SUNDAY
11 APRIL
2021

The Sunday Statesman

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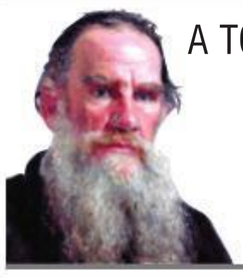
Pages 12 | ₹5 | LC

KOLKATA | **NEW DELHI** | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



A TORMENTED LIFE

P6

'INDIA NEEDS TO GROW FASTER TO MAKE UP FOR CONTRACTION'

P8

CHINA SLAPS RECORD FINE ON ALIBABA

P11

KOLKATA KNIGHTS ALL SET FOR RIDE TO GLORY

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 38 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY
Max: 61% Min: 17%

TEMPERATURE
Max: 37.2°C (+1) Min: 17.1°C (-3)

SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:59 hrs	18:45 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
06:15 hrs	18:09 hrs

THUMBNAILS

Farmers block the KMP Expressway during their ongoing agitation against Centre's three farm laws. In Ghaziabad on Saturday. (SEE P4)

Myanmar massacre: Myanmar security forces fired rifle grenades at protesters in a town near Yangon on Friday, killing more than 80 people, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) monitoring group and a domestic news outlet said. Details of the death toll in the town of Bago, 90 km northeast of Yangon, were not initially available because security forces piled up bodies in the Zeyar Muni pagoda compound and cordoned off the area, according to witnesses and domestic media outlets. P11

Shock defeat for BJP in Tripura: In a shock defeat for the ruling BJP in Tripura, the newly-formed TIPRA, led by former state Congress president Pradyot Kishore Deb Barman, swept the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections on Saturday, winning 18 of the 28 seats that went to the polls on Tuesday. The BJP won nine seats and one seat was bagged by an Independent candidate. The TTAADC area makes up two-third of the state's territory. P4

Bloodshed in 4th phase polling; 5 dead

Security forces said to have opened fire at voters in two separate incidents during polling in Sitalkuchi constituency, Cooch Behar

Security personnel keep vigil after Election Commission ordered stopping the voting exercise at polling station 126 in Sitalkuchi, Cooch Behar where clashes erupted.

Senior citizens after casting their vote during the fourth phase of the Bengal Assembly Election, in Kolkata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI/KOLKATA, 10 APRIL

Bloodshed marred the fourth round of Assembly elections in West Bengal when five persons died after security forces allegedly opened fire at voters in two separate incidents during polling in the Sitalkuchi Assembly constituency in Cooch Behar this morning.

The incidents also left three others injured. Police sources said the incident was triggered by a "rumour" that a boy had been shot at by the Central forces.

In the wake of the violence, the Election Commission this evening decided to bar the entry of politicians to Cooch Behar district for the next 72 hours.

The EC has also extended the "silence period" from 48 hours to 72 hours for the fifth phase of polling, scheduled on 17 April.

In many areas of the districts of south Bengal, the vehicles of several candidates were vandalised and at least six persons were arrested over an attack on the vehicle of Locket Chatterjee, BJP candidate from Hooghly.

The first incident in Cooch Behar's Sitalkuchi occurred at a polling station area when a new voter identified as Ananda Barman was shot when Central forces opened fire during a political clash, sources said.

Significantly, though all the relatives of the deceased claimed that Barman was a BJP supporter, outgoing North Bengal Development Minister and Trinamul Congress leader Rabindranath Ghosh said "BJP goons" attacked his supporters and killed Barman.

Immediately after the incident, four persons belonging to the minority community were killed in similar firing at a different location near the 5/126 polling station (Madrasa Siksha Kendra) under the constituency. One of the injured there has sustained bullet injuries on his hip, it is learnt.

"While local TMC activists claimed that the Central forces opened fire without provocation, election officials initially reported to the Election Commission that the forces rushed there after a political clash broke out between two groups. As locals attacked the forces, they opened fire in self-defense," a source said.

After visiting the site, DIG of Police, Jalpaiguri Range, Annappa E, said: "A 14-year-old ailing boy was playing at the site of the violence when a group of women tried to rescue him.

A group of Central forces rushed to the area and arranged to have the boy taken to hospital. In the meantime, someone informed others that the boy was shot at by the CISF.

The trouble broke out immediately after the rumour spread and hundreds of angry locals, including women, attacked the forces and tried to snatch weapons from them. Central forces opened fire in self-defense. Four persons died on the spot and four others were injured."

An overall voter turnout of 76.16 per cent was recorded till 5 p.m. during the fourth phase today for 44 seats across the five districts of Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, Hooghly Howrah and South 24-Parganas. The highest polling percentage of 79.73 was recorded in Cooch Behar followed by Hooghly (76.02), South 24 Parganas (75.49), Howrah (75.03) and Alipurduar (73.65).

"Barring two incidents in Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar where five persons died, polling was by and large peaceful. Till now, 2,371 complaints have been received by the commission," said West Bengal CEO Ariz Aftab at a press conference this evening.

Meanwhile in many areas of south Bengal districts, vehicles of several candidates were vandalised.

In Howrah, BJP candidate from Bally Baishali Dalmiya complained that her vehicle was vandalised by alleged Trinamul backed goons while in South 24-Parganas, BJP candidate from Behala East Paayal Sarkar's car was allegedly damaged in Haridevpur.

BJP candidate from Kasba Dr Indranil Khan alleged that he was attacked by some miscreants when he tried to protest against the "bike bahinis" that were moving around the polling booths and complained that the CRPF jawans were mute spectators.

In Ganguly Bagan area in Jadavpur constituency, the booth agent of CPI-M candidate Sujan Chakraborty was reportedly attacked by a "fake voter" and a central police contingent was rushed to the spot.

In Bhangar in South 24-Parganas, clashes were reported after ISF alleged the ruling party was not allowing their polling agents to enter the booth. Similar clashes between rival party workers were witnessed in Chanditala and Bandel in Hooghly. The EC on Saturday directed the Union Home Ministry to deploy 71 additional companies of Central Armed Police forces (CAPFs) in Bengal for the conduct of the remaining four phases of polls.

Overall voter turnout Till 5 p.m **76.16 per cent**

Cooch Behar	Hooghly	South 24 Parganas	Howrah	Alipurduar
79.73 per cent	76.02 per cent	75.49 per cent	75.03 per cent	73.65 per cent

Mamata, Modi spar over Bengal violence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NAIHATI/SILIGURI, 10 APRIL

Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee today demanded the resignation of Union Home minister Amit Shah following the killing of five voters in Cooch Behar, allegedly in firing by Central paramilitary forces and said her government would conduct a CID probe into the incident.

In Siliguri, Prime Minister Narendra Modi blamed Miss Banerjee for the "very unfortunate" incidents and said he sympathised with the family members of the victims.

Miss Banerjee said at Naihati: "Unlike Left Front regime, police firing is very rare in West Bengal during my tenure. But rioting, killing are common for Prime Minister and Union Home minister. They were responsible for riots in Gujarat, UP and genocide in Delhi." She later told the Press in Siliguri: "When elections are being held peacefully. as the BJP knows that it is facing defeat, it has started terrorizing people. Home Minister Amit Shah is completely responsible for today's incident. I do not blame the Central forces as they act on the directions of the home minister. I will conduct an inquiry into the incident. They will now say I would be violating the model code of conduct, but I cannot remain mum when people are losing their lives," she said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Modi said Miss Banerjee's "style of violence" and "her party activists' attempt to spoil the poll process would not continue in Bengal." SNS

"I was astonished to see how the Prime Minister without expressing his grief over the killings of five innocent people justified Central armed forces firing and killing of the innocents.

MAMATA BANERJEE

"I want to say this to Didi and TMC activists and goons that such misrule will not continue. I appeal to the Election Commission to take proper action on the incident by identifying the culprits.

NARENDRA MODI

Pentagon defends US Navy ship's patrol in Indian EEZ sans consent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

The Pentagon has defended its Navy asserting its navigational rights within India's exclusive economic zone without taking New Delhi's permission, calling the move "consistent with international law".

In an unusual move, the US Navy announced that on Wednesday it conducted a freedom of navigation operation in Indian waters without prior consent to challenge India's "excessive maritime claims", triggering a reaction from New Delhi, which on Friday said it has conveyed concerns to Washington through diplomatic channels. The Ministry of External Affairs also contested the US Navy's 7th Fleet statement of 7 April that the freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) by the guided-missile destroyer *USS John Paul Jones* "upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses" of the sea recognised in international law by challenging India's "excessive maritime claims". When asked about India's reaction over the US move, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby on Friday said: "That's consistent with international law."

The MEA said: "India's stated position on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is that the Convention does not authorise other states to carry out in the Exclusive Economic Zone and on the continental shelf, military exercises or manoeuvres, those involving the use of weapons or explosives, without the consent of the coastal state.

"The *USS John Paul Jones* asserted navigational rights in vicinity of Maldives by conducting innocent passage through its territorial sea in normal operations within its exclusive economic zone without requesting prior consent.

JOHN KIRBY
PENTAGON SPOKESPERSON

India, China agree to avoid new incidents

ASHOK TUTEJA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Top commanders of India and China have agreed to avoid any new incidents in the border areas between the two countries and jointly maintain peace and stability on the ground, the Ministry of External Affairs said today.

At their marathon 11th round of talks which concluded at the Chushul-Moldo border late last night, the military commanders agreed that it was important to take guidance from the consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries, continue their communication and dialogue and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest.

"The two sides agreed on the need to resolve the outstanding issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with the existing agreements and protocols. In this context, it was highlighted also that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for the two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations," the MEA said.

It said the two sides had a detailed exchange of views for the resolution of the remaining issues related to disengagement along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh.

The talks, which began at 10.30 on Friday morning, concluded at around 11.30 p.m. The Indian delegation was led by Lt Gen P G K Menon, the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps.

The talks focused on disengagement at Gogra heights, Hot Springs and Depsang Plains. The two sides have already successfully completed disengagement at the Pangong Tso Lake.

The disengagement is to be followed by deescalation and deinduction, which means pulling back troops and war equipment to the pre-April 2020 home bases.

The commanders of the two sides had last met on 20 February after completing the first phase of the pullback.

The two sides have been discussing disengagement at the level of senior diplomats under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs.

MARATHON 11TH ROUND OF TALKS

- Completion of disengagement in other friction points along the LAC will pave the way for the two sides to consider de-escalation of forces
- The disengagement is to be followed by deescalation and deinduction, which means pulling back troops and war equipment to the pre-April 2020 home bases

PE against Anil Deshmukh

MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

The CBI on Saturday reviewed the statements and documents collected by it during the ongoing Preliminary Enquiry in former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh's allegations of corruption against ex-Home minister of Maharashtra Anil Deshmukh, an official said.

The CBI is preparing an action plan to be adopted during the probe, as part of which it studied all the documents and statements.

The NIA is probing the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house, 'Antilia', in south Mumbai on 25 February. PTI

Covid-19 vaccines drying up in city hospitals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 10 APRIL

Acute shortage in supply of Covid-19 vaccines have forced many city hospitals to suspend vaccination programme for an indefinite period at a time when there is an alarming spurt in the number of novel coronavirus cases in the state.

Today, several private hospitals, including the AMRI Hospital unit at Salt Lake, Belle Vue Clinic and others have put up notices saying no vaccine is available from 10 April. Vaccination programme would be resumed when vaccines are available, the notices stated.

"Yes, there is a shortfall in supply of Covid-19 vaccines in our state," admitted Mr N S Nigam, state health secretary.

"Today, we have got only 10 out of our daily requirement of 25 vials. With these 10 vials 100 beneficiaries have been vaccinated so far. There is no more stock in our hospital and vaccinations have been suspended from tomorrow till further availability," said Mr Pradip Tondon, chief administrative officer of Belle Vue Clinic. "We hope the crisis will be over shortly," he said.

Bengal had a stock of around eight lakh vials of Covid vaccines left till Friday. On an average, three to four lakh vials are required across the state every day. "A vaccine consignment from the Centre was supposed to land in Kolkata on Friday but it didn't come. If we don't get fresh supply by Monday or Tuesday, vaccination will come to a stop. We asked the Centre on Friday to supply vaccines on an emergency basis," an official in the health department said.

Several states have complained of shortage of supply of vaccines. Maharashtra has said it had to close many vaccination centres for want of doses.

Several hospitals in Calcutta had to temporarily stop vaccination on Friday because of the shortage. R N Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Science at Mukundapur also suspended its Covid-19 immunisation programme today after running out of stock.

"We have adequate stock of vaccines for at least one more week. We will arrange for more stock on Monday considering the shortfall in supply of the vaccines," said Dr Rupali Basu, managing director and chief executive officer of Woodlands Multispeciality Hospital.

Sonia charge: Congress president Sonia Gandhi accused the Centre on Saturday of "mismanaging" the Covid situation and creating a vaccine shortage in the country by exporting it, as she called for cancelling all public gatherings and poll rallies in view of the rising number of coronavirus cases, *PTI* adds from New Delhi.

Maharashtra has 15.63 lakh doses: Maharashtra is currently left with 15.63 lakh of the 1.10 crore anti-Covid 19 vaccine doses it had received, Union minister Prakash Javadekar said on Saturday and called for their "proper distribution" amidst reports of an acute shortage of vaccines which the state government had blamed on the Centre. Earlier, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope had said that 8 lakh doses were available and "we have been told we will get four lakh doses in a day". Javadekar said over 1,100 ventilators will be made available for the state.

COVID SNIPPETS

Deserted view of Gateway of India during weekend lockdown

Gandhinagar municipal polls postponed

Gujarat State Election Commission on Saturday decided to postpone the elections to the Gandhinagar Municipal Corporation, scheduled to be held on 18 April, due to the rise in Covid-19 case

Lockdown extended till 19-22 April in MP areas

The Madhya Pradesh government on Saturday decided to extend the lockdown in several cities, including commercial hub Indore, till 19 April amidst a surge in coronavirus cases in the state, an official said.

India adds 1.45L fresh Covid cases

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

With a record 1,45,384 fresh cases, India's Covid-19 tally has climbed to 1,32,05,926, the Health Ministry said on Saturday.

The number of active cases has breached the 10-lakh mark again after around six-and-a-half months, while the death toll due to the virus has gone up to 1,68,436 with 794 more fatalities, the highest since 18 October last year, the Ministry's data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 31st day in a row, the number of active coronavirus cases in the country has gone up to 10,46,631, accounting for 7.93 per cent of its total caseload, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 90.80 per cent. Ten states ~ Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan have shown a steep rise in daily Covid-19 cases accounting for 83.29 per cent of the new infections, the Union Health Ministry said. Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 56,286. It is followed by Chhattisgarh with 10,652 while Uttar Pradesh reported 8,474 new cases.

Delhi declares strict anti-Covid curbs

NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Delhi government tonight announced a slew of strict curbs, allowing Delhi Metro and DTC buses to operate only at 50 per cent capacity and limiting the number of guests at weddings at 50, officials said. The government prohibited all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural and religious gatherings. SNS/PTI (SEE P2)

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES	1,32,05,926
ACTIVE CASES	10,46,631
NEW CASES	1,45,384
NEW RECOVERIES	77,567
TOTAL DEATHS	1,68,436

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. SATURDAY 10 APRIL 2021

epaper.thestatesman.com

Elections will come and go but always remember, your life is precious, try to protect it....

TMC MP DEV ADHIKARI
ASKING PEOPLE TO MAINTAIN THE COVID PROTOCOLS

Delhi govt declares strict curbs, CM says lockdown not an option

As Covid cases spike, Delhi govt bans various gatherings; Metro, buses to run at 50 pc capacity

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

With Delhi reeling under a massive surge of coronavirus infections and Covid cases and deaths rising every day, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said that lockdown is "not an option" but made it clear that such measures need to be put in place in Delhi that can effectively contain the spread of the virus in the city.

Subsequently, the Delhi government tonight announced a slew of strict curbs, allowing Delhi Metro and DTC buses to operate only at 50 per cent capacity and limiting the number of guests at weddings at 50, officials said.

The Delhi government prohibited all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural and religious gatherings.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said restaurants, bars can operate at 50 per cent occupancy.

Delhi Metro, DTC and cluster buses will run at 50 per cent occupancy in view of the rising coronavirus cases, the DDMA said. The colleges and coaching institutions will remain closed in the city, it said.

Negative RT-PCR report will be required for travellers arriving in the national capital from Maharashtra by air, the DDMA said, adding those without a report will have to undergo 14-day quarantine.

Not more than 20 people are allowed in funeral gatherings and up to 50 in weddings, it said.

Swimming pools will also remain closed except for training of sportspersons participating in national and international events.

Kejriwal was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the CM's Office that "Lockdown is not an option, however, we will be putting some restrictions in place to contain the spread of the virus. We will release the restrictions in the coming few days. COVID centres are being rebuilt and some have already started functioning."

The CM said this earlier in the day during an interaction with reporters after visiting the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital ~ the mainstay of Delhi's fight against Covid spread ~ to review its preparedness.

The CM said the administration and hospitals in the city were working to contain its "fourth coronavirus wave". "We are currently in a comfortable position with reference to beds and ventilators. We will ensure that the people of Delhi stay safe, to the best of our abilities," he said.

Coronavirus cases in Delhi have been rising rapidly over the last few weeks, and the number of deaths too have risen.

Delhi yesterday recorded 8,521 fresh Covid cases, the highest single-day surge since 11 November last year, while 39 more people died due to the infection.

"Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal visited the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan hospital on Saturday, to review its preparation in the face of the fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic that has hit Delhi. He took stock of the situation and the facilities provided to the patients in the hospital," the CMO's statement said.

At present, 1,500 beds out of 2,000 in LNJP Hospital are reserved for Covid patients, and the number might be increased according to requirements, Kejriwal said.

"The last few days have seen a rise in the number of corona cases in the entire country, including Delhi. We need to simultaneously spearhead an aggressive vaccination campaign and also put in place measures that can effectively contain the spread of the virus along with making the hospital management equally effective," the CM said.

The last Covid wave in Delhi was in November after which the new cases had become so few in Delhi that "health system and agencies began to lax", Kejriwal said. It is imperative that they gain their momentum again and begin to function in the same efficient manner that they did, which helped contain the spread of the virus earlier, he said.

"The Delhi government and hospitals of Delhi are working in earnest to revert to their November level of preparation that helped contain the virus," he said.

During the last wave, all 2000 beds of LNJP Hospital were declared as Covid beds.

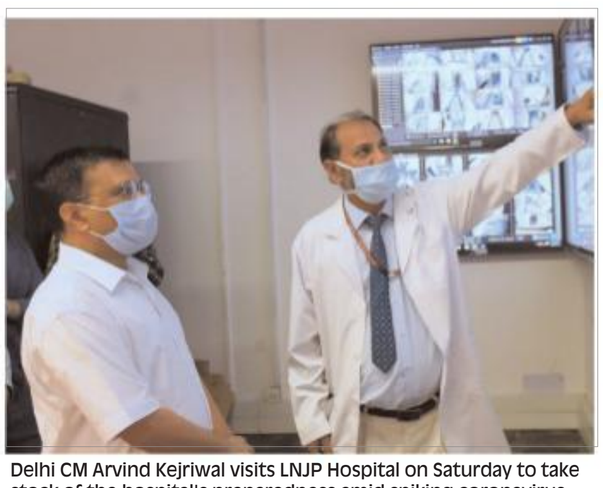
"Whatever is required by the hospitals from our end, will be provided. We sincerely hope and pray to God that no one falls prey to the disease but in the scenario that they do, we will ensure that the hospitals are ready for the challenge and the people of Delhi face no obstacles in recovery," the CM said.

Asked about the vaccination campaign and the Delhi government's preparations in the face of rising coronavirus cases, Kejriwal said, "I have written a letter to the Prime Minister, in which I have said that if adequate doses of the vaccines are made available to us; if we are given permission to increase the number of vaccination centres and if the age limit is removed then within 2-3 months we can vaccinate the entire state".

"I cannot talk about the rest of the country, but according to Delhi government's level of preparation, if these three pre-conditions are met, we can assure you that all residents of Delhi will be vaccinated within 2-3 months," Kejriwal asserted.

Once everyone is vaccinated, it will greatly help contain and end the severity of the virus, the CM pointed out.

"At the moment, we have vaccination for 7-10 days and the conditions for administering them, particularly the age limit, are very rigid. According to me, there is an impending need to remove these obstacles that are coming in the way of the vaccination campaign," he added.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal visits LNJP Hospital on Saturday to take stock of the hospital's preparedness amid spiking coronavirus cases in the Capital. SNS

7,897 fresh Covid cases, 39 fatalities in Capital

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Delhi today recorded 7,897 fresh Covid cases, while 39 more people died due to the infection, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The positivity rate soared to 10.21 per cent, breaching the 10 per cent mark for the first time this year. The positivity rate mid-November last year had stood above 15 per cent in the city.

Yesterday, the national capital had reported 8,521 cases — the second highest single-day count so far — and 39 Covid-linked deaths. This was also the first time that over 8,000 cases had been recorded in a day this year in the city amid a massive spike in cases in the last few weeks.

The highest single-day spike in Delhi so far — 8,593 cases — was reported on 11 November last year, while on 19 November the city had recorded 131 Covid deaths, the highest single-day fatality count till date.

On Thursday, the city had recorded 7,437 cases. On preceding two days, the case count had stood above 5,000.

Today's cases were detected out of a total of 77,374 tests, including 43,473 RT-PCR tests and 33,901 rapid antigen tests, the health bulletin said. The number of Delhi's cumulative Covid cases rose to 7,14,423. Over 6.74 lakh patients have recovered from the virus so far.

According to the bulletin, the city's Covid toll mounted to 11,235.

The number of active cases rose to 28,773 from 26,631 a day before. The number of people under home isolation increased to 15,266 from 13,188 the previous day, while the number of containment zones mounted to 5,236 from Friday's 4,768, the bulletin added.

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Wednesday had warned that the new cases "could cross" the last single-day spike record registered in November, given the pace of Covid spread in the city.

Kejri only leader with vision, PM should call him to discuss schemes for common people: Sisodia

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is the only leader with a vision for development, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi should discuss with him schemes to improve the lives of people and not create hurdles for them, senior AAP leader Mainsh Sisodia said on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference here, the deputy chief minister also claimed that all political parties were promising to follow the "Kejriwal model" of governance in states where elections are being held.

While the three-phase election in Assam and the single-phase polls in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry are over, the fourth leg of the eight-phase West Bengal assembly election was held on Saturday.

"Kejriwal is the only leader who has a vision for the country. He understands the problems being faced by the common people and their needs, and the way for development. He has the capability of taking the country in the right direction. Other parties are following his policies. What he promises, he does," Sisodia said.

"We hope that the prime minister, who is the leader of the nation, would agree to our suggestions because he will not become any smaller if he does. He should invite Chief Minister Kejriwal every fortnight for tea to exchange notes on governance and share their vision for the development of our nation," he said.

Sisodia said that "we sincerely hope there won't be any further hurdles in our road to development".

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader claimed that Delhi has become a laboratory for developing various policies for development.

"Whether it is giving 200 units free electricity or free bus rides for women, all political parties are promising these schemes in other states where elections are being held," he added.

Sisodia said recently when Union Home Minister Amit Shah was campaigning in West Bengal, he promised free electricity up to 200 units should the BJP be elected to power in the state.

"In Kerala, the BJP has promised free public transport for women, and in Tamil Nadu, the party has said that they will bring in a model of governance that is similar to what can be seen in Delhi," he said.

Sisodia said, "In Assam, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has promised free electricity. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has announced free rides for women in public buses despite the fact that there are not enough public buses in Punjab." He said that he has noted that the BJP and the Congress are fighting elections across the country on the foundation of the Kejriwal model of governance.

"They are forging ahead on the basis of the Arvind Kejriwal model of governance, and this gives us immense pleasure," Sisodia said.

Talking about the recent interaction that the prime minister held with chief ministers on COVID-19 management, he said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has insisted upon the relevance of home isolation and how it is a strong line of defence in containing COVID-19; he mentioned the importance of creating micro-containment zones across the country."

Last year, the Delhi government had made these recommendations and later implemented, the deputy chief minister said.

Sisodia claimed that it is only Arvind Kejriwal who knows how to take the nation in the right direction through his impeccable leadership.

JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF DR. KOPAL CHAUDHARY Civil Judge (Junior Division), Gurugram
Eldeco Mensionz Resident Welfare Association
Versus
District Town Planner
CNR No. HRGR02-002044-2020
Next Date: 07-05-2021
Publication Issued to:
M/s. Neovision Infratech Pvt. Ltd., B-63, Antriksh Apartment, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085.
In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 07-05-2021 at 10-00 a.m.
For details logon to https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?trs=district_notice&district=gurugram.
Dated, this day of 06-04-2021.
Civil Judge (Junior Division), Gurugram
Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF SH. MADHUR BAJAJ Civil Judge (Junior Division), Gurgoan
Notice to Defendant through Publication
(Publication Under Order 5, Rule 20 C.P.C.)
Case No. CS/1173/2018
CNR No. HRGR02-001635-2018
Next Date: 12-05-2021 at 10-00 A.M.
Sh. Ajay Arora — Plaintiff
Versus
Sh. Raman Parnami — Defendant
Suit for Recovery.
Notice to:
Sh. Raman Parnami, r/o House No. 519, Parnami Bhawan, Shivpuri, Gurugram-122001.
Second Address : House No. 516, Ward No. 11, Parnami Bhawan, Rattan Garden, Gurugram-122001. — Defendant
In above titled petition, the defendant could not be served. It is ordered that the defendant should appear in person or through counsel on 12-05-2021 at 10-00 a.m.
For details logon to http://ecourts.gov.in
Civil Judge (Junior Division), Gurgoan
Seal of the Court

SITUATION VACANT

APPLICATION for Project Assistant-Position, under Dr. Kaustuv Datta, Department of Genetics, University of Delhi, South Cmpus, New Delhi-110021.
Details of the essential and desirable qualification with experience are available on www.du.ac.in

ANSAM HR Services LLP immediately requires male/female (age below 30) Telecaller fluently in English. 8697685259, 9674765317, 8697905619.

REQUIRED Office Assistant having vast experience for self searching, preparation & submission of E-Tendering including official correspondence at Scientific & Laboratory Instrument Mfg. company in North Kolkata area. Contact: 9433383151.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, BIDHAN Chandra Jotder, son of Pulin Chandra Jotder, P.O. + P.S.: Barasat, North 24 Parganas, Banamalipur, by affidavit from Notary Public, Barasat on 7.4.2021 declare that in my Passport No. Z 120858 both of our middle names "Chandra" have been omitted, to correct my and my father's name should be corrected at the time of renewal of my Passport.

I, SARASWATI Sarkar, W/o. Ashok Sarkar, D/o. Tarapada Gaine, R/o. Vill.: Betpul, P.O.: Maslandapur, P.S.: Habra, 24 Pgs. (N), PIN- 743289, declare that my D.O.B. has been inadvertently written as 12.04.1980 in my husband's Service Record Book in place of 12.02.1981 (correct D.O.B.), before the Court of Ld. Judicial Magistrate 1st Class Barasat, dated 04.12.19.

ELECTRICAL & MACHINERY BAZAR

The Sunday Statesman

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AIR-SURCHARGE; Kathmandu - Re. 2, Eastern Region - Re. 1
All other stations in India - Re. 1

Delhi riots: HC grants bail to two men in murder, conspiracy case

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Delhi High Court has granted bail to two persons, facing prosecution in a case of murder and criminal conspiracy relating to last year's northeast Delhi riots.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait noted that the accused Pradeep Rai and Aman Kashyap are in judicial custody and the trial shall take substantial time.

However, without commenting on the merit of the case, the court said it was of the opinion that the two men deserve bail.

The high court directed that the two accused be released on bail on furnishing a personal bond of Rs 20,000 each with one surety of like amount.

It directed them not to directly or indirectly influence any prosecution witnesses.

The two men are accused in an FIR lodged at Dayalpur police station in northeast Delhi for offences of murder, rioting and criminal conspiracy under the IPC.

The counsel of the accused submitted that one of the eyewitnesses in the case is an eyewitness in multiple FIRs lodged at Dayalpur police station relating to the riots incident that took place on February 25, last year.

He said the incidents took place in Gali no. 10 and 3 and there is a distance of around 500-700 metres between them and therefore, he seemed to be a planted witness.

The high court had directed the prosecution to verify as to how the concerned witness had witnessed the incidents which took place in different lanes.

After verification, the prosecution filed a report stating that the distance between Gali no.10 and Gali no.3 is about 350 metres.

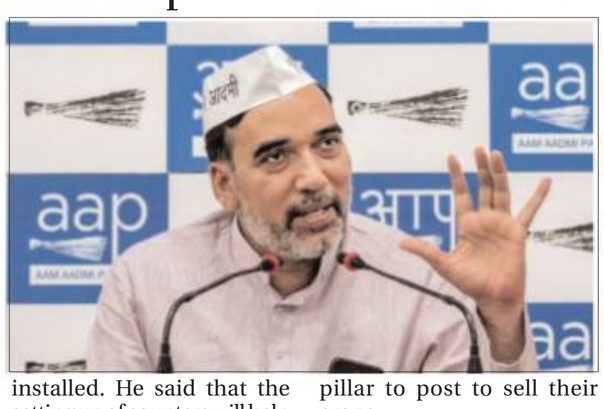
To this, the high court said, In the prima facie opinion of this court, it is possible that the eye witness, who in the present case is resident of Gali no.8, might have seen the incident taking place in Gali No.10, which is close to his place, but how he could see the present incident which has taken place in Gali No.3, and away from Gali no.10 and Gali no.8, is doubtful.

Earlier, the trial court had dismissed the bail pleas of the two men saying the eye witness' statements cannot be thrown into the dustbin merely on the bleak allegations that they are planted witnesses.

Communal violence had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 last year after clashes between citizenship law supporters and protestors spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

'FCI counters to be set up at Narela Mandi from tomorrow'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL



Delhi Agriculture Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday said that in order to facilitate the sale of wheat at MSP rates by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), a joint meeting between Agriculture Department, Mandi officials, and senior officers of the FCI was held. It was decided that the FCI counters will be set up at Narela Mandi from 12 April and registrations will be open from 10 AM to 5 PM in this regard, he said.

Rai said he himself went to Narela Mandi to review whether the counters have been set up, and discovered that the FCI counters were not installed. He said that the setting up of counters will help farmers in a way that their time will be saved, and they will be saved from the long and tedious process of registration, and won't be forced to run from pillar to post to sell their crops.

With the farmers finding it difficult to make their sale at MSP rates at Narela Mandi, Rai stated, "There was a collective problem of the lack of counters at various Mandis, and to solve the problem, a meeting was held. Hence, a joint meeting between the Agriculture department, Mandi Officials, and the senior officers of FCI was convened today, and it has been decided that counters will be set up in Narela Mandi from Monday."

The minister added that "the registrations will be open from 10 AM to 5 PM, and coupons will be given to the famers from there itself. This was especially important as the farmers at Narela Mandi were complaining and were facing problems because of the absence of FCI counters there."

Delhi records maximum temperature of 37.2 deg C

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 37.2 degrees Celsius, a notch above the normal, on Saturday, the India Meteorological Department said. The minimum temperature was recorded at 17.1, three notches below the normal, it said.

On Sunday, the national capital is expected to have a "mainly clear sky" with the minimum and maximum temperature hovering around 17 and 38 degrees Celsius, respectively. Delhi's air quality was recorded in the 'moderate' category. The air quality index was 181 at 4 pm, according to the real-time data of the Central Pollution Control Board. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Man stabs stepmother to death in Delhi's Rohini

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

A 24-year-old man allegedly stabbed his stepmother to death here after she refused to give him money on Saturday, police said.

Shakeela was found dead inside her house in Rohini's Sector-26 area and Mohd Mustafa has been apprehended, they said.

The woman has five stepchildren. Two of them lived with her in Rohini, while the others stayed with their father Mohd Murtaza, who owns a puncture repair shop, in Bahadurgarh, police said. Murtaza's second wife is in Bihar, they said.

"After a thorough examination of all suspects and based on circumstantial evidence, her elder stepson Mohd. Mustafa has been apprehended," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Pranav Tayal said Preliminary investigation suggests that he had a grudge against Shakeela.

epaper.thestatesman.com

As BJP knows it has lost the people's mandate, they are conspiring to kill people

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

Capt has compromised Punjab's interests, should resign: Sukhbir

SAD chief attacks Punjab CM for being 'hand in glove' with Modi govt on issues like farm laws, DBT

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)'s president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday alleged that Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh was compromising the interests of Punjab by being "hand in glove" with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government in "punishing" the farmers of the state for protesting against the Centre's three controversial agriculture laws.

Addressing a Press conference, the SAD president charged that the CM had "sold out" the interests of the state to the BJP. "Forget fighting for the rights of the state, Amarinder does not even raise the issues affecting the people of the state with the Central government. The CM had time and again agreed with all the anti-farmer steps taken by the Central government," he said, adding that the CM was "afraid" of the Modi government.

Badal said farmers' agitation against the new farm laws would not have started if Amarinder had taken prompt action when the agricultural Ordinances were being framed. He claimed that at that time the Punjab CM was part of the committee in which those Ordinances were discussed.

"Later when an opportunity arose to repeal the three agriculture Acts in the Punjab Assembly, the CM proposed amendments in the Acts instead of rejecting them altogether," the SAD chief said.

Badal also charged that the CM recently indulged in a "drama" of opposing the Centre's Direct Bank Transfer (DBT) scheme for procurement of farmers' produce, which "he had agreed in writing to implement from this year".

"Amarinder even assured farmers and 'arhatiyas' (grain commission agents) that this scheme would not be implemented in Punjab but the ministerial team led by finance minister Manpreet Badal meekly surrendered before the Centre in its meeting with food and public distribution minister Piyush Goyal," the SAD chief said.

He said Capt Amarinder had similarly also "surrendered" before the Centre on the issue of seeking rightful compensation of Rs 800 crore for the state on account of Rural Development Fund (RDF). "It is the state's right to impose taxes and the CM should not allow the Centre to infringe on the state's powers in a federal set up," Badal said.

He also castigated the CM for not opposing the increase in fertilizer prices, alleging that Amarinder's "unholy tie-up" with the BJP government was affecting the very livelihood of the farming community.

Badal said it was a matter of record that the Punjab CM has not met the Prime Minister even once to get the problems of the farmers resolved. "Punjabis have been left to their plight. In such a situation Amarinder has lost the moral right to continue in his chair. He should resign immediately," he demanded.

Badal also appealed to PM Modi to hold a meeting with farmer organisations and resolve all their grievances including repealing the three farm laws.

Pushing DBT, Centre 'threatened' not to procure crops from Punjab: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday said the state had to accept the Centre's Direct Bank Transfer (DBT) system for minimum support price (MSP) payments to farmers for crop procurement after the Centre "threatened" not to procure from Punjab if it does not implement the DBT.

Kicking off wheat procurement in Punjab, the CM said the Centre's was "adamant" and refused" to accept the state's request for deferment of the DBT system,. "We fought hard with the Centre on the issue, but they (Centre) were adamant, and even went to the extent of threatening not to procure from Punjab if we do not implement the DBT,." he said.

Assuring the Arhtiyas (grain commission agents) of their involvement in the process of release of payments to the farmers, albeit in a modified manner, while farmers get their payments in their bank accounts within 48 hours, as mandated by the state government, Amarinder said . "the Arhtiyas shall always be associated with procurement".

"Till I am there, you will be part of the system, and your role will always remain," he asserted, adding that he will ensure that the Arhtiya Commission and other charges permitted under the APMC Act will continue.

The CM said he failed to understand why the central government was treating them and the farmers in such a shoddy manner. He recalled that the system of Arhtiyas prevailed even when he was a kid, and visited mandis with his grandfather, and said it was inexplicable why the Centre government wanted to ruin it. The Arhtiyas are not middlemen but service providers, the CM said, adding that the private sector can function along with the existing system and there was no need to change it.

Pointing to the 72 per cent increase in farmers' earning, he attributed it to the combined efforts of the farmers and the Arhtiyas. "Your contribution to the Green Revolution and filling of India's granaries is unforgettable," he told them, adding that he does not agree with anything that the Centre is doing on Agriculture. He assured that all their concerns would be addressed, and all the commitments made to them will be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, Arhtiyas called off their proposed strike after Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh ordered various steps to ensure their continued involvement in the process and immediate release of their pending payments of Rs 131 Crore without waiting for dues to come from Food Corporation of India.

Covid: Haryana shuts Anganwadi centres, crèches till 30 April

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

In view of the prevailing conditions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Haryana government on Saturday decided to close all Anganwadi Centres and Crèches in the state.

For this, financial commissioner, Haryana and additional chief secretary, department of revenue and disaster management, Sanjeev Kaushal has issued an order declaring vacation in all the government and private schools in the state Class I to Class VII upto 30 April.

"However, teachers will attend the schools without any change and will do their administrative works such as preparation of results, admissions and other work processes will continue without any change. Covid-19 appropriate behaviour such as Social distancing, use of face masks, sanitization, hand hygiene etc. should be strictly followed," the order said.

Under guidelines for Anganwadi Centres and Creches,. Kaushal said the state government has decided to close Anganwadi Centres and Crèches under the women and child development department till 30 April.

District programme officers and women and child development project officers (WCDPOs) have been instructed to follow the process of working of Anganwadi Centres as it was followed during the lockdown period and provide all services, including distribution of supplementary nutrition diet (snp) programme at the doorstep of the beneficiaries.

The financial commissioner informed beneficiaries will be called at Anganwadi Centres for immunization with strict adherence to the norms of COVID-19 protection such as maintaining social distancing, use of face masks, sanitization of Anganwadi Centres and that of beneficiaries when they visit Anganwadi Centres. Also, no centre will allow gathering more than 20 persons at any point of time with strict compliance of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

With regard to adherence of instructions being issued, Kaushal said the deputy commissioners will constitute joint inspection teams for enforcing these instructions and should ensure extensive checking and action against the violators as per directions issued by the state government from time to time.

These directions will be enforced by the deputy commissioners in their respective districts and any violations shall be punishable under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 as well as under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Kaushal said strict compliance of these orders should be ensured by all concerned.

Man arrested by Delhi police for deceiving people with fake online job ads

PTI
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

A 48-year-old man was arrested from Kolkata for allegedly duping people by posting fake job advertisements online for work abroad, Delhi police said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Samir Arvind Parekh, a resident of Guwahati in Assam, confessed to have cheated over 25 persons with the promise of securing jobs abroad, they said.

The police said the accused and his associate contacted victims online and promised to provide them employment abroad. On this assurance, the accused and his associate got the victims to deposit money on the pretext of a registration fee, medical examination and interview.

The matter came to notice after one of the victims approached her with a complaint.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that she runs a home food delivery service from Chattarpur in collaboration with her business partner. During the first week of March, she saw an advertisement posted online for a chef's job abroad and contacted the person concerned, who offered her USD 2,000 salary to work as a chef at a restaurant in USA.

She and her business partner deposited Rs 36,000 each as registration fee for the same. Later, when they tried contacting the same person, the phone number was found to be switched off.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said, A case was registered and during the probe, we found that all the contact numbers were taken on fake addresses.

Punjab govt asks pvt hospitals to defer elective surgeries for more Covid beds

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

The Punjab government on Saturday urged private hospitals in the state to defer the elective surgeries at least till 30 April to meet the rising number of demand for Covid beds.

In a virtual meeting with private hospitals of the state for Covid-19 management, principal secretary health and family welfare, Hussan Lal said there are 213 private hospitals on board for the Covid-19 treatment in the state at present and the government has provided 230 ventilators to private hospitals which should be used optimally.

Expressing concern about the rising number of fatalities, especially while shifting the patients, Lal advised referral should be made in time. He said more than 20,000 doses of Remdisivir have been provided to government and private hospitals and these were available free of cost.

He further exhorted the hospitals to treat the patient at the level of which they have the facilities available and the patient should be referred to the appropriate level well in time, if they feel that the patient requires higher level of hospitalization.

Regarding the Covid Vaccine, the principal secretary advised that being a very precious item, its wastage should be avoided.

He urged private hospitals to set-up Covid Vaccination Centers to facilitate vaccination.

He further reiterated Oxygen demand and supply must be communicated to the civil surgeon of the district so that in case of any additional requirement, the same could be made available from the appropriate source well in time.

Ramp up Covid testing, reduce vaccine wastage: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister to DCs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 APRIL

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has asked all the Deputy Commissioners to increase testing in their respective districts and directed the Health department to ensure minimum wastage of the Covid vaccines as the nation and the state cannot afford this.

He gave these directions during a virtual meeting with the Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police, Chief Medical Officers, Medical colleges' principals and medial superintendents on Friday evening to review the Covid situation in the state.

Thakur said the twin strategy for testing, tracing and treatment with effective surveillance through micro containment zones was the need of the hour.

"Greater emphasis must be laid on RT-PCR tests and accomplish the target fixed for achieving 70 per cent tests," he said, adding to make vaccination people's movement, 11 to 14 April may be celebrated as 'Teeka Utsav'.

Thakur further stated that the biggest matter of concern was that the virus was spreading at a fast pace.

In addition to this, the number of deaths has also increased rapidly which was a matter of concern, he said, while asking all the district authorities to enhance their capacity be it bed capacity, quarantine capacity and medical equipment capacity etc, he said.

He added the Deputy Commissioners must also ensure peoples' participation in tackling this situation.

Besides, effective involvement of elected representatives of PRIs and Urban Local Bodies must also be ensured as was being done last year.

"Strict action must also be taken against those involved in gross violation of SOPs.

The hoteliers must also strictly follow the SOPs so that the state government may not be forced to take action," he added.

The Chief Minister said laxity shown by the people has resulted in a sharp resurgence of Covid cases in the state and special focus must be laid on regular monitoring of people in home isolation.

He added ASHA workers, Anganwari workers and other health workers should regularly monitor the patients under home isolation and people should also be motivated to go for immediate testing as soon as they get any symptoms so that they could be provided treatment without delay.

He also directed all the Deputy Commissioners to keep a tab on the drought like situation in their respective districts and fodder issue must also be monitored regularly so that the farmers may not face any inconvenience.

HP Jal Shakti Minister Mahender Singh Thakur said that all the Deputy Commissioners must provide a detailed and consolidated report regarding the losses, a district has suffered due to the drought like situation in the state.

"The Deputy Commissioners must also provide detailed reports regarding losses to agriculture and horticulture crops and land must be identified to construct rain water harvesting structures for water conservation," he added.

Himachal exceeds global target for MMR

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 APRIL

The health service being provided by the Himachal Pradesh government to women in urban as well as rural areas during pregnancy, delivery and post delivery has resulted in the state exceeding the global target for Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR).

The MMR in Himachal had been recorded at 55 per 1 lakh live births while UNICEF had fixed the target of reducing MMR to less than 70 per 1 lakh live births by 2030.

A state government official said the government efforts had resulted in institutional delivery increasing manifolds and decline in MMR in Himachal in recent years.

"The institutional delivery has increased to 91 percent in the state while the Maternal Mortality Rate has declined to 55 per 1,00,000 live births which is better than the envisaged global target," he added.

The official said all countries of the world had united for a new target to accelerate the decline of maternal mortality by 2030 as a sustainable development goal which also includes that no country has a MMR of more than twice the global average.

To raise awareness about adequate access to care during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal services, the National Motherhood Day was observed every year on 11 April on the birth anniversary of Kasturba Gandhi, wife of the Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi.

He further stated that the state government had taken many initiatives for the care of pregnant women and a scheme, Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) had been launched to promote institutional deliveries.

"It is an initiative to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women including normal deliveries and caesarean operations and sick newborn up to one year after birth in government health institutions in both rural and urban areas.

The entitlements include free drugs and consumables, free diagnostics, free blood if required and free diet.

Besides, it also provides free transport from home to health institutions, free transport between facilities in case of referral and free drop back from Institutions to home.

In addition, to motivate families for institutional deliveries, women are given incentive of Rs 1,100 for institutional delivery under JSSK and ambulance service Janani Express-102 has been started to facilitate pregnant women and to minimize the risk during travelling.

Similar entitlements have been put in place for all sick newborns and infants accessing public health institutions for their treatment," he said.

The official said maternal health and newborn health are closely linked and most maternal deaths were preventable if women access health-care facilities to prevent or manage complications.

"The state government is also working to curb the issue of malnutrition among pregnant women and all pregnant women are counseled about the diet to be taken during pregnancy during their visits to government health institutions.

The pregnant women are also provided with iron and calcium supplements free of cost," he added.

Oversee formation of HP MCs: Shukla to state Cong

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 10 APRIL

Former Union Minister and Himachal Congress in-charge Rajeev Shukla on Saturday asked the state party leadership to oversee the selection of mayors and deputy mayors in four Muncipal Corporations (MCs) and the MCs' formation, whose polls results were declared on 7 April.

Shukla appointed Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri as special representative in Dharamshala MC, Asha Kumari in Palampur and state Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore at Solan MC.

"These leaders will coordinate with observers earlier appointed for MC elections to ensure smooth selection of mayor and deputy mayor candidates," he said, adding state organization secretary Rajneesh Kimta will coordinate with observers in Palampur and Solan MCs.

Gujarat was given the lion's share of supply of medical equipment, which is disproportionate to the caseload. What is this if not discrimination based on politics

SENIOR MAHARASHTRA CONGRESS LEADER PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN
STATING THAT MAHARASHTRA, DESPITE HAVING THE HIGHEST COVID-19 CASELOAD, WAS FACING STEP-MOTHERLY TREATMENT FROM CENTRE

THUMBNAILS

A beneficiary receives a dose of Covid-19 vaccine at a camp in Jaipur on Saturday. AGENCIES

RSS chief tests positive: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat has tested coronavirus positive and has been admitted to a private hospital in Nagpur, the RSS said. The health condition of Bhagwat, 70, is stable and all his vital parameters are normal. PTI

J&K Tourism: The Ministry of Tourism will organise a mega event to showcase the myriad tourism products of Jammu and Kashmir from 11 to 13 April. The event titled 'Tapping the Potential of Kashmir: Another Day in Paradise' will be held in Srinagar. The ministry is keen to promote the region as a destination for leisure, adventure, wedding, films and MICE Tourism," the tourism ministry said. PTI

Covid 'negative' report for IPL: The Mumbai Cricket Association has asked its Apex Council members to produce a Covid-19 negative certificate in order to enter the Wankhede stadium, which will host 10 matches of the Indian Premier League. PTI

Maha weekend lockdown: Streets wear deserted look

The weekend lockdown and other curbs will continue till 30 April in Maharashtra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

The weekend lockdown imposed across Maharashtra to bring under control the Covid-19 surge, has elicited a positive reponse from people so far with the streets and markets in most parts of the state, including Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nagpur, wearing a deserted look, officials said on Saturday.

However, at some locations in the state, including some market areas in Mumbai, people were seen flouting social distancing and other norms by gathering at one place in large numbers.

The first weekend lockdown in the state began at 8 pm on Friday and it will continue till 7 a.m. on Monday.

The announcement about the weekend lockdown had been made on Sunday, when the state government also declared some other restrictions, like night curfew during the week days and prohibitory orders during the day time as part of its 'Break the Chain' Covid-19 action plan. The weekend lockdown and other curbs will continue till 30 April.

In the country's financial capital, some areas like south Mumbai were completely deserted due to the lockdown. But people in some other pockets of the city, like the market areas in the central parts and some suburbs in the eastern parts, could be seen stepping out of their houses and also crowding at some points.

A large number of people were seen in Dadar vegetable market, with many of them not even wearing face masks, eyewitnesses said.

At many places in the city, people also made a beeline outside liquor shops. Mumbai police have deployed personnel to ensure that people adhere to the rules.

Taking to *Twitter*, Mumbai Police had said, "Indoor Mode: ON! A Friday-evening reminder about the weekend lockdown from 8pm tonight till 7am Monday. We urge all citizens to not step out, except for essential services or medical emergencies. Stay home, Mumbaikars. Help Mumbai stay safe!"

In Pune, the weekend lockdown has so far received a good response as all shops, commercial establishments, major market areas remained shut and there were no people on the roads.

"There is a very good response to the weekend lockdown in Pune. Barring medical shops, almost all other shops, commercial establishments and market areas are shut. People are not coming out on the streets and 95 per cent of those who stepped out, had a valid reason to do so," Joint Commissioner of Police Ravindra Shisave said.

Police have set up multiple checkpoints in the city to ensure that peole follow the lockdown in letter and spirit. The lockdown in Pune had started at 6 pm. on Friday.

In Aurangabad, the weekend lockdown brought the movement of people under control.

The Bandra Worli Sea Link wears a deserted look as Maharashtra Government announced weekend lockdown due to surge in Covid-19 cases in Mumbai on Saturday. AGENCIES

Amarinder: Anger against Centre over farm laws impacting vaccination drive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 10 APRIL

Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday said the anger against the Centre over new farm laws is impacting the Covid-19 vaccination in the state, even as he said Punjab was left with only five days of supply of Covid vaccine doses and demanded fresh supply of the same.

During a video conference of the Congress-ruled states convened by the party president Sonia Gandhi to discuss the Covid situation, Amarinder said people in Punjab were still not coming out in large numbers for the vaccination due to the massive anger prevailing against the Central government on the issue of farm laws.

Since Punjab has a majority population among the agriculture community, even the common man is affected by the farmers' agitation, he said, adding "this anger is impacting the vaccination drive." The CM said his government is undertaking an extensive media campaign to address the misinformation regarding Covid and vaccination hesitancy.

With Punjab left with only five days of supply (5.7 lakh Covid vaccine doses) at the current levels of vaccinating 85,000-90,000 persons a day, Amarinder hoped the Centre would send fresh batches of vaccine supply soon.

Punjab has vaccinated more than 16 lakh persons, at an average of around 85000-90000 per day, he said. Ranking 18th in the country at present in terms of cases reported, Punjab is showing around eight per cent positivity, with an average of around 3,000 cases per day for the past 15 days, the CM apprised Sonia.

The number of cases is slightly stable, he said adding even in the graphs put up by the health ministry in the Prime Minister's review meeting yesterday, the "curve appears to have flattened over the past fortnight." The state currently has around 27,200 active cases.

Amarinder said deaths are a concern for Punjab, with around 50-60 daily deaths with a little under two per cent case fatality rate (CFR) in the second surge.

On 9 April, a total of 3,459 persons tested positive out of 41,347 samples tested and 56 deaths were reported, he said.

Tomar appeals to farmers to call off protest as Covid-19 cases surge

Farmers block the KMP Expressway during their ongoing agitation, in Ghaziabad on Saturday. AGENCIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Amid a spike in Covid-19 cases, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar Saturday appealed to the farmers protesting at Delhi borders to call off their long-running agitation, saying the government is ready for a discussion whenever they come with a concrete proposal.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting against the three new agri-marketing laws for nearly five months now, braving the raging pandemic. There has been no headway in the logjam over the issue since 22 January, when the 11th and the last round of formal talks happened between the Central government and the protesting farmer unions.

Tomar expressed concerns about the farmers' health and wellbeing as India witnessed a record surge of over 1.45 lakh coronavirus cases on Saturday.

"Now in the second wave of pandemic, the entire nation and the world is following Covid-19 protocols. Even protesting farmers should follow the protocols. Their life is important for us," Tomar said. In the current Covid-19 situation, I urge them (agitating farmers) to call off their protest. The government is ready for a discussion whenever they come with a proposal," he told reporters.

Stating that there is no "dissatisfaction" among the farming community across the country over the new farm laws, the minister said many farm bodies in fact are in the favour these legislations, while some are opposing them.

"Ours is a democratic country, be it farmers or citizens, if they have any doubt, the government believes it is its responsibility is to clear doubts and find a solution," he said. The minister said the three laws were not drafted all of a sudden, but there was a long discussion in the past and PM Narendra Modi has taken it forward, he said.

He said that normally any protest continues if the government is not ready for talks. But this government has held with open heart 11 rounds of discussion with representatives of protesting farm unions, yet their agitation did not stop, he said. Tomar reiterated that he had appealed to the farmer unions in all 11 rounds of meetings to send back senior citizens and children from the protest sites in view of the pandemic.

J&K: Covid-19 spreading in educational institutions

JAMMU, 10 APRIL

Due to further spike in Covid-19 positive cases, deputy commissioner Anshul Garg on Saturday declared the area within and around the University of Jammu a containment zone putting restrictions on movement of students and staff.

More than 40 persons were tested positive on the campus during the day.

The Sanskrit University and the GGM Science College have already been locked-down. Covid-19 is spreading in education institutions and work-places. About 24 students and staff members at the IIM Jammu campus were tested positive on Thursday, a day before the visit of the Vice President in connection with convocation of the institute. Education institutions in Kashmir are also affected. SNS

Setback for BJP, new outfit captures key tribal body in Tripura

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
AGARTALA, 10 APRIL

In a major and far-reaching political development in BJP ruled Tripura, a newly-formed tribal based party, TIPRA Motha, registered a landslide victory on Saturday to capture power in the politically important Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), defeating the saffron party candidates.

Of the total 28 seats in TTAADC, the TIPRA Motha won 18 seats, the BJP secured nine seats while one seat went to an Independent candidate. The outcome of the elections to the TTAADC is a major setback for the BJP-IPFT (Indigenous People's Front of Tripura) alliance, which wrested power in Tripura in 2018 after defeating the CPI-M-led Left parties that ruled the state for 25 years.

However, as a consolation, the BJP for the first time won nine seats in the TTAADC though its junior ally IPFT, despite being a major tribal-based party, drew a blank.

According to the results declared by the State Election Commission, which conducted the April 6 elections to the 28-member TTAADC, of the 28 winners, two are women ~Dolly Reang (TIPRA Motha) and Swapna Rani Das (BJP). The counting of votes took place on Saturday in 16 sub-divisional headquarters across Tripura.

Amalgamating various local tribal-based parties and leaders and members of other parties, the TIPRA Motha headed by Tripura's royal scion Pradyot Bikram Manikya Deb Barman was formed just a few months ago. It fielded candidates in all the 28 seats while the BJP-IPFT alliance also contested all the seats.

Deb Barman, who was earlier the state president of the Congress but subsequently quit the party in 2019 over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act issue, won from the Takarjala-Jampuijala seat in western Tripura.

Deb Barman, 43, son of former Congress minister Bibhu Kumari Devi and ex-Congress Lok Sabha member Kirit Bikram Kishore Deb Barman, is likely to be the chief executive member of the TTAADC.

Tripura's oldest tribal-based party Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT), a former ally of the Congress, is also a partner of the TIPRA Motha, and its two candidates, including general secretary Jagadhish Debbarma, secured victory in the TTAADC polls.

CREAM OF THE CROP

A woman harvesting wheat at a village in Ghaziabad district on Saturday. AGENCIES

Samajwadi Party to form outfit named after Dr Ambedkar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW, 10 APRIL

In an apparent bid to widen its electoral base, the Samajwadi Party on Saturday decided to set up 'Babasaheb Vahini', a party affiliated outfit after Dalit icon Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's name.

SP president Akhilesh Yadav announced the decision to form the outfit on the occasion of Dr Ambedkar's birth anniversary on 14 April in a tweet, saying it will have units at the levels of the country, various states and their districts.

"In order to keep the thoughts and ideas of Babasaheb Ambedkar active, remove the disparity and injustice and move towards an equitable social justice, we pledge to form 'Babasaheb Vahini' on the birth anniversary of Ambedkar (April 14), the SP chief said in a tweet in Hindi.

'In order to keep the thoughts and ideas of Babasaheb Ambedkar active, remove the disparity and injustice and move towards an equitable social justice, we pledge to form Babasaheb Vahini on the birth anniversary of Ambedkar (April 14),' the SP chief said in a tweet in Hindi

The outfit will work in the districts, states and the country", he added.

Two days ago, Akhilesh Yadav had urged people to observe Dalit Diwali, saying, "In the dark (Amavasya) period of BJP's politics, the Constitution, which gave a new light to independent India, is in danger. Hence, the SP will celebrate the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar as 'Dalit Diwali' in Uttar Pradesh, the country and abroad, he had added.

Speaking to reporters at the party headquarters here and responding to a question on 'Dalit Diwali', Akhilesh Yadav said, What's there in a name? The name can be anything -- Ambedkar Diwali, 'Samvidhan Diwali or Samta Diwas are some of the names.

Ram Manohar Lohia and Babasaheb Ambedkar had pledged to work together. And, if the Samajwadi Party are embracing the followers of Ambedkar, why should the BJP and Congress have problems?" he asked. The SP chief also asked if the BJP and Congress will light a lamp on this occasion.

The former UP CM also hit out at the UP government over the alleged Covid-19 mismanagement.

After Modi visit, India, Bangladesh to build 'youth maitri bridge'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Nearly a fortnight after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka, diplomats, experts and politicians have pitched for forging a 'youth maitri bridge' by roping in the next generation in both India and Bangladesh to take bilateral ties to new heights.

Setting the tone for increasing youth exchanges, India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami underlined the need for greater involvement of young people in taking India-Bangladesh relationship forward.

"We are both among the youngest countries in the world in terms of youth profile and profile of the population," he said at a webinar organised by India Writes Network and India and The World magazine.

The Indian envoy underscored the imperative of shaping the bilateral relationship in such a manner that is relevant to the next generation of Indians and Bangladeshis, which is where technology, trade, travel and the ease of doing business and the ease of connecting with each other comes in as essential focal points.

The Indian envoy underscored the imperative of shaping the bilateral relationship in such a manner that is relevant to the next generation of Indians and Bangladeshis, which is where technology, trade, travel and the ease of doing business and the ease of connecting with each other comes in as essential focal points

In a similar vein, Nahim Razzaq, a Member of Parliament from the ruling Bangladesh Awami league, spoke about the need for creating an ecosystem where India and Bangladesh can connect the youth of both of these countries.

"India is central to Bangladesh in every sense of the word. It is not only within the bilateral, but also within the regional and international framework," said Shahidul Haque, Bangladesh's longest-serving foreign secretary, who retired last year.

Other eminent diplomats and experts who spoke at the webinar, included India's former High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri, Anil Wadhwa, Former Secretary (East) in the External Affairs Ministry Anil Wadhwa, Dhaka University Professor Amena Mohsin, RIS Professor Prabir De and Manish Chand, Editor-in-Chief of India Writes Network.

Responding to a question on rising fundamentalism and radicalism in Bangladesh, Mohsin stressed on drawing a distinction between violent extremism which is religious centric and the use of politics in the domestic arena. "I don't think it will have any major impact in its relations with India because we have seen the rise of religious nationalism in our neighbourhood also but that has not affected the foreign policy aspects or bilateral relations between countries," she said.

Ambassador Wadhwa highlighted the importance of Bangladesh for India's Indo-Pacific policy and Act East strategy and highlighted that Bangladesh can gain substantively from connectivity, infrastructure and trade which is a primary Indian agenda in the Indo-Pacific.

He, however, rejected the notion of a rivalry with China and underscored that India should focus on its own model of engagement.

Modi govt should quit Quad over US intrusion into India's EEZ: CPM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The CPI (M) today said if the Modi Government had any self-respect, it should quit the Quad alliance over the American Seventh Fleet's intrusion into India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters off the coast of Lakshadweep.

The party said the American Fleet warship's intrusion was a "gratuitous challenge to India's sovereignty."

The Fleet's statement made it clear that this operation was for "challenging India's excessive maritime claims," the party said. "The United States is being blatantly hypocritical. It has not signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas, of which India is a signatory, but claims it is acting as per international law," the party said.

TENDER

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER P.H.E.D. CIRCLE TONK

No. 14-21 Date 2.04.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS THROUGH e-procurement system NIT No. 01/2021-22

Online tenders through e-procurement system are hereby invited, on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from enlisted contractors with the department in appropriate class under the Government of Rajasthan and enlisted contractors with CPWD/Postal, Telecom, Railways, MES, other state Govt./ Central Govt. undertaking / organization equivalent to "AA" class of Rajasthan provided they meet out prescribed eligibility criteria for the following works. The details may be seen on the DIPR website and tenders can be downloaded from website http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in.

Bidders who wish to participate in online bidding will have to procure digital certificate as per IT Act-2000 to sign their electronic bids. Offers which are not digitally signed will not be accepted. Bidder shall submit their offer in electronic format on above mentioned website.

Work Detail of NIT	NIT No.	NIT No. NIB & UBN No.
	1/2021-22	NIB - PHE2122A0045
		UBN - PHE 2122WSOB00086
Available/Submission of tender document at website		22.04.2021 up to 18:00 Hrs.
Opening of PQ tender		23.04.2021 up to 16:00 Hrs.

विस्तृत जानकारी http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर कार देखे एवं डाउनलोड किए जा सकते हैं। पावर सप्लाई व टेंडर प्रति हेतु भुगतान के माध्यम से जमा किए जावें।

Superintending Engineer
PHED Circle, Tonk

DIPR/C/3752/2021

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
e-procurement notice
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

The Superintending Engineer (Mech), O/o Engineer-in-Chief HP.PWD, Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar Shimla-171002, invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh for procurement of Machinery with detail as under:-

S. No.	Name of work	Qty.	Est. Cost of Work (Rs. in Lakh)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Cost of Document (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender	Period of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Rock Breaker Attachment compatible for use in any make of backhoe loader.	7 No.	28	70,000/-	1050/-	120 days	60 days	Principle Manufacturers/Authorised Dealer

Period of availability of Tender on-line/date & time of on-line bid submission and Date & time of opening of Bids are given as under:-

On-line Availability of Tender for bidders		Last date & Time for on-line Submission of Bids	Date & Time of Opening of tender	
From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
14/04/2021 at 3:00 PM	04/05/2021 at 3:00 PM	04/05/2021 at 3:00 PM	05/05/2021 at 3:30 PM	Date to be announced.

Bidding documents can be downloaded from the web site https://hptenders.gov.in. The document downloaded from the web site should not be tempered, and if any such tempering is detected before or after the opening of bids, the bidder shall be penalized and black listed. Other terms and conditions shall remain same as given in the bid document.

For further details please log on to https://hptenders.gov.in

Superintending Engineer (Mech), Pre-Fab-Building & Ropeways,
Nirman Bhawan, Nigam Vihar, HPPWD, Shimla-171 002
E-mail:- mecpre-shi-hp@nic.in, ee-mec-hp@nic.in
Phone:- 0177-2624781, Mobile:- 9418019836

0146/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

India needs jobs and jabs, BJP govt gives jumlas, jibes

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
SUGGESTING THAT MONEY SHOULD BE GIVEN IN THE HANDS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE TO TIDE OVER SECOND COVID WAVE

THUMBNAILS

Police punish commuters for flouting lockdown norms, imposed to curb the recent surge in Covid cases in Jabalpur on Saturday. AGENCIES

ATM burglary: Two people were arrested on Saturday for allegedly attempting to loot an ATM in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, police said here. An FIR was registered on 7 April based on a complaint from a J&K Bank official that unidentified people had broken locks and entered the cabin of an ATM and damaged it in a attempt to commit burglary, the police said. PTI

Khelo India State Centre of Excellence: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday inaugurated the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE) for rowing at the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council Water Sports Academy in Srinagar. PTI

Rape: Bareilly Police have lodged a case against four people for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl and threatening to upload her video on social media, an official said on Saturday. The accused included the girl's uncle. Police said the girl was raped by her uncle and three youths around a month ago. On 2 April, the girl tried to commit suicide, brother saved her. PTI

Scientists blame sluggish vaccine drive, carelessness for Covid surge

Experts say the population has been made more vulnerable by elections and other public events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Why are India's Covid-19 cases flaring up so sharply? There are no clear answers but top scientists say the complex interplay of mutant strains, a hugely susceptible population made more vulnerable by elections and other public events and the lowering of guard are primarily to blame.

India's Covid tally climbed to 1,32,05,926 (1.32 crore, 13.2 million) with a record spike of 1,45,384, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday, in what many say is a second wave that is surging more powerfully than the first. And just like there were no answers to why there was a slide earlier this year, there is no clarity on why the numbers are rising so sharply.

While there are many imponderables and many things unknown, virologists Shahid Jameel and T Jacob John are agreed that not following Covid-19 protocol, including informing people they must continue with precautions even after being vaccinated, and a sluggish vaccination drive are responsible. Jameel said the interplay of mutants and vaccines over the next couple of months will decide the future of Covid in India and the world.

The intensity of the surge also suggests that there were ahuge number of susceptible people after the first wave, the director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University in Haryana told.

The Centre warned earlier this week that the next four weeks are critical and people's participation in helping control the second wave of the contagion is pivotal. NITI Aayog Member (Health) V K Paul said the pandemic situation has worsened with a sharp rise in cases and a large part of the population still susceptible to the virus, without giving any clear explanation on why this is happening.

The fact that people lowered the guard and didn't follow Covid protocols after the first wave was over is certainly one valid explanation for the surge, Jameel said.

Everything opening up to pre-Covid levels and behaviour that was no longer risk-averse exposed the susceptible population in a big way. A new factor is emerging mutants~ both imported and homegrown, the eminent virologist added.

John, professor of virology at Tamil Nadu's Christian Medical College (CMC), concurred with Jameel, saying not following Covid-19 protocols is partly to blame for the new wave. Lowering of the guard was led by the central government and followed by all political parties, all religious groups, and the public at large.

Schools and colleges were opened without vaccinating all staff. This explains partlythe second wave, John told. Wherever infection was rising, stricter imposition of discipline should have been taken but with the elections ahead, no leader wanted that. Elections during pandemic had to be carefully planned, the renowned virologist told.

The scientist also agreed that variants are the other reason for the second wave, adding that it was too late for India to look for mutants.

The two factors came together and we were leaderless in response at the critical time. The speed of spread in the second wave is twice as fast as in the first wave. Partly due to variants and partly lowering of the guard, John explained.

Referring to a Health Ministry briefing on 24 March, Jameel noted that the UK variants now show up in about 80 per cent of cases from Punjab.

A new double mutant has emerged in India and is reported in 15-20 per cent of cases analysed from Maharashtra. If this percentage goes up further, it would be a clear indication of its role in the Maharashtra surge, said the virologist.

In India, variants first identified in the UK, South Africa and Brazil have been found.

In late March, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) announced that a new variant had been identified insamples of saliva taken from people in Maharashtra, Delhi and Punjab.

The genome sequencing carried out by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG), a consortium of 10 labs in India, identified two important mutations in the variant dubbed as double mutant.

Explaining that the UK variant is known to be about 50 per cent more infectious, Jameel said one of the two mutations in the double mutant was also found in California, US, where it was associated with increased transmission. The two experts also discussed the country's vaccination drive.

According to John, the government started the drive too lateand no outcome goal of vaccination was defined.

Kerala Assembly Speaker questioned in dollar smuggling case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 10 APRIL

The Customs sleuths grilled Kerala Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan in connection with the dollar smuggling case.

As Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan failed to appear before the Customs for interrogation multiple times, the agency sleuths questioned him on Friday at his official residence in Thiruvananthapuram in connection with the dollar smuggling case.

Though a notice was served to the Speaker asking him to appear at Customs office in Kochi on Thursday, Sreeramakrishnan didn't appear citing medical reasons. Sources said the entire interrogation procedure has not be completed on Friday and the agency would again ask him to appear for questioning.

The Speaker was questioned based on the revelations made by gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh and Sarith PS. They both had revealed that Sreeramakrishnan had handed over a bag to Sarith containing currencies which were handed over to diplomat of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram. They alleged that Speaker Sreeramakrishnan had investments in an educational institution in Oman. Speaker had met a member of the Sharjah Royal family in Thiruvananthapuram for starting an educational institute and getting land for it in Sharjah.

The Speaker was questioned based on the revelations made by gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh and Sarith PS. They both had revealed that Sreeramakrishnan had handed over a bag to Sarith containing currencies which were handed over to diplomat of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram

Sarith had earlier given statement that Speaker handed over dollars to him at the flat. Another accused in the case, Swapna Suresh had stated that Sreeramakrishnan stayed in this apartment occasionally. Meanwhile, Speaker Sreeramakrishnan has tested positive for Covid-19. His office has directed all those who recently came in contact with the Speaker to go into quarantine.

YSR cancels public rally over rise in Covid cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 10 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh chief minister and YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has cancelled his public rally slated for 14 April at Tirupati ahead of the bypoll for the Lok Sabha seat citing the increasing number of new cases of Covid-19 in Chittoor and Nellore districts, just a day after he wrote to PM Narendra Modi seeking more vaccines to mark "Tika Utsav", a Central programme to ramp up vaccination, successfully.

Reaching out to his voters in yet another letter Reddy announced his decision to cancel the rally as a "responsible CM" because health and happiness of his people were of utmost importance to him while urging them to vote for his candidate in the bypoll on 17 April.

Although polls are being held in four states and a union territory along with bypolls in several states this is the first time a political leader chose to cancel his campaign due to the pandemic. In fact political leaders and cadres of various parties have come under fire for blatantly ignoring Covid-19 norms by holding huge gatherings.

According to the health bulletin the cases have been rising in the state rapidly with two districts Chittoor and Nellore across which the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat is spread, recording a massive spike in the past few days.

Among the 2,765 fresh cases in the state Chittoor recorded 496 cases while Nellore came up with 292 cases. Again among the 11 fatalities four are from these two districts. Mentioning the above statistics CM Reddy wrote: " Out of wanting to show affection and love scores of citizens could turn up at my public meeting if I decide to go ahead with it. All these are my people. Their health and happiness is of utmost importance for me."

The YSRCP chief had earlier written to individual families residing within the constituency listing out the various social welfare schemes introduced by his government and availed by the respective families while urging them to vote for the YSRCP candidate Dr Gurumurthy.

Yesterday, the CM had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to urgently send another 25 lakh vaccine doses to successfully undertake "Tika Utsav" to be celebrated between 11 April and 14 April. The CM chose to write to the Prime minister after officials informed him that the state currently held a stock two lakh doses and another two lakh was expected.

10 killed, 40 hurt as truck falls into gorge in UP

LUCKNOW/ETAWAH, 10 APRIL

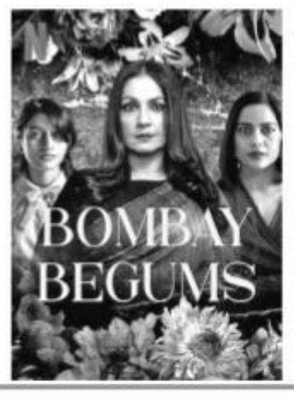
Ten people were killed and 40 injured as a truck on which they were travelling fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge in UP's Etawah district on Saturday, police said.

"The incident took place in the Barhpura police station area after the driver of the vehicle lost control over it," Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Prashant Kumar Prasad told PTI, adding that the accident took place in a ravine area. A police PRO said, "The number of people who have died stands at 10. The injured have been admitted to the Etawah district hospital. Depending upon the seriousness of the cases, the injured will be shifted to higher centres for medical treatment."

Meanwhile, Etawah SSP Brijesh Kumar Singh said the accident took place around 4 p.m. on the Udi Chakarnagar road. "The truck was going from Agra to a Kalika Devi temple located in the Lakhna area of Etawah to offer a flag when the driver of the truck lost control over it and it fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge," Singh said, adding that 10 people died on the spot. PTI

'Bombay Begums' row: NCPCR summons Mumbai police official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL



The apex child rights body NCPCR has summoned a senior Mumbai police official on Monday with action taken report on alleged "inappropriate" portrayal of children in *Netflix's* "Bombay Begums" series.

In a letter to Raju Bhujbal, DCP Enforcement, Mumbai Police, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) said the Mumbai police commissioner had forwarded the commission's complaint against the series to Bhujbal, but no response had been received in the matter yet.

"The Commission is constrained to issue this summon for you to appear before the Commission through video conferencing on 12 April, 2021 at 11:00 hours on (Monday) along with the requisite compliance/action taken report," the commission said.

The NCPCR had last month taken cognizance upon a complaint received from two Twitter handles in regard to Bombay Begums series streaming on Netflix, wherein children were allegedly shown indulging in snorting drugs and taking indecent pictures.

It had asked the Mumbai police to register a complaint against the series and take necessary action.

The Netflix series delves into the lives of five women from different sections of society, who all want different things in life.

Earlier, the child rights body had directly asked Netflix to stop the streaming of the series on their platform till the time they came to any decision on removal of the scenes, and held a meeting with officials of the online streaming platform.

SC asks Centre, states to respond on repeal of provisions criminalising begging

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre and four states, including Maharashtra and Gujarat, to file their response within three weeks on a plea seeking a direction to repeal the provisions criminalising begging.

A bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and R Subhash Reddy noted in its order that though a notice was issued on the plea on February 10 this year, only Bihar has so far filed its response in the matter.

Although notice has been issued on February 10, 2021, a reply has been filed by the respondent - state of Bihar - only and other respondents have not yet filed their reply. Let reply be filed within three weeks, the bench said in its order passed on Friday.

The apex court has posted the matter for hearing after three weeks.

The top court had in February sought a response from the Centre, and the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Bihar on the plea which has claimed that the sections of the statute criminalising begging are violative of constitutional rights.

The plea filed by Meerut resident Vishal Pathak has referred to the August 2018 verdict of the Delhi High Court which had decriminalised begging in the national capital and said that provisions of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which treats begging as an offence cannot sustain constitutional scrutiny.

The provisions of the statutes criminalising the act of begging put people in a situation to make an unreasonable choice between committing a crime or not committing one and starving, which goes against the very spirit of the Constitution and violates Article 21 i.e. Right to Life, said the plea, filed through advocate H K Chaturvedi.

Referring to the Census 2011, the plea has said that the total number of beggars in India is 4,13,670 and the number has increased from the last census.

It said that the government has the mandate to provide social security to everyone and ensure that all have basic facilities, as embedded in the Directives Principles of State Policy in the Constitution.

However, the presence of beggars is evidence that the State has failed to provide these basic facilities to all its citizens, thus instead of working on its failure and examining what made people beg, criminalising the act of begging is irrational and against the approach of a socialist nation as embedded in the preamble of our Constitution, the plea has claimed.

It said that a person, who is compelled to beg due to certain circumstances, cannot be faulted for his actions.

The plea has claimed that The Abolition of Begging and Rehabilitation of Beggars Bill 2018' was introduced in Lok Sabha but till date, this bill is not passed and is wedged in length parliamentary procedures, that has resulted in thousands of poor facing more hardships because of present arbitrary statutes.

The petition has sought directions to declare as illegal and void all provisions, except some sections, of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, Punjab Prevention of Beggary Act, 1971, Haryana Prevention of Begging Act, 1971 and Bihar Prevention of Begging Act 1951.

It has also sought to declare all other similar Acts prevailing in any part of the country as illegal.

DIVERSION/PARTIALLY CANCELLATION AND RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS DUE TO TRAFFIC BLOCK

In order to upgrade the infrastructure, Varanasi Division of Railway will undertake the Construction of Limited Height Subway (LHS). To execute this work Traffic Block will be taken from 13.04.2021 to 27.04.2021. Consequently following trains will be Diverted/ Partiallly Cancellation and Rescheduled on date shown against each:-

DIVERSION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Diverted Via	Date (from the Originating Station)
01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Jaynagar Express Special	Via Aunrihar Jn.-Indara Jn.-Phephna-Chhapra instead of Varanasi Jn.-Aunrihar Jn.-Chhapra	12.04.2021 & 26.04.2021
04005 Sitamarhi-Anand Vihar Terminal Express Spl.	Via Varanasi Jn.-Janghai Jn.-Prayagraj instead of Varanasi Jn.-Madhosingh-Prayagraj	19.04.2021
02792 Danapur-Secunderabad Jn. Express Express	Via Varanasi Jn.-Janghai Jn.-Prayagraj instead of Varanasi Jn.-Madhosingh-Prayagraj	19.04.2021
05160 Durg-Chhapra Special	Via Janghai Jn.-Jaunpur Jn.-Aunrihar Jn. instead of Janghai Jn.-Varanasi Jn.-Aunrihar Jn.	21.04.2021

PARTIALLY CANCELLATION OF TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short Originate from	Partially Cancelled between Station	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
05008 Lucknow Jn.-Varanasi Exp. Spl.	at Mau Jn.	Mau Jn.-Varanasi City	21.04.2021
05007 Varanasi City-Lucknow Jn. Exp. Spl.	from Mau Jn.	Varanasi City-Mau Jn.	22.04.2021
05138 Prayagraj Rambag-Mau Jn. Express Special	at Mau Jn.	Varanasi City-Mau Jn.	22.04.2021
05137 Mau Jn.-Prayagraj Rambag Express Special	from Mau Jn.	Mau Jn.-Varanasi City	22.04.2021

RESCHEDULE OF TRAINS

Train No. 02334 Prayagraj-Howrah Jn. Express Special will be rescheduled for 60 minutes from Prayagraj on 19.04.2021

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App.

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Northern Railway will run following summer special express trains as per the programme mentioned below:-

04074 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express Train — 2 Trip

STATIONS ↓	Train No. 04074 Arr.	Dep.
New Delhi	--	23:15
Kanpur Central	05:25	05:30
Aishbagh	06:50	07:00
Badshahnagar	07:25	07:28
Gorakhpur	11:45	11:55
Deoria Sadar	12:55	12:57
Siwan Jn.	13:58	14:00
Chhapra	15:15	15:25
Sonpur Jn.	16:30	16:35
Hajipur Jn.	16:50	16:55
Muzaffarpur Jn.	17:45	17:50
Samastipur	19:10	19:40
Darbhanga Jn.	21:00	--

Days of Run: 04074 Ex New Delhi from 11.04.2021 (Sunday) & 15.04.2021 (Thursday)
Accommodation: Sleeper, Reserved 2nd seating, Chair Car

04076 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express Train — 1 Trip

STATIONS ↓	Train No. 04076 Arr.	Dep.
New Delhi	--	23:15
Kanpur Central	05:25	05:30
Aishbagh	06:50	07:00
Badshahnagar	07:25	07:28
Gorakhpur	11:45	11:55
Deoria Sadar	12:55	12:57
Siwan Jn.	13:58	14:00
Chhapra	15:15	15:25
Sonpur Jn.	16:30	16:35
Hajipur Jn.	16:50	16:55
Muzaffarpur Jn.	17:45	17:50
Samastipur	19:10	19:40
Darbhanga Jn.	21:00	--

Days of Run: 04076 Ex New Delhi from 13.04.2021 (Tuesday)
Accommodation: Sleeper, Reserved 2nd seating

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Boots *on* the ground

The potentially mortal imbroglio in Afghanistan might linger if Thursday's statement by President Biden is any indication. This was exactly 20 years after US troops entered the embattled country in search of Osama bin Laden, post the outrage of 9/11. For one thing, he scarcely appears to be firm on abiding by the 1st of May deadline for the withdrawal of US troops. The boots may not be off the ground quite yet. Admittedly, the vulnerability of the country to yet more sectarian strife is dangerously real. Yet the latest bout of uncertainty has left military officials frustrated; they want the US President to take a decision. Mr Biden is said to be dithering, almost a prisoner of indecision. Indeed, the Pentagon wants him to "tell us what we're doing here." Whether to abide by the May 1 deadline, and if not how to proceed with a war that began 20 years ago this fall, is among the high-stakes foreign policy decisions Mr Biden has faced since assuming office three months ago. His apparent indecisiveness on Afghanistan has raised questions about what it portends for future foreign policy decisions, given his extensive knowledge of the dynamics of this issue and its key players. And the indecision has been pronounced barely three weeks before the scheduled pullout.

It will be 'hard to meet' the May deadline of withdrawing troops, the President is reported to have said, thus virtually ruling out an outward march in another three weeks. According to the White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, President Biden is consulting his national security team on the issue and "wants to take the time to make the right decision." For the first time since he stepped into the White House, Mr Biden made it explicit on Thursday that it would be "tough" to fully withdraw all troops by May 1, thus virtually guaranteeing there will be an extension.

However, any frustration among Pentagon officials with the lack of a decision does not include Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin who has not expressed any concern about the pace of decision-making on America's terribly critical military and foreign policy issue.

The White House has chosen to defer a final decision on troop withdrawal primarily to give more time to a diplomatic initiative by Washington, hoping that the Taliban and the Afghan government can conclude an agreement on a power-sharing arrangement and a possible ceasefire that would set the United States on the path for withdrawal. Unfortunately for Afghanistan and the stakeholders, this is easier contemplated than achieved. Hence arguably the speculation that the US administration can use the uncertainty about the exit of its soldiers as leverage to persuade the Taliban to compromise and forge a deal that would open the way for longer-term peace negotiations. The US military mission in Afghanistan is poised to be prolonged.

Beauty and beholders

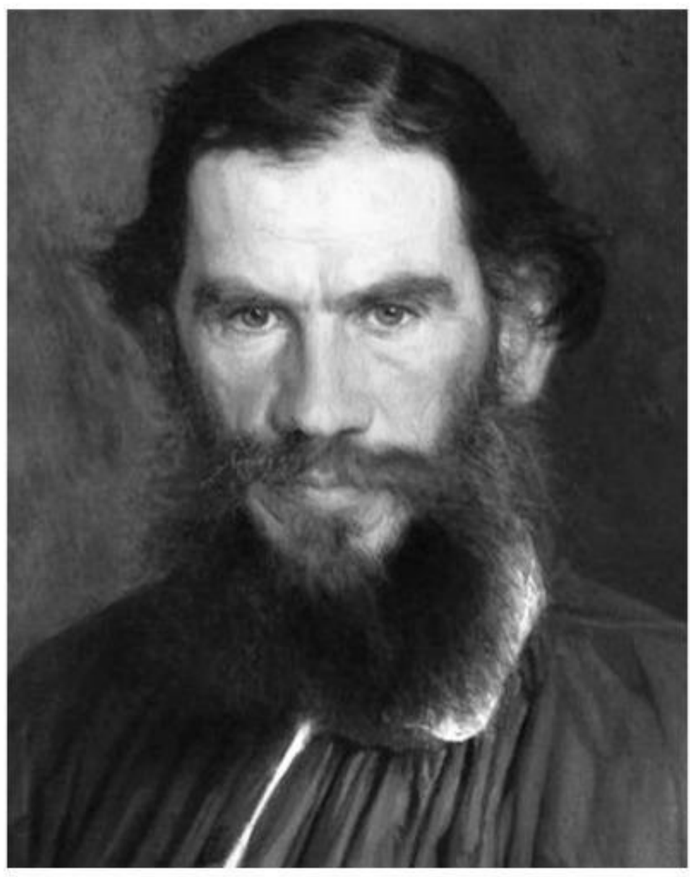
The temptation to ignore the corporate commodification of women via beauty pageants types is great. Ditto, the women themselves who seem to have no problem in willingly contributing to their own objectification. Yet, the PR disasters the past week have brought forth for an industry which is centred around notions of beauty and its highly subjective beholders makes it abundantly clear that whatever our view on beauty pageants and the like, there is no escaping the fact that these contests can be quite subversive in conservative societies where female autonomy is restricted and agency circumscribed. The immediate provocation for these observations emanates from two incidents ~ the crowning, de-crowning and re-crowning within 24 hours of the same individual as Mrs Sri Lanka at a pageant in Colombo, and Miss Papua New Guinea being stripped of her crown after she uploaded a twerking video on TikTok. That the tropes at play in both cases are embarrassing, or at least ought to be, is obviously neither here nor there.

The video which captured the chaos in Colombo when former title holder Caroline Jurie physically de-crowned this year's Mrs Sri Lanka winner Pushpika De Silva moments after she was crowned on the grounds that the latter was divorced and therefore ineligible to participate in the competition is breaking the internet. The affray resulted in minor head injuries to Ms De Silva caused by the pins holding her crown in place when it was yanked off, an apology being tendered to her by the organisers who have also re-crowned her, and the winner taking to Facebook to declare "I am not a divorced woman" as if that were a bad thing. Ms De Silva added: "A real queen is not a woman who snatches another woman's crown, but a woman who secretly sets the other woman's crown." Ms Jurie, meanwhile, is being questioned by police. In the Southwest Pacific, Miss PNG (Papua New Guinea) Lucy Maino, 25, has been stripped of her crown after sharing a video of herself twerking ~ described in the dictionary as "dancing in a sexually provocative manner, using thrusting movements of the bottom and hips while in a low, squatting stance" ~ on TikTok. Ms Maino was crowned in 2019 and is a footballer who has represented her national team. Following her video going viral ~ and her online harassment because of it ~ the pageant organisers said Ms Maino had been "released from her duties as Miss Papua New Guinea". This, in turn, provoked a backlash on social media with a campaign to have her re-crowned gaining traction and even the United Nations expressing its disappointment with the organisers.

Many social media warriors are taking stands for or against the individuals in the spotlight. But it will be business as usual in a few days' time. That's the beauty of it all.

A Tormented Life

Tolstoy renounced his aristocratic lifestyle after his spiritual awakening and lived the rest of his life as a hermit, preaching love and non-violence. His philosophy of non-violence profoundly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Václav Havel, Lech Walesa, and Nelson Mandela, among others



Leo Tolstoy (1828 ~1910) suffered from serious bouts of depression shortly after he turned 50, just as he was riding the crest of his success as a literary icon and enjoying an affluent lifestyle.

As Tolstoy was going through depression and on the brink of suicide, he wrote about his crisis in A Confession, which is an extremely moving, deeply insightful and emotionally intense autobiographical memoir. The greatness of this book lies in Tolstoy's ability to write with extraordinary candour about his personal struggles.

When Tolstoy was writing A Confession, he believed that part of his depression was brought about by the wild and dissolute life he led in his younger days, which was marked by "love of power, covetousness, lasciviousness, pride, anger and revenge." In A Confession Tolstoy recalled with horror, heartache, and shame his days of carousing, gambling, debauchery, lying, stealing, and killing:

"I cannot think of those years without horror, headache, loathing and heartache. I killed men in war, and challenged men to duels in order to kill them; I lost at cards, consumed the labor of the peasants, sentenced them to punishments, lived loosely and deceived people. Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder ~ there was no crime I did not commit ..."

All the material success and fame that Tolstoy had attained could not stop his fall into the abyss of despair and depression. He often thought of taking his own life to rid himself of this profound, ineffable suffering:

"It was indeed terrible. And to rid myself of the terror I wished to kill myself. I experienced terror at what awaited me ~ knew that terror was even worse than the position I was in ... The horror of darkness was too great, and I wished to free myself from it as quickly as possible by noose or bullet. This was the feeling which drew me most strongly towards suicide."

Tolstoy's preoccupation with suicide was so intense that he had to hide a cord out of fear that he would hang himself from the crosspiece of the partition in his room. He also stopped going out for shooting in case he got tempted to use the gun on himself.

In A Confession Tolstoy likened the progression of his depression to a serious "mortal internal disease," something many people who are suffering from depression can relate to. Like most people with depression, Tolstoy didn't initially take his condition seriously. He wrote:

"Then occurred what happens to everyone sickening with a mortal internal disease. At first trivial signs of indisposition appear to which the sick man pays no attention; then these signs reappear more and more often and merge into one uninterrupted period of suffering. The suffering increases, and before the sick man can look round, what he took for a mere indisposition has already become more important to him than anything else in the world ~ it is death!"

One may ask why someone like Tolstoy, who had astounding success as a writer, substantial wealth, good health, and a loving family, would sink into deep depression. In A Confession Tolstoy explained that the real source of his depression had to do with his struggle to find a meaning for existence. Tolstoy explained the cause for his existential crisis thus:

"My question ~ that which at the age of fifty brought me to the verge of suicide ~ was the simplest of questions, lying in the soul of every man from the foolish child to the wisest elder... It was: "What will come of what I am doing today or shall do tomorrow? ~ What will come of my whole life?" Differently expressed, the question is: "Why should I live, why wish for anything or do anything?"

It can also be expressed thus: 'Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?'"

Although Tolstoy was born into a family of Orthodox Christians, he chose not to follow their religious faith. He found the religious rituals and the blind worshipping of icons unpalatable. Instead, he embraced the intellectual ideas of the Western world that challenged the beliefs of organised religions. Consequently, in his search to find answers to his question about whether life had any meaning and what the purpose of life was, he first turned to the physical sciences and then to philosophy.

Tolstoy found that the physical sciences circumvented that question and, instead, asked its own questions and answered them. Upon receiving no acceptable explanation from the physical sciences, Tolstoy entered the domain of philosophy, which also failed him because it didn't directly answer "life's question" in a simple, unambiguous manner. Tolstoy reported in A Confession that his despondency and anguish worsened when he failed to get answers to the most crucial questions concerning his existence.

Not finding any satisfactory answers to questions about his existence from science or philosophy, he started searching for answers from life as it was lived by the people around him. He keenly observed them and found that they generally adopted four different approaches to deal with the problem concerning existence. The first approach, which Tolstoy characterised as "ignorance," consisted in "not knowing, not understanding that life is meaningless." Tolstoy believed that people of this kind were incapable of reflecting on the purpose or meaning of life. Thus, he concluded that there was nothing he could learn from them. The second approach was epicureanism, where people were acutely aware of the meaninglessness of life, but they chose to disregard the hopelessness and suffering of life and, instead, chose a life of hedonistic pleasure. These people also failed to inspire Tolstoy because he simply couldn't bring himself to embrace a hedonistic life and not think about the meaninglessness of it. For Tolstoy, the third approach was one that required both strength and energy. People belonging to this category understood that life was filled with pain and suffering. They also had the courage to take their own life to put an end to their misery. Tolstoy deemed this to be the most effective way of escaping suffering in this world, but he found himself lacking the courage to take his own life. Tolstoy found the fourth way of dealing with life's meaninglessness as weak because people belonging to this category clung desperately to life even though they knew the truth: that life has no meaning. This is the category where Tolstoy found himself.

Tolstoy realised that he could never learn about the meaning and purpose of life by associating with wealthy and successful people in his circle who feared "privations, suffering and death," and whose goal in life was to satisfy their desires. Unlike the people Tolstoy associated with, he found labourers like peasants, whose lives were mired in poverty, sickness, and death, never gave up on life. They accepted their lot with grace, fortitude, resilience, and faith, living the purest form of life.

Tolstoy felt that it was ultimately faith that provided these people the raison d'être to continue living life purposefully despite their hardship and suffering. When Tolstoy wrote about faith, he didn't mean religion or God. For Tolstoy, whatever the faith may be, it "gives to the finite existence of man an infinite meaning, a meaning not destroyed by sufferings, deprivations, or death ... Faith is the strength of life. If a man lives, he believes in something. If he did not believe that one must live for something, he would not live."

In his spiritual journey, Tolstoy ultimately went back to the Christian faith of his childhood, which instructed him to live a "godly" life and in order to have a "godly" life, he must give up the earthly pleasures of life, and to be humble, toil, be willing to suffer and be merciful.

Tolstoy's Christian teachings showed him that in order to find joy and contentment in life, he had to accept all things, whatever they may be and make them a part of his life. Most importantly, Tolstoy needed to help others with their toils. He wrote: "I understood that if I wish to understand life and its meaning, I must not live the life of a parasite, but must live a real life, and ~ taking the meaning given to live by real humanity, and merging myself in that life..."

Tolstoy renounced his aristocratic lifestyle after his spiritual awakening and lived the rest of his life as a hermit, preaching love and non-violence. His philosophy of non-violence profoundly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Václav Havel, Lech Walesa, and Nelson Mandela, among others. Tolstoy died of pneumonia in a railway station in Astapovo in 1910 when he was 82. According to eyewitnesses, Tolstoy spent the last hours of his life speaking about love and non-violence.

ABHIK ROY

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ASIAN VOICES

Elephant in the room gets spotted

Never a dull day in Sri Lanka, where controversies crop up so rapidly that nobody can keep track of them. The latest issue is the government's contention that the removal of Chief Justice (CJ) Mohan Peiris, in January 2015, was unconstitutional. Justice Minister Ali Sabry himself said so in answer to a question raised by a government MP, in Parliament, on Monday. He promised to take remedial action after consulting Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Why has this issue been catapulted to centre stage all of a sudden? It is being argued in some quarters that the ruling party propagandists engineer controversies, from time to time, to prevent their opponents from flogging an issue hard and long enough to turn public opinion against the government. It is a supreme irony that Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose presidency Dr. Shirani Bandaranayake was removed as CJ in 2013 amidst protests and Mohan Peiris appointed to that post, and Maithripala Sirisena, who used his presidential powers in 2015 to defenestrate Peiris and reinstate Bandaranayake as the CJ, are now together in the SLPP coalition. One may recall that Sirisena, as a senior member of the Rajapaksa Cabinet voted for the impeachment of Dr. Bandaranayake, in Parliament.

Opinion is divided on the removal of CJ Bandaranayake. The Rajapaksa government should have refrained from resorting to such a course of action for the sake of democracy, which is underpinned by the principle of separation of powers. Intoxicated with power, it was no respecter of democracy. The UNP's arguments against the impeachment of CJ Bandaranayake were compelling; the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), which probed her, refused to allow her witnesses and failed to specify what the due process was. Most of all, the UNP said the Rajapaksa government had bungled its impeachment project; the resolution passed in a hurry to impeach the CJ sought and secured parliamentary approval for the appointment of the PSC, which probed her; it did not specifically seek approval for her removal, according to the Order Paper, the then UNP MP Lakshman Kiriella told the House. But if the impeachment process had been flawed and the removal of CJ Bandaranayake wrong, as argued by the UNP and some legal experts, a proper way to right the wrong would have been for President Sirisena to have Parliament undo what it had done. The yahapalana government, which mustered a two-thirds majority for the 19th Amendment, could have accomplished that task easily.

The Island Online

Instead, President Sirisena chose to override Parliament. Sadly, the Bar Association of Sri Lanka egged him on to do what he did, unmindful of the politico-legal consequences of his arbitrary action. President Sirisena's line of reasoning was that Dr. Bandaranayake had been removed from office wrongfully in January 2013, and the post of CJ had therefore not fallen vacant.

He declared the appointment of Peiris as the CJ null and void ab initio, and reinstated Dr Bandaranayake, who retired soon afterwards. Sri Lanka had three CJs on three consecutive days ~ Peiris, Bandaranayake and her successor K Sripavan! A person has recently been arrested for posing as a President's Counsel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

The language of Taslima Nasreen

SIR, Please refer to your today's report 'Mind your language'. The cost of the many battles that Taslima Nasreen has fought over the years ~ for her right to speak against fundamentalist Islam and patriarchy ~ has been in exile and banishment since 1994. That is not an inconsiderable price to pay. But not all the skirmishes that the Bangladesh-origin writer sallies into involve her as a free speech warrior against repressive religious practice.

To pick on the much-loved English cricketer Moeen Ali, saying he would have joined ISIS if he were not "stuck with cricket", reveals a performative, casual bigotry that plays to the basest instincts of social media. It is unclear what prompted Nasreen's jibe, but it is safe to say it had something to do with the personal choices of Ali, a deeply religious Muslim, who wears his "beard as a label", and is an icon of inclusivity for Britain's cricketing establishment.

Ali is proof that it is possible for nations to outgrow the narrow-mindedness of a Tebbit test; that to be "Muslim, Asian and British" involves no conflict. That, perhaps, explains why Ali's teammates, from Jofra Archer to Ben Duckett and Saqib Mahmood, have rallied around him after this gratuitous attack, and asked Nasreen to withdraw her comments.

Nasreen's experience of religion is obviously radically different from Ali's. It entitles her to her suspicion and scepticism of organised religion. But, increasingly, the writer appears to have cast herself as a defender of secular values in a morality play where Islamophobia against ordinary believers can be passed off as courage. Both secularism and religion are invested in the dignity of human beings and their right to fashion their lives differently from others. It is hardly surprising when religious fundamentalists fail to uphold such values.

But it is worrying when a writer like Nasreen fails to see fellow humans without the blindfold of prejudice.

Bigotry is, of course, the price of free speech. But that does not obscure the slide of Taslima Nasreen, from secular hero to rebel without a cause.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 8 April.

POISONED FISH

SIR, S Ananthanarayanan's incisive article: 'Toxins in the food chain' (*The Statesman*, 7 April) reminded me one of the worst tragedies ~ Minamata Disease, sometimes referred as Chisso-Minamata disease, a neurological disease. The tragedy was first 'discovered' in the city of Minamata, Japan, in 1956. As of March 2001, 2,265 victims (1,784 of whom had died) had been officially recognised as having Minamata disease. Minamata disease is methylmercury (MeHg) poisoning with neurological symptoms and caused by the daily consumption of large quantities of fish and shellfish of the tiny fishing village of Minamata in Japan. Investigation pointed to pollution of the Minamata Bay by effluents from a chemical factory owned by Chisso Co. Ltd. The effluents contained the extremely toxic and persistent chemical MeHg. Even some of the mercury sulfate in the wastewater was also metabolized to MeHg by bacteria in the sediment.

This highly toxic chemical bioaccumulated and biomagnified in shellfish and fish in Minamata Bey and the Shiranul sea which, when eaten by the local population, resulted in Minamata disease. MeHg poisoning has also occurred after people have eaten meat from animals fed seed grain contaminated with that toxic chemical.

Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana, Kolkata, 9 April.

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Adopting state capitalism to compete against China

ANDREW SHENG

Late last month, the Biden Administration unveiled a $2 trillion infrastructure programme that aims to modernize American infrastructure. The American Jobs Plan has four major spending components over the next eight years. First, invest $621 billion on clean energy, upgrading and repairing highways, railways, bridges and city transit systems. Second, focus $650 billion on improving life in homes, schools with water and broadband systems. Third, spend $400 billion on caregivers for elderly and disabled people to create jobs. Finally, invest $300 billion in research, development and manufacturing, including $50 billion on semiconductor manufacturing. Underlying is a strategy to deliver a green lifestyle to combat climate change.

Coming on top of the $1.9 trillion stimulus package and $0.9 trillion approved under Trump, the US is committing $4.8 trillion or 22.9 per cent of 2020 GDP, setting the stage for Big State competition with China. To fund this, the corporate tax rate would be raised to 28 per cent from the current 21 per cent, which Trump slashed from 35 per cent in his 2017 tax package. The Biden package would also plug US corporate tax evasion through capturing offshore income at domestic tax rates.

This attention to infrastructure and jobs is long overdue. Furthermore, the world needs this large fiscal stimulus to help global recovery from the pandemic. The OECD estimates that up to 1.5 per cent would be added to global growth from the US stimulus package.

The downside is whether the US can implement such investments without inflation and whether the rest of the world will fund this without higher interest rates. On inflation, LSE Professor Charles Goodhart and Manoj Pradhan have already documented that since the 1980s, global benign inflation was due to China becoming the world's new source of cheap goods and services. They think that this will not last. University of Texas Professor James Galbraith warns that "China is missing from the Great Inflation Debate." He however thinks that China will not rock the boat by pushing up prices.

On US debt funding, out of US net foreign liability to the rest of the world of $14.1 trillion at end-2020, just under three quarters is funded by East Asian surplus economies (Japan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan), with the balance by Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland). As Harvard Professor Kenneth Rogoff put it, "it seems an article of faith among US policymakers and many economists that the world's appetite for dollar debt is virtually insatiable."

What could totally disrupt both assumptions? Worsening US-China relations! By retaining Trump tariffs on China and hardening rhetoric on China, the Biden Administration thinks it can pump up the US and fight China and Russia at the same time.

Is this unipolar hubris justified?

The latest China Academy of Social Science (CASS) 2020 National Balance sheet report showed that by 2019, China amassed national net wealth and GDP at market value at 80 per cent and 65 per cent of the US respectively. China is a net lender to the world with $2.2 trillion or 14.4 per cent of GDP, running current account surpluses, whereas the US is net borrower to the tune of $14.1 trillion or 66.9 per cent of GDP, running growing twin fiscal and current account deficits and debt.

The real race is which form of state capitalism is more sustainable and effective – a marathon rather than a short-term dash. State capitalism has evolved from managerial and financial capitalism of recent years because financialization and technology created growing income and job disparities that only government intervention can correct. There may be ideological differences, but ideology does not ensure performance outcome.

The Chinese use state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to implement long-term national goals, such as modernization of Chinese infrastructure, stabilization of jobs, regional development and provision of social utilities. Although less efficient than the private sector, by keeping sufficient reforms to ensure profitability, SOEs contributed to China's growing net national wealth to $88.6 trillion. With the state owning one quarter of such wealth, there is more than ample reserve to address Chinese modernization without higher taxation on the citizens. A 40-year review of Chinese SOE performance considers that SOEs are best labelled as "social enterprise", created to achieve social goals through business methods, not wholly-for-profit.

In contrast, the combination of shareholder capitalism and frequent elections induces the US to act for short-term considerations. With contentious domestic politics and complicated Federal-State relations, infrastructure projects have hitherto faced formidable obstacles and delays. Money politics have reached the stage where everything depends on monetary creation, but that in turn relies on growing net foreign debt.

In short, one state capitalism relies on domestic savings and the other relies on foreign savings.

The US has been running down its public infrastructure, because the bulk of net wealth is in private hands. In contrast, China uses SOEs to own and build infrastructure, but allows private sector to innovate and compete across usage rights. Over the last two decades, China has reduced state-ownership of assets and allowed the private sector to push market innovations. Despite criticism that privatisation was slow, sufficient SOE reforms were made to hold back growing SOE leverage and ensure that they remained profitable and delivered on national objectives.

As Jude Blanchette of CSIS argued, "Absent a deep and enduring commitment to rebuilding internal competitiveness, as well as creating an economic system that is vastly more inclusive, the United States can only tread water while China continues to march toward the future."

As governments assume larger roles in the US, Europe and China, the issue is how to deliver performance along whole range of military, economic, social, technological and organizational dimensions, without capture, corruption, concentration and widening social injustices. So far, American free markets have allowed the 1 per cent to increase concentration of wealth and power, including capture in politics. The Achilles' heel of procedural democracy is the enormous difficulty of reforming itself when captured.

In contrast, China seems able to lift the majority out of poverty and deliver modern infrastructure and living standards, at the cost of individual freedom. The competition is therefore between different forms of state capitalism that may in practice look like market socialism.

Who wins in this competition is not about wishful thinking that the other side will collapse or falter. It's about who makes the least strategic mistakes.

The writer is a former central banker and financial regulator. The views are entirely his own.
Special to ANN

NOW AND AGAIN

A festival of democracy

BUDDHADEV NANDI

A few decades ago, any election in our small town, whether to the Lok Sabha or Assembly or the municipality, would be looked at as a festival. Our small town would be decked with colourful flags, festoons and posters. The walls would be inscribed with graffiti, parody, rhymes, and cartoons, whereas the air would be sonorous with witty slogans.

Use of giant flex printed with the photograph of the candidates smiling unabashedly was then beyond our thoughts. During the period between 1971 to 1977 the difficult elections symbols to draw like 'Gai-Bachur' (cow with a calf sucking milk) would be painted using a stencil. We little boys walked round the town to memorize funny rhymes and parodies on the walls and recited them without realising their meaning.

Local political leaders would deliver speeches on humble stages and at street corners. On the other hand, the grassroots workers popularly called 'chamchas' (political stooges) would hang around the leaders to project themselves as influential persons before the people in their respective localities. There was a competition among grassroots workers to draw symbols beautifully and quickly. Professional artists like today would not be hired to do the job.

If a state-level or even a district-level leader of any political party arrived in the town, there would be a mammoth gathering of people irrespective of their political differences. The town would very rarely be disturbed by the sight of helicopters as very few leaders could access these. Local leaders would compete to take senior leaders to their houses and arrange lunch for them to exhibit the range of their political influence.

A few days before the election, the town would witness small rallies and street corners gatherings. The candidates would try to visit every house to meet voters personally. Once the then king of Bishnupur who stood in the election was asked why he wanted to be demoted from the post of king to a minister.

Unlike today, there were no opinion or exit polls. Even newspapers that monopolised the media space, abstained from conducting such polls. Though the term 'psephology' (scientific study of elections) was coined in 1948 and used in written form in 1952, it did not gain much popularity until TV news channels came into existence in our country. Educated people especially a section of teachers and professors involved in politics directly would be regarded as election specialists. People looked forward to their predictions.

On the day of election, the festival acquired a tremendous look. Tents for giving slips to the voters would be decorated with flags and festoons made of paper and cloth. Though the political colour of the tents could be discerned by the flags and festoons, it was difficult for a stranger to distinguish between the workers. They would share gossip and even meals. Little boys would hang around the tents at the end of voting to collect the colourful posters to cover their books.

The election result like today would be eagerly awaited. People would assemble around the counting centres where paper ballots would be counted for hours or even days. There would be much hue and cry especially over validity of the votes polled. After counting, supporters of the winning political party enjoyed the victory with much exuberance, whereas a pall of gloom would descend over the loser. Within a few days, everything would be as usual. Unlike today political violence before and after elections was beyond imagination.

Today the political scenario in our state is quite different. The festival of democracy has lost its sheen. It has turned into a complete fiasco. Elections are now marked by casualties, character assassinations, terror, bullying and so on. Livelihood of a large section of people is now determined by the political parties in power. Political ideologies have been put on the backburner. Political leaders shift from one party to another without feeling an iota of shame.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

The rise and rise of the BJP

When the the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K Advani and others launched the Bharatiya Janata Party on 6 April 1980, they were confident that someday their party, the political wing of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh would become a dominant player. Breaking away from the Janata Party on the issue of dual membership they had firm faith that, in the long run, they would rule the country.

Amidst the Covid outbreak and elections to five state Assemblies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party chief J.P Nadda addressed the workers on the occasion of BJP's 41st birthday on April 6, giving them an inspiring talk. A birthday is an occasion for the party to look back and look to the future. That was what the BJP leaders did on that day.

The party that is currently the largest political outfit in India, both in terms of representation in parliament and party membership, has come a long way since its birth in 1980. It has overtaken the 136-year-old Congress Party.

The rise of the BJP to political prominence results from multiple factors - both external and internal. Looking back, and as the founders aspired, the BJP emerged as the single largest party in 1996 but could not sustain the 13- day government due to lack of support. It came to power in 1998, leading a coalition, but the government fell after 13 months. It won the polls in 1999 and ruled until 2004. This period established the BJP as a credible alternative to the Congress.

The BJP-led NDA lost the next two general elections (2004 and 2009) due to various factors, making way for a Congress-led coalition, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). After ten years, the party came to power, winning a majority in 2014 led by the charismatic Narendra Modi. Ever since Modi became prime minister, the BJP has worked like a well-oiled electoral machine. To its credit, the party won one state election after another and is dominating the national discourse both at the Centre and in states. The 2019 Lok Sabha polls were an even more significant achievement. From just two seats in the 1984 general elections to winning 303 seats in the 2019 elections, the BJP has established itself as India's most credible political force.

One of the main reasons for its growth was the decline of Congress. The Congress gradually lost its hold on the country, an event simultaneous with the emergence of regional parties.

The decline of the Left parties, too, was a factor for the BJP's growth. The Left parties are ruling only Kerala, and it is not sure if they will retain power in the current Assembly polls. The Left parties had their best performance in 2004 when they won about 60 parliamentary seats, but there has been a steady decline since then.

BJP's rise to dominance is also due to the failure of non-Congress, non-BJP parties' attempts to forge stable coalition governments. For a short while after the Emergency, the Janata Party appeared to be a reliable alternative giving rise to speculation about the possibility of a two-party system taking shape. The National Front, the United Front, and the UPA could not give a solid alternative to the BJP.

However, the future of the BJP depends on how these factors play. It also depends on how the BJP accommodates the various groups and castes' aspirations in its future strategy and also on whether the various regional parties are family fiefdoms that can challenge the BJP. At more than 40 per cent vote share, the regional parties still receive sizable support from Indian voters.

The BJP's dominance is due its innovative political strategy and ability to adapt to the changing times and the changing aspirations of the Indian voter. It could sense the political vacuum in the wake of Congress's decay. The BJP decided to abandon the ideals of "positive secularism and Gandhian socialism" to Hindutva following the party's first massive electoral defeat in the 1984 general polls.

The BJP, seen as a Brahmin party, recognized that to come to power, it had to secure the support of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This social engineering took them to the path of success. It got a fillip under Modi's rule as he comes from a disadvantaged community of Backward classes. This massive change in its support base pushed the party to the centre stage. Finally, Modi, as a charismatic leader could inspire the party and the public that he was the alternative that the country was waiting for.

While the BJP is growing because of the weakness of other parties, there are challenges ahead. It will be a big challenge to keep the cadres satisfied in sharing power. The BJP too has not developed its second rung of leaders. The anti-incumbency is also a factor in the long run.

In the snakes and ladders game, the BJP is up the ladder now.

100 YEARS AGO

MUSICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

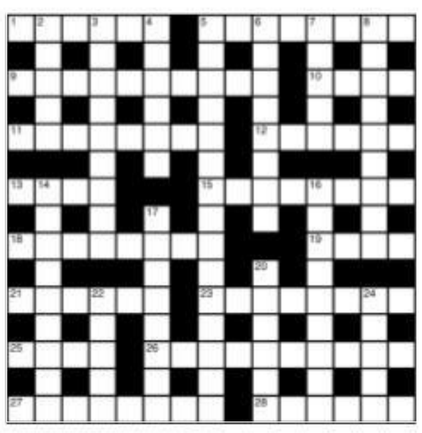
To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The soul sickness of a reformer is usually symptomatic of a loss of ideals on the part of those whose faith has hitherto sustained them in a movement of progress. However, I refuse to treat Mrs. Everett's scathing indictment of the prevailing fashion in musical education out here as a signal of despair on the part of the promoters of the Calcutta School of Music venture, knowing full well, as I do, the value of the work which that splendidly conceived institution has achieved during the past few years and the esteem in which it is held by discerning people. Nevertheless the hideous fact remains that the conception of "Art for art's sake" has wholly failed "to catch on" in India - so far as Western music is concerned. Now what is the best way of ridding New India of this system? Most probably the Calcutta School of Music would form the nucleus of such an institution.

PHILIP COX.
Calcutta.

CROSSWORD

NO 28880



SOLUTION FOR 04 APRIL

ACROSS

1 Prepares last portions of chips and fish with mushy peas (6)
5 Help politician to conceal British tale of woe (3,5)
9 Maybe pancake with essentially watery filling is uninspired (4-6)
10 Teacher's anguish (4)
11 Book again – including a little champagne flute (8)
12 Win gold for coach (6)
13 Consume sport (4)
15 Cassette re-established legal precedent (4,4)
18 Good nutrient halved in Dr Pepper (8)
19 Regularly ignored fungal yeast's beginning to be unsightly (4)
21 Young horse scratching a short tail (6)
23 Friend might – in extremis – greet naked dates found here? (4,4)
25 Almost destroy new oven (4)
26 Snooty one in popular comedy ultimately putting sex appeal into play ... (5-5)
27 ... short play, good in points and theatre's booming (8)
28 Liberal Party Housing Spokesperson finally makes room (6)

DOWN

2 Lethal venom bottles split into two (5)
3 Spray, tip or pour mixture (9)
4 Tatty, blingy daughters take wife's place (6)
5 Settled wee kitty moving in and there's no room for any more at this juncture (10,5)
6 Be grateful for entertaining cricket game – it's unreal (8)
7 Can touring artist work out (5)
8 Reading magazine nurse leaves after cycling here (9)
14 Leader let independent radio broadcast (9)
16 Judge on wretched TV show (9)
17 Scatters seeds containing nitrogen with garden implement – it spreads the load on soft ground (8)
20 Emphasise trouble (4,2)
22 Crease navy sheets (5)
24 Join stuck-up priest in bed every now and then (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with **The Independent, London**)

epaper.thestatesman.com

Emerging markets are performing much better than the developed world

SANJEEV SANYAL
PRINCIPAL ECONOMIC ADVISER TO THE FINANCE MINISTRY

THUMBNAILS

Gems & jewellery manufacturing: The Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) on Saturday said the Maharashtra government has allowed export operations to resume with restrictions in number of people working in the manufacturing units during the ongoing night curfew and weekend lockdowns, to curtail the coronavirus spread. In a virtual meeting with the gems and jewellery manufacturers and exporters on Friday, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said manufacturing and ancillary activities in the state would be exempted from the ongoing emergency measures during the second wave of Covid-19, GJEPC said. PTI

Forex reserves fall: The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by $2.415 billion to stand at $576.869 billion in the week ended 2 April, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended 26 March, the reserves had decreased by $2.986 billion to $579.285 billion. PTI

Smart monitor: Samsung on Saturday launched smart monitor with an innovative do-it-all screen that lets users enjoy Netflix, YouTube, Apple TV and other OTT apps, remotely connect with their office PC and also edit documents using Microsoft 365. It has been priced at Rs 28,000, the company said. However, for a limited period, smart monitors will be available at an introductory price of Rs 21,999 onwards, it added. SNS

Linc Pens-KKR tie-up: Linc Pens and Plastics Ltd has announced a year-long association of their flagship product ~ Pentonic ~ with the Kolkata Knight Riders. As a partner to the team, the Pentonic logo will feature on the arm of the KKR jersey, it said. SNS

India needs to grow faster to make up for contraction: IMF

IMF deputy chief economist makes a strong case for an additional economic stimulus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

India, which is projected to grow at an impressive rate of 12.5 per cent this year, needs to grow at a much faster pace to make up for the unprecedented contraction of eight per cent that it clocked during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, according to a senior IMF official.

The International Monetary Fund deputy chief economist, Petya Koeva Brooks, also made a strong case for an additional economic stimulus to address the impact of the pandemic on the country's economy.

"When it comes to India there was a major collapse of output last fiscal year. So, we are very glad to see the strong rebound this year with projected growth of 12.5 per cent for fiscal year 2021-22 and we are seeing also high frequency indicators, including PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index), and trade and more mobility indicators which give us a sense that there is continued recovery in the first quarter of this year," she said.

That said, localised lockdowns in recent times to check the second wave of Covid infections are seen as one of the threats to this recovery, Brooks noted.

On the recovery itself, when it comes to level in terms of the level of output, we are expecting that level to return to the pre-crisis one this fiscal year. That is what we have in our projections.

"If we were to just think about the level of output that it was prior to being a pandemic then that catch happens this year, which is not surprising also given the very high level of the underlying growth which India has. But again, if we compare it to the path of what it would have been without the pandemic then we are getting too many larger gaps there," she said.

Noting that the Indian government took several steps to address the Covid-19 crisis, Brooks said: "We have seen policy responses, which have been coordinated and in several areas. We have seen that the fiscal support, the monetary easing as well as the liquidity and regulatory measures that were taken." What makes sense is to maintain the focus on having that coordinated policy response because this is what's going to prevent the long-term damage to the economy. Providing that support to small and medium-sized firms as well as vulnerable houses would be particularly important, she said.

Brooks said the IMF very much welcomes the measures that were announced by India during its Budget. It is particularly supportive of maintaining the accommodative fiscal stance and also emphasising expenditures on health and infrastructure.

"We estimate that the positive impact of the measures for this fiscal year is going to be of the order of point six percentage points on growth," she said, adding that several measures announced in the Budget were in line of the IMF's advice.

Prominent among them are that there would not be a withdrawal of fiscal stimulus at the general government level and also that state governments would be given the temporary flexibility to go over their budget ceilings. Overall, the IMF is very supportive of this focus on growth.

At the same time, Brooks made a strong case for an additional economic stimulus.

We do think that additional fiscal stimulus would be helpful. Focusing that stimulus again on the most vulnerable is something that makes sense to us. We note that some of the income support schemes were not extended beyond November 2020 and such, she said.

Centre may redraw recapitalisation plan for public sector banks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

The government may redraw the recapitalisation roadmap for public sector banks (PSB) in the current fiscal as the institutions face additional burden to meet interest on interest obligation for all its borrowers while changes in valuation norms of AT1 bonds by Sebi will make the instrument less attractive for banks to raise their capital.

Sources said that the finance ministry has already started a preliminary exercise to determine the capital requirement of banks in the wake of the changes in norms and rise in bad assets during the time of the pandemic. Based on the inputs received by banks, additional capital may be provided to them from budgetary resources.

The Budget allocated Rs 20,000 crore towards recapitalisation of PSBs to help them consolidate their financial capacity. Some balance from previous year towards recapitalisation is also available for disbursement. Moreover, PSBs have proactively built buffers during financial year 2020-21 (FY21) to improve their resilience in the face of the shock from the pandemic. But despite this, banks will need more capital infusion from the government for business growth and to meet regulatory norms.

The problem has been accentuated with the Reserve Bank of India now writing to bank to meet their obligation towards interest on interest for all borrowers where exposure is over Rs 2 crore as well. This will put additional burden of close to Rs 7,500 crore on banks.

Moreover, the Sebi, though has amended the valuation rule of perpetual bonds in line with objections raised by the finance ministry, it still has said that from April 2023 onwards, the residual maturity of AT-1 bonds will become 100 years from the date of issuance of the bond. This will make the most used route of raising capital by banks less attractive.

On its part, the government is strengthening the banking segment by merger and amalgamation of public sector banks.

Shriram Properties files papers for IPO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Bengaluru-based Shriram Properties has filed a draft document with market regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India to raise up to Rs 800 crore through an initial public offer (IPO).

According to sources, Shriram Properties filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) on Friday.

As per DRHP, the company proposes to raise up to Rs 800 crore through IPO. Out of the total IPO size, it plans to raise Rs 250 crore through fresh issue of equity shares and Rs 550 crore through offer for sale. Shriram Properties has proposed partial exits to its four existing investors ~ TPG Capital, Tata Capital, Walton Street Capital and Starwood Capital ~ which hold around 58 per cent stake in the company.

In offer for sale, each of the selling shareholders will be entitled to their respective portion of the proceeds from the offer for sale in proportion of the shares offered by them.

The company will not receive any proceeds from the offer for sale. Shriram Properties proposes to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue towards repayment and/ or prepayment of debt and general corporate purposes.

RBI may hold interest rates through FY'22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 10 APRIL

Fitch Solutions sees the Reserve Bank of India keeping benchmark interest rates unchanged during the fiscal to March 2022 following its decision to buy Rs 1 lakh crore of government bonds.

"We had initially expected another policy rate cut to arrest the rise in government bond yields since the Union Budget announcement in February.

"However, having an explicit bond purchase guidance from the RBI following the announcement of the G-SAP will also achieve a similar effect, if not even be more effective than a rate cut on capping the increase in bond yields," it said in a note.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held its policy repurchase (repo) rate unchanged at 4 per cent at its monetary policy meeting on 7 April.

In addition, the RBI announced a secondary market government securities acquisition programme (G-SAP 1.0), committing to buy up to Rs 1 lakh crore worth of government bonds in April-June, taking another step towards formalising quantitative easing.

"As such, we at Fitch Solutions have revised our forecast for the RBI to keep its policy repurchase (repo) rate on hold at 4 per cent over the course of FY22 (April 2021-March 2022), from our view of a 25 basis point cut previously," it said.

Fitch Solutions also revised its inflation rate forecast to an average of 5 per cent in FY'22, up from 4.6 per cent previously, due to elevated inflationary pressures.

The elevated inflation "underscores our expectation for the RBI to keep its policy rate on hold", it said.

Government bond yields have trended higher since the Union Budget announcement in February, given the government's substantial market borrowing plan of Rs 14.3 lakh crore.

The RBI had already been buying government bonds in the secondary market and held Rs 3.1 lakh crore worth of bonds in FY21.

"However, the announcement of the G-SAP marked the first time the RBI had committed to an explicit quantity of bond purchase and we believe that this enhances the certainty of the bond market on the evolution path of bond yields over the coming months.

"This will complement the existing open market operations and the 'Operation Twist' the central bank conducts to cap increases in bond yields," it said.

"Operation Twist" refers to the simultaneous purchase of long-end bonds and sale of short-end bonds to cap long-end yields.

The monetary policy committee (MPC) has maintained its stance to keep monetary policy accommodative for as long as necessary to sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target range of 4 per cent, plus or minus 2 per cent.

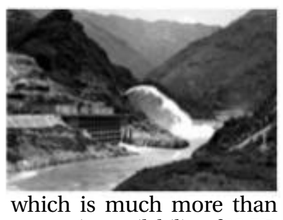
NEWSFEED

Shri Sanjeev Kumar takes over as Chairman, Airports Authority of India

Shri Sanjeev Kumar, an IAS officer of 1993 batch, Maharashtra Cadre, took over as Chairman of Airports Authority of India on 7th April 2021. Prior to this, Shri Kumar was working as State Commissioner -GST, Government of Maharashtra. With rich experience in the field of Infrastructure and Finance, Shri Kumar has served in various ministries and departments of the Government of Maharashtra viz. Water Supply & Sanitation Department, Energy and Industries Department. He has worked as Joint CEO of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) and has also been MD of Maharashtra Agro Industries Development Corporation. Shri Kumar holds a degree in Electronics & Communication Engineering from University of Roorkee (now known as IIT Roorkee) and M.Tech in Communication Engineering from IIT, Kanpur. He also holds a degree in Financial Management from Jamnalal Bajaj Institution of Management Studies, Mumbai University.

BBMB Crossed 11000 Million Units Generation - Produced 19.60% more energy than target.

Bhakra Beas Management Board has generated 11,482.051 million units of energy upto 31.03.2021 from all its Power Houses against target of 9600 million units fixed by the Central Electricity Authority, Government of India. Till date BBMB Power houses have generated 19.60% more energy than the target. Plant load availability of generating machines in BBMB Power Houses has been 97.04% which is one of the highest in the country. The transmission availability has been registered as 99.82%



which is much more than normative availability of 98.5% for hydro generating stations. Sh. Sanjay Srivastava, Chairman, BBMB lauded all the employees of BBMB for maintaining high excellency even during the grave situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

Forex Customers Meet of Central bank of India

Central Bank of India, Zonal Office Delhi, organized a Forex Customer Meet in India International Centre on 03/04/2021. Around 30 valued Importers/Exporter attended the meet. Sh. Vivek Wahi, Executive Director of the Bank was present who presided over the meeting, also Sh. V K Mahendru, Field General Manager, Delhi, Sh. Dinesh Kumar Pant, Senior Regional Manager (Delhi South), Sh. R C Goel, Regional Manager (Delhi North) and Smt. Manisha Kaushik, Regional Manager (Delhi Central) and other senior officers of Central Bank were present on the occasion.

Central University of Punjab successfully organized 19th Faculty Development National Workshop

The Teaching Learning Centre (TLC) at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda (CUPB) under the patronage of Vice Chancellor Prof. Raghavendra P. Tiwari successfully organized the Ministry of Education sponsored 19th National Faculty Development Workshop in Economics discipline. The workshop entitled "Making Indian Economy Self-Reliant: Challenges and Opportunities" was conducted under Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT)

from 27th to 31st March, 2021. The Chief Guest of the Inaugural and Valedictory Session was Prof. A.D.N. Bajpai, Vice Chancellor, Bilaspur University, Chhattisgarh and Prof. Bhagwati Prakash Sharma, VC, Gautam Buddha University, Noida respectively.

DoPPW has brought out the notification for regulating the service matters of Central Government employees covered under the National Pension System.

The New Defined Contribution based Pension Scheme was introduced vide Department of Economic Affairs Notification No. 5/7/2003-ECB & PR dated 22nd December, 2003. Thereafter the activities under the National Pension System viz. registration, contribution, investment, fund management, withdrawals, annuity, etc. are regulated by the PFRDA Act, 2013. However, there were several service matters pertaining the NPS employees which were not covered by the PFRDA Act. In order to streamline the implementation of NPS, DoPPW initiated the proposal for framing of separate service rules for NPS employees.

Inauguration of College Annex Building in Andhra Pradesh

On 19th March 2021, Dr. G.R. Chintala, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) inaugurated the College Annex Building in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh built by NBCC. Shri Kurasala Kanna Babu, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture and cooperation, Govt. of A.P.; Dr. A Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor, ANGRAU and dignitaries from various Govt. bodies along with Shri A.K. Bhardwaj, SBG Head (AP & Telangana), NBCC and senior officials from NBCC were present during the event. The landmark project consists of 140 Rooms approximately that boasts of smart Classrooms, Laboratories, Staff Rooms etc. in a total built-up area of about 15,915 Sq.m.

Secretary (Power), Govt. of India and CMD, NHPC meet Chief Secretary of Sikkim and visit NHPC's 510 MW Teesta-V and 500 MW Teesta VI Project

Shri Alok Kumar, Secretary (Power), Govt. of India and Shri A.K. Singh, CMD, NHPC met Chief Secretary (Sikkim) on 01.04.21 and apprised him on the status of under construction projects and power station of NHPC in Sikkim. Chief Secretary appreciated the efforts being made in state and assured expeditious action on clearance of Teesta-IV. It was also intimated that efforts are underway to handover some new projects in state. Shri Alok Kumar, Secretary (Power), Govt. of India alongwith Shri A.K. Singh, CMD, NHPC in meeting with Chief Secretary (Sikkim) on 01.04.21 at Sikkim. Shri K. Sreekant, CMD, Powergrid was also present on the occasion.

PFC pays interim dividend of Rs 1182.63 crore to Government of India for the financial year 2020-21

Shri Ravinder Singh Dhillon, CMD, PFC presenting bank advice of an interim dividend of Rs 1182.63 crore to Shri R.K. Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) Power and New & Renewable Energy & Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. Power Finance Corporation, a Schedule - A Navratna CPSE and India's leading NBFC for the Power Sector has paid an interim dividend of Rs 1182.63 crore to Government of India for the financial year 2020-21 on March 31st, 2021 on 1,47,82,91,778 number of equity shares (56%) held by the government. The interim dividend RTGS intimation bank advice was presented to Shri R.K. Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) Power and New & Renewable Energy & Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship by Shri Ravinder Singh Dhillon, CMD, PFC in the presence of Shri Alok Kumar, Secretary (Power), Shri Ashish Upadhyaya, Additional Secretary (Power) & FA, Government of India, Shri P.K. Singh, Director (Commercial) PFC and Smt. Parminder Chopra, Director (Finance) PFC.

PNB meets exporters, launches online trade finance portal

Punjab National Bank has organized Exporters Meet recently at ITC Maurya, New Delhi. The meeting was presided over by Shri. CH. S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao - MD and CEO of Punjab National Bank, in the presence of Shri. Swarup Kumar Saha - Executive Director of the Bank. Smt. Vibha Aren, General Manager of International Banking Division, Corporate General Managers and other senior officials from the Bank's Delhi zone, were also present. Shri. CH. S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao deliberated upon the successful amalgamation of the erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce and erstwhile United Bank of India with Punjab National Bank. He further discussed the organizational structure changes, focusing on the verticalization of important segments, such as risk management, credit underwriting, and forex operations to improve services. More than 65 leading exporters from the Delhi NCR region attended the event.

A year after amalgamation: PNB 2.0 emerges stronger to play a greater role in nation-building

Indian banking industry witnessed the mega consolidation exercise on 01st April 2020, which reduced the number of Public Sector Banks from 19 to 12 at present. Erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India were amalgamated with Punjab National Bank to create one of the largest banking behemoths in the country with total business exceeding ?18 lakh crores. Commenting on the bank's significant progress since the amalgamation, Shri CH. S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao, MD and CEO of PNB, said, "We have completed our technology integration in the record time by December 2020, to be able to focus on the business priorities from year 2021 onwards. We have also realigned various internal processes and revamped the organization structure to position the Bank as customer-centric and future-ready. Seamless integration and harmonization of products, processes, distribution channels, creation of specialized units and technology platform have benefited customers in terms of wider products offerings and better service experience."

Van Dhan Vikas Yojana: A Big Success in Andhra Pradesh

TRIFED, under the aegis of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has implemented several initiatives to help improve the livelihoods of the tribal population. More so, over the past year, to help the beleaguered tribals who had been severely impacted due to the pandemic. Among the various programmes, which have emerged as a panacea to the tribal population are the Van Dhan tribal start-ups and the Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce

(MFP) Through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP' Scheme that provides MSP to gatherers of forest produces and introducing value addition and marketing through tribal groups and clusters. These programmes have widespread acceptance across the country.

Union Bank of India wins - Best Strategy in HR 2020 & HR Oriented CEO Award 2020

Union Bank of India has won major awards viz "Best Strategy in HR 2020" and prestigious honor of "HR Oriented CEO Award 2020" conferred on Bank's MD&CEO, Shri Rajkiran Rai G. at the Apex India HR & Business Excellence Awards 2020. The Apex India Foundation, Delhi honors individuals and organizations for their

outstanding contribution towards HR good practices and business excellence through its annual award program with a thorough selection process by an elite jury of notable personalities.

CIL to help develop infrastructure in Uttarakhand

Coal India Limited has signed a MoU with Shri Kedarnath Uthhan Charitable Trust, Badrinath and will contribute Rs. 19 Crores for a road development project at Badrinath-Joshimath in Uttarakhand. The MoU was signed at Dehradun by Shri. S. N. Tiwary, Director (P&IR) Coal India and Shri. Dilip Jawalkar, Tourism Secretary, Government of Uttarakhand. One of the main features of the

project is that the proposed road, besides benefitting 90 villages, will provide an all-weather access to the village of Mana, situated at an elevation of 3200 meters and considered as the last village of India close to the Indo-China border. Betterment of road linkage is a precursor to the all-round socio-economic development of rural areas. CIL's last mile road initiative aims to open a gateway of opportunities in the hinterland of the Badrinath hill region. Fulfilling its social commitments, CIL has spent close to Rs 90 Cr as part of its CSR in the FY 2020-21.

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Covid surge in Odisha continues unabated

1374 new cases, vaccine supply concerns persist

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 10 APRIL:

The daily virus load in Odisha continues to register substantial rise in the past 24 hours while the vaccine shortage fuels scare of inoculation drive getting disrupted in several parts of the State.

The central agencies sent 2.5 lakh doses of Covishield which arrived today evening, said Health and Family Welfare Director Bijay Panigrahi.

The Odisha government had earlier urged the Centre to allocate at least 25 lakh doses of ''Covishield'' vaccine for smooth vaccination operation. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had told the PM that the state requires 10 days stock to plan accordingly.

While the erratic and inadequate supply has hit the inoculation drive, reports of fully vaccinated frontline workers including doctors getting infected in different parts of the country as well as a couple in Odisha has raised eyebrows.

If the vaccine does not guarantee that one will not get infected and if it is meant to avert complications only, then how can it be called a vaccine ? is a question that is debated here.

The ongoing vaccination exercise is bound to be affected as currently the State has a total stock of 2.18 Covishield and Covaxin vaccine doses. The dispatch of fresh vaccines to district centres is a delicate and time consuming process. Therefore, we are apprehensive that inoculation will be affected in large parts of the State, said Panigrahi.

Meanwhile the Railway Board rejected the Odisha government's demand of cancelling all passenger trains from Chhattisgarh. The board assured Odisha that passengers have been asked to carry RT-PCR negative reports or final vaccination certificates.

In view of the virus spike, the State has issued a circular directing the people coming to Odisha by any public transport, such as train, bus, flight or waterways will have to produce a negative RT-PCR report.

The State government has also suspended all public transport from Odisha to Chhattisgarh and vice versa till April 30.

As against 1,282 infections reported yesterday, the state logged 1,374 more new positive cases, the steepest single-day rise in 2021, with a quantum jump of around 10% virus growth in a day.

The lone refreshing turn of events amid the COVID spike is the low fatality rate in the state. The case fatality rate (CFR) currently stands at 0.55% . The contagion's cumulative fatality tally today rose to 1,926 with two fresh deaths reported. Only seven succumbed to infection since the past three weeks.

The signs of resurgence of virus outbreak are appearing ominous as over 400 positive cases have been reported for 9th consecutive day including today's posting of 1300-plus virus infections.

The active cases have jumped to 7,003 . The positivity rate of 33,996 samples tested in 24 hours stood at 4.45 per cent.

The State's recovery rate currently stands at 97.71%.

The state has so far tested 93,38,708 samples for COVIOD-19 including 33,996 on Friday (bulk of it RATS).

Sundargarh district reported the highest 355 cases followed by Khorhda (193), Nuapada (135), Sambalpur (77), Bargarh (59), Jharsuguda (52), Cuttack (51), Rayagada (47) and Kalahandi (45).

State capital Bhubaneswar reported another spike on Saturday with 171 more people testing positive in the last 24 hours. According to the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), 126 of the new cases are local contacts and 45 from quarantine.

Enforcement has been stepped up and two cinema halls were shut today in the state for violation of Covid protocol.

Chief secretary Suresh Mahapatra, Additional Chief Secretary P K Mahapatra visited Kalahandi and Nuapada districts to review the situation today.

Cong candidate for Pipili bypoll tests COVID positive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 10 APRIL:

Congress candidate for Pipili bye election, Ajit Mangaraj has not been campaigning since the last two days and today his facebook post said he had tested COVID positive.

The candidate requested party workers to continue campaigning for him and ensure that the Congress does well in the election.

As such the ruling BJD candidate Rudra Pratap Maharathy has launched a massive campaign with support of an army of Ministers and MLAs while the BJP's Ashrit Pattnayak is also putting up a formidable campaign .

There are 10 candidates in the fray and as per the ADR report four of them have declared criminal cases pending against them.

The candidates of leading political parties- Ashrit Pattnayak (BJP), Rudra Pratap Maharathy (BJD) and Ajit Mangaraj (Congress) have all criminal cases pending including serious offences.

While two candidates- Rudra Pratap Maharathy (BJD) and Ajit Mangaraj (INC)- are crorepatis, the average assets per candidate contesting in the bye election stood at Rs. 1.56 crores. There are 5 candidates who have declared liabilities.Only one woman candidate is contesting the Pipili by poll.

BJD contestant Rudra Pratap Maharathy owned assets worth Rs 5.26 crore while Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj is in possession of Rs 8.01 crore.

Gangster Seikh Hyder escapes from hospital

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK, 10 APRIL:

Dreaded gangster Seikh Hyder, sentenced to life in two murder cases, escaped from the SCB medical college and hospital, where the convicted history-sheeter was undergoing treatment on court order.

He overpowered the police security guard deployed at Cabin No 5 of the surgery ward and left him unconscious. Another version doing the rounds is that the gang lord had managed to drug the police guard.

Hyder had been lodged in Sambalpur circle jail . He was ailing and had been referred to the Burla hospital from where he was shifted to SCB hospital , Cuttack for treatment .

A special squad has been constituted to nab the escapee. Further investigation is underway in this regard, said Cuttack Deputy Commissioner of Police, Prateek Singh. We are examining the CCTv footage to ascertain details including the time of his escape. The guard is unconscious and not in a position to tell us how it happened, he said.

The gangster had been sentenced to life by a court in Bhubaneswar in March 2011 in the sensational murder of Sk Chunna following a gang war with his rival Sk Suleiman. On May 31, 2005, Chunna, brother of Sk Suleiman, a rival of Hyder, was gunned down near Stewart School Square in Bhubaneswar. In 2015, a court in Cuttack had also awarded life imprisonment to the gangster for the kidnapping and murder of mines trader Rashmi Ranjan Mohapatra.

Mohapatra and his driver were kidnapped on May 27, 2007. Their charred bodies were recovered from Ranchi.

The crime syndicate headed by Hyder was involved in crimes in several other parts of the state, while two other Kendrapara-based gangsters Tito and Suleiman, who was later, gunned down in gang rivalry, dealt with tender fixing of government civil construction projects besides cases of murder and extortion. Gangster Tito is currently in jail facing trial in a series of criminal cases including murder.

Farmers of Balikuda threaten suicide

Call of stir following promises by local officers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAGATSINGHPUR, 10 APRIL:

Anguished over the mess in paddy procurement by concerned officials farmers of Balikuda who were unable to sell their paddy squatted blocked the road and squatted with paddy stock, poison and kerosene threatening to commit suicide.

The mass dharna and threat prompted officials to rush to the spot and dissuade the farmers from taking any drastic step. They admitted to the lapses and promised that the distressed farmers will get priority in the next procurement season since the current one has ended on 31 March.

After a great deal of persuasion, the farmers called off their stir.

It is learnt that 4767 farmers of the area had failed to sell their paddy at the mandies (market yards) despite having received tokens from the government entitling them for such sale.

Chandeswer Rout , a farmer said he had planned his daughters marriage next month but without being able to sell his produce, the marriage plans have been shattered. Another 85 year old Nityananda Nayak said he was unable to purchase medicines as he had failed to sell his paddy stock, hence he had decided to join the mass suicide movement.

Doctors threaten stir at Nilgiri

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE, 10 APRIL:

The OMSA members said that a group of people had heckled and attacked the SDMO Ajay Samal while confronting him on why Union Minister Pratap Sarangi was not invited to inaugurate two cabins at the Rogi Kalyan Samiti .

Doctors under the banner of Orissa Medical Services Association (OMSA) have threatened to embark on agitation if the people involved in attacking the sub divisional medical officers(SDMO) , Nilgiri are not brought to book within 72 hours .

The decision was taken by the doctors at a meeting yesterday .They OMSA members said that a group of people had heckled and attacked the SDMO Ajay Samal while confronting him on why Union Minister Pratap Sarangi was not invited to inaugurate two cabins at the Rogi Kalyan Samiti .

The angry mob barged into the chamber of SDMO Samal, abused him in vulgar language and heckled him in the presence of the medical staff. They also damaged the plaque.

The SDMO , Samal informed that the inauguration was done by the local MLA and district collector as had been decided earlier at a meeting in this regard.

Samal is on leave since the incident which took place on Wednesday . The medical staff sported black badges on duty and demanded arrest of the culprits.

Rules violated in drugs procurement in government hospitals: CAG

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR , 10 APRIL:

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has found glaring lapses in the drugs and medicine procurement system in the government healthcare facilities with instances of violation of tender and centralized purchase norms in the procurement of drugs

Earlier the audit apex panel had found that Ineffective monitoring of indents, distribution, consumption, stock position of drugs through e-Niramaya software had resulted in the expiry of drugs valued at Rs 4.18 crore during April 2017 to May 2019.

As per the 'Guidelines for procurement of goods' issued by the Finance Department, tender is to be invited by advertisement for procuring goods worth Rs 5 lakh and above. The health authorities in at least five test-checked hospitals however, did not follow tender procedures annually for local procurement of drugs and consumables.

Instead of inviting fresh tender, the hospital authorities procured drugs based on the rates approved by them in previous years, inviting quotations from local medicine shops.

The Non-floating of tenders led to procurement of drugs at prices that were not competitive while also being contrary to the provisions of procurement guidelines issued by the Finance Department, the CAG report said.

The Superintendent of SCB Medical College & Hospital, Cuttack did not float any tender during 2016-19 (up to January 2019) and procured drugs on the basis of quotations received from the local medicine shops empanelled during 2015-16.

A comparison of cost of drugs procured (2016-19) with the rates finally approved when the tendering was carried out (February 2019), showed that the premiere hospital had incurred an extra expenditure of Rs 21.58 lakh (24 per cent) in procuring five medicines at Rs 88.38 lakh.

The Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL) procures drugs and medical consumables out of 80 per cent of the budget made by the State under a centralized procurement system. There is the provision of 20 percent of the drugs budget, made for local procurement by the District Headquarters Hospitals, medical colleges and other major health institutions to meet emergency requirements.

As per the instruction (October 2017) of the Health & Family Welfare Department, local procurement of drugs is to be limited to requirements for one month only at a time and follow the procurement guidelines issued by the Finance Department from time to time.

The test checked health institutions had incurred Rs 40.81 crore for local procurement of drugs and consumables against Government allocation of Rs 42.48 crore during 2016-19, it concluded.

Dolphin numbers grow substantially in Odisha's seawaters

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 10 APRIL:

Over 544 dolphins have been sighted in the Odisha coast, including 188 in the Chilika lake, indicating the healthy habitat and ample fish availability for the aquatic mammals in the state, a senior official said.

The pertinent feature of this year's census of these delicate aquatic animals indicates the impressive rise in population of Irrawaddy dolphins in the Chilika lake.

The population of Irrawaddy dolphins, categorized as a highly endangered species, was found at 162 up from 146 last year.

There is also an overall increase in dolphin population in Chilika as 26 bottle-nose dolphins were sighted during the census as against 17 last year. This has taken the overall population of dolphins, inhabiting the lake, to 188 from 163 in 2020.

While the State accounted for a total of 544 dolphin population, the Bhitarkanika national park and Gahirmatha marine sanctuary region under the Rajnagar wildlife division reported the highest sighting with 342 dolphins, according to the census report compiled by the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) and State Wildlife Wing.

While 281 humpback dolphins and 22 bottle-nose dolphins were sighted by the enumerators this year, the number in Irrawaddy dolphins slumped to 39 as against 60 last year.

The dolphin census was also carried out in Puri, Bhadrak, Balasore wildlife and Berhampur divisions where only 14 dolphins were spotted.

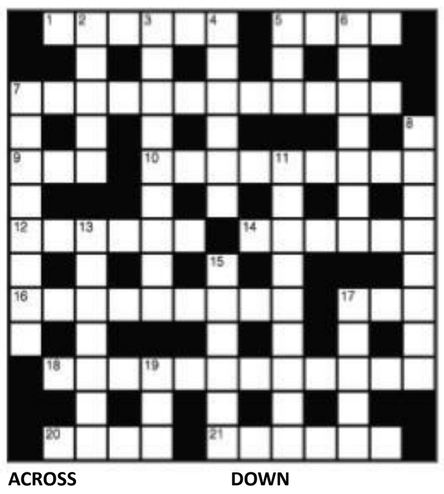
The presence of dolphins throughout the year is a boon for tourists. Dolphins frequenting the coasts have enabled tourists and nature-lovers to catch a glimpse of them, he said.

Three varieties of dolphins -- Irrawady, Humpback and Bottlenose -- inhabit the water bodies of the state, with most of them having been spotted in the deltaic regions of Bhitarkanika and Gahiramatha.

Mask checking & enforcement in Bhubaneswar. SNS

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Husky-voiced (6)
5 Encounter (4)
7 Afterwards (12)
9 Decay (3)
10 Ensnared (9)
12 Find (6)
14 Dinner jacket (6)
16 Infancy (9)
17 By way of (3)
18 Dental specialist (12)
20 Pinnacle (4)
21 Small hole (6)

DOWN

2 Curved path (5)
3 Voted in again (2-7)
4 Consider as equivalent (6)
5 Adult males (3)
6 Overshadow (7)
7 Clerical vestment (8)
8 Egg-based liqueur (8)
11 Copious supply (9)
13 Bird's sound (7)
15 Caress (6)
17 Express (5)
19 Evil spell (Informal) (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Pace, 3 Ding (Pasting), 7 Apprehensive, 9 Pilot, 10 Gremlin, 11 Enrich, 13 Unison, 16 Rear-end, 18 Sci-fi, 19 Short circuit, 20 Snip, 21 Able.

DOWN
1 Popular, 2 Cleft, 3 Discern, 4 Novel, 5 Raspberry, 6 Beige, 8 Enunciate, 12 Cheer up, 14 Seizure, 15 Edict, 17 Ashen, 18 Shrub.

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker

RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson

DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski

NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

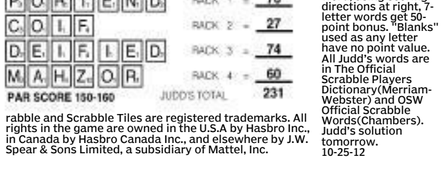
ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320
- Punjab Roadways 23867842, 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airport 011-25671580; Terminal I-B 25671576, Palam Road 25671579, 18001803838
- JET AIRWAYS Flight Inquiry and Reservation 39841111
- EMIRATES Flight Inquiry and Reservation 33773377
- Air Canada Flight Inquiry 25656421/25656431 Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE BRAND GRALS



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irections Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right, 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary(Merriam-Webster) and OSW Official Scrabble Words(Chambers). Judd's solution tomorrow.
10-25-12

SUDOKU

Conceptis SudoKu — By Dave Green

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

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 4/21

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answer to previous puzzle

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

While your strength and stay, your Majesty, may now have passed, Jenny and I pray that you will find great comfort in your faith, in your family, at this time

AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON
AS HE OFFERED HIS COUNTRY'S SYMPATHIES AND CONDOLENCES TO QUEEN ELIZABETH II

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN	
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C	H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C	H
TOKYO	09°C	12°C	CL
LONDON	07°C	09°C	R
DUBAI	30°C	25°C	S
SAN FRANCISCO	12° C	04° C	S
NEW YORK	14° C	07° C	H
MOSCOW	11° C	09°C	S

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS

Model displays an Autumn/Winter creation by Spanish designer Brain & Beast during the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week in Madrid, Spain. AP

Texas infant fatally shot: Police believe an infant was fatally shot Friday by his 3-year-old brother after the older boy got a hold of a gun inside a Houston apartment.The infant was shot in his abdomen Friday morning, said Houston Police Department Assistant. AP

Russia scribe probe: Russian authorities took a promi nent investigative journalist in for questioning after searching his apartment, and the news website he works for said the actions were likely connected to a story about one of President Vladimir Putin's closest associates. AP

Jailed for helping IS: An Illinois man who believed he was giving phones to help the IS group commit violence was sentenced Friday to 13 1/2 years in federal prison.US District Judge said Edward Schimenti was more culpable of the two men convicted by a jury in 2019. AP

US warns of consequences to Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

The Biden administration is carrying a review of its policies against Russia over its escalating aggression in eastern Ukraine and there will be "consequences", some seen and some unseen, to Kremlin, the White House has warned.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki during her daily briefing said the US is in close consultation and working with partners and allies in the region over Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's borders.

Of the actions that have already been taken, that we've had an ongoing review about we've been clear, There will be consequences, some unseen and some seen. We will hope to have more about those soon, Psaki said on Friday.

As it relates to the escalating Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, including Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's borders, we are, of course, in close consultation and working with partners and allies in the region to assess, to share intelligence, to determine what's happening, and what can be done about it, Psaki said.

Responding to a question, Psaki said there's ongoing diplomatic engagement between the US and a number of countries in the region, including Russia, including Ukraine, including European partners and allies who share a number of American concerns about the aggression of Russian movements on the border.The long-running conflict in Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking east has claimed more than 13,000 lives since 2014.Fighting in the conflict, which erupted after Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, subsided in 2020 as a new ceasefire agreement took hold last July.

But clashes have picked up again since the start of the year. Ukrainian separatists are widely seen as having Russia's political and military backing, which Moscow denies.

Ukraine last week accused Russia of massing thousands of military personnel on its northern and eastern borders as well as on the Crimean peninsula. The Russian buildup has become the latest point of friction in icy relations between Moscow and the Biden administration. The two sides have differences over arms control, human rights and other issues.Meanwhile, media reports said that Biden Administration has completed its security review of Russia and is planning new sets of actions against Russia.

From his first phone call with President Putin, President Biden has been clear that the United States will respond to a number of destabilising Russian actions, in a manner and timing of our choosing, a White House spokesperson said in response to a question.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy visits positions of armed forces near the frontline with Russian-backed separatists in Donbass region, Ukraine on 8 April.

Ukraine, Turkey leaders meet in Istanbul: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is in Istanbul on Saturday to meet with Turkey's president.A statement from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office said the two leaders would discuss bilateral relations, characterizing them at a "strategic partnership level."Zelenskyy's visit to Turkey comes amid renewed tensions in eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists have been fighting since 2014. In a visit to troops there this week, Zelenskyy said breaches of a July truce were increasing. Separatists authorities have also accused Ukrainian forces of violating the cease-fire. Russia has reinforced its troops along the border and warned Ukraine against trying to retake control of the separatist-controlled territory. AP

Stalled at first jab: Vaccine shortage hit poor nations

COVAX will only ship vaccines cleared by WHO; 60 countries are affected; deliveries halted since Monday

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 10 APRIL

As many as 60 countries, including some of the world's poorest, might be stalled at the first shots of their coronavirus vaccinations because nearly all deliveries through the global program intended to help them are blocked until as late as June.

COVAX, the global initiative to provide vaccines to countries lacking the clout to negotiate for scarce supplies on their own, has in the past week shipped more than 25,000 doses to low-income countries only twice on any given day. Deliveries have all but halted since Monday.

During the past two weeks, according to data compiled daily by UNICEF, fewer than 2 million COVAX doses in total were cleared for shipment to 92 countries in the developing world — the same amount injected in Britain alone.On Friday, the head of the World Health Organization slammed the "shocking imbalance" in global Covid vaccination. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreysus said that while one in four people in rich countries had received a vaccine, only one in 500 people in poorer countries had gotten a dose.

The vaccine shortage stems mostly from India's decision to stop exporting vaccines from its Serum Institute factory, which produces the overwhelming majority of the AstraZeneca doses that COVAX counted on to supply around a third of the global population at a time coronavirus is spiking worldwide.

COVAX will only ship vaccines cleared by WHO, and countries are increasingly impatient. Supplies are dwindling in some of the first countries to receive COVAX shipments, and the expected delivery of second doses in the 12-week window currently recommended is now in doubt. In a statement, the vaccine alliance known as GAVI told The Associated Press that 60 countries are affected by the delays.

In vaccination tents set up at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, many of those who arrived for their first jabs were uneasy about when the second would arrive.

"My fear if I don't get the second dose, my immune system is going to be weak, hence I might die," said Oscar Odinga, a civil servant.Internal WHO documents obtained by the AP show the uncertainty about deliveries "is causing some countries to lose faith in the COVAX (effort)." That is prompting WHO to consider speeding up its endorsement of vaccines from China and Russia, which have not been authorized by any regulators in Europe or North America.

The WHO documents show the U.N. agency is facing questions from COVAX participants about allotments in addition to "uncertainty about whether all those who were vaccinated in round 1 are guaranteed a second dose."

WHO declined to respond specifically to the issues raised in the internal materials but has previously said countries are "very keen" to get vaccines as soon as possible and insisted it hasn't heard any complaints about the process.

Concern over the link between the AstraZeneca shot and rare blood clots has also "created nervousness both around its safety and efficacy," WHO noted. Among its proposed solutions is a decision to "expedite review of additional products" from China and Russia.

WHO said last month it might be possible to greenlight the Chinese vaccines by the end of April. Some experts have noted that Sinopharm and Sinovac, two Chinese-made vaccines, lack published data, and there are reports of people needing a third dose to be protected.

"If there is something that we miss from not having thoroughly evaluated the risks of serious adverse events from these vaccines, that would undermine the confidence in all the good products that we're using that we know are safe," said Dora Curry, director of health equity and rights at CARE International.

Other experts worried that delays could erode faith in governments that were particularly efficient in their vaccination programs and were counting on second doses soon. Earlier this month, the WHO appealed to rich countries to urgently share 10 million doses to meet the U.N. target of starting Covid vaccinations in every country within the first 100 days of the year. So far, countries have pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to COVAX. But there are simply no doses to buy, and no country has agreed to immediately share what it has. Bilateral donations of doses tend to go along political lines, rather than to countries with the most infections, and they aren't nearly enough to compensate for the goals that COVAX has set out. Think Global Health, a data site managed by the Council on Foreign Relations, identified 19 countries that have donated a total of 27.5 million doses to 102 nations as of Thursday.

According to the International Rescue Committee, Covid cases and deaths last month surged in numerous crisis-hit countries: by 322per centin Kenya, 379per cent in Yemen and 529per cent in northeast Syria.

IMF, WB urged to ensure timely delivery of safe & effective vaccines across nations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

Asserting that the effects of the pandemic will be felt for years, a joint ministerial committee of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank has urged the two global financial bodies to ensure timely delivery of safe and effective vaccines across all countries.

"Timely delivery of safe and effective vaccines across all countries is critical to ending the pandemic, especially as new variants emerge. Developing countries need to strengthen their readiness for vaccination campaigns and develop coordinated strategies to reach vulnerable populations," the Development Committee said in a communique after the Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank here on Friday.

The panel noted that the pandemic has caused an unprecedented public health, economic and social crisis, threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions.

The economic shock is increasing poverty, worsening inequalities and reversing development gains. As the global economy begins a gradual recovery, uncertainty surrounds near- and medium-term prospects, it said.

According to Johns Hopkins University, the Covdi has so far infected 134,545,099 people and claimed 2,914,590 lives globally.

"We call for sustained, differentiated, and targeted financial and technical support for an adequate policy response, strong coordination across bilateral and multilateral organisations, and further support to the private sector. We urge the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in line with their respective mandates, to work closely together and with other partners to contain the impacts of the pandemic," the communique said.

The committee called for redoubling the efforts to support manufacturing capacity for vaccines and the pandemic-related medical supplies in developing countries. "The pandemic has triggered far-reaching consequences, and we must strengthen global preparedness for future pandemics, and at the same time make progress in building robust health systems with universal coverage," it said.

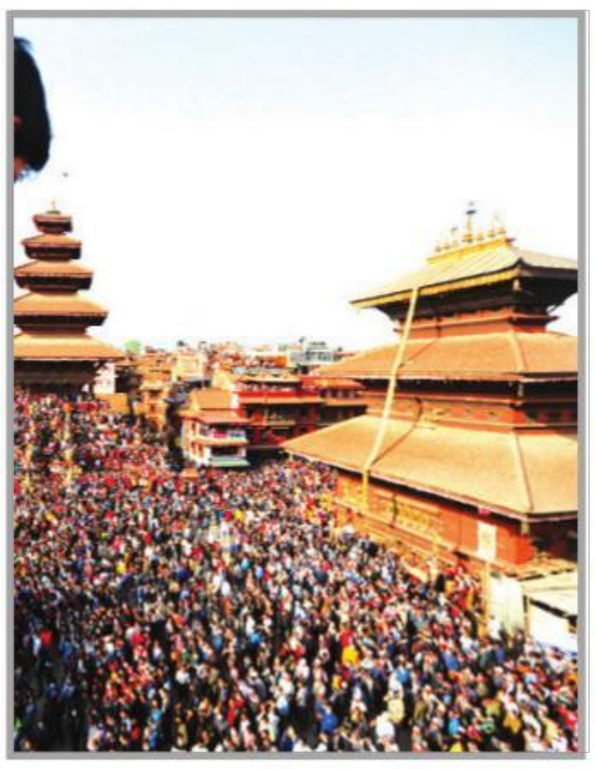
People sleep on top of empty oxygen cylinders, waiting for a shop to open in order to refill their tanks, in the Villa El Salvador neighborhood in Lima, Peru.

Iran enforces 10-day lockdown amid 4th wave: Iran on Saturday began a 10-day lockdown amid a fourth wave of coronavirus infections, state TV reported, a worrisome trend after more than a year of the country battling the Middle East's worst outbreak. Iran's coronavirus task force, charged with determining virus restrictions, ordered most shops closed and offices restricted to one-third capacity in cities declared as red-zones.The capital Tehran and 250 other cities and towns across the country have been declared red zones.

Pak approves emergency use of 3rd Chinese vaccine: Pakistan has approved the emergency use of the third Chinese vaccine, despite its low efficacy rate, as the country struggled to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan on Thursday granted Emergency Use Authorisation to CoronaVac, developed by Chinese company Sinovac Biotech, officials said.

Biden to rush vaccinators to Michigan as gov urges limits: Washington will rush federal resources to support vaccinations, testing and treatments, but not vaccines, to Michigan in an effort to control the state's worst-in-the-nation outbreak, the White House has said. The announcement came as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer strongly recommended, but did not order, a two-week pause on face-to-face high school instruction, indoor restaurant dining and youth sports. She cited more contagious coronavirus variants and pandemic fatigue as factors in the surge, which has led some hospitals to postpone non-emergency procedures.

FESTIVE MOOD



Devotees pulling a chariot during the Biska Jatra Festival in Bhaktapur, Nepal on Saturday. This festival, also regarded as Nepalese New Year, images of Hindu god Bhairava and his female counterpart Bhadrakali are enshrined in two large chariots and pulled to an open square after which rituals and festivities are performed. AP

Biden budget seeks more for schools, health and housing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

President Joe Biden released a $1.5 trillion wish list for his first federal budget, asking for substantial gains for Democratic priorities including education, health care, housing and environmental protection.

The request by the White House budget office Friday for an 8.4per cent increase in agency operating budgets spells out Biden's top priorities as Congress weighs its spending plans for next year. It's the first financial outline of the Democrats' broader ambitions since the expiration of a 2011 law that capped congressional spending.

"I'm hoping it'll have some bipartisan support across the board," Biden said before an Oval Office meeting with his economics team, though prominent Senate Republicans immediately complained the plan would shortchange the military and national security in boosting domestic programs.

Bipartisanship in 2011 also restricted Democrats' ambitions, a problem they're now trying to address. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the administration was "inheriting a legacy of chronic underinvestment" because of the caps. "The president is focused on reversing this trend and reinvesting in the foundations of our strength," she told reporters at a briefing.At stake is "discretionary spending," roughly one-third of the huge federal budget that is passed by Congress each year, funding the military, domestic Cabinet department operations, foreign policy and homeland security. The rest of the budget involves so-called mandatory programs with locked-in spending, chiefly Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

The Biden request provides a significantly smaller 1.6% increase for the $700 bn-plus Pentagon budget than for domestic accounts.

The Biden request provides a significantly smaller 1.6per cent increase for the $700 billion-plus Pentagon budget than for domestic accounts. Biden wants to increase the Education Department's budget by a massive 40.8% to $102.8 billion, which includes an additional $20 billion in grants for high-poverty schools. The Department of Health and Human Services would get a 23.1% boost to $133.7 billion.

Matt Gaetz faces House ethics probe

WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

The House Ethics Committee announced an investigation into Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz as federal prosecutors probing sex trafficking allegations against him are also scrutinizing the actions of some of his political allies and fellow Florida Republicans as part of a broader public corruption inquiry.Federal agents have, in recent months, been examining Gaetz's connections to several other influential Florida political figures.

They include Florida state senator Jason Brodeur; Halsey Beshears, the state's former top business regulator; Chris Dorworth, a lobbyist who had served in the state House of Representatives; and Jason Pirozzolo, a hand surgeon and Gaetz campaign donor who served on the board of the Orlando Airport Authority, a person familiar with the matter said.

The FBI's examination of a wide range of topics involving Gaetz and his associates exemplifies the breadth of the investigation. AP

Prince Philip honoured with 41-gun salutes as Britain enters eight-day mourning

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, 10 APRIL

Gun salutes in all capitals of the United Kingdom as well as aboard some Royal Navy ships on Saturday honoured Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away aged 99 at Windsor Castle on Friday.

The 41 rounds fired in London, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh at a rate of one shot per minute from midday local time on Saturday mark the start of an eight-day national mourning period.

"The tradition of Gun Salutes being fired throughout the country to mark significant national events dates back to at least the 18th century, and there are historical records of salutes taking place as early as the 14th century when guns and ammunition began to be adopted more widely, a statement on the royal website read. "Similar gun salutes were fired to mark the death of Queen Victoria in 1901," it notes. They also honour the Duke's strong military links, having served with the Royal Navy in World War II.

"His Royal Highness has been a great friend, inspiration and role model for the armed forces and he will be sorely missed, said General Sir Nick Carter, the UK's Chief of the Defence Staff.

Gun salutes across the U.K., in Commonwealth countries and at sea are marking the death of Britain's Prince Philip on Saturday as military leaders honor the former naval officer and husband of Queen Elizabeth II. Batteries of cannons in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and other cities fired 41 rounds at one-minute intervals starting at midday. The Australian Defense Force offered its salute at 5 p.m. local time outside Parliament House in Canberra, and New Zealand planned to give an artillery tribute on Sunday. "His Royal Highness leaves us with a legacy of indomitable spirit, steadfastness and an unshakeable sense of duty," said General Nick Carter, chief of the U.K. Defense Staff. "From all of us who serve today and who have served, thank you."

Also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, Philip served in the Royal Navy during World War II and once had a promising military career. He joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1939 and won mentions during the war for his service aboard the battleship HMS Valiant at Cape Matapan, on Greece's Peloponnesian peninsula. He rose to the rank of commander before he retired from active duty.

Two years after the war ended, Philip married the future queen at Westminster Abbey when she was 21 and he was 26. His naval career came to an abrupt end when King George VI died in 1952 and Elizabeth became queen.

The couple had four children — Charles, the heir to the throne, Anne, Andrew and Edward.

Members of the public left flowers outside Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle on Saturday, ignoring appeals from authorities and the royal family to refrain from gathering because of the Covid.

Harry expected to fly in for funeral: The rift in the royal ranks after an explosive interview by Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle is to be set aside as reports suggest that the Duke of Sussex is keen to fly to the UK despite coronavirus restrictions to attend grandfather Philip's funeral.

Harry was close to his grandfather and, according to media reports, he is keen to be by the side of his grandmother, as she mourns the passing of her husband.

Members of the Honourable Artillery Company fire a 41-round gun salute from the wharf at the Tower of London, to mark the death of Prince Philip, in London on Saturday. AP

BBC sets up page for Philip coverage complaints: The UK's national broadcaster switched instantly into mourning mode when Prince Philip's death was announced.
The BBC cancelled its regular programming and aired special coverage about Philip hosted by black-clad news anchors on Friday. Popular prime-time shows such as the cooking contest MasterChef were pulled off the air, and the network's music radio stations played instrumentals and somber tunes. Some Britons saw the BBC's actions as a fitting mark of respect. For others, it was a bit much. The broadcaster has received so many complaints alleging its reporting was excessive that it set up a special page on its website for viewers to register objections if they felt there was too much TV coverage of the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The publicly funded BBC often finds itself criticised from all sides over its treatment of major national events. When the Queen Mother Elizabeth died in 2002, the broadcaster was criticized because the announcer delivering the news did not wear a black tie. AP

epaper.thestatesman.com

Joe Biden is committed to bringing a responsible end to the conflict in Afghanistan and ensuring that the country can never again become a haven for terrorists

WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JEN PSAKI
AT HER DAILY NEWS CONFERENCE

THUMBNAILS

Activists react to crowd control projectiles fired by Israeli police during a protest against planned evictions in east Jerusalem on Saturday. IANS

Bangla mosque attack: Activists of a hardline Islamist group attacked devotees inside a mosque in northern Bangladesh, injuring at least 12 persons, according to a media report.Self-proclaimed Hefazat-e-Islam activists attacked the devotees who tried to intervene, Imam Motlob Uddin said. AP

Christian nurses booked: Two Christian nurses have been booked under blasphemy charges in Pakistan's Punjab province following a complaint by hospital authorities, police said, as people staged demonstrations against the duo demanding strict action against them. PTI

Libya shoot out: A shooting in a detention center for migrants in Libya's capital left one migrant dead and two others injured, an international charity said Saturday. TOne migrant was killed and two others, ages 17 and 18, were wounded and taken to a hospital run by the charity. PTI

Lanka Mrs World gaffee: The reigning Mrs. World has relinquished her title while defending her decision to pull the crown off the head of this year's Mrs. Sri Lanka title holder, whom she claimed was unqualified to take part in the contest because she is divorced. PTI

US unveils new rules for contacts with Taiwan

Revised guidelines don't include all changes put in place by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in waning days of Trump administration

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

The State Department has unveiled new rules for US government contacts with Taiwan that are likely anger China but appear to reimpose some restrictions that had been lifted by the Trump administration.

The department announced the changed policy in a statement that said the Biden administration intends to "liberalize" the rules to reflect the "deepening unofficial relationship" between the US and Taiwan. However, the revised guidelines don't include all the changes put in place by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the waning days of the Trump administration.

Pompeo had lifted virtually all restrictions on contacts with Taiwan, including allowing Taiwanese military officers to wear uniforms and display

the Taiwanese flag at meetings with US officials. Friday's changes were silent on those matters, although the rules do continue to permit US officials to meet their Taiwanese counterparts in federal buildings.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and opposes any attempt to treat the island as an independent country. China had condemned Pompeo's easing of the restrictions that had been in place since the US recognised Beijing and dropped formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979.

"These new guidelines will continue the U.S. government's longstanding practice of providing clarity throughout the U.S. executive branch of how to implement our one China' policy," the department said.

"This new guidance is a step forward from earlier versions, including the contact guidance that was in place for virtually all of the previous administration, by encouraging engagement with Taiwan counterparts and removing unneeded restrictions."

Yet the statement contained no details about the new "contact guidance" and congressional aides briefed on the matter said the changes were actually more restrictive than those Pompeo had rolled out just 11 days before the end of the Trump administration.

The department said Pompeo's changes had not made engagement with Taiwan easier but rather "had the practical policy effect of impeding our unofficial engagement with Taiwan - a problem that we are rectifying today with this new guidance." It was not immediately clear how the new guidance rectified the matter.

On January 9, Pompeo issued a sweeping order that rescinded almost all USrestrictions on contacts with Taiwan. "The United States government took these actions unilaterally, in an attempt to appease the Communist regime in Beijing. No more," Pompeo said in a statement that announced the "lifting all of these self-imposed restrictions. He said the U.S.-Taiwan relationship should not be shackled by self-imposed restrictions of our permanent bureaucracy."

Meanwile, Pentagon Spokesperson John Kirby said, the US will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows and they "will support the rights of all nations to do the same. This is not going to change".

US approaching China from position of patience and is not in hurry: WH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 10 APRIL

The Biden administration is approaching China from the position of patience and is not in a hurry, the White House has said. White House Press secretary Jen Psaki said that the relationship with China is one based on steep competition. "We have been publicly and privately expressing our growing concerns about China's aggression towards Taiwan. China has taken increasingly coercive action to undercut democracy in Taiwan. We've seen a concerning increase in PRC military activity in the Taiwan Strait, which we believe is potentially destabilising," she said. "We are approaching this from a position of patience; we're not in a hurry. We are working to strengthen our conditions at home, better support our workforce, ensure that we are approaching the relationship from a position of strength," Psaki said.

The US is watching Chinese military exercise near Taiwan closely. "What we can control is how we approach our relationship with China. We see it as one that is about competition, not about conflict. Our focus is also on approaching the relationship from a position of strength," she said.

"Things like infrastructure investment, ensuring we have broadband access across our country, certainly fit into that category. Also, working very closely with our partners and allies in the region and also across Europe," she said. The Pentagon said that it is concerned by the Chinese military activities in the SCS "We remain concerned by the amassing of Chinese maritime militia vessels in the Union Bank area of the SCS. And China's efforts to impede the lawful rights of our treaty ally, the Philippines. The US stands by our ally and we remain firmly committed to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific that is rooted in international law as reflected in the law of the sea convention," Pentagon Spokesperson said.

Iran: N-plant testing advanced centrifuge

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN, 10 APRIL

Iran said Saturday it has begun mechanical tests on its newest advanced nuclear centrifuge, even as the five world powers that remain in a foundering 2015 nuclear deal with Iran attempt to bring the US back into the agreement.

Iran's IR-9 centrifuge, when operational, would have the ability to separate uranium isotopes more quickly than the current centrifuges being used, thereby enriching uranium at a faster pace. The announcement carried on state TV came on Iran's annual Nuclear Day.

The IR-9's output is 50 times quicker than the first Iranian centrifuge, the IR-1. Iran's nuclear program is also developing IR-8 centrifuges.

Since January, Iran has begun enriching uranium at up to 20% purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels, though Iran's leadership insists the country has no desire to develop a nuclear weapon.

Former US President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the nuclear accord in 2018, accusing Iran of failing to live up to the agreement, opting for what he called a maximum-pressure campaign of stepped-up U.S. sanctions and other tough actions.

Iran responded by intensifying its enrichment of uranium and building centrifuges in plain violation of the accord, while insisting that its nuclear development is for civilian not military purposes.Israel maintains Iran still maintains the ambition of developing nuclear weapons, pointing to Tehran's ballistic missile program and research into other technologies. Iran denies it is pursuing nuclear weapons, and says its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

Iran's stockpile of 20per cent enriched uranium has reached 55 kilograms (121 pounds), moving its nuclear program closer to weapons-grade enrichment levels. The amount of the material was 17 kilograms in January.

Iran has installed 1,000 IR2 centrifuge machines and one cascade of 164 IR4 machines. Both are in operation and have more speed than the IR1 machines.

Since late February, Iran has ceased abiding by a confidential agreement with the UN's nuclear watchdog reached as part of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal. The International Atomic Energy Agency has additional protocols with several countries it monitors.

Under the protocol with Iran, the IAEA collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by its sophisticated surveillance cameras, the agency said in 2017. The agency also said then that it had placed 2,000 tamper-proof seals on nuclear material and equipment.

However, Iran's parliament passed a bill in December requiring the government to limit its cooperation with the IAEA and push its nuclear program beyond the limits of the 2015 nuclear deal. After the bill became law, Iran then began enriching uranium up to 20% purity and spinning advanced centrifuges oth barred by the deal.

Iran argues that the U.S.'s departure from the nuclear deal was the first violation of the deal by either county and therefore the U.S. must make the first move and remove sanctions before Iran returns to compliance.

President Joe Biden came into office saying that getting back into the accord and getting Iran's nuclear program back under international restrictions was a priority. But Iran and the United States have disagreed over Iran's demands that sanctions be lifted first.

Indirect talks with Iran to resume in Vienna next week: The indirect talks with Iran would resume in Vienna next week, a US official has said, noting that the meeting held this week through the European Union, China and Russia made some progress. A senior State Department official told reporters after the conclusion of the talks this week, "The parties will reconvene next week in Vienna sometime mid-week. We expect that the US team will be back and it will be continuing this process of clarifying what steps both sides need to take to come back into compliance." "Our hope is that we'll see from Iran a greater indication of what they're prepared to do and greater indication that they will take a constructive attitude in getting there," the official said, describing this week's meeting as the first step of this first phase of a potential return to the JCPOA. AP

Myanmar forces kill over 80 protesters with rifle grenades

AGENCIES
YANGON, 10 APRIL

Myanmar security forces fired rifle grenades at protesters in a town near Yangon on Friday, killing more than 80 people, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) monitoring group and a domestic news outlet said.

Details of the death toll in the town of Bago, 90 km (55 miles) northeast of Yangon, were not initially available because security forces piled up bodies in the Zeyar Muni pagoda compound and cordoned off the area, according to witnesses and domestic media outlets.

The AAPP and Myanmar Now news outlet said on Saturday that 82 people were killed during the protest against the Feb. 1 military coup in the country. Firing started before dawn on Friday and continued into the afternoon, Myanmar Now said.

"It is like genocide," the news outlet quoted a protest organiser called Ye Htut as saying. "They are shooting at every shadow."

Many residents of the town have fled, according to

accounts on social media.

A spokesman for Myanmar's military junta could not be reached on Saturday.

AAPP, which has maintained a daily tally of protesters killed and arrested by security forces, has previously said 618 people have died since the coup.

Junta spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun told a news conference on Friday in the capital, Naypyitaw, that the military had recorded 248 civilian deaths and 16 police deaths, and said no automatic weapons had been used by security forces.

An alliance of ethnic armies in Myanmar that has opposed the junta's crackdown attacked a police station in the east on Saturday and at least 10 policemen were killed, domestic media said.

The police station at Naungmon in Shan state was attacked early in the morning by fighters from an alliance that includes the Arakan Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the media reported.

Shan News said at least 10 policemen were killed, while the Shwe Phee Myay news outlet put the death toll at 14.

Myanmar's military rulers said on Friday that protests against its rule were dwindling because people wanted peace, and that it would hold elections within two years. Ousted Myanmar lawmakers urged the United Nations Security Council on Friday to take action against the military.

"Our people are ready to pay any cost to get back their rights and freedom," said Zin Mar Aung, who has been appointed acting foreign minister for a group of ousted lawmakers. She urged Council members to apply both direct and indirect pressure on the junta.

Chadian Prez seeks 6th term after 30 yrs in power

N'DJAMENA, CHAD

Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno is seeking to extend his three-decade long rule, running for a sixth time in this oil-producing Central African nation that is home to nearly half a million refugees and also plays a prominent role in the fight against Islamic extremism in the Sahel.

Giant portraits of Deby line the streets of the capital, N'Djamena, and the incumbent leader has campaigned on promises of building schools, paving roads and improving living conditions in this country that remains one of the least developed in the world.

Deby is widely expected to win in the first round, in part because two of the leading opposition candidates withdrew from the race as part of a boycott and a third man considered a top contender chose not to run.The only remaining opposition candidate that has had the resources to campaign outside the capital is Albert Pahimi Padacke, a one-time Deby ally who served as prime minister from 2016 to 2018. Padacke has argued that the opposition boycott only benefits the president.

"Every year, the youth, more and more of whom have only known Idriss Deby Itno, are faced with a more difficult future," he told Jeune Afrique recently. One of the remaining opposition candidates, Bruce Guedimbaye Mbaimon, has accused Deby's party of using state resources to campaign.

Deby, a former army commander-in-chief, first came to power in 1990 when his rebel forces overthrew then-President Hissene Habre, who was later convicted of human rights abuses at an international tribunal in Senegal. AP

HISTORY RE-RUN

People stand in a 3,000-year-old lost city in Luxor province, Egypt on Saturday. The newly unearthed city is located between the temple of King Rameses III and the colossi of Amenhotep III on the west bank of the Nile in Luxor. The city continued to be used by Amenhotep III's grandson Tutankhamun, and then his successor King Ay. AP

UAE names first woman astronaut

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, 10 APRIL

The United Arab Emirates named the next two astronauts in its space programme Saturday, including the country's first female astronaut.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai who also serves as the autocratically ruled country's prime minister and vice president, named the two astronauts on Twitter.

He identified Noura al-Matroushi as the UAE's first female astronaut, with her male counterpart as Mohammed al-Mulla.

A later government promotional video described al-Matroushi, born in 1993, as an engineer at the Abu Dhabi-based National Petroleum Construction Co.

Al-Mulla, born in 1988, serves as a pilot with Dubai police and heads their training division, the government said. The two had been selected among more than 4,000 applicants in the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula that's also home to Abu Dhabi. The two will undergo training at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

Ruler identified Noura al-Matroushi as the UAE's first female astronaut

If al-Matroushi ends up going on a mission, she could become the first Arab woman in space, the UAE government said. Anousheh Raissyan, an Iranian-American telecommunications entrepreneur and millionaire from Dallas, became the first Muslim woman and first Iranian in space when she traveled as a self-funded civilian to the International Space Station in 2006. She reportedly paid $20 million to travel there as a tourist.

Explosive eruption rocks volcano on Caribbean's St. Vincent

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

An explosive eruption rocked La Soufriere volcano on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent on Friday after the government ordered thousands to evacuate their homes nearby. Experts said the first explosion shot an ash column 32,000 feet into the sky and that the majority of the ash was headed northeast into the Atlantic Ocean. Lightning crackled through the towering column of smoke and ash late Friday.

Heavy ashfall was reported in communities around the volcano and beyond, with authorities saying some evacuations were limited by poor visibility.

Several flights also were canceled and islands including Barbados, St. Lucia and Grenada prepared for light ashfall as the 4,003-foot (1,220-meter) volcano continued to rumble. Authorities reported two other explosions later Friday as the island braced for possible additional activity.

"More explosions could occur," Erouscilla Joseph, director of the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Center said in a phone interview.

In the coastal town of Barrouallie, about 9 miles from the volcano, evacuees trudged toward shelters carrying backpacks, duffel bags and shopping bags stuffed with personal belongings after the explosion. Some prepared to stay there, while others were expected to board cruise ships and go to nearby islands that have offered help. The volcano last erupted in 1979, and a previous eruption in 1902 killed some 1,600 people. AP

China slaps record $ 2.78 bn fine on Alibaba over anti-competitive tactics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, 10 APRIL

China's antitrust regulators on Saturday slapped a record fine of USD 2.78 billion on Alibaba Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company, for abusing its dominant market position as Beijing tightened the screws on the country's tech giants.

Closing a months-long investigation that began last Christmas eve, China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) slapped a fine of 18.23 billion yuan ($ 2.78 billion) on Alibaba, headed by the country's top billionaire Jack Ma, setting a precedent for the ruling Communist Party to use the anti-monopoly rules to regulate tech giants.

The move is a new setback for Alibaba and its founder following a Nov decision by regulators to suspend the stock market debut of Ant Group

The SAMR said that it had made an administrative penalty decision under China's anti-monopoly law, ordering Alibaba Group to stop illegal activities and imposing a fine of 4 per cent on its 2019 domestic sales of 455.71 billion yuan, totalling 18.23 billion yuan. The market regulator concluded the four-month investigation, alleging that Alibaba has been abusing its market dominance since 2015 by prohibiting merchants from opening stores or participating in promotional activities on other competitive platforms, state-run CGTN TV reported.

The SAMR said that Alibaba's "pick one out of two" requirement restricted competition among online retail platforms and infringed the legitimate rights of the merchants, at the same time hurt consumers' interests.

The move is a new setback for Alibaba and its billionaire founder Ma following a November decision by regulators to suspend the stock market debut of Ant Group, a finance platform spun off from the e-commerce giant.

Ma, one of China's most prominent entrepreneurs, disappeared temporarily from public view after criticizing regulators in a speech in November. That was followed days later by the Ant Group suspension. In a statement on Saturday, the company said "Alibaba accepts the penalty with sincerity and will ensure its compliance with determination," It pledged to strengthen its operations in accordance with the law, step up the building of a compliance system, and better fulfill its social responsibilities, the CGTN report said. It also vowed to introduce a series of measures to lower platform operating thresholds and reduce platform operating costs to create a more transparent and efficient platform environment for businesses, the report said.

The fine sends a clear message to the world that China will crackdown harshly on any monopolistic behaviour if Big Tech companies such as Alibaba breach the law with their monopolistic business models, said Zhai Wei, executive director of the Competition Law Research Centre at East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai. This is the biggest impact, way more important than the penalty, Zhai said. He said small businesses which previously had to pick sides among Big Tech companies may benefit from the implementation of anti-monopoly law.

The space for their free development has obviously been maintained and expanded, he said. Observers say the fine shows China intends to move against internet platforms that it thinks are too big and aimed at serving warning to them.

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The Sunday Statesman
Sport
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THE INELIGIBLE MAN

Rio de Janeiro has abandoned plans to rename its famous Maracana Stadium in tribute to Pele (photo, left) after a widespread outcry from fans. The official proposal to give Pele's name to the ground that hosted the final of the 2014 World Cup and the opening ceremony of the 2016 Olympic Games was vetoed by state governor Claudio Castro.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Lynn's hope: Chris Lynn, who played in the opening match for Mumbai Indians in place of Quinton de Kock, hopes his first match does not turn out to be his last after running his skipper Rohit Sharma out in Friday's match against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Nawaz disappointed: Sarfraz Nawaz on Friday expressed disappointment over Cricket South Africa's decision to allow its players to leave the bilateral home series with Pakistan and join the cash-rich Indian Premier League, a point earlier made by a few stalwarts.

Khan's plan: The mayor of London wants to bring Indian Premier League matches to the British capital city. Sadiq Khan said he was discussing it with Surrey as the city had benefited from visits by American football, basketball, hockey and baseball franchises.

Positive test: Daniele De Rossi has been hospitalised after testing positive for Covid-19 during last month's World Cup qualifiers. Fourth on Italy's all-time appearance list, he tested reportedly positive along with three other staff members and several players.

No action: La Liga announced it would not be taking any action against Cadiz defender Juan Cala for alleged racist insults allegedly aimed at Valencia's Mouctar Diakhaby in the game between the two teams. Valencia walked off the pitch for 20 minutes in protest.

Cavani unsure: Edinson Cavani remains unsure about his Manchester United future beyond the end of the Premier League season. The Uruguayan arrived at Old Trafford as a free agent in October for until the end of the campaign with the option of a further year.

Zidane optimistic: Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has said he hopes Saturday's Clasico between his side and Barcelona will not be the last time Lionel Messi plays in the fixture. The Barca captain's contract expires this summer and his futures is up in the air.

Barty out: World No 1 Ashleigh Barty crashed out of the Charleston quarter-finals on Friday, beaten by 71st-ranked Spaniard Paula Badosa, who fired seven aces - three more than Barty - and saved 12 of 14 break points she faced on the way to a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

Tokyo berths: Young wrestlers Anshu Malik and Sonam Malik produced impressive performances in the Asian Olympic Qualifiers here today to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. India now have three women wrestlers who will fight for glory at the Summer Games.

Hans Women FC win: Hans Women FC emerged as the champions of the Football Delhi league after defeating Hops FC by a solitary goal Saturday. In the closely contested finals Anushka Samuel scored the winning goal. Hero of the match in the final game was Deepika Venkatesh.

Knight Riders ready for action, once again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 10 APRIL

Former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to strike a perfect balance under the astute leadership of Eoin Morgan (**in photo**) when they open their Indian Premier League campaign against a consistent SunRisers Hyderabad here tomorrow.

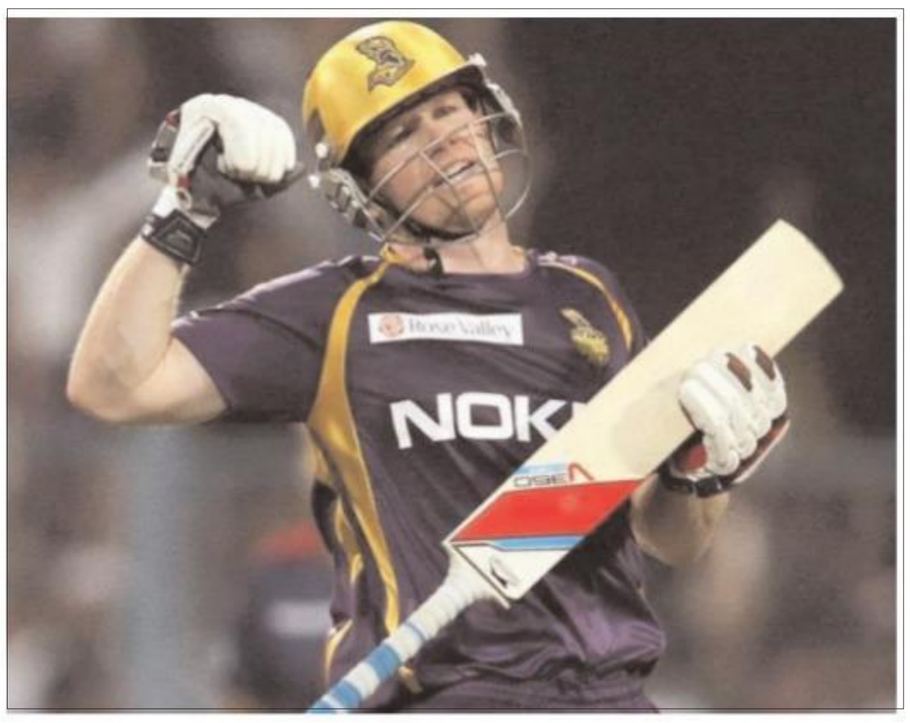
One of the best in the business in the white-ball format, Morgan took charge of an ordinary-looking KKR previously led by Dinesh Karthik midway into the last season.

They finished on the same points as SRH and Royal Challengers Bangalore but the two teams advanced on better run rates as KKR missed the playoffs for the second consecutive time. In his first stint as full-time KKR captain, all eyes would be on the One-Day Internationals World Cup-winning English skipper.

In Shubman Gill, they have a young top-order batsman who can easily shift gears, while Rahul Tripathi, Nitish Rana and Karthik, now with no captaincy burden, can form the core of their Indian batting. Morgan will look to bat through the overs while hoping Andre Russell gets back his explosive touch.

Russell had the worst season by his standards, averaging 13 in nine innings without a single match-winning performance, as an excessive reliance on the Jamaican cost KKR dear last season. Another West Indian who flopped badly in the United Arab Emirates was Sunil Narine. A key figure in their triumphs in 2012 and 2014, he looked a pale shadow of his past. It is time they tried out Shakib Al Hasan.

On the slow Chepauk strip, all eyes would be on 40-year-old Harbhajan Singh, who should aim to make the maximum impact in what could be his last IPL. They have a mystery spinner in Varun Chakravarthy, who did well last year, but his fitness could be a worry. SRH lost before the



final hurdle, going down to runners-up Delhi Capitals in Qualifier 2 last year. They will be bolstered by the return of Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who played just four games in last year's IPL because of a hip injury.

Fresh from his fine form during the white-ball phase of the England series at home, Kumar will spearhead their attack with yorker specialist T Natrajan. Add Afghan spinner Rashid Khan to the bowling line-up and the so-called Orange Army looks well-balanced. But the real strength of SRH will be their destructive top order, featuring David Warner and in-form Jonny Bairstow.

They also have Kane Williamson and Manish Pandey, forming a solid top four. Wriddhiman Saha also opened for SRH last year as the wicket-keeper-batsman and would look to prove a point after being sidelined internationally because of Rishabh Pant's fantastic ascent. But it remains to be seen who will play the finisher for SRH as they seem to lack the muscle power teams need in the last five overs.

KKR hold a head-to-head edge, the result so far being 12-7. Last year, they won both their matches against SRH.

Squads:

KKR: Eoin Morgan (captain), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav, Shivam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarthy, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer and Pawan Negi.

SRH: David Warner (captain), Kane Williamson, Virat Singh, Manish Pandey, Priyam Garg, Wriddhiman Saha, Jonny Bairstow, Jason Roy, Sreevats Goswami, Vijay Shankar, Mohammad Nabi, Kedar Jadhav, J Suchit, Jason Holder, Abhishek Sharma, Abdul Samad, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Rashid Khan, T Natarajan, Sandeep Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed, Siddharth Kaul, Basil Thampi, Shahbaz Nadeem and Mujeeb ur Rahman.

Patel made it possible, says Kohli

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 10 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli was all praise for Harshal Patel's (**in photo**) match-winning bowling performance here last evening, describing him as their designated death bowler in this edition of the Indian Premier League.

RCB paceman Harshal Patel, who became the first bowler to take a five-wicket haul against Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League, said being told by Kohli at the pre-season camp that he would bowl the death overs had helped him find confidence and clarity.

Patel's five for 27 was the reason RCB were able to restrict MI to 159 for nine in the IPL's first match this time around, which losing captain Rohit Shama acknowledged too. 'We brought Harshal in in a trade-off from Delhi. He is relishing the responsibility and clear with his plans. He was the difference today. He is going to be our death bowler. As a captain you want players with clarity, and he has that,' Kohli said at the post-match Press conference.

About AB de Villiers' 48 off 27 balls, Kohli said the South African still intimidated the opposition. "The opposition get nervous about AB. We have depth in the batting which we want to utilise. AB is probably the only one in the team who is so versatile. And he does it on slow wickets, which many others cannot." Sharma said he would not mind losing another opening game as long as his team went on to win the tournament, but admitted MI had fallen short by 20 runs.

"Winning the championship is important, I guess, not the first game. It was a great fight and we didn't let it go easily. Although the score wasn't something we were happy with. We were 20 short,' Sharma said after his team's ninth opening-round loss. "We made some mistakes, those are bound to happen. We need to move on. When you look at the

situation with four overs left they had AB and Christian, that's why we went with Bumrah and Boult to try and get them out.

Definitely not an easy pitch to bat on, the odd ball was gripping," he said. The MI captain was all praise for de Villiers. "De Villiers batted really well and got them home. We haven't had much time together as a group and it was totally opposite in Dubai, where we began preparations a month earlier," Sharma said.

He gave no excuses, though. "That's how the IPL has been played over the years, you just got to get into the game as quickly as possible. It can be difficult for teams that have great home records, but that is what sport is, you've got to go away and win. We are fortunate that we're even on the park."

De Villiers, whose exploits won the game for RCB, was also very happy with his effort. "It was an incredible game of cricket, it always seems to be against Mumbai. We obviously came in knowing it wasn't going to be easy. I knew halfway it was going to get tough, it's one of those pitches that gets harder as the game goes on,' de Villiers said.

Covid-19 reality

All eight teams are in strict bio-bubbles and testing has been increased as case numbers have skyrocketed to more than 130,000 a day since players arrived to prepare for the eight-week spectacle. The Board of Control for Cricket in India has appointed bubble integrity managers to police each team.

The games are to be held in six cities and all players are also being monitored through tracking devices, team officials said. "We are travelling in chartered planes and have created a foolproof bio-security environment, so everything's under control," Chennai Super Kings chief executive Kasi Viswanathan said, adding that teams were also getting Bluetooth monitoring devices.

Chennai, led by former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, suffered a number of positive cases before last year's IPL which was held in the United Arab Emirates. Sourav Ganguly, president of the BCCI, has said he expected the disruption to ease. But the BCCI has stopped independent media houses from covering the games though it has said the decision will be reviewed after a few days.

Comeback man Raina, Sam Curran guide CSK to 188/7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 10 APRIL

Suresh Raina announced his IPL comeback with a blazing 36-ball 54 and powered Chennai Super Kings to a solid 188 for seven against Delhi Capitals here on Saturday.

Sam Curran smashed away to 34 off only 15 balls to prop up the CSK innings towards the end. Curran hit four fours and two sixes.

The last five overs yielded 52 runs for CSK, thanks to Curran's power-packed innings.

Asked to bat first by Rishabh Pant, Ruturaj Gaikwad got CSK off the mark with a pleasing drive through the off side between point and cover, two deliveries after being beaten all ends up by a Chris Woakes outswinger.

Last season's runners-up DC didn't have to wait long for their first breakthrough as Avesh Khan (2/23 in 4 overs) had Faf du PLessis trapped in front of the wicket in the second over.

In the first ball of the third over, Woakes had Gaikwad caught in the slip cordon as CSK slipped to seven for two.

The English pacer drew Gaikwad into a push with a ball that moved a slightly on pitching.

In came Raina -- he had missed the last IPL owing to personal reasons -- and in the company of Moeen Ali, the seasoned campaigner revived CSK's innings and looked to put up a challenging total against a strong DC batting line-up at the Wankhede Stadium.

During his 24-ball 36, Moeen struck four boundaries and two sixes, playing a fine helping hand to Raina.

Experienced off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin cut short Moeen's innings when the all-rounder got himself into an uncomfortable position while going for a reverse sweep, the ensuing top-edge ending in a good catch by Shikhar Dhawan, who ran backwards from short third man to hold on to the ball.

Ambati Rayudu came in and straightaway got into the act, hitting a couple of sixes and a four to race away to 23 off 16 balls before Tom Curran ended his stay in the middle.

Meanwhile Raina went about his task in a manner that did not give the impression that he was coming back to top-flight after a long hiatus.

Raina got himself going with a four off Woakes and then worked Ashwin for two successive boundaries, not afraid to dance down the wicket against the wily spinner's flight.

Using his feet well, the veteran southpaw hoicked leg-spinner Amit Mishra for two and also got a maximum against Ashwin.

It was no different with Marcus Stoinis as Raina pulled the Australian medium pacer for another six before being run-out following a mix-up with Ravindra Jadeja (26).

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS INNINGS

R Gaikwad	c Dhawan b Woakes	5
Faf du Plessis	lbw b A Khan	0
M Ali	c Dhawan b Ashwin	36
S Raina	run out (Woakes/Pant)	54
A Rayudu	c Dhawan b Curran	23
R Jadeja	not out	26
MS Dhoni	b Avesh Khan	0
Sam Curran	b Woakes	34
Extras: (lb 7, nb 1, w 2)		**10**
TOTAL: (20 Ov, RR: 9.40)		**188/7**

BOWLING: C Woakes 3,0,18,2 A Khan 4,0,23,2 R Ashwin 4,0,47,1 T Curran 4,0,40,1 A Mishra 3,0,27,0 M Stoinis 2,0,26,0

Some people rush in where angels fear to tread

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

So much had already happened on the day Sourav Ganguly spoke appreciatively of Indian cricketers' greater "tolerance" quotient compared with English and Australian ones when it came to putting up with such oppressive phenomena as bio-secure bubbles that well might anyone would have been left wondering what we were up to, apart, of course, from making a virtue of necessity.

At Wankhede stadium, coronavirus victims' number had risen by three. North Korea had let it be known that it was pulling out of the recheduled Olympics, postponed once on account of the coronavirus. And the Summer Games had a big question mark over them yet, with the note of uncertainty becoming all too palpable as Tokyo shelved some test events and Japanese said they could do without the global fun and frolic in these testing, dangerous times.

India, of course, had had

SHORT POINT

no qualms earlier about holding a limited - overs match in its Capital city against Bangladesh before a virtually full-house Kotla when New Delhi was under a public health emergency. And the Indian Premier League is to it the equivalent of Durga puja, Kali puja and Doljatra clubbed into one jumbo package of glitzy, high-decibel entertainment, after all those scandals and investigations and Supreme Court judgments.

It's all about money, as everyone knows, and the fact that the matches, at least to begin with, will be held behind closed doors implies a bonanza for television.

Everything fits in so perfectly - Ganguly was earlier quoted as saying that holding the IPL with Maharashtra shut down was a bit of all right, eliminating some easily imaginable scares - that you can't really be sure Indian cricket misses the serried ranks of spectators that filled up the stands at all.

But it's also bizarre that IPL cricketers will practise when Mumbai grinds through a night curfew.

That the Maharashtra government has okayed it is part of the deeply regrettable farce. The criticism is inescapable as it may not be the finest time for gadabout bravado, just as it quite emphatically wasn't when the 2020 IPL was taken to West Asia, with international air travel when people were required to stay at home for safety and security.

There is also plenty of evidence by now that the goals they put players in for these matches during the pandemic are neither bio-secure nor bubbles. It's more sport's maximum-security jail than a thin sphere of liquid enclosing air. Nor is it secure if you go back into recent history.

Ganguly may have implied Indian cricketers' tractability but Virat Kohli, having apparently shifted from the stance of obedience he advocated in 2020, pointing out the mental toll of lurching from one prison to another could suggest a sort of collective resentment voiced by someone who'd be hard to ignore or get rid of.

"Bite the bullet" can't be the answer they'd be happy with though no a rebellion is unlikely.

Johnson, McIlroy and Koepka miss Augusta Masters cut

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
AUGUSTA, 10 APRIL

Top-ranked defending champion Dustin Johnson (**in photo**) has more time to prepare for next week's US Professional Golfers Association Heritage Classic than he really wanted after missing the cut at the 85th Masters.

Four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy also failed to reach the weekend for only the second time on 13 trips to Augusta National, missing his chance to complete a career Grand Slam for another year.

And four-time Major champion Brooks Koepka, who battled to play after right knee surgery a month ago, was not among the 54 who reached the weekend at the year's first Major championship. "I worked my a** off just to get here and then to play like this is pretty disappointing," Koepka said.

Johnson and Koepka each cited putting woes as their reason for being done, although Koepka will get weekend physical therapy and Johnson must put the green jacket on the shoulders of the new Masters champion in a Sunday (April 11) ceremony. "Mostly just the putter. Six

three-putts in two rounds, you just can't do that," Johnson said. "Didn't drive it great but drove it good enough, and I felt like I never was really too bad out of position. Just the three-putts killed me.

"I just didn't putt very well. My speed was awful. I just left it short from 10 feet there on the last hole. I just didn't have a good beat on the speed the last two days." Koepka and Johnson both shot 75 to finish on five-over 149 while McIlroy, who did not speak after, was on 150 after a closing 74. McIlroy has been reworking his swing with coach Pete Cowen and said Thursday he was very much still in a transition process.

"Any time you're working on things with your swing, it's going to feel very different, but it's not as if I haven't done these things before," he said. "It's like you get into these bad habits and that feels normal, and then you get it back into position where I've been a million times before and it just feels a little different."

Koepka putting woes were major as well. "I don't want to say the speed was off, maybe the reads a little bit. Maybe the start line. A lot of them felt like good putts, and they weren't even hitting the hole. "They felt good coming off the face, but they didn't even sniff it."

Koepka was pleased he had the stamina to walk 18 holes at hilly Augusta.

"Downhill was tough," Koepka said. "I don't feel as sore as I did yesterday, so I feel better. It's nice to know I can walk 18." He will play in next month's PGA Championship at Kiawah Island but was not sure if he would play a US PGA event before the next Major tournament.

"Tough to say," he said. "Just for how it feels, how rehab goes and everything. I wouldn't have been playing for another month if it wasn't (Masters) week. So I'll take a nice long break after this."

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