rs 1 lakh crore.

Latest data released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) showed that close to 1.5 lakh cases had been settled out of the 5.1 lakh disputes. The total demand raised by the income tax authorities in the cases involving dispute added up to over Rs 15.1 lakh crore, of which the settled amount added up to just over Rs 1 lakh crore.

Payment worth Rs 54,005 crore has been received, according to the numbers released by the department.

## Cred's valuation trebles to \$2.2bn, raises \$215mn



Bengaluru: Cred, the fintech startup started by serial entrepreneur Kunal Shah, has raised \$215 million in new funding, with its valuation soaring to \$2.2 billion. The company, which offers rewards for credit card payments, is now officially the second fastest Indian startup to emerge as a unicorn, a moniker for startups valued at \$1 billion or more. It achieved the status in just 29 months of launch.

TOI first reported in its March 16 edition about Cred being in the final stages of talks for the new financing with a jump of three times in its valuation in just three months. In December 2020, Cred was valued at a little over \$800 million.

In a note to his team, Shah said new investor Falcon Edge Capital and its existing investor Coatue Management

and an opportunity to create member value. We've grown rapidly over the past 2.5 years, with 35% of premium credit card holders and processing 22% of all card payments in India on a monthly basis. As the credit card category continues to grow rapidly in India, our opportunity is to imagine new use-cases, empower Cred members to use credit responsibly and reward them for good financial behaviour," Shah said in his note. Cred has now raised over \$440 million since it was started.

Bengaluru-based Cred has nearly 6 million members who use the platform to pay credit card bills. It focuses on a premium set of users and applicants must have a minimum credit score of 750 to be a member. Over the last six months, it has also launched new products that are said to be seeing good traction. It has forayed into lending and rent payments.

"While valuation is a milestone that many celebrate, we view it as a responsibility

## US investor Tiger Global eyes stake in PharmEasy

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Bengaluru: Tiger Global Management, one of the most fervent backers of Indian startups, is in early-stage talks for an investment in online pharmacy platform PharmEasy, two people aware of the discussions said.

Tiger Global, which recently closed its thirteenth global fund of \$6.7 billion, its biggest till date, has been aggressively investing in local startups this year. Sources aware of the talks said the investment size is yet to be finalised but it would be a mix of primary and secondary capital infusion where some of the early investors may sell parts

### HIKES BETS ON DESI COS

of their stake in PharmEasy's parent firm API Holdings. "Tiger has been in talks with PharmEasy for several weeks now and it's progressing steadily. PharmEasy has got the final approval from antitrust regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) on the

### INVESTMENT

investment from Prosus Ventures (previously Naspers) and now talks with Tiger will move ahead," one of the sources mentioned earlier said.

As reported by TOI in February, PharmEasy's parent is in the final stages of closing an investment of \$300-350 million from Prosus Ventures

and PE major TPG Capital. This too is a mix of primary and secondary share sale. In a secondary transaction, existing investors sell their stake (partial or full) to new investors and the money does not go to the company coffers.

Tiger Global has already invested around \$150 million in Indian startups this year, based on investments that have been made public, according to data from Venture Intelligence. Tiger is reportedly in the middle of backing multiple other startups which will take the total size of its investments in India in 2021 to a much bigger figure. PharmEasy co-founder Dhaval Shah and a spokesperson of Tiger Global declined to comment.

On some of the components have also gone up.

Godrej Appliances said after rising prices by 3-5% in January, an additional 3-5% as on April 1. We also expect to hold it," However, in select categories, prices were kept 10% lower than last year to gain market share.

Panasonic officials said

that given the market conditions, they plan to raise prices of ACs by 6-8%, while refrigerators will see an increase in the range of 3-4%. This is due to the rise in cost of commodities, thereby increasing the price of production.

Panasonic India & South Asia president & CEO Manish Sharma said, "As an organisation, we try to absorb maximum costs at our end and not pass it to our consumers. In the last 3-4 months, there's been 25% growth in sales of air conditioners."

While LG Electronics India has increased prices 6-8% this year, Voltas said ACs and cooling appliances have witnessed an overall 3-5% increase in average market price. Customs duti-

es on some of the components have also gone up.

Godrej Appliances said after rising prices by 3-5% in January, an additional 3-5% as on April 1. Its ACs product group head Santosh Sallan said,

"Commodity prices are not coming in control. In the initial stages of commodity prices going up last year by around 13%, manufacturers did not pass on the entire cost to customers at that time. They waited till demand picked up in the summer season to pass on the price increase."

There is a tremendous price increase on ocean freight too—up 3x as compared to pre-Covid levels. Besides, this channel is also witnessing a shortage of containers coming to India, manufacturers said. "Most input parts like steel, compressors are imported, and the freight price has gone up by 200-300% to \$3,300 per container from \$900 in pre-Covid times," Sallan added.

AC prices up 13%, 2nd hike since Jan

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Chennai: Airconditioner manufacturers have raised prices by 8-13% for the second time in less than 100 days. The reason being cited is increasing input costs such as those incurred on ocean freight.

Blue Star managing director B Thiagarajan said, "Input costs of steel, copper and ABS plastic are up 25% on an average since March 2020. After raising the selling price of ACs 5-8% in January 2021, we have raised another 3-5% as on April 1. We also expect to hold it." However, in select categories, prices were kept 10% lower than last year to gain market share.

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KATE WINSLET CALLS OUT HOLLYWOOD HYPOCRISY, SAYS GAY ACTORS TERRIFIED OF COMING OUT FEARING THEY WILL LOSE STRAIGHT ROLES

HARVEY WEINSTEIN APPEALS SEXUAL ASSAULT CONVICTION, CLAIMS HE WAS 'DEPRIVED OF FAIR TRIAL' BY 'CAVALIER' JUDGE

## Global Covid toll crosses 3m amid infection resurgence

370m People, Or 4.7% Of World Population, Inoculated With Single Dose

Coronavirus-related deaths worldwide crossed 3 million on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, as the latest global resurgence of Covid-19 infections is challenging vaccination efforts across the globe. Health officials blame more infectious variants that were first detected in the UK and South Africa, along with public fatigue with lockdowns and other restrictions. According to Reuters tally, it took more than a year for the global Covid toll to reach 2 million. The next 1 million deaths were added in about three months.

Brazil is leading the world in the daily average number of new deaths reported and accounts for one in every four deaths worldwide each day, according to a Reuters analysis. WHO epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove said last Thursday that many hospital ICUs in Brazil are more than 90% full.

The European region, which includes 51 countries, has the highest total number of deaths at nearly 1.1 million. Five European countries including the UK, Russia, France, Italy and Germany constitute about 60% of Europe's Covid deaths. The US has the highest number of deaths of any country at the world at 55,000 and accounts for about 19% of all deaths due to Covid-19 in the world.

At least 370.3 million people or nearly 4.7% of the global population have received a single dose of vaccine by Sunday, as per Our World in Data. REUTERS



OZ-NZ 'TRAVEL BUBBLE' TO BEGIN FROM APRIL 19: New Zealand and Australia will create a quarantine and Covid-testing free 'travel bubble' from April 19. The virus has effectively been eradicated in both the countries with strict border closures and lockdown measures

### EMA official sees clear 'association' between Astra vax and blood clots

Rome: A top official at Europe's medicines regulator has said there is a clear "association" between AstraZeneca's shot and rare blood clots in the brain, though the direct cause is still unknown. The European Medical Agency said after the comments by Marco Cavaleri, chair of its vaccine evaluation team, that it was still reviewing the vaccine and is expected to announce its findings on Wednesday or Thursday.

"In my opinion, we can now say it, it is clear that there is an association (of the brain blood clots) with the vaccine. However, we still do not know what causes this reaction," Cavaleri told an Italian daily, without giving evidence. The EMA, which has said the bene-

In response to the official's comment, the EU regulator said that its review was ongoing and it expected to announce its findings on Wednesday or Thursday

fits of the Astra shot outweigh any risks, is probing 44 reports of the clots, or cerebral venous sinus thrombosis, out of 9.2 million vaccinated in Europe. The WHO, meanwhile, said it expects there'll be no reason to change its assessment that the benefits of the Astra shot outweigh any risks. "The benefit-risk assessment is still largely positive," regulatory director Rogerio Gaspar. REUTERS

### Saudi to allow only 'immunised' pilgrims

Saudi authorities said on Monday only people immunised against Covid-19 will be allowed to perform the year-round umrah pilgrimage from the start of Ramzan. The haj and umrah ministry said 3 categories of people would be considered "immunised": Those who've got two vaccine doses, those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior, and people who've recovered from the infection. REUTERS

### Oxford pauses Astra vax trial among kids

The University of Oxford has paused dosing children and teenagers in a small UK study of the Covid-19 vaccine it developed with AstraZeneca, pending more information about rare blood-clotting issues in adults who've received it, Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday. Oxford is waiting for more information from the UK's drugs watchdog, before giving any further vaccinations to children or teenagers in the pediatric trial, an Oxford spokesman told the Journal. AstraZeneca and Oxford University did not immediately respond to a request for comment. REUTERS

## Netanyahu gets first crack at forming new Israel govt

Israel's president handed PM Netanyahu the difficult task on Tuesday of trying to form a government from the country's splintered parliament, giving the embattled leader a chance to prolong his lengthy term in office while he stands trial on graft charges.



Rivlin said here was nothing in the law preventing Netanyahu from holding the office and with most support—52 seats—he had the best chance. "I've decided to entrust him with the task. This is not an easy decision on a moral and ethical basis. The state of Israel is not to be taken for granted. And I fear for my country." Netanyahu now has up to six weeks to try to form a coalition. If he fails, Rivlin could give another party leader the opportunity, or Israel could be plunged into a fifth election in just over two years. AP

## Russian FM in Pak, Af talks to dominate agenda

Islamabad: Russia's foreign minister arrived on Tuesday in Pakistan for a two-day visit expected to focus on efforts to bring peace to neighbouring Afghanistan. Sergey Lavrov's visit comes as a May 1 deadline for US troops to leave Afghanistan in line with a deal Washington signed a year ago with the Taliban seems increasingly unlikely. "A common concern is the situation in Afghanistan," said a Russian foreign ministry statement. "We look forward to an early finding of a constructive solution in order to end the civil war in Afghanistan..."

Lavrov heads a 13-member delegation that includes Moscow's special representative for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov. Lavrov's visit is the first by a Russian foreign minister in nine years. Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that the visit is indicative of a closer relationship between the two countries. The Russian ministry statement said the visit will also focus on bilateral trade. While in Pakistan, Lavrov will meet PM Imran Khan as well as Pakistan's powerful army chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. AP

**AROUND THE WORLD**

**US airline set to shake up white, male-dominated pilot population**

United Airlines said on Tuesday it wants women and people of colour to make up at least half of the 5,000 pilots it plans to train this decade at its new flight school, a push to diversify a career traditionally dominated by white men. "We want to make sure that we are tapping into a big diverse talent pool and not limiting ourselves to just one section of the pond," chief communications officer Josh Ernest said. There are fewer than 100 black women pilots flying for major airlines, United pilot Carole Hopson said, adding this situation had to change. Becoming a pilot can be a long and costly pursuit and the company is offering \$1.2 million in academy scholarships

**SURPRISE GUEST:** Covid-19 forced the White House to scrap its Easter Egg Roll for a second straight year on Monday, but that didn't stop President Biden from giving a nod to the tradition in an appearance with a special guest. The president and first lady Jill Biden appeared on the White House balcony along with a mask-wearing Easter Bunny. The egg roll usually brings some 30,000 children and parents to the White House grounds

## Chelsea seek return to calm at Porto

London: Soon after his 14-match unbeaten start at Chelsea ended, Thomas Tuchel had a warning for his players. "We cannot lose our heads now," the Chelsea manager said after Saturday's 5-2 loss to a West Bromwich side facing relegation from the Premier League.

What unfolded at the training ground on Sunday was just the reaction he didn't want to see: A clash between defender Antonio Rudiger and goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga. There is no denying from Tuchel, who replaced the fired Frank Lampard in January, that the incident "got heated."

Ensuring there are no lingering tensions in the camp from the bust-up is key, with fourth place to secure in the

Premier League and the more immediately pressing matter of the first leg against Porto in the quarterfinals of the Champions League on Wednesday. "We calmed the situation down immediately," Tuchel said Tuesday. "Toni sorted it out directly, and it was a strong and brave thing to do. So I am happy with the way they dealt with it."

Porto coach Sergio Conceicao said he is uneasy about facing Chelsea so soon after their defeat to West Brom. "I wished they had won the last game rather than lost," Conceicao told a news conference. "A defeat like that serves as a warning. It sets the alarm bells off and makes everyone more alert to danger. Chelsea had been very strong until this game." AGENCIES

## BARCA WITHIN A POINT OF ATLETICO

Barcelona: Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman said his side have what it takes to win their nine remaining games and sweep to the La Liga title after snatching a last-gasp 1-0 win over Real Valladolid. The Catalans were far from their best but a volley from Ousmane Dembele in stoppage time meant they grabbed a sixth straight league win and closed the gap with Atletico Madrid to one point with nine games remaining. "The team is capable of winning the games we have left but today was also a reminder you always have to be at your very best and you have to be clinical," Koeman said.

Lingard lifts West Ham into fourth: Jesse Lingard inspired West Ham to a thrilling 3-2 win at Wolves to move fourth in the Premier League, as Everton's hopes were dented in a 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace.

## COUTINHO UNDERGOES SURGERY

Barcelona: Barcelona midfielder Philippe Coutinho has had surgery on his left knee for an injury sustained during their 1-1 La Liga draw with Elbar in December, the Spanish club said. Coutinho, 28, started the game on the bench and came on in the second half but limped off the field during stoppage time as Barcelona finished the game with 10 men having made all their substitutions. Meanwhile, Real Madrid defender Raphael Varane has tested positive for Covid-19, the Spanish club said. AGENCIES

**FILLING UP THE LEWA-SIZED HOLE**

**QUARTERFINALS, 1ST LEG**

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While the likes of Neymar and Kylian Mbappe will be aiming to avenge the Lisbon final defeat, holders Bayern will be without their talismanic striker Robert Lewandowski, who is nursing a knee injury and is ruled out of both the home leg at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday and the re-

turn leg in Paris next Tuesday. But Bayern's old warhorse Thomas Mueller remained optimistic despite the pressing challenges. "It should be interesting to have a repeat of the final again. Having played against them, our players know how good a team PSG is. They have great players who are very good in attack. We are also aware how desperate they are to win the Champions League. It's their big goal and they will come hard at us after missing out last season. The likes of Neymar and Mbappe will be extra motivated. So we have to remain alert and cannot let our intensity drop," Mueller told TOI.

The 31-year-old midfielder though concedes that it will be difficult for Bayern to replace Lewandowski. In fact, a large part of Bayern's success was due to the

fruitful partnership of Mueller and Lewandowski. The pair has produced 55 goals between them in all competitions this season too. "It's not easy to lose our best goalscorer. But we have to accept it. I believe we have a good depth in our squad and there are a few quality players. Lewa's absence should inspire us to win the match for him."

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us," the World Cup winner said. However, it's not only Lewa that Bayern will be missing. Serge Gnabry, who was deemed to be Lewa's replacement, is down with a sore throat and doubtful for the contest. PSG, on the other hand, will be missing defender Alessandro Florenzi and midfielder Marco Verratti, both testing positive for Covid.

Mueller said that the PSG match is perfect opportunity for Bayern to prove that they are the best in the business. "The Champions League has always been special for us. We know PSG are a tough opponent but I have always enjoyed playing against the biggest names of football in this competition. It is only when you win against the top teams you prove your worth. So we have to remain confident in our abilities," Mueller concluded.

## Rory, DJ spin the thrill for returning fans

Augusta: Top-ranked defending champion Dustin Johnson and four-time major winner Rory McIlroy delighted the first spectators at Augusta National since 2019 with a practice round together on Monday ahead of the 85th Masters tournament.

Spectators were banned last year and the event was delayed until November by the Covid-19 pandemic while this week only a limited number of fans are allowed onto the famed course under Covid-19 safety protocols which include mandatory face masks and social distancing. "It's fantastic to see people out here again," England's 16th-ranked Matthew Fitzpatrick said.

Those who arrived early, the first fans at a major since the 2019 British Open, were treated to a tour of the front nine by McIlroy, trying to win a green jacket to complete a career Grand Slam, and Johnson, bidding to

**MASTERS**

**FAN FOLLOWING:** The gallery of patrons with Masters defending champ Dustin Johnson and Rory McIlroy during their practice round

become the first back-to-back Masters champion since Tiger Woods in 2001-02. "It's nice to have the patrons back," Johnson said. "It's shaping up to be a wonderful Masters. Conditions are perfect. The course is in really good shape, right where they want it."

McIlroy, ranked 12th, continued onto the back nine while Johnson headed back to the practice range. Masters officials have not said how many fans are expected to attend the tournament, but US media reports have estimated about 12,000 spectators per day will be allowed compared to a usual 40,000 to 50,000.

"The patrons play such a massive role," 2015 Masters winner Jordan Spieth said. AFP

## Myanmar curbs may lead to civil war, says Russia, but EU plans more

Russia said on Tuesday the West risked triggering civil war in Myanmar by imposing sanctions on the military junta that has seized power in a coup, but France said the EU will step up restrictions on the junta. The Kremlin's show of support was a boost to the junta that overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government on February 1.

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The EU was preparing to impose sanctions on the Myanmar military targeting its business interests, French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in Paris. "We are going to add economic sanctions at the level of the 27 (EU countries) ... against the economic entities linked to the army so that they (sanctions) can be applied very quickly," Le Drian told lawmakers.

The EU last month imposed sanctions on a number of figures linked to the coup and the subsequent repression. REUTERS

## World powers, Iran and US launch indirect talks to revive nuclear deal

Vienna: Iran and world powers will meet on Friday after their experts flesh out concrete plans on how the US would lift sanctions and Iran return to its obligations, as part of indirect talks aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.

Two expert-level groups have been given the task of compiling lists of sanctions that the US could lift with nuclear obligations Iran should meet, and reporting back on Friday. "This is going to involve discussions about identifying the steps that the US has to take and identifying the steps that Iran is going to have to take," Robert Malley, head of the US delegation, which also includes sanctions expert Richard Nephew, told NPR radio on Tuesday morning. Iran briefly met at a hotel for preparatory talks with the five other parties to the deal—but without the Americans.

mission meeting. There's unity and ambition for a joint diplomatic process with two expert groups on nuclear implementation and sanctions lifting.

As coordinator I will intensify separate contacts here in Vienna with all relevant parties, including US," EU chief coordinator Enrique Mora said on Twitter. Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Abbas Araghchi echoed those comments, adding that senior diplomats would meet again on Friday.

Aragchi said Tehran had rejected a US proposal for Iran to suspend its enrichment of uranium to 20% fissile purity in return for the release of \$1 billion of its funds blocked in other countries amid the US sanctions. Diplomats said the talks would spread over several weeks. REUTERS

## China cautions Japan against teaming up with US ahead of Biden-Suga meet

### China: Drills near Taiwan to become regular

Chinese carrier group is exercising near Taiwan and such drills will become regular, China's navy said late on Monday in a further escalation of tensions near the island that Beijing claims as its sovereign territory. The US navy said on Tuesday that its Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group entered the South China Sea on April 4 to conduct routine operations, its second such visit this year, amid stepped up US-China tensions. Taiwan has complained of an increase in Chinese military activity near the island in recent months. China's navy said the carrier group was carrying out "routine" drills in the waters near Taiwan. The aim is to enhance its capability to safeguard national sovereignty, safety and development interests, it said. "Similar exercises will be conducted on a regular basis in the future," the navy added. REUTERS

ased view against China."

Japan, a close US ally, shares US concerns about China's military buildup and claims to territory in the South and East China Seas. However, its ma-

## TIMES SPORT

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**We don't see this as a revenge match. The context is different, we have a different coach. Quite a few players have left since too. If some of those that were there last season want to use this as an extra source of motivation, it will be welcome.**

—Marquinhos | PSG CAPTAIN

**Shilarie. Saharoy @timesgroup.com**

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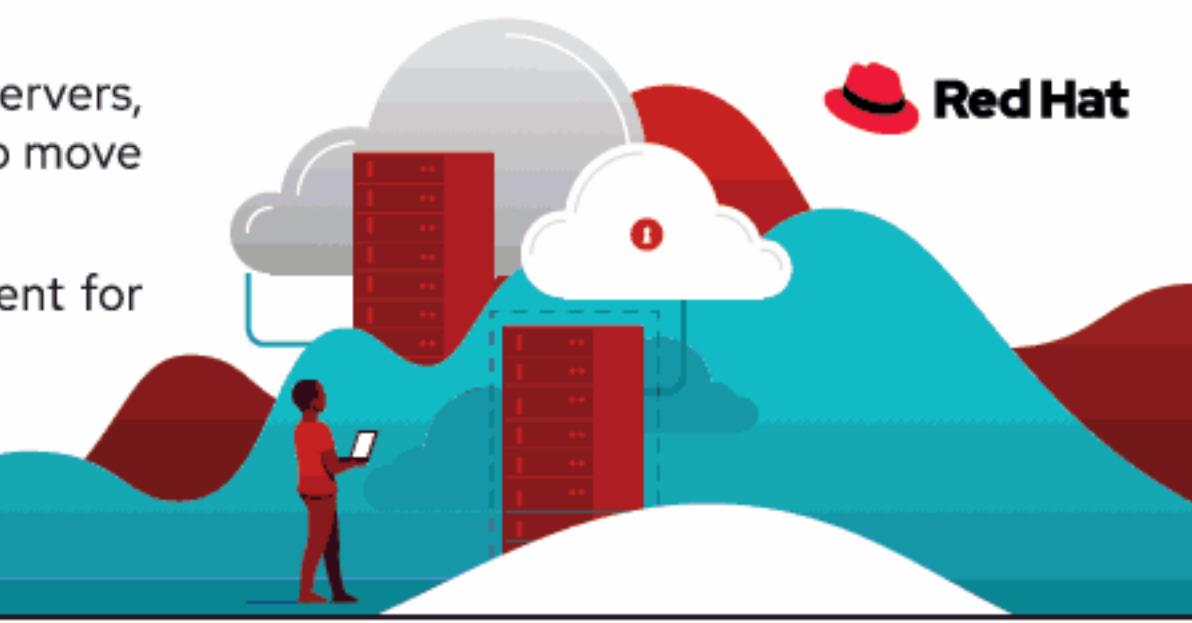
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Recruiters look for open source contributions, participation in coding challenges

Habeeba Salim &  
Swati Rathor | TNN

Ever since one can remember, the resume has had a standard template for freshers and young professionals. Educational qualifications with grades. Work experience if any. Extra-curricular activities in college. Languages known. Age. Contact details. Some even grandly put a 'Career objective' or a 'Life objective'.

For young technologists, it's time to bury that template. It's time to get your hands "dirty" right from college, work on projects, participate in competitive and code hosting platforms. And make these the centrepiece of your resume.

It is this recognition that is driving the growing Indian presence, including student presence, on various developer platforms – like GitHub for code, Kaggle for data science, and HackerEarth for various competitions. Profiles on such platforms are proof points of open source contributions, participation in coding challenges, hackathons, bug hunting. It gives recruiters a quick low down on the stuff you are really made of.

"Organisations across the board are giving more weightage to the actual projects that people have done. The resume is just a

## CERTIFICATIONS HELP, BUT NEED TO BE VERIFIED WITH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

**SACHIN GUPTA** | CO-FOUNDER & CEO, HACKEREARTH

Projects and coding challenges are a very good indicator of skills. It tells the recruiter that the person worked on a certain set of problem types, used a particular tech stack, etc. This allows companies to do one-on-one matching with the kind of tech skills they are looking for.

**VIPIN SAHU** | CO-FOUNDER, WEBKUL

People are participating in a lot of competition programmes because bigger companies are using that for direct recruitments. But working in open source projects can help you get hired too. Open source contributions come from people who are passionate about what they code.

**YASHAB GIRI** | DIRECTOR, STAFFING, RANDSTAD TECHNOLOGIES

Software development is a collaborative sport. While writing code, documenting and collaborating, you are also making trade-offs on what kind of technologies you should use and what kind of architecture you

must have. All of these will towards the profile of a software developer. It tells a hirer how active a person is in software development.

**MANEESH SHARMA** | COUNTRY MANAGER, GITHUB

**Ash Malik** | MD, INDIA TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, DEUTSCHE BANK

Certifications still have a role to play. A person who acquires certifications demonstrates an investment in themselves and a desire to keep learning. However, a certification will not be taken at face value and will always be verified with real practical experience.

**YASHAB GIRI** | DIRECTOR, STAFFING, RANDSTAD TECHNOLOGIES

In IT, what is on the resume is sometimes difficult to validate. Certifications and training programmes are essential. Having a coding portfolio on independent platforms are good add-ons as they indicate that the candidate can deliver what he or she has learnt.

**YASHAB GIRI** | DIRECTOR, STAFFING, RANDSTAD TECHNOLOGIES

establishing an understanding of their level of competency, their conceptual thinking and problem solving abilities. Contributions to open source or writing technical whitepapers that are externally published, not only demonstrate a candidate's ability and willingness to pick up new skills, but also exhibits their agility to learn," adds Malak.

Yashab Giri, director at staffing firm Randstad Technologies, says that coding as a requirement has suddenly gone up and that probably could be because of the digital focus of all companies now. "Previously, IT and e-commerce companies used to look at the digital aspect, but now, post-pandemic, everyone is looking at it, resulting in high demand for coding talent. There is more and more acceptance of platforms like GitHub now among potential employers. The reason is that during face to face interviews, many times it becomes difficult to assess the candidate's capabilities, but on these platforms, it is easy to see where the candidate's strengths lie," says Giri.

For a while now, developers have been rushing to gather certifications to showcase capabilities. But certifications, experts say, should be supplemented with projects. "Certification is a very good way to gather knowledge. These are very structured formats to learn new things. But projects are where developers get the real experience. Whether on GitHub or on their laptop, building software is their practical knowledge," says Maneesh Sharma, country manager at GitHub India. Being part of an open source project not only lets the developer code, but will also let them run and ship the code in the cloud. Now, that's as good an experience as being a part of a team with a large company.

## TECH I'D LIKE TO SEE

### AI will help us ask right questions

Advancements in analytics, automation, and artificial intelligence have given us the ability to answer and address some of our time's most essential questions – enabling significant differentiation in our businesses. But, what about questions we did not know to ask? AI has reached the point where pattern recognition, language, and computer vision is getting to, or is well above human grade. The ability to spot the weak links in large data sets that were previ-



Sanjay Srivastava | CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER, GENPACT

## TIMES TECHIES WEBINAR

Our discussion today is on the future semiconductor landscape and the changing paradigm of VLSI education in India



Live on Facebook today,

April 7, from 6pm to 7pm.

Event page link: <http://bit.ly/techieswebinar48>

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## India can build IoT products at lower costs

Shilpa Phadnis & Sujit John | TNN



Nikhil Bhaskaran

Sejal Gupta

darin," he said.

Gupta, a recent computer science graduate, said even creating entrepreneurs has been a challenge because we don't celebrate failure. "It's only about success. That mindset must change," she said.

Bhaskaran said there's huge potential in India for IoT innovations. Covid, he said, had dramatically increased the demand for IoT especially in manufacturing. Many of the products are currently being imported at high prices. Given India's cost structure and tech capabilities, he said, there's potential to redesign these products and offer them at significantly lower costs.

Bhaskaran said many in the space are embracing the low-code/no-code development path. "You don't need to know the programming syntax. In the US and UK, kids tinker with Arduino or Raspberry Pi. But there are free IoT technologies that one can access these days, provided one learns to connect things and understand security protocols and certificates," he said.

The IoT-AI world, he said, is moving from intelligent monitoring to decision making. Chips at the edge are now making it feasible to move decision-making to the edge. This will enable instant decision-making, crucial to areas like autonomous cars.

"If we only do services, we will miss the bus," he said last week at the Times Techies Webinar, where he was our guest together with his colleague Sejal Gupta.

Bhaskaran, who was inducted by semiconductor company ARM into its innovator programme last year, said they have had to overcome language barriers in India to teach tech. "When I used to describe Linux as a monolithic kernel, many wouldn't understand the word monolithic. They couldn't visualise it. But if you use a Hindi word like 'katta' (sturdy/brick), it does ring a bell. In China, even advanced concepts are in Man-

okay to slow down. You can always pick up where you left off."

Ashwini also co-chairs Nasscom's regional council and is an active member of its Tech SIG (special interest group). There are certain preconceived notions about women employees that often hold them back, says Ashwini. "During the initial days of my career, there was an opportunity to travel to the US for a few months, and I wasn't even considered for it as everyone assumed that a new mother wouldn't be up for it," she says. "I cannot blame them, but I think it's important to make them understand that it's better to ask than assume. But since they didn't ask, I fought for it."

## How AI, robots, smartglasses are changing healthcare

Amin.Ali@timesgroup.com

**SHAILESH SHRIKHANDE** | DEPUTY DIRECTOR & HEAD OF CANCER SURGERY, TATA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Medical technology is the future of healthcare, and will see a whole new world of job opportunities for techies in the health sector and in patient care. AI, machine learning, nanotech, IoT, robotics, 3D printing are just a few examples of technologies that are playing an important role in healthcare.

**DR. SHRIKHANDE** | DEPUTY DIRECTOR & HEAD OF CANCER SURGERY, TATA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

ment," says Dr Shrikhande, who last year became the second Indian and the first Indian cancer surgeon to be awarded the Honorary Fellowship of the American Surgical Association, the most prestigious and oldest surgical association in the world.

AI-guided clinical care, he says, has the potential to play an important role in reducing health disparities, particularly in low resource countries like India.

Dr Shrikhande says robotic surgeries that improve precision and take away the human element – such as fine finger and wrist movements – are also a great help in prostate, rectal, kidney, neck and head cancer surgeries. "A robot is an untiring assistant. While the surgeon remains in charge, it is the robotic arms that do everything up to stitching up, enabling complex surgeries," he says.

Tata Memorial Hospital has conducted the highest number of gastrointestinal, pancreatic, rectal and other robotic surgeries in the world. The results of robots in surgeries have been found to be far superior to that of a human. "The wider the adaptation to technology, the lower will be the cost of such specialised procedures," Dr Shrikhande says.

## WE LOVE NOT HAVING LONG COMMUTES, SAY GE TECH EMPLOYEES



**PARVNA BUGALIA**, Edison Engineer, GE Gas Power

I joined during the lockdown, in August. We had a one week induction programme. We've been having fun events, like virtual Zumba, a virtual get-together of about 100 of us in the gas power division. It has been very comfortable working from home. Given the traffic, why get up early in the morning! A hybrid model would be nice, would be able to see people face to face too.

**GOPI GUDAPATI**, Remote Operation Centre (ROC) Leader - APAC, GE Renewable Energy



**GOPI GUDAPATI**, Remote Operation Centre (ROC) Leader - APAC, GE Renewable Energy

Our job is to monitor wind turbines on the field across Asia Pacific, 24/7, diagnose problems. We were doing it on wide screens in the office; the centre had parallel activities going on. When the lockdown happened, we shifted everything home; had never thought that was possible. Got high-speed networks, special firewall protection. Today, my team members are working across 6 cities, and it's working well. The team is happy. Travel time is down. That's 1 to 1.5 hours more with family, plus more work time.

**PARVATHI PATIL**, Lead System Designer, GE Healthcare

I had always been physically active. We had Zumba and yoga in office. This was impacted immediately

### ONE YEAR OF WFH



upon lockdown. But soon, the office started virtual sessions. Brought in fresh instructors. It's working really well. There's personalised attention. We had family events too for Zumba, yoga. On campus, we had to walk 15 min to get to the gym, and that would be an excuse not to go. Now we have no such excuses. We have also been having motivational sessions, financial sessions. All these have kind of made up for physical meetings.

## INSPIRATION

Ardra.Shankar@timesgroup.com

**T**rusting her instincts, Ashwini Nandini says, has always led her to the right path. As a young math graduate from Delhi University in the late 80s, she decided to go with the tide and pursue MCA, the hottest

I found my true calling." As the delivery assurance head for GlobalLogic India, the largest delivery centre of the product development services firm, Ashwini today leads the Noida office team responsible for ensuring partner delight.

She joined GlobalLogic in 2007 after working with companies like InterraIT and Tata Unisys, and has established Noida as an excellence centre for big data, cloud and mobile technologies, while growing the firm's business across e-commerce and telecom verticals. She also started and nurtured the design studio at the centre, which plays a pivotal role in design-led engineering.

As a certified life coach and a

"Instead of trying to become a superwoman and do ten things at once, prioritise things and focus on them. Slow down once in a while, but don't stop."

**Ashwini Nandini** | HEAD OF DELIVERY ASSURANCE, GLOBALLOGIC INDIA

mother of two, Ashwini is passionate about guiding budding women leaders caught between work and family, and young aspiring professionals at the crossroads. "I believe that these two sections can make or break the society, and a little guidance goes a long

## Slow down to speed up, says Ashwini Nandini

way," she says. Most of Ashwini's inspiration for the counseling comes from her own experiences. "Today, I think we've come a long way in terms of tackling gender bias and inequality in the industry, but the big challenge is the tug-of-war between work and family demands," she says. "When my daughter was in 12th grade, I took a conscious decision to slow down at work and focus on family," she recalls. "It did, to some degree, affect my career, but it's

okay to slow down. You can always pick up where you left off."

Ashwini also co-chairs Nasscom's regional council and is an active member of its Tech SIG (special interest group). There are certain preconceived notions about women employees that often hold them back, says Ashwini. "During the initial days of my career, there was an opportunity to travel to the US for a few months, and I wasn't even considered for it as everyone assumed that a new mother wouldn't be up for it," she says. "I cannot blame them, but I think it's important to make them understand that it's better to ask than assume. But since they didn't ask, I fought for it."



**BACKBEAT**

Nushrratt  
Bharucha in  
isolation after  
co-star  
Akshay Kumar  
tests COVID  
positive

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 |  
ADVERTORIAL, ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY  
PROMOTIONAL FEATURE | MUMBAI



**BACKBEAT**  
Nikita Dutta  
under home  
quarantine  
after testing  
positive for  
COVID-19

India is one  
of the most  
magical places  
I've been to:  
Dua Lipa

Grammy-winning artiste and pop icon Dua Lipa  
in an exclusive chat with Bombay Times

Debarati S Sen

All of 25, a career spanning around five years, and three Grammy Awards to boot, Dua Lipa is not your regular pop star. The singer-songwriter, who won the Best Pop Vocal Album for Future Nostalgia at the 2021 Grammys and has hits like *New Rules*, *Levitating*, *Don't Start Now*, *Be The One* and *One Kiss* to her credit, is raring to go and tells us, "I feel like I'm just getting started." Her infectious energy and passion for work are palpable even over a video call. In an exclusive interview with the Bombay Times, she speaks candidly about her work, family, struggles, love for India and more. Excerpts:

Three wins and multiple nominations later, the Grammys must feel like home now?

(Laughs!) I don't know about home! I don't think I like the idea of being too comfortable. I feel like I have a long way to go.

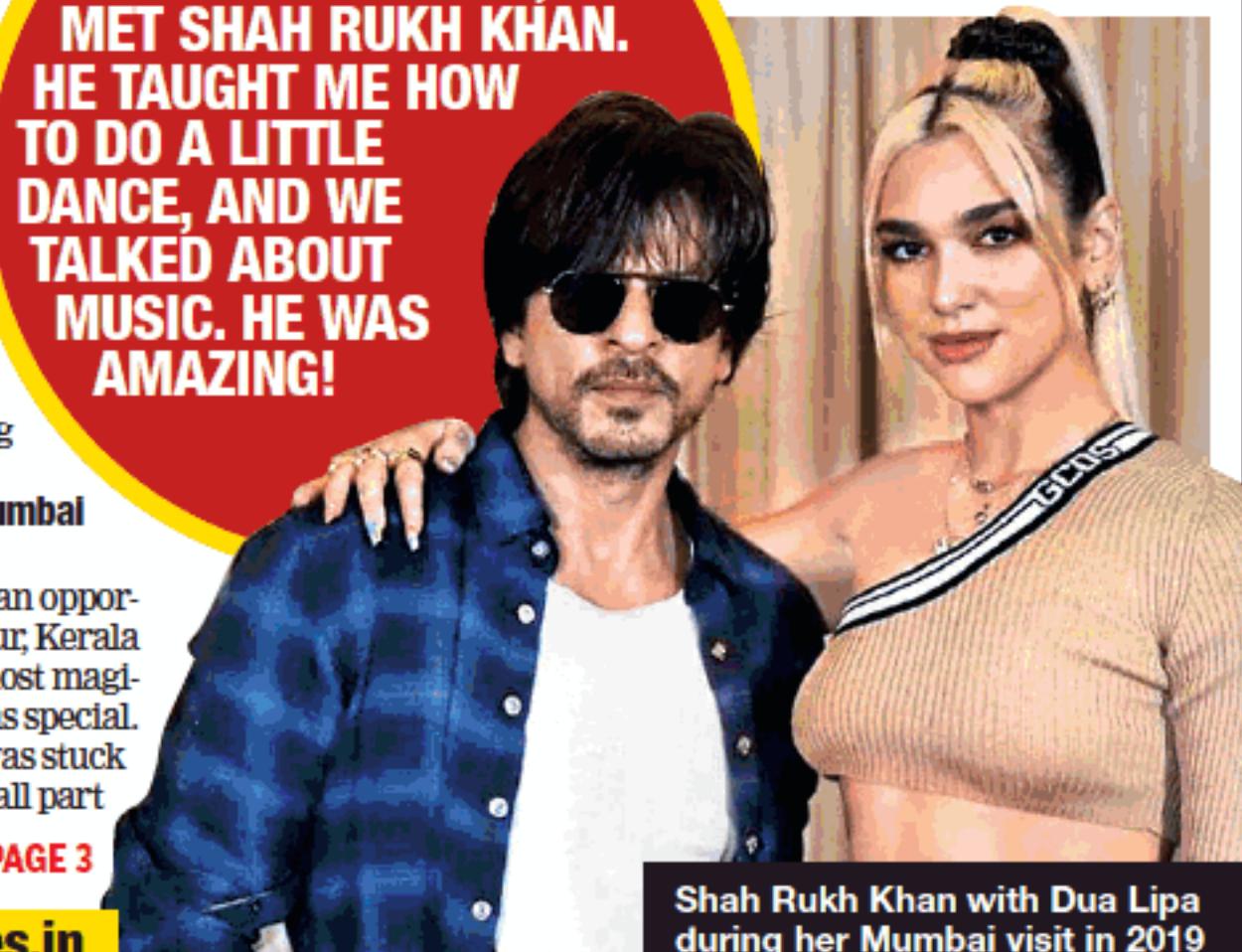
You put out a spectacular performance at the Katy Perry concert in Mumbai in 2019. What was your entire experience of visiting India like?

I love Mumbai. I've actually spent a little bit of time in India. I didn't get an opportunity to go to Mumbai until I went for this show. I went to Jodhpur, Jaipur, Kerala and then Goa. So, I did a short trip all around India. It's just one of the most magical places I've ever been to, and I'm eager to visit India again. Mumbai was special. I loved the hustle and bustle there; the city is just buzzing. I remember, I was stuck in traffic for a long time, and I had to pretty much run to the stage! It was all part of the experience, so it was amazing. I loved it!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Watch the full interview with Dua Lipa on etimes.in

THE LAST TIME  
I WAS IN MUMBAI,  
I MET SHAH RUKH KHAN.  
HE TAUGHT ME HOW  
TO DO A LITTLE  
DANCE, AND WE  
TALKED ABOUT  
MUSIC. HE WAS  
AMAZING!



Shah Rukh Khan with Dua Lipa  
during her Mumbai visit in 2019

## Sonu Sood launches a drive in Amritsar to encourage people to get vaccinated

Vedish Naidu

On World Health Day, the actor  
sparks this initiative, which  
begins at the iconic Attari-  
Wagah Border in Amritsar

Onkar Kulkarni

Last year he turned saviour for thousands of migrant workers and helped them reach their villages when the lockdown was implemented during the pandemic. Come 2021, Sonu Sood is back on the streets, and this time, he is spreading awareness about the importance of getting vaccinated to fight COVID-19. The actor started a vaccination drive today in Amritsar on the occasion of World Health Day.

Talking about his initiative, Sonu says, "I think there is too much confusion among people regarding the vaccine. They are still wondering *kti vaccine lena chahiye ya nahi lena chahiye*. So, I thought it was time I get down to spreading awareness about the importance of everyone getting vaccinated. I have planned a country-wide drive beginning from Amritsar. While I am encouraging people to get vaccinated, even I am getting vaccinated today to motivate them."

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE



I THOUGHT IT WAS TIME I GET  
DOWN TO SPREADING AWARENESS  
ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF  
EVERYONE GETTING VACCINATED

## INTERNATIONAL SHOWS AB HINDI MEIN!



NEW SHOW



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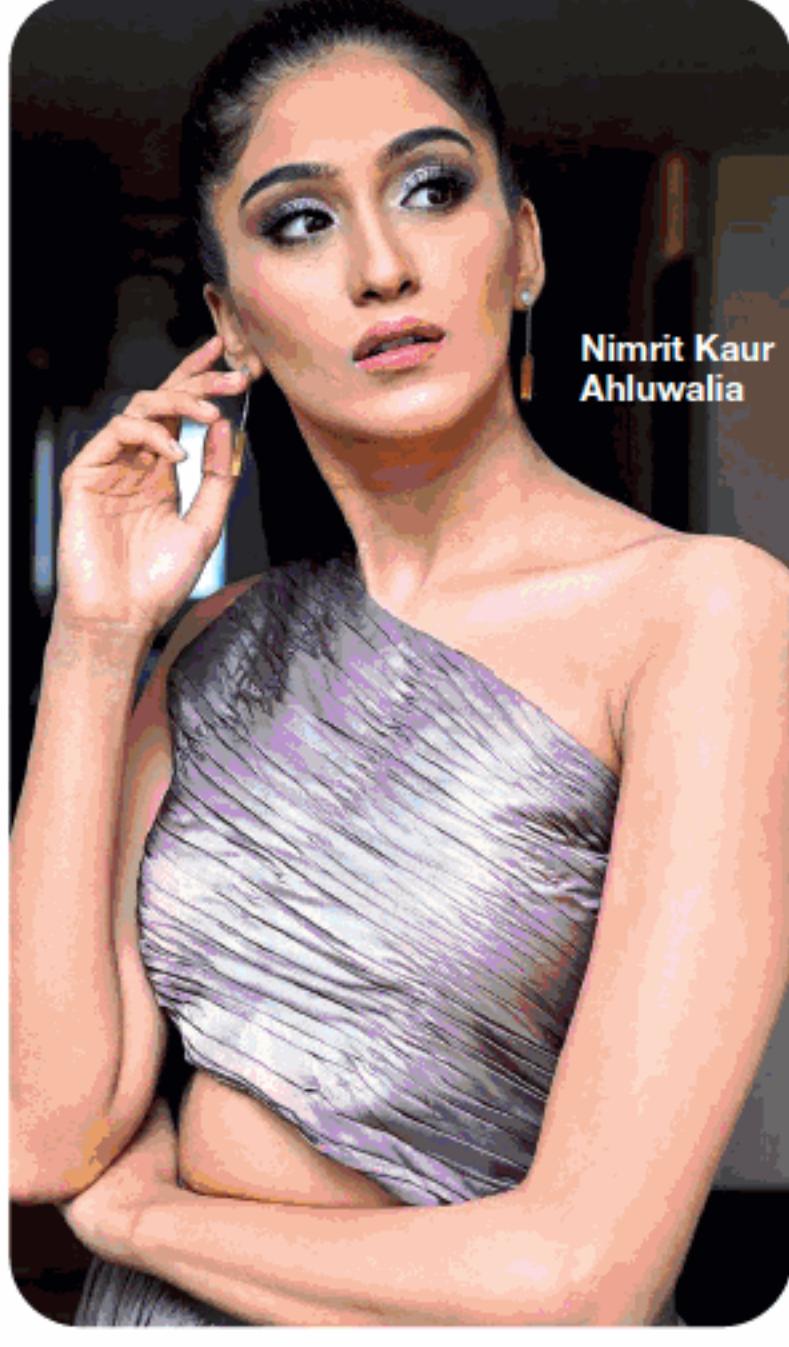


**MXPLAYER**

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# Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia's re-entry will mark Kratika Sengar's exit from Chhoti Sarraarni

@nimritahluwalia



Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia

**N**imrit Kaur Ahluwalia is all set to return to *Chhoti Sarraarni*. The actress had exited the show owing to health woes, which forced the makers to rope in a popular face to keep the audience engaged. Kratika Sengar of *Kasam - Tere Pyara Ki* fame had stepped in for Nimrit and to take the story ahead. However, Nimrit's return on the show will mark Kratika's exit.

In a chat with BT, Kratika told us, "Yes, I have heard that, too. I joined this show because the makers needed a known face to fill in for Nimrit till she could resume the shoot. I have immense respect for her; I was roped in for a cameo, which was always the plan. The people around me, including the production team, the cast and the crew are very nice. I have been having a great time shooting with them."

— Neha Maheshwari



Kratika Sengar



Vishal Kotian

## Why do you need drama in a reality show? For that there are daily soaps: Vishal Kotian

**A**kbar Ka Bal Birbal actor Vishal Kotian has always called a spade a spade. He doesn't mince words as he talks about his views on singing and dance reality shows of today. In fact, recently, Vishal posted a story on his Instagram saying, "I wonder why all the dance shows on various channels are more of sympathy shows rather than talent shows. They make you feel *accha dancer banne ke liye kabiltyat nahi gaareb hona zaroori hai* (sic)."

While speaking to us about this, Vishal said, "Earlier, during my childhood and *Boogie Woogie* days, actual talent was appreciated. There was no drama

and no video clips of who's coming from where and if people are poor. I am not saying that talent shows of today haven't given a platform to people, but the focus on a person's economic status is a lot. In the real world, only talent and hard work matters. I am not from a rich family, I made it on my own and on the basis of my talent."

Vishal feels equal opportunity should be given to everyone. "The portrayal is wrong on these talent shows because emphasis is given to drama. You don't

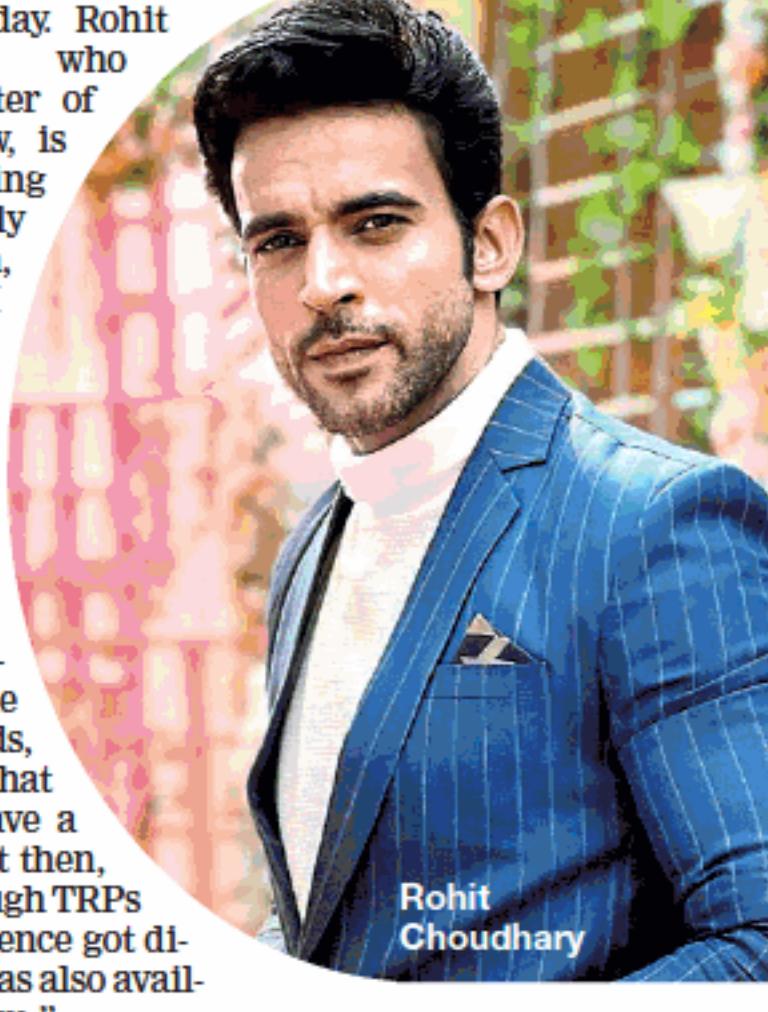
need drama on a talent show. At best, you could show a clip on the life of the contestants at the beginning of the show," he said.

According to Vishal, in the current scenario, people would want to see happy faces performing rather than sad stories and drama. "For drama, we have daily soaps and that should be enough," he signed off.

— Hasti Doshi

## My family told me to quit TV during the lockdown: Rohit Choudhary

@rohitchoudharyofficial



Rohit Choudhary

**B**rahmarakshas 2 went off air on Sunday. Rohit Choudhary, who played the character of Robin in the show, is currently spending time with his family in his hometown, Jaipur. He shares, "I had a great time being associated with the show. I played the character of Robin, Angad's (played by Pearl V Puri) younger brother. Later in the show, I got an opportunity to play the title role." He adds, "We were hoping that the show would have a long run on TV. But then, we couldn't get enough TRPs later. I feel the audience got divided as the show was also available on OTT platform."

Rohit recalls the time his family asked him to quit the industry. "During the lockdown, my family had asked me to look for a stable job. I was sitting at home for around five months before I got Brahmarakshas 2, but I decided not to give up. I am the

happiest when I face the camera and I am glad that my family understood me," he says, adding, "Brahmarakshas 2 has given me good exposure and now, I am in a position to choose the kind of roles I want to do."

— Neha Chaudhary

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**SUDOKU CHALLENGE**

**HOW TO PLAY**

Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

4			8			3		
	9	1	4					
	2		5					
2	6				5	7		
8	1				4	9		
		4	3					
		7	1	8				
5		8			6			

Level: Medium

**TIMES HITORI**

**How to play**

1. A number may appear just once in each row or column. Eliminate repeat numbers by darkening cells. (see example)
2. Darkened cells must never be adjacent in a row or column.
3. Unmarked cells must create a single continuous area, undivided by darkened cells.
4. Every time you darken a cell, you can automatically circle its vertical and horizontal neighbours, which means they cannot be eliminated.
5. Any cell "sandwiched" between neighbours of the same value can be circled. (e.g. **[6][4][6]**)
6. A "triple" is a special case of sandwich. Circle the centre cells, and darken the ends. (e.g. **[6][6]**)

1	3	4	2	5	3	2	1
1	4	7	2	8	9	5	1
5	5	5	9	5	1	3	2
3	1	9	6	7	2	3	5
1	9	4	3	9	6	4	8
6	3	5	6	1	9	7	3
5	6	2	8	4	3	1	9
8	8	8	7	5	5	2	4

Level: Easy

**LOOP THE LOOP**

**Rules**

- Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A).
- Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B).
- Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines.
- You can't draw lines around zeros.
- Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

**How to begin:** Example (Fig A) - Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

**Hints:** Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B)

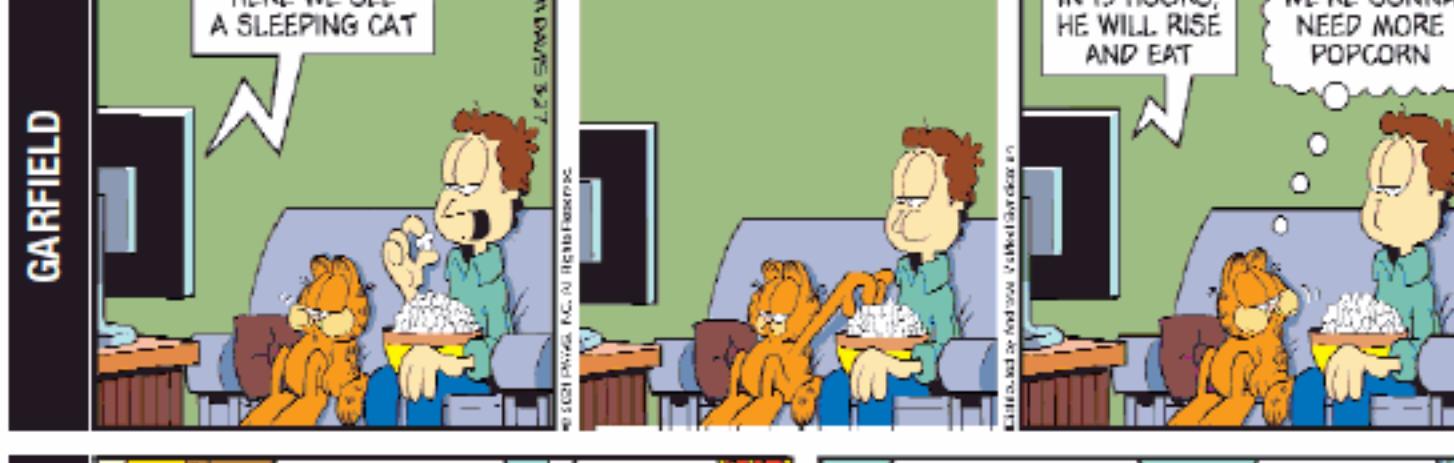
**LOOP THE LOOP**

**Rules**

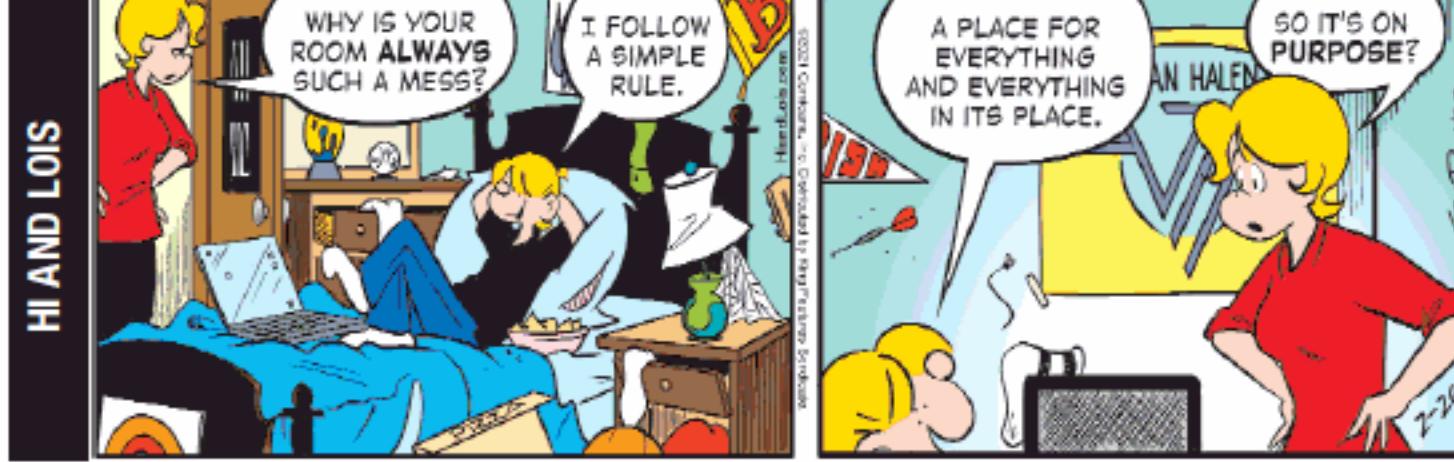
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**Hints:** Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B)



HERE WE SEE A SLEEPING CAT  
IN 19 HOURS, HE WILL RISE AND EAT  
WE'RE GONNA NEED MORE POPCORN



WHY IS YOUR ROOM ALWAYS SUCH A MESS?  
I FOLLOW A SIMPLE RULE.  
A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE.  
SO IT'S ON PURPOSE!



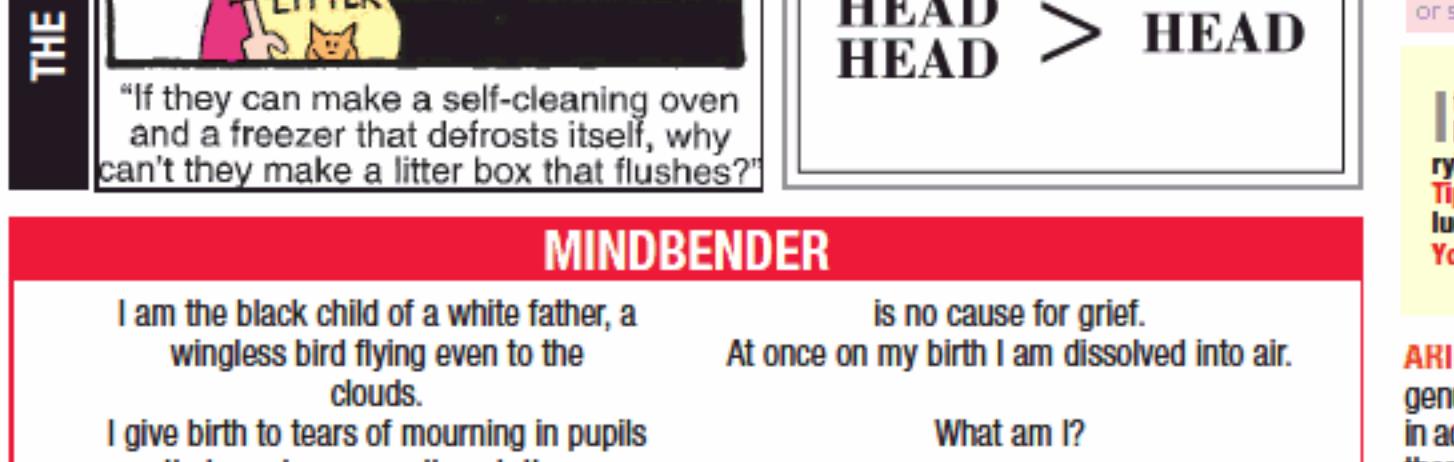
ONE KEY TO MAKING MONEY IS GETTING INTO A HIGH-VOLUME BUSINESS!  
HEAR THAT, JUST WHERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK!



IF WE HURRY, WE CAN STILL MAKE IT TO SECOND PERIOD!  
BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU I'M GOING TO SIT HERE WITH SNOOPY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!

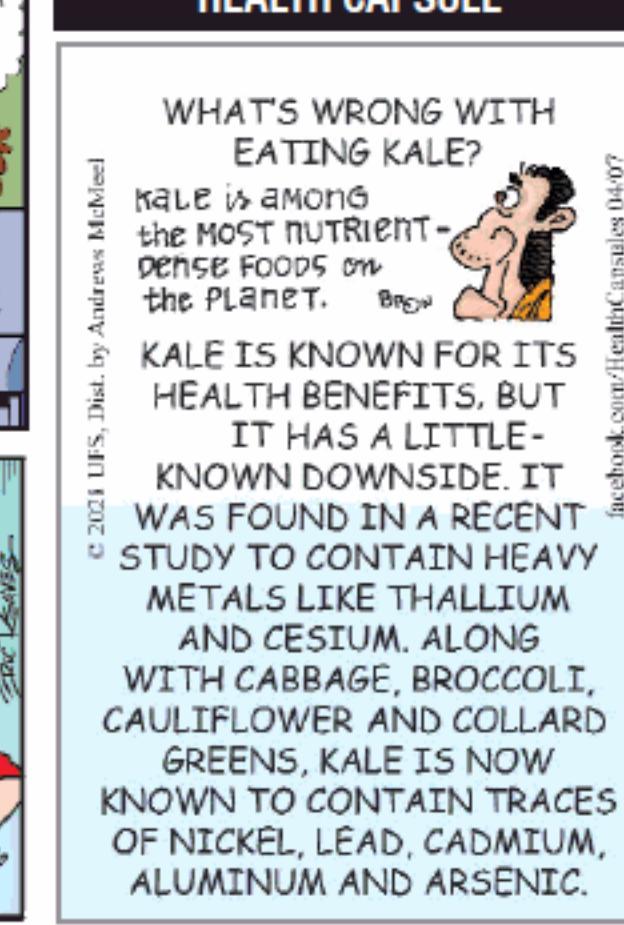


SIR, PLEASE COME DOWN AND LET'S SAY SCHOOL.  
IF WE HURRY, WE CAN STILL MAKE IT TO SECOND PERIOD!  
I HATE SECOND PERIOD! BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU I'M GOING TO SIT HERE WITH SNOOPY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!



**WHATZIT?**  
Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

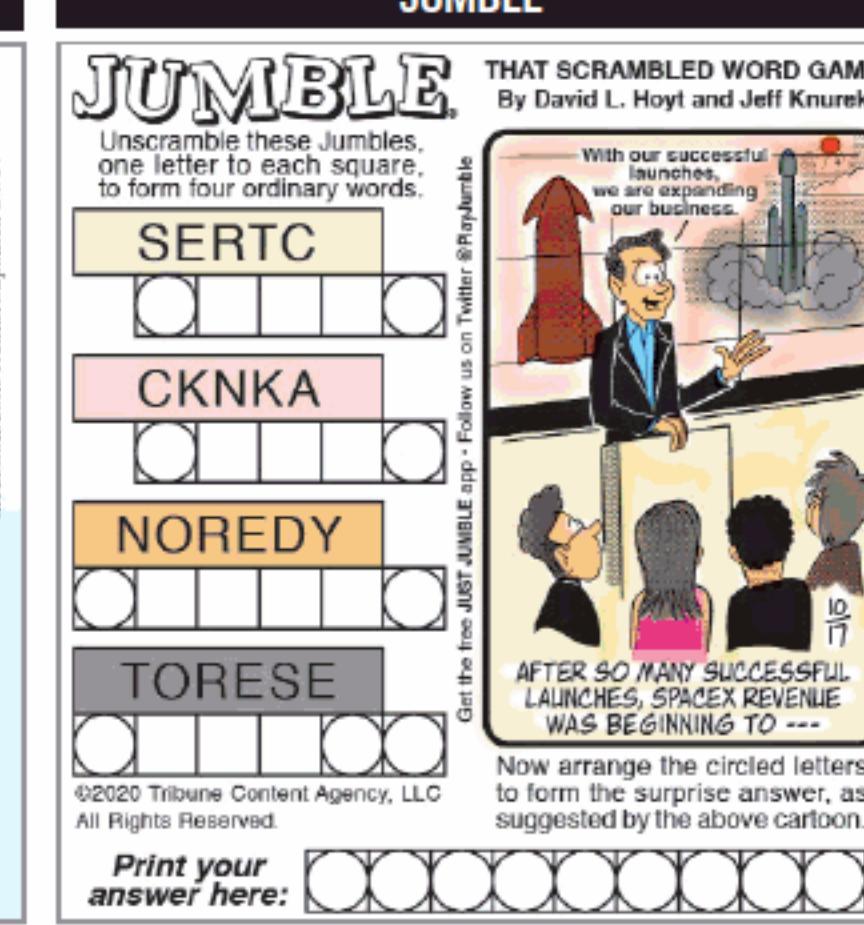
HEAD > HEAD



WHAT'S WRONG WITH EATING KALE?

KALE IS AMONG THE MOST NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS ON THE PLANET.

KALE IS KNOWN FOR ITS HEALTH BENEFITS, BUT IT HAS A LITTLE-KNOWN DOWNSIDE. IT WAS FOUND IN A RECENT STUDY TO CONTAIN HEAVY METALS LIKE THALLIUM AND CESIUM. ALONG WITH CABBAGE, BROCCOLI, CAULIFLOWER AND COLLARD GREENS, KALE IS NOW KNOWN TO CONTAIN TRACES OF NICKEL, LEAD, CADMIUM, ALUMINUM AND ARSENIC.



**JUMBLE**

Unscramble these jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

**SERTC**  
**CKNKA**  
**NOREDY**  
**TORESE**

With our successful business, we are expanding our business.

After so many successful launches, SpaceX revenue was beginning to ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print your answer here:



THEY'RE GIVING SANTA CLAUS THE KEY TO THE CITY.



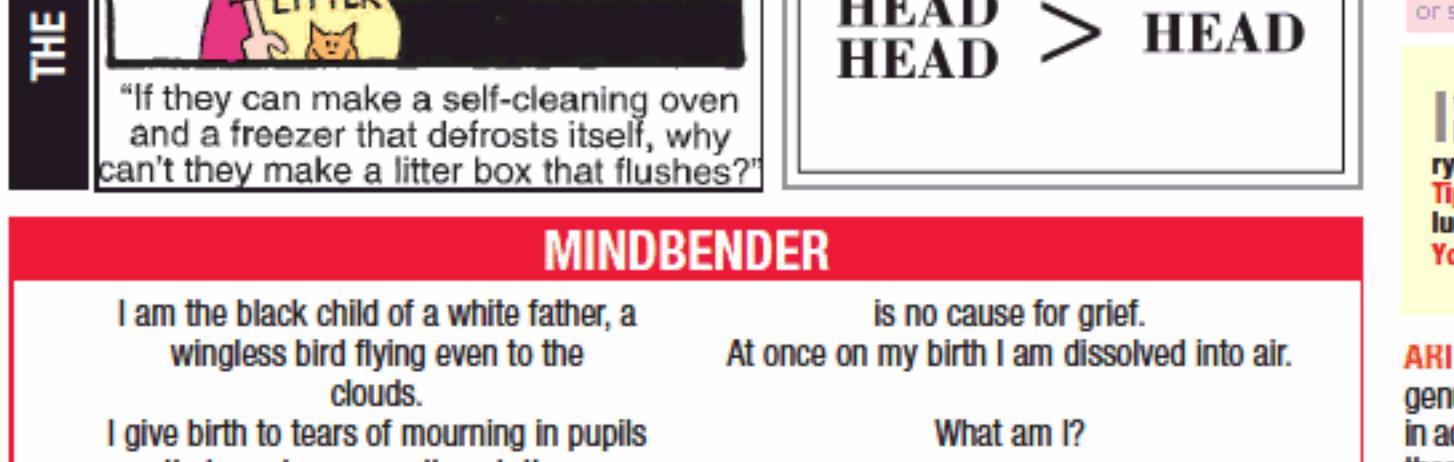
WHAT FOR?  
HE ALWAYS USES THE CHIMNEY.



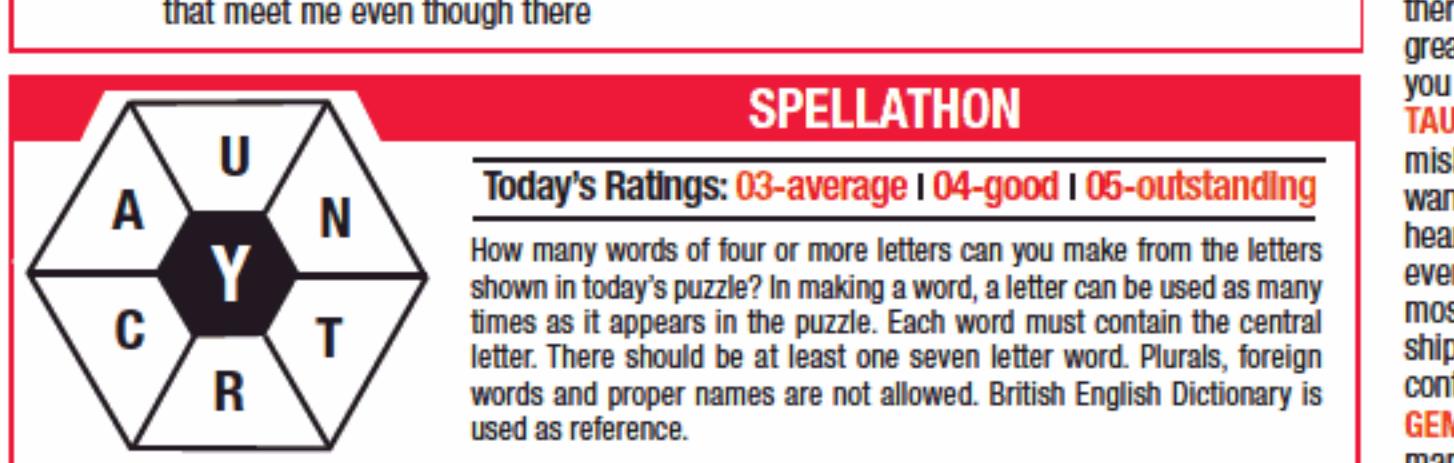
WE'RE JUST GOING TO SIT HERE AND BEEP EACH OTHER ON THE NOSE... BEEP!!



DEAR ESTHER: WITH OUR DESKS SO FAR APART, I CAN'T EVEN HAND YOU THIS NOTE IN CLASS.



YET ANOTHER WAY MODERN LIFE HAS DRAINED OUR CHILDHOODS OF ALL FUN AND WHIMSY.



I am the black child of a white father, a wingless bird flying even to the clouds.

is no cause for grief.

At once on my birth I am dissolved into air.

What am I?

**ARIES** March 20 - April 18 You are genuinely more affectionate today. Act in accordance with the circumstances out there, rather than your own fears. Your great intentions won't necessarily make you any more productive today.

**TAURUS** April 19 - May 19 You have misled yourself before and you don't want to do it again. Trust what's in your heart and move toward whatever attracts you. Reconsider what's most important for you in a relationship. Nurture love instead of trying to control it.

**GEMINI** May 20 - June 20 There are many wonderful social opportunities

tempting you. You just know things that others cannot perceive. Figure out a way to bring the missing pleasure back into your life. Make sensible choices.

**CANCER** June 21 - July 21 You may be eager to make a commitment without any fear of being tied down. Think exactly what's needed to move a relationship to the next level. Go ahead and risk your heart by showing your vulnerability.

**LEO** July 22 - August 21 Act with integrity and tell the truth. Integrity will tell you what you need to know. Instead of making empty promises, put your actions where your heart is and make good on whatever you have committed to do.

**VIRGO** August 22 - September 21 Your instincts may tell you to slow it all down and it would be wise to listen to that inner voice today. Rest assured that what you are experiencing now can have lasting positive impact. You cannot do everything, so pick and choose carefully.

**PISCES** February 19 - March 19 Too much security in a personal relationship can make you a little nervous since you treasure your independence. Don't pull the trigger too quickly. Stress and strain may take a toll on your health.

self from possible rejection. Channel your desires into stable manifestations.

**SCORPIO** October 23 - November 20 Romance is stirring your interest in faraway places. Your intuition is highly effective now; it may also bring up unrealistic concerns over unimportant details that won't matter in the long run.

**SAGITTARIUS** November 21 - December 20 You could miss the most wonderful experience if you spread yourself too thin. Your sweetest schemes will naturally take on an air of practicality today. Look at things from different perspectives.

**CAPRICORN** December 21 - January 19 A magnificent day is in store for you. Expressing your vulnerability will make you more lovable while increasing your chances to manifest your dreams. Love may not be the exciting factor in your life right now.

**AQUARIUS** January 20 - February 18 You may attempt to stay focused on your work today, but the emotional buzz could be too strong. Give yourself permission to wander around in your fantasies and what you just might come across exactly what you need to say.

**PISCES** February 19 - March 19 Too much security in a personal relationship can make you a little nervous since you treasure your independence. Don't pull the trigger too quickly. Stress and strain may take a toll on your health.



**ACROSS**

- 1 Prepared, as a bed
- 5 Scuttlebutt
- 10 Col. Sanders's chain
- 13 Soft pale feature that translates to "little grape"
- 15 Battery terminal
- 16 Right-angle shape
- 17 Where Alcatraz sits
- 20 Towel embroidery word
- 21 Like many meds
- 22 "A Day's Night" Beatles song
- 23 Sport popular on college campuses
- 28 Shakespearean fairy queen
- 29 Jay of late-night TV
- 30 Lady's man
- 33 "A Room of One's Own" author
- 34 Website for film buffs
- 35 Peanut hot dog
- 36 NBC staple for 45 years
- 37 NBC's *Science Guy*
- 38 Give-it-a-test-run advice
- 42 Kiki, Sandra or Ruby
- 43 Brainiacs, maybe
- 44 Mass: an I-90 nickname
- 45 Fair
- 46 "Dude!"
- 48 Storied pot-of-gold spot
- 49 Skewered dish
- 50 Bell-bottom bottom
- 51 Achy
- 52 What a slob makes
- 53 Nitrogen-based dye
- 54 Hiding-your-eyes parent-baby game
- 55 Veer off course
- 56 Vegan and Paleo regimens
- 57 NBC's *Today* host
- 58 Roadside hot dog seller
- 59 Inside scoop
- 60 In, on, in England
- 61 Kangaroo kid
- 62 Diamond bag
- 63 Dredgeville dangers
- 64 TV sports awards
- 65 Hall of Fame pitcher Ryan
- 66 Three in a deck
- 67 NBC's *Today* host
- 68 Chicago airport code
- 69 Three in a deck
- 70 Chinese menu item
- 71 To no \_\_\_ in vain

**TUESDAY'S PUZZLE SOLVED**

<table border



Dua Lipa;  
(inset) She  
wore a sari  
during her  
visit to a  
temple in  
Jaipur in  
2018

**YOU DO GET THROWN INTO THE DEEP END WHEN YOU ARE 15 YEARS OLD. BUT I WAS ALWAYS VERY CONFIDENT, I KNEW WHAT I WANTED, AND MY PARENTS HAD A LOT OF TRUST IN ME. THEY TOLD ME THAT ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE... I WAS PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES**

# Who knows where the world will take me next! I'm just getting started: Dua Lipa

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Considering you managed to visit several cities in India, what left you most impressed?** The culture, the food and the people. I remember I bought a sari, because I wanted to wear one to visit a temple. I carried the sari with me, but didn't know how to drape it. That's when a sweet lady who was there with her kids came up to me and said, 'Let me help you put it on.' She taught me how to do it. I just love the togetherness of the community, and for some one to do something like this for someone who you do not know at all... it was amazing.

**Are you familiar with Indian music, have you heard any musicians?**

The last time I was in Mumbai, I met Shah Rukh Khan. He taught me how to do a little dance, and we talked about music. He was amazing. So, of course, I know him, and I also know Amaal Mallik, who I think is really cool. I'm always up for learning and hearing new artists.

**Do you enjoy the process of writing a song more or do you love performing on stage?**

I love both. I love performing so much, but I wouldn't be able to perform if I wasn't in the studio. So, I need to make the songs, envision them on stage, and then put them out, so that I can perform. I can't have one without the other.

**You have two younger siblings — sister Rina and brother Gin. How do they take to your global fame as a pop icon?**

I am lucky that my family is so incredibly supportive. It's really nice to be able to show my siblings that anything is possible. If I can do it, they can do whatever they put their mind to. It's exciting for all of us to be able to go through this together. I hope that this gives them the confidence to take over the world in whatever way they feel.



They can see that you can be from anywhere in the world and you can do whatever you want, you just have to be focused and work hard.

**You were around 15 years old when you left Kosovo and started living in London alone. Could you share something about the struggles that you went through back then?**

You do get thrown into the deep end when you are 15 years old. But I was always very confident, I knew what I wanted, and my parents had

a lot of trust in me. They told me that anything was possible, and also, I worked really hard. I was prepared to do whatever it takes. I was working at a restaurant and then in a bar in London. I would go to the studio in the morning and also attending school. It was all a part of the process, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

**In an earlier interview, you had said that growing up, you didn't appreciate your Albanian name. Why did you feel that way?**

Dua in Albanian means love. It also means to want and to need. But it is interesting that when you grow up, and you are rooted from somewhere completely different, and you go to school and somebody asks you what your name is, and you say Dua. People can't pronounce it right! They think it's funny, it's different, and then, you don't really appreciate it as much. Now, I definitely appreciate my name more. It's amazing that my real name is also my stage name, and I did not have to change it.

**From an aspiring teenage musician to a Grammy-winning artiste, do you feel you have reached where you wanted to?**

I think that I have only scratched the surface. I am ready to do more, and I'm excited to keep writing, growing, learning, experimenting and playing. Who knows where the world will take me next! I feel like I'm just getting started.

# It's time to give your home a stylish makeover this summer

Ajay Kumar Gautam



Amit Syngle

## LAUNCH PAD

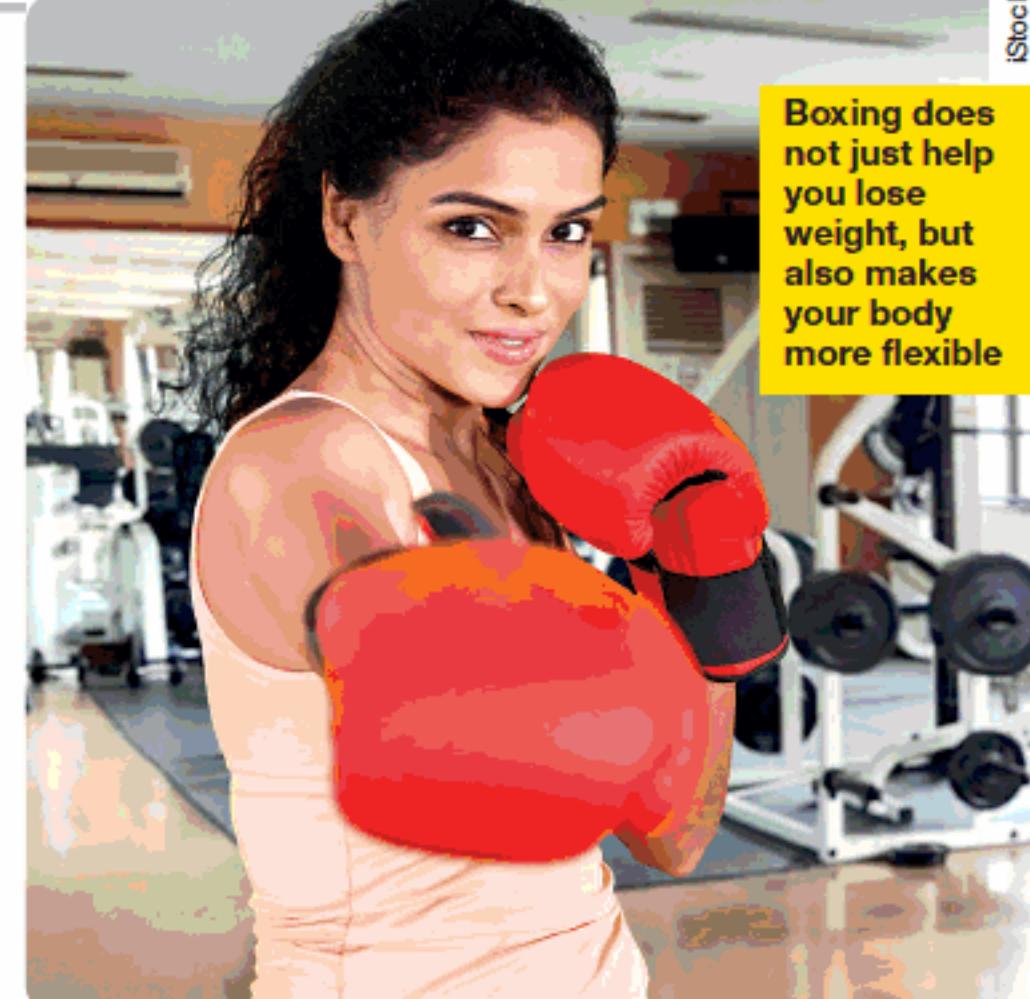
If there was one thing that 2020 compelled most of us to do, it was to spend a lot more time at home. And that meant, people dream of upgrading the décor of the place they were suddenly inhabiting way more than usual. Home furnishing has always played a pivotal role in turning around the décor of one's home rather quickly, and realising a rising demand in the segment, Asian Paints rekindled its collaboration with one of India's most respected designers, Sabyasachi, to launch a first-of-its-kind experience of designer home furnishing under the Nilaya Brand.

Sabyasachi's myriad inspirations for his first ever home furnishing collection stem from a variety of experiences — the skillfully painted fabrics born along the Coromandel coast; embroideries from an ancient world; well-remembered motifs and patterns that continue

to enchant; old-world Calcutta with its fading luxury and the traditions of miniaturists from the colonial-era Murshidabad. The result is an uncommon and unforgettable journey of transformation, brought to life by five exquisite collections — Thar, Makhmal, Soofa, Hazaribagh and Chowk.

Commenting on the new launch and partnership with The Pure Concept, Amit Syngle (Managing Director and CEO, Asian Paints) says, "It's our pleasure to renew our partnership with Sabyasachi to break new ground and enter the furnishing category with designs that are timeless with Nilaya Furnishings. The partnership with The Pure Concept gives us an opportunity to harness the design and quality standards of this great brand. Adding to our brand Ador, we now have the widest variety of designer furnishings of high quality and trust associated with Asian Paints."

## 5 health benefits of boxing that can inspire anyone to throw punches like a champ



Boxing does not just help you lose weight, but also makes your body more flexible

## Beware! Cyberstalking is on the rise during the pandemic

With our professional and personal lives playing out online during the pandemic, there's been a marked increase in virtual stalking and harassment of women. Here's what you can do to stay safe...

Amrita Prasad

Last year, Divya Sharma noticed that almost 200 pictures of hers were liked by a random account on Instagram. She dismissed it as harmless, until the person started posting lewd comments. The Archeology student says, "He then started sending me DMs asking if I would like to go on a date with him, which I continued to ignore. Frustrated, he started abusing me, and threatened to forcefully 'make me his wife'." That's when Divya lodged an online complaint with the cyber police, got the account in question suspended, and the abuser punished. "No one has the right to threaten you in DMs or comments," she asserts.

The chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Rekha Sharma stated last year at a virtual press conference that online harassment, including cyberstalking, towards women has increased by 500% since the lockdown.

"The pandemic has certainly turned physical stalking into virtual stalking. It's now easier to stalk people because there are so many apps, stalkerware, spyware, social media tools, etc," says Rahul Krishan Ahuja, a cybercrime investigator and consultant, adding, "The internet gives the option of anonymity to the stalker, making tracking and identifying fake profiles difficult."

However, with the legal definition of — and the laws around — cyberstalking still being hazy in India, many don't report or even realise they are being stalked online. So, how can one identify and stay safe from, online stalkers?

**'THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 'HARMLESS STALKING'** Many times, online stalking manifests into physical stalking and vice versa, says Raina Raonta, video head, She The People, a platform for women, adding, "Once a guy sent me 30,000 messages on FB messenger, even though I hadn't met or seen him



In real life. He then started harassing my parents on the phone, before stalking my younger sister and telling her that he 'knows whereabout'. That's when we finally filed a complaint against him. When the police busted him, they found that his laptop and phone had my pics as screensaver."

Online stalking is most common among Gen Z, who spend more time on social media and dating sites. "Young adults aged between 18 to 24, particularly women, are at highest risk," says Shrivraj Harsha Mysore, co-founder of a cybersecurity company TrustCheckr, adding, "Students and individuals who

live alone should be particularly careful. Using their victim's social media check-ins, maps and street view, stalkers can keep a virtual eye on their target's address, discover their location through photos and posts with geotags, and even hijack their webcam."

### THERE IS NO LEGAL DEFINITION OF CYBERSTALKING IN INDIA'

Cyberstalking essentially means repeated and unsolicited harassment of, or threatening, someone through the digital medium. However, Mukesh Chaudhary, chief consultant, cyber cell, Jaipur, says that India lacks a legal definition of, and a standalone law to tackle, cy-

### HOW DATING APPS ARE DEALING WITH STALKING

According to Shrivraj, dating apps have witnessed 700% increase in engagement amid the lockdown. But bullying and stalking is rampant on the apps, which has led the latter to chalk out policies pertaining to these issues. Dating site Bumble has tied up with Red Dot Foundation, a body that fights sexual violence. "In India, a woman can choose to use only the first initial of her name to create her profile, and share her full name with connections when she feels comfortable. The app also has a feature that allows them to block and report anyone whose behaviour goes against our guidelines," says Priti Joshi, VP of Global, strategy & operations at Bumble.

Tinder uses tools like automatic scans of profiles to red-flag language and images; manual reviews of suspicious profiles, activity, and user-generated reports; shadow-banning suspicious accounts; as well as blocking of email addresses, phone numbers, IP addresses and other identifiers associated with bullying and harassment.

berstalking, leading to many perpetrators abusing the loopholes. "There is no stand-alone section under the Indian IT Act that defines online stalking as a crime, and so it is always associated with other crimes, such as sharing pornographic content, harassment, threat, abuse, hate crime, etc," says he. For now, Sanjay Tungar, PI, Cyber Cell, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, says, "A victim who is being stalked, harassed or abused can easily reach out for help through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal's victim-friendly platform, cybercrime.gov.in, the social media handles of cyber police or the nearest police station."

### WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED ONLINE?

**KEEP AN EYE ON COMMENTS ON YOUR POSTS:** If you suspect someone of stalking, block them immediately, and keep your profiles private and limited to your friends," Rahul advises.

**REPORT CYBERSTALKERS IMMEDIATELY:** "Report the account to the administrator of the group or social media platform. If that doesn't solve the problem, reach out to cybercrime.gov.in (the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal), the Cyber Crime Cell (through social media) or the nearest police station," says Sandip Kumar Panda, CEO, InstaSafe Technologies.

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### WHAT IS THE PUNISHMENT FOR CYBER-STALKING?

Under Section 67 of the IT Act, when a person sends/posts obscene content to the victim via electronic media, they will be liable to imprisonment for a term of 5 years and a fine of ₹1 lakh. If the incident repeats, they will be liable to imprisonment for a term of 10 years/fine of ₹2 lakh.

Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code, that deals with defamation, can be applied in cases of cyberstalking in India. If the stalker forges the victim's personal information to post an obscene message or comment on any electronic media, they are liable to imprisonment for a term up to 2 years, a fine or both.

—Rahul Krishan Ahuja, cybercrime investigator and consultant

What comes to your mind when you think of boxing? Probably the adrenaline rush, speed and strength or brain injuries, pain and apprehension. Your mind can cook up all kinds of thoughts, including the scary ones after seeing professionals like Vijender Singh, Mary Kom, Mike Tyson or Muhammad Ali do what they do the best — boxing. But if you're inspired to take up boxing for fitness, you can put your worries about injuries to rest because throwing punches can do more good for your physical and mental health than bad. Of course, you can always train smart and safe. And if you're patient, you'll reap some amazing boxing benefits, which include...

### 1 BUILDS ENDURANCE & IMPROVES CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Your heart works hard to keep your arms pumping, to help your feet maintain balance and your core alert to slash those speed-sensitive combinations. With time, this trains your heart to pump more efficiently without running a mile or two. Boxing training can raise your heart rate by 75% to 85% which is good news for your health.

### 2 STRENGTHENS & EMPOWERS YOU

Boxing is a full-body workout and it doesn't just help your body build full-body strength, but also, makes you feel strong, confident and badass. Regardless of your body shape and type, those jabs, crosses, uppercuts and hooks boost upper-body muscles, core and lower-body strength. Make sure to also get your daily dose of omega-3.

### 3 IMPROVES FULL-BODY COORDINATION

Nothing teaches full-body coordination like a combination of footwork, alertness and punches. Synchronising all those body parts — from your eyes to the feet — trains your subconscious mind to coordinate in the toughest of situations. The speed and constant movement might take a toll on your joints so make sure they're getting all the nutrition they need.

### 4 RELIEVES STRESS, IMPROVES MEMORY & SLEEP QUALITY

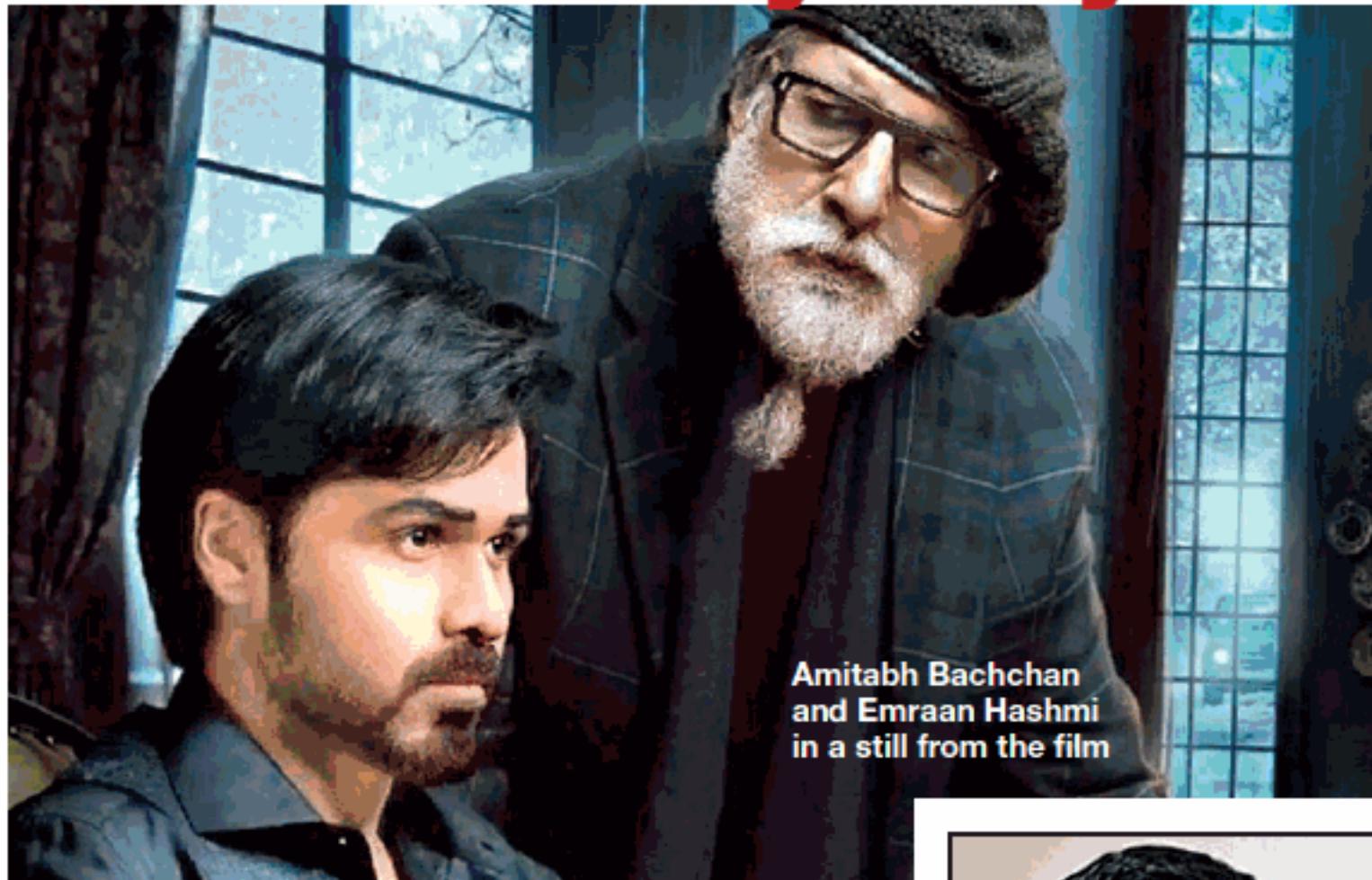
Spending some quality time with a punching bag does a lot for your anger and anxiety. Researches have shown that full-body cardio workouts like boxing release feel-good chemicals into your body, resulting in happier moods, reduced stress and better sleep quality. Let's be honest, boxing is nothing like repeating 3 sets of lunges. It's more fun.

### 5 TEACHES YOU TO DEFEND YOURSELF

Martial arts is exciting, but it's also a basic need of the decade. The ability to block, dodge and come-back with a solid punch in a split-second can save your life. Don't you agree?

—Chhavi Portwal, Mensxp.com

# Chehre will definitely have a theatrical release, says filmmaker Rumi Jafry



Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi in a still from the film



Rumi Jafry

**A**midst the pandemic, while cinema halls were struggling to receive better footfalls, there were some filmmakers who took the risk of releasing their movies in theatres, and there were others who were ready to roll out their projects too. One such film was *Chehre* starring Amitabh Bachchan and Emraan Hashmi. The film, directed by Rumi Jafry, was set to release on April 9. However, with the recent announcement of theatres being shut till April 30, due to rising coronavirus cases in Maharashtra, this film, along with a few others, has pushed its release date. Talking about it, Rumi says, "We have made a good film, so it is necessary to be a little patient. Having said that, it is going to be the producer's call about when to release the film, but yes, we, including Mr Bachchan, decided *ki* film release *hoga toh theatre mein hi hogt*. It will definitely have a theatrical release." When asked if they have come up with another date for the release, the filmmaker says, "Well, not yet. It's too early to say anything."

— Onkar Kulkarni

## Nushrratt in isolation after co-star Akshay tests COVID positive

**N**ushrratt Bharuccha has self-isolated after Akshay Kumar, with whom she was shooting for the film *Ram Setu* in Mumbai, tested positive for COVID-19. Akshay was hospitalised on Monday as a precautionary measure. "Isolation. Steam Inhalation. Precautions. Stay Safe," the actress wrote with a video that she shared on social media.

— TNN



Nushrratt Bharuccha



Nikita Dutta

**IT'S DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE WHILE SHOOTING CERTAIN SCENES, AND ACTORS CANNOT WEAR A MASK WHEN THE SHOT IS ON**

**N**ikita Dutta, who was seen playing actress Jia Sharma in Shahid Kapoor-starrer *Kabir Singh* and in the MX Player web series *Aajat*, was all set to get her mother to fly down from Delhi to Mumbai for the screening of her upcoming film, which will release on an OTT platform. However, her plans went for a toss as she tested positive for COVID-19 and her mother, too, fell sick.

Nikita contracted the virus while shooting for the dance movie *Rocket Gang* with actor

Aditya Seal in Mumbai. The film marks the directorial debut of choreographer Bosco Martis. Talking exclusively to *Bombay Times*, Nikita says, "It's unfortunate and frustrating, but acting teaches you to be patient.

We have been trying to shoot the film since 2019, but we had to halt the schedule due to the pandemic.

We resumed the shoot in December last year, but Bosco was detected with COVID; later, Aditya tested positive, and now, it's me. I have been asked to quarantine at home for 10 days and take a test again."

Nikita adds, "It's difficult to maintain social distance while shooting certain scenes, and actors cannot wear a mask when the shot is on. Our safety rests on the shoulders of the crew. Safety precautions like using sanitisers, masks and temperature checks are in place, but people are still contracting the virus. We cannot move the shoot to another city either as our set has been constructed in Mira Road and change in venue for a third schedule is logically impossible."

What made things more difficult for Nikita was her mother's illness that coincided with her contracting the virus. "My mother had to be rushed to the ICU due to some complications. Luckily, it wasn't because of COVID. I was about to fly to Delhi to see her, but I couldn't as I tested positive for COVID-19."

— Renuka Vyavahare

## I am getting vaccinated today to motivate people around me: Sonu

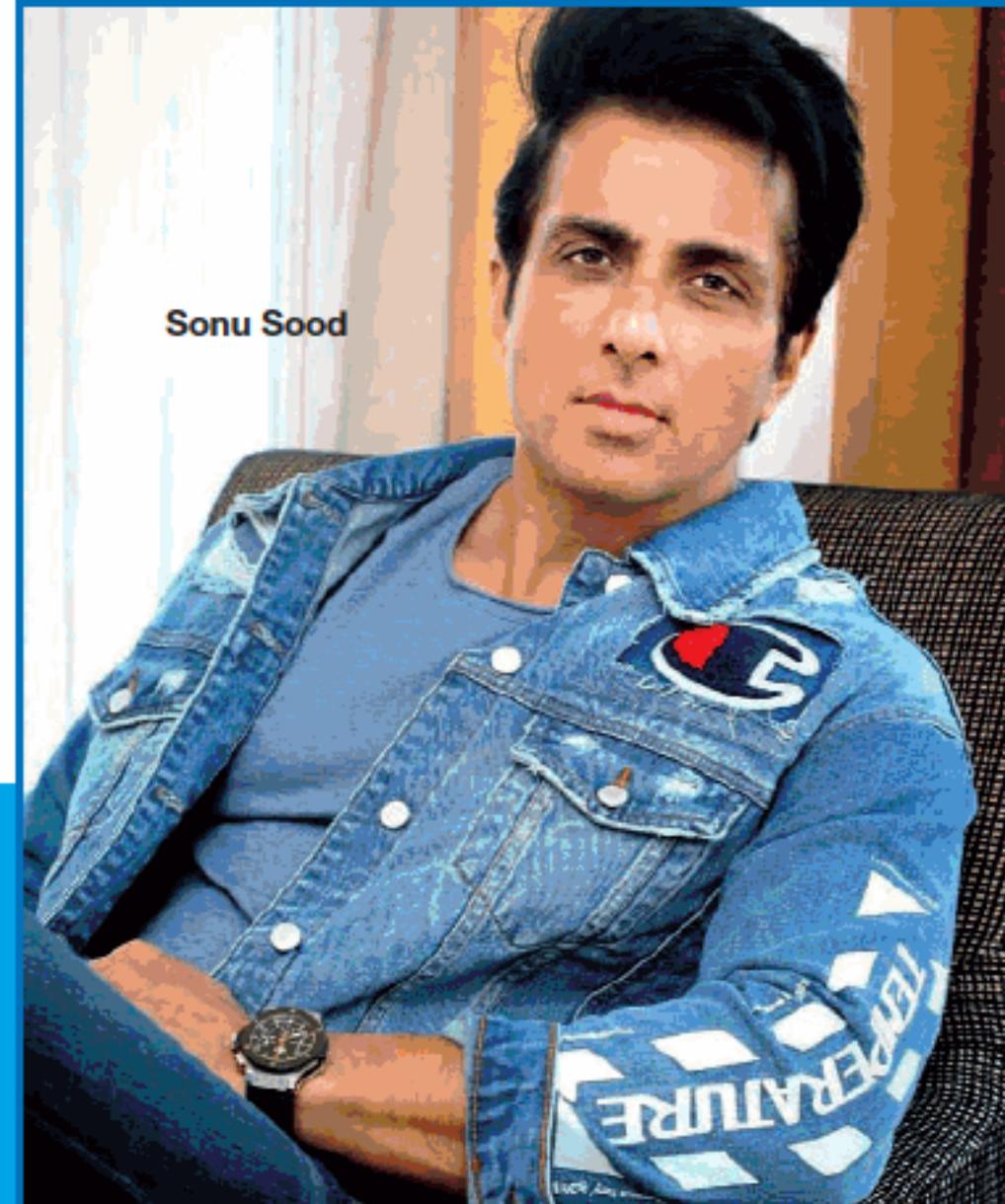
**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Considering he hails from Punjab, Sonu picked his home state to begin the drive. In fact, he will be initiating the campaign from an iconic location — the Attari-Wagah Border near Amritsar. He says, "I wanted to start from a place where my roots lie. Also, I realised that many people from Punjab have not been taking the vaccine or are in two minds. The Attari-Wagah Border is quite special. It is a place of national pride that symbolises unity. That apart, I would also be focusing upon Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India. The idea is to get maximum people educated about the vaccine." Through this drive, Sonu is also looking at making vaccines available to people for free at private hospitals in six cities. He says, "We are tying up with NGOs at places like Nashik and Indore, among others, where we will make free vaccines available for people."

With COVID-19 cases on the rise in several parts

of India, Sonu is also back to doing something he did last year. "Back in 2020, when the cases were high, I used to get a lot of calls from people saying that beds *nahi mil rahi* hospitals *mein*. Today, I am receiving the same number of calls asking me to help them get a bed at a medical facility. I hope this time around, just like last year, a lot of people come forward and help others. The key is in showing unity and humanity," he signs off.

**I WANTED TO START FROM A PLACE WHERE MY ROOTS LIE. ALSO, I REALISED THAT MANY PEOPLE FROM PUNJAB HAVE NOT BEEN TAKING THE VACCINE OR ARE IN TWO MINDS ABOUT IT**



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