# THE ASIAN AGE

**NEW DELHI THURSDAY 22 APRIL 2021** 

NATION 4

IAF Chief R.K.S. Bhadauria flags off 4 Rafale jets for India from French airbase



SPORT 8

CSK's Faf du Plessis hits 95 to help him team reach 220/3, win by 18 runs against KKR

TABLOID 16

Despite corona crisis in country, Salman's Radhe will be released on Eid

**Shocking tragedy at Nashik hospital** 



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Actor Tom Cruise waves to onlookers as he walks to the filmset of his latest project in the sidings of the railway station in the village of Levisham in the North York Moors, England, on Tuesday.

#### **Militants abduct 3 ONGC staffers** from Assam rig

Guwahati/New Delhi: Five Wednesday abducted three employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation from a rig site in Assam using a company vehicle driven by a driver employed by the firm. The militants, suspected to be belonging to the banned Ulfa(I) group, later abandoned the vehicle and its driver near Nimonagarh jungle close to the Assam-Nagaland border, an ONGC official said.

More on Page 4

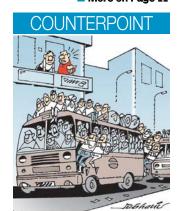
#### **Japanese PM Suga** cancels India visit

New Delhi: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has reportedly cancelled plans to visit India at the end of this month due to the Covid surge both in India and at home, reports from Japan said on Wednesday morning. He was to visit in April end.

#### **Queen is 95, thanks**

world for support

London: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II thanked people around the world for their messages of support and kindness as she marked a low-key 95th birthday on Wednesday, days after husband Prince Philip's funeral She said that the tributes paid to her husband from across the UK and Commonwealth were comforting. ■ More on Page 11



Not guest workers, they are voters being taken to an election rally!



Max: 34°C Min: 22°C **RH:** 30%

Rain: 0% Forecast: Sunny

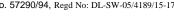
#### ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Dasami till 11.30 pm Star: Ashlesha till 8.11 am **Varjyam:** 7.55 pm to 9.29 pm **Durmuhurtam:** 10.09 am to 10.59 am; 3.10 pm to

Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.51 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.47 AM** MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.48 PM

**MOONSET TODAY 2.43 AM** 



#### ■ Centre gives more oxygen to Delhi, other states as supplies run out

# 'Triple mutant' new worry amid exploding cases: nearly 3L/day

VINEETA PANDEY NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

With fresh single-day Covid-19 cases touching almost three lakhs on Wednesday and deaths over 2,000 in the past 24 hours, India is almost exploding with the virus load with the biggest single-day spike so far. Adding to the worry is the "triple mutation" variant in the country that is increasing the infection rate, leading to the huge spike in fresh cases.

With the majority of states and Union territories, including Delhi, swiftly running out of oxygen supplies, the Centre has increased Delhi's quota of medical oxygen from 378 MT daily to 480 MT. However, Delhi has been demanding a hike in this quota to 700 MT per day. A controversy has, meanwhile, erupted when Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia alleged that a Haryana government official had stopped the supply of medical oxygen to Delhi from a plant in Faridabad. He alleged that a similar incident

**Covishield to** 

cost ₹400 for

govt; ₹600 at

pvt hospitals

New Delhi, April 21:

Serum Institute of India's Covishield vac-

cine will cost private

hospitals ₹600 per dose

and state governments

₹400, a rate which will

also apply to central gov-

ernment procurement

once the existing con-

tract for ₹150 a dose

ends, its chief executive

The world's largest

announced pricing of

AstraZeneca shots it manufactures at its Pune facility, following

the government decision

to open up inoculation to

all citizens above 18

cent of our capacities

will be served to the Government of India's

vaccination program,

and the remaining 50 per

cent of the capacity will

be for the state govern-

ments and private hospitals," the Serum

Institute of India (SII)

With government giv-

ing manufacturers and

importers pricing freedom, SII said Covishield

vaccines will be priced at

₹400 per dose for state

governments and ₹600 for

private hospitals. — PTI More on Page 3

said in a statement.

'Going ahead, 50 per

maker

said on Wednesday.

vaccine

years of age.



hero Spiderman, sanitises the area around Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus during the lockdown in

Mumbai on Wednesday. took place in Uttar Pradesh too on Tuesday, leading to a crisis in some hospitals in Delhi. Mr Sisodia, however, clarified that the situation was normal now and the oxygen supply had been restored by both states, though Haryana health minister Anil Vij was not very happy with the situa-

"We are being forced to give our oxygen to Delhi. First, we will complete our needs, then give to others. Yesterday, one of increase" in demand for medical oxygen, a critical

Chanchal/Harirampur/Bal

**urghat (WB), April 21:** West Bengal chief minister

Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday sharpened her

attack on the Prime Minister

over the resurgence of Covid-19, terming it a "Modi-made

disaster" and demanded that

he quit if unable to provide adequate medical supplies to

combat the disease. West

Bengal will vote in the sixth

phase of the Assembly elec-

tions on Thursday, when 43 constituencies will go to the

our oxygen tankers that was going to Faridabad was looted by the Delhi government. From now, I have ordered police protection for all tankers," Mr Vij said. In Delhi, the police had to be used to clear road blockages for faster movement of lifesaving oxygen tankers.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman held discussions with 150 industry leaders on how to meet the "phenomenal

Mamata: Covid-19 surge is a

'Modi-manufactured disaster'

43 constituencies set to vote in West Bengal's 6th phase today

Mamata Banerjee during

polls, with 306 candidates in

the fray. She alleged that 65 per cent

a rally at Balurghat on

Wednesday.

17/2W

Amid an acute oxygen shortage in the midst of the Covid-19 surge, the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi and the BJP-led government in Haryana accused each other of 'stealing' oxygen supply by stopping and confiscating vehicles bound for various hospitals treating Covid patients.

treatment tool for Covid-19, and assured a "seamless supply" to all states. Measures that the government is taking include import of medical oxygen, round the clock working of the oxygen filling stations and allowing containers used for nitrogen and argon to be used for oxygen, the finance minis-

ter said.
The finance minister also gave details of the government's initiatives to help ramp up the capacity of Remdesivir from 36 lakh vials per month to 78 lakh vials per month. Some of the measures include rapid clearances for new capacities, stop-

of the drugs manufactured

in the country for tackling the pandemic have already been exported. "The Covid-

19 pandemic had subsided in

the country but has surged

in a second wave owing to

the monumental failure of

PAGE 4

Left looks to youth

to stay relevant in

central

**West Bengal** 

Turn to Page 4

#### summit today, Xi will join too AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

**PM to speak at** 

**Biden's climate** 

Prime Narendra Modi will participate in the Leaders' Summit on Climate hosted virtually by US President Joe Biden on Thursday. Mr Modi will speak on the first day of the two-day summit. with his remarks scheduled between 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm IST Thursday. Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is among the 40 leaders invited to participate, will also be speaking on Thursday.
"Nearly 40 world leaders are participating in the summit. They will represent countries which are members of the Major Economies Forum, and those vulnerable to climate change, among others. They will exchange views on climate change and enhancing climate actions," the MEA said.

More on Page 4

# patients died due to the leakage. 24 die as oxygen cut amid tank leak at Nashik hospital

CM orders probe, ₹5L to victims' kin

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, APRIL 21

A worker welds a pipe to stop the leakage of medical oxygen gas from a storage unit, which led to an interruption in the supply of oxygen to Covid-19 patients at Zakir Hussain Municipal Hospital in Nashik on Wednesday. At least 24 Covid-19 postive

In a shocking incident, 24 Covid positive patients died at a municipal hospital in Nashik on Wednesday as the oxygen supply was interrupted following massive leakage from an oxygen tanker. The state government ordered a high-level inquiry and chief minister Uddhav Thackeray announced ₹5 lakh compensation each to the heir of the deceased.

According to sources, the tragic incident took place at around 12 pm, when substantial leakage from an oxygen tank caused disruption in oxygen supply for close to 30 minutes, which allegedly caused the deaths of several patients who were on oxygen support. A fire brigade team was called to

took place at around 12 pm, when substantial leakage from an oxygen tank caused disruption in oxygen supply for close to 30 minutes, which allegedly caused the deaths of several patients who were on oxygen support

THE TRAGIC INCIDENT

the incident spot to contain the leak.

All the victims were on ventilators and in need of constant oxygen supply. Zakir Hussain Hospital is a Covid-dedicated facility. Around 150 patients were either oxygen-dependent

or on ventilators. Panic struck patients and their family members as the oxygen supply was stopped. Heart wrenching visuals showed families trying to help the patients as they gasped for breath.

Turn to Page 4

#### **China to India: Keep focus on** broad ties, not border dispute

**Beijing, April 21:** China said on Wednesday that it was committed to maintain peace and stability along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as it urged India to put the boundary issue at an "appropriate position" and meet it "halfway" for the long term development of the

bilateral ties.
Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said this at his media briefing as he parried questions on India's assertion that consensus reached by the leaders on maintaining peace along the border cannot be swept under the

Indian ambassador to China Vikram Misri in his recent address to the India-China dialogue forum said that the significance of the consensus reached between leaders of the two countries to maintain peace along the LAC cannot be "swept under the carpet" and called for the complete disengagement of troops in Eastern Ladakh to rebuild bilateral ties strained by the "seri-

ous incidents" In a candid address to the ICWA (Indian Council of World Affairs)-CPIFA (Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs) virtual dialogue on April 15, Mr Misri also questioned the Chinese officials ignoring the "significant consensus" reached by the leaders of the two sides about maintaining peace along

#### ZojiLa Pass reopens: Big relief for Ladakh, Army troops who were rushed into Ladakh after the ten-▶ THE OPENING of the NEW DELHI, APRIL 21 weather conditions, poor

The roads to Ladakh have opened after winter amidst the continued standoff with China. The ZoiiLa Pass. which connects Kashmir to Ladakh, was opened on Wednesday and the Manali-Leh highway was opened some three weeks ago.

The opening of the Srinagar-Leh and Manali-Leh highways is crucial for the supply of ammunition, food, fuel and other essentials for the Indian troops who are deployed in Ladakh. The opening of these roads indicates that the Army has successfully managed the winter deployment of the additional

sions soared with China. Last year the Indian Army had rushed supplies to Ladakh for some 50,000 troops which were to be stationed in the area during winter at sub-zero temperatures due to the tensions with China.

The strategic 428 km Manali-Leh highway was opened by the Border Roads Organisation more than oneand-a-half months ahead of schedule. However, due to the snowfall, movement on it has been getting affected. The strategically crucial mighty ZojiLa Pass on the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh road was opened Wednesday by the BRO, establishing road Srinagar-Leh and Manali-Leh highways is crucial for the supply of ammunition, food, fuel and other essentials for the Indian troops who are deployed in Ladakh.

connectivity to Ladakh after four months. The pass closes every year in winter due to the heavy snowfall and opens only by the end of April the next year.

This year the ZojiLa Pass opened after a closure of 110 days, compared to an average of 150 days in previous years. Located at a height of 11,650 feet, ZojiLa is a strategic pass that provides a vital link between Kashmir Valley and Ladakh and is the key to the operational preparedness of the armed forces in the sector.

Due to the tensions with China and focus on infradevelopment, structure there was focus this time to keep ZojiLa Pass' closure to the minimum.

This time the ZojiLa Pass was kept open till December 31, 2020. Also, the snow clearance operations to open the road began on February 7 by Projects Beacon and Vijayak of the BRO. The connectivity across ZojiLa was initially established on February 15 and it was planned to open the pass for the Army and civil traffic by the end of February or early March. fall, that triggered avalanches, had delayed the opening. Finally, after efforts by Projects Beacon and Vijayak of BRO, connectivity was re-established on April 21 and 10 civil trucks, carrying essential fresh supplies, moved across the ZojiLa Pass towards Kargil, bringing much needed relief to the people of Ladakh. Lt. Gen. Rajeev Chaudhary, the BRO director-general, said the ZojiLa Pass' reopening will facilitate the availability of essential goods and supplies for the people of Ladakh and also enable the easier Army movement.

visibility and heavy snow-

# US: Jubilation as Chauvin held guilty of George Floyd's murder

verdicts to be read

Chauvin, 45, could be sent to prison for decades when he is sentenced in about two months in a case that triggered worldprotests, violence and a furious reexamination of racism and policing

The verdict set off jubila-

tion mixed with sorrow across the city and around the nation. Hundreds of people poured into the streets of Minneapolis, some running through traffic with banners. Drivers blared their horns in celebration. "Today, we are able to breathe again," Floyd's younger brother Philonise said at a joyous family news conference where tears streamed down his face as he likened Floyd to the 1955 Mississippi lynching victim Emmett Till, except that this time there were cameras around to show

the world what happened. On Wednesday, Philonise Floyd described

his thoughts while watch ing Chauvin being handcuffed. He recalled to ABC's "Good Morning America" how it appeared "a lot easier" on Ĉĥauvin than when his brother was handcuffed before his death, but said it still represented "accountability." The jury of six whites

and six Black or multiracial people came back with its verdict after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days. The nowfired white officer was found guilty of seconddegree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

■ More on Page 6



Protesters march in downtown Columbus, Ohio, on Tuesday. Police shot and killed a teenage girl on Tuesday afternoon in Columbus just as the verdict was being announced in the trial for the killing of George Floyd. Police showed bodycam footage on Tuesday night at a news conference of the officer shooting the girl, who was black, as she appeared to attempt to stab two people with a knife.

Minneapolis, April 21: After three weeks of testi-mony, the trial of the former police officer charged with killing George Floyd a day of jury deliberations, then just minutes for the guilty, guilty and guilty — and Derek Chauvin was handcuffed and taken away to prison.





#### SHORT TAKES **Pvt schools asked**

# to suspend online teaching, learning

New Delhi: All online and semi-online teaching and learning activities shall remain suspended during the summer vacation from April 20 to June 9, the Delhi government directed private schools on Wednesday. The **Directorate of Education** (DoE) had on Monday advanced summer vacations

in view of the deteriorating Covid-19 situation. The vacation, which was scheduled from May 11 to June 3, has now been rescheduled from April 20 to June 9. "It has been brought to the notice of this directorate that despite the summer vacation which has been advanced due to surge in Covid 10 cases, the regular online learning method continues to be adopted in one way or the other by some private schools," the DoE said in an official order. - PT

#### **Noida records 4** deaths, 536 Covid cases in a day

Noida: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Wednesday recorded four more fatalities linked to Covid-19 pushing the death toll to 118 while the district added 536 new coronavirus cases that took its infection tally to 32,133, official data showed. The district's active caseload reached 4,009, the 10th highest in the state, from

3,765 the previous day, according to the figures released by the Uttar Pradesh Health Department for a 24hour period. During the same period, 288 patients got discharged which took the overall recoveries in the district to 28,006, the fifth highest in the state, it showed. Gautam

Buddh Nagar now has a death toll of 118 with a mortality rate of 0.36 per cent. The recovery rate of patients reached 87.15 per cent. Meanwhile, the number of active Covid cases in UP reached 2,42,265 from 2,23,544 on Tuesday while the overall recoveries climbed to 6,89,900. — PTI

#### **Basketball coach** arrested for molesting student

New Delhi: A 57-year-old basketball coach was arrested for allegedly molesting his minor student in south Delhi's Hauz Khas area, police said on Wednesday. On April 10, a 17-year-old girl, along with her parents, approached Hauz Khas police station and levelled allegations of molestation against one person who was her basketball coach in Siri Fort sports complex, a senior police officer said. The victim further alleged that when she reached Siri Fort at 6.15 am on that day, after warming up, her trainer molested her. She came home and narrated the entire incident to her parents, the officer said. A

case was registered under

accused was arrested on

the same day and sent to

judicial custody, police said.

and POCSO Act. The

relevant sections of the IPC



A deserted look of Laxmi Nagar market due to the lockdown to prevent the spread of

# Migrants hoping to leave for home turn up at night shelters

New Delhi, April 21: The migrant workers leaving Delhi amid the ongoing lockdown imposed by the city government have started turning up at the night shelters of the DUSIB, seeking food and rest before managing to catch buses and trains to their native places, officials said on Wednesday.

The Delhi government on Tuesday announced various measures, includ-ing provisions of food, shelter and medicines for the migrant workers, many of whom have been trying to leave Delhi, fearing an extended lock-down. The government has provided stay and food facilities to the migrant workers at the 205 night shelters run by the Delhi Improvement

(DUSIB) across the city, the officials said.

'Some migrant workers turned up at the shelter homes, especially those closer to the ISBTs and railway stations, for food and rest. Their number is, however, far too less compared to the exodus when the lockdown was imposed in March 2020," a DUSIB official said.

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Anil Baijal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal have appealed to the migrants to stay back in the national capital and said the city government will provide food, shelter and medicines to them.

However, the migrants are turning up at the inter-state bus terminals and railway stations, hop-

ing to leave Delhi. The lockdown imposed in the national capital on

Monday will be in force till 5 am on April 26.

The city government, in a bid to help the construction workers registered with its welfare board, has proposed to provide a financial assistance of ₹5,000 each to them.

A committee of top officers of the Delhi govern-ment has been formed to ensure the implementation of the welfare and measures migrant workers, daily wagers and construction workers.

The principal secretary (home) and the special commissioner of police have been appointed as the nodal officers to coordinate and supervise matters related to the welfare, provisions amenities and movement of the migrant workers.

— PTI ■ No of active cases reduced to 85,364 from 85,575 day before

# **Delhi records over 24K Covid** cases, 249 deaths in 24 hours

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Delhi logged 24,638 fresh Covid-19 cases and 249 deaths due to the viral disease on Wednesday as the positivity rate stood at 31.28 per cent, meaning almost every third sample

almost every third sample turned out to be positive, amid a growing clamour for oxygen and hospital beds in the city.

Only 18 ICU beds for COVID patients were available in hospitals across Delhi at 11 pm, according to government data.

On Tuesday, the city had registered a record 28,395 cases and 277 fatalities. the highest since the out break of the pandemic. The positivity rate was 32.82 per cent, also the highest so far.

The city has reported over 1,350 deaths due to the deadly virus in the last seven days.

On Monday, Delhi had recorded 23,686 cases with a positivity rate of 26.12 per cent and 240 fatalities.

The national capital witnessed 25,462 cases with a positivity rate of 29.74 per cent on Sunday. On Saturday, 24,375 Covid-19 cases and 167 deaths were reported in the city.
It witnessed 161 deaths

Sunday, 167 Saturday, 141 on Friday and 112 on Thursday.
With the fresh cases, Delhi's Covid-19 tally has risen to 9,30,179 and the death toll stands at 12,887,

according to the latest



Medics push a stalled ambulance carrying a Covid-19 patient outside Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan Hospital in New Delhi on Wednesday. (below) Relatives of a Covid-19 victim outside LNJP Hospital on Wednesday.

A total of 78,768 tests, including 45,088 RT-PCR tests, were conducted the previous day, the bulletin said. So far, over 8.31 lakh patients have recovered from the disease in Delhi, it added. The number of active cases in the city has reduced to 85,364 from 85,575 the day before, the bulletin stated.

The number of people under home isolation has increased to 42,768 from 40,124 on Tuesday, while that of containment zones has mounted to 19,624 from 17,151 the day before,



# Haryana blocked oxygen supply to Delhi: Sisodia

#### State govt vehemently denies charge, Haryana minister Anil Vij says Delhi govt 'looted' tanker

New Delhi/Chandigarh, April 21: Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia accused the Haryana government on Wednesday of blocking Sisodia medical oxygen supply to Delhi, where several hospitals scrambled to save lives of coronavirus patients amid its shortage for the second consecu-

The Haryana government vehemently refuted the allegations, underlining that no one in the administration had hampered anything.

Addressing a press conference, Sisodia said the AAP government had been demanding that the Centre increase Delhi's quota of oxygen from 378 metric tonnes to 700 metric tonnes.

The central government, which decides the quota of oxygen for states, is yet to take a step in this direction, the deputy chief minister

said.
"We again demand that the Centre increase our oxygen quota to 700 MT in view of the increased consumption. Patients from several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, are admitted



provided by Residence Welfare Association (RWA) of Turkman Gate in New Delhi on Wednesday.

in city hospitals," Sisodia

He claimed that an official of the Haryana government stopped oxygen supply from a plant in Faridabad.

Sisodia said a similar occurred in Uttar Pradesh a day ago and it led to a crisis in some hospitals, adding the oxygen supply had been restored now.

He demanded that states should get their allotted share of oxygen without others interfering into it. Reacting to it, Haryana chief secretary Vijai Vardhan told PTI: "No supply has been stopped to Delhi. This is not true." Earlier in the day, Haryana health minister Anil Vij alleged that a tanker carrying medical oxygen for Covid patients in hospitals, which was going from Panipat to by the Delhi government and said all oxygen tankers will now move

with police escort. Several hospitals Delhi alleged that the Haryana government was



not allowing vendors to supply oxygen to them and there was only limit-ed stock left as hundreds of coronavirus patients battled for their life in

these facilities. "The vendor, as per its representative, is not being allowed by the Haryana government to supply oxygen cylinders and liquid oxygen to Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital, Pusa Road. Supply left is sufficient only for five hours," the official said.
A spokesperson of St Stephen's Hospital said: "The Haryana government has not been allowing our vendor to supply oxygen to us. Of the 350 patients in the hospital,



Manish Sisodia

around 200 are on oxygen support," he alleged. Manipal Hospitals CEO Pramod Alagharu said their supplier was willing to supply oxygen from its Faridabad "However, an officer has taken control over the plant. We have only 12 hrs Faridabad deputy commissioner Garima Mittal

of supplies left," he said. denied the allegations. "There is absolutely nothing like that. Some storage tankers of the compareaching Faridabad plant from Meerut and once they reach as usual, they will fill and supply," Mittal told PTI.

From the Faridabad

#### The AAP government had been demanding that the **Centre increase** Delhi's quota of oxygen from 378 metric tonnes to 700 metric tonnes. The central government, which decides the quota of oxygen for states, is yet to

direction.

— Manish Sisodia, Delhi Dy CM



plant, the supplies go to 32 hospitals, out of which 25 are in Delhi, Vardhan said, adding that the supply would reach in rou-

Some major government and private hospitals in Delhi received a fresh stock of medical oxygen in the early hours of Wednesday, averting a crisis just in time, according to officials. This stock should last till 9 am on Thursday, an official said.

(AIIMS) here has requested his colleagues from other departments to provide 80 per cent of the resident doctors and faculty members for Covid-19 management. In an urgent request, Dr Naveet Wig, who is also the chairperson of the nospitai's Covid-19 Task Force, said in view of an alarming rise in the number of patients suffering from the disease and the opening of multiple Covid-19 facilities in the

**Covid task** 

force chief in

more doctors

india Institute
Medical

**AIIMS urges for** 

New Delhi, April 21: The head of the medicine department at the All

"To meet this demand, as directed by the director, you are requested to provide 80 per cent of your residents and 80 per cent of your faculty members for Covid-19 management," request stated. "Please provide the names of residents and faculty members urgently from your department to finalise the roster at the earliest,"

hospital, the need of

manpower has increased

multi-fold.

# SC to hear 'urgent matters' only through video-conferencing

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

With surge in Covid cases assuming alarming proportion in the national capital, the Supreme Court has decided to hear urgent matters only from Thursday (April 22, 2021) onwards while adjourning all other matter listed for hearing tomorrow (Thursday)

Saying that only urgent matters which brook no delay will be taken up for hearing, a circular issued by the top court has said, "Only urgent matters will be listed for hearing w.e.f. 22.04.202" and 'The Regular Courts and the Registrar Courts shall not sit from 22.04.2021 onwards till

further orders The circular uploaded on top court website late on Wednesday evening says the application for the mentioning of the fresh matters for urgent listing by the advocate-on-record or the petitioner in person shall be made on five days - Monday to Friday by 01.00 P.M. and by 11.30

A.M. on Saturday. The application for men-

The circular annexed the list of 15 kind of matters that will be entertained for urgent hearing, including those related to death penalty, imminent demolition of property or eviction, anticipatory bail, admissions in educational institutions, elections where the last date for nomination, withdrawal, election is to expire, auction or sealing of premises in case of bank default and medical termination of pregnancy.

tioning for an urgent listing of fresh matters will be accompanied with synopsis giving grounds of urgency and the same will not exceed one page. It will be processed for listing on the next to next working day, subject to availability of concerned bench and approval of the competent authority

The application will be sent email mention.sc@sci.nic.in. The same is the procedure for the listing of the applications in already pending matters for an urgent hearing. The application in the pending matters or in disposed of matters will be sent on email id mention.an.sc@sci.nic.in.

The circular says the matters for urgent mentioning shall be as per the guidelines laid down in the circular of 23.01.2019. It also annexed the list of 15 kind of matters in that circular that will be entertained for urgent hearing, including those related to death penalty, imminent demolition of property or eviction, anticipatory bail, admissions in educational institutions, elections where the last date for nomination, withdrawal, election is to expire, auction or sealing of premises in case of bank default and medical termination of preg-

nancy.
The 2019 circular also lists 16 matters that shall not be entertained for the urgent

Four top court benches will hear on Thursday urgent matters listed before the benches headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, Justice Uday Umesh Lalit, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice Surya Kant

#### **Elderly woman,** son found dead, suicide suspected

New Delhi, April 21: A 60-

Police found a suicide note from the spot citing their health problems as a reason for taking such an extreme step. It said they were upset because their deteriorating health condition. The woman had difficulty in walking and had other old-age issues while her son Pramod had high blood sugar and blood pressure, police said. During the post-mortem, it was revealed that the deceased woman was Covid-19 positive but neither she nor her family

# Cops save lives by arranging oxygen

year-old woman and her son died allegedly by suicide in their house following prolonged health problems in southeast Meethapur Extension, police said on Wednesday. The deceased identified as Krishana and her son Pramod Kumar Saini (37), they said.

members were aware about it.

#### for hospitals, providing green corridors AGE CORRESPONDENT escort provided by Alipur Since the last two days, the police have been flooded with requests by

From arranging oxygen cylinders to providing green corridors to facilitate movement of oxygen tankers, supplying food to admitting covid-positive patients to hospitals, the Delhi Police personnel have saved lives of hundreds of patients by going beyond the call of their duty to serve public.

Since the last two days, the police have been flooded with requests by the city hospitals to arrange oxygen cylinders amid shortage of supply during the ongoing pandemic.

On Wednesday, lives of 32 covid-19 patients were saved after Delhi Police managed to arrange 11 oxygen cylinders for Amarleela Hospital in west Delhi's Janakpuri after they got a distress call around 9 am saying oxygen stock at the facility was nearly exhausted.

"Police contacted local

the city hospitals to arrange oxygen cylinders amid shortage of supply during the ongoing panoxygen suppliers and succeeded in finding medical oxygen. Eleven cylinders

were arranged for the hospital from three different locations — Kirti Nagar, Gole Market and Mayapuri," additional deputy commissioner of police (west) Prashant Gautam said.

In another instance, a green corridor was provided to facilitate movement of a truck carrying oxygen containers from Singhu border to Jaipur Golden Hospital in Rohini which was running out of supply.
"A green corridor was

established for quick movement of the oxygen tanker. Under police

police station, the oxygen tanker was escorted to Jaipur Golden Hospital and it was ensured that the oxygen truck safely reached the hospital in minimum possible time," said Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North).
Again lives of

patients were at risk due to shortage of oxygen sup-ply at Santom Hospital.

The Medical Superintendent of facility approached Rohini district police which then managed to arrange oxygen cylinders and created green corridor for the ambulance which was carrying oxygen cylinders for the critically ill covid-19 patients at the facility.

Life of another Covid-19 patient in isolation in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar was saved on Wednesday after police managed to arrange oxygen cylinder within minutes of receiving informa-

tion, police said. police post of southeast district came to the rescue of covid-19 patients by arranging 10 oxygen cylinders for Holi Family Hospital and five oxygen cylinders for Jeevan Hospital.

In northwest Delhi's Trinagar, the police came to the rescue of a 51-yearold covid positive man on Tuesday night after his wife requested police to arrange an oxygen cylinder for her husband whose oxygen level fell below 50 and could not be admitted to hospital due to shortage of bed.

In another instance, a 71year-old Covid-19 positive woman in Bharat Nagar area was admitted to Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital by beat constable Harkesh after an information was received that her health condition was deteriorating. She lives alone here as her son is in Singapore, the officer said.

#### SHORT TAKES

### **Bengal Cong chief**

**Adhir tests positive** 

New Delhi: Congress leaders Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Shashi Tharoor tested positive for the coronavirus infection. Mr Chowdhury, the Congress leader in the Lok Sabha, said he will continue to campaign for the West Bengal polls through virtual mode. "I have been tested covid positive, requesting all who came in contact with me for the last 7 days must comply with covid protocols, I will be continuing my campaign through the virtual platform," Adhir said on Twitter. Congress MP Tharoor also confirmed that he has tested positive for the infection. After waiting two days for a test appointment and another day & a half for the results, I finally have confirmation: I'm #Covid positive. Hoping to deal with it in a positive frame of mind, with rest, steam & plenty of fluids. My sister& 85 year old moth-

#### **Panchayat polls** put off in Bihar

tweeted. -PT

er are in the same boat, he

Patna: The state election commision on Wednesday decided to postpone issuing notification for the panchayat polls for now in view of the raging coronavirus cases in Bihar. Preparations were underway to issue order for the panchayat elections by the end of April. Considering Covid-19 surge it has been decided to put off announcement of polls for the rural bodies for now, a statement of the state election office said. "Further decision will be taken upon reviewing the situation after 15 days," the statement said. Many staff of the state election office have also tested positive for the disease. Election process for panchayats has to be completed by June 15 when the term of the three-tier local bodies end. The elections will be

#### held for 2.58 lakh posts under Panchayati Raj Institutions. — *PTI* **Odisha cancels**

Class 10 exams

Bhubaneswar: Under mounting pressures from parents and students, the Odisha government cancelled the annual high school certificate examinations. The announcement was made by school and mass education minister Samir Ranjan Dash in the morning. The cancellation move came just a day after the state government faced a backlash from Class IO students for delay in tak ing a final decision with regard to holding the examinations. "After reaching a conclusive decision following detailed discussions with all stakeholders, we are canceling the annual Class 10 examinations in view of the worsening pandemic situation," the minister told the media. — PTI

#### **BENGALI POET SHANKHA GHOSH DIES DUE TO COVID**

Kolkata: Noted Bengali poet Shankha Ghosh died on Wednesday morning while he was in isolation at his residence after testing positive for Covid-19, his family said. Ghosh, 89, was found to be Covid-positive on April 14 He was in home isolation on the advice of doctors, according to health department sources. Ghosh, who suffered from several comorbidities, was hospitalised a few months ago due to deterioration of his health condition. Considered to be having authority on Rabindranath Tagore, Ghosh is known for Adim Lata — Gulmomav and Murkha Baro Sama-

jik Nay, among other books. Ghosh, known for being vocal on various social and political issues, was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2011 and conferred the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 2016. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977 for his book Babarer Prarthana. His works have been translated into several languages, including English and Hindi. Ghosh is survived by his daughters Semanti and Srabanti, and wife Pratima. Litterature Subodh Sarkar said Covid snatched away Ghosh when he was needed the most as "the state was faced with the threat of fascism". "He was soft-spoken but his pen was

razor-sharp, always speaking

against intolerance. He used

to be a participant in all con-

ventions and movements for

free and liberal thinking,'

Sarkar said. — PTI

# Hike of Covishield price invites Opp. wrath

Cong demands one nation, one price for vaccines, Stalin slams Centre for differential pricing

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

The Congress and its ally DMK on Wednesday lashed at the differential pricing for Covid vaccines, saying it was discriminatory and will ben-efit only a "few big industrialists" while common people will suffer.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi took to Twitter to alleged injustice on the part of the Central government and compared the new vaccine policy to demonetisation.

"Disaster of the country, opportunity for friends of Modi. Injustice of the central government," he said in a tweet using the hashtag "#VaccineDiscrimination" and shared the Serum statement of Institute announcing a price of ₹400 per vaccine dose to states and ₹600 to

private hospitals.
"The Central government's vaccine strategy is no less than the demonetisation. The common people will stand in queues, will suffer loss of wealth, health and life and in the end only a few big industrialists will benefit," Mr Gandhi said in another

Addressing a press conference, Congress's senior spokesperson Ajay Maken said it is unfortunate that the Centre is getting the vaccine at ₹150, but it is not being made available at the same price to states.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "The Central government will continue to pay ₹150 per dose for Covishield. The state governments will now be charged ₹400 a dose. This is not cooperative federalism. This will bleed dry the already reeling state finances. Atrocious! We demand One Nation, One Price for

Centre and states. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi also hit out at the Centre for not taking constructive suggestions from Opposition parties but ridiculing them.

#### Free vaccine for all above 18 in 5 states

Guwahati/Lucknow/Bho pal, April 21: Three BJP-ruled states of Assam, Pradesh Madhya Pradesh C o n g r e s s - r u l e d Chhattisgarh and Kerala Wednesday announced all adults above the age of 18 years would be provided free Covid-19 vaccination in the state from May 1.

Donations received last year for Covid management will be utilised for the purpose, Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Uttar Pradesh government has also decided to administer vaccine free of cost to all those above 18 years of age from May The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Yogi Adityanath.

Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel also announced to provide vaccination free of cost to all above 18 years of age and urged the Centre to make sufficient quantities of vaccine available to the state.

Speaking to a news agency, she said that the export of six crore vaccines between January and March 2021 was a huge public relations exercise and during this same period, Indian citizens received only three to four crore doses DMK president M.K.

Stalin also expressed concern over the "differential pricing" for Covishield vaccines, calling it 'discriminatory' and urged the union government to ensure common prices for all.

Mr Stalin expressed 'shock" and concern over SII fixing ₹400 per for its vaccine for state govern-ments and wondered if states, including Tamil Nadu, can shoulder the 'burden' amid existing



Covid-19 patients at Zakir Hussain Municipal Hospital after medical oxygen gas leaked out from a storage unit in Nashik on Wednesday, leading to interruption in supply of oxygen to the patients. At least 22 patients died due to the leakage.

# 94 bodies cremated in **Bhopal, official Covid toll 3**

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY** BHOPAL, APRIL 21

discrepancies between the official data on Covid deaths in Bhopal and the records of the crematoriums here has come to the fore, giving rise to suspicion on a bid by the state government to cover up the deaths due to Coronavirus.

In Bhadbada Ghat crematorium in Bhopal, around 70-80 bodies were being cremated with Corona protocol every day for the past three weeks, but the official toll due to Coronavirus reached the double figure in Bhopal during the peri-

od. "Of the 113 bodies cremated in Bhadbada Ghat crematorium on Tuesday, 94 were cremated with protocol", Mamtesh Sharma, secretary of Bhadbada crematorium told this newspaper on Wednesday.

MADHYA PRADESH recorded 13,107 fresh Coronavirus positive cases taking the tally of cases to 4,468,91. The

state recorded 75 deaths.

letin issued by MP health department on Tuesday stated that three people died of Covid-19 on the day. Similarly, of the 108 bodies cremated in the crema torium on Wednesday till six in the evening, 93 were

However, the official bulletin issued by the state health department on Wednesday confirmed only five deaths due to Covid-19 on the day.

cremated with corona pro-

On April 19, of the 95 bodies cremated in the crematorium, 83 were cremated with corona protocol. The official toll was

On April 18, total 77 bodies were cremated in the crematorium. Of them, 68 were cremated with corocial toll was three. The records records

Bhadbada Ghat crematorium showed that a total of 762 bodies were cremated from April 1-17. Of them, 628 were cremated with corona protocol. However, the official

death toll due to Coronavirus in Bhopal during the period has been put at less than 70. Health department officials, however, said there were many suspected cases of Covid deaths. Such bodies were cremated with corona protocol in the interest of the safety of the kin of the deceased well as the people

involved in cremations. But the deaths were recorded as Covid deaths after their reports were found positive.

On Wednesday, Madhya Pradesh recorded 13,107 fresh Coronavirus positive cases taking the tally of cases to 4,468,91.

The state recorded 75 deaths on Wednesday taking the death toll to 4,788.

# Tears, anger at Nashik hospital, kin seek answers

(Maharashtra), April 21: Family members could not contain their tears as well as anger as they mourned the death of their kin following the disruption of oxygen sup-ply at the Zakir Husain

municipal hospital here. Some of the 22 Covid-19 patients who died in the tragedy were recovering and about to get dis-charge, their relatives told mediapersons.

As the news spread, family members rushed to the ward where Covid-19 patients on ventilator were undergoing treat-

were There wrenching scenes as condition patients' became critical and doctors and nurses could not anything in the absence of oxygen supply, one witness said.

The brother of 42-year-old Pramod Walukar could not stop his tears. "My brother was about to get discharge in the next two days as his condition was improving. Today when I brought him tiffin, he said he

would eat later. "Immediately after our conversation the hospital ran out of oxygen and within two hours my brother was dead," he The relative of another victim said the hospital management was callous and must be held responsible.

A woman, whose mother Leela Shelar (60) died during the incident, said had her mother received good treatment, would have survived.

Another woman, who also lost her mother, said her condition was improving. "But the oxygen supply got disrupted and she died gasping for breath," she said, sobbing.

"My grandmotherdied

pital management is responsible for this," said a man.

One relative claimed that there was no oxygen supply for almost two hours and had the hospital stocked some oxygen cylinders, lives could have been saved.

A woman said her mother could not get a hospital bed for two days, and when it became available, she lost her life for lack of

As angry and weeping elatives demanded relatives answers, hospital authorities had to ask the police to restrict the entry into the Covid-19 ward.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi condoled the death of patients at a Nashik hospital and urged the Maharashtra government to provide all assistance to the affected.

"The news of patients' death at Nashik's Zakir Hussain Hospital extremely tragic. My heartfelt condolences to

the aggrieved families. "I appeal to the state government and party workers to provide all possible assistance," Mr

Gandhi tweeted. At least 22 patients on ventilator support died due to the interrupted supply of medical oxygen caused by leakage gas from a storage

plant, officials said. Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray announced financial assistance of Rs five lakh each to the families of the 22 patients. President Ram Nath Kovind said he is deeply distressed by the unfortunate incident.

Narendra Modi expressed grief over the death of at least 22 patients at a Nashik hospital after the oxygen supply was inter-

#### MHA team to monitor jab, oxygen, drugs' stock

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Home minister Amit Shah has formed a core team of senior officials headed Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla to ensure there is no shortage of oxygen, vaccines and other medical essentials in states.

The committee is working closely with other key ministries including health, railways, commerce, etc to handle the ongoing corona crisis. The Home Secretary

along with a team of senior officials from different Ministries has been working round the clock to ensure that adequate oxygen and other essential are supplied in adequate quantity to all

The Home Ministry's team avoided a major tragedy late last night when oxygen was rushed to Delhi's GTB Hospital with police escort following a panic response from Delhi Government that oxygen supply there could run out in a couple of hours.

Earlier, Secretary had also written to all states directing them to ensure that no oxygen is supplied for commercial or industrial use and is only sent to hospital and other Covid facilities

Officials claimed efforts are also being made by the Centre to expedite import of oxygen and raw material for making essential vaccine for Corona. The situation is being moni-tored several times during the day by this **Empowered Committee** of senior officials.

Sources admitted that some of the worst affected states were facing a major shortage of oxygen as they have witnessed a sharp increase in demand

# BJP MP held for role in Pune gangster's car rally

**SHAHAB ANSARI** MUMBAI, APRIL 21

police Pune Wednesday arrested for-mer BJP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Kakade on the charge of playing a key role in organising a rally for Gajanan alias Gaja Marne, a criminal in police records. Hundreds of Marne's supporters took part in the vehicle rally from Taloja jail in Navi Mumbai to Pune on

February 15 following his acquittal in a murder Pune city police Commissioner Amitabh Gupta said Kakde had been arrested for plan-

ning the rally. A huge car rally was taken out from Taloja Central Prison in Navi

Mumbai to 54-year-old house in Kothrud in Pune, via Mumbai Expressway. Hundreds of high-end cars were part of the rally, which was taken out after notorious



gangster Gaja Marne was released from Taloja prison in the second week of February after his acquittal in two murder cases.

The rally created a major controversy, several offences have since been registered against Marne and his aides in connection to the celebratory procession.

The particular offence against Marne, in which Kakade has been arrested, pertains to conspiring to arrange the car rally and then spreading its images and videos on social media platforms with a motive to terrorise people.

The offence, in this case, is registered at

out from Taloja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai to Marne's house in Kothrud in Pune, via Pune Mumbai Expressway. Hundreds of high-end cars were part of the rally, which was taken out after Marne was released from Taloja prison

Bundgarden police station in Pune.

A HUGE car rally was taken

The police had sought Kakade's five-day cus-tody. PI Vinayak Gaikwad had contended that the police has received information that Kakade and Gaja Marne are directly and indirectly linked to each

other. However, one Kakade's defence counsels, advocate Chinmay Inamdar argued that most legal provisions invoked by police are bailable. One non-bailable provision of the Criminal Amendment Act can not be applied here. After hearing both sides, the court granted bail to Kakade.

#### **Indrani** among **38 Byculla jail** inmates found +ve for Covid

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, APRIL 21

A day after the Bombay High Court heard a suo moto (on its own) public interest litigation on increasing number of Covid cases Maharashtra prisons 38 inmates of Byculla jail including former INX Media chief Indrani Mukerjea, have been tested positive for the virus. Same day 58 people at Panvel's old age home have also been found Covid positive.

Byculla prison is situated in the heart of the city where maximum inmates are females.

Last year Indrani had applied for temporary bail for 45 days on the ground that there is a high risk of contracting Coronavirus in Byculla prison where she has

been kept.
Special CBI judge J.C.
Jagdale on July 15 last
year had rejected her
bail plea.

# Mystery shrouds Remdesivir 'theft' from MP hospital

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, APRIL 21

Mystery shrouds the recent alleged theft of 853 Remdesivir vials from a government hospital here with the bulk of 'stolen' life saving drug 'resurfacing' in its store room. The development that

came to light late on Tuesday has uncovered a racket involved in the illegal supply of the life saving drug from the hospital to some influential people to treat their kin or acquaintances admitted in Covid hospitals in and outside Madhya Pradesh, a member of the crime branch team that is probing into the incident told this newspaper.

As many as 17 boxes con-taining 853 vials of taining Remdesivir were found stolen from the Central store room of governmentrun Hamidia hospital here on the intervening night of

Around 70 per cent of the 'stolen' Remdesivir vials, however, were found in the Central store room of the hospital late on Tuesday,

leaving the probe team puz-

Sources said the discrepancies in the records of availability of Remdesivir in Central store room and the requisition of the life saving drug by the doctors in the hospital, spotted by the probe team during course of investigation has given rise to suspicion that a racket was operating in the hospital to make the drug 'disappear'.

The probe team also suspected it was an "insider's job". "The mismatch of the two records has suggested that there was no theft of the vials, but they were issued by the staff", crime branch additional superintendent of police Gopal Singh Dhakad said.

The probe team has also "interrogated" hospital superintendent

Chourasia. Incidentally, hours after Dr Chourasia's interrogation by police, around 450 of 'stolen" vials of Ramdesivir were found in the Central store room of the hospital, leading to uncovering of the racket.

# **■** Mindtree co-founder Bagchi ₹340cr to set up hospital Bizmen open coffers to fight Covid

**AKSHAYA KUMAR** SAHOO

BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 21

As Odisha government battles to cope with the Covid-19 blues, top Odia entrepreneurs, including software major Mindtree's co-founder Subroto Bagchi and managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of Orissa of Stevedores Limited Mahimananda Mishra have come out in a big way to extend their cooperation to the state government to meet the healthcare and other

Mr Bagchi, who is also

heading the state govern-

ment's Skill Development Authority as its chairman, has donated Rs 340 crore for setting up a state-of-the-art hospital. Reciprocating his generosity, the state cabinet has approved a proposal to provide 20 acres of land for the hospital project. The 600-bed hospital, apart from providing palliative or integrated and people-centred health services, will have 500 beds for cancer treat-

leader Business Mahimananda Mishra, promoter of Gopalpur port and many other ventures has turned a Good Samaritan for thousands of common people and his own employees dur-ing the current Covid-19 crisis by extending essential supports ranging from healthcare services to education requirements of children.

Spending crores of rupees, Mr Mishra has ensured that the livelihoods of thousands of employees as well as workers in port cities of Paradip, Gopalpur and other operational areas are not affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

"During this pandemic period, we worked with state government agencies to reach out to the distressed people in our projects areas in Paradip in Jagatsinghpur and Gopalpur in Ganjam districts," Mr Mishra told this newspaper.

Mr Mishra has collaborated with private healthcare service providers to ensure that the pandemic-affected employees and their family members avail themselves the requisite medical attention free of cost under the proper monitoring of doctors and nurses.

He added that the OSL group along with volunteers provided thousands of PPE kits, multivitamin supplements, immu nity-boosting pills, distribution of foods and refreshments during the nightmarish lockdowns and shutdowns.

#### **SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED** General Public is hereby informed that a



R/o D-1386, JJ Colony, Bawana, Delhi, Age: 17 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Light Green ColourJeans Pant, Grey Colour Chunni and Grey Colour Slipper in her feet has been missing/ kidnapped from her home since 03.04.2021. In this regard a case FIR No. 161/21, u/s 363 IPC dated 05.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi.

girl namely Rukshaar. D/o Jafir Alam.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. if any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in Ph.: 011-24368638,24368641 Fax: 011-24368639

SHO P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi Ph.: 011-27787593, 7065036324



4 top execs

unders lens

over DGMS

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Days after busting a

recruitment racket involving public servants

of directorate-general of mines safety (DGMS), the CBI is all set to question

four senior officials for

their suspected role in

manipulating and influ-

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

job scam

SHORT TAKES

#### **Bomb attack on BJP**

candidate in Bengal

Barrackpore, West Bengal: A country-made bomb was allegedly hurled at the vehicle of BJP candidate from Khardah assembly constituency, Shilbhadra Dutta, in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday evening, a police official said here. However, no casualty was reported. Mr Dutta claimed that he was taking tea at a roadside stall on Kalyani Expressway at Rahara when someone threw the bomb which exploded a few metres away from his vehicle. A deputy commissionerlevel officer of the Barrackpore police commissionerate went to the spot to investigate the incident, the police official said. The BJP candidate, who left the Trinamool Congress a few months ago, said that he will file a complaint with the Election Commission about the incident. — PTI

#### **EC rules out change** in Bengal poll dates

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Wednesday ruled out any change in the schedule of the West Bengal assembly polls and told the Trinamool Congress that its suggestion to club the last three of the eight phases is "not feasible". The commission also told West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury that his demand to hold the remaining phases of polls in West Bengal after the Muslim fasting month of Ramzan is over and the present pandemic is diluted, is not acceptable as the term of the state Assembly ends on May 30 and a new assembly has to be constituted before that. "Any postponement of scheduled elections would affect adherence to Constitutional and statutory provisions related to timely conduct of elections," the Congress leader was told. He had written to the poll panel on April 19 seeking deferment of polls. - PTI

#### Tank leak

#### ■ Continued from Page 1

Visuals showed gas leaking from the tanker outside the hospital and dense, white fumes covering the area rapid-

R.V. Game, divisional commissioner of Nashik, said that after the incident, relatives and others started entering the ward, leading to chaos. "This led to delay in restoring the situation. The entire staff is under shock," he said.

Mr Game confirmed that a high-level committee has been constituted with five members, including deputy director health, principal polytechnic and superintendent engineer of Nashik Municipal Corporation. The committee would be headed by him.

Terming the Nashik mishap as "shocking", Mr Uddhav Thackeray said that he has no words to express his grief. "The oxygen leakage that led to the death of 22 people is a shocking incident. I cannot express my grief in words. Such incidents are devastating, especially when we are trying hard to save every Covid patient," he said, adding that nobody should do politics over the Nashik incident as the entire Maharashtra is moaning.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope said that oxygen was leaking from the valve, resulting in the drop in pressure of oxygen supply.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his condolences to the families of the victims. "The tragedy at a hospital in Nashik because of oxygen tank leakage is heart-wrenching. Anguished by the loss of lives due to it. Condolences to the bereaved families in this

sad hour," he tweeted. Congress party blamed the BJP, which controls the Nashik municipal corporation, for the tragedy.

# 3 ONGC employees abducted in Assam

Involvement of Ulfa-I suspected ■ They were taken in an operational vehicle belonging to ONGC

MANOJ ANAND

In what is said to be the fall out of soft paddling of recent kidnapping and release of two employees of an oil and gas infrastructure company, suspected rebels of outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) on Wednesday abducted three employees of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) in the early hours from a rig site in Lakwa oil field of Assam's Sivasagar dis-

Asserting the involvement of Ulfa-I rebels, security sources told this newspaper that security forces were alerted about the movement of Ulfa-I rebels in the area but due to excessive focus and engagement in election-related issues, the police

**Japanese** 

PM Suga

**India visit** 

**AGE CORRESPONDENT** NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

Minister Yoshihide Suga

has reportedly cancelled

plans to visit India at the

end of this month due to the Covid surge both in

India and at home, reports from Japan said

on Wednesday morning.

According to these reports, Mr Suga was supposed to visit India and the Phillipines in

April-end. While India is

being battered by the second wave of Covid, the number of cases is reportedly sharply ris-

Since the visit had not

been formally announced by India, there has not been any formal announcement of

the cancellation so far by

New Delhi. Nevertheless,

this will be the second

time in the past 16

months when a Japanese PM has had to cancel plans of a visit to India.

It may be recalled that

the previous Japanese PM Shinzo Abe had can-

celled a scheduled visit

to India in December

2019, on account of vio-

lent protests rocking

Assam then due to the

Citizenship Amendment

Last month in a phone conversation with Prime

Modi, Mr Suga had

"expressed serious con-

cerns regarding unilat-

eral attempts to change

the status quo in the East

and the South China Sea,

China's Coast Guard

Law and the situation in

Narendra

Act (CAA) controversy.

Minister

Hong Kong".

ing in Japan too.

Japanese

calls off

probably failed to take

note of inputs. The ONGC authorities however said that their employees were taken by 'unknown armed miscreants" in a vehicle belonging to ONGC, which was later found abandoned near the Nimonagarh jungles, close to the Assam-Nagaland border. The Sivasagar superintendent of police Amitava Sinha told reporters that they have launched a combing operation in the area to rescue the ONGC employees. "All the three abducted are local residents of Assam," he added. The three employees have been identified as Mohini Mohan Gogoi,(Junior Technician, Production) from Sivasagar district, Alokesh Saikia (Assistant Junior Engineer, Production) from Jorhat **SECURITY SOURCES** 

told this newspaper that security forces were alerted about the movement of Ulfa-I rebels in the area but due to excessive focus and engagement in election-related issues, the police probably failed to take note of inputs

(Assistant Production) from Golaghat district. Informing that security forces of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have already been alerted, security sources said that possibility of some NSCN-K rebels helping the Ulfa-I in abducting the ONGC employees can't be ruled out. Indicating that militants are moving towards Mon district of Nagaland

and may try to cross over

to Myanmar, security

tive of kidnapping is

Informing that nothing less than ₹4 crore was transferred to the outfit through some Guwahati Hawala route in the recent kidnapping and release of two employees of a private firm, security sources said that it has also come to the notice of security agencies that Ulfa-I was instrumental in winning over the contract for a private oil company but they tried to breach the agreement leading to the kidnapping

Security sources said that the last incident of kidnapping and subsequent release of employees after a long negotia-tion between Ulfa-I and a private negotiator has also come as an encouragement for the outfit to intensify its subversive to rescue employees

**Guwahati, April 21:** Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday condemned the kidnapping of three ONGC employees by suspected Ulfa(I) militants and directed the chief secretary and the DGP to take all steps to rescue them. In a series of tweets, Mr Sonowal denounced the

Gogoi, Alakesh Saikia and Ritul Saikia from an oil-field in Sivasagar district. "I have asked CS Shri Barua @DGPAssamPolice Shri Bhaskarjyoti Mahanta to take all possible measures for their release," he

abduction of ONGC employees Mohini Mohan

Assam CM tells officials

Mr Sonowal also said that special DGP (law and order) Gyanendra Pratap Singh has rushed to the spot and is monitoring the investigation on abduction.

The public sector unit said in a statement that

the three employees were abducted by "unknown armed miscreants" in the early hours of Wednesday. A senior official of Sivasagar district administration said that suspected Ulfa(I) militants are behind this kidnapping and they fled through Nagaland. No demand for ransom or anything else has been received so far.

encing members of the interview board for ensuring qualification of certain candidates. "Role of four senior officials of the DGMS is under the scanner of the agency in connection with the case. They (public servants) will soon be called for questioning," sources said. The agency has already registered a case against deputy director-general (central zone), DGMS, head office, Dhanbad, Arvind

Kumar, for his alleged

role in the racket.
Sources said Mr Kumar
and a few others were allegedly involved in manipulation and influencing the members of the interview board for ensuring the qualifica-tion of certain candidates in an oral examination in lieu of a huge amount of bribe. Those who were named in the FIR include Mr Kumar, his relative Kailash Mandal, one Triloki Nath unknown persons on the allegations that they had entered into a conspiracy to show undue favours to some of the candidates.

"The candidates were appearing for the oral examination after quali-fying computer-based examinations for manager's, certificate of competency (restricted & unrestricted), conducted by the DGMS," sources said.

# IAF Chief in France: Flags off 4 Rafale jets for India

**New Delhi, April 21:** Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria on Wednesday flagged off four Rafale fighter jets for India from a military airbase in France, people familiar with the develop-

ment said.

district and Ritul Saikia

Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria visited a Rafale aircraft training facility on the third day of his five-day visit to France. He also thanked the French aerospace industry for ensuring timely delivery of the jets. "Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria on an official tour to France lauds pilots and sees off the next batch of Rafales on a non stop flight to India



force U A E .
"Thanks

France especially FASF R.K.S. Bhadauria and French Industry for timely delivery & pilot training on schedule despite Covid,'

the Indian embassy in France tweeted. The Indian embassy did not mention the number of aircraft flagged off by the IAF Chief but people associated with the event said four jets formed the new that left from France's Merignac airbase. In his brief remarks, the

IAF Chief said some of

been delivered a "little bit" ahead of time and it has contributed to the overall combat potential of the IAF.
Ahead of his visit, mili-

tary officials in Delhi said that his trip to France is expected to boost cooperation between the IAF and the French Air and Space Force (FASF). "This ferry, which is fifth from here, marks the end of the third batch of our pilots and all our maintenance crew. The Rafale training centre has provided world class training and it is because of the level and quality of training that we were able to operationalise the aircraft quickly," he said.



during an awareness campaign against the spread of the coronavirus on the occasion of Ram Navami in

# In Bengal, Left looks to youth to stay relevant

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

When activist Maimoona Abbas Mollah, who is also the wife of CPI(M) leader, Hannan Mollah, put up a post — "Paschim Bangal, Abki Bar Baam Sarkar (This time it's a Left Front government in West Bengal)" — on FaceBook, people reacted by posting ROFL emojis. Some even described the post as a 'comic relief" amidst the tense, high voltage, violent electioneering in West Bengal. Ms Mollah's observation could be described as ambitious and wishful

Despite a triangular contest, the fight in Bengal is between BJP and Trinamul Congress. The Sanjukta Morcha comprising of Left-Congress and Indian Secular Front is

merely fighting for survival and revival. In the 2016 Assembly elections, CPI(M) had won only 26 seats and was completely wiped out in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The CPI(M), an ageing outfit, going through an existential crisis looked for ways to stay relevant. It was then, party general secretary Mr Sitaram Yechury pushed for a generation shift. He apparently argued that the CPIM) has to rely on the generation next to claw back to the top. Shifting gear, the CPI(M) decided to field several young candidates. Even though the Left's move to push for the generation next might not eventually translate into votes, but on the surface, it was getting a lot of trac-

Some of the prominent future.'

young candidates fielded by CPI(M) included JNU student leader, Ghosh, Democratic Youth Federation of India(DYFI) state president, Minakshi Mukherjee, SFI national joint secretary, Dipsita Dhar, SGI state president, Pratiku Rahaman and DYFI state secretary, Sayandeep Mitra.

Speaking to this newspa-CPI(M) leader said mainly to "arrest the rapid decline" of the party. He argued that the younger generation of Bengal "did not relate to the ageing party leaders." CPI(M) leader, Md Salim went on record saying that the "new candidates have a brought a paradigm shift to Left's campaigning" For him, this would "pay dividends for the party in

**DESPITE A** triangular contest, the fight in Bengal is between BJP and Trinamul Congress. The Sanjukta Morcha comprising of Left-Congress and Indian Secular Front is merely fighting for survival and revival.

Author and Associate rofessor, English, McGill University, Banerjee, who "still wants Mamata to win," however, feels that the "Left's democratic, socialist and economic policies are the need of the hour for a better India." For Mr Banerjee, "TMC is actually an agent of the BJP and had been indulging in divisive politics." He came down heavily on Ms Banerjee's sops for the Brahmin priests. He

claimed that the Left's was the only formation, which can provide an "equitable path of economic development." On the issue of the Left Front pushing for the generation shift, Mr Banerjee felt that it was time that "old men in the Left need to go and the youth brigade should take

Sandwiched between the TMC and BJP, the Left is relying completely on its youth brigade to stay politically relevant. Shedding the image of sombre, ageing dhoti-clad Bengali bhadraloks, the Left not only changed over to young faces but also replaced its traditional revolutionary numbers with peppy songs like "Tumpa Sona". While the old Marxists frowned and fumed, the comparatively "Tumpa Sona",

which talks of unemploy ment and corruption both by the BJP and TMC, caught the imagination of Bengali youths. Social media is filled with memes of CPI(M)'s youth brigade against the "geriatric"

A majority of the candidates fielded by the Left are under 40. Mr Banerjee felt that the Bengali youth were responding to this red young cadre, who are expected to come up with fresh ideas and a new vision. Yet it is a long way to go. A CPI(M) central committee member speaking on the issue argued that the "paradigm shift is not going to produce an instant result." For him. "the process to infuse fresh blood in an ageing Goliath has begun. This is the first step. It's still a long journey ahead.'

ing rules, can function with 15 per cent strength

or five people, whichever is more, stated the notifi-

As to inter-city and inter-district travel ban, exemption will be made

for travel for medical

emergency, essential serv-

ices and funeral or med-

As to travel by local

trains in Mumbai, the

government had tight-

ened the rules on April 13,

saying that only those

working in the essential

services can travel.
Travelling will be allowed with 50 per cent

Passengers of private

buses (who are allowed to

capacity of the vehicle.

ical attendance.

#### 'Triple mutant' new worry amid exploding cases chairman

exports of APIs and formulations used in the manufacture of this life-saving drug, and allowing EoUs and manufacturers located in SEZs to sell in the domestic market, she said.

Centre announced a waiver of the import duty on Remdesivir. "Considering the immediate requirement on the recommendation of the department of pharmaceuticals, department of revenue has waived customs duty on Remdesivir and its API/KSM. This step will further augment domestic availability of Remdesivir injections," said chemi- Andhra

■ Continued from Page 1 cals and fertilisers minister Sadananda Gowda.

The Centre also allocated the supply of Remdesivir to 19 states and UTs with a high burden of Covid cases. "Remdesivir being an investigational therapy drug given in acute and severe versions of Covid where oxygen support is a must, this allocation pertains to 14 states to which medical oxygen is allocated and five other states where the high volume of supplies are being observed," the Union health ministry said. These high burden states include Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana,

Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Nadu Uttarakhand.

However, the director of AIIMS, Dr Randeep Guleria, and a group of doctors have said that Remdesivir is no magic bullet and only a small percentage would need this injection. "More than 85 per cent of people will recover without any specific treatment in the form of Remdesivir, etc, and most will have symptoms like the common cold, sore throat, etc," Dr Guleria

Adding to this, Dr Devi

Narayana Health, said: "If your O2 saturation is above 94 per cent, then there is no problem. But if it is falling after exercise, then you need to call a doctor. It is important you get the right treatment at the

Dr Naresh Trehan of Medanta Hospitals said relatively few people who are Covid positive require hospitalisation. "The hospital beds should be utilised judiciously and with responsibility. Today we have enough oxygen if we try to use it judiciously. want to tell the public that if you do not need Shetty, top cardiologist oxygen, then do not use it

as a security blanket. Waste of oxygen will only lead to depriving someone who really needs it," said Dr Trehan. His statement comes at a time when the social media is flooded with requests for oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentration machines that are either not available or are selling at exorbitant prices in the black market.

Meanwhile, the indigenously made Covaxin has been found to neutralise multiple variants of SARS-CoV-2 and effectively works against the dou ble mutant strain as well, Medical Research said on

tive till 7 am on May 1.

Thackeray announce the new restric-

travel) will have to quarantine themselves at home for 14 days after they reach their destination. Bus operators will have to stamp the passengers' hands to indicate they are supposed to stay at home for 14 days.

# Mamata: Covid-19 surge is a 'Modi-manufactured disaster'

■ Continued from Page 1 and negligence and total incompetence on its part," she said addressing public meetings at Chanchal in Malda and at Harirampur in Dakshin Dinajpur districts.

Election Commission did not accede to Trinamul Congress' request to hold the last three the eight-phase election in West Bengal on a single day, Ms Banerjee said she is forced to combat the sharp rise in infections in the state as its chief minister as well campaign for Trinamul Congress, her party.

Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Banerjee said "The country is facing a Modi-made disaster. Modi Babu will have to take responsibility on why medicines to treat Covid-19 are not available in the market ... You have to provide medicines or leave the chair. Either you control corona or

move out." "The second Covid wave is more intense There are no injections or oxygen. Vaccines and medicines are oxygen. being shipped abroad even these items in the country,"

"It is not a man-made dis-

aster, it is Modi made." she

Alleging that 65 per cent of drugs manufactured in the country to treat coronavirus have been exported, she said while medicines may be given to other countries, it has to be also ensured that Indians get adequate supply on a priority basis

"The BJP is attempting to break the spine of Bengal (but) we (TMC) have resolved to break its back-

she said earlier a rally at Balurghat in Dakshin Dinajpur district. bone," the feisty TMC supremo claimed, adding that none other than her had the strength to fight Mr Modi.

"Bengal is the land of Royal Bengal Tiger and we fight like one," she asserted. Analysts feel that as Malda-Murshidabad districts of Bengal have been traditional bases for the Congress party, Banerjee is attempting to break the Congresss stran-glehold by positioning TMC as the only alternative to BJP in the state.

chief claimed that her government has done a lot for the

welfare of ₹Rajbanshis (an ethnic group inhabiting parts of North Bengal, parts of North Bengal, Assam and Meghalayas) and minorities in the state. Ms Banerjee urged the

people "not to allow division of votes" and to unitedly support the TMC. She said if TMC is re-elected for a third consecutive

term, her government would arrange soft loans of up to ₹10 lakh for higher education. Addressing a gathering in

Muslim-dominated Malda district, Banerjee asked the electorate to cast

their votes in favour of TMC irrespective of their religious beliefs as it is the only party which has not allowed any division on grounds of religion.

There is "no one else in the market" to ensure a government which will protect religion and rights of all people other than the TMC, Ms Banerjee asserted.

Earlier addressing an election rally at Balurghat, the TMC chief asserted that West Bengal will be run only by a "Bengal engine government" and not by "Modi's double-engine".

### New lockdown-like restrictions in Maha

#### State govt bans inter-district travel Mumbai, April 21: The operate as per the exist-

Maharashtra government on Wednesday imposed several new restrictions including a ban on intercity and inter-district travel and curbs on office attendance in an attempt to bring the spiralling coronavirus infections under control.

The new restrictions under the government's "Break- the-Chain" programme will come into effect from Thursday 8 pm and will remain effec-

With the state adding over 50,000 coronavirus cases daily over the last two weeks, ministers in the Uddhav Thackeray-led government had indicated the day before that a new lockdown was imminent. However, chief minister

tions himself, unlike last time. The government notification also did not use the word "lockdown". As per the notification, Central, state and local governing body offices shall function with 15 per cent attendance. But emergency services dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic will be exempted

Other offices, allowed to

from this rule.

Weddings can take place with 25 persons in attendance in a single hall. The ceremony shall not extend beyond two hours and violation of the rule will attract a fine of ₹50,000, the notification said.



# THE ASIAN AGE

22 APRIL 2021

# Does road to Indo-Pak peace run through UAE?

here has been a flicker of interest in India-Pakistan relations in the region since late February when a military-to-military agreement between the two sides materialised. It spelt out that the ceasefire agreement of 2003 will be seriously adhered to. In the last five years or so, this agreement has been observed mainly in the breach by Pakistan, provoking retaliatory fire by India.

This has been especially the case since the Indian Air Force struck terrorist bases across the LOC in Balakot in response to the February 2019 Pulwama terrorist attack. With New Delhi ending J&K's autonomy and special status in August that year, high-intensity ceasefire violations by Pakistan became a practically daily affair. Throughout this period, India resisted suggestions by former US President Donald Trump to broker talks with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. New Delhi stuck to its view that "terror and talks can't go

In recent weeks, however, there is a sudden buzz in India-Pakistan relations,

Since the new element in the region is the sensitivity around the Afghanistan issue, the UAE could be acting at the behest of the **United States** 

which became the more noticeable after their militaries agreed to stop cross-border firings. Pakistan Army chief General Javed Qamar Bajwa and Prime Minister Imran Khan made conciliatory noises and dilated on the virtues of peace. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made solicitous enquiries during a recent illness of Mr Khan. The optics looked satisfactory. There was a Pakistan cabinet committee recommendation to import cement and sugar from India, though this was sub-sequently quashed with the usual suspects thumping their chest over Kashmir.

And yet, something does seem to be cooking. The UAE ambassador to America, Yousef al-Otaida, disclosed recently that his country had done some groundwork to facilitate India and Pakistan reach a level of "functional" relationship. This appears to be a hint that the defence ministry agreement of February was preceded by security and intelligence dialogues in third-country locations at UAE's behest. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar indeed hosted UAE foreign minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan a day after the February 25 agreement.

And now there is fresh twist to the story. Last Sunday, Mr Jaishankar's bilateral visit to the UAE overlapped with that of his Pakistan counterpart, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. India has made no comment on this. New Delhi's longstanding view is that Kashmir is strictly a "bilateral" issue between India and Pakistan. The two countries denied their foreign ministers met. This does indeed appear to be the case. Still, the episode begs the question: Did Mr Jaishankar and Mr Qureshi have to be in UAE on the same day? Is this a logistical coincidence of a somewhat unusual kind?

At this stage it cannot be ruled out that the UAE has just played host to what's called undeclared "proximity talks" at the foreign minister level between India and Pakistan in which the UAE carried messages back and forth. The entire thing will have to be deniable if the talks do not go far. More, since the new element in the region is the sensitivity around the Afghanistan issue, the UAE could be acting at the behest of the United States. The US cannot afford even accidental sabre-rattling between India and Pakistan when delicate negotiations are on, and may have sought help from an old ally that has

### Justice for George Floyd

'n a landmark judgment, the former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of two counts of murder and one of manslaughter ■ for putting such a brutal knee hold for nine minutes on the neck of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, that he choked to death. As the arraigned cop faces a decades-long prison term even as three fellow officers stand dismissed, there is general rejoicing over what the verdict means towards correcting systemic fault in the treatment of black people in the United States.

US President Joe Biden was optimistic that the "world is going to change". Whether the milestone in rendering justice expands into a genuine reform to correct systemic faults in the treatment of black, minorities and people of colour in a pluralistic society remains to be seen, but there is no doubt this is

a seminal moment in the history of US policing.

A Black man as innocent as being on a trip to the grocery store can be in danger of being pulled up in his car and shot or mistreated by policemen as George Floyd was when accused of using a counterfeit note to buy cigarettes. In death, ecame a symbol of retributive justice against a discriminato loaded against people of colour other than white or Hispanic in the US.

It was fortuitous that teenager Darnella Frazier filmed the whole episode on her phone and shared it with a shocked nation and world which saw a helpless man plead that he was unable to breathe because of the chokehold. The horrendous event, described as "a stain on the soul of our nation" by Biden, spawned the powerful Black Lives Matter movement.

Law enforcement may face numerous challenges but no police force can be above being held to account as is too often the case when it comes to police excesses in dehumanising ordinary people in the guise of controlling or arresting them. The verdict is an inflection point in race relations in the US even as it represents a moment when police forces around the world must stop to think and resolve to behave more humanely.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



# Lessons not learnt after a year of battling Covid



Patralekha Chatteriee

**Dev 360** 

he fear is back. Γhe images on television, the gut-wrenching stories of death, devastation, despair and a gnawing sense of helplessness evoke an eerie feeling of déj₹ vu - one has been down this road before.

New Delhi's cremation and burial grounds are Nigambodh changing. Ghat, one of the largest cremation grounds in the city, has stepped up its capacity from 36 to 63 pyres to accommodate the swelling numbers of the

More than one year into the coronavirus pandemic, ordinary Indians are once again flooding the social media to save the lives of their loved ones. They are turning to strangers for help as they grapple with acute shortages of medical oxygen, ventilators, and hospital beds that offer intensive care for Covid-19 patients.

locked down. And migrant workers are leaving out of fear of being abandoned.

How did we get here? What does this tell us about our pandemic preparedness and the lessons not learnt?

The oxygen crisis comes as Delhi, and the country, faces a terrifying spike in new coronavirus infections and deaths, signalling a second wave of Covid-19. India now has the world's fastest-growing Covid-19 caseload, adding more than 250,000 new infections every day for the past week or so.

The total tally of Covid-19 cases in the country has crossed 15 million; the death toll is over 1,80,530 and there is worrying news about new mutants of the virus, including B.1.167, an Indian-origin double mutant strain of the coronavirus that some experts say could be behind the dramatic surge in new infections.

Arguably, this year, some of us are a little better prepared. Some of the recent steps taken by the government are steps forward. We have the vaccine - three, in fact now, to combat the new coronavirus. The Centre has just given the green signal for vaccinations to be open to all above 18 from May 1. We have a little better health infrastructure in some parts of the country, and we are better equipped in areas like personal protective equipment, compared to the early days of the pan-

demic last year. As Gautam Menon, professor in the departments of physics and biology at Ashoka University, who has a long-standing interest in the modelling of infectious diseases, puts it: "Opening up vaccines is a genuine step forward, supporting Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech in ramping up production is a good idea and expanding vaccinations to anyone

above 18 is a good step.' But many of ill-prepared. On many fronts, we don't seem to have learnt any lessons. The second wave is

hammering us because both the political class and the people lowered their guard.

We forgot that mixed messaging never works in public health.

While official advisories continue to extol the virtues of Covid-appropriate behaviour, large religious gatherings like the Kumbh Mela and multiphase state elections were allowed. Politicians, cutting across party lines, have been addressing huge rallies. Ministers without masks have addressed crowds. Ordinary people took the cue. Late last year, when infections were going down, there were parties, weddings. birthday

celebrations. Now, the virus has back with a vengeance.

We never learnt things can get progressively worse in a pandemic, that we can't afford to assume

The second wave is hammering us because both the political class and the people lowered their guard. We forgot that mixed messaging never works in public health.

a best-case scenario and go slow on contingency planning, and most important, that openness and data transparency are musts. Take the case of medical

oxygen, critical for Covid-19 patients whose condition becomes serious. As is amply clear, India is ill-prepared on this front. Faced with a sharp spike in Covid cases and the soaring demand for medical oxygen, the Centre has banned the supply of oxygen for industrial purposes except in nine spec-

But what was the extent of preparations for this eventuality over the past

In October, the government took a decision to install oxygen-generating plants on-site in 162 government hospitals across India to support Covid-19 treatment. Funds were sanctioned early this year but according to one recent media report, only 33 such plants have come up so far. Meanwhile, states jostle for depleting medical oxygen reserves.

The oxygen crisis is not just about increasing capacity but also transport. Availability of oxygen is also about enough cryogenic (tank) trucks, cylinders, refilling facilities and so on. But India is ill-equipped on this front too. Saket Tiku, All India Industrial Gas Manufacturers Association president, says that while it is possible to ramp up oxygen output, there is the issue about not having an adequate number of trucks for oxygen transportation.

Take the issue of genomic sequencing and information about the new mutants. There is not enough data on the subject in the public domain and we don't know how many samples in India have shown the so-called double mutation (B.1.617).

Recent media reports suggest that the double mutant was first detected last October through genome sequencing of a virus sample. However, the genome sequencing exercise has been running at a slow pace. Not enough resources appear to have been invested in it. The sluggish pace could be due to complacency because of the steadily falling Covid-19 curve at the end of 2020.

As Prof. Menon points "Getting adequate genomic sequencing in place was actually crucial and should have been well in place December."

There are other lessons we have not learnt. Last year, migrant workers walked down highways in a desperate attempt to get back to their villages hundreds of miles away as the nationwide lockdown kicked in.

As Covid cases spike, and several states announce a slew of restrictions including night curfews and weekend lockdowns, migrant workers are, once again, staring at an uncertain future.

A parliamentary standing committee report has recommended that the government should ensure a decent minimum wage, food security and safe living conditions to all workers employed in both the formal and informal sector by including them in health services, cash transfers and other social programmes. The committee also suggested the launch of a national database on migrant workers as it will help in the identification of migrant workers and in delivering ration and other benefits to them.

Nothing much has moved on the ground till

And migrant workers are boarding buses and trains to get back to their villages

Much of this could have been avoided. There must mechanisms which enable the government to listen to and incorporate independent voices in its decision making.

> development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee @gmail.com.

The writer focuses on

#### **PM'S LAME ADDRESS**

The PM's clarion call to the people to desist from free mingling during the course of his televised address to the nation is far from reassuring. His warning that lockdowns are a last resort shows that his government's helplessness in the face of the surging pandemic. Yet he and his ministers have continued with election rallies in states like West Bengal. Invoking Ramnavami and Ramzan to urge people to follow Covid protocol, therefore, does not cut ice. Why did his government not call a janata curfew on Holi? By all accounts, the address was nothing to write home about.

**Deepak Singhal** Noida

#### LATE AWAKENING

AFTER HIS "toofani daur" (stormy run) in the election-bound states and particularly in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called the second Covid wave a "toofan" (storm) that has swept the country and asked citizens not to lose heart. People wonder how the lockdown was the first resort vear and the last one this year. Even so, elections and power-grabbing seem to have kept him more occupied. After one year of the pandemic, we have not built infrastructure. It took eight months to invite bids for over 150 oxygen generation plants costing just ₹200 crores. Six months later, most still aren't up and running.

Bidyut K. Chatterjee

Faridabad

#### **GOODBYE, SANKHA**

THE PASSING AWAY of celebrated Bengali poet Sankha Ghosh (89), a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Sahitya Akademi Award, Rabindra Award, Saraswati Award and Jnanpith Award, due to Covid-19 today, 21 April, is shocking. Sankha Ghosh belonged to the era of Bengali poets after Jibanananda Das. Ghosh had also spent several years teaching in Delhī University, University of Iowa and Visva Bharati. He always spoke against intolerance. RIP.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

**Every Monday the best letter of** the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

# Dilip Cherian



Private sector specialists will helm Modi's

reforms push

n September last year, the Modi sarkar gave the go-ahead to its most ambitious bid to reform the bureaucracy — a national capacity building programme. Finally, the programme has got underway with the creation of the Capacity Building Commission (CBC) under the National Programme for Civil Service Capacity Building aka

"Mission Karmayogi".

And given the government's recent obsession with domain experts from the private sector, the man appointed to head the new CBC is no babu, but Adil Zainulbhai, the chief of the Quality Council of India (QCI), which is an autonomous body under the department of industrial policy and promotion. He is a former chairman of McKinsey India and a known supporter of the Prime Minister. The CBC will have two members — Ramaswami Balasubramaniam and Praveen Pardeshi — with only

the latter being an IAS officer (of

the 1985 batch). For those who look for patterns in things, consider that Zainulbhai's appointment came on the same day as the announcement that Mallika Srinivasan will be the chairperson of the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), the first time that a private sector specialist has been appointed as the head of the board that is responsible for the appointment of top management posts in the

Central Public Sector Enterprises. Looking back further, there was another clue when in February Prime Minister Narendra Modi attacked the IAS in the Parliament, no less. The message then is clear the government has firmly

announced its intention of bringing in more domain knowledge specialists than continue to depend on the "heaven-born" who are generalists by training. They will no doubt put up some resistance, but Mr Modi is

bent upon breaching this wall and bring in much-needed reforms.

#### HC STAYS APPOINTMENT OF FORMER TN CHIEF SECY

Former Tamil Nadu chief secretary Girija Vaidhyanathan faces uncertain days ahead. Slated to join the National Green Tribunal (NGT) as an expert member, the appointment has been put on hold by the

Madras high court. The court has granted an interim stay on her appointment stating that she did not meet the minimum eligibility criterion of possessing five years of experience in handling environmental issues. The court was acting in response to a petition filed by a group of environmental conservation activists, which argues for cancellation and nullification of the December 12 notification about

Vaidhyanathan's appointment. Sources point out

expert member of the NGT along with her 1987 batch colleague K. Satyagopal, who retired as additional chief secretary and commissioner of revenue administration. Ms Vaidhyanathan's argument that she had held various administrative positions related to the environment clearly did not cut much ice with the court. The court will continue hearing the case.

#### **MAHARASHTRA BABUS SEEK**

**CENTRAL DEPUTATION** The fierce face-off between the ruling Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and the Opposition BJP has led to many "blue-eyed" officers seen as close to former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis seeking the "cooler climes" of a Central deputation. Sources say that several IAS and IPS officers who wielded clout in the tenure of Mr Fadnavis are on deputation to the Centre.

Sources Vaidhyanathan was appointed an Commissioner Sanjeev Kumar, a

1993-batch IAS officer, has taken over as chairman of the Airports Authority of India, while Best general manager S.K. Bagde has been appointed an additional secretary in the ministry of housing and urban development. While Mr Bagde had completed his tenure, Sanjeev Kumar was GST commissioner for only a year and four months. Similarly, former DGP S.K. Jaiswal has taken over as DG of CISF while former state intelligence commissioner Rashmi Shukla has now gone to the CRPF. Another senior IPS officer, Manoj Kumar Sharma, who was in the Maharashtra State Security Corporation, has taken up a Central deputation.

While it would be erroneous to see political colour in what should be seen as routine assignments, few observers are willing to buy this line.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.













IN BRIEF

#### **Varsity staffer** killed in Nigeria

Kaduna, Nigeria, April 21: Gunmen have attacked a private university in Nigeria's northern Kaduna state, killing one staff member and kidnap ping some students, police and officials said Wednesday.

It was not immediately clear how many students had been abducted from Greenfield University during the Tuesday night attack and one official said they were still conducting a headcount.

Γwo officials at the university told AFP at least 20 students were still missing though it was unclear how many had been taken by gunmen or may

#### **Queen's 95th** b'day low-key

London, April 21: Queen Elizabeth II is marking her 95th birthday in a low-key fashion at Windsor Castle, just days after the funeral of her husband, Prince Philip.

Some members of the royal family are expected to be with the queen on Wednesday. Her birthday falls within the two-week royal mourning period for Philip that is being observed until Friday. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was one of many people who sent best wishes to the mona-

"I have always had the highest admiration for Her Majesty and her service to this country and the Commonwealth," Johnson said.

#### **Erdogan fires** trade minister

Ankara, April 21: Turkish President Recep Tayyir Erdogan fired the country's trade minister Wednesday following allegations that her husband's company received a tender to sell disinfectants to the ministry.

In a mini Cabinet reshuffle, Erdogan also split the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services into two and appointed new ministers to lead them, according to a decree published in the Official Gazette. The president named Mehmet Mus, a prominent ruling party lawmaker, as trade minister to replace Ruhsar Pekcan, according to

#### **Indonesian sub** with 53 missing

Jakarta, April 21: Indonesia's navy is searching for a submarine that went missing north of the resort island of Bali with 53 people on board, the military said Wednesday.

Military chief Hadi Tjahi anto said the KRI Nanggala 402 was participating in a training exercise when it missed a scheduled reporting call. The submarine is believed to have disappeared in waters about 60 miles (95 kilometres) north of Bali, he said.

Tjahjanto said the navy has deployed scores of ships to search the area, including a hydrographic survey ship, and has asked for help from Singapore and Australia, which have submarine rescue vessels. Local media reports said the navy believes the submarine sank into a trough at a depth of 700 metres.

#### **LANKA OBSERVES 2ND ANNIV OF EASTER ATTACKS**

Colombo, April 21: Sri Lanka on Wednesday commemorated the second anniversary of the Easter Sunday terror attacks by observing a two-minute silence to remember the victims of the coordinated suicide blasts in 2019 — one of the deadliest attacks in the coun-

try's history. Nine suicide bombers belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing 258 people, including 11 Indians. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa observed the two minutes silence at his official residence in Colombo in honour of the victims of the blasts. "Held two minutes of silence in remembrance of all those who were victims of the #EasterSundayAttack two years ago," Prime Minister Rajapaksa tweeted.

Sri Lankan lawmakers who were all dressed in black also observed silence in the parliament complex. Addressing the main memorial service held at the St Anthony's Church, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, said that the authorities had failed so far to identify the real perpetrators of the crime.



People celebrate as the verdict is announced in the trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin outside the

# **US cop Chauvin guilty** of killing George Floyd

Jury: Former Minneapolis officer guilty of all 3 charges

**Washington, April 21:** A federal grand jury has found Derek Chauvin, a found Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer, guilty on all three counts of murder of African American George Floyd last year. Floyd (46), was killed in a brutal abuse of police force on May 25 lact year during an efformeon in Columbus (Whon Police and Formeon in Columbus when police of the police in Columbus (Ohio), April Dispatch reports the police of the police in Columbus (Ohio), April Dispatch reports the police of May 25 last year during an arrest after a store clerk alleged, he had passed a counterfeit \$20 bill in Minneapolis. Chauvin (45), pinned down Floyd with his knee on the pavement of a south Minneapolis intersection for more

than nine minutes.
"I can't breathe. I can't breathe," were his last words. The horrific death of Floyd resulted in a nationwide violent protest. A 12-member federal jury in Minneapolis on Tuesday found Chauvin guilty on all three counts: second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. President soul. The knee on the neck of justice for PoC Americans. Profound fear and

arrests of opposition pro-

testers. Addressing law-

makers and senior offi-

cials in his annual state of

the nation address, Putin

said Russia would respo-

nd swiftly and harshly to

moves against its inter-

ests and condemned what

he said had been a coup

provocations threatening

the fundamental interests

of our security will regret

their deeds, more than

they have regretted anything in a long time,"

He hailed Russia's battle

against the coronavirus

and development of vac-

cines and, with parliame-

ntary elections due later

this year, announced a

raft of populist social spending measures. — AFP

Putin said.

'The organisers of any

attempt in ally Belarus.

# Police shoot, kill teen

**Columbus (Ohio), April** Dispatch reported. Office-21: Police shot and killed a rs had responded to an afternoon in Columbus just as the verdict was being announced in the trial for the killing of George Floyd.

The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation was at the scene Tuesday night on the city's southeast side, The Columbus

Joe Biden said it was a murder in the full light of

day and it ripped the bli-

Don't cross the red line,

Moscow, April 21: Russian

police on Wednesday searched the Saint Pete-

rsburg offices of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei

Navalny and detained his

top aide Lyubov Sobol and

spokeswoman Kira Yarm-

vsh. his allies said, ahead

of nationwide protests in

The morning police

raids came ahead of

protests planned in more

than 100 cities across

Russia on Wednesday evening in support of the

hunger-striking Navalny,

who is protesting his lack

of medical treatment in

prison. "Searches were

carried out from the very

morning," his team in

Saint Petersburg said on

Twitter. at least 2 country.

his support.

hospital, where she was pronounced dead. -APtrauma. The pain, the exhaustion that PoC Americans experience every sin-

rs had responded to an

attempted stabbing call

when police shot the girl

at about 4:45 p.m., the newspaper reported. The

911 caller reported a female was trying to stab

them before hanging up,

The girl was taken to a

according to the Dispatch.

come for the office's cam-

eraman, several volun-

Sobol's lawyer Vladimir

Voronin said on Twitter

that police had pulled her

"According to her, she

was detained by many uniformed officers," he

He later said she was

taken to a police station

but was being kept in a

Yarmysh retweeted her

lawyer saying that she

was "just detained at the

entrance of her building"

The independent moni-tor OVD-Info said Wednesday that police

had conducted searches

and detained activists in

at least 20 cities across the

out of a taxi.

police wagon.

wrote.

and activists.

nders off for the whole world to see the systemic gle day," Biden said.
The verdict giving jusracism in the country. tice, he said is not enough. "The systemic racism is "We can't stop here. In a stain on our nation's order to deliver real change and reform, we can and we must do more

that a tragedy like this will ever happen to occur again, to ensure the black and brown people or any-one so they don't fear the interactions with law enforcement, that they don't have to wake up knowing that they can lose their very life in the course of just living their life," he said.

In an address to the nation soon after the ver-dict, Vice President Kamala Harris said PoC Americans and PoC men in particular have been treated throughout the course of history as less than human.

"Today we feel a sigh of relief. Still, it cannot take away the pain. A measure of justice isn't the same as equal justice. This verdict brings us a step closer and the fact is we still have work to do," she aid. Observing that America has a long history of sys-temic racism, Harris said:

#### 250,000 PEOPLE **DISPLACED IN MYANMAR: UN**

million people, a United Nations rights envoy said Wednesday. The junta has stepped

up its use of lethal force to quash mass demonstrations against a Feb. 1 coup which ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. At least 738 people have been killed and 3,300 are languishing in jails as political prisoners, according to a local

monitoring group.
"Horrified to learn that... the junta's attacks have already left nearly a quarter (of a) million Myanmar people displaced," UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews twee-

ted on Wednesday. "The world must act immediately to address this humanitarian catastrophe." More than 2,000 Karen people have crossed Myanmar's border.

# US-backed Afghan peace meet postponed **Sponsors cite lack of prospects for progress**

upcoming international peace conference that was meant to move Afghanistan's warring sides to a power-sharing deal and ensure an orderly US exit

from the country has been

postponed, its sponsors announced Wednesday. They cited a lack of pro-spects for meaningful progress. As peace efforts stalled, Germany's Defence Ministry suggested Nato military planners were contemplating a pos-sible withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan as early as July 4. That's more than two months ahead of the planned Sep. 11 pullout date. "The Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul are currently considering whether to shorten the withdrawal period," said German Defence Ministry spokesman David Helmbold. "The 4th of July is now being considered as a pullout date. The ministry informed the (German pa-

mmittee about this today." Still, the latest delay in getting Afghanistan's warring sides to hammer out a peace deal underscored the difficulties the Biden administration and Nato are facing in orchestrating an orderly exit from conflict-scarred Afghanistan. Both have said they would begin withdrawing their remaining troops a total of close to 13,000 from the country on May 1 and complete the pullout

conference came several days after Taliban insurgents, who are key to peace efforts, dismissed the US-promoted conference in Istanbul as a political spectacle serving American interests. No new date was given

by Sep. 11, no matter what.

The decision to delay the

for the conference, which was to have started Saturday under the sponsorship of the United Nations, Turkey and Qatar. Turkey's foreign minister said the conference was delayed until after the Mu-

Ramadan, which ends in mid-May. Just hours before the announcement of the postponement, a suicide bomber attacked a convoy of Afghan security personnel, wounding seven people in the capital Kabul. The Interior Ministry said civilians and security personnel were among the wounded. The attack was the first in weeks in the capital, even as targeted killings have escalated and Afghanistan's security personnel have come under relentless attacks

by Taliban insurgents. Recent months have also seen an increase in government bombing raids on suspected Taliban positions and increased raids by Afghan special forces. Residents fear the attack could be a harbinger of what's to come as foreign troops prepare to begin their final withdrawal from Afghanistan. No one took immediate responsibility for the attack.

# 200 million citizens have been vaccinated: China

**Beijing, April 21:** Around 200 million Chinese, or 14.29 per cent of the population, have been vaccinated for Covid-19 so far, with an emphasis on front-line workers, university students and people living in border areas, a health official said

China is ramping up vaccination efforts after a slow start, prompted in part by the virtual elimination of domestic transmission. Just two local cases were reported on Wednesday, both in the city of Ruili, which bor-ders on Myanmar.

Center of Disease Control official Cui Gang told a news conference that key areas and members of the population were being prioritized for vaccines. China has approved five domestically produced vaccines and exported mi-llions of doses, although some scientists believe they provide less protec-

tion that those by Pfizer. Moderna and AstraZeneca. The Chinese vaccines have an efficacy range of 50.7 per cent to 79.3 per cent, based on company data, lower than their foreign peers but still effec-tive. China is now giving millions of shots a day and a top government doctor, Zhong Nanshan, has announced a goal of vaccinating 560 million of the country's 1.4 billion people by mid-June.

than two months starting in Jan. 2020 after the Coronavirus was first detected in late 2019. Wuhan became known as the epicentre of the pandemic, although Beijing has suggested the virus might have been circulating earlier and possibly brought to China from abroad. Since then, China has controlled the virus through stringent border

China locked down the

city of Wuhan for more

#### **FRANCE TO PUT ENTRY CURBS ON INDIANS**

Paris, April 21: France will impose new entry restrictions on travellers from India to fight a contagious Coronavirus variant spreading in that country, an official said on Wednesday.

The restrictions come in addition to those previously announced regarding four other countries Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Brazil that will be implemented starting from Saturday.

Government spokesm-an Gabriel Attal also confirmed that France will lift its ban on domestic travel as planned on May 3, but will maintain its nighttime curfew, now in place from 7 p.m. to 6

#### Putin's warning to rivals Radioactive stuff: Lanka Yangon, April 21: The Myanmar military's cra-Police detain **Moscow, April 21:** President Vladimir Putin ckdown on anti-coup protesters has displaced asks Chinese ship to leave warned foreign rivals on close to a quarter of a Wednesday against "crossing the red line" with Navalny aides Russia, as he gave a key speech amid deep ten-sions with the West and

Colombo, April 21: Sri Lanka has asked a Chinese ship to leave the southern port of Hambantota after it was found to be carrying radioactive material, officials said on Wednesday.

Anil Ranjith, the top official of the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Authority (SLAEA), said that the ship was on its way to China from the port of Rotterdam when it developed technical difficulties and entered the Hamban-tota Port. The SLAEA said the vessel had failed to disclose its radioactive cargo when it docked in at

The ship was managed by the China Merchants Port Holding Company. The main Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa said in parliament that the Sri Lanka Navy, who is in ence of dangerous cargo

# Oz scrapping BRI deal: China hits out

Beijing, April 21: China late Wednesday called an Australian federal government decision to scrap a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) deal between Beijing and Victoria state "unreasonable provocative" as relations tank between the two countries

had not informed the pres-

"The BRI cooperation charge of the Hambantota on board cargo when they port security, was not allowed to carry out inspections on the vessel. "The local agent of the vessel

between China and the to deepening economic and trade between the two sides," a statement by the Chinese Embassy in Australia said. "This is another unreasonable provocative move taken by the Australian side against China." — AFP

sought permission from the Harbour Master to enter the port." Ranjith said it was a commercial vessel, which carried radioactive material.

# IMPORTANT | SPEECH Former Prez Donald Trump withdrew US from the Paris Climate deal

# Xi to attend Biden virtual climate summit today

Beijing, April 21: Chinese President Xi Jinping will take part in US President Joe Biden's climate summit being organised virtually on Thursday and Friday in which several world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will participate.

At the invitation of Biden, President Xi will attend and deliver an "important speech" at the Leaders' Summit on Climate on Thursday by video link from Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday. Biden has invited 40 world leaders, including Modi, to the two-day conference beginning April 22, which according to a White House statement will underscore the urgency and the economic benefits of stronger climate action.

It will be a key milestone on the road to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this Nov. in Glasgow, the statement said. Chinese experts consider invitation to Xi for the summit as a positive signal for the China-US relationship, facing growing tensions on a number of issues like Xinjiang, Hong

#### EU reaches climate deal

Brussels, April 21: The European Union reached a tentative climate deal that should make the 27-nation bloc climate-neutral by 2050, with member states and parliament agreeing on the targets on the eve of a virtual summit that US President Biden will host.

Kong and Taiwan. The Chinese top leader's attendance was confirmed just a day before the summit, and a day after Rus-

"Our political commitment to becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050 is now also a legal commitment. The Climate Law sets the EU on a green path for a generation," said EU Commission President Ursula von der

sian President Vladimir Putin confirmed he will be speaking at the summit, showing that the two countries are willing to take

part in global efforts to address the climate issue despite tensions with the US, state-run *Global Times* daily reported. The US and China are the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases. Former US President Donald Trump withdrew America from the Paris Climate deal but Biden announced the return of the US to the Paris climate accord after he took over the presidency. Climate change has been a major area of focus for Biden.
Ahead of the US-led cli-

mate summit, Xi held a video summit exchanging

in-depth views and reaching a consensus for cooperation on climate change with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. China's attendance signals that cooperation between China and the US is still the mainstream tone. Li Haidong, a professor at the Institute of International Relations of the China Foreign Affairs University, told the daily. "The attendance of our leader can also reassure other countries, as the world anxiously needs a strong voice on this issue," Li said. -PTI

#### CARGO VESSEL'S 4 FOUND DEAD IN PHILIPPINES

Manila, April 21: Rescuers in the southern Philippines found the bodies of four crew members Wednesday and rescued seven others who jumped off a cargo vessel, which took in water and listed after its anchor broke in rough

seas, officials said. Nine other crew members of the LCT Cebu Great Ocean remain missing. The coast guard and maritime police were continuing a search off Surigao del

Norte province.





INDICATORS		%
Sensex	47,705.80	-0.51
Nifty 50	14,296.40	-0.44
S&P 500*	4,158.17	0.56
Dollar (₹)	74.89	-0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.71	-0.60
Euro (₹)	90.31	-0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,756▼305	0.65
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.35	-1.04
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.074	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.585	-0.014
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

#### Instagram curbs on unsolicited messages

Facebook Inc is beefing up tools on its photo sharing app instagram to combat harassment and hate speech in private messaging and comments. Instagram announced it will let users hide direct message requests that contain offensive words, phrases or emojis. All direct message requests from a predefined list will be filtered into a separate hidden requests folder. People will also be given the option to preemptively block new a/cs.

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**■** Motor insurance business dips in FY21

# Health, property drive non-life biz

**FALAKNAAZ SYED** MUMBAI, APRIL 21

Strong uptick in demand for new Covid-related policies (Corona Kavach and penetration among mass segments through the newly launched Arogya Sanjeevani plan and high property insurance rates helped the non-life insurance industry clock a modest 5.20 per cent growth in 2020-21 even as the country largely remained under lockdown during the fiscal first half. Other segments such as motor, travel, crop and marine insurance reported a decline in business.

By the data released by

the insurance regulator on Wednesday, the gross premium underwritten by the non-life insurance industry up to March 31, 2021 grew by 5.20 per cent to Rs 1.98 låkh crore. Health insurance during the year

**MICHAEL GONSALVES** 

Maruti Suzuki's increasing

use of the rail network to

transport its vehicles to far

flung cities and towns is

paying off. India's biggest

carmaker despatched more than 1,80,000 vehicles

in FY2021, its highest ship-

ments through the Indian

Railways in a fiscal year.

This amounts to nearly 13

Over the last five years, Maruti Suzuki transported

per cent of total sales.

RAIL ROUTE PAYS OFF FOR MARUTI SUZUKI

grew by 13.37 per cent to Rs 58,584 crore while the property insurance segment posted 28 per cent growth with a gross premium underwritten of Rs 20,139 crore. On the other hand, with new car sales taking a hit and the insurance regulator maintaining a status quo on motor third party premium rates, the motor insurance business declined by 2 per cent to Rs 67.790 crore.

Similarly, crop insurance declined by 3.37 per cent to

over 7.2 lakh vehicles via

the rails. The focus on

using railways has helped

the company offset over 3,200 tonne of CO2 emis-

"The transportation of

finished vehicles via rail-

ways has many tangible

benefits. It is a clean, environment-friendly mode of

transportation. It reduces

congestion on highways

and there is more space

available to other vehicles," Kenichi Ayukawa, MD & CEO, said.

sions, cumulatively.

Sanjay Datta, underwriting and claims at ICICI Lombard General Insurance, said, "New car sales were down during the first six months...Crop insurance business fell as several states discontinued the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Similarly, travel insurance business was also impacted due to lockdowns. So was marine insurance."

"Its very difficult to predict the outlook for FY 22. We will have to wait and see how Covid plays out. Claims have started rising since the last week of March," added Datta.

In July, the regulator had mandated insurers to provide Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak health insurance policies. These two plans cover hospitali-sation expenses, domiciliary treatment and the cost of consumables like PPE kits, masks and gloves, etc.

#### **COVAXIN PREVENTS HOSPITALISATION** 100%: BHARAT BIO

**FC BUREAU** HYDERABAD, APRIL 21

Bharat Biotech said on Wednesday the phase-3 analysis of Covaxin has demonstrated 100 per cent efficacy against the cases of severe Covid-19 infections.

"The efficacy against severe Covid-19 disease was 100 per cent with an impact on reduction in hospitalisations. The efficacy against asymptomatic Covid-19 infection was 70 per cent, suggesting decreased transmission Covaxin recipients," the

company said. It said the phase-3 study enrolled 25,800 persons in the 18-98 age group, with analysis conducted 14 days after the second dose. Prof. Balram Bhar-

gava, secretary, department of health research DG-ICMR said, 'The vaccine has shown the efficacy of 78 per cent in the second interim analysis."

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 21

Air pollution costs Indian businesses about Rs 7 lakh crore every fiscal in lost revenue and productivity, according to a study. The cost of air pol-lution for Indian businesses is about \$95 billion, Rs 7 lakh crore, or around 3 per cent of India's total GDP, says the study by Dalberg Advisors, Clean

Air Fund and CII.

**AIR POLLUTION COSTS INDIA INC ₹7 L CR** 

Indian workers take an estimated 1.3 billion days off work annually because of the adverse effects of air pollution on their health, amounting to \$6 billion in lost revenue. Their on-the-job productivity also comes down, decreasing business revenues by up to \$24 billion. Further, it leads to lower footfall in consumer-facing businesses

# Tata Steel receives UAE payment via blockchain

New Delhi, April 21: Tata Steel on Wednesday said it received

"blockchain-enabled transaction", a global first for the steel industry, from a UAE-based firm for a steel export order. The steel maker did not

disclose the size of the transaction.

"Tata Steel and HSBC successfully executed a blockchain enabled transaction, a global first for the steel industry. This transaction was executed on Contour's blockchain platform," a company statement said.

The live trade finance



transaction involved the export of steel by Tata Steel to Universal Tube & Plastic Industries, UAE,

the statement added. "This unique initiative, executed in collaboration with HSBC, demonstrates our continued efforts to lead technology-led disruptions by challenging

reimagining the global trade set-up," said Peeyush Gupta, vice president (steel marketing & sales), Tata Steel.

Explaining the concept of a blockchain transaction, Tata Steel said this technology in trade finance enables comprehensive visibility for all involved parties and enhances security in payment. It helps reduce the document negotiation and banking transaction cycle from week(s) to a few days. It also shortens the transaction time of letter

# Nomura upbeat on financial stocks

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** 

The recent corrections have made fundamentally strong banks and NBFCs good investment candidates, as financial stocks had delivered strong returns from last year lows, says Japanese investment bank Nomura. Similar trajectory is

expected as the second Covid-19 wave pans out and impacts the same set of economic agencies and sectors. Top financial stocks have corrected sharply by 8 to 33 per cent from recent historical peaks as the second wave has soured sentiments.

Lockdowns are likely to be localised and relatively less stringent this time, which augurs well for financial stocks, it said.

Banks' loan growth has been tepid during the pan-demic so far and the out-

#### FPI HOLDINGS UP BY \$105 BN IN H2

of credit.

**Mumbai, April 21:** The value of the FPI holdings in the domestic equities reached a record \$555 billion in 2020-21, a steep billion growth between September 2020 and March 2021, according to a report. In comparison, the

holdings of the domestic institutional investors, at \$203 billion, were not even half of their foreign counterparts, the report by Bank of America (BofA) Securities said. In 2020-21, foreign portfolio investors have pumped in a record \$37

look is also not encouraging for the near future. It said retail loan growth

has hovered in 8-10 per cent range between April

billion, or Rs 2.75 lakh crore, into Indian equities, the highest in two decades, according to data from the National Securities Depository. In FY10, FY11 and FY13,

FPI inflows had crossed \$20 billion.

The domestic institutional investor inflows remained at a negative Rs 1.38 lakh crore in 2020-21, taking the total value of their holdings to \$203 billion, spread across ETFs (\$38 bn), large-cap fund (\$24 bn), flexi cap funds (\$22 bn) and mid-cap fund (\$16 bn). — PTI

2020 and April 2021. Loan growth is likely to remain tepid until the impact of Covid-19 is fully minimised, it said.

# **GAMES**

SHORT TAKES

#### **UAE** cricketer is banned for fixing

Dubai: The ICC on Wednesday banned United Arab Emirates (UAE) player Qadeer Ahmed Khan for five years from all cricket after he admitted breaching the anti-corruption code and also charged Mehardeep Chhavakar on six counts for corruption. Khan was charged in October 2019. The ICC said that Khan admitted

to six breaches that relates to failing to disclose approaches or invitations received in relation to the Zimbabwe v UAE series in April 2019. Khan disclosed inside information in August 2019. He failed to disclose to the ACU full details of any approaches or invitations received. - PTI

#### **Goa lose game in Asian League**

Margao: FC Goa put up a spirited fight before going down 1-2 to Group 'E' leaders Persepolis FC, bringing to an end the Indian club's unbeaten run in the AFC Champions League here on Tuesday

Quite remarkably, FC Goa grabbed the lead when Edu Bedia headed in to the bottom right corner from the centre of the box in the 14th minute. Bedia was assisted by Brandon Fernandes following a set piece

But the Indian club's joy was short-lived as Persepolis FC fought back strongly to not just equalise but also go ahead in the high-octane contest. - PTI

#### **India-Britain** hockey put off

Lausanne, Switzerland: The FIH Hockey Pro League matches between India and Great Britain, scheduled for May 8-9 in London, were on Wednesday postponed following the UK government's decision to add India to the travel 'red list'. "FIH, Hockey India and Great Britain Hockey are monitoring the evolution of the situation in the hope of rearranging these matches at a later date," a FIH release said. India will still travel to Europe to play the matches against Spain (May 15-16) and Germany (May 22-23) while Britain will host Germany (May 12-13), USA (Women, May 22-23)

# Super flop! Elite league in red

# European Super League dead as top teams withdraw following furious fan response

Milan giants and Atletico Madrid followed all six English Premier League clubs in pulling out of the European Super League Wednesday, dealing a fatal blow to the project.

withdrawals by nester City, Manchester United. Manchester Arsenal. Liverpool. Chelsea and Tottenham came just 48 hours after the league's unveiling late on Sunday following a furious response from fans and officials.

involved — Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan -Madrid

initial group of 12 clubs to

main drivers benind the plans, having missed out on the Champions League The

the voice of those who love this wonderful sport". The three Italian clubs Italian

admitted defeat and La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid also pulled out. Barcelona — the last of the

sign up — have yet to make any comment but the project in its current form is dead in the water. AC Milan were one the

for the past seven seasons. seven-time European champions said change was necessary due to the changing football landscape but admitted they "must be sensitive to

champions said they remained "convinced of the soundness of the project's sport, commercial and legal premises" but accepted it could not go ahead in its original form.

by Manchester City, Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea and **Tottenham were** followed by Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan and **Spanish leaders** Atletico Madrid.

The Super League promised guaranteed entry for its founding clubs and billions of dollars in payments. Most of the clubs have huge debts and wage bills, and suffered a sharp drop in revenues during the coronavirus pandemic. But the project was vehe-

The withdrawals barred from representing

mently opposed across the

football spectrum, from fans to players, coaches, politicians and UEFA and FIFA, the European and world football bodies. The clubs were threatened with a ban irom domestic and European football, while their players could even have been

> their countries. president Aleksander Ceferin struck a conciliatory tone on Wednesday, saying he wanted to "rebuild the unity" of European football, and described the English clubs as "back in

> the fold" "I said yesterday that it is admirable to admit a mistake and these clubs made a big mistake," Ceferin said in a statement.

fold now and I know they have a lot to offer not just to our competitions but to the whole of the European game. The important thing rebuild the unity that the game enjoyed before this and move forward together," Ceferin added.

Shares in Juventus plunged by more than 13 per cent on Wednesday following a slump in the value of Manchester United stocks.

In response to English pull-outs, Super League had said it was looking for ways to "reshape", insisting the "status quo of European football needs to change".

#### PLANS AND TEST **EVENTS CHANGE** FOR OLYMPICS Tokyo, April 21: Each day

seems to bring another change to the Tokyo Olympics as surging coronavirus cases in Japan threaten planning for the games, which are to open in just over three months. A leg of the torch relay on Wednesday was moved off the public streets in Matsuyama City in the Japanese prefecture of Ehime. It was to take place in a city park with no spectators or stage performances," an organising committee said.

This followed the torch being detoured last week in Osaka and run only in a city park.

Some legs of the relay will also being taken off the public streets on May 1-2 on Japan's southern island of Ōkinawa.

The torch relay will feature a total of 10,000 runners crisscrossing Japan until it arrives on July 23 at the opening ceremony in Tokyo. The relay began on March 25 in northeastern Japan and, though it has run with few incidents, organisers have cautioned that it may need to be rerouted as conditions change. -AP

# 8 Indians punch into title rounds

YOUTH WORLD | CHAMPIONSHIP

New Delhi, April 21: Eight Indian boxers, including Kazakhstan's Zhuldyz seven women, stormed Shayakhmetova. into the finals of the youth world championships in Poland, unprecedented achievement for the country in the marquee age group event.

Apart from the eight finalists, three others settled for bronze medals at the tournament, a performance which betters the 10 medals that India won in its best ever show not too long back in the 2018 edition in Hungary.

The ones who made the

finals, to be held on

Thursday after a rest day on Wednesday, were Gitika Babyrojisana 1kg), Vinka (51kg), Vinka Arundhati Chanu (60 kg)Choudhary Poonam (57kg), Thokchom Sanamachu Chanu (75kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) among women.

Among men, only Sachin (56kg) made the summit clash while three others signed off with bronze

Gitika defeated Italy's Erika Prisciandaro 5-0 to set up a clash with Poland's Natalia Dominika, while Vinka In the evening session, prevailed 4-1 against Sachin was the lone Czech Republic's Veronika Indian to triumph. Gajdova

Arundhati had little trouble getting Uzbekistan's chabonu Abdullaeva in a unanimous 5-0 verdict and she will be up against Poland's Marcinkowska in her

summit showdown. Babyrojisana notched up a similar result against Italy's Elen Ayari. She has Russia's Valeriia Linkova to contend with in the finals. Manipur's Babyrojisana is the reigning Asian youth champion.

Poonam sailed Uzbekistan's Sitora
Turdibekova 5-0, and
France's Sthelyne Grosy
awaits her in the gold medal bout.

Sanamacha clinched a 4-1 triumph over Poland's Daria Parada. She will square off against Kazakhstan's Dana Diday in her last bout of the

Alfiya had a tough one against Poland's Oliwia Toborek but the Indian did enough to prevail 3-2. Moldova's Daria Kozorez will be her final challenge.

#### **WOMEN RECURVE ARCHERS TOP QUALIFICATION AT WC**

Guatemala City, April 21: Indian recurve archers had a blazing start on their return to the World Cup after nearly two years as the women's team topped the

qualifications with Ankita Bhakat and Deepika Kumari's super show in the opening stage here. Atanu Das grabbed the second spot behind world number one Brady Elison to propel the men's team to a third place finish, as India have qualified straight to quarterfinals in the men's and women's team event besides mixed section where Das and Deepika will be in action together for the first time after their mar-

"Mixed team, you know, I like very much. If I get to play with Deepika then it's awesome. We're a couple you know and then we'd be the first couple to play in the Olympics. So it's fun," Das, who last won a mixed pair bronze with Deepika at the Asian Championships, said.





Berlin, April 21: Bayern Munich can be crowned Bundesliga champions this weekend after taking a 10 point lead at the top of the table with a 2-0 win at home to Bayer Leverkusen

and

Bundesliga match against Bayer Leverkusen in Munich on Tuesday.

earlier suffered a shock at relegationthreatened Cologne.

Bayern Munich's Cameroonian forward Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (left) scores the opening goal during their

With just four games to go, club world champions Bayern will be guaranteed a ninth German league title in a row with a won at Mainz on Saturday.

It was business as usual as Bayern quickly domi-Leverkusen and scored from their first

Bayern set for ninth German title When Thomas Mueller's shot was saved, Choupo-Moting was on hand to tap home the rebound on seven minutes.

Kimmich Bayern's second goal on 14 minutes when David Alaba's cross only went as far as the Germany midfielder who fired home from the edge of the area. Leverkusen raised their game after the break with

Manuel Neuer, but his goal was ruled offside. Choupo-Moting had the ball in the Leverkusen net for the second time with

25 minutes left but his effort was ruled offside. Bailey's cross across the six-yard box was then fired off the crossbar by Karim Bellarabi on 69















 CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
 DELHI CAPITALS
 KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
 MUMBAI INDIANS
 PUNJAB KINGS • RAJASTHAN ROYALS • ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE • SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

THE ASIAN AGE, NEW DELHI, THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021

# **Shikhar** Dhawan, DC Glenn Maxwell, RCB

**Bairstow**,SRH **PURPLE** Harshal Patel, RCB Deepak Chahar, CSK **Avesh** Khan, DC

#### Off the field



Delhi Capitals pacer Avesh Khan gets his match jersey signed from Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit

#### MSD's parents test positive for Covid

**BIPIN DANI** 

CSK captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni's parents, Pan Singh and Devaki Devi, are recovering well after testing positive for Covid-19. According to Abhishek Jha, the managing director and CEO of Pulse Super Speciality hospital in Ranchi, they will be discharged soon. "They were admitted on Wednesday. Our team of critical care doctors, led by Dr. Saurabh Kumar, is treating them," said Jha.

Dhoni's childhood coach Chanchal Bhattacharya said: 'They are maintaining the oxygen level and they may be discharged from the hospital in two-three days.

#### More set to rejoin Mumbai bubble

 ${f F}$ ormer India wicket-keeper and Mumbai Indians' talent scout Kiran More has recovered from COVID-19 and is fit to join team's bio-bubble, the IPL defending champions said on Wednesday. The 58-year-old More, who is also the wicket-keeping consultant for the five-time IPL champions MI, had tested positive for the dreaded virus on April 6.

"Our medical team in consultation with BCCI have determined Kiran More fit to rejoin the MI bio-bubble in adherence with BCCI guidelines," Mumbai Indians said in a tweet

Mumbai Indians are based in Chennai, where they have played four games so far. They will next take on Punjab Kings on Friday.

#### **Rohit fined for** slow over-rate

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma was fined ₹12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during the IPL game against Delhi Capitals

"Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during their IPL 2021 match against Delhi Capitals at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai on April 20," the IPL said in a statement.

'As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Mr Sharma was fined ₹12 lakh," the statement added.

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# FAFULOUS SHOW

#### Du Plessis slams an unbeaten 95 as Chennai pip KKR by 18 runs

Mumbai, April 21: Faf du Plessis smashed an unbeaten 60-ball 95 as Chennai Super Kings beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 18 runs in a high-scoring IPL game here on Wednesday. Sent into bat, du Plessis

(95 not out) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (64) knocked the bowlers, adding 115 for the opening wicket to lay the foundation.

After Gaikwad was back in the hut, du Plessis continued his rampage, while Mooen Ali (25) and MS Dhoni (17) also came up with useful cameos as CSK posted a big total of 220 for three.

Defending the total, pacer Deepak Chahar (4/29) produced a sensational spell, claiming four wickets, while Lungi Ngidi (3/28) captured one leave KKR tottering at 31 for 5 in 5.2 overs

Andrew Russell, however, hit six maximums in a breathtaking 54 off 22 balls and shared 81 runs off 39 balls with Dinesh Karthik (40) to bring KKR back in the hunt.

Once Russell was gone. Pat Cummins (66 not out) kept KKR in the chase but he ran out of partners in the end as they eventually fell short by 18 runs. First, it was Gaikwad

who returned to form after a string of poor outings in his first three matches with a composed 42-ball knock that set it up for CSK after KKR opted

Gaikwad played the role of aggressor, smashing four sixes and four boundaries, while his senior South African partner du Plessis gave the youngster the backup as the duo produced CSK's best start of the season with an opening stand of 115

Du Plessis came on his after Gaikwad's departure in the 13th over



CSK opener Faf du Plessis plays a shot during his unbeaten knock of 95 against Kolkata Knight Riders in Mumbai on Wednesday.

as he added 50 runs with Russell for three succes-Moeen Ali (25 off 12 balls) off just 26 balls.

CŠK scored 76 runs in the final five overs with the South African at his attacking best in the final five overs.

smashed Andre sive boundaries and raced to 90s with a six off Pat Cummins in the final over in his 60-ball knock which was studded with four sixes and nine fours.

CSK finished it off in Ravindra with

Jadeja hitting Cummins for a six as Nitish Rana palmed it over the midwicket boundary that summed up the plight of KKR. MS Dhoni promoted himself to No. 4 and finally broke his jinx against Sunil Narine, hitting his

#### **SCORECARD**

Chennai Super Kings: Ruturaj Gaikwad c Cummins b Varun 64, Faf du Plessis (not out) 95, Moeen Ali st Karthik b Narine 25, MS Dhoni c Morgan b Russell 17, Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 6. Extras (nb 3, w 10) 13. Total (for three wickets in 20 overs)

FoW: 1-115, 2-165, 3-201. **Bowling:** Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-27-1, Pat Cummins 4-0-58-0, Sunil Narine 4-0-34-1, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-49-O, Andre Russell 2-0-27-Kamlesh Nagarkoti 2-

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shubman Gill c Ngidi b Chahar O, Nitish Rana c Dhoni b Chahar 9, Rahul Tripathi c Dhoni b Ngidi 8, Eoin Morgan c Dhoni b Chahar 7, Sunil Narine c Jadeja b Chahar 4, Dinesh Karthik Ibw b Ngidi 40, Andre Russell b Curran 54, Pat Cummins (not out) 66, Kamlesh Nagarkoti c du Plessis b Ngidi O, Varun Chakravarthy run out (Chahar/Curran) (Chahar/Thakur) O.
Extras (b 4, lb 2, nb 1, w
7) 14. Total (in 19.1 overs) 202.

FoW: 1-1, 2-17, 3-27, 4-31, 5-31, 6-112, 7-146, 8-176, 9-200 **Bowling:** Deepak

Chahar 4-0-29-4, Sam Curran 4-0-58-1, Lungi Ravindra Jadeja 4-0-33-O, Shardul Thakur 3.1-0-48-0.

first boundary after 64 balls against the mystery spinner en route to a eight-ball 17. Gaikwad made his intention clear in the first over howled by Cummins when he pulled him over the rope for a

#### POINTS TABLE **Points** 6 +1.142 6 +0.4260 2 3 0 2 - 0.700 2 0 2 - 0.719

# RCB hold all aces in clash of Royals

Mumbai, April 21: Off to the best possible start with three wins on the trot, a confident

confident Royal Challengers Bangalore will hope to keep the jugger-naut rolling when they take on Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match here on Thursday.
Both sides have endured

contrasting campaigns so far. RCB head in to the game after three moraleboosting victories. The Virat Kohli-led side edged past defending champions Mumbai Indians in the tournament opener before getting the better of Sunrisers Hyderabad and Kolkata Knight Riders to jump to the top of the points table.

On the other hand, the Royals have managed to win only one of their three fixtures. They lost to Chennai Super Kings in their previous match to slip down to the sixth spot. Sanju Samson and his men will be eyeing a second

The Royals have struggled to perform as a cohesive batting unit. While Samson led the team to within touching distance of victory with his sensational century against Punjab Kings, it was the African duo of Miller and Chris Morris that pulled off a win against the Delhi Capitals.

Against CSK, opener Jos Buttler looked dangerous but the other batsmen failed to provide any valuable contributions. For the former champions to do

Live on T Royal Challengers Bangalore vs Rajasthan Royals from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

well, the side must click as a batting unit with Samson and the Englishman play-

ing key roles.
The Royals bowling unit has been underwhelming to say the least, apart from the game against Delhi Capitals, the bowlers have leaked runs. Pacer Jaydev Unadkat shone againsť the Rishabh Pant led-side, registering the impressive figures of 3/15, while young Chetan Sakariya

shown promise. In the absence of Jofra Archer, more will be expected out of the likes of Morris Bangladesh speedster Mustafizur Rahman. For RCB, Ab de Villiers

and new-recruit Glenn Maxwell have been the standout players with the willow. While the South African continues to deliver season after season, the Australian all-rounder is proving to be a valuable addition to the middle order. Kohli has got decent

starts in a couple of games but the talismanic skipper will be itching to play a big innings. Young Devdutt Padikkal, who impressed everyone last season, has also looked rusty and is yet to perform to his full poten-Rajat Patidar will, too, look to make amends.

Sunrisers opener Jonny Bairstow en route to his match-winning knock of 63 not out against Punjab Kings. - IPL

# Sun rises in Chennai, finally

**Chennai, April 21:** Fast bowler Khaleel Ahmed led an impressive bowling effort before Jonny Bairstow smashed an Sunrisers Hyderabad

snapped their three-match losing streak with a convincing nine-wicket win over Punjab Kings in an IPL game here on

Wednesday.
Skipper David Warner
said Kane Williamson's
return bolstered the side. 'The game plan of hav-

ing them there is to anchor the game. He rotates the strike so well. his impact points against spin are there to see. Abhishek is a young guy coming through, we asked him to bowl a lot more this season, and he did it. Till we went on, he didn't know he was bowling the first over," he

Asked to bowl first, Sunrisers Hyderabad's pace-spin duo of Khaleel (3/21) and Abhishek Sharma (2/24) did bulk of the damage to bundle out Punjab Kings for a belowpar 120 in 19.4 overs.

#### **SCORECARD**

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul c Jadhav b Kumar 4, Mayank Agarwal c Rashid Khan b Ahmed 22, Chris Gayle Ibw b Rashid Khan 15, Nicholas Pooran run out (Warner) 0, Deepak Hooda Ibw b Abhishek Sharma 13, Moises Henriques st Bairstow b Abhishek Sharma 14, Shahrukh Khan c Abhishek Sharma b Ahmed 22, Fabian Allen c Warner b Ahmed 6, Murugan Ashwin c Bairstow b Kaul 9, Mohammed Shami run out (Shankar/Bairstow) 3, Arshdeep Singh (not out) 1. Extras (b 9, nb 1, w 1) 11. Total

(in 19.4 overs) 120. FoW: 1-15, 2-39, 3-39, 4-47, 5-63, 6-82, 7-101, 8-110, 9-114. Bowling: Abhishek Sharma 4-0-24-2, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3-0-16-1, Khaleel Ahmed 4-0-21-3, Siddarth Kaul 3.4-0-27-1, Vijay Shankar 1-0-6-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-17-1. Sunrisers Hyderabad: David Warner c Agarwal b Allen 37, Jonny Bairstow (not out) 63, Kane Williamson (not out) 16. Extras (lb 1, w 4) 5. Total (for one wicket in 18.4 overs)

**Bowling:** Mohammed Shami 2-0-16-0, Fabian Allen 4-1-22-1, Arshdeep Singh 3.4-0-31-0, Moises Henriques 1-0-7-0, M. Ashwin 4-0-22-0, Deepak Hooda 4-0-22-0.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/16), star Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan (1/17) and Siddarth Kaul (1/27) also picked up a wicket each as Punjab never gained momentum. Chasing the total, SRH openers Jonny Bairstow (63) and David Warner

(37) pummelled Punjab

into submission, adding

73 runs off 60 balls to set

the foundation.

Williamson (16) then knocked off the remaining runs as SRH romped home with 8 balls to spare. Bairstow and Warner

smashed five boundaries and two sixes during their 50-run stand in the powerplay, while Punjab had managed nine fours and two maximums in their entire innings. Warner picked up the

first boundary when he sent Mohammed Shami across point in the third ball of the innings. Bairstow then welcomed Fabian Allen with a four and a six in the next over. A low full toss by Shami was then sent across the mid-wicket by Bairstow before Warner hit the Indian through backward point.

Bairstow also pulled Moises Henriques over long leg, while Warner swatted Arshdeep Singh over the backward square

leg.
Warner sent Deepak
Hooda sailing over extra
cover for a six but in the next over he holed out to Mayank off Allen, who bowled a wicket maiden, as SRH were 73 for 1. Bairstow found an able

ally in Williamson, who was playing his first match of the season, as they added an unbeaten 48 runs to help SRH log their first win of the season. Shahrukh Khan (22) and Mayank Agarawal (22) were the top scorers for Punjab Kings.

– Agencies

#### **BAIRSTOW OVER** THE MOON AFTER SRH'S FIRST WIN

Chennai, Sunrisers batsman Jonny Bairstow says it was sheer "care-lessness" which led to their three successive defeats and he is feeling "over the moon" to have contributed in team's win in the IPL here on Wednesday.

Bairstow has been in good form but his efforts couldn't translate into a win for SRH as they lost the first three matches.

The England batsman, however, was pleased to finally take the team home after scoring an unbeaten 56-ball 63 in their nine-wicket win against Punjab Kings on Wednesday.

"Absolutely over the moon to get us over the line. Been really close in most of the games, and haven't got through. Probably through carelessness to be honest. Pleased to get over the line," Bairstow said. "Each game we've seen

after the powerplay it's gotten harder and harder. It was key to make sure we took advantage (of the powerplay)."" Skipper David Warner

credited the bowlers for setting up the win. "Very pleasing, the bowlers did a fantastic job to reduce them to a low score," he

Talking about spinner Abhishek Sharma, who claimed two wickets, Warner said: "Abhishek is a young guy coming through, we asked him to bowl a lot more this season, and he did it. Till we went on, he didn't know he was bowling the first over."

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson's inclusion has strengthened their middle-order as he played a crucial innings after Warner was dismissed.

# RCB pacer Kyle Jamieson during a training session. — RCB

#### **HEAD to HEAD**

Matches RCB 10 RR

No result LAST YEAR'S MATCHES RCB beat Royals by 8 wickets at

• RCB beat Royals by 7 wickets at

**FOR THE RECORD** 

Virat Kohli who has scored 5,949 runs at an average of 37.89 in 187 innings needs 51 runs to become the first batsman to complete 6,000 runs

Sanju Samson who made 119 off63 balls with 12 fours and seven sixes against Punjab Kings at Mumbai is the only centurion this

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

# **CONFIDENT WASHINGTON WANTS TO KEEP GOING**

Mumbai, April 21: India and Royal Challengers Bangalore off-spinner Washington Sundar on Wednesday said he will carry forward the confidence and self-belief he gained while playing Test cricket into the ongoing Indian Premier League.

Washington made his Test debut earlier this year against Australia Brisbane. He scored a fluent 62 and snared three wickets in the first innings. In the second essay, he played a game-changing 22 on the final day to help India seal a memorable victory.

"I think performing well in the Test cricket definitely boosts a lot of confidence for any cricketer," Washington såid.

"And getting to play Test cricket at the highest level for the Indian cricket team, which has been really doing well, especially in

the last few years is a dream come true moment for any youngster and that has happened to me," he added.

The 21-year-old was also a part of the Indian Test side that defeated England 3-1 last month. "We played against two top quality sides — Australia and England. Performing against them and winning games against them gave me a lot of confidence and self belief.

"So, yes that confidence I will definitely take it forward and also the momentum I would really love to take forward throughout the IPL and the games to come," he added.

Talking about the IPL, which is being held behind closed doors for a second successive edition, Washington said: "But given the scenario, we are happy that we could play