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Unadkat, Miller and Morris help RR edge DC in thriller
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NEARBY



Court dismisses bail plea of riot-accused Shahrukh

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed the bail plea of a man who allegedly pointed a pistol at a policeman during the north-east Delhi riots, saying that the role attributed to him was not confined to participation in the mob of rioters but of heading the large crowd.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Gehlot refutes Vardhan on vaccine availability

JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday refuted Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's claim that there was no shortage of COVID-19 vaccine in the country, and that the Centre was providing vaccine supply to every State.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Uttar Pradesh to open quarantine centres again

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh is gearing up once again to open quarantine centres for migrant workers returning home amid the surge in COVID-19 cases. The State on Thursday recorded 22,439 new cases and 104 deaths. The Additional Chief Secretary, Health, said migrant workers would be quarantined at the gram panchayat level or in schools.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

India records 2.16 lakh new cases, 1,153 deaths

Maharashtra leads with 61,695 cases, followed by U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India registered 2,16,642 new COVID-19 cases and 1,153 deaths as of 11.15 p.m. on Thursday.

The country has so far reported a total of 1,42,87,740 cases and 1,74,306 deaths.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Ladakh and Tripura. The data are sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily figures.

Over 13.84 lakh tests were conducted on Wednesday.

Maharashtra reported 61,695 infections, accounting for nearly 31% of the new cases, followed by Uttar Pradesh (22,339) and Delhi (16,699). Maharashtra also recorded 349 casualties, followed by Delhi (112) and Chhattisgarh (105).

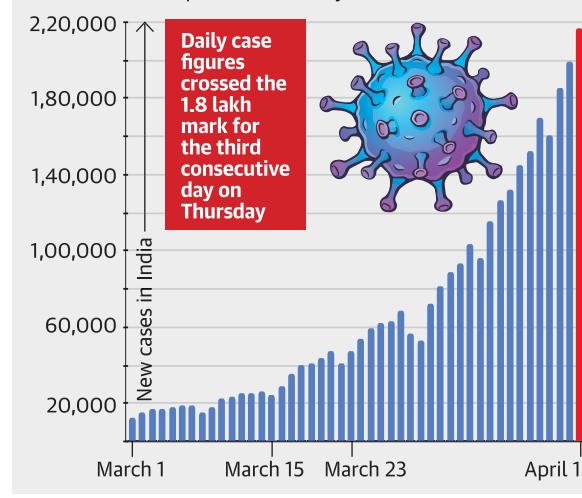
Nearly 33.13 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Thursday. It is about 6.6 lakh doses more than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours, but 8.2 lakh lower than what was recorded the previous Thursday.

India continues to lead the world in terms of average daily cases. It now accounts for one in four cases reported globally every day.

Continued on ▶ PAGE 8
NEET PG EXAM PUT OFF ▶ PAGE 10

No respite

As many as 2,16,642 COVID-19 cases were recorded in India as of 11.15 p.m. on Thursday



Mumbai company to manufacture Covaxin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A Mumbai-based company, Haffkine Biopharma Corporation, has received permission from the Centre to manufacture Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, on a technology transfer basis.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the permission.

Minister Narendra Modi for the permission.

The State government sent the proposal to the Centre in February, saying the infrastructure of Haffkine can be used for the vaccine production.

The company has received one-year tenure for the production.

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RELATED REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 10

Gyms, malls and spas shut in Delhi

E-passes for providers of essential services during weekend, says Kejriwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced a weekend curfew in Delhi to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19. He said e-passes will be issued to providers of essential services and those who need to attend weddings over the weekend as the wedding season is on.

The curfew will begin at 10 p.m. on Friday and end at 5 a.m. on Monday. Mr. Kejriwal said, "During the week, people have to step out to earn



Family members wait during the cremation of a COVID-19 victim in New Delhi. ■ PTI

their livelihood and other essential activities. But over the weekend, they go out for entertainment and other activi-

ties that can be curtailed. People should not think of it as an inconvenience. We need to break the corona chain."

He said malls, gyms, and auditoriums will be shut immediately, and cinema halls can run with 30% occupancy. Only one weekly market per day, per zone will be allowed to open. At restaurants, there will be no in-dining facility and only home delivery will be permitted.

"Imposing these restrictions right now is very important and I hope everyone will

cooperate. We will also be enhancing an enforcement drive to ensure people maintain social distancing and wear masks," Mr. Kejriwal said. He said there is no shortage of beds as more than 5,000 are vacant. "Please do not insist on a hospital of your choice. There may be a few hospitals that don't have any beds available but that does not mean that there are no beds left in the entire city."

NEW COVID CASES FALL BY 3%
TESTING DIPS BY 23% ▶ PAGE 3

Annuity clause goes for NPS subscribers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Pension System (NPS) will no longer compel investors to convert 40% of their accumulated retirement corpus into an annuity, as poor yields and high inflation are translating into negative returns, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Chairman, Supratim Bandopadhyay, said on Thursday.

The regulator will soon allow those saving up to ₹5 lakh to take the whole amount at retirement, up from ₹2 lakh at present.

Continued on ▶ PAGE 8
RELATED REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 5

ISRO case: SC asks CBI to look into panel report

Police officers 'framed' space scientist

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into the Justice D.K. Jain Committee report on senior Kerala police officials who allegedly framed space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) espionage case of 1994.

A Bench, led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, said the report concerned a "serious matter" warranting a CBI probe. "This requires a thorough investigation," Justice Khanwilkar said. "Registrar Judicial shall forward a copy



Nambi Narayanan

of the report to the Acting Director, CBI, who may proceed in accordance with the law...

Open to the CBI to treat the report as a preliminary enquiry report and proceed accordingly," the order said.

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RELATED REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 5

8 Pakistani men held with drugs in sea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

In a mid-sea operation on Thursday, the Coast Guard and the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) of Gujarat apprehended eight Pakistani nationals on board a fishing boat with heroin valued at about ₹150 crore off the Gujarat coast.

Action on a tip-off, a joint team captured the boat near the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) in the Arabian Sea.

The accused were taken for interrogation to the coastal police station at Jakhau in Kutch district.

Continued on ▶ PAGE 8

Centre to push judges' appointments

Supreme Court Collegium recommendations have been pending for six months

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Thursday offered to decide in three months the Supreme Court Collegium recommendations for appointment of judges in the High Courts pending with it for over half a year.

Appearing before a Special Bench of Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde and Justices S.K. Kaul and Surya Kant, Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal made a statement that the High Courts continued to have 220 vacancies because their collegiums had not forwarded any names. Mr. Venugopal said those collegiums should be put on a clock to forward their recommendations.

"Share timeline" Chief Justice Bobde shot

back saying it would be helpful if the government shared its own timeline at each stage of the appointment process.

Two timelines

"There are two timelines. One for the government and another for the HC. The Chief Justice says he will deal with the High Court timelines. As regards the timeline for the government, you tell us on the next date... We are only asking you to tell us the timeline within which the government and the judiciary will cooperate," Justice Kaul intervened.

Mr. Venugopal said the Memorandum of Procedure guided the government and the judiciary through the appointment process. The procedure did not insist on a



K.K. Venugopal

deadline but only loosely says the process should be completed within a reasonable time.

On March 23, the Bench had asked the government to come clear on the status of 55 recommendations made by the collegium for judicial appointments to various High Courts six months to nearly a year-and-a-half ago.

In the previous hearing, the court had asked Mr. Venugopal to enquire with the Union Ministry of Law and Justice and make a statement on April 8 about their status.

Forty-four of the pending recommendations were made to fill up vacancies in Calcutta, Madhya Pradesh, Gauhati, Rajasthan and Punjab High Courts. Every one of these recommendations had been pending with the government for over seven months to a year.

Recommendations of names made by the collegium to the Delhi High Court had been pending for seven months. "This is a matter of grave concern... When do you propose to take a decision?" the Bench had addressed Mr. Venugopal.

In the previous hearing, the court had asked Mr. Venugopal to enquire with the Union Ministry of Law and Justice and make a statement on April 8 about their status.

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RELATED REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 5

Khalid granted bail in riots case

He will continue to be in jail in connection with a UAPA case

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to former JNU student Umar Khalid in connection with an FIR alleging "criminal conspiracy" in a north-east Delhi riots case.

The court questioned the rationale behind the police making a case of conspiracy against Mr. Khalid based on the statement of a public witness who allegedly saw him and former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain walk into a building at Shaheen Bagh on January 8 last year.

If principal accused Tahir Hussain was moved or activated by the applicant (Khalid) in meeting dated January 8, 2020, then the applicant should have been made co-accused in 10 other cases [in which Hussain is an accused] also which is not the case," Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav said.

Mr. Khalid was initially ar-



Umar Khalid. ■ FILE PHOTO

ested on September 13, 2020 in another north-east Delhi riots case being probed by the Special Cell, where charges under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act have been invoked.

He was formally arrested in the present FIR on October 1, 2020, after seven months of registration of the FIR. Mr. Khalid will continue to remain in jail as he is yet to get bail in the UAPA case.

The present FIR was registered on the statement of a constable who was on duty on main Karawal Nagar Road on February 24, 2020 when

a mob went on the rampage.

Political vendetta

Mr. Khalid in his bail plea argued that he had been falsely implicated in the matter by the investigating agency on account of "political vendetta to muzzle dissent". He argued that he was not present at the scene of crime.

The court pointed out that the statement of the primary witness merely talked of some meeting between Mr. Khalid, co-accused Hussain and Khalid Saifi. Judge Yadav further highlighted that the same person is also a witness in the UAPA case. When the statement of this witness was recorded on May 21, last year in the UAPA case, "he did not utter a single word against" Mr. Khalid. "Now all of a sudden he blew the trumpet of criminal conspiracy" against the applicant, the judge noted. "This prima facie does not appeal to the senses."

Considering the fact that religious places/places of worship are not closed by the DDMA notification, this court finds that the petitioner (Delhi Waqf Board) has made out a *prima facie* case for permitting devotees to offer namaz at Masjid Bangley Wali.

Considering the fact that

considering the fact that



A view of the Nizamuddin centre in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

considering the fact that the DDMA notification, this court finds that the petitioner (Delhi Waqf Board) has made out a *prima facie* case for permitting devotees to offer namaz at Masjid Bangley Wali.

Considering the fact that the DDMA notification, this court finds that the petitioner (Delhi Waqf Board) has made out a *prima facie* case for permitting devotees to offer namaz at Masjid Bangley Wali.

Considering the fact that

Justice Gupta declined to increase the number of people or allow use of other floors of the mosque for offering prayers, saying "day by day, situation is getting worse in Delhi".

Subject to review

The court, however, clarified that its order would be subject to any notification issued by the DDMA in view of the increasing number of COVID cases in the Capital.

The court's direction came while hearing the plea of the Delhi Waqf Board to reopen the Nizamuddin centre where the Tablighi Jamaat congregations are held. It has been locked since March 31 last year.

The board has contended that even after Unlock-1 guidelines permitted religious places outside containment zones to be opened, the centre continues to be locked up.

Bengal gears up for phase 5 of election

Hospitals can be 'super spreaders' of virus

People coming for COVID-19 tests say non-infected and potentially infected stand side by side

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

In what can be called a gist of the situation at city hospitals, a family has been waiting at a government hospital to get COVID-19 tests for two days, while at another one, people are worried if the hospital itself will become a "super spreader" as non-infected and potentially infected stand together.

Dinesh Gupta, a 42-year-old autorickshaw driver, residing in Mohan Garden, sat with his wife and 14-year-old daughter on a table outside the COVID-19 facility at Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital. He had waited for eight hours both on Wednesday and Thursday to get the tests done.

"I have been having high fever, cold, cough and difficulty in breathing for the last five days. Both my children and wife have the same symptoms. I came to the hospital around 7 a.m. on both Wednesday and Thursday, but they told me to come the next day every time," he said.

Mr. Gupta said that on Wednesday, over 200 people queued up for test at DDU and he was told that only 150 tests were to be conducted. "Out of those 150, they only conducted 40-50 tests of common people. The rest were of staffers and their families," he alleged.



(From left) People queue up outside a COVID-19 testing facility at Shree Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital; the scene at Hindu Rao hospital in Delhi on Thursday. ■ HEMANI BHANDARI, SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



He also said that they could not get the test done on Thursday as well despite reaching at 7 a.m. "Once again, our turn did not come. We are waiting in the hope that they will listen to us. There is no value for a normal person's life," he said.

Mounting complaints
Kuldeep Kaur (35), a resident of Tilak Nagar, faced the same problem and alleged that two dispensaries near her house refused to conduct the test. "My situation is getting worse by the day. Here also [DDU Hospital], they are asking us to go from one counter to the other but nothing is happening," she said.

Another person, who identified himself as Deepak Gogia (30), a resident of Tā-

gore Garden, said: "They keep showing on TV that tests are being conducted at all times, but this is the situation. I don't know where to complain regarding this," he said.

A security guard at DDU Hospital, who did not wish to be identified, said that 150 RT-PCR tests are being conducted every day from 9.30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

However, a Delhi government spokesperson claimed that in Delhi government hospitals, COVID-19 tests are scheduled in the 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. slot.

Another COVID-19 testing facility at Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital saw a pool of people standing close to each other. People who are infected and those who are not were standing side by

side.

Explaining the process, a person said that first they have to procure a slip mentioning their details for the test. Next, they have to reach the premises where rapid tests are conducted and submit the slip to an official. "They enter our details and return the slips. When the official comes out with the slips, they gather around him as they are not sure if their turn has come," said Hari Krishan (45), an LIC employee, who had come with his daughter.

People then queue up and wait for rapid test. "People who are positive and those who are not stand next to each other. They also wait in the same area for the results. When the official, who had given them slips earlier, ar-

rives and hands the results over, people start jumping and pushing," he said.

Laxmi Makhwani, a 21-year-old housewife who had come for test, said that those who test positive wait in the same premises to consult a doctor, who sits next to the room where entries are made. "I am afraid that hospitals could become 'super spreader' of the virus," she said.

People across the Capital are facing problems in booking tests in private labs, which they say are overloaded with samples.

No social distancing'
A security guard, who did not wish to be identified, said that people don't listen despite warnings and alerts on social distancing.

Court dismisses bail plea of riots-accused Shahrukh Pathan

He was arrested based on the statement of a policeman

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed bail plea of a man, who allegedly pointed a pistol at a policeman during the north-east Delhi riots, saying that the role attributed to him was not confined to participation in the mob of rioters but of heading the large crowd, holding a pistol in hand and releasing open fire shots.



Shahrukh Pathan at the police headquarters in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

Pathan was arrested on

March 3 last year based on the statement of a Delhi police head constable, who was deputed to maintain law and order with other members of his team in the area between Jaffrabad Metro Station and Maupur Chowk, where a clash between two groups took place on February 24 last year.

'Fired shots'

In his statement, the policeman stated that one person, leading the agitated crowd and brandishing pistol in his hand, came running towards him and fired 3-4 rounds of shots towards other people.

"The said person did not heed to his warnings, and continued to walk to approach him and while he was at a distance of 9 to 10 feet, he aimed the pistol at his head and shot the pistol fire,"

the head constable said.

The head constable further stated that he dodged his head and saved his life and tried to calm down Pathan, but he pushed him with his left hand and he again fired at the public. The incident was captured by a journalist in his mobile phone and the person brandishing and firing from pistol was identified as Shahrukh.

Shahrukh, in his bail plea, stated that he had only shot in the side and not towards the head constable and so he had no intention to kill him.

The Special Public Prosecutor opposed the bail plea on the ground that the FIR in question has been registered at the instance of a responsible police officer and there are specific allegations of Pathan heading a pistol towards the head constable with an intention to kill him.

Women among eight arrested for assaulting head constable in Khyala

Woman had complained against harassment by neighbours

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Eight people, including two women, have been arrested for allegedly assaulting a head constable in West Delhi's Khyala, the police said on Thursday.

The accused have been identified as Rekha Devi, Binita, Mohan Jha, Vikash Jha, Pappu Jha, Manish Jha, Aakash Kumar Jha and Dhander Pratap Singh.

On Wednesday, a woman approached the Khyala police station alleging that she was being harassed and assaulted by her neighbours, the police said.

Following the complaint, head constable Ramchander along with sub-inspector Chhote Lal reached the spot. The woman told the

CThe group, including the couple, threatened the head constable and the woman. Suddenly, the mob started assaulting the head constable

threatened her as well as the head constable, the police said.

"The group, including the couple, threatened the head constable and the woman. Suddenly, the mob started assaulting the head constable while he was performing his duty," Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Urvija Goel said.

policeman that a couple – Rekha and Mohan Jha – had assaulted her, a senior police officer said.

The police said a quarrel had erupted the previous night between the woman and the couple over the issue of filling a gas cylinder.

The couple got annoyed after seeing the woman with two policemen. They gathered more people and

Two policemen in the video, identified as Sushil and Ravinder, have been suspended for allegedly not informing senior officers about the alleged incident.

The policeman was as-

saulted on April 1 in Uttam Nagar. The video purportedly shows the policeman, identified as Sushil, being abused and beaten up by Mr. Gupta's younger brother Rinku and his accomplice Kaku.

Policemen in video suspended for not informing their seniors

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The police have registered a case against a gym owner and his accomplices and have also suspended two policemen a day after a video surfaced online purportedly showing one of the on-duty policeman being as-

assaulted by them, the police said on Thursday.

Two policemen in the vi-

deo, identified as Sushil and Ravinder, have been sus-

pended for allegedly not in-

forming senior officers about the alleged incident.

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deo, identified as Sushil and Ravinder, have been sus-

pended for allegedly not in-

forming senior officers about the alleged incident.

"When the PCR team reached the spot, the police men denied about any incident of assault and had said that the matter was settled. In a way, they tried to mislead the police," a police officer said.

Extortion cases

The police said two cases of extortion were registered by Mr. Gupta in 2016 and 2018 respectively after which he was provided PSOs.

DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said, "The Delhi police takes such matters very seriously. A case was registered in the matter against Rinku Gupta, Ashwani and Kaku. The investigation is in progress and teams have been sent to arrest the absconding accused."

BJP leader's brother has attacked policeman: AAP

Party demands action by Delhi police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The AAP on Thursday alleged that BJP leader Sanjay Gupta's brother has attacked a policeman at his office and demanded that the police take action against them without coming under "pressure" of the BJP.

"Beating up policeman in this way, that too by calling them in an office... this kind of violent culture has not been seen in Delhi till date. Such hooliganism has not happened in Delhi and is a matter of serious concern. Delhi is the national capital, despite which, it is witnessing this kind of hooliganism, where policemen are no longer safe because of BJP leaders," AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said in a statement.

The AAP leader said that a video of the incident has gone viral.

Mr. Pathak said that he hopes the police will not "succumb to the pressure" from the BJP and will take stringent action against the BJP leader and his brother.

"The police are responsible for protection of the public and if they are not safe, then how will they safeguard the people of Delhi?" he asked.

The AAP leader said that a video of the incident has gone viral.

Mr. Pathak said that he hopes the police will not "succumb to the pressure" from the BJP and will take stringent action against the BJP leader and his brother.

"The police are responsible for protection of the public and if they are not safe, then how will they safeguard the people of Delhi?" he asked.

Rushing to safety



Young migrant workers arriving at Anand Vihar to catch a bus for their hometown after a weekend curfew was announced, in Delhi on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Panel will oversee schools of excellence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The first general body meeting of the Delhi Schools of Specialised Excellence Society was conducted on Thursday. It seeks to establish over 100 'Schools of Specialised Excellence' across Delhi.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia presided over the meeting, which approved the constitution of a seven-member executive committee that will be responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the society. The members also discussed different provisions regarding engagement of human resources such as teachers and administrators in these schools.

Mr. Sisodia said, "The society will have a unique responsibility of creating world-class schools that will ready students for an era of specialisation by discovering and nurturing innate talents in them. These schools will be a first-of-its-kind in the country, and we will ensure that our students receive the highest quality of specialised education."

The Delhi Cabinet approved the setting up of Schools of Specialised Excellence on March 22.

DPCC flags off campaign on e-waste

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee, in coordination with a private company, flagged off 'Clean to Green on Wheels' campaign on Thursday to spread awareness about e-waste.

The campaign aims to

reach out to four million people across India in the next one year. Under it, nine mini commercial vehicles are scheduled to cover about 110 cities and 300 towns across the country and travel more than 1 lakh km, said a statement.

K.S. Jayachandran, Mem-

ber Secretary, DPCC, said: "Wheels' is an opportunity to reach out to millions of Indians, turning each one of them into ambassadors for spreading awareness of the correct ways to reduce, reuse, recycle, and dispose e-waste, for a greener and healthier environment."

NGT rejects plea against unauthorised construction

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has dismissed a plea seeking directions to stop unauthorised construction in Ghittorni while stating that it was under the purview of revenue authorities.

A Bench headed by NGT

Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that issues pertaining to the removal of encroachment from the Gram Sabha land was under revenue authorities and an order had already been passed by the Tehsildar in the matter.

"In these circumstances,

we do not find any substantial question of environment to be dealt with by this Tribunal. The application is accordingly disposed of without prejudice to the remedies of the applicant at an appropriate forum," the Bench said.

The directions came when

the green panel was hearing a plea moved by petitioner Kamran Siddique and others seeking directions to stop unauthorised construction in Ghittorni village.

According to the petition, despite orders passed by the Tehsildar, Vasant Vihar, encroachment was continuing.

CMK

AN-NOE

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, APR. 16
RISE 05:55 SET 18:48
RISE 08:27 SET 22:38
SATURDAY, APR. 17
RISE 05:54 SET 18:48
RISE 09:09 SET 23:33

SUNDAY, APR. 18
RISE 05:53 SET 18:49
RISE 09:56 SET 00:00

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	41	21
Safdarjung	41	21
Palam	41	24

Delhi Palam Today
38°C Rain and thundershower with gusty winds and lightning may occur at some places over the city and NCR.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
36°C A spell of rain and thundershower with moderate winds and cloudy sky likely at few places over the area.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

JNU extends date for thesis submission

NEW DELHI
JNU on Thursday announced extension of the last date for submission of thesis by M Phil, M Tech and PhD students. The university in December last had given an extension of six months till June 30 for submission of thesis.

New COVID cases fall by 3% as testing dips by 23%

Positivity rate stands at 20%, overall tally reaches 7,84,137

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The city reported 16,699 fresh COVID-19 cases in 24 hours – the second-highest since the beginning of the pandemic, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday. The total number of cases stood at 7,84,137.

Also, 112 deaths were reported in 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 11,652.

A total of 82,569 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said, which is less by 23.9% compared to 1,08,534 tests, as per Wednesday's bulletin.

The highest number of new cases was reported on Wednesday – 17,282.

The positivity of new cases was 20.22% on Thursday, which is the highest in months.

This means that 20 out of 100 people taking the tests are testing positive for the virus. Of the total cases, 7,18,176 people have recovered and there are 54,309 active cases.

Bed availability

Out of the total 14,918 beds for COVID-19 treatment, 67.9% were occupied. Only 166 of the 1,250 ventilators were vacant as on Thursday evening, as per a Delhi



Vaccination under way at one of the centres in the city on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
7,84,137	11,652
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
16,699	112

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

has increased by 1,144% from nine to 112.

Serological survey

Jugal Kishore, head of the community medicine department at Safdarjung Hospital, said as per the last serological survey and considering the floating population of Delhi, approximately 40-50% of the population was not infected at the beginning of the present spike.

"Now a considerable percentage of this population has to get infected for this wave to peak and show a downward trend. Considering the sharp spike we are witnessing, I think, it would happen in a week or two," he said.

government website.

A total of 71,030 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city in the last 24 hours, as per the bulletin.

Compared to 2,790 new cases April 1, the number of daily cases has increased by 498.53%.

Also, in the same period the number of new deaths

Vaccinate scribes on priority basis: Delhi govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday wrote to the Central government to consider journalists as front-line workers who need to be vaccinated on a priority basis in Delhi.

The Delhi government in its letter said that journalists are a group of workers that have been in the forefront with the health workers in the most difficult times.

"Going out in the field, visiting hospitals to gather information, interviewing patients, attendants and their treating healthcare providers exposes them to the hazard of infection same as the other front-line workers. It is requested that these personnel be placed in the category of front-line workers so that protection of the vaccination can be offered to them," the letter read.

Played active role

The Delhi government added that throughout the pandemic and the lockdown, the media has continued to play an active role in keeping the people informed about the disease, its consequences and prevention, efforts of the health and other departments and what people are expected to do to keep themselves safe.

Nobody should be turned back from hospitals, CM orders officials

'18K Remdesivir injections will be available in city by April 18'



The scene at Hindu Rao Hospital in the city on Thursday.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

(CCCs) to make the patient feel safe and in the care of the doctors. More and more patients should be shifted to these centres to cater to very critical patients in the hospitals."

Mr. Kejriwal directed that the two civic body hospitals – Hindu Rao and Swami Dayanand Hospital – be declared as fully COVID, which will lead to an increase of 900 beds for the treatment of patients in Delhi. He also asked for full cooperation and no politics in the matter.

In a statement after the meeting, Mr. Kejriwal said: "I came across a situation where when an asymptomatic patient was turned back from admission to the hospital, the patient created a ruckus. This situation should never happen. We must issue an order to allow directing the patients to our COVID Care Centres

addressing the shortage of Remdesivir injections in Delhi, the government said it is expected that 18,000 injections will be made available in Delhi by April 18. The Chief Minister directed officials to prepare an action plan to ensure that there is no dearth and no stocking of injections at any facility in Delhi.

Mr. Kejriwal also said if labs, where the tests are being conducted, are facing problems, orders must be made to reduce the sample size to enable them to issue results within 24 hours.

The health officials also apprised the Chief Minister that vaccine stock is available for the next 6-7 days, the government said.

SOS messages on Twitter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A man desperate to find a hospital bed for his "extremely weak" 60-year-old mother, another looking for Remdesivir and a woman looking for a plasma donor for a relative fighting for his life – the grim COVID-19 situation in Delhi triggered a flurry of SOS posts on Twitter on Thursday. Some claimed that while the Delhi Corona app showed that beds are available in certain hospitals, the situation on the ground is different.



Leader of the Opposition in Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri.
■ FILE PHOTO

hospitals due to the pathetic condition of government facilities," he said.

Mr. Bidhuri said five-star hotels and banquet halls are being enrolled as extended hospitals but questioned how the middle-class, poor and marginalised sections would manage to pay the hefty bills.

He suggested the use of government schools as medical facilities by providing adequate supply of oxygen, ventilators, and medical staff so that people could be treated at these places.

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Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

A near lockdown

Activities prohibited or restricted till April 30

- All shopping malls, gyms, spas, auditoriums, assembly halls, entertainment parks and similar places
- Cinemas, theatres and multiplexes to remain open with 30% of seating capacity
- Only one weekly market per zone in all municipal corporations and Delhi Cantonment Board shall be allowed subject to strict compliance of SOP and DDMA guidelines

Exempted categories with valid ID cards

- Officers/officials of Government of India, its autonomous/subordinate offices and public corporations and officers/officials of GNCT of Delhi/autonomous bodies/corporations involved in emergency services such as health and family welfare and all related medical establishments, police, prisons, home guard, civil defence, fire and emergency services, district administration, pay and account office, electricity, water and sanitation, public transport (air/railways/buses) including all incidental services/activities that are essential for smooth functioning of all modes of public transport, disaster management and related services, NIC, NCC and municipal services
- All judicial officers/officials of courts of Delhi
- All private medical personnel such as doctors, nursing staff, paramedical, etc. and other hospital services

SOURCE: DDMA ORDER

Over 300 policemen tested positive in April

Recovery rate is impressive, says officer

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Amid a sudden surge in COVID-19 cases in the city, around 390 policemen tested positive in April, said a senior police officer on Thursday.

He said in 24 hours (on Wednesday), 87 policemen tested positive. In February and March, only 33 and 24 policemen got infected respectively. In January this year, the figure was 73.

"The surge in cases when all policemen have been vaccinated as per the protocol for front-line workers. More than 8,000 personnel have tested positive so far since the beginning of the

pandemic," said the officer. He added that all district DCPs have been instructed to review the status of COVID cell formed in each police districts during the lockdown. All SHOs have been instructed to take care of police staff and provide masks and sanitisers to officials' duties.

However, the recovery rate is impressive, as most of the policemen have recovered and resumed their duty. "We have lost 36 men in a fight against COVID. The policemen who died were carrying out their responsibilities during the fight to contain the pandemic," said a senior police officer.

HC grants time to farmer's kin to seek experts' opinion on autopsy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted time to the family of a 25-year-old farmer, who died after his tractor overturned during the farmers' protest rally on the Republic Day, to seek opinion of experts on his post-mortem and X-Ray reports.

Justice Yogesh Khanna also asked Delhi Police to allow the family to view the CCTV

footage of the spot where the incident took place, whenever they want to. The court listed the matter for further hearing on July 26.

The high court was hearing a plea by deceased Navreet Singh's grandfather, Hardeep Singh, claiming that the victim suffered gunshot injuries to his head. His post-mortem was conducted at Rampur district hospital in Uttar Pradesh.

COVID takes a toll



People who died due to COVID-19 being cremated at Nigambodh Ghat in the city on Thursday.

■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

deo and X-ray report of the deceased.

The court had earlier directed the Delhi Health Secretary to constitute a board of medical and forensic experts and also a radiologist to examine the X-Ray report of Navreet Singh. It had also asked the doctors of Maulana Azad Medical College here to prepare the X-Ray report from the original X-Ray plate which has been received by

Delhi Police from the Uttar Pradesh Police.

Delhi Police had earlier said that according to the post-mortem report the young farmer died due to a head injury as a result of the accident and all his injuries were possible in a road accident.

The petition has sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the death of the young farmer.

Gurugram court to hear only urgent matters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Cases of only urgent nature, such as bail and stay matters, would be heard in the Gurugram District and Sessions Court till April 30 and staffers' strength will be reduced to 50% to contain the spread of COVID-19, said an order by the office of District and Sessions Judge on Thursday.

The 14-point order said that under trials would be produced through video-conferencing only. However, the court concerned should pass specific orders in case physical hearing is required for a particular undertrial. The filing of fresh cases is allowed only till 1 p.m.

SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY, TRIVANDRUM

(An Institution of National Importance, Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India)

Advt. No. P&A/1/DIR/SCIMT/2021

Dated: 15.04.2021

NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from Indian Nationals for the post of DIRECTOR who will be the Academic Head and Chief Executive Officer of the above Institute. The Institute is an Institution of National Importance under the Ministry of Science and Technology, Govt. of India.

Mode of Recruitment: (a) Direct Recruitment, or (b) By Deputation, including short term contract, or (c) Re-employment. **Tenure:** Not exceeding 5 years or on attaining the age of superannuation (65 years at present), whichever is earlier

IN BRIEF



Telangana police foil Sharmila's procession bid

HYDERABAD
The Hyderabad police on Thursday foiled attempts by Y.S. Sharmila, sister of YSRCP chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, to take out a procession. After undertaking a fast demanding issuance of notification for government jobs for unemployed youths by the Telangana government, Sharmila decided to take out a procession but was stopped.

Driver, co-driver of truck charred to death

HYDERABAD
Two persons, the driver and the second driver, of a prawns-laden container truck were charred to death when the vehicle crashed into a lorry moving in the same direction near Miyatasagar and caught fire on Thursday. Mrutunjaya Yadav of Thane and Surya Kumar from Uttar Pradesh were proceeding towards Mumbai.

Crude oil stolen from ONGC pipeline

KAKINADA
The East Godavari police on Thursday seized nearly 500 l of crude oil reportedly stolen by a gang from the pipeline of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in the Valasatippa area under the Uppalaguntlu police limits. The police swang into action after locals alerted them about the theft.

16-year-old stabbed to death during temple fest

ALAPPUZHA
A 16-year-old boy was stabbed to death at Vallikunnam in Kerala's Alappuzha on Wednesday. According to the police, a gang stabbed Abhimanyu during a festival at the Padayaniyettom temple. The police suspect it to be a sequel to a clash involving Abhimanyu's brother Anandu, a DYFI activist.

Kerala fixes 9 p.m. curfew for shops

Eateries, cinemas to close at deadline; 6.28 lakh people vaccinated in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala on Thursday announced a raft of restrictions to arrest the post-Assembly election surge in COVID-19 cases.

The measures ranged from closing of bars, restaurants, cinema halls, malls, shops and commercial establishments at 9 p.m. to limiting indoor and outdoor

jumped from 3% to 13% over the past two weeks.

Kerala added 8,126 new cases on Thursday with a TPR of 13.34%. Cumulative cases were 11,97,301, and active cases 63,650.

In Andhra Pradesh, a record 6.28 lakh people were vaccinated on Wednesday, and the target should be at least six lakh daily, said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to fix the charges at which private hospitals treat COVID-19 patients.

Hospitals empanelled in the Aarogyasri programme and private hospitals should record beds available. Treatment charges and cost of medicines should be displayed at hospitals.

No prior permission was required for weddings or social events, but local police should be informed. Kerala's test positivity rate (TPR)

events to 75 and 150 people respectively, the Chief Secretary, V.P. Joy, said.

Larger functions would require recent COVID-19 negative certification.

No prior permission was required for weddings or social events, but local police should be informed. Kerala's test positivity rate (TPR)

was 14.23%, the highest in seven months, from 35,741 samples. Chittoor again reported five deaths, the highest, and highest single-day infections at 835.

The Karnataka High Court said COVID-19 norms notified under the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act, 2020 were cognisable and non-

bailable and the DGP and IGP must ensure FIRs were registered for violations.



Helpline to the rescue: Staff at the new COVID-19 helpline 1912 that has been opened in Bengaluru. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Thursday. The daily TPR was 14.23%, the highest in seven months, from 35,741 samples. Chittoor again reported five deaths, the highest, and highest single-day infections at 835.

The Karnataka High Court said COVID-19 norms notified under the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act, 2020 were cognisable and non-

bailable and the DGP and IGP must ensure FIRs were registered for violations.

The court directed the DGP and IGP to educate the police on enforcement and to monitor FIRs and investigation of violations like not wearing masks, failure to maintain social distancing, and gathering in large numbers.

Karnataka reported its sharpest spike of 14,738 fresh cases and 66 fatalities, bringing total infections to 11.09 lakh and the toll to 13,112 on Thursday.

A few corporate hospitals in Hyderabad resumed hotel isolation for patients who were asymptomatic or had mild symptoms.

Telangana recorded 3,307 cases on Wednesday, a new high. For the second day, eight more patients died.

Tamil Nadu registered another new high in daily COVID-19 cases on Thursday as 7,987 people tested positive.

The State recorded 29 deaths of which eight were registered in Chennai. So far, 12,999 people have succumbed to the infection. Seven of the deceased did not have co-morbidities.

Chennai continued to top the table with 2,558 fresh cases.

For the first time since the vaccination programme started on January 16, Tamil Nadu vaccinated over two lakh people on Thursday.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai bureaus)

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSTAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm with lightning, hail and gusty wind at isolated places over Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh; and with lightning and gusty wind at isolated places over Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala37.5...	25.8	20.8	Kozhikode	4.6...	32.8...	24.8
Ahmedabad40.5...	24.3	20.8	Kurnool	0.1...	37.1...	24.6
Aizawl30.5...	16.9	12.5	Lucknow41.4...	26.1	20.8
Allahabad42.8...	23.4	18.8	Madurai36.2...	25.6	20.8
Bengaluru	0.2...	32.6...	19.8	Mangalore33.7...	23.5	20.8
Bhopal37.8...	23.5	19.8	Mumbai	7...	35.0...	25.5
Bhubaneswar37.2...	24.2	19.8	Mysuru	7...	36.0...	21.2
Chandigarh39.2...	22.9	18.8	New Delhi40.5...	21.5	18.8
Chennai	24.3...	31.1...	23.1	Patna39.6...	25.2	20.8
Coimbatore	15.4...	34.0...	20.8	Port Blair32.2...	25.3	20.8
Dehradun36.6...	22.2	18.8	Puducherry	1.6...	31.0...	23.0
Gangtok	1.8...	21.7...	13.9	Pune	5.1...	35.3...	17.1
Goa34.2...	25.7	20.8	Raipur36.8...	23.0	20.8
Guwahati32.6...	21.5	17.8	Ranchi36.4...	24.0	20.8
Hubballi34.0...	22.0	17.8	Shillong	1.2...	27.5...	13.1
Hyderabad35.8...	22.2	17.8	Shimla24.8...	15.5	10.8
Imphal	0.1...	31.7...	16.2	Srinagar	9.7...	10.6...	7.8
Jaipur39.0...	23.6	17.8	Thiruvananthapuram33.0...	25.1	20.8
Kochi32.8...	25.2	17.8	Tiruchi	3.6...	37.8...	24.1
Kohima	1.4...	27.4...	11.2	Vijayawada	18.6...	35.2...	22.4
Kolkata36.0...	27.0	20.8	Visakhapatnam33.0...	26.6	20.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

CITIES	SO	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad37.5...	32	■
Bengaluru	.6	.39	10340	■
Chennai	.6	.16	472328	■
Delhi	.53	.52	25	.202	.321	■
Hyderabad	.5	.46	16	.46	.69	■
Kolkata	.16	.20	102	.118	.108	■
Lucknow	.25	.43	50	.229	.190	■
Mumbai	.1	.09	75	.132	.95	■
Pune	.10	.30	51	.70	.83	■
Visakhapatnam	.19	.69	39	.61	.105	■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall AQI score of 379 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

fore the vaccine centres shut doors.

Of the 6.4 lakh doses received by the State, 6.28 lakh were used on a single day on Wednesday, the last day of 'Tika Utsav', according to the Health Department.

Karnataka has used nearly 63.5 lakh of the 76 lakh doses of vaccine received so far. Karnataka Health Commissioner K.V. Trilok Chandra said there is no shortage of vaccine in the State as of now.

(With inputs from Vijaya-wada and Bengaluru bureaus)

Second-highest surge of 61,695 cases, 349 deaths in Maharashtra

Active case tally surges past 6.20 lakh; Mumbai reports 8,209 fresh infections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Maharashtra posted its second-highest single-day jump of 61,695 cases on Thursday, taking its active case tally to 6,20,060.

A high fatality spike of 349 deaths (211 of which were reported in the last 48 hours, while the rest were from an earlier period) pushed the total death toll to 59,153.

A robust number of recoveries – 53,335 – was also reported. The State's recovery rate stands at 81.3%. While the case tally has reached 35,87,478, the total recoveries stand at 29,59,056.

"Of 2,30,36,652 laboratory samples tested thus far, 35,87,478 (with the average case positivity rising to 15.8%) have returned positive, with over 2.34 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep



One with nature: A life guard patrols a deserted Juhu beach after COVID-19 curbs were enforced on Thursday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Awate. The State's case fatality rate has incrementally declined to 1.63%.

7,500 new cases in Pune

Pune district added more than 7,500 new cases to take its total case tally to 6,89,274. As per State Health Department figures, 59 deaths were reported as the toll rose to

8,695. As per district authorities, the active case tally had marginally dipped to 97,000, while the toll has crossed 10,900. Mumbai reported 8,209 new cases, taking its total tally to 5,53,404, of which 84,753 are active. Fifty deaths took the toll to 12,197.

Nashik in north Maharashtra reported a huge surge of more than 3,900 new cases, taking its total tally to 2,36,829 of which 47,117 are active while 24 deaths pushed its toll to 2,518.

A total of 35,87,478 people across the State are in home quarantine and 27,273 are in institutional quarantine.

Mumbai airport to shift T1 domestic operations to T2

Move will come into effect on April 21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

In view of the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases in Mumbai and the Maharashtra government imposing multiple restrictions to handle the situation, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) has decided to shift all domestic passenger flights at Terminal 1 to Terminal 2 from April 21.

The CSMIA will be operating all international as well as domestic flights through its Terminal 2 from April 21.

As a result, all domestic flights of GoAir, Star Air, Air Asia, TruJet and IndiGo, operating from Terminal 1, will be moved to Terminal 2.

"All passengers of GoAir, Star Air, Air Asia, TruJet and IndiGo are requested to get in touch with the respective

airlines for further queries," the CSMIA said.

The CSMIA said it had been working closely with its stakeholders and relevant regulatory and government bodies to curb the spread of the virus.

</div



Probing the sleuths

CBI probe into ISRO spy case masterminds is a much-needed step forward

The Supreme Court's order tasking the CBI to look into the Justice D.K. Jain committee report on the action to be taken against those who implicated space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the 'ISRO espionage case' of 1994 is a logical and much-needed step forward in ensuring accountability for the suspected frame-up. Representing a dark, but brief, chapter in the annals of police investigation in the country, the case was based on unfounded suspicion sparked by the arrest of two Maldivian women and the claims they made in their statements to the police. The Kerala Police arrested Mr. Narayanan based on suspicion that he was among those sharing official secrets relating to space technology and missions to foreign agents. After the investigation was transferred to the CBI in a matter of weeks, the central probe agency recommended that the case be closed, highlighting grave lapses in the probe and the complete lack of evidence. When the Supreme Court awarded a compensation of ₹50 lakh to the scientist in 2018, taking into account the damage to his honour and dignity following the arrest on grave charges and the interrogation that followed, it was widely expected that police officers who framed him ought to be proceeded against too. The Court formed a committee headed by Justice Jain, a retired apex court judge, for the purpose. The panel's report was submitted recently, and the Centre supported the demand for follow-up action. Significantly, the Court has mandated that the report's contents be kept confidential while being forwarded to the CBI for a decision on how to proceed further. The element of secrecy may seem odd, but avoiding any contestation on its findings, which are to be treated as the outcome of a preliminary enquiry, will indeed be helpful in the agency proceeding on merits.

When it awarded compensation, the Court was quite convinced that the initial probe was malicious. "The criminal law was set in motion without any basis. It was initiated... on some kind of fancy or notion," it had observed. It is rare in India that those falsely implicated or maliciously arrested on grave charges get justice. The police are given to using questionable methods, and treat the gravity of the charge as something that necessitates stronger and more persuasive means of investigation. That Mr. Narayanan has succeeded in the battle for restoring his honour is a matter of relief, but it should be noted that the Kerala government has been resisting calls for disciplinary action against the erring police officers. It opposed the CBI's closure report and tried to revive the investigation by its own police, but thankfully, the effort was shot down by the Supreme Court. It would be in the fitness of things if there is no further impediment to the CBI in proceeding with its investigation against the officers concerned, and that the process of restorative justice leads to its logical conclusion.

Loser Streak

Cricket's fight against the scourge of gambling and match-fixing is far from over

Sport rests on two pivots. The first is the athlete's desire to win by putting in the greatest endeavour. The second attribute is the fans' belief that what unfolds on the turf is based on sincere effort. Sport is real and its immediacy also invests it with long-lasting meaning. It is this enduring template that gets torn asunder when cricketers throw matches or athletes consume anabolic steroids and break records. Corruption that taints performance is a poisoned dagger which cleaves sport's throbbing heart and the latest scandal involving Heath Streak, is a crushing blow to cricket. The former Zimbabwe captain admitted to sharing information with bookies while he was the coach of various teams ranging from Zimbabwe to Kolkata Knight Riders, and has also accepted bitcoins for favours rendered. This breach of trust occurred largely from 2016 to 2018 and on Wednesday, the International Cricket Council (ICC) banned Streak for eight years. It was a fall from grace for one of Zimbabwe's greatest players. Streak was a crafty fast bowler and a useful batsman as evident in his combined international tally of 455 wickets and 4933 runs during a 12-year career that finished in 2005.

Disbelief was the first emotion when match-fixing reared its head in 2000. It was a conflagration that hurt many high-profile cricketers including the late Hansie Cronje, Mohammad Azharuddin and Saleem Malik. The allegations may have failed to gain legal sanctity in long-drawn cases but the whispers remained. The sordid saga had another instalment when spot-fixing hurt the 2013 Indian Premier League forcing a cleansing of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The same despondency was in vogue after the ICC mentioned Streak's transgressions even if the caveat was that his actions had no bearing on the results of the games in which he was involved as a coach. Streak may not have fixed a contest but in sharing contacts of players with bookies, he was paving the way for a probable overwhelming show. Bookies lure with requests for seemingly innocuous information before they spread the net wide. It may be recalled that in the 1990s, Shane Warne and Mark Waugh confessed to sharing pitch and weather information with a book-maker. Streak's misdemeanour is also a step back for Zimbabwean cricket, which is returning from a long-drawn administrative crisis that forced the early retirement of the Flower brothers - Grant and Andy - and the exile of Henry Olonga. Streak's dalliance with greed shows that the ICC's fight against the scourge of gambling and match-fixing is far from over.

On the trail of the second wave's dynamics

India let its guard down too early and policy hesitancy and fast-spreading virus mutants have added to the surge



M.S. SESHADRI & T. JACOB JOHN



= 589.26 million.

We calculate the rate of increase of new cases by looking at the daily new cases of the first and second waves at time points when the daily numbers were nearly equal. On June 12, 2020 and on February 16, 2021 the numbers were 11,320 and 11,795, respectively. Over the next eight weeks, the curves differed in acceleration. From June 12, 2020 to August 7, 2020 the increase (to 61,455) was 5.4-fold. From February 16, 2021 to April 13, 2021 the increase (to 1,85,248) was 15.7-fold. The doubling time of 28 days during the first wave is 2.8 times the doubling time (10 days) of the second wave.

The R value of the initial 'variant' of the virus of the first wave was 2-3, meaning, one infected person would infect 2-3 others; the variant(s) causing the second wave has a higher R value – we guess it may have doubled, ≥ 4 . The herd immunity level required to bring the numbers down to end the second wave (herd immunity threshold) would be about 75%-80%, in contrast to 60% for the first wave – in terms of actual numbers, a maximum of -471 million (80% of 589.26 million).

Of the 828 million infected in the first wave, only 10,904,738 (1.32%) were diagnosed by February 13, 2021. By the same token, only 6,223 million (1.32% of 471.4 million) are likely to be diagnosed by the end of the second wave. At the peak, the numbers detected would be half, namely 3.1 million.

Well into the second wave

We have already diagnosed 2,966,583 infections in the second wave by April 13, 2021 and the current doubling time is 10 days. Therefore, in the next few days we ought to reach -3.1 million detected cases, spelling the peak of the



second wave. We are already 56 days into the second wave; if the peak occurs within the next four days, the time from base to peak would be $56+4 = 60$ days. The descent after the peak will take an equal length of time – two months – in a normal bell-shaped epidemic curve. We expect steady low levels of infection (endemic state) will be reached by mid-June 2021.

Our estimates assume that the conditions will remain the same throughout the second wave, but with vaccination rates going up, curbs being re-imposed and possibly higher re-infection rates, the timing of the peak may vary by a few days and the cumulative infections detected could differ by one or two million.

Our current pace of vaccination (only 1% of the population has completed two doses so far) and the two week interval required after the second dose of the vaccine to confer sufficient immunity to decelerate the second wave, indicate that vaccination may not decelerate the second wave in India. However, we hope that the elderly and vulnerable, who were prioritised for vaccination, will have reduced mortality.

Deepened by lapses

The faster-spreading U.K. variant was involved in the second wave in Punjab; judging by the tempo of spread, either this variant, other known variants and possibly faster-spreading Indian variants are

responsible for the second wave in the country.

By early February the fear of the pandemic waned and people lowered their guard, allowing the virus to spread unchecked; had we stayed vigilant and achieved wide vaccination coverage then, the second wave could have been smaller or even averted. Vaccine hesitancy, policy hesitancy and fast-spreading virus mutants all added to the tempo of the second wave. We let our guard down too early – a costly error.

A larger number of symptomatic infections in youngsters in the second wave may be attributable to their higher mobility and premature opening up of schools and colleges in the face of highly infectious variants.

The weekly average of new cases reported on March 23, 2021 was 42,162 and three weeks later (April 13, 2021) the average of deaths was 844 – a relatively low infection fatality rate of 2%; priority vaccination of the elderly and the vulnerable who stayed cocooned, and clear-cut management strategies for serious cases may have contributed to this.

The strategy ahead

We should insist on the golden rules of mask wearing, cough etiquette, maintaining physical distance, hand-hygiene and avoiding crowds, and pursue an aggressive vaccination drive to contain the situation without imposing a lockdown, which will hurt the recovering economy and lead to untold public misery.

Travel curbs for fully vaccinated individuals are being lifted in the United States. In India, vaccination can be made a pre-requisite for those who come in contact with large numbers of vulnerable people (for example, teachers).

Vaccination at offices (started in Tamil Nadu) and persuading staff in the Indian Railways to get vaccinated quickly are innovative steps in the right direction.

If vaccination is a pre-requisite for any public assembly, fewer people will gather and more people will seek vaccination. If vaccination is a pre-condition for entry into crowded public places and use of public transport, those who use these facilities will feel safe and the public will accept vaccination readily. Mobile vaccination vans can cover inaccessible rural pockets and reach people unable to reach vaccination centres.

Universal mask use, an important and effective preventive measure, despite proven benefits, is practised by only 50% of people in our surveys. This COVID-19 inappropriate behaviour can be addressed innovatively; anyone found without a mask in public may be given a mask and charged for it. If all public figures wear masks in all their public appearances, citizens will get a clear and effective message.

The government's decision to give emergency use authorisation to all World Health Organization-approved COVID-19 vaccines is likely to narrow the demand-supply gap. The mRNA vaccines, which appear to offer greater protection against new variants and other vaccines in the pipeline to cover variants of concern need to be mass produced, tested and commissioned quickly to benefit everyone.

M.S. Seshadri, retired Professor of Medicine and Endocrinology, CMC Vellore, is currently Medical Director of the Thirumalai Mission Hospital, Ranipet, Tamil Nadu. **T. Jacob John** is retired Professor of Clinical Virology, CMC Vellore

A multipolarity, scripted by the middle powers

Japan, Iran, Turkey and India are well set to shape the emerging world order



TALMIZ AHMAD

The acrimony between the United States and Chinese delegations at the Anchorage conclave on March 19, followed by U.S. President Joe Biden referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "killer" and Mr. Putin's sharp riposte, and Mr. Biden's reluctance to rejoin the nuclear agreement with Iran, are positions which make it clear that in respect of three crucial relationships, namely China, Russia and Iran, Mr. Biden is following in the footsteps of his much-reviled predecessor, Donald Trump.

Mr. Biden has also extended his firm backing for another of Trump's priorities: the "Indo-Pacific" as an area of strategic significance for the U.S. and the associated alignment that gives shape and substance to this geopolitical concept – the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad for short. On March 12, Mr. Biden convened an online summit meeting (<https://bit.ly/3wXrZVO>) of the four Quad members, namely, the U.S., Japan, Australia and India, at which the leaders affirmed their commitment to a "free, open, resilient and inclusive" Indo-Pacific region.

New Cold War

It is clear that the U.S. continues to view China as its principal adversary on the world stage and that it will use the Quad to challenge China in the Indo-Pacific, possibly as part of a "new Cold War".

This new Cold War was given

concrete shape during the Trump presidency when the ravages of the pandemic made the President and his officials demonise China. Then Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on like-minded nations to curb China's growth, reduce its influence in international institutions, and "induce China to change in more creative and assertive ways", a clarion call for regime change.

The U.S.'s hostility for Russia goes back to the latter's war with Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea in 2014, followed by allegations of Russian cyber-interference in the U.S. presidential elections of 2016. Mr. Biden continues this hostility for Russia.

U.S. animosity has encouraged China and Russia to solidify their relations. Besides significantly expanding their bilateral ties, the two countries have agreed to harmonise their visions under the Eurasian Economic Union sponsored by Russia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This idea has now been subsumed under the 'Greater Eurasian Partnership' to which both are committed. Both have condemned the Quad for "undermining global strategic stability".

Thus, the new Cold War is now being reflected in a new geopolitical binary – the Indo-Pacific versus Eurasia.

The final shape of this divide will be determined by four nations, namely Japan, Iran, Turkey and India, which, as "middle powers", have the capacity to project power regionally, build alliances, and support (or disrupt) the strategies of international powers pursuing their interests in the region.

On the face of it, their alignments are already in place: Japan and India are deeply entrenched



in the Quad and have substantial security ties with the U.S. Iran, on the other hand, has for long been an outcaste in western eyes and has found strategic comfort with the Sino-Russian alliance. Turkey, a NATO member, has found its interests better-served by Russia and China rather than the U.S. and its European allies.

So, why the uncertainty? The main reason is that, despite the allure, the four nations are not yet prepared to join immutable alliances.

Reluctant allies

Japan has an ongoing territorial dispute with China relating to the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. Thus, the security treaty of 1951 with the U.S. has been crucial for Japan's interests. But there is more to Sino-Japanese relations: in 2019, 24% of Japanese imports came from China, while 19% of its exports went to China, affirming the adage: Japan depends too much on the U.S. for its security and too much on China for its prosperity.

Thus, the new Cold War is now being reflected in a new geopolitical binary – the Indo-Pacific versus Eurasia.

The eight-year prime ministerialship of Shinzo Abe has instilled in Japan greater self-confidence so that it can reduce its security-dependence on the U.S. and pursue

an independent role in the Indo-Pacific. Hence its \$200 billion 'Partnership for Quality Infrastructure' that funds infrastructure projects in Asia and Africa, though Japan is also willing to work on BRI projects on a selective basis. But these are early days and it remains unclear whether Japan will explore the wide oceans or confine its strategic interests to the East China Sea.

India's ties with China have been caught in a vicious circle: as threats from China at the border and intrusions in its South Asian neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean became sharper, it moved closer to the U.S. It is likely that India's expanding defence ties with the U.S. from 2016, consisting of massive defence purchases and agreements on inter-operability and intelligence-sharing and frequent military exercises, as also the elevation of the Quad to ministerial level in September 2019, signalled to China that India was now irreversibly in the U.S. camp. With the border stand-off at Ladakh, China is perhaps reminding India that its security interests demand close engagement with China rather than a deepening alignment with its global rival.

China has a point: while the Quad has made India a valuable partner for the U.S. in the west Pacific, neither the U.S. nor the Quad can address the challenges it faces at its 3,500-kilometre land border with China. The 'revenge of geography' and concerns relating to the U.S.'s intrusive approach on human rights issues ensure that India will need to manage its ties with China largely through its own efforts, while retaining Russia as its defence partner.

The crippling sanctions on Iran and the frequent threats of regime

change make it a natural ally of the Sino-Russian axis. However, its strategic culture eschews long-term security alignments. This will surely assert itself after sanctions are eased, when the Islamic Republic of Iran will seek to redefine its strategic space and exercise independent options.

The "neo-Ottomanism" of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan – celebrating Turkey's glory through military and doctrinal leadership across the former territories of the Ottoman empire – has been achieved through a steady distancing from its western partners and increasing geopolitical, military and economic alignment with Russia and China. But Turkey still wishes to keep its ties with the U.S. intact, and retain the freedom to make choices. Its "New Asia" initiative, for instance, involves strengthening east-west logistical and economic connectivity backed by western powers and China.

Defining characteristic
The four middle powers, whose choice of alignment will impart a political and military binary to world order, are reluctant to make this a reality. While Cold War advocates in home capitals and in the U.S. will continue to promote ever-tighter alliances, these nations could find salvation in "strategic autonomy" – defined by flexible partnerships, with freedom to shape alliances to suit specific interests at different times.

These four middle powers will thus make multipolarity, rather than a new Cold War, the defining characteristic of the emerging global order.

Talmiz Ahmad is a former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Keeping pace

Reports have pointed that the novel coronavirus variants that have evolved are much more infectious; they have also developed more virulence and ways to evade our immune surveillance. Patients with severe clinical signs of disease have tested negative by the RT-PCR test which shows that the rate at which the virus is changing has made it difficult to identify. It is therefore critical that the protocols involved in the tests are reviewed. The decision of the government to go in for emergency

approvals for more foreign vaccines will sharpen India's arsenal against the virus ("Centre fast-tracks approval for more vaccine candidates"). With India recording new highs in terms of a single day spike, it is time we realise the gravity of the danger facing us. Strict adherence to safety protocols and using the maximum number of vaccines which are specific and can be remodelled fast need to be used for immunisation.

DR. BIJU C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

In view of the alarming surge in novel coronavirus cases, face mask wearing has to be enforced by governments and health experts. However, the reality is quite different. Most of the people are nonchalant, whether it is in cities, the districts and interior areas. One only has to look at the pictures in the media to know what is happening. Special patrolling teams and task forces have to be deployed in every State and inappropriate COVID-19 behaviour must be penalised. In ensuring this, even the services of

volunteers can be enlisted for this purpose.

V.S. SRIDHARAN,
Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu

New CEC

At a time when the Election Commission of India is being accused by the Opposition of taking partisan decisions, particularly in favour of the ruling dispensation, Sushil Chandra's appointment as the new Chief Election Commissioner of India spells hope. The Opposition often cites the unprecedented eight-phase Assembly election schedule in West Bengal and the happenings

during the election campaigns to support their apprehensions. Whenever we think of the ECI which functioned honestly without giving room for any complaint, only the face of T.N. Seshan comes to one's mind. He is the one who proved to the electorate that

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A report headlined "India, Russia committed to S-400

How can India contain the second wave?

PARLEY

Positive messaging, containment measures and a good vaccination strategy are crucial

After daily new COVID-19 cases peaked on September 16, 2020, during the first wave, new cases and deaths in India began to increase from the third week of February 2021, marking the beginning of the second wave. The rise in daily cases and deaths has been steep since April 1. On April 14, India reported nearly 2 lakh cases. The seven-day average test positivity rate has also been climbing. What will it take to contain the second wave? In a conversation moderated by R. Prasad, Gautam Menon and Giridhara Babu discuss some possible options. Edited excerpts:

When do you think the second wave is likely to peak? And when we see such a peak, what do you think will be the number of daily cases?

Gautam Menon: That is very hard to say as you have to know what is the significance of reinfection, what is the level of immune escape that is happening. It's clear that these new variants are spreading much faster and the reproductive ratio is significantly higher than the reproductive ratio in earlier cases. So far, there seems to be no sign of any point of inflection in the data. So, my guess is that it is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. We may be seeing around 2.5 lakh new cases per day. These are just guesses. The peak will be at the end of this month to the first week of next month.

There have been very few restrictions in the movement of people within and across States. Should we restrict such movement to contain the spread?

GM: We will probably have to curb inter-State travel at this point. But we can only make that decision when we know how much these new variants have spread. I think the rising cases everywhere are driven by the new variants. If they have already spread sufficiently, restricting inter-State travel would be pointless now. So, we need data. Apart from that we need to worry about closed spaces; masking; the intensity of religious and political events, which we need to maybe forbid alto-

gether. I think we will have to restrict the movement of people both within and across States.

Giridhara Babu: I think it's a bit late. In the first to second week of February, we saw the reproductive number going up and we knew where the localised outbreaks were. That was the time we should have done concurrent genomic sequencing with epidemiological investigations. Even the results of the genomic sequencing were made available in the third week of March. So that won't be useful in containing the transmission to a limited area.

I believe that there are many variants in circulation. It's a pity that we are guessing that this variant might be there and so let's restrict people from going from one State to another. This panic is not justified by data. The easiest thing to do right now is strictly enforce containment measures. If you fail there, especially in reducing the overall transmission trajectory in some of the places that have been hit the hardest, we will lose this opportunity also. It's a bit late to restrict inter-State travel.

If it's a new variant that is possibly responsible for the second wave, why do we see more cases in certain States and not in every State?

GM: We are not doing enough genomic surveillance. Even now we don't know how much Maharashtra has changed between March 24 and today. We know that this variant in Maharashtra has quickly spread to at least 10 States or so. But how those numbers have changed and how much of the spike is in response to that variant we don't know.

What do you think are the reasons for States that went to the polls not seeing a surge compared to Maharashtra?

GB: If there is a newer variant in circulation, every State is at risk. Some are at higher risk than others depending on when the variant entered the State. Inefficient testing, especially an inefficient syndromic approach, and review and monitoring of COVID-19 responses getting second priority over elections are



definitely the reasons why we might have missed it.

GM: In general, an outdoor activity carries less risk than an indoor one.

On March 24, 2020 we went into lockdown when the number of cases was less than 5,000. But now, when there are close to 2 lakh cases a day, we are seeing no restrictions even in closed spaces such as restaurants, theatres and gyms. Are we doing the right thing by allowing such businesses to operate?

GM: If there is a closed, badly ventilated surrounding, you should not allow people to gather there. But what we have not done is to encourage people to go outdoors. All our messaging has been negative so far – do not do this, do not do that. Psychologically this is a mistake. Because unless people understand or have a sort of framework of behaviour in which they can operate, it becomes hard for them to make decisions, and then they will finally throw caution to the winds. Experts from different fields have to discuss this and see if we can alter the messaging a little. You do need to give people some outlet somewhere and I think this has not been sufficiently discussed, and it needs to be done.

GB: These decisions are made based on how much power and influence these sectors have. For example, in Karnataka, there was a rule to allow only 50% attendance in theatres. Due to pressure, there was an immediate reversal of the rule and 100% attendance was allowed for a week. Taking a cue from this, people from other sectors also got

C It's important to have a broad base of multiple vaccines, because we don't know the answers to questions like which vaccine might be better against which variant.

GAUTAM MENON

relief. Now, if there is competition of sorts of how much relaxation each sector gets, this is not the way we can win over this virus. We're giving more reasons for the virus to flourish. And then we say, we don't want a lockdown.

Are we carrying out contact tracing and isolating those people who have been found positive in institutional facilities?

GB: There are too many generals and few soldiers. No additional manpower has been granted; we have not used the opportunity to step up preparedness but we want the same people to be tackling the second wave, which is more infectious. We need to have a complete relook at the way health manpower is managed in this country.

GM: When there is large-scale community transmission, contact tracing becomes a bit irrelevant. The question is whether we should even divert resources to that.

Are States really prepared to handle the potentially huge inflow of patients to hospitals?

GB: There are inter-regional and intra-regional disparities in health system access and delivery. If you look at Maharashtra, the distribution of hospitals and healthcare workers in

Mumbai is different compared to other districts. That's why those districts face a greater strain on their health system compared to Mumbai. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, there is a very poor distribution of health system capacity both in terms of infrastructure and human resources. The worry is that with the reproduction number [R0] almost nearing three, these two States will probably have the highest number of cases. Even if you assume 5% of these people need hospitalisation, we have no beds in those States or in the nearby States. And this is what we need to prevent. We need to be very strategic in helping the States with poor resources.

More than 100 million doses have been administered in India. But we have vaccinated just about 6.5% of the population. What can be done to increase vaccine uptake? Is there vaccine hesitancy?

GM: Vaccine hesitancy has now decreased. There are genuine vaccine shortages in multiple States which have seen a huge uptick in cases. There are many questions whether Serum Institute of India will be able to provide the number that it had promised earlier and how these will be divided between Indian and non-Indian recipients.

GB: Vaccine hesitancy is the least of our problems. We have a complicated list of problems including lack of micro planning, lack of mobilisation, lack of better communication, and lack of a vaccination policy on how to go about vaccination in different phases. Most importantly, in every vaccination campaign, we have had a separate plan for social mobilisation of the minorities. We don't have that yet for COVID-19. So, it's incomplete preparation.

The private sector has claimed that if allowed, it will exponentially increase the number of vaccines given each day. But it hardly holds 10% of the sessions across India now. What is the reason for this and how can this be scaled up?

GB: For nearly four or five decades now, it is the public health sector which has been the main player in vaccination programmes. So, if we are expecting the private health sys-

tem to outsmart the public health system in coverage of vaccines just for COVID-19, that's a wrong assumption. The private health system has a definite and clearly identified population that it caters to, but even that is changing both in terms of COVID-19 care and vaccination. There are government health facilities that are saying that for the first time they are seeing rich people coming to them. The kind of cold chain system in the government system is far superior. But if there are more vaccines, and people want to pay for these vaccines, then the public health system cannot get to it. That's where the strength of the private health system is. I think we need to recognise the trends of each system and see which is the target population for those systems, and work out mechanisms around it.

Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech are about to scale up production to meet the demand. Do you think it's time that the government provides them financial support?

GM: Absolutely. This is a time where we and every other country in the world needs vaccines in large numbers. Government intervention and support can make a huge difference in the long term.

Do you think the vaccine shortage will be eased now that Dr. Reddy's lab can import Sputnik V?

GB: The shortfall in supply will be reduced to some extent. But I am not confident whether it will completely take care of the demand in terms of covering the eligible population above 45 years. I would imagine that at least 10 million doses are necessary per day to completely vaccinate 30% of the population in the next two months.

GM: It's also important to have a broad base of multiple vaccines, because we don't know the answers to questions like which vaccine might be better against which variant. This may alter our policy in terms of where to send which vaccine at what time. In general, it will improve the availability of vaccines overall, and will strengthen our ability to at least meet the target of 300 million to be vaccinated by August, which is an important target.



Gautam Menon
is a Professor of Physics and Biology at Ashoka University



Giridhara Babu
is an epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India and a member of the Karnataka COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Lessons from the first wave

Introducing even partial lockdowns again will widen economic and social inequalities

ANIL K. ANTONY

India's second COVID-19 wave is more virulent than the first. Many States have restarted enforcing shutdowns of various scales. Unfortunately, large-scale political, social and religious events are still being held, rendering these restrictions meaningless.

Uneven growth

Our overall economic trajectory had been on the upswing after the disastrous economic collapse at the onset of the pandemic. The International Monetary Fund projected India's GDP to grow at 12.5% this year. However, the growth during these times can hardly be described as inclusive. Many sectors, including the technological, pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors, saw record growth. The wealth of our billionaires increased by 35% even during COVID-19 times.

However, sectors including travel and tourism and wellness and hospitality, that form the bedrock of economies, receded to historic lows. The pandemic decimated the informal and MSME sector and pushed 75 million Indians into poverty. An unplanned nationwide lockdown last year created the distressing imagery of the exodus by foot of millions of migrant workers desperate to reach their homes hundreds of kilometres away. Meanwhile, a few among us, especially in white collar sectors like IT, consulting and financial services, could stay in the safety of our homes.

Even before the second wave, many economists were of the view that India's revival from the COVID-19-induced downturn would be a 'K-shaped' curve where only a segment of our population recovers.

COVID-19 has affected the least affluent the most. Introducing even partial lockdowns again will constrain the movement of goods and labourers. It will significantly bring down our industrial productivity and create avenues that will widen our economic and social inequalities.

As an alternative, inter-connected industries should be aggregated and allowed to function at maximum possible capacity in multiple shifts. Stringent health and safety regula-

tions should be formulated and implemented. Non-essential gatherings should be restricted or banned.

Preventing distress

Demand contraction has been the biggest contributor towards the economic downturn during the pandemic. Governments will have to account for this and urgently ensure cash stimulus packages at both individual and institutional levels. This will boost consumption and investments. Extra emphasis will have to be given to industries most affected by the pandemic. Additional allocations will have to be made for job stumps, direct cash transfer and employment guarantee schemes. The NYAY scheme formulated by the Congress in 2019 that guarantees a minimum income of ₹6,000 to every household is a solution whose time has come.

Reports from many States indicate that new COVID-19 mutations are unforgiving even to the younger population. India will have to accelerate vaccine production, procurement and distribution. Vaccination should be opened up for all age groups. This would make it easier for the majority of our labour to be at their workplaces with fewer risks. Students will also be able to attend classes and examinations and participate in skilling programmes without further breaks.

As the second wave hits us, our governments share the blame for our health systems to again be caught lacking; and for vaccine shortages.

However, since the onset of the pandemic, our health workers and policymakers have had enough time to be familiar with the virus, and design effective treatment and safety protocols. The private sector and NGOs played a big role in rapidly scaling up healthcare infrastructure during the first wave. With political will and public participation, we should now be able to save lives without compromising on our population's livelihood, or without letting many more fall behind through inadequate safety nets.

Anil K. Antony is a National Co-coordinator of AICC Social Media and Digital Communications Department, and National Coordinator of PIndia.org, a COVID-19 action group. He tweets @anilkantony



NOTEBOOK

Landing in Libya with war clouds looming

The Libyan war provides a lesson for both dictators and foreign interventionists

SUHASINI HAIDAR

As we taxied into Tripoli airport in March 2011, it was clear we had landed in trouble. Instead of making normal announcements about disembarking and the temperature outside, the flight attendant said this would be the airline's last flight into Libya, and if we wanted, we could stay on board and fly home immediately. Otherwise, we were on our own.

My cameraman and I, among a handful of passengers, walked out of the plane in troubled silence. Among our worries was that our visas had been signed by the Libyan ambassador to India, who subsequently defected in protest against Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's policies, and had been declared a traitor. After several hours of interrogation by immigration officials, however, we were allowed to enter Tripoli to cover what we later real-

ised would be the last days of Gaddafi in power.

Outside the airport, a tent city had come up of foreign nationals, immigrants, labourers, nurses and teachers including thousands of Indians who were queuing up to leave Libya. At the Indian Embassy, a few valiant diplomats worked day and night to issue passports and help with exit papers, amidst sounds of intermittent gunfire and clashes, before they themselves had to leave Libya, to escape the violence.

The UN Security Council had begun to discuss a British- and French-backed 'R2P' (Responsibility to Protect) resolution to bomb Libya, so as to (ironically) protect its citizens from its dictator. War clouds were gathering over the country that, for all Gaddafi's public lunacy, still had the highest per capita income in Africa. Gaddafi had gambled that while foreign journalists

he would remain in power.

Gaddafi was wrong. NATO forces never stopped once Benghazi was secured, so he had put them up in splendour at his own Rixos Hotel. He also thought that he could control their reportage by slowing down the Internet everywhere except at the hotel, so that they would be forced to file positive stories from one easily monitored place.

The ruling militia took us to see pro-Gaddafi rallies and escorted us to towns that they had won from the rebels. On some evenings, Gaddafi and his son Saif would appear at the hotel and exude confidence that they would defeat the uprising. Finally, Gaddafi figured that while Western powers had a UN mandate to protect people in eastern Libya (Benghazi and Cyrenaica), they did not have a mandate for regime change, especially while he controlled western and southern Libya (Tripolitania and Fezzan), and even in the worst-case scenario,

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 16, 1971

Plot to assassinate Ceylon P.M.

Colombo, April 15: There had been an insurgent plot to assassinate the Ceylonese Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, on the night of April 5 and to blow up her Colombo residence. Interviewed by the Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation, two captured terrorists hailing from Enderamulla, 30 km north of the capital, gave details of the abortive plot. The 20-year-old insurgents who had undergone five courses in guerrilla warfare were asked to be present near Rosemead Place (residence of the Prime Minister) in Colombo around 23:00 hours local on April 5. They were told that 50 terrorists armed with handbombs and other lethal weapons would be present there around that time and they should join them in an attack on Mrs. Bandaranaike's residence and kidnap her in a jeep failing which should assassinate her and carry away her body. The two terrorists working in a Colombo commercial establishment returned disappointed on finding none near the Rosemead Place.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 16, 1921

Jain temple case

Patna, April 15: At the Patna High Court yesterday, Justice Sir B.K. Mullick on behalf of himself and the Chief Justice delivered judgment in appeals in what is known as the Perneshwar Temple case. The Counsel for the appellants were Babu Sarat Bose assisted by Mr. Bankim Chander De for Swetambar Jains and Sir Benode Mitter assisted by Messrs. Asgar and Sishir Madhab for Digambars. These appeals arose out of a suit brought by Swetambar Jains against entry in the record of rights that both Swetambar and Digambars had equal rights of worship according to the modes and rituals of their own sect in several temples and tanks on the Pareshnath Hill. Swetambar Jains also asserted their claim to proprietary rights over the whole hill by virtue of two firms granted to them by the Mogul Emperors, Akbar Shah and Ahmad Shah. They also based their claim on their immemorial use of the hill. The Digambars claimed that the hill was sacred to both sects of Jains and each had equal right of worship with the other. The learned Judges have found that Swetambar Jains' claim of ownership was not sustainable and with respect to 21 out of 27 tanks and temples on the hill both Swetambar and Digambars have equal rights of worship and the Swetambar Jains have no right to compel the Digambars to worship at particular time in particular way.

FROM PAGE ONE

India records 2.16 lakh new cases, 1,153 deaths

As of April 14, India recorded over two times the average daily cases detected in the United States. The U.S. recorded the second most number of average daily cases – about 71,200.

ISRO case: SC asks CBI to look into panel report

The Supreme Court barred the public circulation of the contents of the report. The Supreme Court copy would be placed in a sealed cover.

Advocate Amit Sharma, for one of the police officers, retired ADGP Siby Mathews, said while Mr. Narayanan was heard out by the committee, Mr. Mathews was not called or given an opportunity to state his case.

"Naturally, the accused need not be heard before re-registration of offence..." Justice Khanwilkar reacted.

The Centre has also put its weight behind a report filed by a three-member Committee chaired by former Supreme Court judge Justice D.K. Jain.

The Centre had applied to the Supreme Court, urging it to accept on record the inquiry report submitted by the Justice Jain Committee and take suitable action on the suggestions made within against the "erring officials".

Mr. Narayanan, in his petition before the Supreme Court, had arraigned Mr. Mathews, K.K. Joshi and S. Vijayan, the latter two had retired in senior positions in

Annuity clause goes for NPS subscribers

The pension fund regulator is also hoping to launch the first guaranteed return NPS scheme in the coming year.

Separately, amendments will be made to the PFRDA Act of 2013 to allow NPS members with a balance over ₹5 lakh to retain 40% of the corpus in the NPS or wind it down over a few years through a system akin to a systematic withdrawal plan. "Post-retirement, a person has to take 40% of the total corpus as an annuity as per the law's mandate, and 60% can be commuted and taken as a lump sum. But the annuity rates always track the interest rates in the market which have come down drastically. So much so, if someone opts for a lifetime annuity at retirement with a return of purchase price to the nomi-

nee when the person dies, the rates are varying between 5% and 5.5%," he pointed out.

Since annuities are taxable, deducting the tax and factoring in inflation means annuities are yielding negative returns. "A lot of people are complaining about that. We have thought of giving them one more choice of retaining the 40% with our pension fund managers, and giving them a better return," he said, suggesting a systematic payout scheme could be offered to them over 15 years instead of an annuity.

The Finance Ministry has announced plans to amend the PFRDA law since Budget 2019-20 and to make legislative changes to override the statutory annuitisation provision.

Eight Pakistani men held with drugs in sea

"We acted on a tip-off regarding a drug consignment likely to be delivered mid-sea by a boat from Pakistan. In a joint exercise with the Coast Guard, we zeroed in on the suspected boat as soon as it entered Indian territorial waters," Deputy Inspector-General of Police, ATS, Himanshu Shukla said.

"The ICG, in a joint operation with ATS Gujarat, apprehended Pakistani boat PFB (Pakistani Fishing Boat) NUH with 8 Pak nationals & 30 kg of heroin off Jakhau #Gujarat close to IMBL in Indian waters today," the Coast Guard said on Twitter.

Cong. wins 12 out of 29 seats in Garo Hills polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Congress in Meghalaya emerged as the single largest party in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), winning 12 of the 29 seats where elections were held on April 12.

The National People's Party (NPP), which rules the State in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party and a few regional parties, took the second spot with 11 seats.

The BJP sprang a surprise

by winning two seats followed by the regional Garo National Council (GNC) that bagged one seat. Independents won the remaining three seats.

Anti-defection law

The NPP had won 10 seats in the 2015 GHADC elections but it went on to form the local government because of defections from other parties. The anti-defection law does not apply to any of the tribal councils in Meghalaya.

India, Australia must stand together: Morrison

Both countries share a passion for democratic freedom and commitment to the rule of law, says Australian Prime Minister

ANANTH KRISHNAN

India and Australia should stand together for democratic freedoms amid "a great polarisation" in the region between authoritarian countries and liberal democracies, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on Thursday.

Addressing the annual Raisina Dialogue from Perth, organised virtually this year by the Observer Research Foundation and the Ministry of External Affairs, the Australian Prime Minister described the recently held first-ever Quad leaders' summit, which he attended

along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, as a "historic" moment for "like-minded" countries in the region.

Mr. Morrison said India and Australia "share a deep friendship, or, as you say in India, *maitri*", and shared in common a "passion for democratic freedom, commitment to the rule of law, and a free and open Indo-Pacific region".

He described the region as "dynamic" and "full of promise", but said Australia was "not blind to the geopolitical reality" of it becoming the



The Indo-Pacific is the region that will shape our prosperity, our security and our destiny, individually and collectively

SCOTT MORRISON,
AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

"epicentre of strategic competition".

Indo-Pacific region'

"The Indo-Pacific is the re-

gion that will shape our pros-

perity, our security and our

destiny, individually and col-

lectively," Mr. Morrison said,

as he warned of tensions due

to territorial claims as well as

"unprecedented" military modernisation.

Mr. Morrison did not name China, but spoke of foreign interference and economic coercion, two issues that have emerged as strains in the Australia-China relationship.

"Democratic sovereign na-

tions are being threatened

and coerced by foreign inter-ference," the Australian Prime Minister said. "Cyber-attacks are becoming more sophisticated, including from state-sponsored actors. Economic coercion is being employed as a tool of statecraft. Liberal rules and norms are under assault and there is a great polarisation that our world is at risk of moving towards – a polarisa-

more cohesively, more often, in our shared interests" and to protect "liberal values that underpin the global order".

'Strategic balance'

Countries should come together "to build a durable strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific", a balance that he said, quoting former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "favours freedom".

In this context, the Australian Prime Minister said the Quad leaders' summit was "a historic first" and "a mark of the momentum that continues to be built among like-minded countries in our re-gion".

'Clear India's doubts in Jadhav case'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court on Thursday asked the Foreign Office to clear India's "misunderstanding" about the court's jurisdiction to hear the Kulbhushan Jadhav case to implement the verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017. India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav, and also grant consular access to India without further delay.

The ICJ, in its 2019 verdict, had asked Pakistan to provide a proper forum for appeal against the sentence given to the retired officer by the military court.

'China tried to change status quo'

Rawat says India stood firm on the borders and proved that it could not be pushed



Ceding no space: An IAF fighter jet flying over the Ladakh region amid the India-China stand-off in Leh in January. ■ PTI

gather world support," he added.

"The international com-

munity has come to our sup-

port and said, yes, there is

an international order that

every nation must follow,"

Gen. Rawat said, adding,

"That's what we have been

able to achieve, and we are

trying to gather support

from other nations."

Asked about the situation

of the Uighurs in the Xin-

jiang province of China, Gen.

Rawat said, "In India, it's be-

lieved that every communi-

ty, irrespective of the reli-

gion that they follow, their

caste, creed and colour of

the skin, everybody has

equal rights. As far as hu-

manity is concerned, the

world must stand together

in ensuring that people get

their human rights. It is a call

to the international communi-

ty to take."

Talking of the develop-

ment of disruptive technolo-

gies, Gen. Rawat said, "Na-

tions that have developed

disruptive technologies feel

that they will be able to im-

pose their will on other na-

tions by saying that if they

[other nations] don't come

to my terms, I have other

means of bringing you into

conflict by unconventional

means."

In the context of the La-

dakh stand-off, he said, "Na-tions are trying to become assertive... This is what Chi-na attempted to say – it's my way or no way... Such nature of undeclared war will place dilemma in the minds of de-cision makers [on] whether or not to resort to kinetic force and thus be labelled as aggressor..."

'Grey zone tactics'

Japan's Chief of General Staff General Yamazaki said China was attempting to unilaterally change the international order. He added that it was necessary to cooperate with other countries to counter such "grey zone tactics".

General Angus Campbell, Chief of the Defence Force, Australia, said grey zone tactics were a way to nibble away at territory.

Noting that this was seen in the South China Sea, he said it was very challenging to respond without breaching the line that led to open conflict. On the tensions in the Taiwan strait, he said, "Conflict over the island of Taiwan will be a disaster for the people of the region and something we all must work to avoid."

Centre eases guidelines for OCI cardholders

Registration also to be simplified: official

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) will not be required to register for a fresh OCI card every time a new passport is issued in their name, the Home Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

The Ministry stated that at present, the OCI card is required to be reissued each time a new passport is issued up to 20 years of age and once after completing 50 "in view of biological changes in the face of the applicant".

'Reissue only once'

"With a view to facilitate the OCI cardholders, it has now been decided by the Government of India to dis-pense with this require-ment. A person who has got registration as OCI cardholder prior to attaining the age of 20 years will have to get the OCI card reissued only once when a new passport is issued after his/her com-

pleting 20 years of age, so as to capture his/her facial fea-tures on attaining adult-hood. If a person has ob-tained registration as OCI cardholder after attaining the age of 20 years, there

will be no requirement of reissue of the OCI card," the Ministry said.

It added that the details of the new passports ob-tained by the OCI cardholder can be uploaded online within three months of re-cieving the passport.

"It has been decided that he/she shall upload a copy of the new passport containing his/her photo and also a latest photo on the online OCI portal, each time a new passport is issued up to 20 years of age and once after completing 50 years of age," it said.

The Ministry added that foreign spouses registered as OCIs will be required to upload a copy of the new passport and also a latest photo, along with a "declaration that their marriage is still subsisting, each time a new passport is issued". The documents will have to be uploaded within three months of receipt of new passport.

"The details will be updated on the system," the Ministry stated.

A government official said a decision had been taken to simplify the registration for OCIs and the portal would be announced soon.

UNFPA's population report launched

The report, 'My Body is My Own', turns the spotlight on bodily autonomy



No rights: Nearly half the women from 57 countries do not have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies.

fully empowered to make choices over healthcare, contraception and the ability to say yes or no to sex. It also highlights that only 75% of countries legally ensure full and equal access to contraception.

Some examples of violation of bodily autonomy in-

clude, child marriage, fe-male genital mutilation, a lack of contraceptive choices leading to unplanned pregnancy, unwanted sex exchanged for a home and food or when people with di-verse sexual orientations and gender identities cannot walk down a street without

fearing assault or humili-ation. Under its ambit also fall people with disabilities stripped of their rights to self-determination, to be free from violence and to enjoy a safe and satisfying sex-ual life.

"Women around the world are denied the fundamental right of bodily auto-nomy with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbat-ing this situation... Realising bodily autonomy is essential to achieving the UNFPA's goals of ending the global unmet need for contracep-tion, preventable maternal deaths, gender-based vio-lence and harmful practices by 2030... We are committed to the cause," Argentina Ma-tavel Piccin, India's UNFPA Representative and Country Director, Bhutan, said.

<p

Bengal gears up for phase 5 of election

45 Assembly constituencies, the highest number in the eight phases, go to polls on Saturday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

In the fifth phase of the West Bengal Assembly election on April 17, 45 Assembly seats spread across six districts of the State will go to the polls. Of the 45 constituencies, 13 are in north Bengal and 32 in south Bengal.

This is the highest number of seats going to the polls in any of the eight phases of the Assembly election.

In north Bengal, 13 seats are spread across three districts – five in Darjeeling, seven in Jalpaiguri and one in Kalimpong. In south Bengal, 16 seats are spread across North 24 Parganas, and there are eight each in Nadia and Bardhaman districts.

Key candidates

The seats stretch from the northernmost point of the State in the Darjeeling hills to Basirhat Uttar and Basirhat Dakshin in the Sunderbans.

Elections are being held in the tea gardens of the Dooars and also in the urban and rural settlements of North 24 Parganas, Bardhaman and Nadia. A total of 1.13 crore vot-

Fifth leg | Forty five constituencies will go to the polls in the fifth phase of West Bengal Assembly election on April 17. A demographic and socio-economic profile of the constituencies

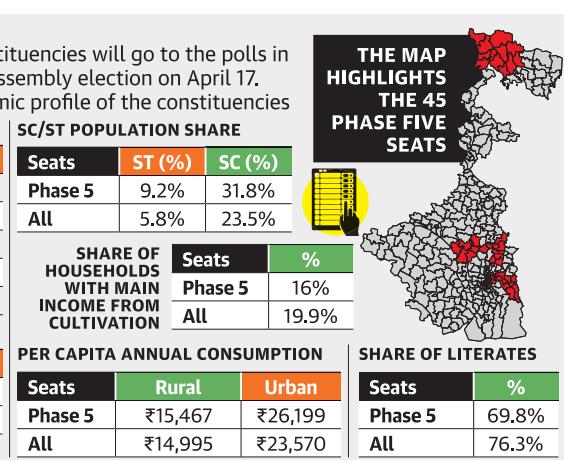
2016 PERFORMANCE

Party	Vote %	% seats won
AITC	44.60%	71.11%
CPI (M)	24.14%	11.11%
BJP	9.87%	-
INC	9.18%	11.11%
GJM	2.92%	6.67%

RURAL/URBAN POPULATION SHARE

Seats	Rural %	Urban %
Phase 5	71.5%	28.5%
All	68.1%	31.9%

Source: Lokdhara, devdatabab



ters are eligible to cast their votes to decide the fate of 342 candidates.

Key candidates include senior Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader and Siliguri Mayor Asok Bhattacharya, contesting from Siliguri, State Minister Bratya Basu, who is contesting from Dum Dum on the northern fringes of Kolkata, and State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya from Rajarhat's Gopalpukur seat in North 24 Parganas.

In north Bengal, one of the key poll issues is the suffering of tea garden workers labouring under poor wages both in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, while agrarian distress continues to be the main issue in Bardhaman and other rural areas of the State.

Both the BJP and the Trinamool have sparred over the benefits of the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) and the State government's Krishak Bandhu scheme, respectively.

In districts such as North 24 Parganas and Nadia, the

contest will be centred on the inroads made by the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and the subsequent resistance of the Trinamool Congress.

Heavy campaigns
In many of the 45 seats, both the ruling Trinamool and the BJP are evenly poised.

In some pockets in north Bengal and Bardhaman, the Samyukta Morcha comprising the Left, the Congress and the Indian Secular Fund (ISF) can make a difference. The BJP ensured that all its

heavyweight campaigners, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, party president J.P. Nadda and actor Mithun Chakraborty, have campaigned in areas going to polls.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also campaigned in Darjeeling district at the eleventh hour for Samyukta Morcha candidates.

Changed dynamics
A lot has changed since the previous phase of the ongoing Assembly election was held on April 10.

The death of four persons on polling day at Sitalkuchi after Central forces opened fire, and the Election Commission of India barring Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and State BJP leaders Dilip Ghosh and Rahul Sinha, from campaigning for a period, has added a new dimension to the fifth phase.

Trinamool

may raise issue with CEO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee on Thursday urged the Election Commission of India (EC) to consider holding polls for all the remaining Assembly constituencies in West Bengal on a single day, instead of following the existing schedule with four phases still to go.

So far, polling has been held for 135 Assembly seats, and the remaining 159 seats go to the polls between April 17 and 29.

"Amid an ongoing pandemic, we firmly opposed the ECI's decision to conduct West Bengal polls in eight phases. Now, in view of the huge surge in #COVID19 cases, I urge ECI to consider holding the remaining phases in ONE go. This will protect the people from further exposure to #COVID19," Ms. Banerjee said on Twitter.

Party insiders said the Trinamool would be raising



Mamata Banerjee with Jay Bachchan during a roadshow in Kolkata on Thursday. • PTI

the issue at a meeting called by the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal on Friday.

The EC's spokesperson in Delhi said Friday's meeting was only to ask all political parties to strictly adhere to the COVID-19 protocol issued by the Commission. The EC also clarified that there was "no plan of clubbing the remaining phases".

The situation in the State is grim. Congress candidate from Samserganj in Murshidabad, Rejal Haque, died at a Kolkata hospital on Thursday morning.

He had tested positive for COVID-19.

EC imposes campaign ban on Dilip Ghosh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Thursday imposed a 24-hour campaigning ban on West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh over his statement that the firing by Central forces in Sitalkuchi on April 10 was "just the beginning".

The Commission had issued a notice to Mr. Ghosh on Tuesday, finding his statement at a rally in Barrangar, North 24 Parganas, to be in violation of the model code of conduct.

"Where did so many naughty boys come from? Those naughty boys were shot at yesterday in Sitalkuchi. These naughty boys will not be there in Bengal. This is just the beginning. Those who thought that the Central forces' rifles were meant to be just for show have well understood now the power of cartridges. And this will be carried on throughout Bengal," Mr. Ghosh said, according to the notice. The EC said it found his remarks "highly provocative and inciteful".

Hill parties no longer hold sway in Darjeeling

With the birth of factions and the shifting of alliances, there is no dominant player in this region of West Bengal

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Like the steep and narrow roads leading to Darjeeling, politics in these hills of West Bengal is marked by twists and turns. However, amid the changing seasons, the demand for a separate State of Gorkhaland has remained at the centre of its politics.

The 2021 Assembly polls in the three seats of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurserong will be held on April 17.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) – the party set up by Subhas Ghisingh who started the statehood stir in the late 1980s – have joined forces with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

A significant development that has added a new dimension to the politics of the hills did not happen in Darjeeling



Changing times: GJM supporters shouting slogans at a protest rally in Darjeeling in 2017. • PTI

but in Kolkata, when on October 21, 2020, Mr. Gurung made a public appearance after hiding from the law for three years and announced his parting of ways with the BJP. He pledged unconditional support to the Mamata Banerjee in the Assembly election.

Mr. Gurung was on the run after the Trinamool go-

vernment filed more than 100 cases against him under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, following the 104-day-long violent agitation and blockade that he led in 2017.

Veteran politician Harka Bahadur Chettri, former GJM MLA from Kalimpong, said the election would decide the future of the movement for separate statehood. "I did not want to add to the confusion by fielding candidates," he said. "People do not talk about Gorkhaland now. They use a phrase 'permanent political solution' for Darjeeling hills."

A "permanent political solution" was also on the lips of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has attacked the Mamata Banerjee government for the "excesses" committed in 2017. The

phrase found mention in the BJP Sankalp Patra for 2019. Earlier in 2014, the saffron party, in its general election manifesto, stated that it would "sympathetically examine and appropriately consider the long-pending demands of the Gorkhas".

Days before Mr. Shah campaigned in the hills, Colonel Ramesh Allay (retd), who was a former member of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, wrote to the Prime Minister's Office on the issue of "denial of creation of small States vis a vis various assurances by the Prime Minister".

Mr. Allay, president of the Bharatiya Gorkha Poorva Sainik Ardh Sainik Sangathan, says that the demand of Gorkhaland is almost a century old and the Centre, in a letter in 2020, had stated to

Govt. cannot shift blame to people: CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government cannot abstain from its responsibility of managing the COVID-19 pandemic by blaming people for not following the protocol, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) said on Thursday.

In a statement, the CPI (M) Polit Bureau urged the BJP government to step in urgently to provide relief in the form of direct cash transfer of ₹7,500 per month to needy families, free food grains and expand the scope of MNREGA scheme to alleviate the economic hardships that people are once again facing due to erratic curbs in various States. The party said all election meetings should be regulated as per the COVID-19 protocol.

Mr. Gandhi alleged that neither testing was being done nor hospital beds, ventilators and oxygen were available.

Separately, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra shared a photo of Uttar Pradesh authorities covering up a Lucknow cremation ground by placing tin sheets and asked the government "not to hide the corona deaths".

"There are no tests or beds in hospitals. There are

no ventilators or oxygen. The vaccine is also not there. But there is a sham of a festival. PM-CARES?" he asked.

Mr. Gandhi has been critical of the government's handling of the second wave and had written to the Prime Minister on April 8, asking the government to open up vaccination to "whoever needs it".

The Congress leader's re-

Rahul lashes out at Centre, says Tika Utsav is a 'sham'

Priyanka flays U.P. govt. over video of cremation ground



Rahul Gandhi

no ventilators or oxygen. The vaccine is also not there. But there is a sham of a festival. PM-CARES?" he asked.

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The Congress leader's re-

newed attack came as India witnessed its highest single-day rise of 2,00,739 COVID-19 infections and 1,038 deaths.

"One request to the U.P. government: don't waste your time, resources and energies in trying to hide and suppress this tragedy," Ms. Vadra said on Twitter with a video of tin sheets being placed around the Bai-kuntha cremation ground in Lucknow.

On Wednesday, there were several clips on social media showing many bodies being cremated at this ground in Lucknow. "Please take concrete steps to stop the pandemic, save lives and contain the spread of the virus. This is the need of the hour," Ms. Vadra said.

endeavor in an extremely selfish display of vaccine nationalism, and that too for very little benefit. This is a record to be proud of, not condemned," the release said.

The group called for increasing the number of doses available in the country to step up the vaccination programme. It said the Centre should provide funds requested by the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to ramp up production.

Time for India to have a woman CJI

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde on Thursday said time has come for India to have a woman Chief Justice of India.

Heading a Special Bench, Chief Justice Bobde, however, said women lawyers refuse offers of High Court judgeships citing familial responsibilities. "Chief Justices of High Courts have stated that many women advocates, when invited to come as judges, declined the offer citing domestic responsibilities about children studying in Class 12, etc.," the CJJ said.

The court was hearing a plea by the Supreme Court Women Lawyers Association that talented women advocates are sidelined for judgeships. Chief Justice Bobde, addressing advocate Sneha Kalita, for the Association, said, "Why just High Courts? Time for a woman Chief Justice of India has come."

Advocate Kalita highlighted the fact that even the Memorandum of Procedure for Appointment of Judges does not make a mention of women judges. To illustrate her point, she said there is only one woman Chief Justice in all of the 25 HCs – Chief Justice Hima Kohli leading the Telangana High Court.

"We have the interest

National Board of Examinations

(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi – 110029

FOREIGN MEDICAL GRADUATE EXAMINATION (FMGE) NOTICE

National Board of Examinations (NBE) shall conduct the next FMGE on 18th June 2021.

Please refer to the Information Bulletin at NBE website <https://nbe.edu.in> for details pertaining to eligibility criteria, fee structure, scheme of examination and other details.

Important Dates for FMGE – June 2021 Session

Availability of Information Bulletin	16th April 2021 onwards</

CoWin to allow minor corrections in data

Move comes following complaints of errors during entry

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The government-controlled CoWin digitised platform to register for COVID-19 vaccination is all set to "introduce a new functionality of allowing correction of information to be uploaded onto the final vaccination certificates", R.S. Sharma, Chairman, Empowered Group on COVID vaccination, said on Thursday.

The move comes following complaints of data entry errors. "We are deploying a patch – piece of software – that will allow corrections and issue certificate based on this. The provision is totally new and the final certificate is digitally verifiable from anywhere in the world," Dr. Sharma told *The Hindu*.

Stating that the software would be in place within the next couple of days, Dr. Sharma said this technology would allow minor changes in the spelling of a name or mistakes in the surname and so on.

"We will have a protocol in place to guide users on how to do it [correct the mi-



Vaccination certificates can be downloaded from the CoWin portal.

nor error]. It will be done in a manner where one cannot misuse the system to change the name first entered completely to an entirely new different name and thus wrongly issue a new certificate. We need to initiate all necessary security protocols before we roll out this patch," he added.

Dr. Sharma noted that purely from a software standpoint, the platform is currently not facing any challenges.

"The software is simple to use, inclusive, highly scalable and can cater to a large

number of people. The problems occur at data entry level. Though the data sought are minimal – name, age and gender – mistakes occur. While minor errors can be rectified at the time of vaccination where the verifier checks these details, however, there are still some cases – fairly rare ones and errors remain. In such cases, those who need the certificates for travel or other purposes, want these errors to be corrected and that is where the system comes in handy," he explained.

Dr. Sharma added that at present the system of vaccination event is recorded as Immutable Vaccination Event Record (IVER) which could not be altered.

"If we allow it to be changed, then all kinds of problems could occur. People can misuse it to get the certificate by changing the names of the person etc. Hence, we did not have any provision for change in the IVER. The change we are putting in place, through deploying a patch, allows correction of spelling errors in a name or gender," he added.

Last year, on May 16, the Health Department had informed the Patna High Court

With the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases, the Bihar government is apparently struggling to provide medical facilities to patients. Hospitals are having to cope with shortage of oxygen cylinders as well.

The State government has urged the Defence Ministry to depute Army doctors at the dedicated COVID-19 hospital at Bihta, near Patna. "I've sent a letter to the Defence Secretary urging him to depute at least 50 doctors so that all 500 beds at the dedicated hospital can be utilised. It will ease the load in Patna-based hospitals," said Pratyaya Amrit, Principal Secretary in the State Health Department.

Sources in the department told *The Hindu* that directives had been given to add 30-50 beds in various government hospitals.

However, hospitals are facing an acute shortage of doctors, nurses and para-medical staff. In government hospitals, 75% of the posts of nursing and para-medical staff are reportedly vacant. Also, infrastructure to cope with a large rush of patients is lacking in most of them.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 patients are thronging government and private hospitals, only to be turned away for lack of beds. As many as 4786 new cases were reported in

Bihar struggles to cope with rising cases

Hospitals in the State are facing an acute shortage of oxygen cylinders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA



Migrants arriving from Maharashtra stand in a queue at the Patna Junction to undergo COVID-19 tests on Thursday. ■ PTI

that out of 11,645 sanctioned posts of doctors in the State, 8,768 were vacant, 5,600 of them in rural areas.

Bihar in the last 24-hours and 21 have died. In the last two weeks, 75 people have lost their lives.

District court shut

The State's Chief Secretary, Home Secretary, a Minister and several top officials are reported to have been infected. The Bettiah district court in West Champaran had to shut down for five days after 25 positive cases and one death were reported. Party headquarters of the ruling Janata Dal (United) has been locked till April 20. Party offices of other political parties in Patna too were deserted

look. Videos of relatives of patients wailing and complaining about lack of infrastructure and care in government hospitals have been going viral on social media.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday took the second dose of vaccine at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) in Patna. He told media persons that the "number of beds at dedicated COVID-19 hospitals was being increased. The government, he said, would implement suggestions that emerge at all-party meeting called by the Governor on April 17.

Centre clarifies on vaccine applications

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's drug regulator will take a decision on applications seeking approval for restricted emergency use of foreign-produced COVID-19 vaccines within three working days from the date of submission, the government said on Thursday.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), headed by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), will process applications for registration certificates (registration of overseas manufacturing sites and products) and import licences within three working days from the date of approval of restricted use in an emergency situation.

The Union Health Ministry on Thursday issued regulatory pathways for foreign-produced COVID-19 vaccines, according to which the CDSCO has prepared detailed guidelines. Applications for the grant of approval may be submitted to the CDSCO and the application can be made by the foreign manufacturer through its Indian subsidiary or through its authorised agent in India.

NEET PG exam put off: Minister

New date will be announced later

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test - (Postgraduate) (NEET-PG) 2021 medical entrance exams scheduled for April 18 has been postponed in light of the surge in COVID-19 cases, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted on Thursday evening.

The Minister added that the new date for the exam will be announced later. "Decision has been taken keeping the well-being of our young medical students in mind," the Minister added in his tweet.

The National Board of Ex-

Monuments to stay closed till May 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All centrally protected monuments and historical sites would remain closed till May 15 due to the rising COVID-19 cases, Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel said on Thursday. As many as 3,693 monuments and 50 museums will be closed.

Centre plans to import medical oxygen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Stating that there has been increasing demand for medical oxygen, especially from 12 States – Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan – with a high burden of active COVID-19 cases, the Centre on Thursday said it would be

mapping the oxygen sources of these States.

The Union Health Ministry said that in view of the increasing demand for medical oxygen, the import of 50,000 tonnes of medical oxygen was also being looked into. "The States like Madhya Pradesh do not have any production capacity to meet their demand for medical oxygen and there is a trend of increasing demand

in oxygen-producing States such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan," a release said.

It added that a Ministry-level review meeting was organised to assess the availability of essential medical equipment and oxygen during the pandemic.

The Health Ministry also said that it was working at identifying another 100 hospitals for Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants manu-

faturing oxygen. "This will help hospitals become self-sufficient in their requirement for medical oxygen while also reducing the burden on the national grid for supply of medical oxygen.

Over 160 PSA plants sanctioned under PM-Cares are being closely reviewed for early completion to enhance self-generation of oxygen in hospitals especially in remote areas," it said.

Allow scribes to get vaccine: Editors Guild

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India urged the Centre on Thursday to declare journalists as frontline workers and allow them to take COVID-19 vaccinations on priority.

It said news media had been considered an essential service.

Migrant workers are vulnerable again: activists

They are facing wage loss due to curbs

States like Maharashtra and National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Nirmal Gorana, the general secretary of the Bandhua Mukti Morcha that works to free bonded labour, said with the Delhi government on Thursday announcing weekend curfew, a rush of migrant workers leaving the Capital could be seen on Friday evening.

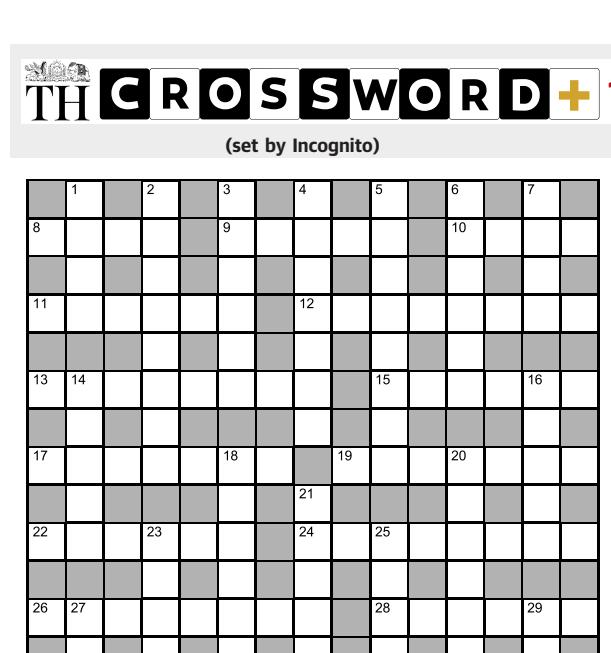
A year after lakhs of workers made their way back to their home States after the nationwide lockdown was announced in March 2020, a day before the lockdown in view of the pandemic. Later in the year, the Ministry allowed foreign nationals from the U.S., the UK, Germany and France on "business, medical and employment" visas under an air bubble scheme.

Workers in the informal sector think that if there is a lockdown again, they could be stranded and so have started returning to their villages. After the lockdown last year, many of these workers could not get back their jobs as the contractors who hired them did not want to take the responsibility of paying them lockdown wages," said All-India Trade Union Congress general secretary Amarjeet Kaur. She added that unions had received reports of workers leaving from Lucknow, the Delhi-National Capital Region, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Workers in the informal sector have already begun to face wage loss due to the curfews and lockdowns in some

The night curfew has already affected sex workers, construction workers and auto-rickshaw drivers. There is fear among workers... The job loss, hunger will be worse this time as the COVID-19 cases are much worse," he said. The government failed to take actions like reducing the working hours of informal sector workers and getting them registered for social security benefits.

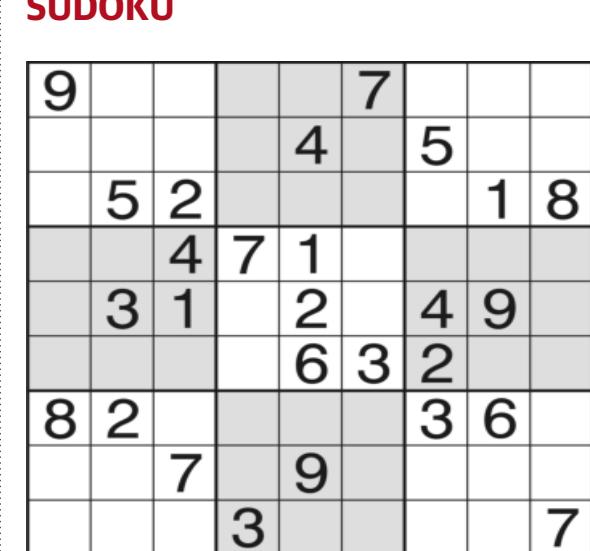
Chandan Kumar, of the Working People's Charter, added that most informal sector workers had not received their wages for the lockdown in 2020 despite government directions, and were facing the same crisis they did last year.



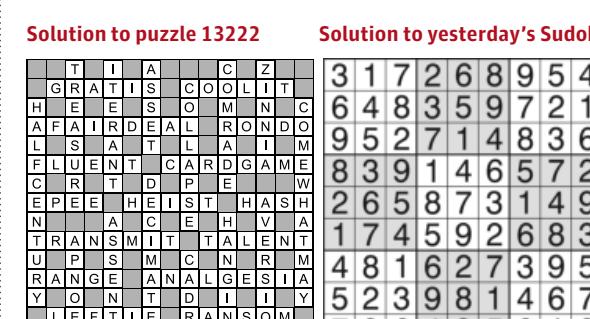
- ACROSS
 - 8 Fantasic teacher for beginners gives uplifting reassurance unerringly (4)
 - 9 Apricots not available in sailing troop carriers? That's a mistake (5)
 - 10 Rum sale? Drinks! (4)
 - 11 Extraordinary puzzle! Arsenic extracted from powdered magnesia? (6)
 - 12 Went away from earthly life, reportedly ailing (8)
 - 13 Emmer product aliens manufactured around Missouri (8)

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SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13222 Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

A strange wish is sought

Periyapuram is valued as much for the social, cultural and economic milieu it captures as for the way it transmits the depth of Siva devotion prevailing among the people of that era. This is very explicit in Sekkizhar's account of the trajectory of the saint devotee Karaikal Ammaiyan's life, wherein her ideals of life and devotion are manifest in the most unique manner, pointed out Selvi Lemuria Manickam in a discourse.

Born as Punitavati in a prosperous merchant family, she is blessed with the inherent strain of devotion to Siva and Sivan Adiyars. After marriage, she abides by her wifely duties with diligence. At this juncture, an incident that becomes a defining moment in her devotional life happens owing to the Lord's will. One day she offers one of the two mangoes her husband had sent home to a Sivan Adiyar by way of hospitality. She serves her husband the other mango at lunch. Drawn by the delicious taste, he asks for the other fruit. She is in a dilemma and prays to Siva for guidance. The Lord grants her a mango which she gives to her husband. He finds this fruit far more delicious and asks her about it. Then she tells him all that had happened.

He wants to test her and asks her to get another mango and Siva answers her prayer once again. But it disappears the moment she hands it over to him. He is now filled with awe and convinced of her divine nature. Henceforth he is unable to see her as his wife. As she is committed to her dharma as a wife, she reacts to his decision in the strangest manner. She wishes for an existence in the skeleton form without skin, flesh, etc, that lend appearance and beauty to all living species. Her rejection is rare and one of its kind, reflecting a mature level of realisation.

A couple is bringing the rich natural produce of Manipur's Ukhral province to food lovers in various Indian cities, through e-commerce



Mountainous bounty (Clockwise from left) Sirakhang chillies; Talui garlic bouquets; Zeinorin Angkang flanked by garlic farmers; Zeinorin with Leiyolan Vashum

■ JIM KASOM AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



From the lap of Nature

ANISHA MENEZES

Ukhral, in Manipur, populated by the indigenous Tangkhul tribe, is a land nestled in nature's bounty, steeped in ancient tradition and buoyed by a modern outlook.

Leiyolan Vashum and Zeinorin Angkang of Ukhral tell the story of their people, through their rich produce. The couple, with a background in Management and Communication Studies, started Hill Wild in the winter of 2017. The business became popular for its confections infused with local produce, but took a detour in 2020. "With the arrival of the pandemic, everything came to a grinding halt," explains Zeinorin, as she juggles online orders and social media updates.

What the company stumbled upon as a predicament last year, soon transformed into an opportunity. "On one hand, access to produce was limited, while on the other, plentiful harvest could not make it to consumers on time. So we launched Taste Ukhral, a brand that would bring artisanal produce from the region to the rest of the

country, and create a network for farmers to sell their harvest," Zeinorin says.

They had clearly hit the spot: in the midst of lockdown, the small business was inundated with online orders. "I remember our small team packing till 11pm once, so we could meet our dispatch deadline the next day," Zeinorin recounts.

Under the umbrella of Taste Ukhral, a bouquet of unique produce is harvested, minimally processed and packed for shipment. Ukhral plums, Sirakhang chilli, Sivath-ei/king chilli (hitting a whop-



ping million units on the Scoville Heat Scale), Kachai lemon, Ning-thee sumac berry, Raphei perilla seeds (used in salads and with meats), wild figs, dried wild apples, kiwi candy and ginger powder have made their way to kitchens across India.

"We want to showcase Ukhral's tasty natural produce. With its amazing terrain, rainfall and proximity to the Indo-Myanmar biodiversity hotspot, Ukhral has a cornucopia of delicious spices, vegetables and fruit. This venture motivates our small land-holder farmers and even our youth, to take up agriculture not just to sustain ourselves, but to ensure food security," Zeinorin explains.

Taste Ukhral is now working with over 200 farmers, with more



Dimapur-based jewellery and home-decor business Runway Nagaland, for instance, has created hand-embroidered pouches for Taste Ukhral.

The collective has had some artistic collaborations too. Dimapur-based jewellery and home-decor business Runway Nagaland, for instance, has created hand-embroidered pouches for Taste Ukhral.

The journey has not been easy,

despite the success. "We took a big

leap of faith during the lockdown

and sunk our own resources at con-

siderable risk. But I think it is paying

off now. We have brands based in

Switzerland and across the USA

who are buying from us," Zeinorin

says. She adds, "This augurs well

for our farmers, who reap rich

dividends, and these small

partnerships form the base for

future collaborations."

In a tango with the mango

Multicity doughnut brand Mad Over Donuts (MOD) is ushering in summer with a special range of mango-based treats. Their range of eggless and handcrafted doughnuts are available in a variety of fillings and toppings in the new menu, the most interesting among them being three mango-flavoured offerings. Among the fruity picks, food lovers can look forward to the decadent 'mango berry' – a doughnut stuffed with mango-chocolate ganache, dipped in white chocolate and topped with dark chocolate mousse and strawberry jelly. The 'mango cheesecake' variant is a mango-infused cream cheese stuffed doughnut topped with mango chocolate curls and mango jam. The third offering is 'mago tango', a mango jam-filled doughnut topped with mango chocolate shavings. The promotion is on until May 31 at MOD's stores in Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Bengaluru and Delhi, besides contactless home delivery options.



HORS D' OEUVRES

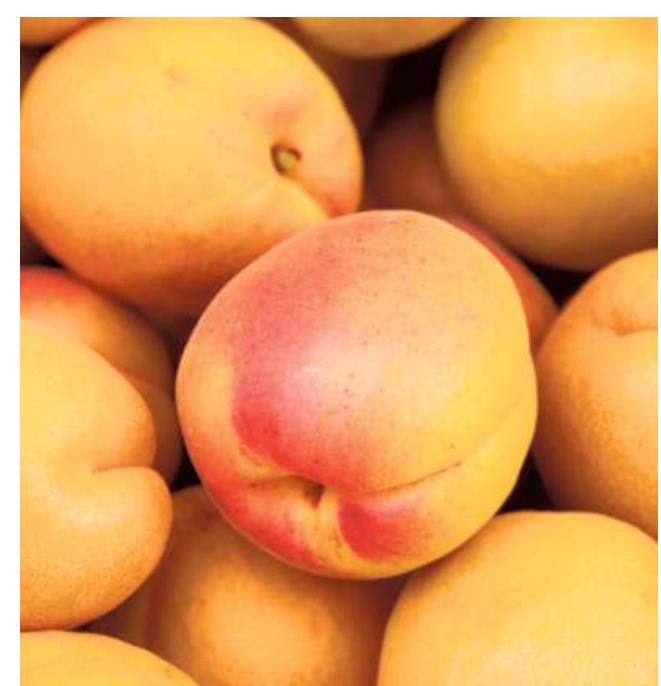


Robots step in to deliver

A Singapore technology company has deployed a pair of robots, whose services have been offered to 700 households over a one-year trial period. Users can book delivery slots for their milk and eggs, and an app notifies them when the robot (in picture) is about to reach a pick-up point – usually the lobby of an apartment building. The robots, which are equipped with 3D sensors, a camera and two compartments each, can carry up to 20 kg of food or parcels ordered online, make four or five deliveries per day on weekdays and are on call for half day on Saturday. They use ultraviolet light to disinfect themselves after every trip, said OTSAW Digital's chief executive, Ling Ting Ming. "Especially during this pandemic period, everybody is looking at contactless, humanless [delivery options]," he told Reuters. For the time being, staff accompany the robots on their rounds to ensure no problems arise.

Sneaking in some liquid gold

Things got a bit juicy for an Indian expatriate from Dubai this week after Customs officials foiled his bid to smuggle gold in liquid form mixed with mango juice at the Cochin International Airport in Nedumbassery. The native of Kannur was found with six packets of the adulterated mango juice. Two kilos of gold worth ₹1 crore were also seized from him. The officials were reportedly trying to separate the fruit juice from the liquefied gold. Mangoes seem to be the fruit of choice for aspiring smugglers, who have tried to conceal not just gold, but also drugs and other contraband items in pulp bars.



Mojitos by the sea

Juggling drinks and spinning cocktail shakers, mixologist Mervyn Payaso demonstrates the theatre of his craft, bringing it out of pubs and on to the streets of Kochi

PRIYADERSHINI

Mervyn Payaso oscillates the cocktail shaker like a juggler. The mixologist, who relocated from Bengaluru to Kochi during the COVID-19 disruption last year, has set up Rendezvous, an al fresco counter, by the sea in Vasco Da Gama Square in Fort Kochi.

Rendezvous is a pop-up – a table and two stools – under a garden umbrella in the charming cobblestone square under century-old rain trees. Fancy mojitos and fizzy fruit drinks make the menu; 'Conversations & Queries' scribbled on a black board adds to the wonder. The unusual stall has been drawing curious crowds since its opening in November 2020.

"This is what I do best," says Mervyn of his unique venture that has brought stylish mixed drinks out of pubs, bars and cafés onto the street. Pouring an attractive dark concoction into a high ball, he says, "Why let mocktails remain indoors and be elitist?"

Mervyn entered the hospitality industry as a casual hand, while still in school: learning the ropes by assisting and watching. He worked in several hotel bars and his longest stint of five and a half years was with Shiro, a pan-Asian restaurant in Bengaluru.

Particular about SOPs (Standard Operating Procedure) and BP (Best Practices) audits, he admits to having quit many bars in the past where "these were not followed."

A reason why he chose this informal style is because "mixology is now peaking and is understood more than before."

Rendezvous serves a simple menu of iced tea and black iced coffee as stimulants, and a choice of three to four mocktails or refreshers for the day.

Each priced at ₹50, the

mojitos are not only value for money but also playful and stylish.

Says Mervyn, "I begin with the pineapple and curry leaves mojito, which combines a hint of leafy freshness with fruity tartness. Agua fresca, a Mexican drink, draws in the flavours of cucumber, lime and mint, while another drink called mango ginger yokes the sharpness of the root with the sweetness of the fruit."

People gather around Mervyn to see his act and also the interesting wares he lays out before each performance.

Some of his signature concoctions are a spin on the bloody Mary made with guava juice; a lychee and cilantro fizz; and a combo of instant coffee with Arabica

On the table lie shiny steel bar scoops, spoons, knives, cocktail shaker, and the most important tool in cocktail world: the Hawthorne strainer. Bottles of home brewed fruit syrups, herbs and garnishes add to the setting.

Mervyn is particular about making the syrups himself. Some of his signature concoctions are a spin on the bloody Mary made with guava juice; a lychee and cilantro fizz; and a combo of instant coffee with Arabica.

When Mervyn launched his little fun joint in November, he had invited all his "buddies".

Now, with his little venture having gone on to create a big fan following, he doesn't forget that he "started off washing glasses in a bar."

Service with a smile Mervyn (above) has worked with several hotel bars in the past

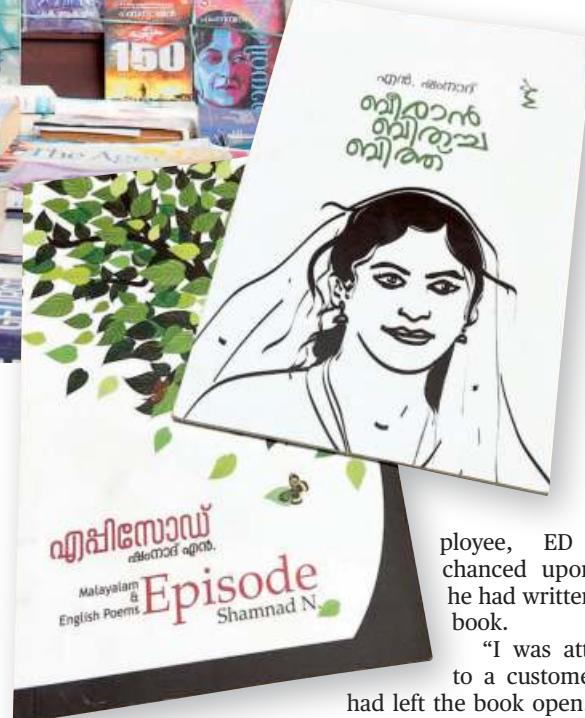
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT





Would you like to read? Shamnad N at his book-selling business on Palace Road in Thrissur
■ K.K. NAJEEB

Shamnad N discovered a fondness for fiction, selling novels on the footpath. Now, he has two books to his credit



ployee, ED Davis chanced upon what he had written in the book.

"I was attending to a customer, so I had left the book open. It had some of my works; he liked what he read and told me that I should get it published. He helped me in many ways starting from proofreading to finding a publisher. Former Thrissur Mayor, R. Bindu ma'am translated *Episode* into English," Shamnad says.

Davis is also a writer, and he helped Shamnad with his second book, *Beeraan Vithacha Bithu*. It has been translated into English, and he is now looking for a publisher.

While the day is for selling books, after work hours are for writing. "Three things dominate my life: writing, reading and the business," he says. He is currently working on his second novella, which will be his third "published work".

His books are self-published, mostly sold from his stall and his father's shop but he is not complaining. *Episode* sold 4000 copies, we printed another 1000 in 2013. I am content with how life is, I am happy here. I don't want much else!"

SHILPA NAIR ANAND

Shamnad N has been selling books on a footpath in Thrissur for more than 15 years.

He fell in love with writing as he casually flipped through the stall's collection of Malayalam magazines. Over time, he graduated to the works of authors such as Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and Madhavikutty. He eventually ended up publishing two books – an anthology of poems in Malayalam, *Episode* (2009; also translated into English) and a Malayalam novel, *Beeraan Bithacha Bithu* (2018).

"It was perhaps the amount of time I spent with books which fired my interest," says the 36-year-old, from his stall opposite the Kerala Sahitya Akademi building on Palace Road. "Since I was in the company of books and magazines, I started reading Malayalam magazines. I moved on to other books, fiction especially. I started writing around the same time."

Shamnad reads and writes in Malayalam. "Almost all of what I read is simple. Initially I read a lot of Malayalam writers. It is only recently that translations of other language books are available easily. I liked Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* and also Orhan Pamuk's writing," he adds.

He dropped out of school in Class VII and began helping his father with his business of second hand books. His father, Noordeen, has a book shop in Thrissur's Swaraj Round.

Noordeen used to buy and sell old newspapers. "A lot of old books – magazines and others – would also end up among the discards. My father would sort them and sell the books as second-hand; now we sell both new and second-hand books at the shop."

One of eight children, Shamnad helps his father and brother by

manning their Palace Road stall. When asked why he didn't complete his education, Shamnad pauses before answering, "I never felt the need nor was I interested. Also, two of my brothers died unexpectedly so I didn't think it was a priority."

He wrote his Class 10, SSLC examination (State School Leaving Certificate) in 2009 registering as a private student when he was in his 20s.

That was also the year he brought out an anthology of his poems, *Episode*. "The poems are inspired by the things I see and which move me," he says. He jots observations in a diary or a notebook, which then become his inspiration. The poems and stories too are written down.

That habit led to the publication of *Episode*. A regular customer, and Sahitya Akademi em-

Hitting the jackpot

Director Taranjet Singh Namdhari resurrects his first feature film as a six-episode series

K JESHI

"It was a dream launch. I was directing Naseeruddin Shah in my debut film," says Taranjet Singh Namdhari who shot his first film *Dhillon's Jackpot* with the veteran actor in 2007.

The film, written by Avtar Panesar, also features Kirron Kher. "We had a bound script and story in place. There were reading ses-

sions with the actors and they mentored us. All of us in my team were in our late 20s trying to figure out our lives. It was fun," says Taranjet looking back at his journey.

Dhillon's Jackpot produced by Raj Kundra didn't have a theatrical release then but now after 15 years it has been resurrected in the form of a six-episode series. Each episode runs for 20 mi-

nutes. The story is about Dhillon, a 50-year-old first generation immigrant from India who lives in Southall, London with his elderly father, wife and three grown-up grown up children. Life for Dhillon is a daily struggle, until one day he hits the jackpot.

The story of immigrants is universal, says Taranjet. "There is a generation gap between the first generation immigrants and the Asian communities born and brought up there. And a longing for acceptance from the Brits. The story is relevant even in the

times." While he retained the original storyline, he made a few edits in the screenplay and a few scenes were moved back and forth. "We added a few aerial shots and footages of how the city looks now (the film was originally shot in London and Mumbai), worked on dubbing and voice over and gave it an editing structure. To place it in the time zone during which it was shot, we added year and location before the start of every episode. We

re-looked at it from the perspective of a series."

Taranjet says the re-telling gave him an opportunity to correct his mistakes. "Most of the Punjabis and Gujaratis who inhabit London city often have land and houses back home in India. They are reluctant to let go of it as for them it's a part of India they own, which the younger generation finds strange. Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, have same issues even now."

He says the OTT platforms are a boon for film makers. "It's a democratic medium and encourages original content."

Dhillon's Jackpot is streaming on YouTube



Back in the limelight A still from *Dhillon's Jackpot*; (inset) Taranjet Singh Namdhari ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



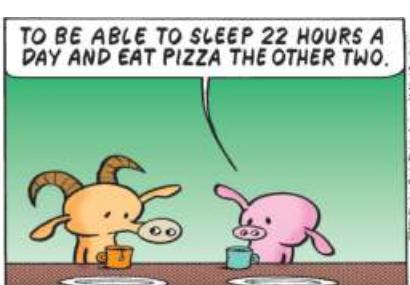
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



To Wales, on a prayer

Shirley Murphy grew up in Chennai but now lives and works in the UK as a priest



SUNALINI MATHEW

In February this year, Shirley Murphy became the first priest of Indian origin to be chaplain to the bishop of St Davids, Wales.

It is an irony that she laughs at, "It was the Welsh who converted us, six generations ago. They taught us the Anglican tradition, and here I am today, doing the same, but in the UK," she says. Some people do wonder about how she felt towards the British, considering the colonial past. "I tell them, 'That was in the past. You don't hold grudges. You give your life to the people to the community in which you serve.'

Shirley was born in Chennai, where she finished her schooling in Sacred Heart, Church Park; and college in WCC and MCC. Through her growing up years she was a regular churchgoer, first to Zion Church and then St Andrew's Kirk.

While in Chennai, she began working in the travel and tourism industry, for El Al, one of Israel's airlines. She went to Israel more than once, and in 2004 she says she felt a calling to the church, but ignored it.

"It was only after my son – who I call a miracle baby – was born, that I was prompted to go into ministry," she says, of both her and her baby's near death experience in 2013.

Her local vicar at Bronwydd, Carmarthen county, Wales, encouraged her, especially since she was already leading services. She was ordained in 2018, after graduat-

ing in theology from St Padarn's Institute, in Cardiff. Her first assignment was in Narberth, Pembrokeshire.

Shirley first came to Wales in 2010, when she and her husband Julian Murphy decided to make the move from London, where they lived, after his father passed away. They wanted to be closer to family, especially his mother and his four children from a previous marriage.

"People here were very supportive. It was the first time they'd experienced someone from a different part of the world be a part of their church," she says, adding that it was also a learning for them that everyone in India was not Hindu. She was pleasantly surprised at not facing any racism in Wales, considering she had in London. "I was told to speak slower though," she says, adding that people speak in softer tones than we do in India.

Grandparents would try and bring their grandchildren in to play soccer and listen to Bible stories, in something called Sweaty Church. Sometimes, Sunday School would be on Saturday, to get more kids in. A lot of her village is not well connected with the Internet so Zoom service was not an option. "I began a blog (revshirleymurphy.co.uk) and started posting daily messages on social media," she says.

With her current job, she's posted in Abergwili. When she does the cassock on Sunday, "I feel proud and privileged," especially during the lockdown, when hers was considered an essential service. What hit people the worst was the loneliness, and Shirley would make trips to see the elderly, standing outside their homes and having a quick chat. "You can garden and watch TV, but finally, human connection is what we want the most."



In the cassock (top left) Rev Shirley Murphy with her family and her current boss Rev Joanna Penberthy, at her ordination; wearing the chasuble ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

need to have people come together safely in the times of Covid-19. People came in their cars, parked them in the open and she held a service. In pre-Covid times, there were services for people to bring their pets to get blessed. "They've brought cows, donkeys, dogs!"

Grandparents would try and bring their grandchildren in to play soccer and listen to Bible stories, in something called Sweaty Church. Sometimes, Sunday School would be on Saturday, to get more kids in.

"They do stare sometimes, because I look so different. When I'm out with my husband they tend to look again, because he is a musician and he has all these tattoos and earrings, and I have this collar," she says, laughing.

Most parishes in villages in Wales are small – at 12-15 people, with church members being mainly the elderly. "People tend to do other things on Sunday, like playing soccer or rugby," she says, adding that it's also true that many have lost faith in organised religion. So it leaves the local vicars to think up innovative ways to bring people in.

"Last October, I did a drive-in service," she says, of the

re-looked at it from the perspective of a series."

Taranjet says the re-telling gave him an opportunity to correct his mistakes. "Most of the Punjabis and Gujaratis who inhabit London city often have land and houses back home in India. They are reluctant to let go of it as for them it's a part of India they own, which the younger generation finds strange. Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, have same issues even now."

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Dhillon's Jackpot is streaming on YouTube

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U.S. imposes new sanctions on Russia

It expels 10 diplomats, restricts trading and blacklists 32 individuals over 'election meddling, cyberattack'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The United States announced sanctions against Russia on Thursday and the expulsion of 10 diplomats in retaliation for what Washington says is the Kremlin's U.S. election interference, a massive cyberattack and other hostile activity.

President Joe Biden's broadside against Russia came the same week as he offered to meet President Vladimir Putin for their first summit.

In an executive order, Mr. Biden widened restrictions on U.S. banks trading in Russian government debt, expelled 10 diplomats who include alleged spies, and blacklisted 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential election.

Mr. Biden's order "sends a signal that the U.S. will impose costs in a strategic and



Tough action: A file photo of President Joe Biden at the White House in Washington. ■ AP

economically impactful manner on Russia if it continues or escalates its destabilising international action," the White House said.

Response 'inevitable' The Kremlin said on Thursday that sanctions would not "help" momentum for a summit and once the White

House unveiled its measures, the Russian Foreign Ministry warned a Russian response was "inevitable."

"The United States is not ready to come to terms with the objective reality that there is a multipolar world that excludes American hegemony," spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

The latest tension comes amid worries both in the U.S. and its European allies over Russia's recent troop build up on the border of Ukraine.

The imprisonment of Alexei Navalny, who is effectively the last open political opponent to Mr. Putin, has further spiked concerns in the West.

The White House statement listed in first place Moscow's "efforts to undermine the conduct of free and fair democratic elections and democratic institutions in the U.S. and its allies and partners."

This referred to allegations that Russian intelligence agencies mounted disinformation and dirty tricks campaigns during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, in part to help Donald Trump's candidacy.

The White House said the sanctions likewise respond

to "malicious cyber activities against the U.S. and its allies and partners," referring to the massive so-called Solar-Winds hack of U.S. government computer systems last year.

The statement also called out Russia's extraterritorial "targeting" of dissidents and journalists and undermining of security in countries important to U.S. national security.

In addition, the Department of Treasury, together with the EU, Australia, Britain and Canada, sanctioned eight individuals and entities associated with Russia's occupation of Crimea in Ukraine.

In Brussels, the NATO military alliance said U.S. allies "support and stand in solidarity with the U.S., following its announcement of actions to respond to Russia's destabilising activities."

Blinken calls on Afghan leaders, reassures them of enduring ties

Worries over the U.S. move to pull out troops from country

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to Kabul on Thursday to tell Afghan leaders and a wary public on President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw all American troops from the country and end America's longest war.

Mr. Blinken sought to assure Afghan politicians that the U.S. remains committed to the country despite Mr. Biden's announcement that the 2,500 U.S. soldiers remaining in the country would be coming home by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

"I wanted to demonstrate with my visit the ongoing to commitment of the U.S. to the Islamic Republic and the people of Afghanistan," Mr.



Future plans: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, right, with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Kabul. ■ AP

Blinken told Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as they met at the presidential palace in Kabul. "The partnership is changing, but the partnership itself is enduring."

"We respect the decision and are adjusting our priorities," Mr. Ghani told Mr. Blinken, expressing gratitude for

the sacrifices of U.S. troops.

In a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the National Reconciliation Council, Mr. Blinken said that "we have a new chapter, but it is a new chapter that we're writing together."

"We are grateful to your people, your country," Mr. Abdullah said.

France asks citizens to temporarily leave Pak.

Anti-France violence over Rizvi's arrest

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAHORE

The French Embassy in Pakistan on Thursday advised all of its nationals and companies to temporarily leave the country after anti-France violence erupted in the Islamic nation over the arrest of a radical leader.

Saad Rizvi was arrested on Monday for threatening the government with mass protests if it did not expel French envoy Marc Baréty over the depiction of Prophet Muhammed in a French magazine.

French Foreign Ministry

spokeswoman Agnes Von Der Muhll said about 400 to 500 French nationals live in Pakistan and they will be able to leave via commercial flights.

But, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said French citizens living in Pakistan were safe and security had been provided to them.

The development comes a day after the government announced a ban on the Tehreek-e-Labiak Pakistan party, which is headed by Rizvi. His arrest sparked violent protests.

U.S. climate envoy Kerry in first China visit

Talks aimed at 'raising global climate goal' ahead of Biden's Leaders Summit

ANANTH KRISHNAN

In the first significant visit by an official of the Biden administration to China, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry arrived in Shanghai for talks with senior Chinese officials.

Mr. Kerry will meet China's top climate official, Xie Zhenhua, and may also meet with other senior officials including Politburo member and top diplomat Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The first visit from the new administration in Wash-

ington follows last month's dialogue in Alaska, where officials from both sides traded bars publicly in an unusual exchange played out in front of the cameras.

Despite that beginning, the visit underlines the Biden administration does plan to seek a meeting ground with China on some issues, including climate change as well as Iran and North Korea.

The U.S. State Department said the visit was aimed at discussing "raising global climate ambition ahead of President Biden's



John Kerry

Leaders Summit on Climate" which will be held virtually on April 22 and 23, to which 40 world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, have been invited. The climate summit will push for an agreement to

keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming limit "within reach".

Just as Mr. Kerry landed in Shanghai, the White House also announced an "unofficial delegation" to Taiwan comprising former senator Chris Dodd and former deputy secretaries of state Richard Armitage and Jim Steinberg, to send "an important signal about the U.S. commitment to Taiwan and its democracy".

That brought a sharp response from China, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian saying on Friday "the Taiwan question bears on China's sovereignty, territorial integrity and core interests."

Sri Lanka Opposition challenges Bill on Chinese-backed Port City

Petitions scheduled to be heard by the top court on Monday

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Filing about a dozen petitions at Sri Lanka's Supreme Court on Thursday, opposition parties Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB or United People's Front), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the United National Party (UNP), Colombo-based NGO Centre for Policy Alternatives, and labour organisations have challenged the constitutional validity of the proposed legislation for the Port City, touted by the government as an investment hub for foreign capital.

The ruling Rajapaksa administration tabled a Bill, titled Colombo Port City Economic Commission, in Parliament last week, outlining proposed laws for the \$1.4 billion Port City being built on reclaimed land at Colombo's seafront.

Constitutional validity However, Sri Lanka's opposition parties Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB or United People's Front), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the United National Party (UNP), Colombo-based NGO Centre for Policy Alternatives, and labour organisations have challenged the constitutional validity of the proposed legislation for the Port City, touted by the government as an investment hub for foreign capital.

SJB legislator Harsha de Silva said while the party wants the Port City project to succeed, for its potential to "catalyse" the next stage of fintech and high-end knowledge services-driven growth in the country, "a solid legal framework" was key. "For this long-term project to succeed it must be consistent with the Constitution of Sri Lanka. It must not be discriminatory...we see multiple clauses that are inconsistent with the Constitution," he told *The Hindu*.

Senior lawyer and SJB Legal Secretary Thisath Wijayagunawardane said the Bill seeks to set up a Commission whose powers – in regard to registrations, li-



A general view of the Chinese-funded Port City project in Colombo. ■ AFP

nistration promised to expedite the project, that it says would attract \$15 billion in investments, and emerge a "leading business, retail, residential and tourist destination in South Asia".

'Chinese colony' However, in addition to the legal challenge, the government also faces sharp criticism from some of its backers, including sections of Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy. "We will not allow Sri Lanka to become a Chinese Colony," Chief Incumbent of the Abhayarama Temple in Colombo, Ananda Murti Thero, said on Thursday. "It is clear the country is heading on the wrong path," he said.

Months ago, Buddhist monks, among others, fiercely opposed Indian involvement at the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port, forcing President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to go back on his announcement that the Adani Group would invest in the project, along with the Sri Lanka Ports Authority. Subsequently, Colombo offered the West Container Terminal to the Group.

Meanwhile the Ceylon Federation of Labour voiced concerns over the Bill exempting employers operating within the Port City from compliance with Sri Lanka's labour laws. The Union had fought and won a case in the late 1970s when the J.R. Jayewardene government tried to deny labour law protection to workers at the newly established Free Trade Zone.

The country's hard-won labour protective legislation had come under threat again. Federation General Secretary T.M.R. Raseedin said in a statement, cautioning that: "Should this Bill be enacted, we will be going back to an era when 'hire and fire' ruled employer-employee relationships."

Eyeing investments The Port City was launched by President Xi Jinping during his state visit to the island nation in September 2014, during former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's second term in office, months before his poll defeat. The successor government, led by President Maithripala Sirisena and PM Ranil Wickremesinghe, vowed to develop the site into an "Indian Ocean financial hub", despite an election promise to scrap it, and amid protests from environmentalists and fisherfolk.

Following their return to power, the Rajapaksa admini-

Chauvin won't testify at Floyd murder trial

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MINNEAPOLIS

Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin said on Thursday he would not testify at his murder trial for the death of George Floyd as the prosecution and defence rested in the high-profile case.

Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill gave the nine-woman, five-man jury a day off on Friday and said closing arguments would be held on Monday.

Before prosecutors and the defence questioned a final witness, Mr. Chauvin told the judge he was invoking his constitutional right against self-incrimination. "I will invoke my Fifth Amendment privilege today," he said.

"Is this your decision – not to testify?" the judge asked the ex-police officer.

"It is your honor," Mr. Chauvin said.

Eric Nelson, Mr. Chauvin's defence attorney, asked him if he understood that "neither the state nor the court can comment on your silence as a sign or an indication of your guilt."

Mr. Chauvin, 45, who is white, was recorded kneeling on the neck of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, for more than nine minutes during his May 25, 2020 arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

A bystander video of the arrest went viral and sparked protests against racial injustice and police brutality across the U.S.

'Cardiac arrest'

Mr. Chauvin's defence claims that Floyd's death was due to underlying health conditions and consumption of the illegal drugs fentanyl and methamphetamine.

David Fowler, a retired forensic pathologist who testified for the defence on Wednesday, said Floyd died from cardiac arrest brought on by heart disease, drugs and other factors.

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION AJMER
PHONE NO. 0145-2628475
N.O. F/(Ar.MP)2021-2022/427-477

E-mail : aceregionajmer@gmail.com
Date : 8/4/2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS

Bids for the Work of Retrofitting Works of RWSS of 97 villages & Dhanies of Nawa Tehsil under JJM for providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) rural area of Nawa Tehsil with Ten Years Operation and Maintenance (up to VTC) excluding One Year Defect Liability Period after successful completion and commissioning of the work are invited from interested bidders upto 10.05.2021. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://pppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state.

SAVE WATER-SAVE LIFE

UBN No. : PHE2122WLB00428
NIB No. : PHE2122A0190
DIPR/C/3953

(CL Jatav)
Additional Chief Engineer
PHED, Region, Ajmer

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Govindarajanagar Division,
2nd Floor, Shakti Soudha, 13th Cross Road, 4th B Main Road,
M.C. Layout, Vijayanagara, Bangalore - 560040,

No.EE(GRN)TN/GL-01/2021-22 DATE : 15.04.2021

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

Tenders on item rate basis are invited by the undersigned for the work mentioned below from the registered contractors of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/ MES or any State Government Organizations. (Standard Tender Document - KW-3 & 4)

SI. No. Name of the Work Est Cost (Rs. in Lakhs)

TWO COVER WORKS

1	Construction of Sports complex at terrace level of Pallike soudha in ward No. 128 Nagarbhavi/Phase-2	200.00
2	Construction of Auditorium and other developments works near Ganesh temple at Canara bank colony in ward No.126	100.00
3	Additional works for PHC Centre near Gundurao Quatres in ward no.105 AD halli.	100.00
4	Providing Installation of Ladies Indoor Gym and Sports Equipments in Vivekananda park Kalyananagar in ward No.127 Mudalapalya.	55.00
5	Providing Installation of Gents Indoor Gym and Sports Equipments in Vivekananda Park, Kalyananagar in ward No. 127, Mudalapalya.	70.00
6	Additional works for old ward office building in ward no. 105 AD halli	100.00
7	Providing ACP, Compound wall, Levelling and Lowering the ground and Other Balance Works at Kabaddi Ground Sports complex at Ward No 104 Govindarajanagar.	52.00
8	Additional works to Jnana Soudha near Vivekananda park at kalyananagar in ward no 127	75.00
9	Additional construction of class rooms for PU college in ward no 105 AD halli.	15

MARKET WATCH

		% CHANGE
Sensex	48804	0.53
US Dollar	74.93	0.15
Gold	46301	0.45
Brent oil	66.61	4.61

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	750.35	19.30
Asian Paints	2587.70	17.00
Axis Bank	668.85	7.85
Bajaj Auto	3597.50	-4.95
Bajaj Finserv	9739.70	-67.00
Bajaj Finance	4660.30	-68.45
Bharti Airtel	539.35	3.20
BPCL	404.85	-4.55
Britannia Ind	3692.70	-53.30
Cipla	914.20	29.00
Coal India	128.25	0.30
Divis Lab	3783.40	64.95
Dr Reddy's Lab	4845.55	68.25
Eicher Motors	2412.60	-81.25
Grasim Ind	1349.25	-42.95
HCL Tech.	991.90	8.50
HDFC	2547.15	34.20
HDFC Bank	1430.10	29.75
HDFC Life	694.45	-11.65
Hero MotoCorp	2862.55	-2.80
Hindalco	353.55	4.85
Hind Unilever	2460.65	6.25
ICICI Bank	575.20	14.60
IndusInd Bank	858.35	-19.05
Infosys	1360.75	-36.40
Indian Oil Corp	90.10	1.30
ITC	206.70	-2.00
JSW Steel	629.10	-1.25
Kotak Bank	1773.25	-2.60
L&T	1374.65	0.95
M&M	805.10	-6.15
Maruti Suzuki	6644.25	-171.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16875.65	-293.20
NTPC	101.35	0.75
ONGC	105.10	3.05
PowerGrid Corp	207.80	-0.95
Reliance Ind	1944.30	12.50
SBI Life	908.70	10.90
State Bank	342.70	1.70
Shree Cement	3035.40	-50.65
Sun Pharma	633.25	5.90
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	659.30	-4.65
Tata Motors	303.50	0.65
Tata Steel	898.20	19.20
TCS	3218.95	114.90
Tech Mahindra	993.15	-8.70
Titan	1538.55	7.95
UltraTech Cement	6539.30	-65.15
UPL	607.35	2.75
Wipro	430.70	11.75

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 15		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.86	75.18
Euro	89.13	89.52
British Pound	103.04	103.49
Japanese Yen (100)	68.45	68.75
Chinese Yuan	11.44	11.49
Swiss Franc	81.04	81.39
Singapore Dollar	55.83	56.08
Canadian Dollar	59.71	59.96
Malaysian Ringgit	18.11	18.20

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Amazon allocates \$250 mn for start-ups

NEW DELHI

Amazon India announced a \$250-million venture fund to invest in start-ups with a focus on technology innovations for digitisation of small and medium business (SMBs), agriculture and healthcare. "We are passionate about enabling acceleration of SMBs in fuelling innovation," said Andy Jassy, CEO, AWS and incoming CEO of Amazon.

Piramal Retail Finance to offer consumer loans

MUMBAI

Piramal Retail Finance, an unit of Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Ltd., said it will foray into consumer and used-car finance. It will focus on small and mid-towns and with DHFL under its kitty, it aims to be among the top five non-banking finance companies in five years, its CEO Jairam Sridharan said. Piramal Retail Finance now offers seven products in its target markets.

RBI gets applications for 'on tap' licences

MUMBAI

UAE Exchange and Financial Services, REPCO Bank, Chaitanya India and Pankaj Vaish are among those who have applied for 'on tap' licensing of universal banks, the RBI said.

Applicants for 'on tap' licensing of small finance banks include VSoft Technologies, Calicut City Service Co-operative Bank, Dvara Kshetriya Gramin Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. and Akhil Kumar Gupta.

NMDC increases iron ore prices

HYDERABAD

NMDC Ltd. has increased iron ore prices by ₹1,100 per tonne of lump and by ₹500 for the same quantity of fines. This is the second increase this month by the miner. Following the latest change, effective April 14, a tonne of lump ore costs ₹6,950, while a similar quantity of fines will sell for ₹5,060. On April 3, NMDC had increased the price by ₹500 and ₹250 a tonne respectively.

WPI inflation quickens to a record 7.4%

Economists expect further acceleration in wholesale prices, partial transmission into CPI inflation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Inflation based on the wholesale price index (WPI) accelerated last month to a record 7.4%, a surge that is expected to feed into higher retail prices in the near term. The price gains at the wholesale level were driven by a 10.3% increase in fuel and power, the quickest pace in two years, and the sharpest surge in manufactured products' inflation at 7.3%.

March's wholesale price inflation marks the highest level since the present Wholesale Price Index (WPI) series began, and economists expect the trend to continue for a few more months due to the base effects of last year's national lockdown and a fresh spate of partial lockdowns that could disrupt supply chains.



Hard to digest: The WPI food index hardened to 5.28%, from 3.31% in February, despite cereal prices easing. ■ REUTERS

"The annual rate of inflation stood at 7.39% (provisional) for the month of March 2021 over February 2021," the Office of the Economic Adviser in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade said in a release.

responding month of last year," it added.

The nationwide lockdown in March 2020 had also affected the computation of the WPI index, with an inflation of 0.4% recorded that month, the department pointed out.

Edible oil prices surge

The WPI food index hardened to 5.28%, from 3.31% in February, despite vegetable and cereal prices easing as manufactured food inflation touched a 49-month high of 9%. Within manufactured food products, edible oils recorded 34.2% inflation in March.

"The expected trajectory of the WPI inflation, and its partial transmission into the CPI inflation going ahead, supports our view that there is negligible space for rate cuts to support growth," Ms. Nayar said.

rate which touched 17%.

"The WPI inflation recorded a broad-based hardening to a series-high 7.4% in March 2021 from 4.2% in February 2021, and printed much higher than our expectation of 6.1%, with faster than anticipated upturns in inflation for core items and fuels," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA Ltd.

"The expected trajectory of the WPI inflation, and its partial transmission into the CPI inflation going ahead, supports our view that there is negligible space for rate cuts to support growth," Ms. Nayar said.

Bond yield spikes as RBI's purchase disappoints

'RBI was expected to buy more paper'

REUTERS

MUMBAI

The National Pension System (NPS) is set to get more fund managers and expand the age-related entry criteria for investors, even as more employers are expected to switch over their non-statutory retirement funds from the EPFO owing to the new tax imposed on provident fund incomes, the PFRDA chief said on Thursday.

The 10-year bond yield ended at 6.13%, its highest level since April 7, and 12 basis points higher than its previous close.

The Reserve Bank purchased ₹250 billion worth of bonds under G-SAP or government securities acquisition programme, under which it has committed to buying ₹1 trillion worth government paper between April and June to aid the absorption of the Centre's massive ₹12,06 trillion borrowing in FY22.

"Traders were hoping the RBI would buy more of the 10-year paper," said a senior trader at a private bank. "It bought only ₹75 billion of that bond versus expectations of nearly double that amount," the trader added.



April and June to aid the absorption of the Centre's massive ₹12,06 trillion borrowing in FY22.

March exports rise 60%, trade deficit widens

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The country's exports jumped 60.3% to \$34.45 billion in March even as the outbound shipments contracted by 7.26% during the 2020-21 fiscal to \$290.63 billion.

Imports too grew 53.7% to \$48.38 billion in March, but showed an 18% decline to \$38.18 billion during April-March 2020-21, according to government data released on Thursday.

Trade deficit during March widened to \$13.93 billion from \$9.98 billion a year earlier. The trade deficit during the full fiscal, however, narrowed to \$98.56 billion as against \$161.35 billion during 2019-20, the data showed.

Citi to exit retail banking in India, China

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

NEW YORK

Citigroup announced it will exit 13 international consumer banking markets, shifting its focus to wealth management and away from retail banking in places where it is small.

Citigroup will focus its global consumer banking business on four markets: Singapore, Hong Kong, London and the UAE.

But Citigroup will depart China, India and 11 other retail markets, where "we don't have the scale we need to compete," said Citi chief executive Jane Fraser.

She described the pivot as part of efforts to 'double down' on wealth management, where the growth opportunities are better.

Wipro Q4 net rises 28% on volume growth

'Q1 revenue to grow 2-4% sequentially'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Wipro posted a 27.8% rise in net profit to ₹2,972.3 crore in Q4 as gross revenue grew 3.4% to ₹16,245.4 crore, from a year earlier. IT services revenue grew 3.8% to ₹2.5 billion.

In the April-June quarter, it expects sequential IT services revenue growth in the 2%-4% range, excluding revenue from recent acquisitions Capco and Ampion.

"This is the best fourth quarter results we have reported in the last 10 years," said its CEO and MD Thierry Delaporte. "This was led by good volume growth. Despite a steep decline in the first quarter because of the pandemic, we bounced

back to finish the year with only a marginal decline of 1.4% YoY," he added.

Operating margin improved 340 basis points (bps) to 21% in Q4 from a year earlier.

Gross revenues grew 1.5% to ₹61,943 crore in FY21 over the previous year. Net profit climbed 11.2% to ₹10,868 crore. However, IT services revenue declined 1.4% to ₹8.13 billion for FY21.

Wipro is planning a pay raise for senior executives in June. It hired more than 7,000 people in Q4 taking total headcount to 197,712.

NPS to ease entry-age norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Pension System (NPS) is set to get more fund managers and expand the age-related entry criteria for investors, even as more employers are expected to switch over their non-statutory retirement funds from the EPFO owing to the new tax imposed on provident fund incomes, the PFRDA chief said on Thursday.

The NPS will raise the entry age limit from 65 years to 70, with those joining after 60 allowed to stay invested till 75. A 30-day window would be opened in May for new fund managers to register with the NPS, said PFRDA Chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay.

The NPS will raise the entry age limit from 65 years to 70, with those joining after 60 allowed to stay invested till 75. A 30-day window would be opened in May for new fund managers to register with the NPS, said PFRDA Chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay.

"This major organisational restructuring within Honda 2Wheeler India will harness the strength of over 100 associates across different functions coming together with one aim – making Honda India the global hub for two-wheeler exports," the firm said.

"With this restructuring, the firm is strengthening business constitution and improving competitiveness to meet the high expectations from Global Honda" said Atsushi Ogata, MD, president and CEO.

crisis till date. "The aggregate debt of ₹43,000 crore addressed till date represents nearly 71% of the overall revised targeted recovery value of ₹61,000 crore and 44

Unadkat, Miller, Morris help Royals edge thriller

After left-armers three for 15 restricts DC to 147 for eight, SA left-hander (62) and all-rounder (36 n.o.) chase it down for RR

IPL 2021

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Questions have often been asked about the high price Rajasthan Royals paid for Jaydev Unadkat. On Thursday night, however, he came up with a priceless performance in his first game of IPL-14.

Sensational spell

His sensational new-ball spell broke the back of the formidable Delhi Capitals batting line-up at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

And it was another expensive player – Chris Morris, the most expensive in IPL history, in fact – that got RR home by three wickets with an unbeaten 36 (18b, 4x6).

Chasing 148, RR needed 12 off the last over. Morris finished it in style, pulling Tom Curran over deep square-leg for the winning runs.

It was a remarkable effort from Morris after his side had been pegged back by some splendid seam bowling from Chris Woakes, Kagiso Rabada and Avesh Khan.

It took a fighting knock from David Miller (62, 43b, 7x4, 2x6) to repair the damage, but he perished attempting a third successive six against Avesh, leaving RR 44 to get off 25 balls with three wickets intact. Morris, his compatriot, took over.

After the twin loss on Monday – the closely fought match to Punjab Kings and Ben Stokes to injury – the men in pink could not have hoped for a better comeback.

Disciplined bowling and splendid fielding saw the DC batsmen struggle after being put in.

Remarkably, there wasn't



Pink panthers: Unadkat, centre, removed the top three DC batsmen quickly before Miller's knock and Morris' cameo sealed the issue. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

a single six in the innings.

DC began dreadfully, losing the wicket of in-form Prithvi Shaw to the last delivery of the second over. He tried to hit an Unadkat slower ball across the line, through the leg side, and gave catching practice to Miller, the man who replaced Stokes, at backward-point.

He did. Pant made 51 off 32 balls before he was run out by a superb piece of fielding by Riyan Parag off his bowling.

Now, only one man could take DC to a competitive score.

He did. Pant made 51 off 32 balls before he was run out by a superb piece of fielding by Riyan Parag off his bowling.

Next assignment

DC: April 18 vs. PBKS, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

RR: April 19 vs. CSK, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS

Prithvi Shaw c Miller b Unadkat 2 (5b), Shikhar Dhawan c Samson b Unadkat 9 (1b, 1x4), Ajinkya Rahane c & b Unadkat 8 (8b, 1x4), Rishabh Pant run out 51 (32b, 9x4), Marcus Stoinis c Buttler Mustafizur O (5b), Lalit Yadav c Tewatia b Morris 20 (24b, 3x4), Tom Curran b Mustafizur 21 (16b, 2x4), Chris Woakes (not out) 15 (1b, 2x4), R. Ashwin run out 7 (4b, 1x4), Kagiso Rabada (not out) 9 (4b, 1x4); Extras (w-5): 5 Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 147.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-5 (Shaw, 1.6 overs), 2-16 (Dhawan, 3.1), 3-36 (Rahane, 5.5), 4-37 (Stoinis, 6.5), 5-88 (Pant, 12.4), 6-100 (Lalit, 14.5), 7-128 (Tom Curran, 18.2), 8-136 (Ashwin, 18.6).

ROYALS BOWLING

Sakariya 4-0-33-0, Unadkat 4-0-15-3, Morris 3-0-27-1, Mustafizur 4-0-29-2, Parag 2-0-16-0, Tewatia 3-0-27-0.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Jos Buttler c Pant b Woakes 2 (7b), Manan Vohra c Rabada b Woakes 9 (1b, 2x4), Sanju Samson c Dhawan b Lalit 4 (3b, 1x4), Shivam Dube c Dhawan b Avesh 2 (7b), David Miller c Lalit b Avesh 62 (43b, 7x4, 2x6), Riyan Parag c Dhawan b Avesh 2 (5b), Rahul Tewatia c Lalit b Rabada 19 (17b, 2x4), Chris Morris (not out) 36 (18b, 4x6), Jaydev Unadkat (not out) 11 (7b, 1x6); Extras (lb-2, w-1): 3 Total (for seven wkts. in 19.4 overs): 150.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-13 (Vohra, 2.4), 2-13 (Buttler, 2.6), 3-17 (Samson, 3.3), 4-36 (Ashwin, 18.6).

CAPITALS BOWLING

Woakes 4-0-22-2, Avesh 4-0-32-3, Rabada 4-0-30-2, Ashwin 3-0-14-0, Tom Curran 3-4-0-35-0, Stoinis 1-0-15-0.

Toss:

Rajasthan Royals.

Man-of-the-Match:

Unadkat.

Royals won by three wickets with two balls to spare.

Innings scan

DC	RR
47	Dots
20	Fours
0	Sixes
36/3	PP
7.35	RR
47	47
12	
7	
26/3	
7.62	

Hardik and Shardul's BCCI contracts upgraded

Axar, Siraj and Gill new entrants



Hardik Pandya. ■ SPORTZPICS



Shardul Thakur. ■ SPORTZPICS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

Hardik Pandya and Shardul Thakur have been promoted after their recent exploits in India colours, while limited-over specialists wrist-spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav have been demoted in the list of BCCI's annual retainer contracts for the period October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

The 28-member list has three new entrants in Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Shubman Gill.

The contracted players: Grade A+

(₹7 crore): Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah.

Grade A (₹5 crore): R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya.

Grade B (₹3 crore): Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shardul Thakur and Mayank Agarwal.

Grade C (₹1 crore): Kuldeep Yadav, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Shubman Gill, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

The contracted players: Grade B+

(₹2 crore): Jaydev Unadkat, David Miller, Riyan Parag, Tom Curran, Kagiso Rabada and Imran Tahir.

Grade D (₹1 crore): Axar Patel, Shubman Gill, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav.

Grade E (₹0.5 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade F (₹0.25 crore): Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade G (₹0.15 crore): Jaydev Unadkat, David Miller, Riyan Parag, Tom Curran, Kagiso Rabada and Imran Tahir.

Grade H (₹0.10 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade I (₹0.05 crore): Kuldeep Yadav, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Shubman Gill, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade J (₹0.025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade K (₹0.015 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade L (₹0.010 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade M (₹0.005 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade N (₹0.0025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade O (₹0.0015 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade P (₹0.0010 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade Q (₹0.0005 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade R (₹0.00025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade S (₹0.00015 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade T (₹0.00010 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade U (₹0.00005 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade V (₹0.000025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade W (₹0.000015 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade X (₹0.000010 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade Y (₹0.000005 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade Z (₹0.0000025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade AA (₹0.0000015 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade BB (₹0.0000010 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade CC (₹0.0000005 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal and Mohammed Siraj.

Grade DD (₹0.00000025 crore): Hardik Pandya, Shardul Thakur, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sund

TV PICKS

IPL: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
South Africa vs Pakistan: 4th T20I, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6 p.m.
Italian GP: Practice, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 2.15 p.m.
Billie Jean King Cup: Latvia v India, EuroSport, 8.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 12.15 a.m. (Saturday)

Yuki advances in doubles

SPORTS BUREAU
ORLANDO

Yuki Bhambri and Matthew Ebdon of Australia defeated wild card entrants Denis Kudla and Thai-Son Kwiatkowski of the USA 7-6(5), 6-2 in the \$52,080 Challenger tennis doubles pre-quarterfinals.

Other results: €132,280 Challenger, Belgrade; Doubles (pre-quarters): Jonathan Erlich (Isr) & Andrei Vasilescu (Blr) bt Santiago Gonzalez (Mex) & Divij Sharan 6-3, 6-3.
€44,820 Challenger, Split, Croatia; Doubles (pre-quarters): Szymon Walkow & Jan Zieliński (Pol) bt Tristam-Samuel Weissborn (Aut) & Purav Raja 6-3, 6-4.
\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo, first round: Sasikumar Mukund bt Kelsey Stevenson (Can) 6-1, 6-2.

It's Priyanka vs Aishwarya

SPORTS BUREAU
AHMEDABAD

Eighth seed Priyanka Rana beat fifth seed Mahika Khanna 6-0, 6-1 to set up a title clash with second-seed Aishwarya Jadhav in the Altevot Asian under-14 tennis girls' section.

The results: Boys: Semifinals: Samprit Sharma bt Tanush Ghildyal 6-1, 6-1; Kriish Tyagi bt Arav Chawla 6-2, 7-5.
Doubles (final): Vraj Gohil & Samprit Sharma bt Samarth Sahita & Kriish Tyagi 6-2, 3-6, [10-7].
Girls: Semifinals: Priyanka Rana bt Mahika Khanna 6-0, 6-1; Aishwarya Jadhav bt Akriti Sonkusare 7-5, 6-4.

We are aware we need a Plan-B: Chirag & Satwik



Immediate goal: Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj are keen to do well in the next month's India Open. ■ FILE PHOTO

They realise that their similar styles of play makes them predictable

BADMINTON

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

In quick time, the men's doubles combination of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy have broken into the World's top-10 ranking.

The remarkable hard work of this young pair, coupled with the efforts put in by the overseas coaches has largely contributed to some excitement coming India's way from men's doubles.

With the Olympics not ve-

ry far away, Chirag and Satwik is the only pair – with a career-high ranking of World No. 7 in November 2019 – to qualify from India.

Currently ranked No. 10, the pair has a 12-4 win-loss record this year – it reached the semifinals of the Thailand and Swiss Opens, but exited in the second round of All England.

Indeed, there have been a few takeaways for them from the limited competitive badminton this year. With the Badminton World Federa-

tion (BWF) curtailing the tournament schedule in view of the rising number of COVID cases, Chirag and Satwik are taking things as they come. "We are very keen to do well in next month's India Open. In the last couple of editions, we did not do as well as expected."

They realise that their similar styles of play – both compulsive attackers – makes them predictable when pitted against some top-class opposition. "Yes. It is not possible to keep attack-

ing all the time. We are aware we need a Plan-B and we are working towards it," said Satwik.

Satwik said, "I feel the experience of the top-five pairs makes a huge difference. We made it to the top-10 just a couple of years ago whereas some of the top pairs have been around for much longer. To beat a top-five pair, you have to play at your best. Again, that is not possible.

"I think, at present, their vast experience makes them better than us."

Anand's father passes away

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

K. Viswanathan, father of five-time World chess champion V. Anand, passed away, after a brief illness, here on Thursday. He was 92. A former General Manager (Southern Railway), Viswanathan is survived by two sons and a daughter.

SPORTS DIGEST

Sarita Mor retains her Asian 59kg title

ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN)

Sarita Mor became the first Indian woman to win two consecutive gold medals in the Asian wrestling championships as she defended her women's 59kg title in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on Thursday.

Sarita defeated two-time World championships bronze medallist Shioovdor Baatarjav of Mongolia 10-7 in the final to retain her crown.

Seema (50kg) and Pooja (76kg), who claimed bronze medals, were the other Indians to shine on the day.

So near, yet so far for Srihari Nataraj

TASHKENT

Srihari Nataraj came agonisingly close to becoming the first Indian swimmer ever to achieve the A-mark Olympic Qualifying Time, before falling short by 0.22s in men's 100m backstroke event at the Uzbekistan Open swimming championships on Thursday.

The 20-year-old's timing of 54.07s in the final was

enough to secure him the gold medal, but insufficient to meet the Tokyo 2020 Games A-mark (53.85s).

On the day, there were also gold medals for Sajan Prakash (400m freestyle, 3:56.03s), Shivani Kataria (400m freestyle, 4:38.05s), Maana Patel (100m backstroke, 1:04.47s) and Chahat Arora (100m breaststroke, 1:16.15s).

Aditi Ashok gets off to season's best start

KAPOLEI (USA)

Aditi Ashok carded three birdies in her first five holes to get off to her best start of the 2021 LPGA season with a 3-under 69 in the first round of the Lotte Championship.

The 23-year-old, playing her fifth event of the year, was in tied-27th place, five shots adrift of leaders Brittany Altomare and Filipina Yuka.

Vikas Singh knocks out Radev

KIELCE (POLAND)

Vikas Singh upset gold medal medal contender Yaser Radev in a men's 52kg bout of the World youth boxing championships here. Vikas tamed the Bulgarian

5-0 to reach the second round.

The results: Men (first round): 52kg: Vikas Singh bt Yaser Radev (Bul) 5-0.

64kg: Ankit Narwal bt Miroslav Herceg (Svk) 5-0.

91kg: Vishal Gupta bt Geoargi Stoev (Bul) 5-0.

Women (pre-quarterfinals):

57kg: Poomam bt Beata Varga (Hun) RSC; 60kg: Vinka bt Tara Bohatjuk (Bih) RSC.

Donic's buzzer-beater does it for Dallas

MEMPHIS

Luka Doncic sank a stumbling, off-balance 3-point floater as time expired to give the Dallas Mavericks a stunning 114-113 victory over the host Memphis Grizzlies on Wednesday night.

The results: Milwaukee 130 bt Minnesota 105; Cleveland 103 bt Charlotte 90; Philadelphia 123 bt Brooklyn 117; Toronto 117 bt San Antonio 112; LA Clippers 100 bt Detroit 98; New York 116 bt New Orleans 106.

Orlando 115 bt Chicago 106; Indiana 132 bt Houston 124; Golden State 147 bt Oklahoma City 109; Dallas 114 bt Memphis 113; Washington 123 bt Sacramento 111; Denver 123 bt Miami 106.

PRA and UBA win easy

Abhiraj Gagan Singh's 47 and Shivansh Bahukhandi's three wickets helped Positive Roads Academy beat TNM Academy by 23 runs in the Kraguzz Sports Under-14 tournament. In another

Shraddhanand College in quarterfinals

A match-winning knock of 84 by Man-of-the-Match Sanchit Sabharwal saw Swami Shraddhanand College beat Rohtak Road Gymkhana by six wickets to enter the quarterfinals of the 31st all-India Hitkary Om Nath Sood Memorial tournament.

Earlier, Chaitanya Bishnoi's

unbeaten 117 helped defending champion Haryana Cricket Academy beat Rann Star CC by nine runs to enter the semifinals.

The scores: RRG 159 in 39.3

overs (Dhruv Ghai 53, Aman Sehrawat 3/26) lost to SSNC

163/4 in 21.3 overs (Sanjhit Sabharwal 84, Himanshu Rana 49); HCA 215/9 in 40 overs (Chaitanya Bishnoi 117 n.o., Deepak Punia 5/26) bt RSCC

206/9 in 40 overs (Priyanshu Vijayran 71 n.o., Vikas Yadav 3/42).

Sporting Club, Delhi Challengers post wins

Half-centuries by Harshit Kaushik and Vision Panchal

saw Sporting Club beat Dhamaka Club by 83 runs in the 4th RK Kapoor T20

tournament. In the second

match, three wickets each by

Sahil Dutta and Karan

Chaudhary helped Delhi

Challengers beat I. Master

Club by seven wickets.

The scores: Sporting Club

236/8 in 20 overs (Harshit

Kaushik 85, Vision Panchal 50,

Sanjhit Sabharwal 37 n.o., Jatin

Bhaduria 3/25, Mohit Kumar 2/31) bt Dhamaka Club 153 18.3

overs (Gulshan Kumar 40,

Manish Sehrawat 3/35, Vision

Panchal 2/26); IMC 129/8 in 20

game, Soumya Goyal picked up four wickets and Mihir Singh got three as Udyanbayan Academy beat M-10 Academy by nine wickets.

The scores: PRA 167/5 in 25

overs (Abhiraj Gagan Singh 47, Rishabh Gupta 36) bt TNM

144 in 24.2 overs (Bhavi Sharma 41, Dev Chaudhary 36, Shivansh Bahukhandi 3/16); M-10

Academy 93 in 19.3 overs

(Soumya Goyal 4/16, Mihir Singh 3/21) lost to UBA 94/1 in

10.1 overs (Nanam Maini 55 n.o.).

Sporting Club, Delhi Challengers post wins

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Challengers beat I. Master

Club by seven wickets.

The scores: CRDC 285/9 in 40

overs (Adil Saifi 89, Kshitij Sobti 66, Agrim Sharma 3/44) lost to Daksh Sports 287/5 in 31.1 overs

(Gulshan Kumar 40, Manish Sehrawat 3/35, Vision

Panchal 2/26); IMC 129/8 in 20

All-round show by Aman

All-round performance by Aman Sharma helped Yuva Shakti Academy beat DAV Academy by 124 runs in the Summer Super League.

The scores: YSA 296/5 in 40

overs (Aman Sharma 161, Madhav Chawla 3/45) bt DAV

172 in 35 overs (Kavya Nagar 4/3, Aman Sharma 3/29).

Hiten shines with century

Man-of-the-Match Hiten Rathor's century helped Sporting Club beat IP International Academy by 123 runs in the Ratan Lal Saini tournament.

The scores: Sporting Club 259 in 39.4 overs (Hiten Rathor 100) bt IPIA 136/6 in 40 overs (Shivam Rai 37).

Aniket stars for MCG win

Aniket Pandey's 61 not out and Devyanshu Thakur's 49 helped MCG Academy beat Giants Academy by seven wickets in the 1st BLS Under-14 tournament.

The scores: GCA 149/9 in 50

overs (Rohan Chawla 30) lost to MCG 150/3 in 18.1 overs (Aniket Pandey 61 n.o., Devyanshu Thakur 49).

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