



CBI to study SC order on further probe into Nambi Narayanan case

Page 8



162 oxygen plants sanctioned, says Health Minister Harsh Vardhan

Page 10



U.S., China agree to cooperate on climate crisis with urgency

Page 11



De Villiers, Maxwell power RCB to the top; DC beats PBKS

Page 13

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## NEARBY



Mamata writes to PM on vaccine shortage

KOLKATA

Highlighting that the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to West Bengal from the Centre has been "scarce and erratic", Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that the State needs to vaccinate 2.7 crore people and urgently needs 5.4 crore doses of vaccines.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10



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EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 5

## Delhi has less than 100 ICU beds left, says CM Kejriwal

He appeals to Centre to increase beds in hospitals run by it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



As Delhi reported 25,462 fresh COVID-19 cases with 161 deaths on Sunday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the situation was worrisome as the number of vacant ICU beds had fallen below 100 and oxygen was in short supply. He appealed to the Central government to increase the number of beds for COVID-19 patients in its hospitals and provide oxygen.

### Oxygen demand

"We have asked the Central government for help and we are receiving it as well. I have spoken to Home Minister Amit Shah and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan about the need for more beds in Central government hospitals and ox-

gen for COVID-19 patients," Mr. Kejriwal said. He added that there were 10,000 beds in Central government hospitals in the city, of which the Delhi government has requested for at least 7,000 to be reserved for COVID-19 patients. The CM also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting him for more beds to be made available.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 3

## Bihar faces oxygen shortage; COVID hospital head seeks relief from post

Nitish imposes night curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. till May 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

The superintendent of a dedicated COVID-19 hospital in Bihar has written to the government to relieve him from the post as lack of oxygen supply in the hospital has put the lives of dozens of patients in danger.

Bihar has been facing a severe shortage of oxygen cylinders and Remdesivir medicine for the past one week, with the government claiming it is taking adequate steps to replenish stocks.

After a marathon four-hour meeting with district magistrates and top officials on Sunday, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said night cur-



tion," he told media persons. "Besides, we also discussed at length about the availability of oxygen cylinders, beds, ambulances and other things at the meeting."

On Saturday, a virtual all-party meeting was called by Governor Phagu Chauhan to seek the opinion of political parties on the situation.

Vinod Kumar Singh, a senior doctor and superintendent of Nalanda Medical College and Hospital, the most prominent COVID-19 hospital in Patna, wrote to Bihar Principal Health Secretary Prat�ya Amrit to relieve him from the post.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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##### Shri Anil K. Sinha (Retd. IAS)

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## COVID deaths in Gujarat far exceed govt. figures

Hospitals list other causes for death'

MAHESH LANGA

AHMEDABAD  
Rupal Thakkar, the 48-year-old mother of a two-year-old, tested COVID-19 positive on April 13. She was rushed to a posh hospital in the city on Friday night after her condition deteriorated. Within a few hours of admission, she died. The Shaly Hospital, in the death certificate, mentioned "sudden cardiac arrest" as the cause of death.



Bodies of COVID-19 victims lined up for cremation at a crematorium in Surat. ■ PTI

Patients missing from list In Gujarat, there are several such cases of COVID-19 patients missing from the list of those infected as hospital authorities mention other conditions as the primary cause of death and not COVID-19.

For example, on Friday, as per the State health bulletin, total deaths were 78. But from seven cities – Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara, Gandhinagar, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar – 689 bodies were either cremated or buried following COVID-19 protocols on the disposal of bodies. "From Ahmedabad's 1,200 bed COVID-19 designated Civil Hospital, almost 200 bodies were moved out on Friday from the morgue," a source in the hospital's mortuary told *The Hindu*. Similarly, from Surat's two main hospitals, officials said that "around 190 bodies were sent for cremation".

"From the beginning of this month, an average of

two dozen bodies are sent daily from the Guru Gobind Singh hospital, Jamnagar," a local official said. The hospital caters to patients from Jamnagar district as well as neighbouring Porbandar and Dwarka districts. Like Rupal Thakkar's case, a 58-year-old man died in a private hospital here but the hospital mentioned kidney failure as the cause of death. "My father, 58, died after he was infected with coronavirus. The hospital, however, mentioned that he died as his kidneys failed due to chronic diabetes," said Maulin Panchal.

The State, overwhelmed by the second wave of the pandemic, is witnessing a tale of two sets of data: one from the Health Department and the other emerging from hospitals and crematoria/burial grounds. And there is a massive mismatch between the numbers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Rahul cancels election rallies in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday announced the suspension of his rallies in West Bengal because of the COVID-19 situation and appealed to other parties to reconsider organising large gatherings.

Mr. Gandhi's move is likely to put pressure on other parties, including the BJP and the Trinamool Congress. "In view of the Covid situation, I am suspending all my public rallies in West Bengal. I would advise all political leaders to think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances," Mr. Gandhi tweeted.

Congress leader Shashi

Tharoor tweeted, "Applause & respect. Lives are too important to be risked in rallies."

Mr. Gandhi's move comes a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came under criticism on social media for appreciating large crowds at his rally in West Bengal's Asansol despite an alarming spike in COVID-19 cases across the country.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



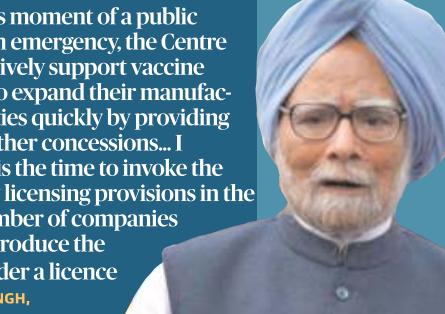
## Give options to States, boost vaccine supply: Manmohan

Letter to PM offers plan to tackle second wave of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

At this moment of a public health emergency, the Centre must proactively support vaccine producers to expand their manufacturing facilities quickly by providing funds and other concessions... I believe this is the time to invoke the compulsory licensing provisions in the law, so a number of companies

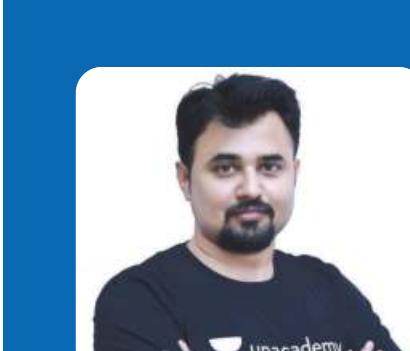
are able to produce the vaccines under a licence



cepted for delivery over the next six months. He said while the Centre can keep 10% of these expected deliveries for emergency needs, it should spell out a distribution plan among State go-

vernments based on a transparent formula. Dr. Singh stressed that India had vaccinated a very small fraction of its population.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



### DR MAHIPAL SINGH RATHORE

Production Linked Incentive Schemes

Apr 19, 2021 | 5:00 PM

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HC decides to hear urgent matters only

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Sunday announced that it will only take up "extremely urgent matters" from April 19 onwards, in view of the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the Capital.

The order issued by High Court's Registrar General Manoj Jain said that other pending routine or non-urgent matters and those cases filed or listed before the court between March 22, 2020 and December 31, 2020, shall not be taken up for now and would be adjourned.

"In case of any extreme urgency, the request in the pending matters may be made on the already notified designated link," the office order said. On April 8, the court had decided that it will take up proceedings through virtual mode from April 9 to April 23.

## Violators come up with absurd excuses

569 FIRs lodged and 323 persons held for violating curfew from 8 p.m. on Saturday till 5 p.m. on Sunday

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police came across unreasonable excuses from weekend curfew violators despite repeated appeal made by the government, apart from the police requesting people to stay indoors and avoid venturing out for no valid reason. The South East district took action against such violators.

### Out to buy liquor

In one such case, a man said he was going to buy liquor when the police stopped him in Jamia Nagar. He was stopped and booked for violating the lockdown orders. In another case, a man was booked after he claimed he was out to distribute wedding cards for his sister's wedding.

A senior police officer said they have instructed policemen on ground to be strict with violators and gentle towards people with genuine



**Guard up:** Security personnel check vehicles during the weekend curfew in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

their car was stopped by the police for roaming without a valid pass. They were also not wearing masks.

The woman tried to es-

cape, but was brought to Daryaganj police station. The couple claimed there was no pandemic and they would continue to roam.

The police set up check-points at various locations to ensure movement of only those who have been exempted by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

Chinmoy Biswal, Delhi Police PRO, said all District Deputy Commissioners were on the ground to ensure the implementation of weekend curfew.

### Over 2,000 fined

From 8 p.m. on Saturday to 5 p.m. on Sunday, the Delhi police registered 569 FIRs and arrested 323 people for violating the curfew. Over 2,300 were fined for not wearing masks and 6,661 were fined under the Delhi Police Act for violating COVID-19 norms.

The DDMA order for night curfew will be in force till April 30. People engaged in certain professions have been exempted from the curfew.

## Key member of fake note syndicate held

He smuggled FICN from Bangladesh

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 29-year-old man, alleged to be a key member of a Malda-based fake currency syndicate, was arrested near Anand Vihar railway station here, the police said on Sunday.

It was revealed that in 2018, while working as a mason at a person named Nasruddin's house, he was offered to deliver fake notes to make easy money.

"Nasruddin used to collect fake notes from suppliers near the Indo-Bangladesh border who smuggled fake currencies from Bangladesh through cross-border smugglers. Later, Rahim also accompanied Nasruddin. They both collected many consignments and supplied to their accomplices in different parts of India during the past three years," Mr. Yadav said.

## Explain basis for approving policies, HC asks insurance body

'Mental and physical illnesses cannot be discriminated'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to explain on what basis it was approving insurance policies that excluded mental conditions from full coverage, noting that "a large number of insured persons would be affected by such an insurance policy".

Justice Prathiba M. Singh said that a perusal of the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, makes it clear that "there can be no discrimination between mental illness



es and physical illnesses and the insurance provided in respect thereof".

This matter requires consideration, in as much as the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India ought to place on record the basis on which approval has been granted for

such insurance policies," the judge ordered. The court's direction came on a petition by one Subhash Khandelwal, who has an insurance policy from Max Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited. Mr. Khandelwal's case is that he has regularly been paying the insurance premium for the sum assured of ₹35 lakh.

Recently, when he raised a claim with the insurance company in respect of his mental illness, he realised that there is a clause in the policy restricting the sum assured to ₹50,000, with a few conditions, in case of mental illnesses.

## List out facilities providing schizophrenia treatment: HC

Delhi govt. and AIIMS asked to respond on woman's plea

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the AAP government and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to give a list of facilities in and around the Capital which provide care and treatment to patients suffering from schizophrenia.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh asked the Delhi government and AIIMS to give a list of such facilities before the next date of hearing on April 27.

The High Court also directed the lawyer appearing

for a woman who has sought various reliefs, including assistance from the government and the AIIMS in treating her 32-year-old son, in view of his mental condition and his resultant aggressive behaviour.

### Violent nature

"In the meantime, the petitioner [woman] would be free to contact the SHO [Station House Officer] of the area concerned, if there is any threat to her and her husband in any manner due to the alleged violent and aggressive nature of her

son," the High Court ordered.

As per a report submitted

to the court, a senior resident in psychiatry at AIIMS had examined the woman's son and diagnosed him with 'schizophrenia'.

The woman's son was to be admitted in the psychiatry ward of AIIMS, after being tested for COVID-19, as per protocols, during this period, he escaped from the hospital premises.

The High Court also directed the local SHO to immediately attend to the concerns of the woman.

the vehicles found parked improperly, an official said.

A total of 15,926 vehicles were prosecuted for unauthorised parking and 15,926 vehicles were towed away in the posh areas of south Delhi in the first three months of 2021, the Delhi Traffic Police said on Sunday.

Traffic police data showed that 2,976 vehicles were towed from Greater Kailash, followed by 1,872 vehicles from Saket, 1,861 from R K Puram and 1,633 vehicles from Hauz Khas.

Maximum prosecutions are done in Greater Kailash because of crowded markets of M Block and N Block," an official said.

## Over 1.6 lakh challans issued for illegal parking

Figures are for first 3 months of 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

More than 1.63 lakh vehicles were prosecuted for unauthorised parking and 15,926 vehicles were towed away in the posh areas of south Delhi in the first three months of 2021, the Delhi Traffic Police said on Sunday.

As many as 61,832 e-challans for improper parking were issued on the spot, while 1,02,127 notices were issued via the VOCA (violation on camera application) through mobile application to the registered owners of

दिल्ली सरकार  
आप की सरकार

**Wash your hands frequently with soap and water  
Stay Safe**

Once again Corona figures in Delhi are increasing rapidly, so remember to regularly clean your hands using soap or sanitizer. Come, let us together defeat this pandemic.



Please get vaccinated to protect yourself from Corona



Follow Social Distancing



Must Wear Face Mask



## Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, APR. 19
● RISE 05:52 SET 18:50
● RISE 10:48 SET 00:25
TUESDAY, APR. 20
● RISE 05:51 SET 18:50
● RISE 11:45 SET 01:15
WEDNESDAY, APR. 21
● RISE 05:50 SET 18:51
● RISE 12:44 SET 02:01

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 36 18  
Safdarjung 36 18  
Palam 36 21

**Delhi Palam Today**  
38°C Rise in day and night temperature likely. A hot day with few clouds and light winds likely over the area.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
38°C A hot and slight humid day. Chances of short spell duststorm and thunderstorm with gusty winds at some areas.

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## Mandatory quarantine for those returning from Kumbh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Delhi residents – who have visited the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar or are planning to do so – will have to undergo compulsory 14-day home quarantine on their return and upload their details on an official website, said Delhi Disaster Management Authority in an order.

The ongoing Kumbh Mela has been at the centre of controversy amid fears that it could be a superspreader event with lakhs of devotees attending the event as the second wave of the virus surges uncontrollably.

The order issued on Saturday said those who visited Kumbh from April 4 onwards or those who plan to do so till end of the religious congregation at Haridwar on April 30 will have to upload their personal details, ID proof and dates of departure and arrival back to Delhi at the website www.delhi.gov.in.

**THE HINDU**  
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NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

A five-year-old virus infected girl, who is a cancer patient, clutching her mother's fingers outside a hospital building, ambulances filing in and out of Lok Nayak Hospital every three to four minutes, and distress calls by patients for hospital beds and medicine. These are some of the images that linger from last week, when another wave of the pandemic swept across the city, a wave so strong that cases and deaths surged to an all-time high on Sunday.

To handle the spike in cases, the Delhi government linked hospitals, banquet halls and other buildings to increase the beds for COVID-19 treatment. The government also imposed a weekend curfew, besides invoking strict restrictions like closing malls, spas and banning dining facilities at restaurants.

On Sunday, Delhi reported 25,462 new cases, the highest since the beginning of the pandemic. The spike in cases is sharper this year and Sunday's cases are 812.6% higher than the number of new cases on April 1.

**Unpredictable pattern**  
“We can't predict a peak at this point. Some models have said that Maharashtra will peak in the first week of May, which means it will take a little more time for Delhi to peak. But we can't completely rely on any model,” said Giridhara R Babu,

# COVID cases in Delhi continue to rise, positivity rate at nearly 30%

CM urges Union Minister to ensure uninterrupted supply of 700MT oxygen daily

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The city on Sunday reported 25,462 fresh COVID cases with 161 deaths, read the health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The bulletin also stated that 85,620 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 29.74%, which was a jump from Saturday's 24.56%. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the increase in the positivity rate to nearly 30% was a major cause for concern.

The total number of active cases in the city now stands at 74,941 out of which 34,938 are under home isolation.

#### Number of vacant beds

The COVID-19 patient management system shows that out of the 17,514 available beds for COVID-19 patients, 3,527 beds are vacant. At dedicated COVID Care Centres, out of the 5,525 available beds, 4,867 are vacant. The Delhi Corona app shows that out of the available 1,340 ICU beds with ventilator for COVID-19 patients, 38 are vacant. There are 58 vacant ICU beds without ventilator out of the 2,778 available.

The health bulletin added that 67,448 beneficiaries had been vaccinated in 24 hours of which 54,306 were given their first dose. The cumulative beneficiaries of the vaccination in the Capital now stand at 25,65,918, of which 4,51,487 have received their second dose.



COVID vaccination drive under way at a centre in New Delhi on Sunday. The cumulative beneficiaries of the vaccination in the Capital now stand at 25,65,918, of which 4,51,487 have received their second dose. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

been vaccinated in 24 hours of which 54,306 were given their first dose. The cumulative beneficiaries of the vaccination in the Capital now stand at 25,65,918, of which 4,51,487 have received their second dose.

#### 'Restore oxygen supply'

To deal with the shortage in oxygen supply to patients in Delhi, Mr. Kejriwal wrote to Union Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal, urging him to ensure an uninterrupted supply of 700MT of oxygen daily. He also asked him to restore 140MT oxygen supply by INOX – one of the major suppliers.

The government also

passed orders to further augment the bed capacity at all nursing homes and private hospitals. It ordered private hospitals – providing COVID-related treatment – to reserve at least 80% of ICU bed capacity and 80% of ward bed capacity for virus patients. It also told them to display the revised bed capacity on the COVID-19 data management portal immediately.

#### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases

**8,53,460**

New cases in the past 24 hours

**25,462**

Total deaths

**12,121**

New deaths

**161**

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

The output of INOX has been diverted to other States, which resulted in a critical shortage in Delhi hospitals, Mr. Kejriwal alleged in a tweet. He and his deputy Manish Sisodia also inspected various hospitals and COVID Care Centres across the Capital.

“Visited Commonwealth Games Village, Yamuna Sports Complex and government school at Rouse Avenue. A total of 1,500 oxygen beds will become functional between tomorrow and the day after in these three places,” Mr. Kejriwal tweeted after announcing the move to add 6,000 beds.

The government also

“After receiving a complaint against a south Delhi hospital that denied admission saying no bed was available despite the Delhi corona app indicating 239 beds were vacant, the government ordered action against the said hospital. Similar action has been taken against another hospital in Janakpuri. While the app noted 93 vacant beds, they denied admission, claiming that they do not have any vacant beds,” the government said.

The police have registered FIRs against both the hospitals for providing wrong information related to the availability of beds on the app.

An officer said that FIRs have been registered under Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Epidemic Act and relevant sections of IPCs in Tigris.

## Govt. orders action against two hospitals for denying admission

FIR against facilities for wrong info on app

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday ordered action against two hospitals in the city that denied admission, citing “no beds available” despite the Corona app indicating beds in their facilities were lying vacant.



Kin of those who died due to COVID at Maulana Azad Medical College on Sunday.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

and Janakpuri police stations after getting complaints on the matter.

“Action will be taken against such hospitals for not following government orders,” the officer said. The move comes after CM Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday issued orders saying that every hospital should ensure correct information on bed availability on the app.

#### Action against airlines

The government has also sought action against four airlines for carrying passengers from Maharashtra without valid RT-PCR tests.

Doctor at GTB attacked by patient's kin

#### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A doctor on emergency duty at COVID ward in GTB Hospital was allegedly attacked by a patient's kin after they had an argument over entry into the ward, the police said on Sunday.

According to the complaint, the woman doctor was allegedly slapped by the wife of a COVID-19 patient, who has been admitted at the GTB Hospital, on Saturday. The accused also tested positive but had not been admitted to the hospital.

In the complaint, the doctor alleged that the accused was requested to not be with her husband in the COVID ward as only admitted patients were allowed. But she opposed this, and an argument took place during which she allegedly assaulted the doctor.

Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered under Sections of IPC and Medicare Service Personnel and Medicare Service Institution Prevention of Violence and Damage to Property Act, 2008.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) R. Sathiyasundaram said, “We have registered an FIR. The matter is under investigation during which the allegations will be looked into.”

## Govt. issues guidelines for gated societies to set up COVID facilities

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday issued guidelines for gated residential complexes to set up COVID-19 facilities to deal with the rising cases in the city.

It said the COVID care facility could be set up using the resources of RWAs/residential societies/NGOs and would be a dedicated health facility for management of suspected, asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic or mild cases in that particular area.

#### Who all barred?

It said this is not meant for elderly people, children below 10 years, pregnant/lactating

women, patients with comorbidities.

The guidelines said intermixing of suspected and confirmed cases shall be allowed and a doctor residing within the gated complex or one provided by the NGO will facilitate daily examination.

“The community living in gated complexes may like to create small COVID facility within the residential complex...this will help reduce the burden on existing facilities...,” the guidelines said.

The facility can be set up in a community hall, centre, common utility area within the premises of residential complexes or empty flats that are isolated location-

## AAP and BJP spar over bed availability

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP engaged in a war of words on Sunday over the availability of beds for COVID-19 patients in hospitals run by the civic bodies in Delhi.

The AAP alleged that the BJP-ruled municipal corporations have around 3,127 hospital beds in the Capital but they have not provided a single bed for COVID-19 patients, a charge rejected by the saffron party which claimed that the Kejriwal government was not giving the municipal corporations the required permission.

## Police come to rescue as hospital in city runs out of oxygen cylinders

The COVID facility asked for help as 35 patients required support

#### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police arranged for 20 oxygen cylinders at a hospital in outer Delhi's Nihal Vihar after it approached them for help as 35 COVID-19 patients requiring oxygen support were in crisis, officials said on Sunday.

The staffer at Nihal Vihar police station received a call around 1.30 p.m. from the director of Mansa Ram Hospital on Nangloi Nazafgarh road. He informed that their oxygen supply is depleting, and the available oxygen supply will not last for more than an hour.

The police said the hospital

had contacted all the officials concerned but could not get any response due to oxygen shortage.

In another instance, SHO Bharat Nagar arranged five vials of Remdesivir injection and immediately got it airlifted to Bhopal for a 67-year-old COVID patient admitted in ICU.

The police team from Nihal Vihar then escorted the vehicle carrying 20 oxygen cylinders to Mansa Ram Hospital, he said.

In another instance, SHO of Bharat Nagar Mohan Singh arranged five vials of Remdesivir injection and immediately got it airlifted to Bhopal for a 67-year-old COVID patient admitted in ICU.

# A wave of anxiety

As worrying as the sudden spurt of COVID-19 cases in the Capital is, doctors are even more concerned of the scientific reasons behind it

Professor at Indian Institute of Public Health in Bengaluru.

Experts said that the government should do more genome sequencing. “Genome sequencing has to be done with epidemiological investigations to understand the virus better. This is what the US and the UK have been doing,” he added.

When asked about symptomatic patients testing negative in RT-PCR, he ob-

served: “The sensitivity of the RT-PCR kits is about 70%. That means it will miss 30% of positive cases, even without variants. But at this point we don't have enough data to prove whether the variants or mutations are responsible for it.”

**More children infected**  
Doctors said that more children are getting infected compared to last year. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that 65% of the new

cases in the past 10-15 days were below 45 years of age. Jugal Kishore, head of the community medicine department at Safdarjung Hospital, said that the government should focus on providing healthcare facilities more than controlling the spread of the virus.

“The virus has spread everywhere now. The focus should be to reduce the deaths,” Dr. Kishore added.

Both experts said that there is not enough data or proof to establish the exact reasons for the current surge.

“One is that clinically, we think that the virus has become more infectious, but we don't have data to establish this. Also, it is because of changes in the virus. If 15-20% of the samples are double mutant strains of the virus in Maharashtra, the same mutation has to be there in Delhi as people keep travelling between the States,” said Dr. Kishore, when asked about the surge.

#### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav Chadha on Sunday alleged that the BJP was putting more focus on election management than COVID-19 management.

**Chadha to PM**  
Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr. Chadha said: “Looking at the de-

riorating COVID situation in the country, I want Mr. Modi to leave election management and start COVID management.” Mr. Chadha said the pace at which people are contracting the virus is directly proportional to the speed at which these rallies by the BJP are increasing.

“While India has breached the 2 lakh mark in COVID cases, the BJP is fo-

cusing on conducting gigantic rallies with huge crowds in West Bengal. Winning elections and collecting votes is their sole motive, and the BJP has nothing to do with the people of India and their lives,” Mr

BJP, Cong. spar over worship of oxygen tankers in M.P.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The ruling BJP and Congress on Sunday lashed out at each other after a video went viral of a State Minister and his supporters breaking coconuts and a priest chanting prayers in front of a tanker transporting oxygen from neighbouring Gujarat.

A sharp spike in COVID-19 cases across M.P. has given rise to a reported shortage of medical oxygen.

In videos being circulated on the social media, M.P. PWD Minister Tulsiram Silawat and his supporters can be seen offering prayers in front of the tanker in Indore, and posing in front of the vehicle for media photographs.

"When the tanker, which started from Gujarat's Jamnagar, reached Chandan Nagar Chowk on Saturday, it was stopped for an hour by Silawat for *puja paath*, to get media coverage. They repeated it when the vehicle reached filling station," M.P. Congress spokesperson Neelabh Shukla alleged.

## 'Drama'

"They did this drama when there is an acute shortage of oxygen in hospitals and serious patients are gasping for breath," he added.

Hit back: Indore BJP chief Gaurav Randive said the tanker was not stopped "even for five minutes" at Chandan Nagar Chowk and was sent immediately to a filling station. "The video of us offering prayers was of the time when the tanker was being emptied at the filling station," he claimed.

Indore's tally rose to 89,317 on Sunday with 1,692 new cases, while the death toll increased by seven to reach 1,047.

# Haryana govt. has failed to handle COVID crisis: Selja

She terms reports of collapse of health services shocking

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM



Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee president Kumari Selja

treatment in Agroha. Despite this, the government is not paying any attention towards strengthening the health infrastructure," she added.

Ms. Selja said a large number of cases were being reported daily in the State and the havoc caused by COVID-19 had exposed the tall claims of the government. "The improper implementation of Testing, Tracking and Tracing formula has further worsened the situation. The death toll is also moving towards a new peak," she said.

the State, said the former Union Cabinet Minister, adding that patients were not getting beds and ventilators.

## 'Lack of medicines'

"There is also a lack of oxygen and essential medicines. The State of affairs can be gauged from the fact that a woman infected by corona died due to lack of

medicines."

Ms. Selja demanded that the State government made quick preparations to deal with the situation at hand and the Central government reconsidered its priority for vaccination and reduce the vaccination age limit to 25 years.

## Lingaraj Temple closed for public in Bhubaneswar

Temple administration will ensure that rituals are conducted by priests only

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR



Lingaraj Temple is the second-most visited temple in Odisha after Jagannath Temple. ■ FILE PHOTO

the temple until further order," the corporation said.

The temple administration will ensure that rituals are conducted by the se-

vayats only. The Ashokastami car festival will be conducted without the mass participation of devotees.

Lingaraj Temple is the second-most visited temple by devotees in Odisha after Shree Jagannath Temple, Puria.

The Jagannath Temple will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays, while no decision has been taken on the total closure of the temple.

The capital city of Bhubaneswar has been reporting a high number of COVID-19 cases for the past one week now. On Sunday, 338 new

cases were detected. The total number of active cases in Bhubaneswar stood at 2,527, which is more than 10% of the active cases in the State.

On average, 2,000 tests are conducted in Bhubaneswar every day. Since April 14, the daily spike in cases has been found to be well above 300. The test positivity rate hovers around 15% in Bhubaneswar. On Saturday, 451 persons had tested positive in Bhubaneswar.

Odisha's COVID-19 tally increased to 3,68,258 following 3,662 positive cases reported on Sunday.

## Engineer, trolley driver fatally hit by moving train in Tripura

Panel of experts has been formed to probe the incident

## SYED SAJJAD ALI

AGARTALA

In a tragic mishap, a railway track maintenance engineer and an employee were killed after their maintenance trolley was hit by a moving train in Tripura on Sunday.

Two railway employees were critically injured in the incident, which occurred at Lakhai Bazar in Telimura, 45 km east to Agartala.

The police said engineer

Akhil Yadav (53) and trolley driver Rajesh Sinha (55) died at the scene. Yadav hailed from Uttar Pradesh and Sinha was a resident of Badarpur in Assam.

Uttam Sarkar (30) and Biplob Mandal (32), both from West Bengal, were critically hurt and have been admitted in the hospital.

The victims were engaged in repairing a damaged portion of a railway track. The train hit the trolley from be-

hind causing the casualties.

Train services to and from Agartala were disrupted for several hours due to the accident.

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has constituted a panel of experts to probe the incident. Sources in the NFR said there could have been serious communication lapse in the whole episode and added that the exact reason would be known after the enquiry.

## Voting for phase two of UP. panchayat polls today

Candidates to fight for over 2.2 lakh posts

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW

Voting for the second phase of the Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls will be held on Monday with more than 3.48 lakh candidates in the fray for over 2.23 lakh posts in 20 districts.

Voting will be held from 7 a.m. to 6 pm with over 3.23 crore voters eligible to exercise their franchise.

The second phase assumes significance as State capital Lucknow and Varanasi will go to polls in this round.

Apart from Lucknow and Varanasi, polling will be held in Amroha, Azamgarh, Etawah, Etah, Kannauj, Gonda, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Chitrakoot, Pratapgarh, Budauli, Baghpat, Bijnor, Muzaffarnagar, Mainpuri, Maharajganj, Lakhimpur Kheri, Lalitpur and Sultanpur districts.

For the 787 posts of members of zila panchayats,

there are 11,483 candidates. For the 19,653 seats of kshetra panchayats, as many as 85,232 candidates are in the fray. As far as the gram panchayats are concerned, there are 1,21,906 candidates in the fray for 14,897 posts. For the gram panchayat wards, there are as many as 1,30,305 candidates for 1,878 posts.

The candidates will contest on "free symbols" given by the Election Commission.

More than 2.31 lakh poll officials have been deployed by the State Election Commission (SEC) for a smooth conduct of the panchayat polls.

In the first phase of the polls, which was held on April 15, an average polling percentage of 71 was recorded.

The 2015 panchayat polls had registered a polling percentage of 72.11, according to the SEC.

Back where they began



Jobs lost: Migrants from Maharashtra waiting in a queue for COVID-19 tests at Patna railway station, amid the rise in COVID-19 cases across the country, on Sunday. ■ PTI

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## TENDERS

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Sealed Tenders are invited on the prescribed form for the supply of below mentioned items to Doubletree by Hilton & Hilton Garden Inn Gurugram, Hilton Garden Inn - New Delhi Saket for the Period of 01' May, 2021 till 30' April, 2022.

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## GROCERY:

Dry Fruits, Atta / Maida, Rice, Sugar, Cooking Oil, Pulses, Spices & Condiments, Bakery Products, Tin Food Items and Juices.

## OTHERS:

Office Stationary, Cleaning Supply, Get Fuel, Charcoal, Service Contracts - Housekeeping, Stewarding, Vests, Security, Engineering items and AMCs. Tender documents can be obtained from the purchase departments from the purchase department from date 18' April' 2021 to 22' April' 2021. Between 09:00 to 18:00 hours- with a Payment of Rs.500/- each category (non-refundable). Sealed tenders will be received till 18:00 hrs. on 26' April' 2021 at purchased department.

**The Management Reserves the right to accept or reject the tender without assigning and reason. The management decision will be final and binding.**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Known All Men that my Clients Srinivas Kumar Verma Shri Abul Verma R/o E-2, Second Floor, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi and Shri Kishan Verma Shri Shri Atul Verma R/o Flat No. 2, 1st G/F Links, Road No. 5, Union Park, Bandra West - 400050, had sent legal notice dated 02.02.2021 invoking the arbitration clause as mentioned in the partnership deed of Miss Mindful Hospitality (hereinafter referred to as "firm") having its office at 10th Floor, 10th Avenue, Sector 10, Noida. The firm does not exist since it was dissolved on 02.02.2021 upon the notice of dissolution sent by my clients and thereafter neither the firm was reconstituted nor the accounts of the firm have been drawn and settled amongst its partners despite several requests on behalf of my clients to other partner Shri Arjun Toor, Shri Rakesh Kumar Toor, R/o J-108, Patel Nagar-1, Near Old Bus Stand, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201001. The business of firm since the date of its dissolution has discontinued to run and any action by Mr. Arjun Toor or the names of his without knowledge and consent of partners of the firm shall not hold any claim to any date of third party for the arrears demands and things done by Shri Arjun Toor. In any case the firm is liable to pay only legal recoverable debts, which are created with the knowledge and consent of all partners of the firm any person dealing with them in respect of business and movable property of firm shall do at his own risk and responsibility and my clients shall not be responsible, in any manner whatsoever, for their acts and deeds.

Sanyam Khetrapal (Advocate) 1211, Vijaya Building Barakhamba, N.D.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

## IN THE COURT OF THE VI ADDL. DISTRICT JUDGE: KADAPA

MVOP 290 of 2020

1.Karumani Samyuktha and others

Vs

1.Fakrudeen Khan, S/o Sharif,

aged about 35 years, Hindu,

Driver of Lorry Bearing

No.MH04GB8583, Luhesar

The Kaman, Bharatpur,

Karan, Bharatpur,

Rajasthan-321022.

... Respondent No.1

SUMMONS TO R1 AND 5 OF CPC

Whereas the above claim petition against you and others for compensation for the death of K Venkatasubbaiah in road accident occurred on 03-05-2020 near Santhi Nagar, Kudur Town and Mandala Dist, on Tirupati-Kadapam Road, Therefore you are hereby instructed to present before the above Hon'ble court on 21-05-2021 at 10:30am. Either personally or through Advocate without Fail and your absence will be treated as ex-party and them after will be decided accordingly.

(By order of the court)

Sd/- K.KRISHNAIAH, Advocate, Kadapa. Cell: 8074652239

## PERSONAL

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, BHARAT S/o Birsingh born on 13 Dec 1983 residing at Dhanik Khan Bahadur - Tehsil - Barwala - Hisar, Haryana - 125121 have changed my name to Bharat Bhushan vide affidavit.

## JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU

0191-2561578 (O), 0191-254780 (F) Email- sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in

## Hue and Cry Notice Rule No. 712/191

SDPO City South, Jammu vide communication No. 6620/SDCS dated 14.04.2021 has intimated that accused namely Ajay Kumar S/o Koushal Kumar R/O Gulabi W.No. 08, Tehsil Sunderbani, District Rajouri involved in case FIR No. 51/2021 U/S 376/201 IPC, 3/4 PCOS Act of P/S Gandhi Nagar, Jammu is evading his arrest, since the commission of crime.

As such photograph of the said absconder / accused person is being published for the information of Police establishments / Public in general having any clue related to the whereabouts / present location of the absconder / accused person, kindly communicate the same on the below mentioned contact /

## Description Roll

Name : Ajay Kumar S/o Koushal Kumar Address : Gulabi W.No. 08, Tehsil Sunderbani, District Rajouri

Age : 25/26 years

Build : Normal

Height : 5' 8"

Complexion : Wheatish

## Contacts/Telephone Numbers:-

1. DPO, Jammu : 0191-2547807, 0191-2561578

2. SSP Jammu Mail ID : sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in

3. PCR Jammu

## Explanation sought from IPS officer

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to take fresh disciplinary action against IPS officer A.B. Venkateswara Rao, who is under suspension for misconduct.

The government directed him to give an explanation for the "derogatory comments and accusations" he made against the officers investigating the irregularities allegedly committed by him in the procurement of aerostat and unmanned aerial vehicle for the Police Department when he was the Additional Director-General of Police (Intelligence).

It directed Mr. Rao to submit a written statement of his defence and mention whether he desires to be heard in person within 30 days of the receipt of the order.

# Inoculation comes to a halt in Telangana

State govt. requests Centre, vaccine companies to address shortage

STAFF REPORTER

HYDERABAD

The 2.7 lakh COVID-19 vaccine doses expected to reach Telangana on Saturday night have been delayed. The immunisation programme was not conducted at government centres on Sunday following the shortage.

Health Minister Eatala Rajender expressed the hope that the emergency consignment would reach by Sunday night.

Mr. Rajender said he had requested the Centre to address the shortage at the earliest. Though the State has the capacity to vaccinate 10 lakh people a day, the immunisation drive came to a grinding halt due to the unavailability of vaccines.

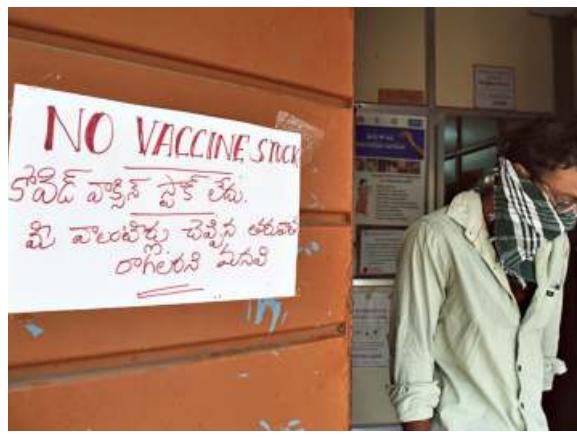
The Health Minister said he and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had spoken to vaccine manufacturers, requesting them to re-

solve the shortage. A request was also placed with Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to allow vaccination of people above 25 years. However, Mr. Rajender said he had not received any response yet.

"Steps are being taken to ensure there is no dearth of oxygen by coordinating with Central government officials. Oxygen supply comes under Centre. A State government cannot produce on its own. There is no shortage of it as of now. Around 250 tonnes is needed in a day. As cases increase, the requirement might go up to 300 tonnes a day," Mr. Rajender said.

### Special drive in A.P.

Following the steep rise in the number of infections and in conformity with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's instructions, the State govern-



**Spike in demand:** People who turned up at this PHC in Vijayawada on Sunday had to return disappointed. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

ment is going to conduct a special drive from Monday to vaccinate all the frontline and healthcare workers in the next few days, according to nodal officer A. Srikanth.

The State received 2 lakh Covishield doses on Sunday, in addition to 6 lakh doses on Saturday. In a release, Mr. Srikanth said the government was set to launch the special drive to ensure that the remaining frontline

and healthcare workers were administered the vaccine.

### Monitoring app

Of the 10 lakh workers, 5 lakh had so far been vaccinated, he said. "An application that monitors and captures individual vaccination data has been developed to ensure all the beneficiaries are vaccinated in the State," Mr. Srikanth said.

"The application will be

used from Monday. All the medical officers will use it to enter the details of the vaccinated workers. It contains the list of all the frontline and healthcare workers," he said. Sample collection and vaccination centres were not opened on Sunday.

### Slow pace in Kerala

Kerala received 3 lakh doses of Covishield on Sunday, which were equally distributed in Ernakulam and Kozhikode regions.

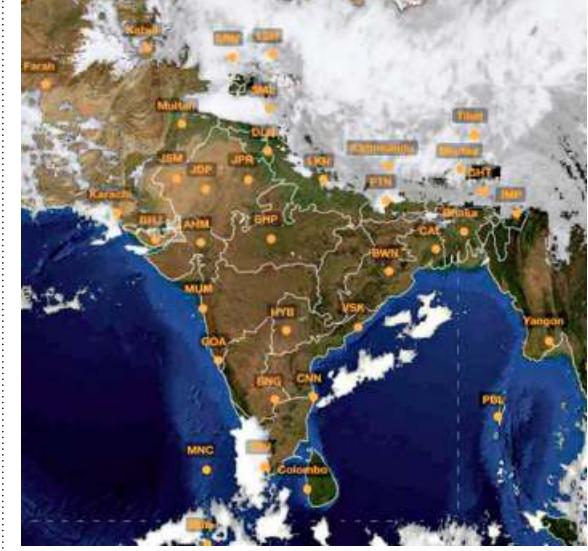
Vaccination was slow in the State on Sunday and as per CoWin statistics, 35,510 doses were administered in the State. As on Sunday, 51,89,639 people have been covered with at least one dose and another 6,80,409 with two doses.

The State has close to 7 lakh doses as stock now.

Vaccination would be conducted in a restricted manner, maintaining only a few essential sites on Monday in the southern districts, officials said.

### WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Monday:** Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty wind very likely at isolated places over west Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Kerala, with lightning at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	34.4	23	Kozhikode	12.2	32.3	24.9
Ahmedabad	—	39.8	24.3	Kurnool	—	40.3	28
Aizawl	—	28.6	16.8	Lucknow	0.1	37.8	23.7
Allahabad	—	40.3	23.4	Madurai	—	37.2	26.6
Bengaluru	—	33.4	23.4	Mangalore	—	35.7	26.9
Bhopal	—	38.7	21.1	Mumbai	—	33.6	26.5
Bhubaneswar	—	37.2	25	Mysuru	—	34.7	21.3
Chandigarh	—	32.2	19.6	New Delhi	—	35.7	18.3
Chennai	—	35.3	28	Patna	—	37.4	23
Coimbatore	—	36.3	25.6	Port Blair	25.4	33.4	24.5
Dehradun	0.5	31.7	14.6	Puducherry	—	35.4	26.1
Gangtok	15	20.7	12.6	Pune	—	38.3	20
Goa	—	34.2	26.6	Raipur	—	40	23
Guwahati	8.2	31.3	19.7	Ranchi	—	36.2	21.1
Hubballi	—	36	22	Shillong	8	24.2	11.5
Hyderabad	—	36.5	25.2	Shimla	—	20.7	19.9
Imphal	—	26.7	15.5	Srinagar	5.8	16.5	7.8
Jaipur	—	37.3	24	Tiruchirappalli	—	33.4	26.2
Kochi	—	31	25.4	Vijayawada	—	39.7	27.5
Kohima	—	24.7	13	Visakhapatnam	—	33.6	28
Kolkata	—	34.7	24.5				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollution in the air you are breathing**

Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	30	.60	.44	.117	.142	■
Bengaluru	.2	.76	.45	.85	—	■
Chennai	10	.16	.45	.25	—	■
Delhi	24	.43	.64	—	.194	■
Hyderabad	.7	.38	.18	.99	.118	■
Kolkata	16	.19	.08	.66	.84	■
Lucknow	.9	.36	.40	.178	.147	■
Mumbai	.2	.7	.89	.101	.84	■
Pune	—	—	.15	.106	.97	■
Visakhapatnam	19	.42	.24	.19	.37	■

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

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

## Drive of caution

With COVID-19 cases galloping, States have stepped up vigil at entry points. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



**Screening time:** A corporation worker collecting swab samples of passengers arriving at the Kempogowda Bus Stand in Bengaluru on Sunday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

## Karnataka logs 81 deaths, nearly 20,000 cases in virus battle

patients requiring ICU care reached the levels of the first peak. On Sunday, the State had 841 patients in ICUs, and 236 on ventilator. Mortality rose with 25 new deaths.

Kerala was set to create a new record as the second wave of COVID-19 swept the State.

With results of the augmented mass testing drive beginning to come in on Sunday, of 1,08,898 samples tested in a 24-hour period, 18,257 persons were positive, the highest figure so far. But the test positivity rate (TPR) was a notch below Saturday's 16.77%.

Samples from 3,00,971 people were collected on Friday and Saturday. The proportion of critically ill

On Sunday, 63,150 people were vaccinated, taking total vaccinations in the State to 70,28 lakh.

Telangana also hit another high with 5,093 cases on Sa-

turday. At 15 fatalities, the State recorded the highest number of deaths in a day.

The highest cases were 743 from Greater Hyderabad, 488 in Medchal-Malkajgiri, and 407 in Rangareddy district.

Andhra Pradesh reported 22 deaths, the highest daily toll since October 21 on Sunday and 6,582 new infections.

For the first time, fresh cases in Tamil Nadu surged past the 10,000-mark on Sunday as 10,723 persons contracted the infection, and 42 succumbed to it. Chennai recorded another new high with 3,304 cases.

(With inputs from Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Vijayawada & Chennai bureaus)

# THE HINDU

## EDUCATION PLUS

GET THE EDGE

■ MAHESH PANCHAGNULA  
AND RAGHUNATH  
RENGASWAMY

Research and Development (R&D) activities foster innovation, herald technological advances, and ultimately promote economic growth. An increase in gross expenditure on R&D activities is an indicator of a nation's long-term vision and growth strategies.

Research progresses when smart minds meet challenging problems. After chance meeting, the research group should have timely access to research analysis, synthesis and characterisation equipment that can be employed to investigate the problem. This ecosystem has only been enabled in the Tier-I research and education institutions such as the IITs, IISc and CSIR laboratories.

A start-up requiring, say, materials characterisation or microscopy has to wait in line for so long that the idea could become moot pursuing. With over 40,000 Ph.D students graduating annually and lakhs of researchers competing for limited resources, access to equipment has stymied progress in India and has stalled the quality of research questions for too long. The 'access' problem requires a solution on a war footing. The answer lies in fostering a shared economy for access to research equipment through an ecosystem of Research Oasis labs.

**Research progresses when smart minds meet challenging problems in an ecosystem that offers access to data and equipment to solve them**

In the current highly competitive research marketplace, the best work is done when resources match intent. While it is still possible for individuals to deliver brilliant research working alone, a large share of cutting-edge research is an outcome of large groups working with expensive equipment. This is particularly true

in areas where access to state-of-the-art equipment such as X-ray absorption spectrometer and Solid-state Nuclear Magnetic Resonance spectrometer can elevate the quality of research considerably. Even in purely computational areas such as Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence, groups with larger computing power are likely to dominate.

**Research management**  
India needs to think about levelling the playing field. While it might not be feasible to match the research funding levels of developed countries, given our resource constraints and multiple alternate worthwhile causes to consider, targeted investments in clusters of excellence and a clear mandate to make the facilities accessible to every corner of India can bridge this gap.

### Incentivising private research funding

For too long, funding research in India has been the burden and responsibility of the Government. This is unsustainable since the fruits of such research – including the manpower trained during the process – are to be employed by the private sector. The latter should be incentivised to participate in the creation and operation of the laboratories.

For example, CSR funds towards



## Normal is good

The IMD must continue to widen its focus to aid business and services sectors

**T**he India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a 'normal' monsoon for this year. In the agency's parlance, normal implies that the country will get 96% to 104% of the 88 cm that it gets from June-September. This quantity, called the Long Period Average (LPA), is a mean of monsoon rainfall from 1961-2010. The IMD, for over 20 years now, follows a two-stage monsoon forecast system. After the prognosis in April, it gives an updated estimate in late May or early June. This includes an estimate of how much rain is likely in: northwest India, northeast India, central India and southern peninsula. Numbers are also given for July and August, which see two-thirds of the monsoon rains and are the most important months for sowing. This year there will be forecasts for June and September too, to be given in May and August, respectively. Historically, predicting rain for June and September is challenging as it corresponds to the monsoon's entry and exit. There will also be forecasts for what is called the monsoon core zone, which represents most of the rainfed agriculture region in the country. All of these updates are an extension of the IMD's increasing reliance on dynamical monsoon models. Unlike the traditional statistical models, which are based on a fixed set of meteorological variables that have historically been correlated with variations in monsoon rainfall, the dynamical models generate forecasts based on evolving weather patterns. The IMD has been testing such models for many years but it is only in the last few years that it is finding use for practical weather forecasts.

A 'normal' monsoon forecast this year is primarily predicated on 'neutral' surface temperatures in the Central Equatorial Pacific. In 2019 and 2020, the IMD forecast normal rains but India ended up with 110% and 109% of the LPA. This year, a warming El Niño is unlikely, and another ocean parameter closer home, the Indian Ocean Dipole, too is expected to be unfavourable for excess rains and so the IMD seems more confident that its calculations are not going to be as wrong. However, the models already show a good chance of 'above normal' rain in central and southern India. While forecasts are a critical aspect of India's disaster preparedness, there should also be more focus on incorporating these forecasts down to municipal and block-level planning. The monsoon forecasts were primarily evolved to assist with agriculture and it is only now getting more urban-focused because of the natural disasters that accompany even 'normal' monsoons. Several business and service sector industries need weather products and in terms of science and infrastructure, few have the resources the IMD has. The IMD must continue to aid on all these fronts.

## Cuba after the Castros

The best chance of ensuring continuity is pushing through political, economic changes

**T**he retirement of Raul Castro as the first secretary of Cuba's ruling Communist Party brings to an end the six-decade-long rule of the "historic generation", who, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, captured power in 1959 through an armed revolution. Fidel remained at the helm of affairs in the island, in the face of growing hostility from the U.S. until he fell sick in 2006. Two years later, he handed the party to his younger brother, who had fought alongside him in the guerrilla war against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in the 1950s. Under the younger Castro, Cuba started taking baby steps towards opening up the state-controlled economy. He had also overseen rapid improvement in relations with the U.S., when Barack Obama eased some restrictions on the Cuban economy, travelled to Havana and opened an American Embassy. In 2018, Mr. Raul stepped down as President, handing government responsibilities to his hand-picked next generation leader, Miguel Diaz-Canel. Now when the 89-year-old leader retires, leaving "a foot in a stirrup ready to defend socialism", Mr. Diaz-Canel, 60, is expected to succeed him as the new party chief.

The Castros built a closed, socialist economy that worked for many for decades. Cuba's achievements in the fields of education and health care are imitable. But many critics of the Cuban model feel that the historic generation was slow to open up the economy, generate growth and create more opportunities – something that China, another communist party-ruled country, did. Mr. Raul took small steps and Mr. Diaz-Canel is continuing them, with a long-promised currency reform having been implemented in January. But the transition comes at a painful time. When Soviet assistance ceased in the early 1990s, Fidel asked Cubans to tighten their belts for a "special period". Eventually, Cuba came out of those hardships, and the pink tide in Latin America that propelled leftist leaders to power, from Venezuela to Ecuador, helped Havana both politically and economically. But now, the pink tide is in reverse. Venezuela, which offered cheap oil to Cuba, is itself in an economic and political mess. The Obama-era concessions were unmade by Mr. Trump. The coronavirus pandemic practically shut down Cuba's vital tourism sector, causing an 11% economic contraction last year. The crisis has triggered food shortages, bringing back memories of the early 1990s. There are also calls for more political freedoms. Unlike in the past when the flow of information was controlled, the expansion of the Internet and social networks is allowing critics of the government, including U.S.-based dissidents, to amplify their voices. Mr. Raul's successor cannot stay away from addressing these challenges as the revolution ages. The party always bets on continuity. But the contradiction it faces is that continuity is intrinsically linked to reforms.

# The ECI cannot be a super government

There is still some confusion about the extent and nature of the powers that are available to the Election Commission



P.D.T. ACHARY

**E**lections bring the Election Commission of India (ECI) into sharp focus as this constitutional body superintends, directs and controls the conduct of elections. It is the constitutional duty of the ECI to ensure that the elections held are free and fair.

It is an interesting aspect of the ECI's history that before T.N. Seshan came on the scene as the Chief Election Commissioner, no one in the country ever knew or felt that the ECI had any powers. Seshan discovered the ECI's powers hidden in Article 324 of the Constitution which was then used to discipline recalcitrant political parties which had till then believed that it was their birth right to rig elections. Thus there was a very high level of confidence in the minds of Indian citizens about the ECI's role restoring the purity of the elected legislative bodies in the country.

It became rather easier for Seshan to locate the powers of the ECI after the Supreme Court held in *Mohinder Singh Gill vs Chief Election Commissioner* (AIR 1978 SC 851) that Article 324 contains plenary powers to ensure free and fair elections and these are vested in the ECI which can take all necessary steps to achieve this constitutional object. All subsequent decisions of the Supreme Court reaffirmed Gill's decision and thus the ECI was fortified by these court decisions in taking tough measures.

### The model code

The model code of conduct issued by the ECI is a set of guidelines meant for political parties, candidates and governments to adhere to during an election. This code is based on consensus among political parties. Its origin can be traced to a code of conduct for political parties prepared by the Kerala go-

vernment in 1960 for the Assembly elections. It was adopted and refined and enlarged by the ECI in later years, and was enforced strictly from 1991 onwards.

There is absolutely no doubt that elections need to be properly and effectively regulated. The Constitution has clothed the ECI with enough powers to do that. Thus, the code has been issued in exercise of its powers under Article 324. Besides the code, the ECI issues from time to time directions, instructions and clarifications on a host of issues which crop up in the course of an election. The model code is observed by all stakeholders for fear of action by the ECI. However, there exists a considerable amount of confusion about the extent and nature of the powers which are available to the ECI in enforcing the code as well as its other decisions in relation to an election.

Since it is a code of conduct framed on the basis of a consensus among political parties, it has not been given any legal backing. Although a committee of Parliament recommended that the code should be made a part of the Representation of the People Act 1951, the ECI did not agree to it on the ground that once it becomes a part of law, all matters connected with the enforcement of the code will be taken to court, which would delay elections.

### Unresolved question

The position taken by the ECI is sound from a practical point of view. But then the question about the enforceability of the code remains unresolved. Paragraph 16A of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 (<https://bit.ly/3ttbbU>) says that the commission may suspend or withdraw recognition of a recognised political party if it refuses to observe the model code of conduct.

But it is doubtful whether this provision is legally sustainable. The reason is that withdrawal of the recognition of a party recognised under these orders seriously affects the functioning of political



parties. When the code is legally not enforceable, how can the ECI resort to a punitive action such as withdrawal of recognition?

There are two crucial issues which need to be examined in the context of the model code and the exercise of powers by the ECI under Article 324.

### Transfer of officials

One issue relates to the abrupt transfer of senior officials working under State governments by an order of the commission. It may be that the observers of the ECI report to it about the conduct of certain officials of the States where elections are to be held. The ECI apparently acts on such reports and orders the transfer on the assumption that the presence of those officials will adversely affect the free and fair election in that State. Transfer of an official is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the government. It is actually not clear whether the ECI can transfer a State government official in exercise of the general powers under Article 324 or under the model code.

The code does not say what the ECI can do; it contains only guidelines for the candidates, political parties and the governments. Further, Article 324 does not confer untrammeled powers on the ECI to do anything in connection with the elections. If transfer of officials is a power which the ECI can exercise without the concurrence of the State governments, the whole State administration could come to a grinding halt. The ECI may transfer even the Chief Secretary or the head of the police force in the State abruptly. In Mohinder

Singh Gill's case (*supra*), the Court had made it abundantly clear that the ECI can draw power from Article 324 only when no law exists which governs a particular matter.

It means that the ECI is bound to act in accordance with the law in force. Transfer of officials, etc is governed by rules made under Article 309 of the Constitution which cannot be bypassed by the ECI under the purported exercise of power conferred by Article 324. Further, to assume that a police officer or a civil servant will be able to swing the election in favour of the ruling party is extremely unrealistic and naive. It reflects in a way the ECI's lack of confidence in the efficacy of politicians' campaigns.

### Administrative moves

Another issue relates to the intervention in the administrative decisions of a State government or even the union government. According to the model code, Ministers cannot announce any financial grants in any form, make any promise of construction of roads, provision of drinking water facilities, etc or make any *ad hoc* appointments in the government departments or public undertakings. These are the core guidelines relating to the government. However, no constitutional body is vested with unguided and absolute powers. Neither citizens nor the ECI is permitted to assume that the ECI has unlimited and arbitrary powers. It would be useful to remember the insightful words of Justice S.M. Fazalali, in *A.C. Jose vs Sivan Pillai* (1984): "if the [Election] Commission is armed with such unlimited and arbitrary powers and if it ever happens that the persons manning the commission shares or is wedded to a particular ideology, he could by giving odd directions cause a political havoc or bring about a constitutional crisis, setting at naught the integrity and independence of the electoral process so important and indispensable to the democratic system."

issue boils down to whether distribution of food items to those in need in a pandemic will affect free and fair elections.

The Supreme Court had in *S. Subramanian Balaji vs Govt. of T. Nadu & Ors* (2013) held that the distribution of colour TVs, computers, cycles, goats, cows, etc, done or promised by the government is in the nature of welfare measures and is in accordance with the directive principles of state policy, and therefore it is permissible during an election. If colour TVs, computers, etc can be promised or distributed during an election and it does not influence the free choice of the people, how can the distribution of essential food articles which are used to stave off starvation be an electoral malpractice? Further, Section 123 (2)(b) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 says that declaration of a public policy or the exercise of a legal right will not be regarded as interfering with the free exercise of the electoral right.

### Insightful words

There is no doubt that the ECI, through the conduct of free and fair elections in an extremely complex country, has restored the purity of the legislative bodies. However, no constitutional body is vested with unguided and absolute powers. Neither citizens nor the ECI is permitted to assume that the ECI has unlimited and arbitrary powers. It would be useful to remember the insightful words of Justice S.M. Fazalali, in *A.C. Jose vs Sivan Pillai* (1984): "if the [Election] Commission is armed with such unlimited and arbitrary powers and if it ever happens that the persons manning the commission shares or is wedded to a particular ideology, he could by giving odd directions cause a political havoc or bring about a constitutional crisis, setting at naught the integrity and independence of the electoral process so important and indispensable to the democratic system."

P.D.T. Achary is Former Secretary General, Lok Sabha

## Election watch from across the Bengal border

Bangladesh waits to see whether the poll result in West Bengal impacts its identity as an inclusive, progressive society



SYED MUNIR KHASRU

**A**s the high-profile contest in India's State elections in West Bengal is under way, Bangladeshis are curious onlookers not only because of the geographic proximity and strong socio-cultural ties between the two Bengals but also on account of the ramifications the electoral outcome may have on India-Bangladesh relations.

### Historical bonds

During Bangladesh's liberation war in 1971, West Bengal played an important role by sheltering most of the 10 million refugees. Political leaders were also accommodated with the provincial government of Bangladesh setting up headquarters in Kolkata. On June 15, 1971, the late Pranab Mukherjee suggested in the Rajya Sabha that India should recognise the Bangladesh government in exile. In 2013, Bangladesh conferred the Liberation War Honour on Pranab Mukherjee who endearingly called himself a "son-in-law" of Bangladesh. The late West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu also played a pivotal role in forging the Ganges water treaty between the two countries in 1996.

Ms. Banerjee was set to be a part of the entourage to sign the water-sharing treaty but her last minute withdrawal led to a stale-

mate in signing it. Such moves could prove costly to India and even push Bangladesh to China which has agreed to fund the nearly \$1 billion "Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration project".



mate in signing it. Such moves could prove costly to India and even push Bangladesh to China which has agreed to fund the nearly \$1 billion "Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration project".

### CAA and the NRC

In contrast, Ms. Banerjee's stance regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have been largely appreciated in Bangladesh. In an interview in 2020, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that though the CAA is India's "internal matter", she added, "We don't understand why [the Indian government] did it. It was not necessary."

Though India has assured Dhaka that the NRC and the CAA are domestic issues not affecting Bangladesh, Dhaka's concern is natural as Bangladesh is at the heart of the foreign nationals' issue spreading across India from Assam to West Bengal. Certain remarks by India's Home Minister, Amit Shah, about immigrants from Bangladesh, referring to them as "ter-

mites", have added to these concerns.

### Vote politics across border

The enactment of the CAA and the NRC has widespread support from Matua community leaders in West Bengal who have been demanding citizenship for Matua refugees from Bangladesh. The community, organised under the umbrella of the Matua Mahasanga, is an influential group with a significant voter base spread across several districts in West Bengal. The support from the Matua community yielded large dividends for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Historically, the Matua community was not a vote bank in the West Bengal elections. In the run-up to the Trinamool Congress's campaigns in the 2000s, Ms. Banerjee reached out to the community to challenge the clout of the Left in Bengal. Now, the BJP is emulating the TMC's success with the Matua community. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Bangladesh, he visited the community's sacred temple at Orakandi and referred to the elected representative of the community Shantanu Thakur's demand to implement the CAA in West Bengal. Many interpreted it as influencing Matua community voters in West Bengal, with even an allegation by Ms. Banerjee of violating the election code of conduct by involving a foreign country in India's internal matters.

So, do Bangladeshis have a stake in what happens? Ms. Banerjee's claims of having close ties with Bangladesh do not carry much weight given her political whims and opportunism. On the other hand, being a moderate, progressive Muslim majority country, the concern on this side of the border is whether a BJP win will divert the course of history and dilute West Bengal's core identity as an inclusive, tolerant, and progressive society.

Whatever may be the election's outcome, there is no apparent reason to feel either euphoric or optimistic on this side of the border.

Syed Munir Khasru is Chairman of the international think tank, The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG). E-mail: munir.khasru@ipag.org

## 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.

### Judicial vacancies

Going by the statement of the Attorney General, 220 vacancies, which is a staggering figure, to the various High Courts have not been filled up. This is apart from the other vacancies in the Supreme Court. There should be no delay, even by a day, in the matter of constitutional appointments. The constitutional parameters in terms of the Preamble and constitutional values of secularism and a welfare state are very clear and should be strictly adhered to in the appointment of

judges. Judicial vacancies wreck the Constitution from within. Not disposing of matters in time affects the liberty of the citizen and the right to a speedy trial. It undermines the rule of law and is a challenge to democracy itself. Whoever is to blame for it, either the collegium or the government, it certainly amounts to a constitutional breakdown. The Supreme Court has insisted upon a time limit and it is only right that a constitutional amendment or a statutory prescription to that effect is brought in

for filling up the vacancies. There is no point in playing the blame game.

N.G.R. PRASAD,  
Chennai

**India and COVID-19**  
India has been witnessing a sharp spike in the number of novel coronavirus cases. The first reason is that we, the people, have largely indulged in COVID-19 inappropriate behaviour. Our political leaders of all hues cannot escape their part in this too. Had the central government in consultation with all political parties discussed

various ways to check the spike early enough, we would not be in the situation we are in.

Perhaps, the Assembly polls this year could have been postponed. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, from February 21, 2020 until March 28, 2021, at least 78 countries and territories across the globe decided to postpone national and subnational elections due to COVID-19, out of which at least 41 countries and territories decided to postpone

national elections and referendums. Now, we are in a big mess.

ALBERT DEVAKARAM,  
Chennai

**Well-rounded talent**  
Versatile actor Vivekh enjoyed enormous goodwill. His quick wit, flawless body language, razor sharp intellect, and imitable style of dialogue

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**  
In a report titled "Collect intel report on ex-MP's murder case" (some editions, April 17, 2021), Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy has been erroneously referred to as former Karnataka Chief Minister. He was actually the Chief Minister of combined Andhra Pradesh.

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



## FROM PAGE ONE

## India records 2.75 lakh new cases, 1,620 deaths

About 26.84 lakh COVID-19 vaccination doses were administered in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on Sunday. It is about 29,000 doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24-hours. Also, it is about 2.5 lakh doses lower than what was recorded the previous Sunday.

As many as 15,66,394 samples were tested in India on Saturday (results of which were made available on Sunday), the highest-ever number of tests conducted in a single day in the country. This is the first time the number of daily tests is crossing the 15-lakh mark in India. For

the past one week, testing levels have remained high and is on an increasing trend. As of Saturday, 26.65 crore tests have been conducted cumulatively in India.

The daily positivity rate (cases detected per 100 tests) in India in the last 12 days has doubled to 16.7%, while the weekly positivity rate is increased to 13.5% in the past month, the Health Ministry said on Sunday. Chhattisgarh reported the highest weekly positivity rate at 30%, followed by Goa at 24%, Maharashtra at 24%, Rajasthan at 23% and Madhya Pradesh at 19%, as per the Ministry.

## April session of JEE Main postponed

Two of these sessions have already been completed in February and March. The number of candidates appeared in session 1 was 6,20,978 and session 2 was 5,56,248, according to the NTA.

"Given the COVID situation, I have advised National Testing Agency (NTA) to postpone the JEE (Main) - 2021 April session. I would like to reiterate that safety of our students & their academic career are Ministry of Educa-

tion's and my prime concerns right now," he tweeted.

Looking at the present situation and also taking into account the safety and well-being of the candidates and examination functionaries, it had been decided to postpone the JEE (Main-2021 April session.), the NTA said in a notice dated April 18.

"The revised dates for the JEE (Main)-2021 April session will be announced later on at least 15 days before the examination," it said.

## 'Give options to States, boost vaccine supply'

He said the government must scale up vaccination efforts and asserted that with the right policy design, the country can do "much better and very quickly".

"...States should be given some flexibility to define categories of frontline workers who can be vaccinated even if they are below 45 years of age. For example, States may want to designate school teachers, bus, three-wheeler and taxi drivers, municipal and panchayat staff, and possibly lawyers who have to attend Courts as frontline workers. They can then be vaccinated even if they are below 45," Dr. Singh said. Currently, only those who are 45 years and

above are eligible for vaccination.

"At this moment of a public health emergency, the Government of India must proactively support vaccine producers to expand their manufacturing facilities quickly by providing funds and other concessions. In addition, I believe this is the time to invoke the compulsory licensing provisions in the law," he said.

He also suggested that any vaccine that has been cleared for use by credible authorities such as the European Medical Agency or the USFDA, should be allowed to be imported for a limited period without insisting on domestic bridging trials.

## Bihar facing severe shortage of oxygen

"Despite several reminders, the hospital is not being provided adequate oxygen supply which has put lives of dozens of patients in danger. I'm afraid that after patients' death due to lack of oxygen, blame will be pinned on the NMCH superintendent. So, you're requested to kindly relieve me immediately from my post," said the one-page letter dated April 17.

Earlier, the Bihar chapter of the Indian Medical Asso-

ciation (IMA) too had lodged a protest over the government's mismanagement of COVID-19 treatment in hospitals. "Infected doctors are not being provided beds in hospitals, but VIPs have been occupying beds even with mild symptoms," the IMA said.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Tejaswi Yadav also targeted Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on the issue.

## Virus deaths in Gujarat far exceed govt. figures

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has said Gujarat "follows the ICMR guidelines in counting COVID-19 deaths".

According to sources, the government has formed a death audit committee in every district to determine the primary cause of deaths. After the first wave last year, the State government issued an order directing an audit of all COVID-19 deaths. Only cases where the primary reason of death is determined to be COVID-19 would be classified as "COVID-19 deaths", the order stated.

dered a COVID death and counted in the official figures. In this disease, we have noticed that a large number of deaths occur due to cardiac arrest or heart failure, brain stroke and multiple organ failures and they are not considered," a government official said.

Since the second wave started in the last week of March, municipal and district administrations have ramped up crematoria capacity as bodies are piling up due to waiting periods of five to 12 hours. In Surat, the civic administration has started using three crematoria that were in disuse for several years. In Ahmedabad, in several cremation grounds, multiple bodies are burnt on open grounds to cope with the inflows.

The finding by the ZSI's Uttam Saikia, Rohit Chakravarty, Vishwanath D. Hegde and Asem Bipin Meetei has been published in the latest edition of *Revue Suisse de Zoologie*, a Swiss journal.

The European authors of this report are Sergei Kruskop from the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University, Gabor Csorba of the Hungarian Natural History Museum, and Manuel Ruedi of Switzerland's Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle.

## CBI to study SC order in ISRO case to decide on further action

Agency will submit a report on further investigation within three months

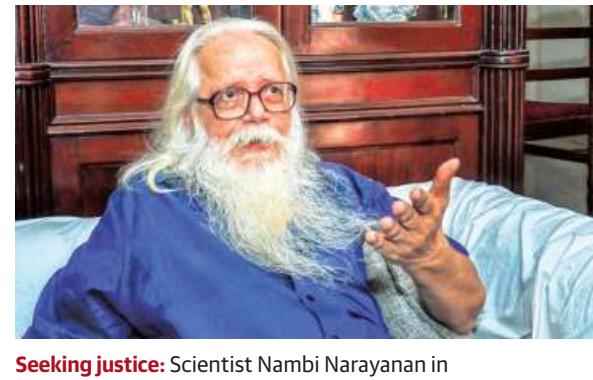
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will study the Supreme Court order directing it 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, to decide the further course of action.

"As soon as we get a certified copy of the order, it will be studied and a decision taken on whether the probe should be handed over to a special team or a unit," a CBI official said.

The agency has to furnish a report on the findings to the Supreme Court within three months.

The case, initially pursued by the Kerala police, was transferred to the CBI on December 4, 1994, on the State government's reference. In its closure report, the CBI had submitted that the espionage charge against the



**Seeking justice:** Scientist Nambi Narayanan in Thiruvananthapuram in 2018. ■ PTI

scientists at the ISRO, including Mr. Narayanan, was not proved and was found to be false. The findings were accepted by the court.

**'No evidence'**

As regards the role of Siby Mathews, who headed the special investigation team (SIT) that earlier conducted the probe, the CBI had alleged in a report that he did not take adequate steps either in regard to the thorough interrogation of the accused persons by the Kerala police or the verification of the "so-

called disclosure" made by them. "In fact, he left the entire investigation to the IB surrendering his duties. He ordered indiscriminate arrest of the ISRO scientist and others without adequate evidence being on record..."

said a CBI report addressed to the then State Chief Secretary, listing other alleged lapses. It has been mentioned in the Supreme Court's September 2018 order, based on which the Justice D.K. Jain Committee was constituted.

Among the other investi-

gating officials were the then Inspector, Special Branch, S. Vijayan and the then Deputy Superintendent of Police, CB CID, K.K. Joshua.

**Police lapses**

The CBI later submitted in the court that in spite of highlighting several lapses and faults on the part of the police officials while carrying out the investigation against Mr. Narayanan and other accused persons, the State government failed to take any action against the erring officials.

"Learned counsel for the respondent no. 4 [CBI] has submitted that the conduct of the police officials is criminal in nature as per the investigation and report submitted by the CBI. The investigation of the CBI had clearly established that the investigation carried out by the State police was full of lapses and also involved employment of illegal means such as criminal torture," as recorded in the 2018 order.

des last year.

In January, Facebook, Google and Twitter had told the court that they had blocked or taken down all links that incorrectly showed the deceased woman's photograph as that of the Hathras rape victim.

On the last date of the hearing, Facebook and Google also told the court that they could not on their own search for such links and remove them without a court or government order.

The petitioner's lawyers told the court that a victim could not be expected to keep on providing the links after they had brought the issue to the notice of the social media platforms.

The court had also earlier said, "A victim cannot go on searching for links and making complaints. There has to be some other solution."

The petitioner has also contended in his petition that the revelation of the identity of a rape victim is an offence under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), though the image of a wrong person was in circulation in the present matter.

## DDG, others booked on graft charges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked a Deputy Director-General (DDG) of the Directorate General of Mines Safety, Arvind Kumar, and others on graft charges.

"It is being viewed seriously by the Board and the Apex Office of the Ministry [of Railways]. The information about the last few incidents of unusual incidents/accidents has come to Board through the media and not from the Division and Zonal Railways," said Mr. Singh. He urged the authorities concerned to ensure information flow about accidents or unusual incidents be prompt before it got flashed by the media.

## Railways to map local festivals near tracks

Ministry will issue advisory to loco pilots on speed restrictions and other safety aspects

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

More than two years after a train ran over 61 persons participating in the Dasara celebrations near Amritsar, the Ministry of Railways has decided to map local festivals celebrated along the railway tracks across the country and issue an advisory to loco pilots on speed restrictions and other safety aspects.

In a note to the General Managers of Zonal Railways, the Railway Board said there were several local festivals celebrated in India during which crowds gathered near the railway premises and crossed the track in groups



**Safety hazard:** People seen sitting on a railway track in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

as part of the event. Such occasions had led to unusual incidents resulting in casualties in the past.

All Divisional Railway

States. "The loco pilot of all trains passing through such locations on festival day should be suitably advised," the note issued early this month said.

There have been a few incidents of fatal accidents on railway tracks during the festival season. In one of the major such accidents in recent years, as many as 61 people, including women and children, were killed and dozens of others injured when a crowd that was watching a 'Ravana' effigy being burnt as part of the Dasara celebrations near Amritsar was run over by a train.

In a related development, Principal Executive Director

(Safety) Devendra Singh expressed concern that accidents and unusual incidents were being reported "very late or not reported" at all to the Railway Board.

"It is being viewed seriously by the Board and the Apex Office of the Ministry [of Railways]. The information about the last few incidents of unusual incidents/accidents has come to Board through the media and not from the Division and Zonal Railways," said Mr. Singh. He urged the authorities concerned to ensure information flow about accidents or unusual incidents be prompt before it got flashed by the media.

## NPP snubs ally BJP in tribal council in Meghalaya

Cong. emerges as the single largest party

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The National People's Party (NPP) has staked claim for power in a tribal council in Meghalaya without the BJP, its ally, as a partner.

The BJP has played down the "snub", claiming that the party led by Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma was

scared of being exposed for having indulged in large-scale corruption in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC).

The GHADC polls for 29 seats were held on April 12. The Congress emerged as the single largest party by bagging 12 seats, followed by the NPP with 11. The BJP won two seats and the regional Garo National Council (GNC) one, while three seats went to independent candidates.

A party or coalition needs

at least 15 seats to rule the council.

**'Automatic' choice**

The BJP had hoped to be an "automatic" choice as the NPP's ally in the GHADC by virtue of being a partner in the multi-party Meghalaya government headed by the NPP along.

But the NPP sought the support of the lone elected member of the GNC and the three independents to form the new council with exactly

"They are ignoring the BJP because they are scared of being exposed for having indulged in corruption and manipulation in the GHADC," State BJP vice-president and one of the party's two MDCs, Bernard N. Marak, said on Sunday.

The NPP had won 10 seats in the 2015 GHADC polls, but ended up ruling the council in coalition with some regional parties. Apart from being embroiled in alleged scams worth more than ₹100

crore, the outgoing council had failed to pay salaries to its employees for up to 35 months.

"The NPP wants to bury the problems instead of trying to correct them. This is the reason why they don't want the BJP as a partner in power, but this is not a big issue for us," Mr. Marak said.

He said the BJP would now work on the "bigger agenda" of winning as many seats in the Assembly election scheduled in 2023.

## Bat with sticky discs found in Meghalaya

*Eudiscopus denticulus* was recorded near the Nongkhyllam Wildlife Sanctuary

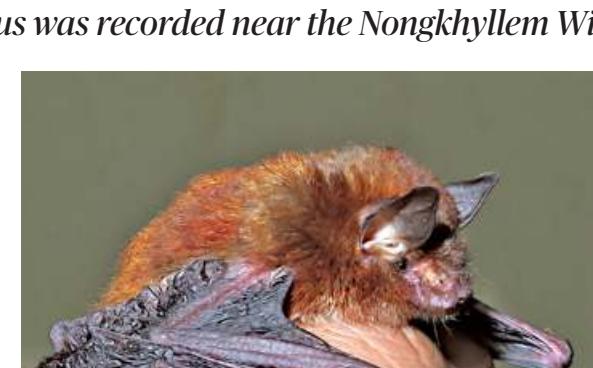
RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

Meghalaya has yielded India's first bamboo-dwelling bat with sticky discs, taking the species count of the flying mammal in the country to 130.

The disc-footed bat (*Eudiscopus denticulus*) was recorded in the northeastern State's Lailad area near the Nongkhyllam Wildlife Sanctuary, about 1,000 km west of its nearest known habitat in Myanmar.

A team of scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and a few European natural history museums stumbled upon this "very specialised" small bat with "disc-like pads in the thumb and bright orange colouration" while sampling in a bamboo patch almost a year ago.

The finding by the ZSI's Uttam Saikia, Rohit Chakravarty, Vishwanath D. Hegde and Asem Bipin Meetei has been published in the latest edition of *Revue Suisse de Zoologie*, a Swiss journal.



**New discovery:** A disc-footed bat has been recorded for the first time in India. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

but its flattened skull and adhesive pads helped in identifying it as the disc-footed known from specific localities in southern China, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

Dr. Saikia and his colleagues found that the flattened skull and sticky pads enabled the bats to roost inside cramped spaces, clinging to smooth surfaces such as bamboo internodes. The disc-footed bat was also found to be genetically very different from all other known bats bearing disc-like pads.

Scientists analysed the very high frequency echolocation calls of the disc-footed bat, which was suitable for orientation in a cluttered environment such as inside bamboo groves.

The disc-footed bat has raised Meghalaya's bat count to 66, the most for any State in India. It has also helped add a genus and species to the bat fauna of India, the ZSI scientists said.

## 'Respond to plea on wrong photo of Hathras victim'

HC seeks details from Facebook, Twitter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has sought the responses of the Centre and three social media platforms – Facebook, Google and Twitter – on a petition seeking details of those who uploaded a wrong photograph of the Hathras rape victim.

On the last date of the hearing, Facebook and Google had told the court that they had blocked or taken down all links that incorrectly showed the deceased woman's photograph as that of the Hathras rape victim.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh issued notice to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the social media platforms, and asked them to place before the court, in a sealed cover, the basic subscriber information of the person(s) who uploaded videos and photos that wrongly showed another deceased woman as the rape victim.

The direction came on an application moved by the widower of the deceased in his main petition. The petitioner contended that his wife's photograph was being circulated on various social media platforms and that they wrongly depicted her as the victim of the unfortunate incident of the rape and murder of a young girl at Hathras, Uttar Pra-

"Organised activities of the underworld and the clandestine smuggling of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances into this country shall lead to drug addiction," the Bench said.

The observation came on an appeal filed by Gurdev Singh challenging a decision of the Punjab and Haryana High Court confirming the sentence for an offence under Section 21 of the NDPS Act. The court had sentenced the accused to 15 years imprisonment.

The Bench dismissed the appeal.



## BJP candidate shot at in Malda, taken to hospital

Trinamool denies hand, demands action against the guilty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Gopal Chandra Saha, BJP's Malda candidate for the West Bengal Assembly election, suffered bullet injuries late on Sunday.

He was shot at from close range in the Sahapur area of Malda. The bullet hit his neck. He was returning home after visiting a venue in the district where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a rally on April 23.

Mr. Saha was admitted to the Malda Medical College and Hospital. Tension pre-

vailed in the area after the incident. The area will go to the polls in the eighth phase on April 26. While several candidates of both BJP and Trinamool have suffered injuries during the campaign, this is the first time a BJP candidate has been shot at.

### Video footage

Video footage aired by local television channels showed the candidate being brought to the hospital on foot by his supporters.

The State BJP leadership expressed strong condemnation. "This speaks vol-

umes about the culture of political violence in the State," said BJP MP and Union Minister Debashree Chaudhuri.

Trinamool Congress leader from Malda Krishnendu Narayan Chowdhury said there could be no involvement of the Trinamool Congress in the violence, and demanded action against those responsible for the attack.

Just a few months ago, State Minister Jakir Hossain sustained serious injuries in a bomb explosion in February in the adjoining Murshidabad district.

## EC bars BJP and Trinamool leaders from campaigning

24-hour ban imposed on Sayantan Basu and Sujata Mondal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The Election Commission on Sunday barred two leaders, one from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and another from the Trinamool Congress, from campaigning for 24 hours beginning 7 p.m. on Sunday.

The EC issued notice to West Bengal BJP general secretary Sayantan Basu for his remarks on the Sitalkuchi deaths. It sternly warned

Mr. Basu and "strongly advised him to desist from using such statements while making public utterances when the Model Code of Conduct is in force".

Earlier, State BJP president Dilip Ghosh and former president Rahul Sinha were barred from campaigning for their remarks about the Sitalkuchi incident.

Trinamool Congress leader Sujata Mondal, who contested the election from

Arambagh, had made some remarks about the Scheduled Castes. The Commission had issued notice to her for "denigrating the Scheduled Caste community in West Bengal".

"Now, therefore, the Commission hereby sternly warns Sujata Mondal and advises her to desist from using such statements while making public utterances when the Model Code of Conduct is in force," said the EC.

## PLI schemes and why they work

The pandemic has turned the spotlight on being Atmanirbhar and the government's new schemes are just the steps in the right direction.



Dr Mahipal Singh Rathore  
Top Unacademy Educator

After independence India's economic policies were largely based on socialist principles.

Foreign investment and companies from the West were shunned and our government and the erstwhile Planning Commission emphasised on making the nation self-sufficient, as their primary objective.

However, there was one stumbling block that is India's private sector was in its infancy as it could not afford to invest in primary industries that was required to give birth to modern industrialisation.

As a result, public sector enterprises were left with the task of industrialising India. Within a few decades, the inefficiency of India's public sector was rudely exposed.

Almost all our government run firms were running in losses, draining the nation's resources. Since 1978, China and the Southeast Asian nations have opened up to foreign investments and private industry. Within a decade, East and Southeast Asia rushed ahead of India, in almost every economic parameter.

Products which India already produced herself, were now cheaply imported from China.

As the COVID-19 pandemic

hit the world economy last year, the importance of being 'Atmanirbhar' came into focus. The Prime Minister pointed out the only way forward for India, was through local industries. To create jobs and get rid of India's unemployment plague it is imperative that the domestic manufacturing sector be boosted.

The Government introduced a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the manufacturing of large-scale electronics, in April 2020. In November 2020, the PLI scheme was extended to 10 other sectors — chief among them were food processing, battery storage, automobile components and specialty steel.

Under this scheme, companies would be rewarded for increasing their output with respect to a defined base year. The PLI scheme has a simple framework — reward for increased production.

### The right direction

Over 130 pharmaceutical companies have expressed interest in the PLI schemes for APIs and medical devices.

On March 12, 2021, the government approved a committed investment of ₹5,082.65 crore under the PLI scheme for APIs. On April 7, the Union Cabinet announced a ₹6,238-crore PLI scheme for white goods (air-conditioners and LED lights) and a ₹4,500-crore PLI scheme for high-efficiency solar



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photovoltaic modules. With the advent of PLI schemes, governments can ensure that incentives are handed out to the deserving party only when they produce.

### Planning a better future for tomorrow

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened our eyes to the importance of public health. It has made us realise that unless the entire population has access to quality healthcare, all of us are at risk.

However, something the society needs to pay more heed to, is the threat posed by climate change. This month, the percentage of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere reached the highest level ever in human history.

Climate catastrophes like floods, droughts, cyclones, and erratic monsoons cause massive amounts of economic damage.

PLI has brought hope to climate action, by incentivising companies to

### Register Now



Scan to watch the free live class on 'Production Linked Incentive Schemes' on April 19, 2021 at 5 PM.  
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Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal mourned the demise. "Saddened to learn about the demise of former Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Bhumidhar Barman. My sincere condolences to his bereaved family members and well-wishers," Mr. Sonowal said.

"Despite his age, he was active in politics, campaigning and attending party meetings to guide the party," said Congress leader Bobbeeta Sharma.

## Not all Matuas may vote on Thakurbari's terms

The Scheduled Caste religious group with origins in Bangladesh views the CAA with some confusion

**SHIV SAHAY SINGH**  
BONGAON (NORTH 24 PARGANAS)  
On April 14, B.R. Ambedkar's birth anniversary, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J.P. Nadda held a roadshow in Bongaon town. The BJP, for which religious and sub-religious identities have emerged as the most crucial tool for the 2021 campaign in the West Bengal Assembly election, the date and the place were well-chosen.

Since the past two years, Bongaon, a sub-division in North 24 Parganas district bordering Bangladesh, is witnessing new identity politics around the Matua sect, a Scheduled Caste religious group with its origins in Bangladesh. However, a visit to a few areas in Bongaon clearly indicates that the father of the Indian Constitution is not the biggest cultural icon here.

The most important day this year for Matuas fell on April 9, Madhu Krishna Tritiyodashi of the Chaitra month of the Bengali calendar, the birth anniversary of Harichand Thakur, founder of the Matua sect, said Biswajit Biswas, a resident of ward



Tough questions: Members of the Matua community at a temple. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

number 6 of Thakurpally in the Bongaon Uttar Assembly constituency, 5 km from the Bangladesh border.

The house of Mr. Biswas, a retired schoolteacher, has a temple dedicated to the Matua sect much like the one at Orakandi, which the Prime Minister visited on March 27.

Most of the constituencies around the area — Bongaon Uttar, Bongaon Dakshin, Gaighata, Bagda and Swaroopnagar — will go to the polls in the sixth phase on April 22.

All the seats are reserved

for Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates.

"There is a lot of misconception about Matuas. It is usually portrayed as the most backward of communities. But as a community, we concentrated on education. Education is something our founders, including Harichand Thakur, emphasised," said Sukumar Das, a retired Indian Air Force officer.

About 20 km from the habitation is the temple of Thakurbari, the religious headquarters of the order. The area falls in the Gaighata Assembly constituency,

where the BJP has fielded Subrata Thakur, older brother of Bongaon BJP MP Santanu Thakur. Both are members of the Thakurbari family and descendants of Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur, founders of the sect.

The Trinamool Congress has fielded Narottam Biswas from the constituency. He insists that the Matuas are educated enough to counter the narrative of citizenship raised by the BJP. "What documents and proof of citizenship do the rest of the population in the country have that the Matuas do not?"

Like the Trinamool candidate, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has also tried to impress upon the electorate that the CAA would not change their lives.

The disadvantage the Trinamool is facing is that the family members of Thakurbari, members of the sect for whom people have huge respect, are battling for the BJP this time. While Bongaon MP Santanu Thakur and Subrata Thakur are with the BJP, their aunt, Mamatabala Thakur, is the only person in the

family who is siding with the Trinamool.

It has been almost over five decades since Pramath Ranjan Thakur, a descendant of the founders of the Matua sect, was elected to the West Bengal Assembly on a Congress ticket. The family members of Thakurbari are now making a fresh entry into politics. While the Matuas have great regard for the members of Thakurbari, a few elderly members of the sect rue the divisions caused in the family by political affiliations.

The temple complex of Thakurbari is dotted with posters of BJP nominee Subrata Thakur. Mithun Byapari, who claims to be one of the assistants to Subrata Thakur, argued, "CAA is an important issue for us. Though we might have all the necessary citizenship documents, many don't. Moreover, only having voter cards and Aadhaar is no proof of citizenship."

Tapan Dey, who claimed to have been a BJP worker for the past three decades, said, "The people of West Bengal trust Modi [the PM]."

## Gopalkrishna Gandhi calls for virtual rallies

Former Bengal Governor writes to CEC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi on Sunday wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to immediately ban all political rallies and door-to-door campaigning in the State and switch to virtual rallies to avoid the spread of COVID-19.

In his letter, Mr. Gandhi said electoral democracy and public health should not be "out of harmony".

"Please consider placing an immediate ban on all public rallies and door-to-door campaigning in the State till the last vote has been cast on April 29. And direct them to move to virtual campaigning. It should not be said that India's electoral democracy and India's public health are out of harmony," he wrote in his letter to the CEC.

The former Governor said the surge in cases in West Bengal that has coincided with the ongoing Assembly election has jeopardised "the health of the electors, the election staff and security personnel on duty simultaneously and staggeringly".

It places the election process at dire risk, apart from endangering public health, he said.

"Social distancing, a de-sideratum in the fight against the virus, is out of the question in election rallies. But very few candidates and campaigners, if any, are to be seen wearing masks either," Mr. Gandhi said.

"They are subjecting themselves and those they come in contact with, to great, in fact, potentially fatal, risk."



Gopalkrishna Gandhi

There were 30 people in the ward

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

RAJPUR  
Authorities have ordered an investigation after five patients died in a fire at the COVID-19 ward of a private hospital in Chhattisgarh's capital city Raipur, police said on Sunday.

Rajpur Collector S. Bhati Dasan has ordered an investigation into the incident. Officials have been directed to conduct safety checks at COVID-19 hospitals in the city.

### Negligence case

"Five coronavirus patients died in the incident. One was charred to death and the others died due to suffocation," a police official said, adding that a case of negligence will be registered against the owners of the deceased.

## 6 dead due to low-pressure oxygen in ICU

State saw 12,248 new cases on Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SHAHDOL

At least six COVID-19 patients died in the ICU of a government hospital in Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh, allegedly due to low pressure of the medical oxygen supply.

The incident occurred at the Government Medical College Hospital here on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. However, the district administration denied that these deaths were caused due to the "shortage of oxygen".

"Out of 62 patients admitted in the Intensive Care Unit ward of Rajdhani super speciality hospital at 4.30 p.m. and was brought under control by the fire-fighters in 20 minutes," the police said.

When the fire broke out, there were around 30 patients in the ward, they said.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel expressed grief over the incident and announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh each to the families of the deceased.

He also said the people should observe a 'janata curfew' in villages, locali-

ties, colonies and buildings during which only two to four persons should bring necessary items for others.

Mr. Chouhan appealed to people to wear a face mask and follow social distancing norms.

He said M.P. has received about one lakh Remdesivir injections since April 8. "A government supply of 12,000 injections was received on Sunday. The State will start receiving about 20,000 injections from April 20," he stated.

The corona curfew will come into effect in Damoh, where the Assembly by-election was held on April 17, from 10 p.m. on April 19 till 6 a.m. on April 26.

With 12,248 fresh cases on Sunday, the highest single-day spike, M.P.'s tally went up to 4,08,080. The death toll stood at 4,557.

Speaking to local officials and their representa-

## PM reviews COVID-19 situation in Varanasi, speaks to officials

Oxygen supply and hospital beds being increased, he says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reviewed the COVID-19 situation in Varanasi, his Lok Sabha constituency, and stressed the need for vaccination of everyone over 45 years of age.

He asked the local administration to help people with full sensitivity and asserted that the cooperation of society as well as the government is necessary to curb the pandemic.

According to a statement, Mr. Modi emphasised on implementing the "tracking, tracing and testing" protocol, saying this has to be fully followed to check the virus's spread, in the same manner the first wave was curbed.

Speaking

Govt. must apologise to nation: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Several Congress leaders on Sunday attacked the Narendra Modi government over its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Manish Tewari asserting that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance owed an apology to the nation.

Mr. Tewari posted a clip of JD(U) leader and Lok Sabha member Rajeev Ranjan Singh asking him to apologise for creating a scare. The Congress leader, who was the lead speaker from his party during the debate on demand for grants for the Health Ministry, had warned the government of a fresh COVID-19 wave.

"When I flagged that second wave of COVID-19 would overwhelm us during debate on Demands or Grants of @MoHFW\_INDIA in Lok Sabha hear response of NDA's lead speaker Rajiv Ranjan Singh. I guess the shoe is on the other foot. It is NDA/BJP THAT owes our nation an APOLOGY," Mr. Tewari tweeted, tagging the official JD(U) handle.

The Congress said the government had done precious little in the past one year. "While 'no vaccine' boards hang on the door of most hospitals, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan claims that 'there is no shortage in the supply of vaccines'. Believe the Minister, there is no shortage of vaccines, oxygen, remdesivir, hospital beds, doctors and nurses. There is only a shortage of patients!" former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram tweeted. "Thank you Prime Minister for sparing a little time for Covid amidst the urgent war to conquer WEST BENGAL and annex it to the BJP's empire," he added.

Former Law Minister Kalyan Sibal tweeted that the government should declare a health emergency.

## 162 oxygen plants sanctioned

Production being diverted from industrial to medical use, says Vardhan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amid heightened demand for medical-grade oxygen, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said the government had sanctioned 162 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants, of which 33 had been installed.

Five of them were installed in Madhya Pradesh, four in Himachal Pradesh, three each in Chandigarh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand, two each in Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana and one each in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

The States had requested for 100 more plants, and they too were being sanctioned, the Ministry said in a series of tweets on Sunday.

**Additional ventilators**  
Dr. Vardhan said oxygen production was being diverted from industrial use to medical use. Additional ventilators were being provided to



Vital element: A worker refilling oxygen cylinders at the Kanpur LLR Hospital in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. ■ PTI

the States. Maharashtra would get 1,121 of them, Uttar Pradesh 1,700, Jharkhand 1,500, Gujarat 1,600, Madhya Pradesh 152 and Chhattisgarh 230.

Vaccines were being replenished in "small" States every seven days and in "big" States, every four days, he tweeted, without clarifying the criteria for big and small.

As of Sunday, the Ministry reported administering 12

crore vaccines. Eight States accounted for about 60% of the vaccines administered. With 2.6 lakh doses being administered in the past 24 hours, it was the third day in a row that the number of daily doses administered fell below 3 lakh.

**Dedicated hospitals**  
The Centre has asked hospitals affiliated to public sector units and Union Ministries to set up dedicated blocks, or

## Industrial O<sub>2</sub> use restricted

The Centre has banned the supply of oxygen for industrial purposes from April 22. However, supply for industries that make ampoules and vials, pharmaceuticals, refineries, steel plants, nuclear energy facilities, oxygen cylinder, waste water treatment plants, food and water purification would continue, an MHA order said.

even exclusive hospitals, to treat COVID-19 patients. "The need of the hour is to prioritise and systematise all our combined efforts towards effective management and ensure availability of sufficient healthcare infrastructure in the States to meet increased demand for treatment," said Rajesh Bhushan, Health Secretary, in a letter to several Ministries, including Defence and Atomic Energy.



Quick fix: A tanker being loaded on a special train. ■ PTI

Empty tankers will begin their journey from the Kalamboli and Boisar railway stations in and near Mumbai on Monday to load liquid medical oxygen from Visakhapatnam, Jamshedpur, Rourkela and Bokaro, officials said.

The

Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra governments had earlier approached the Ministry of Railways to explore whether liquid medical oxygen tankers could be moved by the rail network,

they said. On the receipt of the request from the two States, the Railways immediately explored the technical feasibility of transportation of liquid medical oxygen. It has to be transported through roll-on-roll-off service with road tankers placed on flat wagons.

### Green Corridor

"Since the first empty tankers will move on April 19, we hope to begin operations of Oxygen Express over the

next few days. We would be able to send oxygen wherever there is such demand. Green Corridor is being created for fast movement of the trains," an official said.

"Instructions have been issued to zonal railways to ensure readiness to receive the trailers and load them back. Ramps have to be built at Visakhapatnam, Angul and Bhilai and the existing ramp at Kalamboli is to be strengthened," the Ministry said.

positive report and Aadhaar card would be necessary.

### WHO standards

Explaining about the facility, Dr. Arya said there would be no charges at the facility. All beds would be with oxygen and a large number of ventilators have also been provisioned.

The facility has basic testing facilities and air-conditioning as per World Health Organization (WHO) standards.

If there is any neurological or cardiac case, then the patient will be referred to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Dr. Arya said, adding, "The facilities are same as the last time with some improvements."

## Off track



Deja vu: Migrant workers waiting at the Kalupur railway station to return home again following the rising number of COVID-19 cases in Ahmedabad on Sunday. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

## Ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen: U.P. CM

'There should be no delay in process of purchasing cylinders'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to take immediate steps to ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen to patients amid reports of shortage in some places.

While officials so far have maintained that there is no shortage, a government statement quoting Mr. Adityanath on Sunday took note of the complaints. "Have re-

ceived information of shortage of oxygen cylinder in some places. Take immediate action in this regard," he told officials.

**10 new plants**  
"There should be no delay in the process of purchasing the cylinders," he said, directing the Medical Education Minister to personally monitor the supply and distribution of oxygen.

The government has in-

structed that supply of oxygen to industries be stopped. It has also announced the setting up of 10 new plants.

The State recorded more than 30,000 cases and over 100 deaths on Sunday, with Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi and Kanpur continuing to be the most-affected districts. Several reports have emerged of patients struggling to find beds, medicine and oxygen cylinders.

"We request your urgent intervention to ensure that the State gets its requirement of vaccine doses fulfilled at the earliest," Ms. Banerjee

## DRDO sets up 500-bed facility in Delhi

It will start accepting patients from today; AFMS team will look after the facility

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A 500-bed COVID-19 facility is being set up by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) near the airport in Delhi will start accepting patients by Monday.

The 1,000-bed facility, which was set up near airport [last year], was wound up in February first week. Now again a 500-bed facility is being set up at the same place. By Monday it should start taking patients. About 250 beds will be ready by Monday. Remaining in another few days," DRDO spokesperson Narendra Kumar Arya said.

A medical team from the Directorate General Armed



Critical care: An April 15 photo of the facility being readied in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Forces Medical Services (AFMS) has arrived in Delhi and will look after the facility. Major General S.S. Bhatia will be commanding the facility and the team will also

have two doctors from Central Armed Police Forces.

For admission into the facility, a Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT PCR) COVID-19

terered a record 7,713 infections and 34 deaths. The surge continues as the State is in the midst of a marathon eight phase election, with three phases to go.

In the letter, Ms. Banerjee said the public sector SAIL was meeting the State's need at the moment and urged the PM to instruct them to maintain steady supplies.

Seeking cooperation and support, Ms. Banerjee said the State government was "willing to extend its resources to the fullest in tandem with the Centre to tackle the pandemic which the country is facing and to overcome it".

## Mamata writes to PM on surge in cases, vaccine shortage

West Bengal CM says supply 'scarce, erratic', reiterates that States be allowed to buy vaccines directly

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Highlighting that the supply of COVID-19 vaccines to West Bengal from the Government of India has been "scarce and erratic", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that the State needs to vaccinate 2.7 crore people and urgently needs 5.4 crore doses of vaccines.

"We request your urgent intervention to ensure that the State gets its requirement of vaccine doses fulfilled at the earliest," Ms. Banerjee

said in her letter.

Ms. Banerjee pointed out that she had written to the Prime Minister on February 24 asking that the State be allowed to purchase vaccines directly with its funds, but was yet to get the requisite clearance.

The Chief Minister, in her communication, pointed out that the number of COVID-19 cases in the State had begun to increase sharply, particularly in view of "coming of large number of outsiders to the State for election campaign and other purposes at the behest of some political parties".

In a number of meetings, she has said that the BJP and Mr. Modi are to be blamed for the COVID-19 cases in the State rise.



On April 17, the State registered a record 7,713 infections and 34 deaths. The surge continues as the State is in the midst of a marathon eight phase election, with three phases to go.

The third issue which she highlighted was the supply of oxygen, which must be assured and certain.

Ms. Banerjee said the public sector SAIL was meeting the State's need at the moment and urged the PM to instruct them to maintain steady supplies.

Seeking cooperation and support, Ms. Banerjee said the State government was "willing to extend its resources to the fullest in tandem with the Centre to tackle the pandemic which the country is facing and to overcome it".

Two great sages of high penance who are 'kavis,' that is, poets endowed with excellent poetic vision, are seen in conversation in the first chapter of the Valmiki Ramayana. Valmiki of austere penance asks Narada to tell him about that person who is of the highest admirable nature and even lists 16 specific qualities and attributes. Narada then brilliantly summarises the entire original Ramayana, believed to comprise 100 crore verses, in a mere 90 verses in the first chapter. Hence the adjective 'Vakvidam Varam' is most apt for him.

Valmiki is greatly impressed by the events and people in the story which, though short, is rich in emotion, pathos and depth of character. In this frame of mind, Valmiki goes for ablutions to the banks of Tamasa River, where he is moved when he sees the happiness of a pair of Krauncha birds rudely cut short by a hunter's arrow. Spontaneously he curses the hunter and, strangely enough, he realises that this has taken the shape of a beautiful sloka with pleasing rhythm. It is surely divine will, he feels.

This is confirmed when Brahma and Saraswati visit him in his ashram and bless him with the vision of the entire story of Rama and also the poetic talent to compose this great kavya Ramayana. The verse he spoke is considered as a mangala sloka for the epic. Thus, by divine grace, Valmiki Ramayana is born, wherein the core story briefly told by Narada is explained and expanded into a magnificent work of 24,000 verses. Valmiki composed the entire epic in that metre. He taught it to Lava and Kusa, the sons of the Divine couple who were born in his ashram. They learnt the verses and used to sing them in melodious notes to take it to the people.

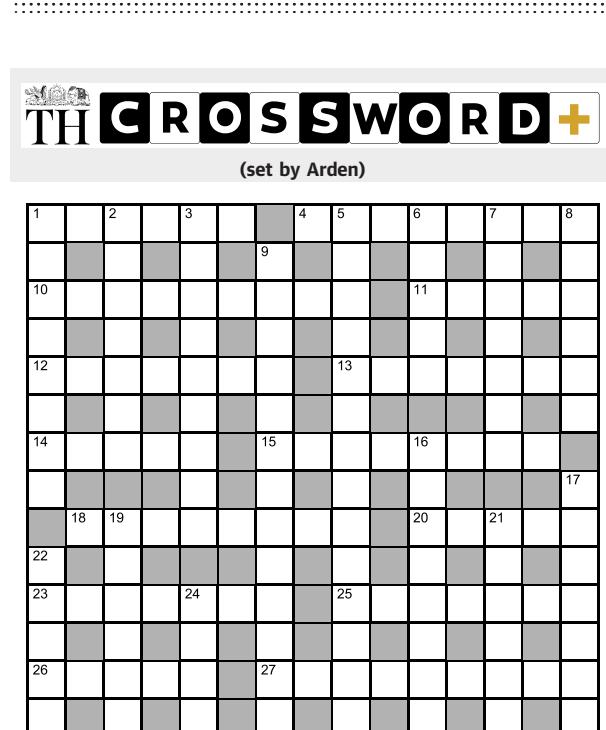
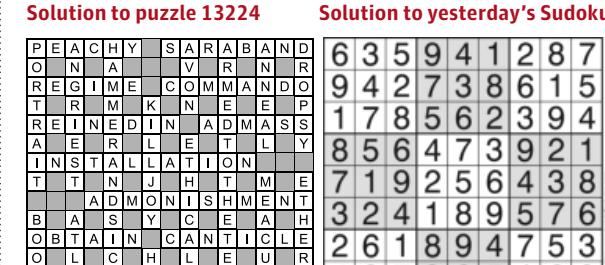
## SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13224

P E A C H Y   S A R A B A N D  
O N A V R N R  
R E G I M E   C O M M A N D O  
T R M K N E E P  
R E I N D I N A D M A S S  
A E R L E T L Y  
I N S T A L L A T I O N  
T T N J H T M E  
R A D M O N I S H M E N T  
B A S Y C E A H  
O B S T A I N C A N T I C L E  
O L C H L E U R  
B L A C K L E G F E L L O  
O S S L E I T P A  
O N T H E S L Y T H R A L

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



## ACROSS

- 1 British church takes one in their arm (6)
- 4 Summon from top to bottom, King gives green signal (3-5)
- 10 Sister to gut the fish? Strange dilemma (9)
- 11 Personally returned some of them, that's plain (5)
- 12 Cruel? Take him out, simple! (7)
- 13 Brood on – is trailing behind in time (7)

CMYK

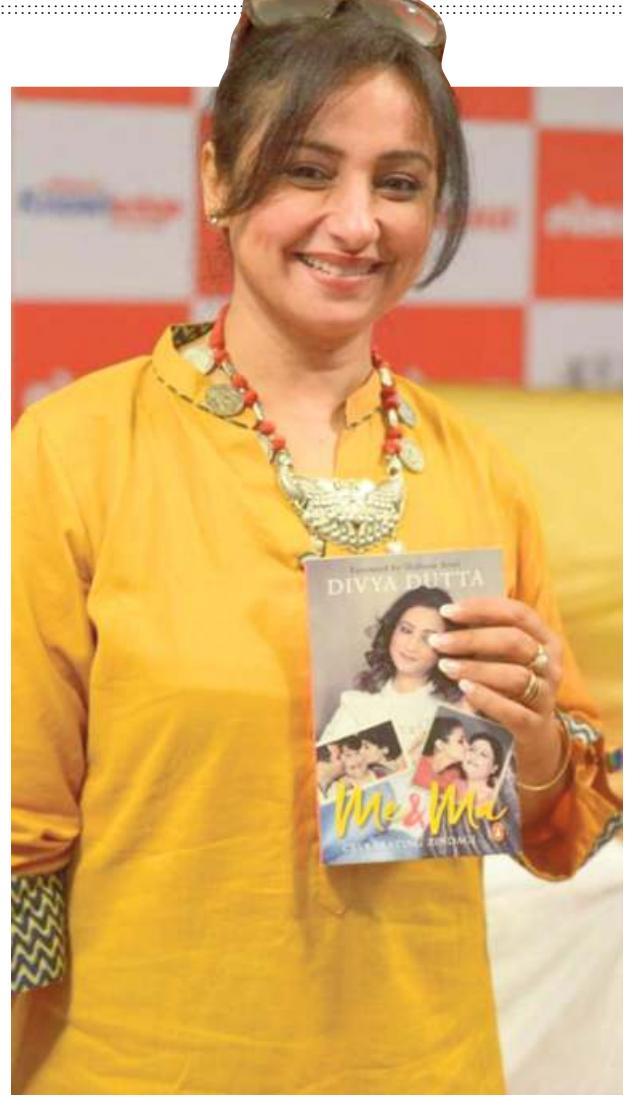
## FAITH

### Birth of the epic

Two great sages of high penance who are 'kavis,' that is, poets endowed with excellent poetic vision, are seen in conversation in the first chapter of the Valmiki Ramayana. Valmiki of austere penance asks Narada to tell him about that person who is of the highest admirable nature and even lists 16 specific qualities and attributes. Narada then brilliantly summarises the entire original Ramayana, believed to comprise 100 crore verses, in a mere 90 verses in the first chapter. Hence the adjective 'Vakvidam Varam' is most apt for him.

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## The forever connection with MOM

their town and both her parents kept busy schedules. She remembers the stillness of domesticity when her ophthalmologist father and gynaecologist mother unwound from days filled with work and responsibility. Yet, they had time for her and her younger brother.

The turning point in her life was when her mother secretly brought her to Mumbai from Punjab for the Stardust Talent Hunt in 1994. She also wrote a mono-act for her that she performed in front of Bollywood biggies including Yash Chopra and Shekhar Kapur.

"When she left me at the auditorium she kissed me and said 'give your dreams your best'. My grandmother was angry when I had once told her I wanted to join the film industry. She told me with my

short height I would never make it, but my mother had innate confidence in me," says Divya. The call from Stardust training academy came two months later.

Just then her uncles got a prospective marriage alliance for her from an US-based doctor and there was pressure on her to accept. Yet again her mother stood up for her saying she was too young for marriage.

"After I shifted to Mumbai, I would call her 20 times a day seeking her advice on everything from my auditions, roles to dresses. No matter how busy she was in her clinic, she would always take the call and reassure me. Later, she sent my brother to study Medicine in Mumbai so that we could be together," says Divya.

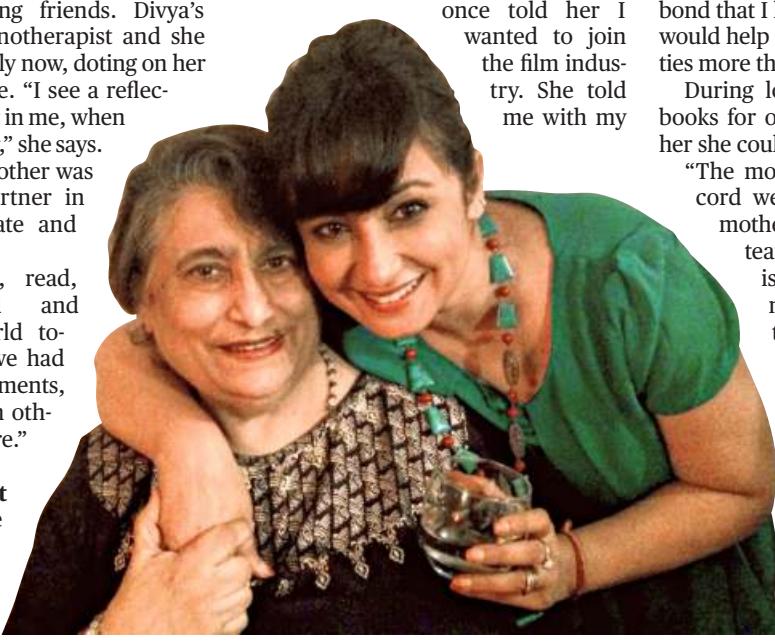
Writing the book was a catharsis for Divya. It was also the time when Deepika Padukone spoke out about her depression. "I took to yoga and writing and in the process I felt the incredible bond that I had forged with my mother would help me see through my difficulties more than anything else," she says.

During lockdown Divya did audio books for other authors and it struck her she could do hers as well.

"The most difficult chapters to record were my last days with my mother as I could not control my tears. I relived my life and realised my mother never judged me; only gave me unconditional support and believed in my dreams," says Divya.

When love, understanding, patience and communication remain at the core of the child-parent bond, life is less complicated and dreams take wings.

*Me and Ma* is published by Penguin Random House



ter the death of her mother, Dr. Nalini Dutta, in 2016.

"I went into depression. I would return to my vanity van from shooting and howl. After finishing work, I would drive around the city crying for ma and begging her to come back to me," she recalls.

Divya credits her mother for helping build strong sibling love between her and her brother. It is that relationship that holds her today, along with a close network of loving friends. Divya's brother is a hypnotherapist and she lives with his family now, doting on her five-year-old niece. "I see a reflection of my mother in me, when I am with her," she says.

She says her mother was her BFF, her partner in crime, travel mate and twin soul.

"We shopped, read, danced, dined and roamed the world together. Though we had different temperaments, we accepted each other for who we were."

**Reliving the past**  
Divya says the health clinic her parents ran jointly was very popular in

SOMA BASU

During the pandemic lockdown, when Bollywood actor Divya Dutta began to record her book, *Me and Ma*, she could not go beyond two days. "I had to take a break and resume. I was reliving my childhood memories and the intensely dynamic relationship I shared with my mother through the phases of my life," she says.

### Holding the dream

The 43-year-olds talks of the bond between mothers and children as "the first ever and the most beautiful relationship in life." Her book is about the journey with her mother, who raised her as a single parent in small town Sahnewal near Ludhiana and led her to Mumbai as a successful actor.

"Ours is a family of doctors and acting as a profession was never even a topic for discussion," says Divya. Her father passed away at 36 when she was six years old. From then on it was her mother's struggles to help mould her into the woman she is today.

Her father's demise made their life daunting. "It was left to my mother to applaud my interests and build my confidence; she was alone in going against the wishes of the two families," says Divya on a telephone call from Mumbai after the launch of her audio book that first appeared in print four years ago af-

### CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF

## The need to dream

Why are we thinking less of our possibilities, and more about our limitations?



TT SRINATH

Kahlil Gibran, the Lebanese poet and author talks about dreaming in one of his pieces.

A young man approaches an elder and requests him to interpret a dream that he has had when asleep. The elder responds "Tell me of the dream you have when awake, I will then share my wisdom, for your dream when awake is filled with imagination. I cannot offer counsel for your dreams when asleep, for they are illusory."

Many of us, owing to the pandemic and the resurgence of fresh cases, are limiting our imagination.

I notice this about myself as when asked what my plans may be for next year, I admit I cannot think about next year and that I am filled with fear.

Even with friends whom I interact with at work, I am realising our

conversation is less about possibilities and instead about what may go wrong.

I am hoping that each of us consciously shift our lens and talk of what we can do rather than what we cannot.

A teacher of mine once told me, "When you say you cannot, you actually mean you don't or will not, for there is nothing that you cannot."

It will spare us the mental torture we are allowing ourselves to be consumed by.

Steve Jobs once said "If your dream list is shorter than your achievement list, it surely means you have grown old." I hope each of us can prevent this happening to us.

The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at tt.srinath@gmail.com



## Stripes well earned

The conversation around stretch marks is changing; we speak with social media mavens about how and why

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Having gone through many weight fluctuations in her life, Tamil Brynta Ponn, who lives in Toronto, Canada, is no stranger to stretch marks.

"Stretch marks have become so common to me that I forgot that they still aren't completely accepted by everyone else," says the plus-size model well-known on Instagram for her self-love posts about curvy bodies, stretch marks, and cellulite.

"As a society we've created a culture that has normalised the shaming and (painful) removal of something that honestly just makes you a normal human being. I always say, 'stretch marks are normal; let your body grow in peace,'" says Brynta.

Stretch marks are seeing a renewed celebration on social media. Posts marked with #StretchMarksAreBeautiful now outnumber those of #StretchMarksBeGone and #StretchMarksRemoval. Actors Jameela Jamil, Malaika Arora and Rytasha Rathore have been vocal about embracing them as a natural part of the body.

Medically speaking, 'stretch marks' are a type of scarring that develops when the skin stretches or shrinks quickly. This typically happens during puberty, pregnancy as well as weight loss and gain. The skin has three layers: the hypodermis (deepest layer),

the dermis (the middle layer), and the epidermis (outer layer). Stretch marks are formed in the dermis. As your body grows naturally, the connective fibres in the dermis cause the collagen and elastin (which make up much of our skin's structure) to rupture; so as the skin heals, stretch marks may appear.

Ponn wants more photographers to also showcase the natural states of human bodies; only then will the conversation flow from social media to mainstream offline spaces.

Agreeing with this, photographer Anushka Kelkar, who runs

the inclusivity-friendly Instagram account Brown Girl Gazin, says she has always noticed a disconnect between how she saw women around her and how they were presented in the media. The 23-year-old made it her mission to turn an honest lens on the beauty of south Asian bodies, and much of this was to capture them as they are.

"South Asian standards of beauty have shifted away from stale notions of 'perfection' and are now geared towards something more natural and holistic," she comments. As a photographer in this space, her subject

has to see her empathy.

But, it took us a long way to get here, and there is still more to do.

Dermatologists are constantly being asked about red lasers and blue lasers to zap these stripes away, a majority of the requests coming from brides before their weddings. Bengaluru-based cosmetic dermatologist Dr Chitra Anand states, "Medically, there is nothing wrong with the body or skin when stretch marks occur; they are actually a remarkable evolutionary trait we have to accommodate growth. These procedures are purely elective,



**More acceptance** Stretch marks are seeing a renewed celebration; Dolly Singh

▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT; GETTY IMAGES / ISTOCK PHOTO

and, yes, there is still a demand for them."

In a 2019 blog post 'Wearing a bikini when you have stretch marks', travel blogger Arunima Dey – aka Namaste, Solo Travel – recalls how a series of toxic relationships, popular culture and social media informed how she looked at her own body. She eventually reshaped how she perceived herself and writes, "The Internet is abundant with articles on how to conceal your stretch marks and tummy fat. They make it sound like having stretch marks is a terrible thing. It isn't, they are a part of what makes us, us. I am not about flaunting them but I am not about hiding them."

**Posts marked with #StretchMarksAreBeautiful now outnumber those of #StretchMarksBeGone and #StretchMarksRemoval**

Arunima's ideas reflect the growing movement towards body neutrality – where the focus is on what your body can do for you, rather than what it looks like.

When Mumbai-based content producer and yoga practitioner Dolly Singh feels she has gained a bit of weight or muscle through her daily practices and asanas, she looks upon her body, sees a new stretch mark, and breaks into a smile.

She comments, "I feel it is a generational thing, since we have access to the Internet and the vanity of social media. My parents never disliked stretch marks and I see my nieces, who are more engaged with positive dialogues, are not of the mindset that they are anything out of the ordinary," she explains.

### HELLO WORLD

## The L word

Sadly that's not a reference to the LGBTQ series, but to lockdowns and loneliness that we have talked about much but can't seem to find solutions to. To stay focused and engaged, UK YouTuber Calfreezy, with 3.7 million subscribers, has started a 30-day fitness challenge.

His five rules: take a cold shower every morning, do 45 minutes of exercise five days a week, follow a healthy diet to suit your needs, read 15 pages of a book, and drink 2.5 litres of water. The aim: to get healthy. You can print out a sheet to tick off the five daily. He "went away into a dark room" to think this up. Lockdown fatigue?

Just in case you're forced to travel and can afford it despite a payout or a job loss (lucky you), the Kempinski group has launched Fit Rooms powered by Technogym, which does gym equipment for the home.

Available in Berlin, Munich, Dubai, Shanghai, the rooms come equipped with a bike and a case, literally a bag (with foam roller, massage ball, mat, bands), and gives guests access to online training. Fitness follows you everywhere.

Imagine pain relief and accelerated recovery from injuries. All with a couple of red dots. It doesn't ship to India sadly. But one takeaway from the PowerDot website: a short video telling us there's no new normal anymore. It's just normal. So let's get this fitness thing back on the road. Too many messages pointing to the same thing.

Meanwhile, people are reaching out to Indian National Congress for different kinds of medical emergencies using the hashtag, and they're responding. Ignore the political pegging in between.

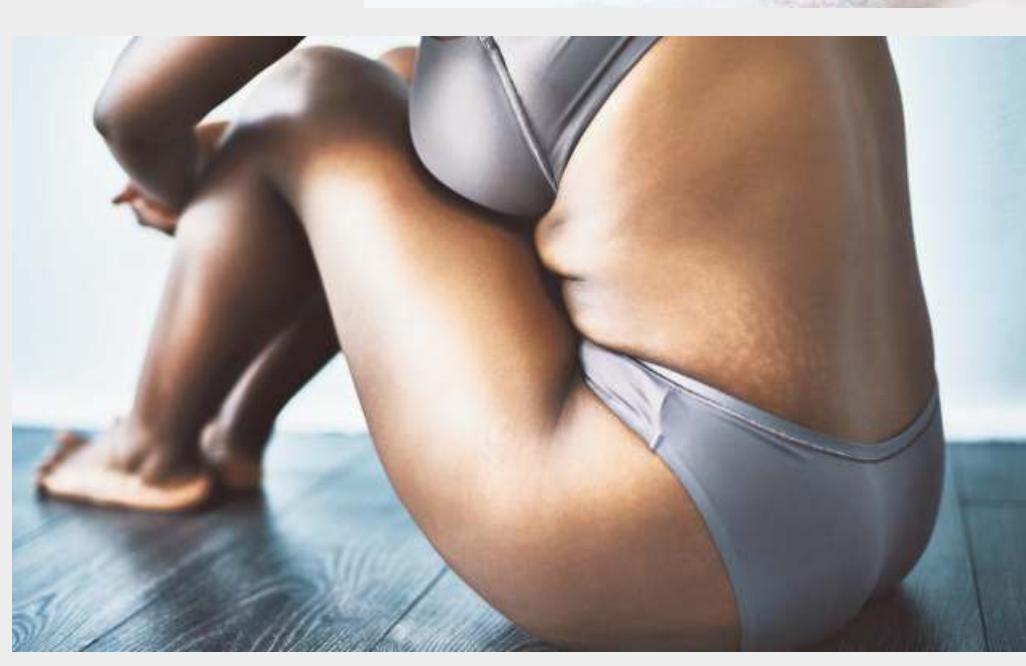
Sesame has been acknowledged as the ninth major food allergen, by the US House of Representatives, with the passing of the Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education and Research (FASTER) Act. Now, food manufacturers will have to list it as an ingredient. The other allergens are milk, eggs, fish, shell fish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans.

Those who have been training and not sitting on the couch ruminating about real or threatened lockdowns, the PowerDot, TM-ed a smart muscle trainer, has been bought over by Therabody that has a bunch of muscle recovery solutions.

Imagine pain relief and accelerated recovery from injuries. All with a couple of red dots. It doesn't ship to India sadly. But one takeaway from the PowerDot website: a short video telling us there's no new normal anymore. It's just normal. So let's get this fitness thing back on the road. Too many messages pointing to the same thing.

Finally, there are a few things to learn from PwC's Global Crisis 2021, even though the report talks about companies. It talks about being able to mobilise quickly in order to stabilise business ops in a crisis, break down silos, and build organisational resilience to survive. Maybe we need this at the family and individual level too.

A weekly round-up of health news that teaches us lessons



the inclusivity-friendly Instagram account Brown Girl Gazin, says she has always noticed a disconnect between how she saw women around her and how they were presented in the media. The 23-year-old made it her mission to turn an honest lens on the beauty of south Asian bodies, and much of this was to capture them as they are.

"South Asian standards of beauty have shifted away from stale notions of 'perfection' and are now geared towards something more natural and holistic," she comments. As a photographer in this space, her subject

As Delhi lowers the legal age to consume alcohol, we explore how peers and parents influence the decision of when to start

SUNALINI MATHEW

Sonia Sharma\*, from Delhi finds the Government's decision to lower the legal age of drinking from 25 to 21 amusing.

She began throwing her son parties with alcohol when he was in school, because when she did not, he would not be invited to other students' gatherings. Children, she says, sometimes begin drinking as early as 14, often encouraged by the parents. This is in Delhi's elite (expensive for most) schools, where the teen years are no longer about pizzas and French fries, but about beer and vodka shots.

**Age no bar**

"If you do throw a party without alcohol, children either will not show up or will carry clear water bottles with alcohol inside," says the mother who does not drink herself; nor does her partner. She is aware that under age drinking carries risks of alcohol dependence.

This is however, reflective of a larger social and cultural landscape, where drinking is seen as a ticket to be a part of a 'club' of networked teens from across Delhi's schools. It is not just a gathering of boys and girls over-eager to enter an adult world early. The children will later apply to universities abroad and connect there, "always having each others' back," says Sharma.

When parents support at-home drinking, there is really no need for children to go to a liquor store or even a bar, where they may be asked for ID.



**Is it time to say cheers?**  
Different states have specific age limits

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



# Drink tank

Surjit Singh\*, who studies in a college in Bengaluru, after having grown up in Delhi, says the *theekas* (liquor shops) in the capital usually check for ID, unlike those in Bengaluru (Karnataka's drinking age is 21).

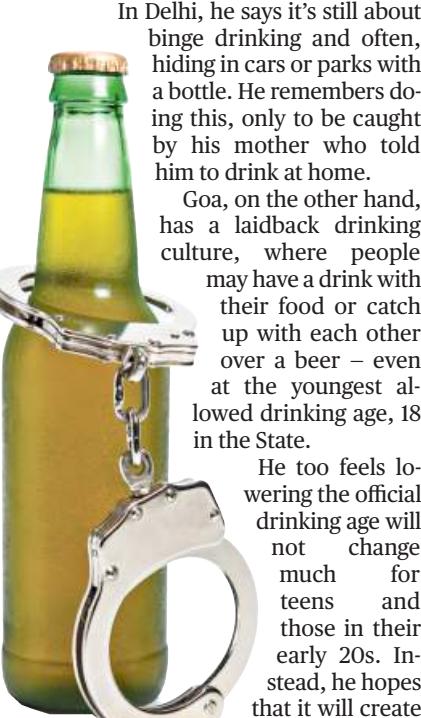
"In Bangalore, the police will do spot checks on the road at night, asking us to open our bags to see if we're carrying alcohol. This doesn't usually happen in Delhi," says the 19-year-old. He and his friends also encounter less checking during the matinee hours than at night, in Bengaluru

pubs. "In Delhi, it's easier to drink at home."

Many parents either turn a blind eye to the drinking or actively support it, because they want their children to be safe at home rather than drinking on the streets.

**Drinking culture**

"Delhi still does not have a post work drinking culture, where people catch a quick drink after work, and then head home,"



says Madhav Dayal, who grew up in the city, trained as a chef, and then moved to Goa to start Miguel's: Cocktails & Petiscos.

In Delhi, he says it's still about binge drinking and often, hiding in cars or parks with a bottle. He remembers doing this, only to be caught by his mother who told him to drink at home.

Goa, on the other hand, has a laidback drinking culture, where people may have a drink with their food or catch up with each other over a beer – even at the youngest allowed drinking age, 18 in the State.

He too feels lowering the official drinking age will not change much for teens and those in their early 20s. Instead, he hopes that it will create

more safe spaces for alcohol consumption. If people can't drink at home, at least they will have places to go out to, where they may be more exposed to drinking etiquette.

Lt Col Sameer Khare, who served in the Army for 20 years and now works in the IT sector, talks of the culture in the Army. Young single officers, often in their 20s, dining in the mess would dress for dinner ("You can't wear jeans or sandals"), and go to the bar or the ante room at about 7.30 pm and have a drink or two. "It's part of the regimental culture," he says, adding that it is about camaraderie, not getting drunk.

He hopes that he will be able to introduce his own daughter, who will turn 18 soon, to alcohol after 21, when they can sit down and

## Goa, on the other hand, has a laidback drinking culture

share a drink, rather than throwing her a party with a bunch of friends.

"Right now she'll have some Baileys over her ice cream, but if she feels she wants a sip, I'm happy to give it to her," he says.

**Saying no to alcohol**

Alcohol in India is on the State list, meaning revenue comes from this into the State. Most states have 21 as the legal drinking age; Sikkim, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh are at 18.

In Haryana and Punjab, the legal age is 25. A few, like Gujarat, Bihar, and Manipur prohibit its sale and consumption.

S Srinivasa Raghavan, advocate with the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court, calls this variance "absolutely absurd". "Ideally, there should be prohibition, but I understand that's utopian," he says.

He wishes alcohol would be a part of the concurrent list, so both the State and Centre can make laws pertaining to it. He would like to see the age frozen at

25 and the State take a sterner view with implementation. "Daughters or sons cannot be in their parents' control after they leave home to stay in a hostel, so this is where the State comes in."

He too was a social drinker, but at 37, when his daughter turned nine, he decided to give it up. "I have explained to her how it affects both mental and physical health," he says.

To educate her on its ill-effects, he took her to a de-addiction centre and also showed her Crime Bureau reports.

"Barriers come down with drinking," he says, citing alcohol-related crime as a cause for concern.

S Mukesh Bala, a marine engineer from Chennai, agrees with Tamil Nadu's legal age set at 21. "The restriction keeps drinking in check. For example, the legal age to drive is 18, and there will be a few people who drive before that, but fear will prevent many," he says, adding that it is important for the law to be implemented.

Aware of teens drinking at 13 and 14, he points not to drinking itself, but other factors that have thrown the lives of students into dis-balance: the amount of money that is available to some teens enables them to buy alcohol regularly, for instance. He cites balancing factors, like family.

"How many people actually sit and have a meal with their family daily without touching the mobile phone?" he asks. Drinking responsibly then is about balance – the ability to step out for the occasional drink with friends, but not making it a daily habit, or a crutch.

Is the State even a player then, in how citizens drink? They could be, to some extent, if they implement the law in public places. In private spaces, it is really upto those over the drinking age to regulate.

\*Names changed to protect identity

A fun Facebook post by feminist-activist Kamala Bhasin actually had a whole story behind it

SUNALINI MATHEW

Some time in March, feminist-activist Kamala Bhasin posted a Facebook message saying she had bought a cycle in time for her 75th birthday.

She was looking for women her age to bike, and the group would be called Cycling Feminist Aunties in their Seventies. She also asked Hero Cycles to start a brand called Shero Cycles, which led to the message getting shared around social media, with over 400 comments just on her post.

"It was a joke," she says, though she does take her new cycle out for a spin around her colony. "My real inspiration to even buy a cycle was two young women who are cycling 56,000 kilometres for the One Billion Rising (OBR) campaign," says

# Riding through 'what will people say'



**Two wheels and a ride** Sabita Mahto, 24, and Shruti Rawat, 21, began the Trans Himalayan Cycling Tour in February ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

organised by the Uttarakhand Government," says Sabita, who has spent six years as a mountaineer, three as a cyclist.

Shruti, who has graduated and now works with the Kartavya Foundation, says she joined the course on a whim, but later when Sabita told her about the expedition, she really wanted to take part. "The longest I had ridden was 43 kilometres, and I am not a sportsperson," she says, adding that it was tough initially, but Sabita motivated her to stay on course.

**Staying the course**

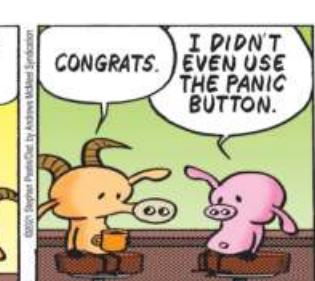
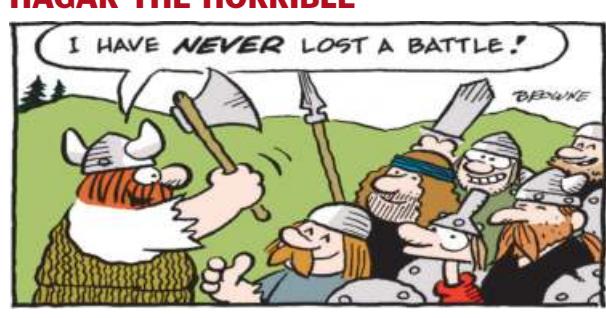
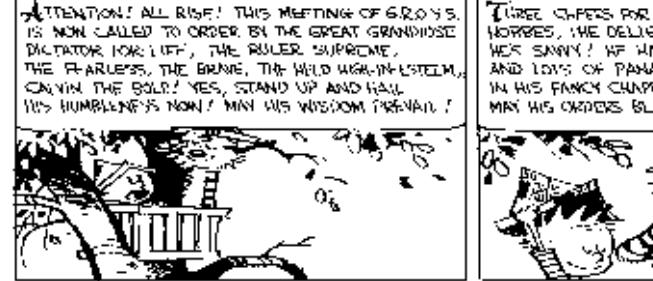
Right now the girls are in Assam, having done 68 days. They will finish in Arunachal Pradesh, though they don't have a clear plan of where their final halt will be. While OBR provided Sabita with a Trek bicycle, the Uttarakhand Government gave Shruti a Merida.

For Sabita, getting to this point has been difficult. The daughter of fisherfolk from Bihar, who later moved to Kolkata, she fought hard to

avoid marriage after Class XII. She had already given up sport after Class X because of the shorts that were worn, since her parents always worried about: "Log kya kahenge? (What will people say?)"

Her brother and brother-in-law helped convince her father to send her for training to the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. On her solo trips, often without funding, she has slept in police stations, in hotels, gurdwaras, mandirs, and churches. "My idea of getting Shruti involved was to build a chain of empowerment," she says. Shruti found it easier to convince her family about what she wanted to do.

On the road, the tough parts are only the cycling that stretches to eight hours a day, the rough terrain, and the rapidly changing weather. They stop at hotels and eat a big meal at night, and start out between 7 am and 7.30 am. They have never had an untoward incident, with people only encouraging them along the way. "When we are at home we are told the world is bad, but the world is not. For every one or two bad people, there are a 100 good people. Don't just sit at home and assume that everyone is bad," says Shruti.

**POOCHE CAFE****PEARLS BEFORE SWINE****HAGAR THE HORRIBLE****PEANUTS****TIGER****CALVIN AND HOBBES**

# U.S., China agree to cooperate with urgency on climate crisis

The pact comes ahead of Biden's summit with world leaders on April 22 and 23

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SEOUL

The U.S. and China, the world's two biggest carbon polluters, agreed to cooperate to curb climate change with urgency, just days before President Joe Biden hosts a virtual summit of world leaders to discuss the issue.

The agreement was reached by U.S. special envoy for climate John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua during two days of talks in Shanghai last week, according to a joint statement.

The two countries "are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands," said the statement.

Mr. Kerry said the language in the statement is "strong" and that the two countries agreed on "critical elements on where we have to go." But the former Secretary of state said, "I learned



**Common ground:** John Kerry says both countries are set to cooperate with each other to tackle climate change. •AP

in diplomacy that you don't put your back on the words, you put on actions. We all need to see what happens."

**Biggest polluters**  
China is the world's biggest carbon emitter, followed by the U.S. The two countries pump out nearly half of the fossil fuel fumes that are warming the planet's atmosphere. Their cooperation is key to the success of global efforts to curb climate change.

Noting that China is the world's biggest coal user, Mr. Kerry said he and Chinese officials had a lot of discussions on how to accelerate a global energy transition.

Mr. Biden has invited 40 world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, to the April 22-23 summit. The U.S. and other countries are expected to announce more ambitious national targets for cutting carbon emissions ahead of or at the meeting, along with pledging financial help for climate efforts by less wealthy nations.

While Mr. Kerry was still in Shanghai, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng signalled on Friday that China is unlikely to make any new pledges at next week's summit. "For a big country with 1.4 billion people, these goals are not easily delivered," Mr. Le said in Beijing. "Some countries are asking China to achieve the goals earlier. I am afraid this is not very realistic."

**'Not a geopolitical chip'**  
During a video meeting with German and French leaders on Friday, Mr. Xi said that climate change "should not become a geopolitical chip, a target for attacking other countries or an excuse for trade barriers," the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

On whether Mr. Xi would join the summit, Mr. Le said "the Chinese side is actively studying the matter."

The joint statement said the two countries "look forward to" next week's summit. Mr. Kerry said on Sunday that "we very much hope that (Xi) will take part" in the summit but it's up to China to make that decision.

## Call for protests amid Navalny's failing health'

He is on a hunger strike in prison

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW

Associates of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny on Sunday called for massive protests in the heart of Moscow and St. Petersburg on Wednesday, saying Mr. Navalny's health is deteriorating severely during a hunger strike.

On Saturday, a doctor said on Saturday that test results he received from Mr. Navalny's family showed sharply elevated levels of potassium, which could lead to cardiac arrest, and kidney failure.

"Our patient could die at any moment," the doctor, Yaroslav Ashikhmin, said.

Leонид Volkov, a top strategist for Mr. Navalny, said the demonstrations were called on short notice for



Alexei Navalny

Wednesday because "his life hangs in the balance."

The 44-year-old Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's persistent critic, started a hunger strike more than three weeks ago to protest prison authorities' refusal to allow him to be seen by a private doctor for diagnosis of severe back pain and loss of feeling in his legs.

## Saudi, Iranian officials hold talks to reset relations: report

Ties were frozen after attack on Kingdom's Embassy in 2016

REUTERS

Saudi and Iranian officials held direct talks this month in a bid to ease tensions between the two foes, a senior Iranian official and two regional sources said, as Washington works to revive a 2015 nuclear pact with Tehran and end the Yemen war.

The April 9 meeting in Iraq, first reported by the *Financial Times* on Sunday, did not lead to any breakthrough, the Iranian official and one of the regional sources familiar with the matter said.

The source said the meeting focused on Yemen, where a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia has been battling the Iran-aligned Houthi group since 2015.

The FT report said that a senior Saudi official denied

## Myanmar shadow govt. wants invite for ASEAN crisis talks

It urges foreign leaders not to formally recognise the junta

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
YANGON

Myanmar's shadow government on Sunday urged Southeast Asian leaders to give it a seat at the table during crisis talks next week, and not to recognise the military regime that seized power in a February coup.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is expected to join a special ASEAN summit on Myanmar on Saturday in Jakarta – his first official overseas trip since the putsch that ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Army has moved to quell mass protests against its rule, killing at least 730 people according to a local monitoring group.

The military chief's invitation to the meeting of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations has drawn scorn from activists and former lawmakers who have urged foreign leaders not to formally recognise the junta.

Moe Zaw Oo, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for



**Growing support:** People marching in support of the National Unity Government in Dawei on Sunday. •REUTERS/DAWEI WATCH

dled carefully."

Unrest continued across the country on Sunday, with protesters rallying in Mandalay, Meiktila, Magway and Myingyan, showing support for the national unity government.

At Palaw in the country's south, demonstrators brannedish banners that read: "Military dictators should not be allowed to rule. The dictatorship will be uprooted. Support the national unity government."

Young demonstrators also staged motorbike rallies while carrying flags in Hpa-kant and Sagaing.

Protesters take seven officials hostage in Pak.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LAHORE

At least seven Pakistan police officers and Special Rangers were taken hostage on Sunday by supporters of a radical Islamist party, officials said, after days of violent protests.

Rioting has rocked the country since Monday, when the leader of the now-banned Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was detained in Lahore after calling for the expulsion of the French Ambassador.

The protests have paralysed cities and led to the deaths of six policemen, prompting the French Embassy to recommend all its nationals temporarily leave the country.

"The TLP members are holding five police officers and two rangers hostage," said Rana Arif, a police spokesman in Lahore.

Meanwhile, Firdous Ashiq Awan, a spokesman for the Punjab government, said 12 policemen had been abducted and taken to a TLP mosque in Lahore, where hundreds of supporters were gathered.

## ELSEWHERE



### 11 dead, 98 injured in Egypt train accident

CAIRO

Egypt's Health Ministry said 11 people have died and 98 were injured on Sunday in a train accident in Qalioubia province north of Cairo. The train was heading from Cairo to the Nile delta city of Mansoura and derailed about 40 km north of Cairo. REUTERS

### Eight of family killed in Afghanistan mosque

JALALABAD

Eight members of the same family were gunned down in an attack on a mosque in eastern Afghanistan, officials said on Sunday. The shooting happened on Saturday night in the city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and was believed to be over a land dispute, Governor Zaiulhaq Amarkhil said. AFP

## Sikhs call for gun reforms in U.S.

They conducted a vigil to mourn the victims of shooting that claimed eight lives

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
INDIANAPOLIS

Members of Indianapolis' tight-knit Sikh community joined with city officials to call for gun reforms on Saturday as they mourned the deaths of four Sikhs who were among the eight people killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx warehouse.

At a vigil attended by more than 200 at an Indianapolis park on Saturday evening, Aasees Kaur, who represented the Sikh Coalition, spoke out alongside the city's Mayor and other elected officials to demand action that would prevent such attacks from happening again.

"We must support one another, not just in grief, but in calling our policymakers and elected officials to make



**In grief:** Family members holding photos of a loved one during a vigil in Krannert Park, Indianapolis. •AFP

meaningful change," Ms. Kaur said. "The time to act is not later, but now. We are far too many tragedies, too late, in doing so."

The attack was another blow to the Asian American community a month after authorities said six people of Asian descent were killed by

a gunman in the Atlanta area and amid ongoing attacks against Asian Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

About 90% of the workers at 5,000+ Sikhs live in the U.S. Many practicing Sikhs are visually distinguishable by their articles of faith, which include the unshorn hair and turban.

**Variant from India being probed: U.K.**

REUTERS  
LONDON

British health officials are investigating a COVID-19 variant originating in India, Susan Hopkins of Public Health England (PHE) said on Sunday.

Speaking to BBC, Ms. Hopkins said: "We have not got enough data about this variant yet to be able to clarify whether it's a variant of concern. We have put it as a variant under investigation."

## Israel relaxes mask mandate

It eases year-long curbs as majority of population is vaccinated

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM

Israel has lifted a public mask mandate and fully reopened its education system in the latest easing of coronavirus restrictions following its mass vaccination drive.

Masks are still required indoors and in large gatherings.

**Schools reopen**  
All primary and secondary school grades returned to classrooms on Sunday, and

health officials ended a year-long requirement to wear a mask in public spaces.

Israel has speedily inoculated a majority of its population against the coronavirus. It has lifted most of its restrictions and announced last week that it would be reopening the country to vaccinated foreign tourists starting in May.

Israel's coronavirus czar, Nachman Ash, told Israeli public radio on Sunday that removing the mask requirement outdoors and reinitiat-

ing in-class studies was a "calculated risk."

Israel has recorded over 8,36,000 cases of the coronavirus and at least 6,331 deaths, according to the Health Ministry. Over 53% of its 9.3 million citizens has received two shots of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

In the months since Israel launched its vaccination campaign in December, serious cases and deaths have fallen precipitously and allowed the economy to fully reopen.

Israel's coronavirus czar, Nachman Ash, told Israeli public radio on Sunday that removing the mask requirement outdoors and reinitiat-

## BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED

(Wholly owned by Government of Karnataka undertaking)  
(CIN-U04010KA2002SGC030438)

### BRIEF E.O.I NOTIFICATION

BESCOM invites "EoI for setting up EV Charging / Battery Swapping Stations in BESCOM owned premises on land rental basis".

Enquiry No.: BESCOM/DGM(SG&EV)/BC-53/2021-22/ENQ-01 Dated: 17.04.2021.

The calendar of events is as follows: (1) Publishing of EoI document Date & Time: 22.04.2021 at 02:00 p.m. onwards.

(2) EoI Meeting Date & Time: 26.04.2021 at 11:00 a.m.

(3) Last date for submission of proposals Date & Time: 10.05.2021 at 05:30 p.m.

The EoI documents can be obtained from the website <http://bescom.karnataka.gov.in>. Further, participants can contact the office of undersigned for additional information.

Sd/-

For Electricity related complaints call: 1912 Deputy General Manager (Ele),

Download "BESCOM Mithras" Mobile APP SG&EV, Corporate Office, BESCOM

Covid-19. DO NOT PANIC, BE AWARE

6 Febn Follow Physical Distancing

Wear Mask

Maintain Hand Hygiene

6 Febn

## THINK INVESTOR

Are you an investor doing fundamental analysis?

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

Many individuals we talk to seem to consider themselves as investors and insist that they do fundamental analysis for stock picking. So, we decided to address these two topics in this column. Specifically, we discuss the difference between traders and investors and also show why most individuals may not be actually doing fundamental analysis.

## Trader vs investor

It is generally argued that a trader has a short-term outlook whereas an investor has a long-term outlook. But how relevant is long term? Suppose your investments are down 20%. Of what use is an argument that equity generates good returns over the long-term if you need the money to fund your child's college education three years hence? Whether you invest to achieve a life goal or to capture short-term movements in the market, your primary source of returns from equity is capital appreciation. That means you are exposed to market risk. Therefore, you are a trader, not an investor.

So, who then is an investor? An investor is one who depends primarily on dividend income for returns. It is highly unlikely that you invest for dividends. Why? One, dividends are now taxable at your marginal tax rate, making it unattractive as primary source of returns. And two, given the current level of stock prices, dividend yields are low, unless, of course, your equity holdings have a low-cost basis because you bought these shares long ago.

Of course, many individuals may not appreciate being referred to as traders because they believe such individuals only do day trading. The above discussion, however, shows that traders can have a time horizon ranging from intraday to many years.

## Fundamentals vs technicals

Direct investing in stocks is appropriate for the trading portfolio as it is set up to capture short-term movement in stock markets. The optimal way to capture short-term trends is to judiciously combine news with stock trends (read technical analysis).

This poses an issue for many individuals. It takes little effort to read chart patterns after you learn technical analysis. But for most, buying a stock based on five minutes or less of pattern reading is no analysis. That drives these individuals to delve into fundamental analysis.

Now, fundamental analysis is not about reading news and then coming to an intuitive judgment about a company's business prospects. Nor is it an analysis of past financial performance. If that were the case, equity research analysts may have no role to play in investment management. But analysts do add significant value. That is because fundamental analysis is about forecasting company's cash flows based on public information and non-material, non-public information and then using a valuation model to price the stock. Individuals cannot engage in this process for two reasons. One, they may lack the time to do such in-depth analysis. And two, it requires good understanding of the industry and the company's business to forecast cash flows and use an appropriate valuation model to price the stock.

The above arguments are based on the premise that individuals will have two portfolios. One, a goal-based portfolio with equity funds and bank deposits. And two, a trading portfolio with direct stock investments. You do not have to do fundamental analysis for your goal-based portfolios; that is the job of analysts at asset management firms and with sell-side research firms. Also, remember that you are a trader, whether you are investing for your goal-based portfolio or for trading portfolio.

*(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)*

## REAP MORE than you SOW



Interest rates on guaranteed return products are better than those on fixed deposits

■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

## VIVEK JAIN

Investment is one of the most important decisions in a person's life that must be taken with utmost attention and knowledge so that you can easily fulfil your own and your loved one's dreams without worrying about the finances.

It would be true to say that investing your hard-earned money is a key step towards wealth creation for an important financial goal. To make sure that you get maximum returns, it is important for you to invest properly and only in products that can help you fulfil your investment goals. There are numerous financial instruments available in the market, but not every instrument will cater to your specific needs and requirements. You need to invest as per your financial capacities as well as according to your risk profile.

'Guaranteed Return Products' are traditional non-participating investment-cum-savings plans that promise guaranteed returns without the investor having to worry about

the market volatility risk.

We have all been taught by our parents that bank fixed deposits are one of the safest and most convenient savings instruments that guarantee returns after a fixed time. These products offer a fixed return for a longer period without the risk of market volatility. No doubt, there was a time when bank fixed deposits were one of the most powerful savings tools available in the market. However, times have changed.

Over the last few years, savings products like bank fixed deposits have started to face declining customer interest due to falling rates of interest. Earlier, tax-saving bank fixed deposits with a tenure of five years used to offer interest up to 8.5% per year. However, the story is completely different today. The rate of interest on FDs has fallen from 8.5% per annum in 2014 to 5.4% in 2020, which is an all-time low.

Another important reason why people are switching to other financial instruments is rein-

vestment risk. Bank fixed deposits have a maximum lock-in period of 10 years, which means you cannot lock in the rate of interest for more than 10 years, and considering the constantly falling interest rates, returns on bank fixed deposits are sure to fall further.

One of the most popular alternatives to bank fixed deposits – guaranteed return products – promise better returns than an FD. The current rate of return that most guaranteed return products are offering is up to a maximum of 6% per annum.

These plans come with different payment terms and policy terms and promise maximum IRR – the annual rate of growth the investment is expected to generate – ranging between 5.5% and 6%. In fact, this is for the first time in 21 years that interest rates on guaranteed return products are better than FD rates. This means, considering the current market scenario, the rate of interest offered by guaranteed return plans is almost up to 0.5-1% more than most bank FDs. The guaranteed return products also cater

to the reinvestment risk as customers can lock in the rate not just for 5 or 10 years, but for 45 years.

## No tax on returns

Yet another prominent advantage of guaranteed return products over bank fixed deposits is tax-free returns. While the amount that you invest in bank fixed deposits with a minimum tenure of 5 years is tax-free under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act, the customer needs to pay tax on the maturity amount. In contrast, there is no tax on the amount invested and the maturity proceeds under guaranteed return products.

For a guaranteed return plan for ₹6 lakh that you invest over 10 years, the returns will be in the range of 5.77-6.04%, while for a fixed deposit it will be 5.40%. Post-tax returns remain the same for a guaranteed return plan, while for an FD it is 4.9% under the 10% tax slab, 4.6% under 20% slab and 4.2% under the 30% tax slab.

Often investors have a complaint that there are

hardly any investment products available in the market offering the option of easy liquidity as bank fixed deposits. All investment products that offer the option of liquidity charge significantly high surrender charges, unlike bank fixed deposits, where customers do not need to pay any liquidity charges. Fortunately, insurers have now come up with no-surrender charges products under the guaranteed return products category, wherein customers do not need to pay any surrender value in the first five years and can easily liquidate the policy. The feature of liquidity is also very important under an investment product as one may encounter expenses that may need one to break into the savings. For now, this feature is only available under Tata AIA's Fortune Guarantee Plus - Single Pay. You may also choose to invest in ICICI Prudential Life Insurance

e's Guaranteed Income for Tomorrow plan, under which if you invest ₹1 Lakh per annum for a term of 10 years, from the second year itself, you will start receiving a yearly payout of ₹24,960 until the eleventh year and from the eleventh year till the 20th year, you will receive a yearly payout of ₹13,800.

When planning to invest in guaranteed return plans, it is always suggested to buy online as a few guaranteed return plans sold online promise extra maturity benefit to the customers in comparison to offline products.

*(The writer is Head - Investments, Policybaazar.com)*

## ASK US

## Is compensation received for land acquired by govt. taxable?

N. SREE KANTH

**Q. Our land was acquired by a central government agency in the year 1962 (actually 1954). The agency paid a small amount after so many years of legal battle. After accepting the amount amid protest, we filed a case again and a lower court gave its verdict. After that, the government agency went to the high court questioning the verdict and the court asked the government to deposit 50% of the amount in the court. Meanwhile, on account of COVID-19, the hearing is in a standstill. My question is whether the amount received as compensation is taxable? For, we have not sold the land. The amount received includes the market price, penalty for not paying in time, and solatium.**

ROY GEORGE

**A. Compulsory acquisition of land by a government agency is construed as a transfer under Income Tax Act, and requisite Capital Gains Tax is attracted, which is to be computed as per the provisions laid. As the acquisition of your lands were done in 1954, 'The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013', shortly known as RFCLARR Act, which came into effect from January 1, 2014, will not apply in your case. Section 96 of the RFCLARR Act states that 'No Income Tax' or**

'Stamp Duty' shall be levied on any award or agreement made under RFCLARR Act when lands are being acquired by appropriate government (including government companies and trusts/AOPs/societies controlled by government), except under Section 46, wherein Section 46 deals with land purchase by non-government/private parties through RFCLARR Act. Enhanced compensation as awarded by courts is taxable under the head 'Capital Gains'. Interest on compensation as awarded by the courts will be taxable in your hands in the year of receipt of such enhanced compensation under the head 'Income from Other Sources'.

**Q. I am a senior citizen aged 83 years and a state government pensioner. I have been contributing a sum of ₹12,500 every month through my bank account towards my paternal granddaughter's Sukanya Samridhi Yojana Scheme (SSA) account since my son is unable to contribute the said sum. I have been contributing to this scheme for the past two years. Please enlighten me whether I am eligible for the tax deduction of ₹15,000 that is one year contribution, under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act.**

K. RAMAMOORTHY

**A. Under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act, deduction towards contribution to Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY) can be claimed only by**

parents of the girl child or her legal guardian. You cannot avail the deduction if you are not the legal guardian.

**Q. I am currently working as an online tutor, the company has provided Form 16A for Q2 (2020) for TDS. I don't know when they will provide for Q3. What I want to know is that will I be able to file ITR for Q3 without paying fine as and when they provide me the form 16A? And my annual income is also non-taxable.**

DEEPAK CHHETRI

**A. TDS deducted by your client is different from your tax liability. TDS is a mechanism wherein certain portion of your payments are withheld and remitted to the government subject to rules regarding applicability, rate of deduction, time of deduction, issuance of deduction certificates among others. You may check your Form 26AS if you have not received the relevant Form 16A from your client and follow up with them accordingly. You may calculate your tax liability in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax**

Act and claim the refund of the TDS if your income is below basic exemption limit or within the rebate limits. There will be no incidence of late fee if the ITR is filed by you within the due date.

**Q. I received an intimation u/s 143(1) saying I have an I-T refund of ₹20,640 for AY 2020-21. Even after six weeks of getting the message I have not received the refund. On tracking the refund I get the message 'No records'. Your assessing officer has not sent this refund to the refund banker. Please contact your Assessing Officer. How do I proceed from here to get the refund without any further delay?**

RATHI MENON

**A. You may post a grievance regarding this matter by logging onto your I-T e-filing profile and by clicking 'e-Nirvan'. Under e-Nirvan, click 'Submit Grievance' and fill in the details by addressing the grievance to 'Assessing Officer (ITO/ACIT) or Supervisory Hierarchy'. Under that, choose 'Refund not received'. It will automatically**

select your assessing officer on populating the above details. Further, select the relevant assessment year, attach relevant documents and describe the issue in sufficient length. On submission of the form, you will receive an acknowledgement number which is to be used to track your grievance. You can also track the status of your grievance by logging onto your I-T e-filing profile any time. You will be receiving the appropriate response to your registered e-mail address.

**Q. I want to know whether the annual insurance premium of ₹12 and ₹330 which we pay for the benefit for the death claim by accident (under the central govt. scheme) is eligible for I-T benefit under Sec. 80 C or under any other section? In personal income tax, whether the old regime is valid for financial year ending March 31, 2022?**

RAVINDRA KUMAR

**A. Under Section 80C(2) of the I-T Act, any insurance premium paid to keep in force a medical insurance with respect to a senior citizen, their medical expenditure incurred is eligible for deduction for an amount up to ₹50,000 for such senior citizen. In your case, as you are already covered by a medical insurance policy, you cannot further claim medical expenses incurred under Section 80D.**

**(N. Sree Kanth is Partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)**

beneficial to you, for FY20-21, and so forth until notified otherwise by the government. Further, you carry out this exercise every year. However, if you are having any business income and you choose new tax regime in any year, you cannot fall back to old regime in the forthcoming years.

**Q. I am a senior citizen aged 80 years and covered up to ₹90,000 by insurance under OPD treatment. Can I claim expenses exceeding ₹90,000, up to ₹50,000, under Section 80D of I-T Act during AY2020/21? Please advise.**

R.S. AGRAWAL

**A. Under Section 80D of the I-T Act, if no amount is being paid to keep in force a medical insurance with respect to a senior citizen, their medical expenditure incurred is eligible for deduction for an amount up to ₹50,000 for such senior citizen. In your case, as you are already covered by a medical insurance policy, you cannot further claim medical expenses incurred under Section 80D.**

**(N. Sree Kanth is Partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)**

*Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.*



■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

## LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Is it a risk worth taking during these uncertain times? Greeting every client with a big smile?"

## PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs 5 lakh)	EMI (Rs 1 lakh)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)	Tenor - 5 years
					Tenor - 5 years
HDFC Bank	10.50-21.00	10,747-13,527	2,149-2,705	Rs 1,999-25,000	
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Max Rs 15,000)	
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.25%	
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 2.75%	
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.75-24.00**	10,809-14,384	2,162-2,877	Upto 2.5%	
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Upto 1%	
Punjab National Bank^	8.95-14.50	10,367-11,764	2,073-2,353	Upto 1%	
Federal Bank	10.49-17.99	10,744-12,694	2,149-2,539	Upto 3%	
Union Bank of India	8.90-13.00	10,355-11,377	2,071-2,275	Upto 0.5%	
Bajaj Finserv	13.00 onwards	11,377 onwards	2,275 onwards	Upto 4.13%	
South Indian Bank	10.85-14.40	10,834-11,738	2,167-2,348	2%	
Bank of Maharashtra	9.55-10.55^	10,513-10,759	2,103-2,152	Upto 1%	
Indian Overseas Bank	12.05	11,135	2,227	Upto 0.75%	

\*\*Digital Personal loan starting at 10.50% p.a.

^0.10% additional concession in applicable interest rate to customers who opt for coverage under Credit Life Insurance.

# Maxwell and AB decimate KKR

The duo helps RCB notch up third successive win and reclaim top spot

## IPL 2021

S. DINAKAR

A clinical Royal Challengers Bangalore made it three wins out of three and moved back to the top of the table with a 38-run victory over Kolkata Knight Riders at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sunday.

Amassing 204 for four after electing to bat – the rejuvenated Glenn Maxwell scored a responsible 49-ball 78 and the gifted AB de Villiers made an electrifying unbeaten 34-ball 76 – the RCB bowlers, operating with precision, cut all escape routes for KKR.

In the death overs, the impressive Kyle Jamieson castled Shakib Al Hasan and found the edge of Pat Cummins' bat.

The contest was effectively over when an inspired Mohammed Siraj conceded just one run to Andre Russell in the 19th over. With KKR needing a near-impossible 43 off the final over, Harshal Patel cleaned up Russell.

For KKR, starts were frittered away under scoreboard pressure.

The pitch at the Chepauk, for the day game, was better for strokeplay. The ball, not holding up, was travelling quicker to the bat.

Earlier, the transformed Maxwell, balanced and employing his feet, both forward and back, held centre-stage. He has added solidity to flair and flamboyance.

But then, RCB's massive total – after the side lost Virat Kohli and Rajat Patidar in the game's second over bowled by Varun Chakravarthy – also required a brutal onslaught from the rampant de Villiers.

The explosive South African picked the length quickly, got into positions early, and with nifty footwork, hit boundaries and sixes for fun.

de Villiers has unique gifts as a batsman, and when in form, the quality of bowling does not matter. Gaps are pierced with a surgeon's precision; boundaries are cleared with ease and fiel-



**Maximum impact:** Maxwell and de Villiers set up a convincing 38-run victory for RCB as the Kohli-led side won its opening three games of a season for the first time. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

**C** Mark [Boucher] talked about it last year. He asked me if I would be interested and I said absolutely

**DE VILLIERS** about playing for SA in the World T20 in India later this year

ders are chasing leather.

Before de Villiers' onslaught, it was Maxwell who held the innings together.

Technically improved, Maxwell is getting on to the front foot and driving with his left elbow leading the way and he also travelled back for cuts and pulls.

Of course, he hasn't compromised on his extraordinary shots such as the tennis ball-like slash off Cummins to the cover fence and the switch hit six off Varun over deep-point.

After Kohli perished to a spectacular catch from Rahul Tripathi, running with his back to the ball from cover, and Patidar was done in by a googly, Maxwell resurrected the innings with responsibility and enterprise.

It was a maximum display by Maxwell and RCB.

## SCOREBOARD

### ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Virat Kohli c Tripathi b Varun 5 (6b, 1x4), Devdutt Padikkal c Tripathi b Prasidh 25 (28b, 2x4), Rajat Patidar b Varun 1 (2b), Glenn Maxwell c Harbhajan 2, Cummins 78 (49b, 9x4, 3x6), AB de Villiers (not out) 76 (34b, 9x4, 3x6), Kyle Jamieson (not out) 11 (4b, 1x4, 1x6); Extras (w-5, nb-3): 8; Total (for four wkt. in 20 overs): 204.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-6 (Kohli, 1.2 overs), 2-9 (Patidar, 1.6), 3-95 (Padikkal, 11.1), 4-148 (Maxwell, 16.6).

### KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING

Harbhajan 4-0-38-0, Varun 4-0-39-2, Shakib 2-0-24, Cummins 4-0-34-1, Prasidh 4-0-31-1, Russell 2-0-38-0.

### KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Nitish Rana c Padikkal b Chahal 18 (11b, 2x4, 1x6), Shubman Gill c sub (Christian) b Jamieson 21 (9b, 2x4, 2x6), Rahul Tripathi c Siraj b Washington 25 (20b, 5x4), Eoin Morgan c Kohli b Harshal 29 (23b, 1x4, 2x6), Dinesh Karthik lbw b Chahal 2 (5b), Shakib Al Hasan b Jamieson 26 (25b, 1x4, 1x6), Andre Russell b Harshal 31 (20b, 3x4, 2x6), Pat Cummins c de Villiers b Jamieson 6 (2b, 1x6), Harbhajan Singh (not out) 2 (2b),

### Innings scan

RCB	Dots	KKR
37	Dots	45
22	Fours	14
7	Sixes	9
45/2	PP	57/2
10.20	RR	8.30

### Next assignment

**KKR:** April 21 vs. CSK, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

**RCB:** April 22 vs. RR, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

### RCB BOWLING

Varun Chakravarthy (not out) 2 (3b); Extras (w-4): 4; Total (for eight wkt. in 20 overs): 166.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-23 (Gill, 1.5), 2-57 (Tripathi, 5.6), 3-66 (Rana, 6.5), 4-74 (Karthik, 8.3), 5-114 (Morgan, 13.4), 6-155 (Shakib, 17.4), 7-161 (Cummins, 17.6), 8-162 (Russell, 19.1).

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## TV PICKS

**IPL:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 12.15 a.m. (Tuesday)  
**Serbia Open:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m. & 10.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



Federer to play at Roland Garros

Roger Federer confirmed on Sunday that he will play the French Open at Roland Garros this year having skipped the 2020 edition to recover from knee surgery. "Hi everyone! Happy to let you know that I will play Geneva and Paris. Until then I will use the time to train. Can't wait to play in Switzerland again," he said on Twitter. AFP

## Vihari falls cheaply again

TRENT BRIDGE Hanuma Vihari failed in the second innings, scoring just eight before being bowled by medium-pacer Lyndon James in Warwickshire's second innings, in the County game against Nottinghamshire on Sunday. Vihari had been dismissed for a duck by Stuart Broad in the first essay.

## Krishna Poonia tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI Delhi CWG discus gold medalist Krishna Poonia on Sunday tested positive for COVID-19 and is undergoing treatment at a Jaipur hospital. "She had cough and mild fever and she took a test on Saturday but the virus could not be detected. Today doctors there took a CT scan from which it was diagnosed for COVID-19," her husband Virender Poonia said. PTI



Kipchoge runs away with Enschede marathon  
ENSCHDEDE (NETHERLANDS) Reigning Olympic champion and World record-holder Eliud Kipchoge won the Enschede marathon on Sunday. The 36-year-old Kenyan completed the course, over eight laps at Enschede airport, in 2 hours 4 minutes and 30 seconds. AFP

## Quartararo wins Portuguese MotoGP

PORTEMAO Frenchman Fabio Quartararo of Yamaha won his second consecutive race when he took the Portuguese MotoGP here on Sunday with Marc Marquez (Honda) seventh in his first race after nine months out. AFP

## Lydia Ko wins for the first time in three years

KAPOLEI (HAWAII) Aditi Ashok birdied two of her last five holes to close with a round of even-par 72 and ended tied 57th at Lotte golf tournament. Kiwi Lydia Ko cruised to a seven-shot victory and won her first title in three years. PTI

## Celtics ride on Tatum's fine form

LOS ANGELES Jayson Tatum scored 44 points and Boston Celtics withstood Stephen Curry's 47-point show on Saturday to beat Golden State Warriors 119-114 in the NBA.

**The results:** Lakers 127 bt Jazz 115; Wizards 121 bt Pistons 100; Bulls 106 bt Cavaliers 96; Celtics 119 bt Warriors 114; Bucks 115 lost to Grizzlies 128; Suns 85 lost to Spurs 111.

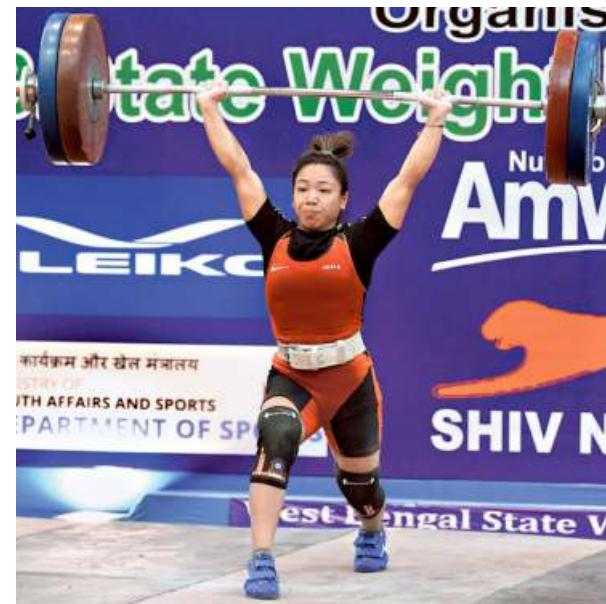


BRISBANE Queensland thrashed New South Wales by an innings and 33 runs to win the Sheffield Shield final on Sunday on the back of Marnus Labuschagne's high-class 192. It was his ninth Shield title. **The scores:** New South Wales 143 (Michael Neser 5/27, Jack Wildermuth 4/21) & 213 lost to Queensland 389 (Marnus Labuschagne 192, Sean Abbott 4/71).

CM YK

## Technical adjustments lift Mirabai

World record effort in the Asian meet a confidence-booster ahead of Tokyo Olympics



**Hard work pays:** Mirabai put behind her Rio Games failure to rewrite the record in the Asian championships. ■FILE PHOTO

## WEIGHTLIFTING

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

From fluffing three clean and jerk attempts in the 2016 Rio Olympics to rewriting its world record in the Tashkent Asian championships, it has been along road for Mirabai Chanu and has given the ace weightlifter a much-needed dose of self-belief ahead of the Tokyo Olympics.

Former World champion Mirabai – who set a new record of 119kg and improved her personal best by two more kg to do 205kg to clinch the women's 49kg bronze medal – is now more confident as she comes within range of an Olympic medal.

"I was doing up to 120kg in training in clean and jerk and went for the world record from the beginning. It is a big achievement. Rewriting a world record is never easy. A lot of hard work goes into it. It will give me more confidence," Mirabai told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

"It is a huge source of satisfaction as I worked on my technique and strength after my failure in Rio."

Mirabai admitted that her 'Vizag moment' in Tashkent – where she failed in her first two snatch attempts in the 2019 National championships at Visakhapatnam – made her nervous before she could manage 86kg in her last effort.

"I was nervous... now I have to improve my snatch

performance. The effort will be not to fail in any of the attempts."

## Treatment helped

Mirabai said her treatment for a long-standing lower back issue in the USA helped her. "I did the exercises prescribed in the USA and maintained those. The treatment was beneficial," she said.

Chief coach Vijay Sharma said a technical adjustment after the Rio Games lifted Mirabai's clean and jerk performance.

"Like clean and jerk, we need to iron out a technical issue in snatch also. I am sure she can improve her overall total up to 209kg. The world record has made me confident about Mira's capability," said Sharma.

## Jhilli grabs gold medal

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

Jhilli Dalabhera emerged champion in a depleted women's 45kg field at the Asian weightlifting championships in Tashkent on Sunday.

Jhilli, a former World junior bronze medallist, totalled 157kg (snatch 69kg, clean and jerk 88kg) to take the gold medal.

Mary Flor Diaz (60kg, 75kg, 135kg) of the Philippines took the silver.



Jhilli Dalabhera. ■FILE PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Deepak wins 86kg silver  
Sanjeet claims 92kg bronze

## WRESTLING

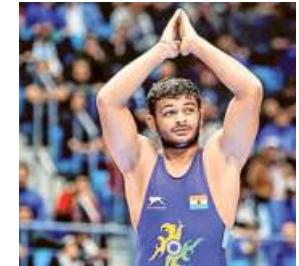
Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

World championships silver medallist Deepak Punia lost to Iranian superstar and World and Olympic champion Hassan Yazdani in the 86kg freestyle summit clash at the Asian wrestling championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on Sunday.

In his long-awaited meeting with Yazdani, Deepak lost 10-0 in two minutes, 53 seconds of the first period.

The two were set to meet in the World championships final in Nur-Sultan in 2019, but a left-ankle injury forced the Indian to pull out and take the second spot.

Twenty-one-year-old Deepak – also a World junior champion in 2019 –



Deepak Punia. ■FILE PHOTO

beat Uzbek Isa Shapier 9-2 and Bokhodur Kodirov of Tajikistan 4-3 to book a place in the semifinals. The Indian then managed a narrow 2-0 victory over Korean Gwanuk Kim to make it to the final.

Sanjeet (92kg) secured a medal, a bronze, on the concluding day. India finished with an overall tally of five gold, three silver and six bronze medals.

## CAB penalises Victoria SC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) has slapped a fine of ₹1 lakh on Rounak Singh from participating in CAB tournaments. The association also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh on Victoria Sporting Club and reversed the result of its semifinal match.

"The association has a zero tolerance policy when it

comes to corrupt practices. Accordingly, the association, after hearing the parties, decided to impose a two-year ban on Rounak Singh from participating in CAB tournaments. The association also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh on Victoria Sporting Club and reversed the result of its semifinal match," said president Avishek Dalmiya.

## Messi on song in Barca's triumph

Talismanic skipper scores a brace in win over Bilbao

## COPA DEL REY

REUTERS  
SEVILLE



**Make that 31!** Barcelona won yet another Copa del Rey with a rout of Athletic Bilbao on Saturday. ■REUTERS

another defender to slot into the net.

Barca's captain struck again four minutes later when he met a low cross from Jordi Alba and fired into the bottom corner, his shot proving too powerful for Athletic keeper Unai Simon.

There was a strong sense of *deja vu* for Athletic, which has now lost four Copa del Rey finals to Barca since 2009, with Messi scoring each time.

## The result:

**Final:** Barcelona 4 (Griezmann 60, de Jong 63, Messi 68, 72) bt Athletics Bilbao 0.

## Chelsea spoils Man City's quadruple bid

## FA CUP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

Manchester City's quadruple dream has been extinguished by Chelsea.

Even more concerning could be the injury to Kevin De Bruyne for the ongoing pursuit of a treble.

Chelsea will be back at Wembley Stadium next month for the FA Cup final after a 1-0 victory over City after a 1-0 victory over City was clinched by Hakim Ziyech on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola will return even sooner next Sunday with City for the League Cup final but with doubts over whether De Bruyne will be fit to face Tottenham. He hobbled off with an apparent ankle injury.

A 11-point Premier League lead makes collecting that trophy a near-certainty but there is also a first Champions League semifinal with City for Guardiola against PSG in what remains the priority title for the club.

**The result, semifinal:** Chelsea 1 (Ziyech 55) bt Manchester City 0.

## Poonam, Alfiya in semifinals

SPORTS BUREAU  
KIELCE (POLAND)

Poonam (57kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) posted easy wins to reach the semifinals of the World youth boxing on Sunday. Both Poonam and Alfiya won by an identical 5-0 margin to enter the medal round.

**The results:** Men: Pre-quarterfinals: 60kg: Akash Gorkha bt Jadier Herrera (Cub) 4-1; 64kg: Ankit Narwal bt Olivier Zamojski (Pol) 4-1; 75kg: Manish bt Abdallah Alaaraq (Jor) 5-0; 91kg: Vishal Gupta bt Borna Loncaric (Cro) 5-0.

Women: Quarterfinals: 57kg: Poonam bt Nazerke Serik (Kaz) 5-0; +81kg: Alfiya Pathan bt Reka Hoffman (Hung) 5-0; Pre-quarterfinals: 64kg: Nisha Gurjar lost to Beatrice Rozentale (Lat) 4-1.

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Anirban, who was part of Chennai Lions in the UTT League in 2019, said Sathiyan, "is a sincere and all-round player.

"He is talented, young and can play with me for long hours."

## Sathiyan to train with Anirban

K. KEERTHIVASAN  
CHENNAI

In what could possibly be his final chance to prepare for the Tokyo Olympics, G. Sathiyan, India's second highest-ranked paddler in the world (38), will train with 22-year-old Anirban Ghosh from April 23 to July 11 at the Raman High Performance TT Centre here.

All the expenses for the

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