



Pages 12 | ₹ 5 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



TN ALLOWS STERLITE  
PLANT TO OPEN FOR  
FOUR MONTHS



GANDHI'S AHIMSA

P4

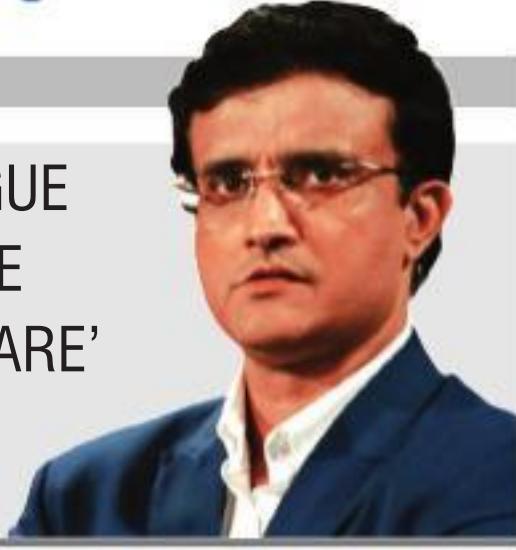


OSCARS 2021: MANY  
FIRSTS, SURPRISES

P6

'LET THE LEAGUE  
GO ON DESPITE  
THE VIRUS SCARE'

P10



P12

## WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 41 and 18 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 71% Min: 23%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 40.2°C (+2) Min: 16.7°C (-7)

SUN RISES

05:43 hrs 18:54 hrs

MOON RISES

18:17 hrs 06:34 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Oxygen tankers being airlifted on Indian Air Force plane in Dubai on Monday. AGENCIES

IMD predicts wet spell from 26-30 April: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday predicted a wet spell over several parts of the country, including central, south and northeast India, from 26 to 30 April. Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 50-60 kmph per hour) are very likely at isolated places over Telangana, Kerala and Maha from 26 April. Lightning at isolated places, including Bengal.

P4

Former Maruti Suzuki MD Jagdish Khattar dies: Former managing director of Maruti Suzuki India, Jagdish Khattar, passed away on Monday morning following a cardiac arrest. Khattar (79), a former bureaucrat, was considered as one of the most high-profile leaders of the Indian automotive industry, laying the foundation for Maruti's future growth after the government began its disinvestment in 2002.

P5

02 crunch: Five dead in Haryana: Five Covid-19 patients, including one from Delhi, died at a private hospital here on Monday with relatives of the deceased holding a protest attributing their death to alleged grave shortage of medical oxygen at the facility. Police said they were verifying the allegations of oxygen shortage after relatives of some of the deceased held a protest outside the facility. P3

P4

## 3.52L new cases, 16K in Bengal

### SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

With 3,52,991 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, the highest so far, India's total tally of Covid-19 cases has climbed to 1,73,13,163 while active cases have crossed the 28-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The death toll increased to 1,95,123 with a record 2,812 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase, the active cases have increased to 28,13,658 comprising 16.25 per cent of the total infections, while the

national Covid-19 recovery rate has further dropped to 82.62 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,43,04,382. The case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.13 per cent, the data stated.

Meanwhile, West Bengal recorded a highest number of 15,992 fresh Covid cases and a steep surge of 68 deaths today.

Kolkata recorded 3,868 cases and 26 deaths while North 24 Parganas recorded 3,425 fresh cases and 11 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The total Covid case count is 7,59,942 and death toll is 11,009 in the state till now while there are 94,949 active cases.



ference today. The highest voter turnout of 80.30 per cent was recorded in the 9 Assembly constituencies in Murshidabad while the four constituencies of south Kolkata recorded the lowest polling percentage of 59.91. The voter turnout in six districts of South Dinajpur was 80.21 per cent followed by Malda (78.76%) and West Burdwan (70.34%).

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who earlier held an emergency meeting on Covid management with state chief secretary and health secretary at Nabanna, showed victory symbol after she cast her vote at Mitra Institution in Bhawanipore (photo). BJP candidate from Asansol South Assembly constituency Agnimitra Paul complained that a Tri-

namul polling agent was wearing a cap with chief minister's photo on it inside the booth at Baktarnagar High School despite the EC clearly stating that agents cannot wear anything with a party's symbol or a leader's picture on it.

"The presiding officer says that he's unwell and did not see it. This is one of Mamata Banerjee's tricks as she knows that people won't vote for her. Her time is up. I will lodge a complaint regarding this," she added. Later, she complained that ruling party activists were serving lunch to voters within 200 metres of the polling station.

A few incidents of scuffle were reported from the Asansol area, where Trinamul candidate Sayoni Ghosh claimed

that BJP activists tried to jam booths in her constituency through BJP candidate Paul dubbed the allegation as baseless. Sporadic incidents of violence were reported from Raninagar in Murshidabad. Miss Banerjee said they would lodge an FIR against Central forces and move court in connection to an incident where in Central forces allegedly ransacked the house of a local Trinamul leader.

Earlier, an independent candidate alleged that he was beaten up by Central forces.

Again, allegation of booth jam was levelled against Trinamul activists. ATMC work-

## Modi discusses Covid situation with Biden, Suga

### SNS & AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to US president Joe Biden on Monday and discussed the importance of smooth and efficient supply chains of vaccine raw materials in a telephone conversation. The phone call came after the US president expressed his solidarity with India as the nation faces a second wave of coronavirus disease in the country.

US President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and other American leaders have come out in support of India in its battle against Covid-19. "Just as India sent assistance to the United States

Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined to help India in its time of need

JOE BIDEN  
US PRESIDENT

as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined to help India in its time of need," Biden said in a Twitter post. He was referring to India lifting the ban in April last year on the export of hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol and rushing consignments to the US when the pandemic first hit the country. India is seeking speedier

deliveries of key elements required in the manufacture of anti-Covid vaccines in India.

Among the steps taken by the US in the coming days will be the dispatch of personal protection kits, diagnostic kits and oxygen generation equipment, according to a post by US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and a phone call by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval.

"The US is working closely with the Indian government to rapidly deploy additional support and supplies during an alarming Covid-19 outbreak. As we provide assistance, we pray for the people of India—including its courageous healthcare work-

ers," Vice President Harris said in his post.

Meanwhile, Modi discussed with his Japanese counterpart the Covid-19 situation.

They highlighted the importance of close India-Japan cooperation to overcome these challenges, such as by working together to create resilient, diversified and trustworthy supply chains, ensuring reliable supply of critical materials and technologies, and developing new partnerships.

The Chinese embassy issued a statement extending support to India. It also asked Chinese companies to cooperate to facilitate acquiring medical supplies and provide support and help according to India's need.

Air India brings 318 O2 concentrators from NY: Air India brought 328 oxygen concentrators to India on its New York-Delhi flight on Monday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

Indian-American CEOs pledge support: Google CEO Sundar Pichai and his Microsoft counterpart Satya Nadella have assured help as India grapples with a ravaging coronavirus crisis that has put pressure on its hospitals due to a shortage of beds, oxygen and medical supplies.

Ghosh alleged that her party agents were stopped from entering the booth by Trinamul workers though the charge was denied by the state government during Chhat Puja.

In the morning, the agent of BJP candidate from the Rashbehari Assembly constituency Lt Gen Subrata Saha was detained for allegedly molesting a few women voters inside a polling booth in New Alipore area, police said.

Trinamul candidates Shovadeb Chattopadhyay from Bhawanipore and Debasish Kumar from Rashbehari alleged that they were not allowed to enter many booths by central forces.

In the Jamuria constituency, Left Front candidate Aishe

## Amidst massive virus surge, 75.06 per cent turnout in seventh phase polling

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA / MURSHIDABAD /  
WEST BURDWAN, 26 APRIL

Amidst a massive surge in Covid cases, the seventh phase of elections recorded a voter turnout of 75.06 per cent while barring a few stray incidents, polls were "overall peaceful" in the 34 constituencies across five districts of West Bengal.

"Polls were overall peaceful and Covid protocols were completely enforced. There were 742 preventive arrests of which 11 arrests were in connection to violation of section 144. While 57 bombs were recovered though there were no incidents of bombing. A total of 1146 complaints were lodged in this phase," said CEO Ariz Aftab at a press con-



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ARIZ AFTAB  
CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

80.30  
per cent  
Murshidabad  
59.91  
per cent  
Kolkata  
80.21  
per cent  
South  
Dinajpur

78.76  
per cent  
Malda  
70.34  
per cent  
West  
Burdwan

Raninagar in Murshidabad. Miss Banerjee said they would lodge an FIR against Central forces and move court in connection to an incident where in Central forces allegedly ransacked the house of a local Trinamul leader.

Earlier, an independent candidate alleged that he was beaten up by Central forces.

Again, allegation of booth jam was levelled against Trinamul activists. ATMC work-

ers assualted at Farakka in Murshidabad allegedly by BJP and had to be hospitalised. Miss Banerjee also alleged that Trinamul camp office at Habibpur was captured by Central forces and they allegedly asked voters to vote in favour of the BJP.

TMC activists alleged their camp office was ransacked by Central forces in Durgapur.

The four constituencies of Kolkata, which recorded a very low voter turnout, wore

an almost deserted. Many non-Bengali voters of Deshpriya Park and Southern Avenue skipped polling on the plea that their priorities were ignored by the state government during Chhat Puja.

In the morning, the agent of

BJP candidate from the Rashbehari Assembly constituency Lt Gen Subrata Saha was detained for allegedly molesting a few women voters inside a polling booth in New Alipore area, police said.

In response to Madras High Court's observation on Election Commission, Mr Aftab said that all steps were taken to implement Covid protocols. "The commission has decided to increase the number of counting halls to 705," he said.

Voting was held at 12,068 polling stations amidst the deployment of 796 companies of Central forces. The Election Commission has deployed 26 general and 9 expenditure observers and 6 police observers for this phase.

# Free Covid vaccine for all above 18 in Delhi: Kejriwal

Says his govt has cleared purchase of 1.34 cr doses, seeks uniform vaccine price across nation

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL



**F**ree Covid vaccine will be provided to everyone above 18 years of age in Delhi, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced today, saying his government has already approved the purchase of 1.34 crore vaccine doses.

The CM said the Delhi government will make efforts to speed up the purchases further and administer jabs to people as soon as possible after the inoculation drive opens up on 1 May for everyone above 18.

Covid-19 has begun to affect in a big way those below 18 years of age too, he said, adding if the available vaccines are effective for this age group as well, or if any special vaccines can be manufactured for children, the Centre should allow inoculating this population also.

Delhi has been witnessing exploding Covid cases and deaths, as well as an acute oxygen crises as several hospitals have been sending SOS messages every day due to shortage of this critical life-saving gas.

"The Delhi government

has decided to provide free Covid vaccines to all those above 18 years of age. We are working on plan to start large-scale vaccination as soon as possible," Kejriwal said, adding that Covid vaccines should have one price across the nation.

He said that the Covid vaccine is emerging as a solution to this raging pandemic, and added that those inoculated are either not contracting the virus or only getting its mild forms.

"They can recover at home and do not have to be admitted to the hospital. Even when they require hospitalisation, their recovery is easy and swift. If we move with this observation, then successful vaccination of everyone will mean that the severity of the pandemic will end. Coronavirus will become like any other disease — manageable

at Rs 600 per dose for private hospitals and Rs 400 per dose for state governments.

Another vaccine manufacturer, Bharat Biotech, had also announced that its Covaxin would be available to state governments at Rs 600 a dose and private hospitals at Rs 1,200 per dose.

"At a time when Central and state governments are capping the rate at which medicines and other facilities should be made available to people, vaccines should also be moderately priced," the CM said, adding that Covid vaccines should have one price across the nation.

Kejriwal also appealed to vaccine manufacturers to bring down the price to Rs 150 per dose, saying that they have an entire lifetime to earn profits but this is a time to show humanity. He said the Central government should cap the price of vaccines, if needed.

Last week, the Serum Institute of India (SII) had announced that it would price its Covishield vaccine

and with success rates of recovery," he said.

Kejriwal also claimed that the UK was facing a similar situation as India is today, adding that one of the main factors behind their ability to overcome their coronavirus wave was a robust vaccination drive in that country.

On Sunday, Delhi recorded 350 Covid deaths and 22,933 cases with a positivity rate of 30.21 percent. This was the fourth consecutive day that Delhi has recorded over 300 deaths due to coronavirus. It had reported 357 fatalities, the highest so far since the pandemic began a year ago, on Saturday, 348 on Friday and 306 on Thursday, according to official figures.

Kejriwal said that the Delhi government was also trying to increase oxygen beds in the city. This morning he visited a centre at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas which has started functioning. There are 150 beds as of now, but in two-three days the number of beds will be increased to 500. Soon the bed capacity at the centre will go up to 2000 beds and finally to 5000 beds. A 200-bed ICU facility will also come up there, the CM added.

Government's claims over smooth crop procurement hollow.

FORMER HARYANA CM AND CONG LEADER BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA  
AS A MAJORITY OF FARMERS ARE YET TO RECEIVE THEIR PAYMENT

## Still on 'beg & borrow' mode, Delhi hospitals continue to gasp for O2

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Hospitals in the national capital continued to grapple with a shortage of oxygen, saying they are still operating on the "beg and borrow" mode, while three of them also raised the issue before the Delhi High Court on Monday, stating they were not receiving enough supplies.

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Sources at the elite Ganga Ram Hospital said in the morning they had been waiting for three days to refill their oxygen cylinders, used for transporting critically ill COVID patients. The hospital received 64 refilled cylinders around 4.20 PM.

The Jaipur Golden Hospital in Rohini took to social media, posting at 12 noon that they were still awaiting their supplies. There was no update till around 7.30 pm if the hospital had received the supply or not.

Bansal Hospital, where 40 COVID-19 patients are admitted, received the supply in the nick of time, said Delhi Police officials who arranged the cylinders.

SOS calls were also raised by Tulsii Multispeciality Hospital in Shahdara and Irene Hospital in Kalkaji.

Jaipur Golden Hospital, Maharaja Agrasen Hospital

and Shanti Mukund Hospital also took strong note of alleged black-marketing of oxygen cylinders, reportedly being sold at Rs 1 lakh per unit in the national capital for treating seriously ill COVID-19 patients, and asked the AAP government to take action against those indulging in it, saying distribution of gas cylinders is "your baby".

Hospitals across the national capital and its suburbs have been sending out desperate messages of help on social media and other platforms, flagging their dwindling stocks of oxygen. The Railways had announced that the first Oxygen Express train for the city carrying around 70 tonnes of the life-saving commodity will depart from Jindal Steel Works plant in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, on Sunday night.

Central government sources had also said that eight pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants are being installed in Delhi from the PM-Cares fund and they will enhance the capacity of medical oxygen by 14.4 metric tonnes. Delhi recorded 350 COVID-19 deaths on Sunday with the government deciding to extend the ongoing lockdown for another week.

Delhi Police performs last rites of 2 Covid victims

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Amid the severe COVID-19 situation in the national capital, Delhi Police on Monday performed the last rites of two persons who died of Covid on humanitarian grounds in Dwarka.

Police cremated a woman in Dwarka as there was no one to take responsibility for her body. The woman was identified as Jai Matani.

"As there was no one to take responsibility for the cremation of the body of the woman. On humanitarian basis, the Dwarka police team took responsibility for the cremation of the woman and the body was immediately shifted to the cremation ground, Sector 24, Dwarka," police said, adding that the funeral was performed according to Hindu rites.

Police further said that during interrogation it was found that the woman had come to her brother's house in Dwarka and later died during treatment after testing positive for the virus.

In another instance, Delhi Police cremated a relative of an army man, who committed suicide in North Dwarka as a result of COVID-19.

## 5 held for black-marketing of Remdesivir injection

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Colony, they said.

They were arrested after police got a tip-off on Sunday that two persons were going near the India Habitat Center from Khan Market for selling Remdesivir vials at a very high price, a senior police officer said.

"Thereafter, a trap was laid near IHC, Lodhi Road, and a car was checked. On searching and frisking, four vials of Remdesivir injection were recovered from the possession of Gupta and Verma," Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

The two told the police that they used to sell the vials at Rs 70,000 each to needy people, the official said.

They said that the third

accused, Anuj Jain, used to supply them the Remdesivir injection at high rates to further sell them in the black-market, police said.

Later, Jain was also arrested with three vials of Remdesivir injection which he brought to sell to Verma, the DCP said.

Gupta has a medical shop near IHC, Lodhi Road, and a car was checked. On searching and frisking, four vials of Remdesivir injection were recovered from the possession of Gupta and Verma," Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

The two told the police that they used to sell the vials at Rs 70,000 each to needy people, the official said.

They said that the third

staff at Tilak Nagar police station got a tip-off and they nabbed Gurpreet Singh (29), a resident of Tilak Nagar, and Anuj Jaiswal (30), a resident of Geeta Colony, who were allegedly involved in black marketing of Remdesivir injections, police said.

Singh has a spare parts business in Mayapuri, while Jaiswal works at a hospital in Krishna Nagar, they said, adding that two Remdesivir vials were recovered from their possession.

With a surge in coronavirus cases, Remdesivir injections are currently in high demand in the country even though experts have underlined its limited scope in treating COVID-19 patients.

On Sunday around 4pm, the

Plea dismissed against exemption to govt functionaries to travel without RTPCR report

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed a plea challenging the exemption given to constitutional and government functionaries and their staff from either showing negative RTPCR report after travelling by air or undergoing a 14-day quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh also asked the Delhi government to put in place necessary infrastructure to streamline the sample collection process. The direction was issued by the court after several lawyers told the bench that they were facing difficulty in getting tested as labs were saying they will carry out sample collection after 2-3 days. The lawyers claimed that the number of daily tests have gone down to around 60,000 from the over one lakh tests that were being conducted earlier. Delhi recorded 350 COVID-19 deaths on Sunday and 22,933 cases with a positivity rate of 30.21 percent.

The submissions were made during hearing of a PIL seeking directions to the Delhi government to order hospitals not to insist on COVID positive reports to hospitalise patients who show symptoms of coronavirus. The Delhi government told the court that its Health department has issued a circular on April 23 directing hospitals in the city not to insist on COVID positive test reports to admit patients who are showing symptoms of coronavirus infection.

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The petition had contended that the exemption granted to government functionaries "has the effect of invalidating the RTPCR report of the entire batch of passengers who shall travel with them." That if such Constitutional and government functionaries carry the COVID-19 virus, it will be meaningless and irrelevant since they have been exposed to persons who do not have negative RTPCR reports during the journey," the petition had claimed.

We wish we could save each and every life. We wish we could do more, the bench said, when the counsel for governments and hospitals and others thanked the judges for their efforts which has helped in improving the situation.

During the hearing, the

court was informed by INOX, major supplier of oxygen to Delhi, that some of its tankers on their way to the national capital have been stopped by the Rajasthan government and were yet to be released.

Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, told the court that strict action would be taken against those who stopped the tankers and the same would be released.

"Consequences would follow. We will set an example... Nobody can stop you. You give us the names of states and officers and we will take action," he said.

The court said it was not in agreement with the SG that there was no shortage of oxygen.

It also directed the Centre to take steps to prioritise the clearance of customs for the import of RT-PCR testing kits from abroad.

The court asked the Centre to file a report in sealed cover within three days on the number of imports pending and cleared and the reason for being up.

It also noted that a communication was sent by the Delhi government to Sajjan Jindal, Chairman of JSW, regarding supply of cryogenic tankers for oxygen.

Regarding allocation of oxygen, the court said it is being done by the Centre and the states shall not directly ask the manufacturer about it.

The court was also informed by the counsel for Maharaja Agrasen Hospital that their offer to assist the Delhi government in transporting oxygen was ignored.

You place the communication on record and if it was ignored by the state government, that is something very serious and we will have to ask

Mr Rahul Mehra (Delhi government counsel) to explain and will pass orders, the bench said and asked the hospital to contact the chief secretary with the offer so that tankers can be procured for oxygen supply.

The bench was also informed by the Delhi government that it was in the process of importing 18 tankers which shall be arriving soon and that four new tankers and the same would be released.

We are hoping that with the infrastructure for transporting oxygen is being augmented, the supply of oxygen to Delhi will improve, the bench said.

It directed all the refilers of oxygen cylinders in Delhi to be present at the hearing on Tuesday following complaints of non-availability of gas cylinders and black marketing.

The bench said it has received information that refilers were selling oxygen sellers at high rates, reportedly at Rs 1 lakh per unit, in the black market and directed the Delhi government to take action against such persons.

"Oxygen cylinder distribution is your baby. You have powers, exercise them. If someone is engaging in black marketing, take action. Bring them before us," the court said.

The Delhi government said that before taking any action it will need the information from the refilers with regard to the deliveries made by them, but if it sends a show cause notice seeking such details, it is viewed as harsh.

The court, thereafter, directed that refilers have to comply with its earlier order to provide details of the deliveries made by them to hospitals and others.

## Set up more Covid testing centres: HC

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The Delhi High Court on Monday requested the AAP government to set up more testing centres in view of the rise in COVID-19 cases in the national capital which is recording around 24,000 fresh infections for the last few days.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh also asked the Delhi government to put in place necessary infrastructure to streamline the sample collection process. The direction was issued by the court after several lawyers told the bench that they were facing difficulty in getting tested as labs were saying they will carry out sample collection after 2-3 days. The lawyers claimed that the number of daily tests have gone down to around 60,000 from the over one lakh tests that were being conducted earlier. Delhi recorded 350 COVID-19 deaths on Sunday and 22,933 cases with a positivity rate of 30.21 percent.

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We wish we could save each and every life. We wish we could do more, the bench said, when the counsel for governments and hospitals and others thanked the judges for their efforts which has helped in improving the situation.

During the hearing, the

admitted on Monday," ITBP spokesman Vivek Kumar Pandey said.

According to the laid out procedure, there will be no walk-in admissions to the centre. Admission at this centre will be made after approval by district surveillance officers in Delhi.

The ITBP has said that treatment at this centre will be free of cost.

Officials and eyewitnesses said a number of patients whose oxygen levels were fluctuating had voluntarily queued up outside the facility in hope of getting admission.

The standard operating procedure says only DSOs can approve the admissions at this centre. This is a cumbersome step for a patient who is gasping for breath. The admissions should be done like in normal hospitals after ascertaining the patient's condition," a volunteer coordi-

nating admission for COVID patients in Delhi, including at this centre, said.</p





Mithun Chakraborty speaking from a helipad to avoid crowding in Birbhum on Monday.

RAJA BHAKAT

**No crisis of medical oxygen:** There is no crisis of medical oxygen in West Bengal and the state has adequate stock of the life-saving gas, a senior state government official said after a review meeting chaired by chief minister Mamata Banerjee on the current spike in cases. There is "no question of any crisis in oxygen" at the moment as the state has a daily average production of 457 MT of the gas whereas the requirement is close to 223 MT per day, the official said. "There is no crisis of medical oxygen in West Bengal. We have adequate storage of the gas. So there is no question of any crisis," he said. The state is also planning to start supplying oxygen through pipeline to hospitals primarily treating Covid-19 patients, he said.

PTI

# Mamata misled people over vaccines: Nadda

Miss Banerjee 'making false allegations' on availability of vaccines, BJP chief said

SNS & PTI  
MALDA/KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

**B**JP president J P Nadda Monday accused Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee of misleading people of West Bengal on various issues, ranging from 'insider-outsider' to Covid vaccination during the campaign for the Assembly elections in the state.

Nadda also asserted his party had upheld the culture and legacy of Bengal as against the insulting language adopted by Miss Banerjee against the BJP leadership.

"During the campaign for the eight-phase elections, which comes to an end on Monday, Mamata Banerjee has made all efforts to mislead the people of Bengal and to instigate them using issues like insider-outsider and culture," he said addressing a virtual public meeting here.

Claiming that BJP has left no stone unturned to reach the message of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee to all corner of the country, he said "it is you who (Miss Banerjee) is the outsider and we who are the true insiders."

Miss Banerjee in her speeches has often spoken of 'bahiragoto (outsiders) bringing coronavirus to the state.

Contending that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has



J P NADD  
BJP CHIEF

It is the BJP which has upheld the culture and legacy of Bengal while Mamata Banerjee has insulted the state through her abusive language and arrogance.

DIDI HAS ADMITTED DEFEAT IN THIS ELECTION AND IS EXPRESSING HER ANGER VIOLENCE IS BEING PERPETRATED BY TMC GOONS ON BJP WORKERS AND LEADERS,

venerated by the PM on the nationwide inoculation programme.

Accusing the TMC of unleashing violence in the state during the campaign, he condemned the "murderous attack" on BJP candidate from Malda, Gopal Chandra Saha, maintaining that the people will answer "bullets with ballots".

Nadda said that Saha, who was shot in the neck on 18 April by unidentified assailants at Malda, is fighting for his life in a hospital.

"Didi has admitted defeat in this election and is expressing her anger violence is being perpetrated by TMC goons on BJP workers and leaders," Nadda alleged.

He claimed that the chief minister, who also holds the Health portfolio, is trying to spread panic by alleging that Covid-19 vaccines are not available in the state.

Nadda said several projects, including railway road and solar power projects have already been taken up by the Centre for development of the state, and claimed more will follow once the BJP forms government in West Bengal.

Addressing a Press conference at a hotel in New Town, Nadda said that Modi's dream of 'Sonar Bangla' will come true. "BJP will make the Bengal a central hub for the development in Eastern India. People gave their mandate to Modiji. We'll form government on 2 May," he said.

Three candidates have also died of Covid-19 in the state in the mid of the elections.

Parno Mittra contracts Covid-19

KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

BJP candidate Parno Mittra on Monday said she has tested positive for Covid-19.

Mitra, an actor by profession, is the BJP candidate from Baranagar in North 24 Parganas where the election was held on April 17.

"I wish to share an important update with everyone. I have tested Covid positive. I request whoever has been in, or come into, contact with me in the last 7 days, please do quarantine yourselves, get tested and take care. Lastly, please continue to be safe and wear mask," she said.

Mitra is among the slew of candidates, cutting across party lines, to be diagnosed with Covid-19 amid the elections.

BJP's Tollygunge candidate Babul Supriyo, CPI(M)'s Jadavpur nominee Sujan Chakraborty and TMC's Kamarhati candidate Madan Mitra are among the several leaders who were diagnosed with Covid-19 following hectic campaigning.

Three candidates have also died of Covid-19 in the state in the mid of the elections.

FILM DIRECTOR SRIJIT MUKHERJI

'COVID-19 HELPDESK' STARTED BY PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS COUNCIL

# TN to allow Sterlite to produce oxygen

8 parties endorse plant restart, bars other units' operation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHENNAI, 26 APRIL



Tamil Nadu chief minister K Palaniswami after attending all-party meeting for reopening of Sterlite Plant, at State Secretariat in Chennai, on Monday. ■ AGENCY

dent of police and health officials should keep track of the production. The committee, she said, should also have representation of anti-Sterlite protesters, environmentalists and local residents. The DMK wanted the oxygen to be given free of cost to the residents of the state.

"Sterlite can be used to produce oxygen alone and not allow it to restart any of its other functions. Tamil Nadu government must provide power supply. This has to be temporary and this permission to produce oxygen should not be as part of a long term move to reopen the plant," said Kanimozi to the media.

While BJP chief L Murugan reiterated the oxygen produced should be used to a large extent in Tamil Nadu, MDMK chief Vaiko said the state government should take over the unit to produce oxygen.

He insisted the required engineers can be lent from public sector undertakings and that Vedanta should not be allowed to operate the unit on its own. However, just hours before the meeting, Vedanta filed a special leave petition before the Supreme Court asserting the TN government should not be allowed to take over the oxygen plant. It claimed that the state government does not have the required operational expertise.

Tamil Nadu currently has an oxygen supply of 400 MT, but the state government predicts that the demand could rise up to 450 MT as cases continue to rise. Some portion of this is distributed to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Therefore, if the consumption in the state rises, the state will find it necessary to tap into all possible sources of oxygen to help patients.

Tamil Nadu's single-day Covid tally crossed the 15,000-mark on Sunday, pushing the total count to 10.81 lakh till date. On Sunday state registered 15,659 fresh cases while recoveries mounted to 9,63,251 today with 11,065 patients being discharged, a bulletin said. Chennai continued to constitute the bulk of the total cases accounting for 4,206 new infections, totalling 3,09,899 till date. The metropolis also leads in the number of fatalities with 4,467 people succumbing to the virus.

# CM demands CAPF exit to curb Covid-19 spread

SOMA MOOKHERJEE  
KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee demanded withdrawal of central forces for the last phase to combat the Covid-19 spread in West Bengal in and welcomed the Madras High Court's observation that the Election Commission couldn't shun the blame for the roaring Covid-19 cases.

She alleged that the EC and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are responsible for the second wave that has left the country in tatters.

"It's Prime Minister and Union home minister (Amit Shah) ego to conquer West Bengal that has overridden their concern for Covid-19 and shown gross irresponsibility. They instead became daily passengers to West Bengal for victory," she said.

"I welcome the Madras High Court order, which clearly said the EC cannot escape its responsibility. Both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EC are responsible for the (current) situation (of Covid spreading in the state)." Miss Banerjee alleged at a workers meeting in North Kolkata where party candidates and workers were present.

She reminded of her request to the EC to club the last three phases which was rejected and alleged that both 'BJP and Election Commission had brought out

siders in West Bengal".

"I am requesting please withdraw the around 2 lakh-strong central forces drawn from Covid-hit states, who are camping in schools and colleges and safe homes hampering Covid management operations 75 per cent of them may be infected by the virus. Please withdraw them in the last phase," she said.

She lambasted Modi and Shah for allegedly bringing "outsiders" from other states, staying in various hotels across the state and accelerating the pandemic. Miss Banerjee said that she would move the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court against the EC for holding the election in the "most partial way".

"I'll win this Assembly poll but I've collected all documents against EC otherwise we will lose democracy to Narendra Modi in 2024." She urged the candidates of Chowringhee, Entally, Jorasanko, Shyampukur, Manikula and Cossipore-Belghoria seats to hold small meetings as EC had embarrassed her rallies after Modi called off his campaigns in Bengal.

She alleged that central forces at the behest of EC are asking TMC polling agents to stay at home which is "illegal" and urged voters to bar central forces or police at their houses during Covid-19 and exercise their right to vote.

## VOTE CLIMATE



(Top) Voters stand in a queue at Ballygunge in Kolkata on Monday. (Bottom) Voters waiting outside a polling station in South Kolkata on Monday.

# Burdwan(W): Peaceful polls, 70.24% turnout

DEBABYOTI CHAKRABORTY  
ASANSOL/DURGAPUR, 26 APRIL

Polling in nine Assembly constituencies of Burdwan (west) was peaceful barring a few stray incidents.

Till average polling in the district till 5 pm was 70.24 per cent; Kulti recorded lowest with 65.75 per cent; Baraboni registered the highest polling with 72.85 per cent.

There were few incidents of EVMs malfunctioning and polling was halted for over an hour. The central forces have allegedly brutally thrashed a TMC polling agent in Pandavaswar when he tried to take his duty as a reliever for the previous polling agent.

In Asansol (south), the central forces baton-charged villagers at several places and allegedly ransacked a polling booth. They had apparently spilled the food at a party office.

TMC's Suvoni Ghosh and BJP's Agnimitra Paul blamed each other in the keenly contested significant Asansol (south) seat.

Paul alleged that a TMC polling agent was sitting inside a booth wearing a party cap and trying to influence voters.

Police, trying to disperse an alleged gathering of TMC supporters, were embroiled in an altercation with the TMC candidate.

There has been allegations of bogus voting against BJP in Durgapur (east) Assembly seat. Two local BJP cadres Raja and Rana have been blamed for the incident.

TMC alleged that Dibyen Adhikari's in-laws' votes have been cast by BJP cadres although they are hospitalised.

Jamuria's CPM candidate Aishee Ghosh said central forces are "terrorising" the locals. Durgapur (east) TMC candidate Pradip Majumdar alleged that the Election Commission was not acting on the complaints.

BJP supporters tried to jam booth in presence of central forces at booth No. 111, TMC alleged.

The EC has shifted both the DM and police commissioner a before the polls.

TMC candidate Tapas Banerjee also alleged that the central forces were "terrorising" the voters.

## BJP candidate's agent detained for 'molesting'

Rashbehari BJP candidate Subrata Saha's agent Mohan Rao was detained

KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

BJP candidate from the Rashbehari Assembly constituency Lt Gen Subrata Saha's agent was detained on Monday for allegedly molesting a few women voters inside a polling booth in the city's New Alipore area, police said.

Mohan Rao was detained after several women voters claimed he tried to drag them holding their hands inside Bidya Bharati School, a police officer said.

"We have received a complaint in this regard and a probe is underway," he said.

Rao, however, rubbished the allegations and said no such incident had taken place.

"TMC activists are trying to create disturbance in the area. This is a deliberate attempt to disrupt the peaceful polling process," Saha said.

PTI

# WB govt asks hospitals to develop oxygen plants

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

Anticipating the increasing demand of oxygen in the coming day due to steep rise of Covid in the state, the state health department has asked all the government hospitals to demarcate land for developing oxygen plant within the hospital premises so that the hospitals can become self-sufficient and negotiate their demand for oxygen and not depend on outside help.

The state health department issued a notification on Sunday asking all the government medical colleges, state general hospitals and superspecialty hospitals to earmark 152 square metre of land for the purpose of developing an oxygen plant.

"There are some medical colleges that have their own oxygen plant but in most of the cases there is no oxygen plant in many medical colleges, state general and super specialty hospitals. In this condition we would like to make the hospitals self-sufficient so that they can meet their requirement," a senior official of the state health department said.

Presently the requirement



People flout Covid-19 protocol of wearing mask near New Market in Kolkata on Monday. SAHLIPAL

is 300 MT and we can produce 450 MT.

So apparently there should not be any shortage of oxygen but with the steep rise of the covid cases in the state and the central government's decision to divert oxygen to the more deserving states might lead to a crisis of oxygen in the state.

"We are trying to increase the supply so that the increasing demand of oxygen can be negotiated. This will lessen the dependence on cylinders because oxygen will reach the patients through pipeline directly from the plant," the official added.

At present there are 22 medical colleges and 12 hospitals in the state. Apart from that there are state general hospitals in most of the sub-divisions and health centres in the blocks.

According to the senior state health department officials, the government is keen to install an oxygen generating system in most of the state general hospitals, medical colleges and super specialty hospitals.

"It will be taking some time but we have taken a target of installing the oxygen generating plants in all the hospitals within a span of two months," the official added.

## NORTHERN RAILWAY Corrigendum

File No. CIIID/SLR/Tender/2020 (Part-V) Ref: Tender published date 06.04.2021 and Tender opening Date: 27.04.2021.

It is to inform all concerned, that due to the prevailing Covid situation across the country and curfew imposed by Delhi Government from 19.04.2021 to 03.05.2021 till 05:00 AM, the NIT for leasing of SLR parcel space in special trains, published in various English & Hindi newspapers scheduled to be opened on 27.04.2021 through IREPS portal i.e. www.ireps.gov.in is postponed and now same will be opened on 12.05.2021. Other Information of NITs shall remain unchanged.

914/21  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## TENDER

### WESTERN RAILWAY ■ AUCTION SALE DURING MAY, 2021 FOR P-WAY & OTHER VARIOUS SCRAP

Public e-auction for disposal of P. way scrap, rail scrap & other various scrap material will be held in May, 2021 as per program given below:-

1 <sup>st&lt;/sup</sup>
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If the requirement of medical oxygen is more than what the Centre has allotted to Bihar then the state will arrange it at its own expense.

BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER NITISH KUMAR

INSTRUCTING OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL STEPS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENT OF MEDICAL OXYGEN

The Statesman

05  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2021

## THUMBNAILS



A police officer stands before a wall painted to salute Corona warriors, at ITO in New Delhi on Monday.

LANS

Oxygen tanker stuck in UP reaches Sagar: A tanker carrying oxygen from Bokaro in Jharkhand reached a medical college in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district on Monday under police escort from the Uttar Pradesh border, officials said. The administration had to dial senior officials of the UP government after the tanker was allegedly held up during transit through UP.

PTI

Raj govt fixes limit of Ambulance fare: Rajasthan's transport department on Monday issued an order to fix the maximum fares of ambulances and vehicles used in carrying bodies in the state. Fares of both kinds of vehicles have been made uniform under which Rs 500 will be charged for the first 10 kms. Apart from this, an additional fee of Rs 350 will be charged for a PPE kit and sanitisation.

PTI

NWR cancels 40 trains: The North Western Railway (NWR) has cancelled the services of 40 trains due to circumstances resulting from Covid-19 and low passenger load. The train services will remain suspended till further orders.

PTI

UK's CSC ready to sail to India: The UK's Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, is all set to sail to India where it will conduct joint exercises with Indian military forces in the Indian Ocean.

PTI

# Mask up even inside your homes: Govt

Highlighting importance of vaccination, NITI Aayog member Paul says can't let pace of vaccination decline



Covid patients receive free oxygen provided by a Sikh organisation at Indirapuram Gurudwara, in Ghaziabad, Monday

AGENCY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

**A**s a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic rips through the country, the government on Monday said it is time people start wearing masks inside their homes as well, and refrain from inviting guests.

Addressing a press conference here, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul said if there is a Covid-positive person inside the house, he or she must wear mask so as to prevent other family members from getting infected.

"Rather, I'll say that the time has come that we start

wearing masks even otherwise inside our homes. We used to talk about wearing it outside homes, but the way the infection has spread, it will be better if we wear mask inside our homes if we are sitting with someone," he said.

"But, definitely, if there is a Covid-19 positive person, that person must wear the mask and others inside the house also must wear a mask and the positive person should be kept in a different room," Paul underlined.

Highlighting the importance of vaccination, Paul said, "We cannot let the pace of Covid-19 vaccination decline or slacken in the face of the emerging situ-

ation. In fact, it should be escalated and with that intent the government of India brought a revised (vaccination) policy. We believe and are confident that will bring in more acceleration," he said. AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria, who also addressed the press conference, sought greater community participation to ensure optimal utilisation of hospital facilities.

"We see now there is unnecessary panic among people which is causing more harm than good. Those who test positive even if their oxygen saturation levels are normal and have mild symptoms, they also want to get admitted.

In this disease, 85 per cent people will have mild illness and they will get well with symptomatic treatment like fever medication or steam just like normal common cold," he said.

It is only useful in moderate to severe cases on the 5th to 7th day, he said, adding there is no benefit in early phases, and taking it on first and second day may even cause side-effects.

In this disease, 85 per cent people will have mild illness and they will get well with symptomatic treatment like fever medication or steam just like normal common cold," he said.

With 3,52,991 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, the highest so far, India's total tally of Covid-19 cases has climbed to 1,73,13,163 while active cases have crossed the 28-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

## Covid awareness: Group-3 reaches out to CSOs

SNS  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

The government's Empowered Group-3 today reached out to the country's one lakh civil society organisations (CSOs) to dispel common myths about Covid-19 management efforts and to supplement government initiatives to support urban poor families.

Chaired by Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, the Empowered Group urged the CSOs to encourage people to go for Covid vaccination.

The citizen bodies were asked to support state gov-

continue to follow Covid-Appropriate Behaviour (CAB), including wearing masks even after vaccination.

At a meeting attended by senior officials from the Cabinet Secretariat and the PM's Office; Principal Scientific Adviser K Vijayraghavan and National Disaster Management Authority Member Kamal Kishore, the Aayog CEO asked the CSOs to encourage people to go for Covid vaccination.

The citizen bodies were

ernments and district administration in filling gaps in the routine delivery of public health services, and to assist local administrations in identifying hotspots.

They were told to depute volunteers and caregivers to deliver services, with a special focus on the elderly, persons and disabilities, children, transgender persons, and other vulnerable groups. The CSOs were told to partner with state and local governments for enlisting volunteers from among individuals and communities

to support the Covid response efforts. The CSOs' help was sought in alleviating social stigma and discrimination against Covid-19 patients and their families through large scale and targeted communication strategies. The government has set up six Empowered Groups to address various issues pertaining to the pandemic. The Group-3 is entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating with private sector and NGOs for Covid-19 response related activities.

With this notification making it compulsory to join duties, the government is expecting to rope in about 1,000 fresh MBBS graduates for covid-19 duties.

## Corona blues



NC asks J&K admin to boost oxygen availability: The National Conference on Monday asked the government to explore methods to boost availability of oxygen at all government designated Covid-19 hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir as the demand for medical oxygen from hospitals and nursing homes is increasing in wake of rising rate of infections. Meanwhile, 25 Covid-19 related deaths were reported across Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. Fourteen deaths were in Jammu and 11 in Kashmir. As many as 2335 persons were tested positive with 632 +ve followed by 472 in Jammu..

Covid patients shifted due to Oxygen shortage: Covid patients in Meerut were shifted to other hospitals on Sunday night due to the shortage of oxygen in the hospitals they were being treated. Since last couple of days the hospitals are facing shortage of oxygen for the covid positive patients. This started after the sharp rise in the covid positive cases in the district. Amongst 9 nine districts of Meerut and Saharanpur divisions highest number of covid cases are being reported in Meerut. Meanwhile, 1501 people were tested positive in the district from the samples of 6559 persons on Sunday while 7 patients passed away due to Corona.

Sonowal takes review of situation: As the Covid-19 cases are increasing in Assam, chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal took a comprehensive review of corona-situation in Sonitpur and Biswanath districts during a meeting. Sonowal reviewed the status of medical infrastructure for the treatment of concerned patients. He directed the district administrations and health officials to expedite vaccination of targeted population and urged them to encourage and promote corona-appropriate behaviour among the common people. Sonowal asked the administration to carry out miking in the tea gardens to sensitize garden people about the pandemic.

No lockdown in Kerala, weekend restrictions to continue: The Kerala government on Monday decided not to impose a lockdown in the state but decided to continue the weekend lockdown-like restrictions implemented last week to contain the spread of Covid-19. The government also decided to shut movie theatres, shopping malls, gyms, clubs, sports complex, swimming pools, amusement parks, bars and foreign liquor shops for a while to fight Covid-19. The decision was taken after an all-party meeting convened in Thiruvananthapuram by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday. The meeting, however, resolved to enforce strict restrictions in containment zones. Currently, the state has imposed lock-down like restrictions on weekends and at night, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Centre approves setting up of 13 oxygen plants in N-E region: The Centre has decided to set up 13 oxygen generation plants in five Northeastern states to boost availability of the life-saving gas amid its shortage in several states of the country when Covid-19 cases are surging, an official said in Shillong on Monday. "Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram will get three oxygen plants each while Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur will get two units each," the official said. These 13 are among the 551 dedicated Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) medical oxygen generation plants to be set up inside public health facilities across the country, he said. The PM Cares Fund has given in-principle approval for allocation of funds for the installation of the plants.

## T'gana Cong charges state EC for holding Municipal polls

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, 26 APRIL

On a day Madras High Court pulled up the Election commission of India, Telangana Congress levelled similar charges against the State Election Commission for being adamant in holding Municipal polls in the state leading to steep increase in Covid cases, particularly in areas where the elections are being held.

Telangana today reported 6551 cases and 43 deaths while active cases rose to 65,597. Referring to the observations of Madras High court congress leader Sravan Dasoju said on Twitter: "Same case in Telangana and as state election commission (SEC) adamantly holding Municipal polls while there is steep growth in number of Covid-19 cases."

However, the pandemic has made the local elections a little off-colour as the big guns have all been affected by the virus and were forced to skip the campaign. Both chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and his son KT Rama Rao, the party's working president have tested positive. Con-

gress state president N Uttam Kumar Reddy is also in quarantine after contracting the virus. Even the State Election Commissioner was in quarantine for a few days. Only BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar managed to bring in some colour to the otherwise lacklustre campaign.

In neighbouring Andhra Pradesh at Tirupati where a bypoll to the Lok Sabha seat was held on 17 April, has seen a huge surge in the past few days. The entire city of Tirupati has been declared as a containment zone and curfew will be imposed after 2 pm everyday. The entire state comes under curfew between 10 pm and 5 am everyday.

Two Covid patients die:

Two Covid patients die: Two Covid-19 patients died at Maharajah Government hospital in Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh allegedly after the high pressure oxygen supply in the facility was disrupted. Former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu lambasted the state government for its failure to address the oxygen shortage in the old Oxygen plants that are currently lying defunct.

## Army Western Command to revive defunct O2 plants for Punjab's war-like Covid crisis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 26 APRIL

Responding to chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh's plea for help in the war-like Covid situation, the Western Command of the Indian Army on Monday extended all possible help, including medical staff and medically trained combatants, to Punjab to meet the exigent shortage in hospital, along with support in reviving the state's old Oxygen plants that are currently lying defunct.

General-Officer-Commanding-in-Chief Western Command Lieutenant General RPS Singh, at a virtual meeting of the CM with senior Command officials, also offered to provide staff to

run the 100-bed Covid facility proposed to be set up in the building loaned to the state government by Central Scientific Instruments Organisation (CSIR) for the purpose.

The CM later said at an another review meeting with top officials of the state government and medical experts that the government was also approaching the Union home ministry to provide manpower and ICU beds through the Border Security Force (BSF).

Technical and specialist cover will be provided by the Command Centre, Lt Gen Singh told the CM during their virtual meeting, adding that 15 trained nurses had already been sent to Patiala

to support the civic staff. Further, experts will be sent to visit the defunct Oxygen plants at existing industrial units to assess their status and extend whatever support needed for their restoration.

Of the 105 tonnes, the state was actually getting only 85 tonnes as the rest was being diverted to PGI Chandigarh. The CM said later at the internal review meeting that the state government was making all efforts to secure medical Oxygen to supplement its depleting stocks.

The meeting was informed by secretary industries, Alok Shekhar, that Jalandhar and Amritsar had been facing a crisis situation on the Oxygen front for the past few days.

## Campaigning ends for last phase of poll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA, 26 APRIL

Campaigning for the eighth and final phase of polling for 35 Assembly constituencies in West Bengal, scheduled to be held on 29 April, ended at 6.30 pm on Monday.

A total 84,77,728 voters-43,55,833 male, 41,21,735 women and 158 of the third gender are eligible to decide the fate of 283 candidates in Thursday's polling which will be held in six constituencies of Malda, 11 in Murshidabad, seven in Kolkata North and 11 in Birbhum, Election Commission sources said.

The polling will be held between 7AM to 6.30PM in 11,860 polling stations, they said. While 11 candidates each have been fielded by Trinamul Congress, BSP and BJP, CPI(M) is contesting in four seats, Congress in three, AIFB in 2 and RSP (1), the EC sources said. There are four independent candidates in the fray as well, they said.

The focus in this phase of polling will be on five constituencies in Kolkata north-Beleghata, Jorsanko, Shyampukur, Maniktala, Kashipur-Belgharia-as thorny contest is expected between TMC heavyweights and BJP chal-

engers. In Shyampukur seat, state minister for Women and Child Development and Social Welfare Shashi Panja is contesting against BJP's Sandipan Biswas and AIFB's Jibon Prakash Saha. In Beleghata, TMC has fielded Purnesh Paul against BJP's Kashinath Biswas and CPI-M's Rajib Biswas. In Jorashanko, TMC has named Meena Devi Purohit against TMC's Vivek Gupta and Congress' Ajmal Khan. The TMC has named Atin Ghosh in Kashipur-Belgharia against BJP candidate Sibaji Sinha Roy and CPI(M)'s Pratip Dasgupta.

## SP takes up initiative to sensitise people

BHOPAL, 26 APRIL

The Superintendent of Police (SP) of Bhind district in Madhya Pradesh has announced that he would personally host dinners at his official residence, for one newly wed couple at a time, to honour those brides and grooms of the district who got married in the presence of a maximum of 10 guests.

SP Manoj Kumar Singh's novel initiative is in a desperate bid to sensitise people to strictly adhere to all Covid-19 guidelines.

IMPORTANT NOTICE	
It is notified for the information of passengers that due to very low occupancy, Railways have decided to discontinue the following special trains from the dates shown against each till further Advice:-	
CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MAIL/EXPRESS SPECIAL TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
04124/04123 Kanpur Central - Partapgarh Jn - Kanpur Central Intercity Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04101/04102 Prayagraj Sangam - Kanpur Central - Prayagraj Sangam Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04213/04214 Lucknow - Kanpur Central - Lucknow Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04327/04328 Sitapur City - Kanpur Central - Sitapur City Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
02985/02986 Jaipur - Delhi Sarai Rohilla - Jaipur Double Decker Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04701 Bhatinda Jn - Lalguru Jn Special	29.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04702 Lalguru Jn - Abohar Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04722 Abohar - Jodhpur Jn Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04721 Jodhpur Jn - Bhatinda Jn Special	28.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04733/04734 Rewari - Shri Ganganagar - Rewari Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04754/04753 Bhatinda Jn - Shri Ganganagar - Bhatinda Jn Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04756 Shri Ganganagar - Bhatinda Jn Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
04755 Bhatinda Jn - Shri Ganganagar Special	28.04.21 (Till further Advice)
09749/09750 Suratgarh Jn - Bhatinda Jn - Suratgarh Jn Special	27.04.21 (Till further Advice)
09009 Mumbai Central - New Delhi Duronto Special	30.04.21 to 14.05.2021
09010 New Delhi - Mumbai Central Duronto Special	01.05.21 to 15.05.2021

## China targeted

Ever so on the defensive, China has binned as "unwarranted" the robust condemnation by the House of Commons ~ for the first time ~ that "state genocide" is taking place against Uighurs and others in north-west China. More than a million people are estimated to have been detained at camps in the Xinjiang region. The motion, approved by MPs, does not compel Britain to take action, but arguably points to the growing discontent with the Chinese government in Parliament. The British legislature has been exceptionally forthright, when contrasted with the generally indifferent response in a bevy of other democracies. Without dwelling on specifics, China has said in its response that the UK should "immediately right its wrong moves". The Tory leader, Sir Iain Duncan Smith, heralded the vote as "a historic moment", bringing the UK Parliament in line with Holland, Canada and the United States. Markedly, Sir Iain was one of the five British parliamentarians sanctioned by China for spreading what it calls "lies and disinformation". Decidedly more explicit was Nus Ghani ~ another MP to be targeted by China ~ who defined genocide as a (state-sponsored) praxis to "destroy in whole or in part" a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. "All five criteria of genocide are evident in Xinjiang," she said. The detainees were subject to "brutal torture methods, including beatings with metal prods, electric shocks and whips". Women in the Uighur region, she alleged, were being fitted with birth control devices, adding: "The Handmaid's Tale is a fairy tale compared to the reproductive rights of Uighur women." This abuse is manifest in the Chinese government's own data; in 2014, over 200,000 birth control devices were inserted in women in Xinjiang. By 2018, this had increased by 60 per cent, she said.

The comity of nations is unlikely to buy the argument advanced by the Chinese embassy in the UK ~ "The unwarranted accusation by British MPs that there is 'genocide' in Xinjiang is the most preposterous lie of the century, an outrageous insult and affront to the Chinese people, and a gross breach of international law and the basic norms governing international relations. China strongly opposes the UK's blatant interference in China's internal affairs." Strong words that can scarcely overshadow the core issue, specifically man's inhumanity to man, the latter representing a religious minority. It is by all accounts a hideous cocktail that has been brewed in the People's Republic of China. At another remove of the political spectrum, the Labour party's shadow Foreign Office minister, Stephen Kinnock, said the party supported the motion arguing that "genocide can never be met with indifference or inaction". The world must give it to the House of Commons that it has internationalised the torment of the Uighurs.

## Putin's 'red line'

Vladimir Putin has used the analogy of *lakhs man rekha* should the Western powers cross the limit of what he calls the "red line", saying such a move would trigger an "asymmetrical, rapid and harsh" response from the Kremlin. Though he has not spelt out the details, there is little doubt that tension with the West, including the United States across the Atlantic, has escalated over Moscow's expansionist designs in Ukraine and the imprisonment of the dissident, Alexei Navalny. While the first issue has been festering since 2014, the second is a relatively new red herring across the diplomatic trail. It is considerably significant too that the warning has been announced in course of the Russian President's annual state of the nation address. Mr Putin said Western powers were constantly trying to "pick on" Russia. Police have detained nearly 100 Navalny supporters rallying in several cities. Wednesday's pro-Navalny protests in the eastern cities of Russia have been declared as illegal. The anti-corruption campaigner is being treated at a prison hospital in Vladimir, to the east of Moscow. He is on hunger-strike and his allies say his life is in danger. In central Moscow, police cordoned off the area around Manezh exhibition hall, where Mr Putin addressed both Houses of Parliament. Mr Putin focused most of his speech on Russia's battle against Covid-19 and its plans to improve welfare and economic development.

Mr Putin's presentation had a wide reach and he was obviously playing to the gallery of his countrymen. He accused the West of diplomatic transgressions that threatened stability in Russia and its ex-Soviet neighbours, Belarus and Ukraine. "The use of unjust sanctions is growing into something more dangerous: a coup attempt in Belarus," he said. On 17 April, the Belarusian authorities announced that they had foiled a US-backed plot to assassinate President Lukashenko. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said it had detained two Belarusians allegedly involved in the plot. The coup claim was dismissed by the exiled Belarusian opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, as a "provocation". But the Russian President did convey the impression that the West has fingers in the Ukrainian and Belarusian pies. Since last August's disputed election, massive demonstrations in support of Svetlana have taken place, with thousands of protesters beaten up by police and detained. President Putin said some Western countries were like "jackals trying to please the US, just as a jackal behaves with the tiger Shere Khan" in Kipling's tale *The Jungle Book*. "We don't want to burn bridges, but if somebody interprets our good intentions as weakness, our reaction will be asymmetrical, rapid and harsh," he said. "We'll decide for ourselves in each case where the red line is." A large part of Russia's force is in Crimea, the peninsula which it annexed from Ukraine in March 2014. Last week, the force size was estimated to be 103,200. Russia backs the separatists holding a swathe of eastern Ukraine, and its manoeuvres have fuelled fears of a new military intervention.

# Gandhi's Ahimsa

To Gandhi ahimsa was not only the means but also the end. It was not only during the struggle for freedom that he wanted ahimsa to be practiced. He wanted a non-violent society. He kept writing and talking about a future socialistic order or a Sarvodaya society

Dr Joan V Bondurant, an American political scientist, in her book entitled *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* has pointed out, ahimsa is valorized strongly in the Hindu tradition. The author claims that the aphorism found in the Mahabharata: ahimsa param dharma (i.e., ahimsa is the highest religion) is 'known in every village in India'.

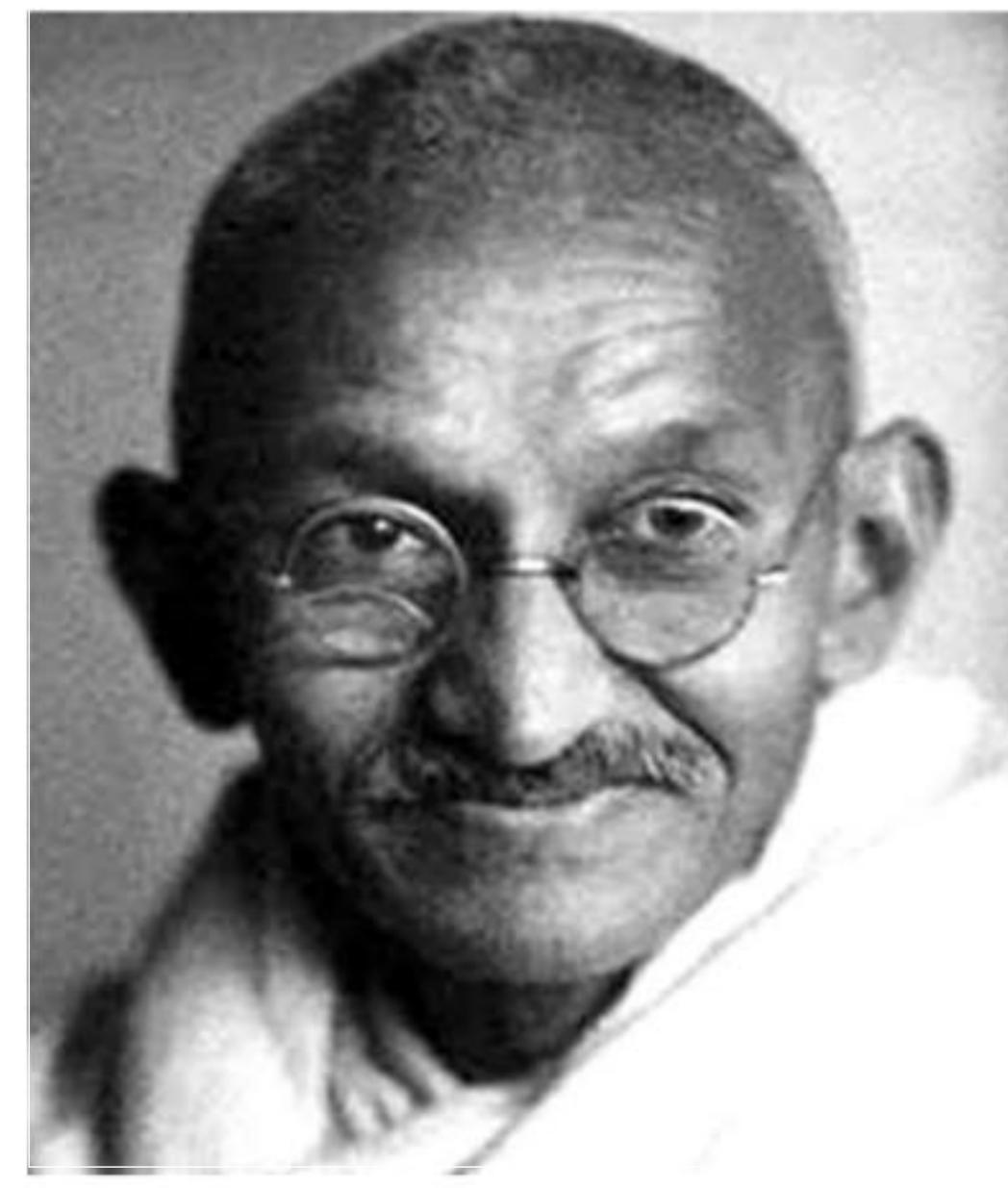
It is one of the cardinal virtues and an important tenet of three major religions ~ Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It is invoked in the Mahabharata to condemn cruel practices, the futile destructiveness of worldly existence and also to proclaim the sanctity and dignity of life. In Buddhism it is considered as an essential requirement for every monk. Nothing in Buddhist scripture gives any support to use of violence (himsa) as a way to resolve conflict. In Jainism, ahimsa means to be without harm, to be utterly harmless, not only to oneself and others, but to all forms of life, from the largest mammals to the smallest bacteria. Ahimsa, like truth, is as old as the hills and bears both a minimal and maximal meaning as mentioned above. It is obvious that it will not suffice to merely define non-violence as the opposite of violence. Equally, the term 'non-violence' is not an exact equivalent for the Sanskrit word ahimsa. While writing in the Indian languages, and sometimes even in English, Mahatma Gandhi used the Sanskrit word rather than its English equivalent.

He said that he had an innate and natural attraction for truth from his early years, but ahimsa was not an innate trait for him. It was in the pursuit of truth that he discovered ahimsa. He based his concept of ahimsa on the Gita and linked it to the idea of non-attachment and freedom from hatred, pride and anger. However, his early hesitations about ahimsa were overcome by reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and he became a firm believer of ahimsa.

We cannot provide a quick and ready definition of ahimsa. Gandhi said: "Ahimsa in theory no one knows. It is as undefinable as God." Though he himself was unable to formulate a clear definition of ahimsa, his ideas about it could be ascertained from his work and writings.

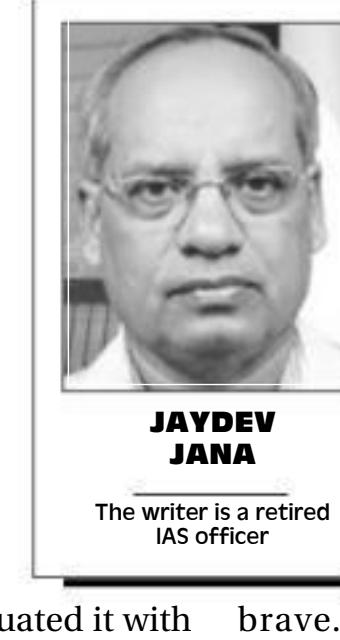
Gandhi extended the meaning of ahimsa beyond mere non-killing or even non-injury. As early as 1916, Gandhi distinguished between the negative and the positive meanings of ahimsa: "In its negative form it means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind... It requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer... In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity... This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness."

In From Yervada Mandir Gandhi held: "Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression.



The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs." It entails continuous suffering and the cultivating of endless patience.

At times Gandhi equated ahimsa with reason and defended it in terms similar to the Golden Rule. "The basic principle on which the practice



JAYDEV JANA

The writer is a retired IAS officer

of non-violence (ahimsa) rests is that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. All mankind in essence is alike. What is, therefore, possible for one is possible for everybody." It is also true that Gandhi sometimes inflated the term ahimsa to include all the moral virtues; he equated it with humility, forgiveness, love, charity, selflessness, fearlessness, strength, non-attachment, meekness and innocence. Gandhi regarded the killing of a living being for its own sake under certain circumstances as not only consistent with but also necessary for ahimsa.

There are several cases which would enable us to understand what exactly he meant to say. Once a calf was maimed and lay in agony in Gandhi's ashram. The veterinary surgeon declared the case to be past help and past hope. On Gandhi's request, the doctor administered poison to the calf and thus killed it in a couple of minutes in his presence. This was not only a case of simple killing, but a sacrifice from the viewpoint of orthodox Hindus, who regard the cow as a sacred animal, but Gandhi stoutly defended his position against all attacks from co-religionists. As a matter of fact, Gandhi introduces a new value of ahimsa.

Gandhi regarded the use of violence (Himsa) in self-defense differently from its exercise in aggression, though he insisted

that ahimsa becomes meaningless if violence is automatically permitted for self-defense. "People must learn to defend themselves against misbehaving individual, no matter who they are. No doubt the non-violence (ahimsa) is always the best, but whether that does not come naturally the violent way is both necessary and honorable." There are three ways of defense, said Gandhi. The best is defense that is based on ahimsa.

The second best is violent defense. The worst form of defense is submission or running away out of fear. Therefore, ahimsa in Gandhian thought is positive in content and must not be confused with all types of ahimsa. Gandhi said: "Ahimsa is an attribute of the brave. Cowardice and ahimsa don't go together any more than water and fire..." In his words: "I could show my way of successfully delivering the message of ahimsa to those who know how to die, not to those who are afraid of death." Ahimsa is not a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness, but a more active fight against wickedness than retaliation which, by its nature, increases wickedness. In the words of Gandhi: "I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon but by disappointing his expectations that I would be offering physical resistance."

Gandhi mentioned various positive attributes of ahimsa. Love is the very basis of ahimsa. The adversary must be treated with goodwill, respect and sympathy. The suffering must be borne entirely by the believer in ahimsa without the slightest feeling of anger or hatred towards the oppressor. He also observed: "Ahimsa does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive

acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the state of ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrongdoer..."

"No man could be actively non-violent", Gandhi said "and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred." Truthfulness is, according to Gandhi, an inseparable ingredient of Ahimsa. He maintained that "if non-violence (Ahimsa) of thought is to be evolved in individuals or societies or nations, truth has to be told, however harsh or unpopular it may appear to be for the moment." In his autobiography Gandhi argued that the search for truth is in vain unless it is founded on ahimsa.

Gandhi's firm conviction was that the bravery of ahimsa could be brought within the reach of the people by means of Satyagraha. Gene Sharp, who called satyagraha as the weapon of moral power, said: "It is important to see this method of fighting evil in the perspective of Gandhi's whole philosophy, for this weapon is an expression of a way of looking at life and a way of living. Gandhi's philosophy of life and this method of opposing evil are both called Satyagraha."

To Gandhi ahimsa was not only the means but also the end.

It was not only during the struggle for freedom that he wanted ahimsa to be practiced. He wanted a non-violent society. He kept writing and talking about a future socialistic order or a Sarvodaya society.

Every word and his action and desire for the creation of a non-violent society was transparent.

Although ahimsa has been commended by several religious and social thinkers, Gandhi alone has clearly and continuously distinguished between ahimsa as a creed and as a policy, or between the ahimsa of the strong and the ahimsa of the weak. Gandhi's own dilemma lay in the fact that he wished to propagate ahimsa as a creed; yet as a politician, he also tried to justify it as a policy. To him ahimsa was definitely a creed, 'the breath of my life', but he sometimes spoke of it as a policy to be adopted on prudent grounds, and he called himself "an essentially practical man dealing with political questions."

However, he sadly confessed in 1947 that the Congress had embraced the policy of ahimsa because they were unable, though not unwilling, to offer armed resistance, whereas with him ahimsa had always been a creed.

He laid down five simple axioms of this creed. The creed is applicable under all circumstances and can admit of no exceptions.

Ahimsa is not a quality to be displayed to order, but an inward growth depending for sustenance upon individual effort, and it can be effectively taught only by living it. The conclusion in Joan Bondurant's book mentioned above is deeply perspective: "Man grows increasingly concerned over the dangers which freight his ventures into violence. But it is not enough that he should take unreasoned flight from violence. The Gandhian experiments suggest that if man is to free himself from fear and threat alike, he must pause in its flight from violence to set himself the task of its conquest."

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ASIAN VOICES

**Inspection teams  
for Covid-19 control  
and measures**

The Ministry of Health has set up five inspection teams for Covid-19 prevention and control measures, including vaccinations, in the southwest from April 18-30.

The teams will visit CanTho and the provinces of Kiên Giang, Vinh Long, Đồng Tháp, Long An, An Giang, Tiền Giang, Ben Tre, Trà Vinh, Hau Giang, Bạc Liêu, Cà Mau and Sóc Trăng.

On April 18, a team led by Minister of Health Nguyễn Thành Long travelled to Kiên Giang Province to meet the local Steering Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control and checked activity at the international border gate and stations, quarantine areas, and a health centre in Hà Tiên.

Speaking at the meeting, Hà Văn Phúc, head of the province's Department of Health, said that Covid-19 prevention and control at the border has been very stressful because neighbouring countries are seeing an increase in cases.

The province is at high risk of community transmission, Phúc said. The control of migration through trails, border crossings and the sea is difficult, he added. The province has already found 142 illegal immigrants.

The working conditions for soldiers at border stations are also difficult as they have to ensure strict control of migrants via the border and sea, he said.

All Covid-19 patients who enter the province are brought to Hà Tiên District Health Centre for treatment, he said, adding that the centre is small and can treat only 30 patients.

Phúc said the ministry should allow the province to set up a field hospital.

The next day, on April 19, Cho Ray Hospital in HCM City sent a team including 13 medical officials to the

**Viet Nam News**

province to help set up the field hospital and Covid-19 prevention and control activities.

The province has three Covid-19 testing machines with the maximum capacity of 600 samples per day, but this number does not ensure rapid tracing as the ministry has required, he added.

Phúc said the ministry should give priority to providing two more real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction machines and other items related to Covid-19 tests.

Moreover, the province needs 20,000 rapid tests for Covid-19 diagnosis and 10 million pairs of medical gloves.

Phúc also suggested that the ministry should give priority to providing Covid-19 vaccines in the next phase of the national vaccination drive.

Minister of Health Nguyễn Thành Long said that the province should prepare for worst-case scenarios if Covid breaks out again.

Prevention and control of illegal migrants via the border and sea should be strengthened, Long said, adding that communication to encourage local people to become collaborators in Covid-19 prevention and control should be enhanced.

He told the HCM City Pasteur Institute and relevant agencies to help the province upgrade its testing capacity.

## SELFISH AMERICA

SIR, Harsha Kakar is quite correct in his analysis, 'An ill-advised step by the Americans' (20 April). Without self-interest, America does not befriend any country. It has come close to India as it knows that without the help of a formidable local military power, it will not be able to counter the Dragon in the Indo-Pacific. And the superpower's global hegemony may suffer a severe setback if China continues flexing its military muscle unchecked in the Indo-Pacific region ~ the current vortex of explosive Sino-US rivalry. Uncle Sam, for its own interest, needs India. Historically India was never an American ally; Pakistan was.

America's war on terror in Afghanistan is on its last legs which provokes America to show its true colours to Pakistan as the latter's help to fight terror is not needed once its troops withdraw from Afghan soil. India should learn a lesson from this. If Sino-American relations takes the right track someday, America, it is highly likely, will not baulk at leaving India in the lurch. Before totally falling into the lap of the superpower, India needs to be extremely cautious. It will be difficult for India to counter the Dragon's wrath alone if the USA does not stand by.

Yours etc., Aranya Sanyal, Siliguri, 21 April.

## Lockdown isn't a ready-made vaccine

SIR, Please refer to your today's report 'Lockdown should be last resort, Modi urges states'. In his address to the nation on Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to assure citizens that in the war against the relentless second wave, all efforts should be attuned to ensure there is minimal impact on the livelihoods of people; that everything would be done to "save the country" from a lockdown and states should use it as a "last resort". The message has gone through ~ already several states have rolled out their versions of lockdowns ~ night-time curfews, curbs on weekends and limits on movement during the day. How effective that is against a steadily climbing wave and whether harsher curbs are needed will only be known in the days to come. What is staring us in the face, however, is how the second wave has exposed the glaring inadequacy of health infra ~ not only in remote rural pockets but in the heart of the national capital, New Delhi, and financial capital Mumbai. From shortages



of medicines and beds to oxygen supplies and testing facilities ~ all basic Covid-care needs that were flagged by the empowered groups set up more than one year ago are deficient. A just-in-time approach to replenishing oxygen supplies at hospitals will endanger lives. If transporting oxygen across state lines is proving to be a logistical challenge, then governments must quickly work out the modalities invol-

ved. The vicious cycle of supply-demand mismatches, panic and hoarding needs to be broken.

India, which stepped up to the plate in the first phase, needs to pitch in again, aggressively.

On the vaccine front, the opening up has raised several new challenges. The bizarre dual pricing of a public good ~ Covishield at Rs 150 for the Centre and Rs 400 for the states ~ is set to sharpen conflict between the

states and the Centre. The lack of clarity on vaccine procurement days before the May 1 ramp-up needs to be addressed.

Cash-strapped state governments are worried how they will compete with open-market players in sourcing the vaccines. The impact of the measures recently announced to boost domestic production, which should ideally have come months ago, will show up with a lag. To what extent imports can bridge the gap in the interim is debatable. This continuing health uncertainty will have grave consequences for the economy. Production will be hit as restrictions are imposed, and both consumption and investment decisions by households and firms will be postponed.

Analysts have already begun paring down their forecasts for economic growth this year with the third revision by the rating agency in the last one month. Because for all the talk of no lockdowns, demand or economic activity will not revive if the Covid curve doesn't begin to bend.

Yours etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 21 April.

HARSHA KAKAR

The US has lifted restrictions on export of raw material for vaccine production in India. In addition, it is providing other essential medical stores. Restrictions were imposed by President Joe Biden recently. A spokesperson defended the action by stating, "We have a special responsibility to the American people." A few days earlier, Serum Institute of India CEO, Adar Poonawalla, had requested Mr. Biden to lift the ban on export of raw materials. He tweeted, "if we are to truly unite in beating this virus, on behalf of the vaccine industry outside the US, I humbly request you to lift the embargo of raw material exports out of the US." Within the US too, pressure mounted on the government to lift restrictions and support India in its crisis as India had done when the US faced the first wave.

Press inputs state that President Biden took this decision as the major American vaccine manufacturer, Pfizer, was compelled to cut short its vaccine production targets by 50 per cent, citing a raw material crunch. Currently, the US is hoarding surplus vaccines, claimed to be up to 70 million, which is contrary to humanitarian norms, but not unusual for the US.

On India stopping export of vaccines to other countries due to its own rising cases in the second wave, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel stated, "We now have a situation with India where, in connection with the emergency situation of the pandemic, we are worried whether the pharmaceutical products will still come to us." She added, "Of course, we have only allowed India to become such a large pharmaceutical producer in the first place, in the expectation that this should be complied with. If this is not the case now, we will have to rethink." As the third wave hit Europe in late March, the EU itself stopped export of vaccines to other countries, including UK, with whom it had an agreement. It also reneged on its global commitments.

John Nkengasong, the director of the African Centre for Disease Control, cautioned India against blocking vaccine exports to Africa. He stated, "If you finish vaccinating your people before Africa or other parts of the world, you have not done yourself any justice because variants will emerge and undermine your own vaccination efforts." Prior to the second wave hitting India, the government had exported over 66.2 million doses to more than 95 countries. Currently India is not fulfilling even its paid commitments for vaccines including to close allies Bangladesh and UK.

Nations placing their own population first, ignoring neighbours, allies and alliances, is not a new phenomenon. Economically strong nations overstocked even basic essentials even during the first wave of the virus last year, while the economically weaker nations suffered.

At the height of the first wave in

# Nations look inwards as panic spreads



April 2020, the US was accused of purchasing a consignment of masks about to be transported to France on a tarmac in China, by paying three times the amount. The buyer and seller were complicit. Canadian PM Justin Trudeau directed his government to ensure that there was far more protective gear available than necessary. Brazil claimed its supplies were taken away by others, by paying more than it could afford. Turkey banned export of protective gear and reigned on delivery for equipment for which payments had been made, even to NATO allies. EU nations blocked movement of medical stores within themselves, breaking the very reason of creating the EU, implying collaboration and open movement.

When President Trump announced Hydroxychloroquine could treat Covid, India banned its exports and dispatched only where the government decided. Israel's Mossad was accused of launching clandestine operations to procure large quantity of

Covid testing kits. Germany accused US of attempting to bribe its medical research companies on vaccines under development. Cyber-attacks on vaccine research were reported globally. China was accused of stashing supplies to gain financially.

A crisis impacting the global population compels nations to look inwards and ensure safety and well-being of their own people, rather than being global benefactors. Neither the US nor Europe have donated vaccines to economically weaker nations, which cannot afford to procure them, solely due to selfish reasons. They donated funds to the UN-led global vaccine initiative, COVAX instead. The global initiative suffers as manufacturers like India handle domestic demands on priority.

Shortfall of vaccines in Canada compelled Trudeau to eat humble pie and request PM Modi. The case of China selling gifted items to nations in need, demanding contribution for its research for vaccine development, as a

prerequisite for vaccine supplies, as also forcing nations to purchase Sino-vac, is well known.

India, despite being the producer of 60 per cent of global vaccines, is compelled to import vaccines due to high demand. Indian support to the world during the first wave was well appreciated. In response, the world is now supporting India. Many argued on this approach, but it is being proved wrong.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar defended India's Vaccine Maitri

by stating 'international cooperation is not a one-way street.'

He backed the current decision of stopping vaccine exports by stating, "As things got tough, we spoke to the world and said - we tried our best to live up to commitments but please understand that we have a serious situation at home and most countries understand that." However, many nations did not understand, especially when they were directly impacted. Angela Merkel and others, whose supplies were affected,

commented adversely and accused India.

US decisions to initially block raw materials and hoard vaccines is condemnable under humanitarian conditions and displays selfishness. Simultaneously, India is being accused of not fulfilling its export commitments, including from nations from whom payments have been taken. There are also countries who have given first doses of vaccines sent from India and are currently facing a crisis for their second dose, as India stopped exports.

Every nation will secure its own populace first, prior to catering for the global community. Nations only provide support to others once they are well-stocked, and their population is secure. In the bargain, economically weaker nations suffer. In summary, selfishness, better described as 'My nation first', is a global mantra and must be accepted.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

## Beware of the ides of May

PARTHA P. MAJUMDER

Assembly elections in the states of West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu are being held. The results in West Bengal will be declared on 2 May; in Assam on 4 May, and shortly thereafter in the other three states. There will be a lot of hugs and jubilation on announcement of the results. Physical distancing will go for a toss. Masks, as well. Then, there will be a period of lull during which the coronavirus will incubate in many. Another huge surge of infections will follow. A near certainty.

At the beginning of February, we seemed to think that our war against coronavirus was won. In a country of 1.3 billion, the number of daily infections was less than 10,000. Triumphant, we got rid of our masks. Roadside tea stalls had picked up business. Everything seemed normal. On 7 March, our Union Health Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, said that "we are in



the endgame" of the Covid-19 pandemic in India.

Sadly, from just about that time,

the number of daily cases of infection started to rise. And, rise like hell. Within days, lakhs of people were being infected each day. The daily count is poised to reach 4 lakh soon. Hospitals

have no beds to care for the Covid-19 patients. Oxygen is in such short supply that patients are dying in hospitals because of lack of oxygen. Even getting tested for the infection has now become an ordeal.

There are many reasons for this huge surge. We will never know the most important reason. Election rallies are surely a main cause. Of course, no physical distancing could be maintained. But masks were also nearly non-existent in these rallies. Contesting politicians didn't care. They needed votes. When in fact the government should have banned election rallies, these became more frequent as the election dates neared.

Our Prime Minister, Home Minister, Chief Ministers and others, held many election meetings every day. Without paying any heed to warning bells.

Infections spread. Many were bussed from rural areas to cities and towns to swell crowds in these election rallies. And, they carried infections home to their villages. On 30 March when the trajectory of infections was taking off on an exponential path of increase, our Health Minister seemed to think that "the situation is under control." Shortly before that, on March 21,

our Prime Minister accorded a "hearty welcome to all devotees of Mahakumbh." Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat said "...Kumbh is at the bank of the River Ganga. Maa Ganga's blessings are there in the flow. So, there should be no corona." Perhaps, we didn't deserve Maa Ganga's blessings and our load of infections is reaching four lakh per day.

The E484Q-L425R "double mutant" coronavirus arose and spread rapidly, possibly because it is more transmissible than existing variants. It is yet unclear whether the double mutant is also more dangerous. With winter receding, the mercury has started to rise. This may also be contributing to the surge and spread; the seasonality effect.

We must take precautions. We must learn from our mistakes. A third surge is expected around the middle of May, a few days after the jubilations following declarations of the election results. I request all political parties to jointly declare a moratorium on jubilations. That way, a third surge may be avoided.

The writer is National Science Chair, Government of India and President, Indian Academy of Sciences.

NO 28896

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

ROAM	WELL	BORING
ALB	XAVDA	
VILLA	POSTERIOR	
IRE	ERROL	
SENEGAL	RICOTTA	
HVA	BON	
PALISADE	NOSED	
INDIA	FAE	
SINAI	UNMAILED	
ULN	DDU	
BY SIGHT	LIED DOWN	
SHCE	NUK	
ISOTHERMS	CUBAN	
DNEZELO		
EXASPERATE	TEXT	

### ACROSS

- 6 Pull bat away regularly after proper bloomer (7)
- 7 Uncanny, Dot (single) making right move twice in highly-strung state (5)
- 9 Setter's power as mischief-maker (5)
- 10 His older TV's repair is not long-lasting (5-5)
- 11 Guy more than once needing to make a dash for it, reportedly (5)
- 13 Recording that male setter's given 6D 10 things (8)
- 15 Stopped talking and did postprandial chore? (5,2)
- 16 Excessive as cost might be, if broadcaster under influence of a drug? (5-4)
- 20 Creative person gets home by taking second north out of IOW town (8)
- 23 Manners shown by Dr. Dre? Not at first, in today's theme ... (5)
- 24 Unusually large pets receiving hard 7 messages? (10)
- 27 Country where setters introduce thematic content in left/right columns (3)
- 28 On the way out, Indy's recycled? Good (5)
- 29 Creative use of e.g. Corel 6D (2,5)
- DOWN
- 1 Having lost case, simply with no case to lose (8)
- 2 Setters' pleasure trips no longer starting with a thematic dash (4)
- 3 German city's missing hotel by river, previously knocked down (3,4)
- 4 Pull up after taking the lead From Steve Cram (4)
- 5 Element nitrogen is missing from compound number 1 (6)
- 6 Portrait's head isn't the Queen, according to artist (7)
- 8 Read out, say, writing that's depressingly dull in literary terms (5)
- 12 Burst of letters from higher up, thematically (5)
- 14 Stink is about fine? That's nonsense (5)
- 17 Very strong man in Cheers, playing university lecturer (8)
- 18 Suggest a possible case for secret police (7)
- 19 Stuck bug on leads of peripheral electronic devices? That's about right (7)
- 21 Very much recovered at last, after turning up gas (2,3)
- 22 Wasted time during last two-thirds of second half? It makes you sick! (6)
- 25 Gregory's car registration? Sydney's, actually (4)
- 26 Avoiding 27, maybe Frankfurter is wise (4)

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

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

It might have been anticipated that under Lord Sinha's administration the subject of the development of village self-government would not be neglected in Bihar and Orissa. Through the Provincial Publicity Board, public opinion has now been invited upon the recommendations and the draft Bill produced by the committee which was appointed to consider the question of the introduction of a measure on the lines of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919. Lord Sinha's own experience in dealing with the Bengal Bill should be of service to Bihar and Orissa. Whether this is the most opportune time for such legislation in the sister-province is a question which no doubt will be duly considered by the Government. If the Bill should provide a counter-attraction to the very unattractive propaganda of the non-cooperators, its effect should be good. In normal conditions the work of the committee would call for nothing but congratulations on the prospect held out to Bihar and Orissa of obtaining the same benefits which Lord Sinha's Village Self-Government Act has given to Bengal. The details of the Bihar and Orissa Bill admittedly will need discussion, and are published for that purpose. The result, it may be hoped, will be to secure for Bihar and Orissa its full share in the general development of local administration which is not the least important of the progressive movements of the day in India.

### NEWS ITEMS

### IMPERIAL FORESTRY EDUCATION

The report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Imperial Forestry Education, including Mr. P.H. Clutterbuck, of the India Office, and Major Furse, of the Colonial Office, recommends that a central institution for training forest officers, in favour of which the British Empire Forestry Conference passed a resolution, should be located in Oxford and be incorporated with the University. The Governments of the United Kingdom, India, the Colonies, and Protectorates, should jointly guarantee a sum sufficient for normal requirements. It is anticipated that the annual cost will be lessened by the Dominion Governments sending probationers for a special course of research. The cost cannot be estimated at present, but the annual cost of the permanent staff should not exceed pound 4,000 at the commencement.

### FIRING ON THE MOB AT NAGPUR

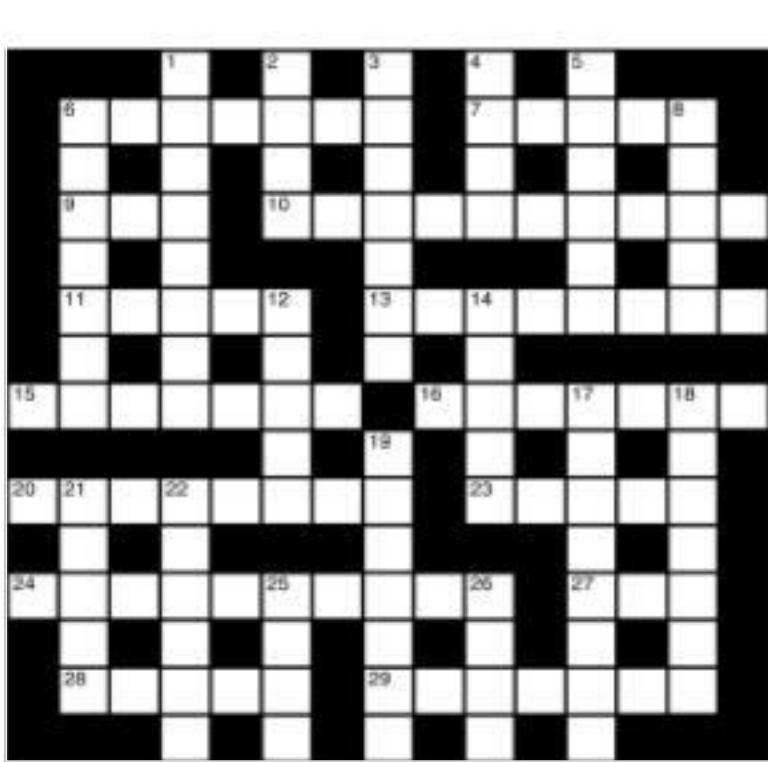
The committee enquiring into the circumstances under which firing occurred at Nagpur, examined today Gajananrao, formerly the city inspector, and at present the City Deputy Superintendent of Police. Witness corroborated the evidence given by Mr. Armitage and stated that he knew Udayaram who was one of the persons arrested that morning. He was a big gambler. Witness further stated that a rifle was taken away by the mob from the Tahsil treasury guard. A boy named Harischandra died of a gunshot wound near the Rajaram theatre. Attaulakhan, sub-inspector, stated that he could not explain the cause of the firing near the Rajaram Theatre as no mob was pursuing him and his party in that direction. The Committee rose for the day.

### THE WIDENING OF BENTINCK STREET

The Government of Bengal has sanctioned the plan for the widening of Bentinck Street with the modification that the road-line is made to follow the building line opposite the new Mercantile Buildings Nos. 1 and 2, Bentinck Street, and 12, Lal Bazar Street, on the east as already set back at the junction of Bentinck Street and Lal Bazar Street that the rest of the road line has been slightly shifted towards the west accordingly, and that the proposed public street No. XI as sanctioned by Government now crosses this alignment on the north of Metcalfe Street instead of at the junction of Mangoe Lane. The scheme for the Russa Road South extension has also been sanctioned.

### BRITISH AND INDIAN PEOPLES

The Times, in the course of a leading article on the Birdwood memorial lecture entitled, "The Common Service of the British and Indian peoples to the world," given by Sir Edward Grigg at the Royal Society of Arts on April 22, emphasises that it is to the mutual interests of Britain and India that the Indian nation should willingly seek to retain an abiding place within the British Empire. The Times endorses Sir Edward Grigg's sentiment that the inspiration of Indian policy must pass increasingly to the Indian mind, and thinks that future difficulties in the way of realising these ideals seem more likely and more prominent in Britain than in India. It says that the strangest transformation of the Indian problem is that while devoted British members of the Indian Civil Service need no conversion.





*The fresh Covid-19 wave and consequent local lockdowns may bring down the economic growth to less than 10 per cent in the current fiscal.*

S C GARG  
FORMER FINANCE SECRETARY

## THUMBNAILS

**NTPC invites EoI:** State-owned power giant NTPC has invited expression of interest (EoI) for the sale of desalinated water produced at its joint venture project NTECL Vallur in Tamil Nadu. NTECL is a 50:50 joint venture company formed between NTPC and Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Company Ltd (TANGEDCO). Vallur Thermal Power Station with a capacity of 1500 MW (3 Units of 500 MW) is the sole power plant of the NTECL, which is located in Vallur village of Ponnai Taluk, Tamil Nadu.

PTI

**HDFC Life profit:** Private life insurer HDFC Life Insurance reported a 2 per cent increase in its stand-alone profit after tax to Rs 318 crore in the quarter ended on 31 March 2021, compared to Rs 312 crore in the year-ago period. For the financial year 2020-21, the insurer's profit after tax grew by 5 per cent to Rs 1,360 crore from Rs 1,295 crore in FY'20. During the year, it sold about 9.8 lakh new individual policies registering a year-on-year growth of 10 per cent.

PTI

**SBI Cards profit:** SBI Cards and Payment Services on Monday reported a 110 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 175 crore for the quarter ended March 2021. The credit card company, promoted by the country's largest lender SBI, had posted a net profit of Rs 84 crore in the corresponding January-March period of the preceding fiscal year 2019-20. The company reported decline in revenue to Rs 2,309 crore during the fourth quarter as against Rs 2,433 crore in same period a year ago, it said in a regulatory filing.

PTI

**Tata Steel oxygen:** Tata Steel on Monday said it has increased its daily oxygen supply limit to 600 tons a day to health centres for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. On the directions of the steel ministry, steel plants in the country are supplying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to various states amid rising demand for the gas.

PTI

**New Hayabusa:** Suzuki Motorcycle India on Monday said it has launched the third generation version of its flagship sports bike Hayabusa in the country at a price of Rs 16.4 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). The all-new Hayabusa has been launched with a full model change for the first time in 13 years.

PTI

**5G smartphone:** Smartphone maker iQOO on Monday unveiled the iQOO 7 series of flagship smartphones in India. The iQOO 7 and the iQOO 7 Legend are the latest 5G performance flagship smartphones by iQOO in India, the company said in a Press statement. The iQOO 7 is priced at Rs 31,990 and the iQOO 7 Legend is priced at Rs 39,990, the Press statement added.

SNS

# Sensex soars 508 pts, rupee rises 28 paise

Investors snap up banking, consumption and energy stocks despite Covid worry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

**E**quity market benchmarks made a winning start to the week today as investors snapped up banking, consumption and energy stocks despite a grim situation on the Covid-19 front.

A rebounding rupee, which climbed 28 paise against the US dollar, added to the momentum, traders said.

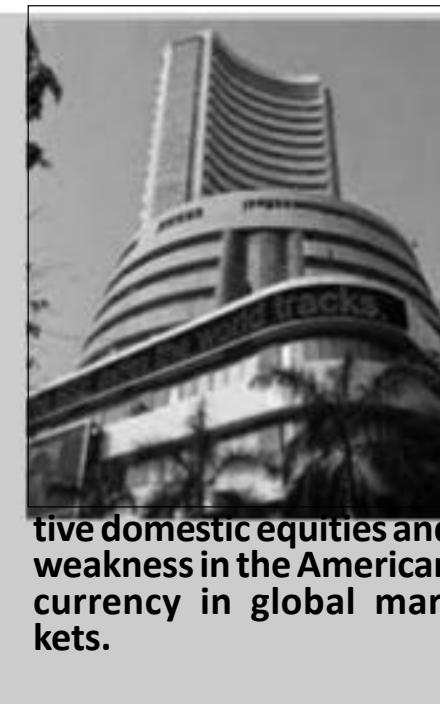
The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on the front foot and remained in the positive territory throughout the session, closing at 48,386.51 points, up 508.06 points or 1.06 per cent.

## MARKET WATCH

► The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on the front foot and remained in the positive territory throughout the session, closing at 48,386.51 points, up 508.06 points or 1.06 per cent.

► On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 143.65 points or 1 per cent to finish at 14,485 points.

► The rupee strengthened by 28 paise to close at 74.73 against the US dollar, supported by posi-



tive domestic equities and weakness in the American currency in global markets.

HUL, PowerGrid, Bajaj Auto and Reliance Industries were among the other prominent gainers.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 143.65 points or 1 per cent to finish at 14,485 points.

Axis Bank was the top performer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.40 per cent. ICICI Bank spurted 3.63 per cent after the company reported a nearly four-fold jump in March quarter consolidated profit over the weekend.

"Domestic equities shrugged off rising Covid-19 cases and rebounded mainly led by sharp recovery in finance," said Binod Modi, head strategy at Reliance Secu-

rities. Barring pharma, most of key sectoral indices traded in green. Strong March quarter performance led ICICI Bank to recover sharply, while HCL Technologies witnessed sell-off due to subdued 4Q performance, he added.

The market may remain volatile in the coming days as Covid cases continue to be high, with April F&O expiry and upcoming FOMC meeting being crucial events this week, said Vinod Nair, head of

Stock exchanges in Europe were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.74 per cent lower at USD 64.28 per barrel.

The rupee strengthened by 28 paise to close at 74.73 against the US dollar, supported by positive domestic equities and weakness in the American currency in global markets.

research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sectorally, the BSE realty, metal, basic materials, bankex, energy, consumer durables and finance indices rallied as much as 3.68 per cent, while healthcare ended in the red.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices spurted up to 0.88 per cent.

Global equities were mixed as investors digested corporate earnings amid steady progress in Covid-19 vaccination in many countries.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the red, while Tokyo and Seoul were in the positive terrain.

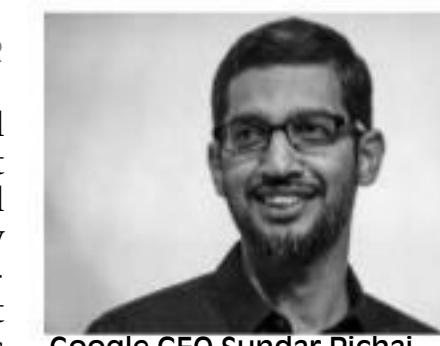
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# Covid crisis: Pichai, Nadella pledge support to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HOUSTON/WASHINGTON, 26 APR



Google CEO Sundar Pichai



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella

to host a CEO delegation meeting with secretary of state Tony Blinken, followed by an industry briefing on 27 April on India's Covid-19 crisis and how the business community can help.

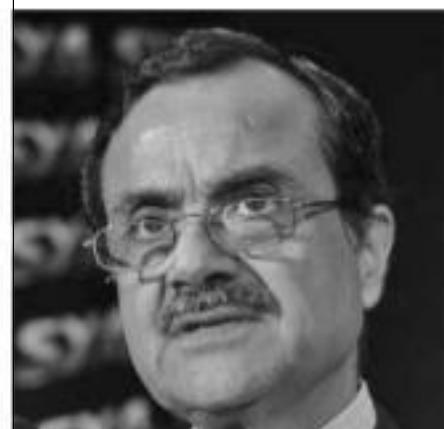
The US Chamber and Chamber Foundation has set up a Resources for India's Covid Crisis page, which lists urgently needed supplies and links to humanitarian organisations doing work on the ground.

"We are also working to set up a portal through which American companies can offer direct support and resources. Look out for more details shortly," Chambers said in an email to its members on Sunday.

In this crisis period, the US Chamber of Commerce and the larger business community are stepping up to help.

## Former Maruti MD Jagdish Khattar passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL



Former managing director of Maruti Suzuki India, Jagdish Khattar, passed away this morning following a cardiac arrest, according to people close to him.

Khattar (79), a former bureaucrat, was considered as one of the most high-profile leaders of the Indian automotive industry, laying the foundation for Maruti's future growth after the government began its disinvestment in 2002 and gradually exited from its joint venture with Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC).

Even as the government and the Japanese partner continued to squabble over various issues, including ownership and technology transfer, Khattar had also to deal with industrial relations issues when workers at the company's

next six years. He was promoted as joint managing director in 1999, a year that saw various disagreements between SMC and the government.

Recollecting his association, Bhatnagar said Khattar was doing "exceedingly well" as a bureaucrat before joining Maruti.

## Bank MD/CEO tenure capped at 15 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 26 APRIL



cooling period, the individual shall not be appointed or associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity, either directly or indirectly, the apex bank said.

## RBI DIRECTIVE

► Subject to the statutory approvals required from time to time, the post of the MD & CEO or WTD cannot be held by the same incumbent for more than 15 years, the RBI said.

These directives form part of the instructions issued by the RBI with regard to the chair and meetings of the board, composition of certain committees of the board, age, tenure and remuneration of directors, and appointment of the WTDs to.

The RBI said it would come out with a Master Direction on Corporate Governance in banks in due course.

"Subject to the statutory approvals required from time to time, the post of the MD & CEO or WTD cannot be held by the same incumbent for

more than 15 years. "Thereafter, the individual will be eligible for re-appointment as MD & CEO or WTD in the same bank, if considered necessary and desirable by the board, after a minimum gap of three years.

► During this three-year

cooling period, the individual shall not be appointed or associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity, either directly or indirectly, the apex bank said.

more than 15 years.

"Thereafter, the individual will be eligible for re-appointment as MD & CEO or WTD in the same bank, if considered necessary and desirable by the board, after a minimum gap of three years, subject to

meeting other conditions," the RBI said.

It added that during this three-year cooling period, the individual shall not be appointed or associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity, either directly or indirectly, the apex bank said.

This directive will not preclude him/her from being appointed as a director in another bank subject to meeting the requirements.

## Blackstone commits up to \$ 2.8 billion to buy controlling stake in Mphasis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

and the purchase consideration will vary between Rs 15,200 crore to Rs 21,000 crore (approximately \$2.2-2.8 billion), the statement said.

A different fund managed by Blackstone had acquired a controlling stake in Mphasis from Hewlett Packard Enterprise in September 2016, it added. At the end of March 2021 quarter, Marble II Pte Ltd, a fund managed by Blackstone, held 56.03 per cent stake in Mphasis.

Meanwhile, Mphasis in a regulatory filing said Marble II Pte Ltd ~ the existing promoter of the target company ~ will sell up to 1,04,799,577 equity shares as part of the share purchase agreement signed today.

This represents 55.31 per cent of the expanded voting share capital, it added.

"BCP Topco IX Pte Ltd

along with Blackstone Capital Partners Asia NQ LP and Blackstone Capital Partners (CYM) VIII AIV F LP.. have announced an open offer for acquisition of up to 49,263,203 fully paid-up equity shares... from the public shareholders of Mphasis Ltd, representing 26 per cent of the expanded voting share capital, at a price of Rs 1,677.16 per equity share," it said, adding that the total consideration for the buyback is about Rs 8,262 crore.

The expanded voting share capital refers to the total voting equity share capital of the target company on a fully diluted basis expected as of the 10th working day from the closure of the tendering period for the open offer.

This includes 2,368,949 outstanding employee stock options already vested as on date, exercisable into equal number of equity shares, the filing said.

There will be an additional 59,500 employee stock options that will be vested between the date of the public announcement and 31 August 2021, it added.

The sale is expected to complete in the coming months, subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals.

Mphasis is exceptionally well-positioned given a terrific management team, strong order backlog, long-term strategic customer base, deep domain expertise in financial services, and a world-class suite of cloud and digital offerings, Amit Dixit, co-head of Asia acquisitions and head of India for Blackstone Private Equity, said in the statement.

## Help desk to expedite custom clearance

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

In a bid to expedite smooth custom clearance, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has set up a dedicated help desk to handle queries related to covid related imports and handhold the trade, industry and individuals.

In a Press note, CBIC, the apex decision making body in customs matters, said it has been receiving queries and requests from various quarters. "These relate to availability of duty exemption benefits, to clearance procedures, registration requirements from various ministries etc. In order to streamline this process and cater to all the queries and grievances of the trade, a dedicated cell has been set up by the CBIC," reads the Press

## GDP growth forecast cut to 10.2%

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Global forecasting firm Oxford Economics today revised downwards its India GDP growth forecast for 2021 to 10.2 per cent from 11.8 per cent previously, citing the country's escalating health burden, faltering vaccination rate and lack of a convincing government strategy to contain the pandemic.

Oxford Economics also said that notwithstanding the likelihood of further mobility restrictions, it expects India's targeted lockdown approach, less stringent consumer and business behaviour to mitigate the economic impact of the second wave.

The global forecasting firm added it expects GDP to contract sequentially in the second quarter.

of natural gas in its energy basket from 6.2 per cent currently to 15 per cent by 2030, to help cut carbon emissions.

Domestic gas production of about 78 million metric standard cubic meter per day (mmscmd) meets just half of the demand. Helped by output from KG-D6 and 15 mmscmd of peak production planned from the adjacent KG-D5 block of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) will help domestic gas output reach 122 mmscmd in 2023-24.

Reliance-BP is developing three deep-water gas developments in block KG-D6 ~ R Cluster, Satellite Cluster and MJ ~ which together are expected to produce around 30 million standard cubic

metres per day of natural gas by 2023, meeting up to 15 per cent of India's gas demand.

The developments will each utilise the existing hub infrastructure in the KG-D6 block, the statement said.

Reliance is the operator of

the block with a 66.67 per cent participating interest and BP holds the remaining 33.33 per cent.

The Satellite Cluster is the second of the three developments to come onstream, following the start up of R Cluster

and MJ field. The Satellite Cluster will produce gas from four reservoirs utilising a total of five wells and is expected to reach gas production of up to 6 mmscmd. Together, the R Cluster and Satellite Cluster are expected to contribute to about 20 per

cent of India's current gas production," the statement said.

The third KG-D6 development, MJ, is expected to come onstream towards the latter half of 2022.

Reliance has so far made 19 gas discoveries in the KG-D6 block. Of these, D-1 and D-3 ~ the largest among the lot ~ were brought into production from April 2009 and MA, the only oilfield in the block was put into production in September 2008.

While the MA field stopped producing in 2019, the output from D-1 and D-3 ceased in February 2020.

Other discoveries have either been surrendered or taken away by the government for not meeting timelines for beginning production.

## Tech Mahindra buys US firm for \$44 million



*Lockdown only breaks the chain for a while and pushes the inevitable little further, it is not the solution*

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRADEEP KUMAR GYAWALI  
CLEARING THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT CONTEMPLATING NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN FOR NOW

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2021

09

# Myanmar activists call for non-cooperation campaign

A civil disobedience campaign of strikes crippled the economy, international aid agencies warned

AGENCIES

YANGON, 26 APRIL

**A**nti-coup activists on Monday called for people to stop paying their electricity bills and agricultural loans, and keep their children away from school, scorning the top general's pledge at a regional summit to end the post-coup crisis.

Scattered protests took place in Myanmar's big cities on Sunday, a day after Senior General Min Aung Hlaing reached an agreement at a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia.

The junta chief did not submit to calls for the release of political prisoners, including the leader of the ousted civilian government, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the ASEAN accord lacked any timeline for ending the crisis.



Activists hold placards and banners during a protest to support the anti-coup movement and democracy in Myanmar, near the ASEAN secretariat building in Jakarta. AGENCIES

An estimated 750 people have been killed by security forces, as Myanmar's generals unleashed lethal force in the face of sustained protests against their 1 February coup.

The agencies were unable to confirm the death toll, as the junta has significantly curbed media freedoms, and

many journalists have been detained.

A civil disobedience campaign of strikes has crippled the economy and raised the prospect of hunger, international aid agencies have warned.

Pro-democracy activists have called for an intensifi-

cation of their effort from Monday by refusing to pay electricity bills and agricultural loans, and for children to stop going to school.

"All of us, people in townships, wards and then regions and states must work together to make a successful boycott against the military junta," activist Khant Wai Phyoe said in a speech at a protest in the central town of Monywa on Sunday.

"We don't participate in their systems, we don't cooperate with them." A spokesman for the junta did not answer calls seeking comment.

Activists criticised a five-point agreement that came out of the ASEAN meeting, to end violence, start a dialogue among all parties, accept aid, and appoint a special ASEAN envoy who would be allowed to visit Myanmar. The agreement did not mention political prisoners although the

statement said the meeting heard calls for their release.

**Junta postpones Suu Kyi court date again:** Myanmar's junta again postponed court proceedings against deposed leader Suu Kyi on Monday her lawyers said, as they fight for permission to visit her 12 weeks after she was detained.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted the Nobel laureate in a 1 February coup, shunting the country back into junta rule after a brief experiment with democracy.

Large swathes of the population have taken to the streets in protest, with security forces unleashing a brutal campaign to quell the massive uprising. Meanwhile Suu Kyi has been under house arrest, with the junta charging her under six cases including for sedition and having unlicensed walkie-talkies.

# Pakistan prays for India amidst testing Covid times

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
ISLAMABAD, 26 APRIL

With the Covid-19 situation in India continuing to wreak havoc the neighbouring country, the people of Pakistan - politicians, journalists, and citizens are all praying, sending wishes and expressing genuine concerns for all Indians.

The second wave of Covid-19 outbreak is challenging the country's health infrastructure with devastation, struggle and suffering, bringing it under severe stress.

In these testing times, while the whole world is pouring in with prayers and best wishes for the people of India; through the weekend, #PakistanStandWithIndia and #IndianNeedOxygen remained as top trends on the social media platform Twitter as alarming numbers of positive cases of the novel coronavirus battered Indians.

Nuzhat Uthmani @NUthmani tweeted: It is heart warming after 70+ years of tensions to see the top trend in

#Pakistanis #PakistanStandWithIndia. Indeed humanity is our most important faith and what being good neighbours should be about. Praying for all our family in #India and #Pakistan #IndiaNeedsOxygen.

Asim Azhar @AsimAzharh: We, as a nation, pray for our neighbours India to recover from this difficult time. All our love & prayers. #PakistanStandWithIndia.

Soha @SohaHussain8: My heart is bleeding that our neighbouring country India is struggling with exponentially rising Covid-19 cases. During this month let's pray for those countries which are fighting Against Covid-19. Pray for India #IndianNeedOxygen / #PakistanStandWithIndia.

Social media has been flooded with vexing stories of Indians, suffering to the shortage of oxygen and medical facilities. Pakistan PM Imran Khan has expressed solidarity with the people of India, offering every kind of support in tough times.

China sends 1 million Covid vaccines again

ISLAMABAD, 26 APRIL

Pakistan has received another batch of one million doses of coronavirus vaccine from China to help it stem the spread of Covid-19 that has infected over 800,000 people and claimed more than 17,100 lives in the country.

Three planes of the Pakistan International Airlines airlifted from China the consignment of one million Chinese-developed Sinopharm vaccines on Sunday.

An additional two million doses of Covid-19 vaccines will also be transported from China by the national flag carrier on 29 April, said PIA Country Manager for China Qadir Bux Sangi. The new consignment arrives as Pakistan struggles to combat the third wave of the virus. PTI

## Thailand charges fine of up to \$640 for not wearing masks

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BANGKOK, 26 APRIL

Authorities in Thailand are imposing fines of up to 20,000 baht (\$640) for people who fail to wear face masks in public in 48 provinces, as the government struggles to cope with a new wave of coronavirus cases that is straining the medical system.

Bangkok, which has the largest number of cases, is also closing more than 30 types of businesses and services, including cinemas, parks, zoos, bars, pools and massage

## In heavy blow to Suga, Opposition wins all three parliamentary races

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
TOKYO, 26 APRIL

Candidates backed by the Opposition parties won all three parliamentary elections, the results showed on Monday, dealing with a severe blow to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

The outcomes of Sunday's races, the first since Suga was inaugurated in September, bode ill for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as the country prepares for a general election that must be held by this autumn, Yonhap

the Covid-19 pandemic and scandals in the LDP, which led to two of the three races.

"We humbly accept the voters' judgement. We would like to correct what needs to be corrected," Suga told reporters on Monday.

The election results were "very harsh," Hakubun Shimomura, who leads LDP's policy research council, told media.

Shimomura added the results showed people want the government to do a better job in responding to the pandemic.

## Indonesian brigadier general killed in 2-week Papua clash

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JAYAPURA, 26 APRIL

An Indonesian brigadier general was killed in an ongoing clash between security forces and a rebel group in restive Papua province, authorities said on Monday.

The clashes started 8 April in Indonesia's easternmost Papua province after rebels set fire to three schools and shot to death a teacher in Beoga village in Puncak district. Police, military and intelligence forces joined Operation Nemangkawi to

find the attackers, who authorities believe belong to the West Papua Liberation Army.

Rebels have been fighting a low-level insurgency since the early 1960s, when Indonesia annexed Papua, a former Dutch colony. Papua was formally incorporated into Indonesia in 1969 after a UN-sponsored ballot that was seen as a sham by many.

Papua's intelligence agency chief was shot in his head and died in a rebel ambush, said Col. Iqbal Alqudusy, the Operation Nemangkawi's spokesperson.

## Baghdad hospital blaze kills 82

BAGHDAD, 26 APRIL

The death toll from a huge fire that broke out in a hospital treating coronavirus patients in Baghdad rose to 82 killed and some 110 wounded, the Iraqi Interior Ministry said.

"The fire of Ibn al-Khatib Hospital resulted in the killing of 82 patients and health workers and the wounding of 110 others," Khalid al-Mahana, spokesman of the ministry, told the official Iraqiya channel on Sunday. "Many of the wounded are still in critical conditions," al-Mahana said.

The incident occurred late on Saturday night when several oxygen cylinders exploded, setting a huge fire at Ibn al-Khatib Hospital, which is dedicated to treating coronavirus patients on the eastern side of the capital, said a statement released by the country's civil defence, Xinhua news agency reported.

Civil defence teams and firefighting vehicles arrived at the scene to put out the fire and were able to prevent the fire from reaching the upper floors, the statement said.

They also rescued some 90 patients and health workers who were surrounded by flames in the building, it said. This comes hours after the country reported 6,967 new Covid cases, taking the national tally to 1,025,288. IANS

## Leaked recording of Iran's top diplomat offers blunt talk

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 26 APRIL

tape's authenticity.

He told journalists on Monday that the recording represented just a portion of a seven-hour interview Zarif gave to a well-known economist that was to be held for posterity by a think tank associated with the Iranian presidency.

Khatibzadeh called the release of the recording illegal and described it as selectively edited, though he and others did not offer opinions on how it became public.

The recordings also include Zarif offering criticism of Revolutionary Guard Gen Qassem Soleimani's separate relations with Russia as well.

After the leak became public, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh did not dispute the

## Covid: UAE lit up landmarks with tricolour to showcase support

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI, 26 APRIL

Prominent iconic buildings, including the Burj Khalifa, in the UAE were lit up with the tricolour to show solidarity with India as it grapples with a growing Covid-19 crisis.

India's total tally of Covid-19 cases has climbed to 1,73,13,163 while active cases have crossed the 28-lakh mark. The death toll increased to 1,95,123 with a record 2,812 new fatalities, as per the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) headquarters and the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa, in Dubai were lit up with the

colours of the Indian flag in solidarity with India as it responds to a second Covid-19 wave, the official WAM news agency reported.

"As #India battles the gruesome war against #COVID19, its friend #UAE sends its best wishes. Glowing star @BurjKhalifa in #Dubai lights up in Flag of India to showcase its support," Indian Embassy in

the UAE tweeted on Sunday.

The embassy also tweeted a video of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, displaying the Indian flag and #StayStrongIndia.

India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals in several states

are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

Pavan Kapoor, Ambassador of India to the UAE, tweeted, "India appreciates the UAE's strong support to its close friend in difficult times @MoFAICUA @UAEembassyIndia."

The ADNOC on the facade of its headquarters displayed the message "Stay strong, India" to highlight its support for one of the UAE's closest friends and most important trading partners, the report said.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, has affirmed his confidence in India's ability to overcome the challenge of the resurgence in Covid-19 cases.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

- 1 Terminate (3)
- 3 Perfumed (7)
- 5 Put hate (7)
- 9 Complete change in direction (1-4)
- 10 US vacation period (6,5)
- 12 Acquire (6)
- 14 Evening party (6)
- 16 Principal character (11)
- 19 Greek bread (5)
- 20 Wound dressing (7)
- 21 Underwater missile (7)
- 22 Day before (3)

**DOWN**

- 1 Heat-resistant material (8)
- 2 Very keen (5)
- 3 Surgeon's clothes (6)
- 4 Kind of perfume (3,2,7)
- 5 Lorry driver (7)
- 6 Animal excrement (4)
- 7 Give new energy to (12)
- 11 Lover of beauty (8)
- 13 Sons of betting advice (7)
- 15 Woody grass (6)
- 17 Furious (5)
- 18 Petty squabble (4)

**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**

**DOWN**

- 7 Brother-in-law,
- 12 Back and forth,
- 15 Oral,
- 16 Broccoli,
- 17 Ready,
- 18 Often,
- 19 Keto,
- 20 Temporal,
- 21 Roomy,
- 22 Gnaw.

**ACROSS**

- 1 Bill,
- 4 Baffle,
- 5 Perfume,
- 6 Broccoli,
- 7 Curtaing-riser,
- 9 Alderney,
- 10 Coot,
- 12 Dooce,
- 14 Baffle,
- 15 Oral,
- 16 Broccoli,
- 17 Ready,
- 18 Often,
- 19 Keto,
- 20 Temporal,
- 21 Roomy,
- 22 Gnaw.

**By arrangement with The Independent**

Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



I'LL TRY TO THINK OF SOMETHING



THE BUCK STOPS HERE



SOMETIMES WITH WORK AND FAMILY, IT'S HARD TO FIND THE RIGHT...



BALANCE



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09



Drip, drip, drip of allegations was damaging people's trust in politics

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION LABOUR PARTY KEIR STARMER

ON ALLEGATIONS OF CRONYISM AND ETHICAL BREACHES AGAINST UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON

## THUMBNAILS



Pakistan army troops patrol in a market to observe new restrictions announced by government for business community to control the spread of the coronavirus, in Lahore on Monday.

**EU to allow US tourists:** The European Union is finalising plans to allow tourists from the United States to travel to the 27-nation bloc this summer, officials said on Monday. More than a year after the EU restricted travel to the region to a bare minimum in a bid to contain the pandemic, the European Commission said it would make a recommendation to members to allow American travellers back.

**Autistic boy found dead:** An autistic 5-year-old boy was found dead in a Florida pond shortly after he was reported missing over the weekend. Investigators believe Mohamad Nour unlocked the front door and walked outside his home in Jacksonville early Sunday. Crews in a boat found the boy in the pond just before 11 a.m. on Sunday.

**Chinese-American man kicked:** A 61-year-old Chinese American man was attacked by a man who kicked him repeatedly in the head in East Harlem, police said. The man was collecting cans when he was attacked.

**US Supreme Court to take up right to carry gun for self-defense**

WASHINGTON, 26 APRIL

The Supreme Court agreed on Monday to hear an appeal to expand gun rights in the United States in a New York case over the right to carry a firearm in public for self-defense.

The case marks the court's first foray into gun rights since Justice Amy Coney Barrett came on board in October, making a 6-3 conservative majority. The justices said Monday they will review a lower-court ruling that upheld New York's restrictive gun permit law. The court's action follows mass shootings in recent weeks in Indiana, Georgia, Colorado and California. The case probably will be argued in the fall.

The court had turned down review of the issue in June, before Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death. New York is among eight states that limit who has the right to carry a weapon in public. The others are: California, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island. In the rest of the country, gun owners have little trouble legally carrying their weapons when they go out.

AP

# Britain to vaccinate all aged 44 yrs and above

Around half a million 44-year-old will receive a text message to get their jab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON, 26 APRIL

**E**veryone aged 44 and above in Britain will now be able to book their Covid-19 jab starting on Monday as the UK's National Health Service (NHS) vaccine programme expands further to more younger age groups.

Around half a million 44-year-olds will receive a text message inviting them to get their jab through the National Booking Service, with England's top doctor urging people to come forward for their jab when they are invited.

The move to the next age cohort in the vaccination programme comes alongside the latest NHS figures showing that more than two-thirds of people aged 45 to 49 have now been vaccinated as the programme moves through age and risk-based cohorts.

"Now that 95 per cent of all over 50s have had their first jab, and more than two-thirds of those aged 45-49, we are opening up vaccinations to 44-year olds," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"The biggest vaccination programme in NHS history has delivered 45.5 million doses so far across the UK, and we are on track to offer a jab to all adults by the end of July. I encourage everyone who is 44 to book an appointment to get the jab it will protect you and your loved ones, and help put this pandemic behind us," he said.

The NHS said the decision to move to the next group of people aged between 40 and 43 will be set out in the coming days with the NHS vaccinating in line with Joint Com-

mittee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice and as supply allows.

"Thanks to NHS staff, people aged 45-49 have been hot on the heels of millions of people most at risk who were quick to take up the offer of a vaccine with more than two thirds getting their lifesaving jab, marking another medically important milestone in the biggest vaccination campaign in NHS history," said Sir Simon Stevens, NHS England Chief Executive. "When the time comes, and you get that text, book an appointment to get your vaccine it is the best protection you and your loved ones will receive from this deadly virus," he said.

Since the UK's vaccination rollout began in December 2020, more than 28 million people have been vaccinated with a first dose in England, 63.8 per cent of the total population of adults aged over 18.

NHS staff have also carried out more than 10 million second doses and has been reminding people to attend their second dose to ensure they receive maximum protection. NHS Medical Director, Professor Stephen Powis, said: "It is testament to the hard work of NHS staff that we are now able to vaccinate people in the next age group. If you are aged 44, when you are invited to do so, please do book your jab as appointments become available it is simple, effective and provides vital protection against the coronavirus."

The NHS currently vaccinates against Covid-19 using three approved vaccines, Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Oxford/AstraZeneca. People who cannot go online can call

UK denies that Johnson said 'let the bodies pile high'

AGENCIES  
LONDON, 26 APRIL

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied on Monday saying he would rather bodies piled "high in their thousands" than order a third social and economic lockdown to stem coronavirus infections, as reported in a newspaper.

Johnson is facing a stream of allegations in newspapers about everything from his muddled initial handling of the Covid-19 crisis to questions over who financed the redecoration of his official apartment.

The *Daily Mail* newspaper cited unidentified sources as saying that, in October, shortly after agreeing to a second lockdown, Johnson told a meeting in Downing Street: "No more fucking lockdowns - let the bodies pile high in their thousands."

Asked whether he had made the remark, Johnson told broadcasters: "No, but again, I think the important thing, I think, that people want us to get on and do as a government is to make sure that the lockdowns work, and they have."

Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said

he was astonished to read the newspaper's report.

"If he did say those things, he's got to explain it," he told broadcasters.

Johnson did impose a third lockdown, in January, though critics say it could have been avoided had he yielded to pressure from senior ministers to make the second lockdown more stringent.

Last week Downing Street named Johnson's former chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, as the source of leaks against the PM. But Cummings denied he was the source and, in comments potentially damaging to the PM, cast Johnson as incompetent and lacking in integrity.

Cummings said Johnson had planned to have donors pay secretly for the renovation of his Downing Street apartment, adding that was "unethical, foolish, possibly illegal - and almost certainly broke the rules on proper disclosure of political donations". Defence Secretary Ben Wallace on Monday declined to confirm or deny if Johnson had been given an undeclared loan from political donors to pay for the renovation of the flat.

Students sit for the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) exams on Monday in Hong Kong. Temperature checks and social distancing measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19 have been put in place in the schools.

Vaccinations are now being administered at more than 1,600 sites across the country, including churches, mosques, temples, museums and rugby ground.

Australia to send oxygen, ventilators, PPE to India to fight Covid-19

MELBOURNE, 26 APRIL

Australia will send oxygen, ventilators and personal protective equipment to India as part of an immediate support package to the country which is battling with the latest surge of the Covid-19 cases, Health Minister Greg Hunt said on Monday.

The federal government was in the process of considering what it could send to help, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation news channel quoted Hunt as saying. "India is literally gasping for oxygen," the federal health minister said.

And while we can assist with the national medical stockpile, their particular request is for assistance with regards to the physical supply of oxygen. That will be one of the things we are looking at, in particular with the minister said.

The federal government also confirmed to *The Daily Mail* that it will continue through the summer a payments program that replaced school meals because the pandemic left many children with virtual classes.

Families of eligible children will receive \$6.82 per child for each weekday. That adds up to \$375 per child over the summer months.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called the summer benefits a first-of-its-kind, game-changing intervention to reduce child hunger in the United States.

The programme reflects the Biden administration's attempts to nearly stamp out child poverty an unprecedented push with money for parents, child care centers and schools that could revamp the social safety net. Conservative critics have warned that the spending, if made permanent, could undermine the willingness of poorer Americans to work.

Besides the food aid, parents will receive roughly \$250 a month starting in July for each child between the ages of 6 and 17. Qualifying families with a child under 6 would receive \$300 monthly.

The payments are part of an enhanced child tax credit that would expire at the end of this year, according to the terms of the most recent coronavirus relief package.

President Joe Biden plans to extend the monthly payments through 2025. The

# World

Biden expanding summer food programme for 34mn schoolchildren

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 26 APRIL

**It's time to prep for next pandemic: Harris to UN**

WASHINGTON, 26 APRIL

The Biden administration is expanding a programme to feed as many as 34 million schoolchildren during the summer months, using funds from the coronavirus relief package approved in March.

The Agriculture Department is announcing Monday that it will continue through the summer a payments program that replaced school meals because the pandemic left many children with virtual classes.

Families of eligible children will receive \$6.82 per child for each weekday. That adds up to \$375 per child over the summer months.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called the summer benefits a first-of-its-kind, game-changing intervention to reduce child hunger in the United States.

The programme reflects the Biden administration's attempts to nearly stamp out child poverty an unprecedented push with money for parents, child care centers and schools that could revamp the social safety net. Conservative critics have warned that the spending, if made permanent, could undermine the willingness of poorer Americans to work.

When the school year ends, children have traditionally shifted to other forms of food aid such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP. Yet administration officials said that summer feeding programs tend to reach less than 20 per cent of the number served during the school year.

Children could qualify for the new summer benefit if they are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year or if they are under age 6 and live in a SNAP household.

EU launches legal action against AstraZeneca

BRUSSELS, 26 APRIL

The European Union's executive branch said on Monday that it has launched legal action against coronavirus vaccine-maker AstraZeneca for failing to respect the terms of its contract.

The AstraZeneca vaccine has been central to Europe's immunisation campaign, and a linchpin in the global strategy to get vaccines to poorer countries. But the slow pace of deliveries has frustrated the Europeans and they have held the company responsible for partly delaying their vaccine rollout.

European Commission spokesman Stefan De Keersmaecker said that Brussels launched the legal action against AstraZeneca last Friday on the basis of breaches of the agreement.

He said the reason for the legal action was that some terms of the contract have not been respected and that the company has not been in a position to come up with a reliable strategy to ensure a timely delivery of doses.

AstraZeneca's contract with the EU, which was signed by the Commission, foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among member countries. The drugmaker had hoped to deliver 80 million doses of that in the first quarter of 2021, but only 30 million were sent.

## TESTING TIME



Students sit for the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) exams on Monday in Hong Kong. Temperature checks and social distancing measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19 have been put in place in the schools.

## Iranian-British woman gets another year in prison

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 26 APRIL

An Iranian-British woman long held in Tehran has been sentenced to another year in prison, her lawyer said Monday, drawing immediate criticism from Britain in the high-profile case that has prompted international condemnation of Iran.

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has already served a five-year prison sentence in the Islamic Republic. Her lawyer, Hojjat Kermani, told *The Associated Press* that she received

the second sentence on a charge of spreading propaganda against the system for participating in a protest in front of the Iranian Embassy in London in 2009.

State media in Iran did not immediately acknowledge the sentence. Her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, told the BBC the court's decision was a bad sign and clearly a negotiating tactic by the Iranian authorities. Her sentencing comes amid ongoing negotiations in Vienna over Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

British PM Boris Johnson immediately condemned the new sentence. "I don't think it is right at all that Nazanin should be sentenced to any more time in jail, he said. I think it is wrong that she is there in the first place and we will be working very hard to secure her release from Iran, her ability to return to her family here in the U.K., just as we work for all our dual national cases in Iran," Johnson added.

"The government will not stop, we will redouble our efforts, and we are working with our American friends on this issue as well. Johnson and his office declined to elaborate on that comment.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab bluntly called Iran's sentence a totally inhumane and wholly unjustified decision. We continue to call on Iran to release Nazanin immediately so she can return to her family in the U.K., he said in a statement.

The latest twist in Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case comes as Britain and Iran negotiate a long-running dispute over a debt of some 400 million pounds (USD 530 million) owed to Tehran by London.

# 'Nomadland' best picture at Oscars of many firsts and surprises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LOS ANGELES, 26 APRIL

It was a night of big wins for meditative road drama *Nomadland* which got the Oscar for best picture as well as best director for Chloe Zhao, the first woman of colour to get the coveted trophy, at the 93rd Academy Awards, a socially distanced event held in the shadow of the pandemic.

The film, about grief and finding connections outside the traditional structure of a family, also won Frances McDormand her third best actress Oscar after "Fargo" and "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" as well as a gong for producing.

The usual glitter that accom-

panies Hollywood's most starry night had dimmed but with women and people of colour creating history as the first-time winners, there was plenty to celebrate this year.

Veteran actor Anthony Hopkins, who did not attend the ceremony, won best actor Oscar for his performance as a man suffering from dementia in the relationship drama "The Father". The actor stars opposite Olivia Colman in the movie.

It was a surprise win for the actor as many expected the trophy to go to Chadwick Boseman for his turn in "May Rainey's Black Bottom".

The India connection came through with the Academy honouring actor Irrfan Khan and costume designer Bhanu Athaiya in

its 'Memoriam' segment. The night clearly belonged to Zhao and "Nomadland", a frontrunner for the awards from the beginning.

Zhao, who moved to the US from China as a teenager, is the first woman of colour and the only second woman after Kathryn Bigelow's 2010 win for "The Hurt Locker" to win the best director trophy.

This is for anyone who has the faith and the courage to hold on to the goodness in themselves and to hold on to the goodness in other no matter how difficult it is to do that, the 39-year-old director said in her acceptance speech.

Based on Jessica Bruder's book of the same name, "Nomadland" stars McDormand as Fern, a woman who, after the economic collapse of her company town in rural Nevada, packs her van and sets off on the road to explore a life outside of conventional society as a modern-day nomad.

The film's star and producer McDormand struck a chord with her speech in a year that has seen theatres remain shut as people across the globe struggled with the coronavirus pandemic.

"One day very, very soon, take everyone you know into a theatre, shoulder to shoulder, in that dark space, and watch every film that's represented here tonight," McDormand said in her speech.

Based on Jessica Bruder's book of the same name, "Nomadland" stars McDormand as Fern, a woman who, after the economic collapse of her company town in rural Nevada, packs her van and sets off on the road to explore a life outside of conventional society as a modern-day nomad.

The pandemic forced the Academy to delay its date and shift the ceremony to April even as the entertainment industry the world over grappled with shutdowns of theatres and productions.

In a break from tradition, the ceremony announced the best picture winner ahead of the best actress and actor winners.

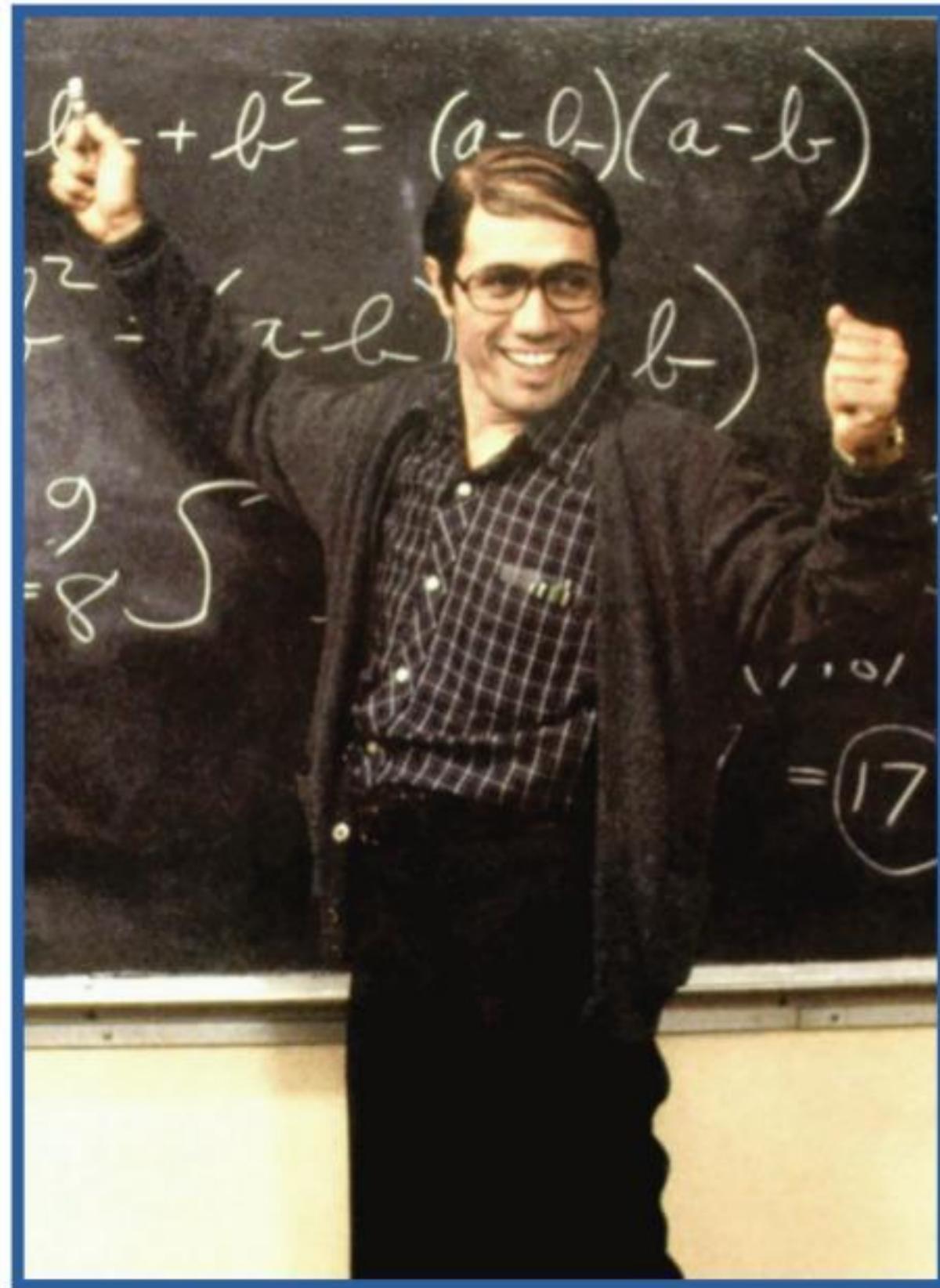
Daniel Kaluuya won best supporting actor for "Judas and the Black Messiah". The "Get Out" star was widely expected to walk away with the trophy for his impressive performance as the Black Panther leader Fred Hampton.

"You've got to celebrate life, man. We're breathing. We're walking. It's incredible," he said in his speech where he also thanked Hampton and his moth-

er. South Korea continued its glory run at the Oscars a year after "Parasite" with veteran star Yuh-Jung Youn winning best-supporting actress trophy for her role as a feisty grandmother in Lee Isaac Chung's film "Minari".

## Playing by the numbers

**The logical and critical thinking concepts learnt in a mathematics class can be applied to everyday life**



YOGESH MAKKAR

in mathematics only comes to those born as "math people" whereas fact is that mathematics pathways, like any other subject, develop in the brain through learning and practice. Improvement is needed on every level from teachers' and students' perspectives to teachers' instructional practice.

Another common misconception is that mathematics requires brilliance or raw intellectual talent. This myth has far-reaching consequences for many students' success, especially girls and those coming from ethnic minority backgrounds, because minorities and women are often stereotyped as lacking brilliance.

It must be highlighted that one of the most widely read books about mathematics comes from a woman named Shakuntala Devi, who belonged to a rural background. Another example is Raman Parimala, who is known for her contributions to algebra.

A few other misconceptions include only some students can grasp high-level mathematics; one needs to be able to calculate fast; it requires a lot of memorisation, and that a student is intelligent only if he or she is math-smart.

#### MATHEMATICS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

BUSTING MYTHS

The biggest myth is that success



The growing use of digital technology in educational contexts has become prominent in recent years. It is exciting to witness how the Internet is transforming mathematics in classroom and pedagogy. Educators are leveraging digital tools to effectively teach mathematical concepts and problems to students with the use of fun animations, enabling learners and teachers to explore complicated mathematical ideas in more tangible ways. The majority of the student and teacher fraternity has enthusiastically accepted this new model.

In the near future, one might see schools coming up with interactive and innovative ways of digital learning. When the suddenness of the pandemic put a thrust on e-learning, the focus was more on access to e-learning as technology without equity will not lead to effective education for all children. What began as a rescue from the crisis might become a new way of teaching and learning as educational institutions across the country are taking the situation as an opportunity to strengthen digital infrastructure.

#### KEEPING STUDENTS MOTIVATED

The most critical aspect of any curriculum and one of the most important ways to bust various myths

in students' minds is to motivate them to be receptive. Teachers must focus attention on both motivated as well as less interested students. Here are a few ways to keep them engaged and inspired:

#### Identifying the gaps

Educators must dramatically reveal to students the gap in their understanding. It is one of the most effective ways to motivate students, and it will capitalise on their desire to learn more. For instance, a teacher can break down complex exercises to students by backing them up with simple calculations from familiar situations.

#### Making it challenging with rewards

Students love challenges because it gives them enthusiasm and a competitive spirit. A challenge that ends with a reward can make any student apply their best. There is nothing better than learning to solve math problems based on real life situations, with a challenging spirit, rewarded by a bonus in the end. Precaution, however, is necessary to choose the challenge wisely. The problem must be in tandem with the student's ability to solve, leading to a helpful lesson.

#### Relevance in daily life

Teachers must focus on developing the interest of students in whatever they teach because the latter often wonder "Why am I learning this?", "Will it ever be useful to me?" etc. Therefore teachers must start a lesson only after assuring that there is a genuine interest among all present in class. The applications or issues chosen should be uncomplicated and brief.

#### Recreational mathematics

This involves games, puzzles, paradoxes, etc. These activities or devices trigger students' curiosity to solve and ultimately motivate and teach them specific topics. While choosing, however, one must ensure that the devices are concise and straightforward.

Indeed mathematics is a tricky subject but it is undoubtedly not a hard one. The logical and critical thinking concepts learned in a mathematics class can be applied to everyday life. It is up to teachers and educational institutions to make it enjoyable, bust the myths surrounding it, evolve the existing curriculum, and make it more practical and applicable in life.

The writer is founder, Kapdec, Uttar Pradesh

#### PLUS POINTS

##### Insightful event



Mahindra University organised the fourth edition of its TEDx conference recently. Held virtually, this year, the conference's theme was "Alt+F4" – a commonly used keyboard shortcut to close a currently active process, freeing up space to start another process or restart the process anew. The idea was to learn from speakers on how to break stereotypes, look for fresh perspectives and alternate solutions in professional and personal lives.

This year, there were five prominent speakers at the event from diverse segments of society and each brought a different perspective to the meet. Monojit Choudhury, principal researcher, Microsoft Research Labs spoke about research and how to overcome obstacles that come in the way of researchers.

##### EU meet



A delegation of the European Union hosted a virtual discussion with Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee recently on the theme, "EU-India cooperation in climate and energy". The online event, held as part of the EU day series, put a spotlight on the joint initiatives with India in the area of climate action, clean energy transition, biodiversity including policy dialogues, and the role of innovation. European climate and energy policies, including the EU recovery package, Next Generation EU, the European Green Deal, and research and innovation initiatives were also discussed.

Delivering the keynote address, Ugo Astuto, EU ambassador to India highlighted the EU green recovery agenda, the central role of the European Green Deal and the importance of the EU and India working together in the area of climate change, biodiversity and circular economy.

##### Digital conclave



JK Business School recently organised its human resource conclave virtually. The theme was "The Future Workforce Reset 2021 and Beyond". The mega conclave saw participation by more than 500 eminent corporate personalities, industry, academia and student community. Bridging the gap between industry and academia, the conclave gave students an opportunity to gain industry insights from renowned dignitaries and their views on the current trends.

The conclave was inaugurated with director Sanjiv Marwah's speech. The event witnessed an open discussion on the theme between speakers and HR heads of various companies in search of the right strategies to embrace the new normal and future of work.

##### Medical fellowship



The Institute of Laser and Aesthetic Medicine announced the launch of its one-year fellowship in aesthetic and anti-aging medicine programme. This flagship programme is in collaboration with University Medicine Greifswald, Germany. Applicants should have a recognised medical degree from any university/traineeship or specialised degree in dermatology. This one-year fellowship is also approved and endorsed by the Indian Society of Aesthetic Medicine and The Plastic Surgery Centre of Western New York.

The programme will give a chance to all budding doctors and physicians to master the discipline with hands-on training on live patients under international faculty supervision. For details visit, [www.ilamed.org](http://www.ilamed.org)

## CATCHING YOUR ATTENTION

**As the marketing industry is transforming rapidly, graphic designers are emphasising on the needs of customers with the help of aesthetics**

#### DHARMENDRA AHUJA

Last year was a period of evolution for all business industries. With consumer behaviour making a radical shift, the graphic designing industry is embarking on exploring the emerging trends and new styles to empower digital brand experiences. The new developments in graphic designing are focused more on brand aesthetics, earning customer attention and unlocking exponential outcomes.

The world of marketing is transforming at a fast pace and has forced brands to adopt conversational marketing strategies to connect with customers. As a result, it makes creative design agencies develop a socially conscious design and emphasise the needs of customers in the form of aesthetics.

Though the industry is witnessing fluctuating movements, there are a few dominant trends that are going to stay.

#### EASY DATA VISUALISATION

Data drives digitalisation – the brands looking to acquire and retain a huge customer base capitalise on customer data points to make a thriving business. To make it easy for customers to consume branded content, creative designing agencies are harnessing the act of easy data visualisation. The present need of using different forms of data in a visually appealing yet concise manner has increased the demand for graphic designers who can blend the art of storytelling with technical analysis. This trend is predicted to stay for long



as human brains are more wired to the visual representation of data than textual content.

#### MUTED COLOUR PALETTES

Picking an ideal colour scheme for a brand is the most essential yet challenging task for a creative design agency. It plays a crucial role in bringing ideas to life. The ongoing wave of muted colour and duotone in brand designing is going to captivate the minds of customers. The muted colour tones are known as one of the easiest ways to give designs a fresh look.

On the other hand, duotone replaces the role of using a black and white combination. Though the trend of vibrant and dark colours is not



going to disappear completely, there will be an increased focus on muted colour palettes. Creative designers will leverage the art of using these colour tones to give a natural and organic vibe to the brand.

#### GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Geometric shapes always bring a sharp and modern look to the design. They are known to be one of the most strategic elements that make it easy for brands to draw the eyes of consumers to exactly where it wants them. Since geometric designs can easily go with any colour scheme, whether monotone, duotone or a muted colour palette, it makes the overall design eye-catching and impactful. The trend of using clean

lines and shapes is steadily becoming dominant and futuristic with graphic designers widely seen using flowing and abstract shapes.

#### FLAT ICONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

A lot of creative design agencies are using flat icons and illustrations as a standard choice of design elements. Flat designs, in simple terms known as two-dimensional designs, help the brand to communicate information in a minimalist and simple manner. Many proficient graphic designers hired by digitally active brands consider flat icons and illustrations as a powerful tool of communication. These elements are predicted to attract the attention of brands that look for simple designs to communicate complex meanings creatively and in fewer words.

#### BLUR AND GRAIN

One of the most popular trends of 2020 was the innovative use of gradients. This year, creative designers have started putting emphasis on popping out text on a background. That's where blur and grain come into the picture. This trend has picked up in the market due to the widespread use of social media by brands. The effect of blur and grain creates unique shadows and visual textures. It keeps the design fresh and makes the target audience spend more time on the brand's promotional channels. This is going to be a futuristic trend in graphic designing as it allows the creative designer to play with different elements and get eyeballs.

The graphic designing industry is witnessing unprecedented growth. Technology is moving forward and brands are more open to experimenting with their platforms by diversely aligning with customers' needs and desires. Inclination towards using minimalist design blended with the aforementioned trends are going to lead the industry and drive customer engagement.

The writer is founder and chief executive officer, PitchWorx, Haryana



## IRISH IRE

Ireland Prime Minister Micheal Martin (photo, left) has said Uefa was "out of order" over its insistence fans must attend Euro 2020 matches, which led European football's ruling body to drop Dublin as a host city. The Irish capital and Bilbao in Spain won't host matches in the delayed competition.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Top tier:** Chennai Super Kings have replaced Royal Challengers Bangalore at the top of the Indian Premier League standings. Delhi Capitals' Shikhar Dhawan and RCB's Harshal Patel headed the lists for the Orange cap and Purple cap aspirants, respectively.

**Nadal's triumph:** Rafael Nadal saved a championship point to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday and claim a 12th Barcelona Open title in the men's Tour's longest match of 2021. The Spaniard secured his first title of the year and the 87th of his career.

**Andrescu out:** Canadian tennis star Bianca Andreescu will miss the Madrid Open, having tested positive for Covid-19 after arriving in Spain. "After testing negative twice before my flight to Madrid, I was sadly informed that I had tested positive upon arrival," she tweeted.

**Pandemic record:** More than 78,000 Australian Rules football fans crowded the Melbourne Cricket Ground for an Australian Football League match between Collingwood and Essendon, the biggest crowd for a sport event since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

**Leipzig win:** Leipzig kept Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich waiting for their title with a 2-0 win over 10-man Stuttgart. Leipzig's task was made easier early on when Stuttgart's Naouiro Ahamada was sent off for a studs-up challenge on Amadou Haidara on Sunday.

**Juventus struggle:** A loss at home to promoted Benfica, a draw with Torino, another defeat at Atalanta and now a 1-1 draw at relegation-threatened Fiorentina. There's been nothing "super" over the past six rounds from defending Serie A champions Juventus.

**Lille's lead:** Lille showed why they were French title contenders to be reckoned with after coming back from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at rival Lyon, reclaiming first place from Paris Saint-Germain by one point with four games left in really a very thrilling race.

**Late equaliser:** Keinan Davis pushed West Bromwich Albion closer to the drop from the Premier League after his late equaliser denied the Baggies a derby win at Aston Villa. The goal earned Villa a 2-2 draw to stop West Brom from claiming a priceless victory.

**League Cup:** A rare goal from Aymeric Laporte produced a familiar outcome: Manchester City winning the League Cup. For the fourth successive season, Pep Guardiola's side triumphed in the final of the competition on Sunday with a 1-0 victory over Tottenham.

**Early goals:** Barcelona took over as Atletico Madrid's challengers for the title on Sunday as Antoine Griezmann scored a quick-fire double in a 2-1 win away at Villarreal in La Liga. Three early goals in seven minutes saw Villarreal take the lead and then throw it away.

**Golf feat:** Playing over the course of the Royal Calcutta Golf Club on 18 April, 2021, Jitendra Khaitan holed out in one stroke at the second hole (150 yards), according to a press release from the RCCG received for dissemination on Monday.

**Bowling meet:** A tenpin bowling tournament which ended on 25 April in Kolkata featured neck-and-neck fights, with the final going on till the last frame. Roshan Goenka, playing very competently, won it 371-354 to win it against Abhijit Das, who finished as runner-up.

www.thestatesman.com

## I told Rishabh that I too can bowl the Super Over, reveals Axar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHENNAI, 26 APRIL

We thought initially that we could go with a pacer since they will be sending a left-right combination.

"After that, just when we were going to the ground, I thought, even a spinner could be effective. So I told Rishabh 'Even I can bowl, think about it.' So he spoke to (coach) Ricky Ponting and it was decided at the last moment that I will bowl."

The move paid off handsomely as Axar used his variations to deadly effect.

Axar, who joined the DC camp only three days prior to their match against SRH after recovering from COVID-19, also bowled beautifully in the regulation match and returned excellent figures of 2/26 in his quota of four overs.

"When I was in the dressing room, I knew that the pitch would assist spinners," Axar said of the challenging Chepauk track.

"When we went down, there were a lot of discussions.

A few sessions with the team and he was raring to go.



"I was ready from my end," he said when asked about returning to the playing XI.

"The team management asked me how I am feeling after (recovering from) COVID. You know your body better. I had done four sessions already.

"On Chennai's wicket, the ball has been coming slow and turning. I told the manager-

ment that I'm match fit, so they told me that if I'm ready I will play straight away," the left-arm spinner added.

He thanked his teammates and said they trusted him more than the spinner himself. "I was nervous before the game, but once I did some warm-up sessions with the team, I was fine.

"I was emotional to be amongst my close friends and teammates again since I was back in action after being in quarantine for 20 days, but everyone backed me to do well, and they trusted me even more than I trusted myself."

The fact that Axar was coming off a terrific outing in his debut Test series against England must have added to his confidence heading into the lucrative league.

"I was bowling well even

before COVID -- in the Tests as well as the T20s," he said.

"I was carrying that confidence. I wasn't thinking too much about COVID... obviously, it was a frustrating phase."

The spin bowling all-rounder expressed that the Delhi Capitals, who defeated Mumbai Indians in their last match, couldn't have asked for a better outing in Chennai. "We won two out of two matches in Chennai, so we couldn't have put in a better performance at this venue. And when a close match falls in the team's favour, then the team's confidence gets a major boost.

"We haven't discussed about our plans for the Ahmedabad leg yet. We are taking one match at a time and staying in the present as much as possible."

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## Cricketers scared but board won't let up



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

**A**xiety pierced through IPL's bio-secure bubble on Monday with leading Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and some Australian players withdrawing from the league amid the escalating COVID-19 crisis in India even as the BCCI insisted that the glitz league will go on.

The 34-year-old Ashwin, competing for Delhi Capitals, decided to take a break saying that his family is currently "putting up a fight against COVID-19" and he wants to support them. He hopes to return to the side if things go in the right direction.

However, Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals) and the duo of Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) withdrew as apprehension set in after a couple of weeks went by smoothly for the league being held in front of empty stands across six venues.

While Zampa and Richardson have not yet spoken about their "personal reasons" for leaving, Tye said he feared getting locked out of his own country owing to mounting quarantine cases from India in his hometown Perth.

The 34-year-old Tye had also not got a game with the Royals so far and his contract with the franchise was worth Rs one crore.

India is recording over 3 lakh daily cases for the past few days and the health infrastructure is struggling to han-

"I just thought to try and get on the front foot and get home before I got locked out of the country...think I've had 11 days at home out of the bubble since August, so for me I just wanted to get home," Tye told SEN Radio from Doha, the transit point before his flight to Perth.

The BCCI, on its part, insisted that the event will continue and it wouldn't come in the way of those wanting to leave.

"As of now, IPL is going ahead. Obviously, if anyone wants to leave, that's perfectly fine," a senior Board official said on conditions of anonymity.

While Zampa and Richardson were bought for Rs 1.5 crore, RCB spent Rs 4 crore to buy pacer Richardson at the players' auction.

Richardson featured in one match for RCB, returning figures of 1 for 29 in three overs against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, but Zampa couldn't make it to the play-off across six venues.

The 34-year-old Tye had also not got a game with the Royals so far and his contract with the franchise was worth Rs one crore.

India is recording over 3 lakh daily cases for the past few days and the health infrastructure is struggling to han-

dle the rise with shortage of oxygen and some crucial medicines adding to the crisis.

Kolkata Knight Riders' mentor David Hussey acknowledged that Australians in the IPL are a "bit nervous" about getting back home in the wake of the situation here.

"Everyone is sort of a bit nervous about whether they can get back into Australia. I daresay there will be a few other Australians a bit nervous about getting back into Australia," Hussey, a former Australian international, told the Sydney Morning Herald.

However, not all Australians are willing to leave.

Kolkata Knight Riders' Rs 15 crore buy Pat Cummins said he has been advised that the Indian government views the league as a welcome distraction from the gloom. He also donated USD 50,000 to the PM CARES Funds to help oxygen supplies in hospitals.

Another pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile, who has a Rs 5 crore deal with Mumbai Indians, would rather be in the bio-bubble than risk a trip back home at this point.

"I feel like it's safer for me to stay in the bubble than try and get home at the moment," he told cricket.com.au.

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting said he is aware of the

"grim" situation outside the IPL bio-bubble but would want the league to continue for it is a welcome escape for a few hours.

Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association also issued a joint statement on Monday, saying that they are monitoring the situation.

"Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association remain in regular contact with Australian players, coaches and commentators taking part in the Indian Premier League, which is being conducted under strict bio-security protocols," the two bodies said.

"We will continue to listen to feedback from those on the ground in India and the advice of the Australian Government. Our thoughts are with the people of India at this difficult time."

Several England and New Zealand players are also competing in the event but haven't spoken about their concerns. "We continue to monitor and work with the players on an individual basis. Our thoughts are with the people of India during these difficult times," a spokesperson of the England and Wales Cricket Board said.

The players from New Zealand, including stars such

Kane Williamson and Trent Boult, are expected to leave early in any case as they have a Test series against England starting June. They will have to head back in last week of May to be available for it because of quarantine rules.

The IPL final is scheduled to be held on May 30 in Ahmedabad.

Australia, it learnt, might arrange a chartered flight for its IPL cricketers once their engagement is over.

As many as 14 Australian players now remain in the event, including stars such as Steve Smith (DC), David Warner (Sunrisers Hyderabad) and Pat Cummins (Kolkata Knight Riders), as well as coaches Ricky Ponting and Simon Katich (RCB).

Commentators Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee, Michael Slater and Lisa Stalekar are also among the Australians involved with the league right now.

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals' South African bowling all-rounder Chris Morris, who is the costliest player in the IPL, had spoken about how the COVID situation in India has become a talking point in the team meetings.

"It is quite difficult to comprehend what is happening," he said at a recent press conference.

## Brilliant bowling display by KKR restricts Punjab Kings to 123/9

AGENCIES  
AHMEDABAD, 26 APRIL

(2/31) and Prasidh Krishna (3/30) tightened the noose sharing five wickets between them at the death.

The pace troika removed the top three KL Rahul (19), Chris Gayle (0) and Deepak Hooda (1) in space of 12 balls for six runs to leave PBKS in a disarray in the first 10 overs.

On a pitch where ball stayed low and gripped a bit, the Punjab Kings batsmen failed to apply themselves with Sunil Narine (2/22) and Varun Chakravarthy (1/24) further denting the middle overs as well as back-end.

Prasidh has the best figures as he ended Chris Jordan's 18-ball 30 cameo which took

the total past 120-run mark.

Mavi capped a fine opening spell off four overs dismissing Chris Gayle for a golden duck with the Universe Boss' taking a bottom edge.

Bowling with the new ball, the youngster was superb in the Powerplay, conceding just nine runs from his three overs, never allowing the two star Punjab openers, Mayank Agarwal and KL Rahul, to express themselves.

The pressure was evident on Rahul when he perished after trying to break free against Cummins in the final over of Powerplay.

The dangerous Deepak Hooda (1) got out courtesy a

stunning low catch by Eoin Morgan as Punjab had a terrible start losing three wickets in 12 balls for six runs.

## SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS INNINGS			
KL Rahul (c) M	b Cummins	19	
M Agarwal c Tripathi b Narine	31		
C Gayle c Karthik b Mavi	0		
D Hooda c Morgan b P Krishna	1		
N Pooran b Varun	19		
M Henriques b Narine	2		
S Khan c Morgan b P Krishna	13		
C Jordan b P Krishna	30		
R Bishnoi c Morgan b Cummins	1		
Arshdeep Singh not out	1		
Extras: (lb 1, w 4)	5		
TOTAL: (20 Ov, RR: 6.15)	123/9		
BOWLING: S Mavi	4/0, 13, 1		
Pat Cummins 3/31, 2	4, 0, 22, 2		
P Krishna	4, 0, 30, 3		

given us a fresh perspective in our preparations for the Olympic Games," said Prasad.

The Indian hockey team's recent tours of Europe and Argentina have given the side a fresh perspective during their preparations for the Olympics, says young mid-fielder Vivek Sagar Prasad.

India toured Argentina in March and Europe in February where they played against Germany and Britain. India registered 3-2 and 3-0 wins against reigning Olympic champions Argentina in Hockey Pro League matches and also had 4-3, 4-2, 0-1 and 4-2 results in practice matches against the home team.

"These tours against have

what had made the difference in their recent successful outings. "We focused on fitness, setting up good a connection between the midfield and the forward line, as well as maintaining momentum till the last quarter. All these things helped us improve our performance. We created different scenarios in training and didn't let the fact that we weren't getting any competition because of the pandemic affect our morale or rhythm," he said.

Having undergone the mandatory quarantine after their return from Argentina, the core group will focus on their goals for the Olympics now.

## It's Delhi Capitals vs Royal Challengers Bangalore now