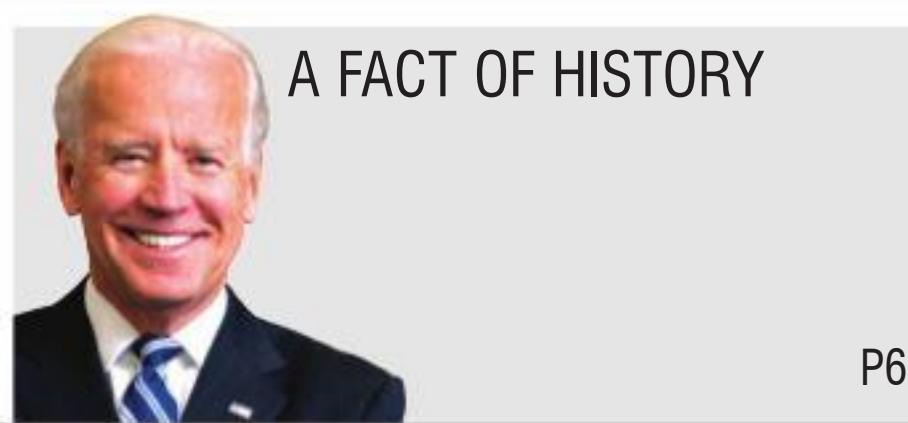




CAN'T ALLOW INDIA TO BECOME 'BATTLEFIELD', SAYS PILOT

P5



A FACT OF HISTORY

P6



RUSSIAN COURT RESTRICTS NAVALNY'S FOUNDATION

P10



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING RAVINDRA JADEJA

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 42 and 19 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 74% Min: 23%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 41.4°C (+3) Min: 19.6°C (-4)
SUN RISES 05:43 hrs MOON RISES 20:28 hrs
SUN SETS 18:55 hrs MOON SETS 07:22 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Construction of a temporary Covid-19 care centre begins at Ramlila Maidan, in the Capital on Tuesday.

SNS

Calcutta HC: Justice Rajesh Bindal, the senior most judge of Calcutta High Court will perform the duties of the Chief Justice from 29 April. It will be consequent to the retirement of Chief Justice, TBN Radhakrishnan, according to a notice of the Union ministry of law and justice issued on Tuesday.

Litterateur passes away: Eminent litterateur Manoj Das passed away in Puducherry on Tuesday. He was 87. The celebrated writer was under treatment in a nursing home in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry in September last year. A team of doctors from Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research has been deputed to Puducherry for the treatment of the celebrated author. Das was born in Balasore and his first book of poems was published in 1949 when he was in high school. He did his PG in English literature from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack.

UK sends ventilators, oxygen concentrators

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India today received the first batch of medical supplies from the UK to help the country fight Covid-19 surge even as the European Union (EU) and Australia announced despatch of emergency medical supplies to India.

A Lufthansa flight landed this morning from the UK with consignments comprising 100 ventilators and 95 oxygen concentrators.

According to reports, nine airline container loads of supplies including 495 oxygen concentrators, 120 non-invasive ventilators and 20 manual ventilators are being organised by the UK to be sent within this week.

Time for armed forces to rise to occasion: Rawat

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

As India battles a catastrophic Covid-19 wave, chief of defence staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Tuesday called upon the armed forces to rise to the occasion and support the civil administrations in dealing with the pandemic as well as creating mitigation facilities in a time-bound manner.

"This is the time for the armed forces to rise to the occasion and support the civil administration in creating Covid mitigation facilities in a time-bound manner. Time-bound support at this juncture is important," Rawat said.

"Our men and women in uniform have the will and dedication to break barriers and walk the extra mile, always and every time," he said.

PTI

Can't be mute spectator in national crisis, says SC

Apex court's intervention must be understood in the correct perspective, a bench said

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Terming the massive resurgence of Covid-19 cases a "national crisis", the Supreme Court on Tuesday said it cannot remain a mute spectator and made clear that its suo motu proceeding on devising national policy for Covid-19 management is not meant to supplant high court hearings.

A bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud said the high courts are in a better position to monitor the pandemic situation within their territorial boundaries and the apex court was playing a complementary role and its intervention must be understood in the correct perspective as there are some matters which transcend the regional boundaries.

There is a need for top

court's intervention on certain national issues as there might be matters related to coordination between states, it said.

These observations assume significance as some lawyers had criticised the apex court last Thursday for taking suo motu cognisance of the pandemic's resurgence and issues by saying that high courts be allowed to continue with hearings.

A day later on 23 April, a bench headed by the then CJI S A Bobde, who has retired, took a very strong exception to unfair criticism by some lawyers for something which was not part of its order in the suo motu case related to framing of national policy on the pandemic and said this is how institution is being destroyed.

The bench on Tuesday also took note of the submissions of lawyers including senior advocate Vikas

Singh on differential pricing of Covid-19 vaccines and asked the Centre to apprise it of the rationale and basis behind such pricing.

On the government's decision to vaccinate all citizens above 18 years, the court sought replies from states by Thursday as to how they intend to cope with the surge in vaccine demand and the infrastructure required for that.

The bench also asked the Centre to apprise the top court of the modalities on distribution of oxygen as well as the vaccines to states and the monitoring mechanism.

Last Thursday, the bench took note of the pandemic situation due to sudden surge in Covid-19 cases as also in mortality and said it expected the Centre to come out with a national plan.

Observing that oxygen to patients infected with the virus is said to be

SC allows Vedanta's O2 plant to operate

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed Vedanta to operate its closed oxygen plant at Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, saying the order has been passed in view of "national need" for oxygen.

A bench of justices D Y Chandrachud, L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat said Vedanta shall not be allowed to enter and operate its copper smelting plant under the garb of this order.

an essential part of treatment, the top court had said it seemed that a certain amount of panic has

The top court said there should be no political bickering over the generation of oxygen by Vedanta as the country is facing a national crisis.

It said the order allowing Vedanta to operate its oxygen plant would not create any equity in its favour.

The apex court asked Tamil Nadu to form a panel, including the district collector and the Tuticorin superintendent of police, to monitor activities at Vedanta's oxygen plant.

been generated due to which people have approached several high courts seeking relief.

EC bans victory processions after counting of votes

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Election Commission on Tuesday banned all victory processions after counting of votes in states where assembly polls were held to check the spread of coronavirus.

The counting of votes will be held in Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry on May 2.

While the eighth and last phase of election will be held in West Bengal on April 29, the voting exercise is over in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry on May 2.

The court called the poll panel "the most irresponsible institution" and even said its officials may be booked under murder charges.

The judges also orally warned that they would not hesitate to stop the counting of votes on 2 May.

The bench directed the EC to file a detailed report by 30 April on the blueprint of Covid-19 protocol to be followed on the counting day.

"There should be not more than 50 per cent occupancy in counting halls," an official explained.

MIND-NUMBING TRAGEDY



As deaths due to Covid soar, funeral pyres are built at Sarai Kale Khan crematorium, in the Capital on Tuesday. SNS

Direct flights from India to Oz suspended till 15 May

MELBOURNE, 27 APRIL

Australia on Tuesday suspended all direct passenger flights from India for the next three weeks due to the unprecedented spike in Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said.

The pause on arrivals would be reassessed before 15 May, Morrison said.

The decision was taken during a meeting of Cabinet's national security committee to consider the move to

temporarily restrict flights from India along with what equipment and assistance could be sent.

The flight suspension is expected to affect direct flights to Sydney and two repatriation flights scheduled to arrive in Darwin, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported.

There are about 9,000 Australians in India who are registered with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as wanting to return home, the report said.

PTI

India gets oxygen tankers from Thailand

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

A consignment of containers for the transportation of medical oxygen has arrived in India from Thailand while some more empty tankers will be airlifted from Singapore, the Union home ministry said on Tuesday.

The empty oxygen containers from Thailand are the third such consignment to be flown to the country in the Indian Air Force's (IAF) transport aircraft by the home ministry amidst a surge in Covid-19 cases and a subsequent increase in demand for medical oxygen.

The home ministry in a tweet said, "IAF C17 transport aircraft gearing up to air-lift more empty oxygen containers from Singapore today."

All three aircraft carrying the containers landed in West Bengal. From there, they were taken to oxygen generating sites to be filled up and for onward transportation to the high-demand areas, mostly through special trains.

Oxygen concentrators: Ireland announced sending 700 oxygen concentrators and other medical supplies to the country.

The Irish embassy here said the oxygen concentrators are expected to reach India by Wednesday morning. Irish ambassador Brendan Ward said Ireland is in close contact with the Indian government.

The Irish embassy said Ireland has also pledged to send ventilators to India and the gesture of solidarity is a part of the European Union's coordinated response to help the country overcome the Covid-19 surge.

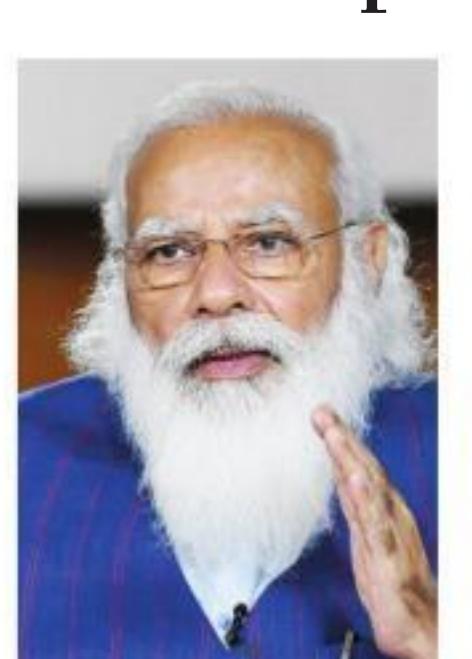
Govt imports 20 cryogenic tankers: The Centre has imported 20 cryogenic tankers of 10 MT and 20 MT capacity and allocated them to states to address the shortage of oxygen tankers in the country as it deals with spiralling of Covid-19 cases.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in consultation with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the overall guidance of the Empowered Group-II have mapped the allocation of these containers to suppliers in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, the ministry said in the statement.

After Modi-Biden phone call, US swings into action

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL



soon as possible.

We are in close touch with Indian officials at all levels. We are also closely coordinating with our allies, friends, and Quad partners about how we can collectively support India



in its hour of need, a senior administration official told reporters, soon after US president Joe Biden had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As requested by the Cen-

tre, the US will be providing raw materials for the production of the Covishield vaccine at the Serum Institute of India, a second senior official said.

Given that there is not enough supply for the entire global manufacturing effort and in light of the current crisis, we, the United States, are diverting our order to India, the official said.

We did not intervene with the manufacturer to make them fill the Serum Institute's order; we don't have that power, the official explained.

USAID and CDC will provide technical assistance and materials, and strengthen vaccine communications and support of vaccine readiness at the national and sub-national levels.

Observing that India was

facing a huge surge right now, a third senior official said that there's a lot of support that the Biden administration is currently exploring.

At India's request, we're exploring options to provide oxygen and related supplies. These are resources that India has specifically requested and are very high on their priority list, the official said.

"Had a fruitful conversation with @POTUS @JoeBiden today. We discussed the evolving COVID situation in both countries in detail. I thanked President Biden for the support being provided by the United States to India," Modi tweeted after discussions with Biden on phone.

"India-US healthcare partnership can address the global challenge of Covid-19," he added.

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"According to reports, nine airline container loads of supplies including 495 oxygen concentrators, 120 non-invasive ventilators and 20 manual ventilators are being organised by the UK to be sent within this week.

PTI

'Indian strain' spreads faster, little evidence of being more lethal: Experts

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

The 'Indian strain' of the coronavirus carries higher transmissibility similar to the UK variant, but there is little evidence so far if it is more lethal than the original virus, experts have said.

The B.1.617 variant of SARS-CoV2, also being called a 'double mutant' or the 'Indian strain', has been found prevalent largely in Maharashtra and Delhi that have been severely hit by a devastating second wave. In many cities in Maharashtra—the worst-hit state in the country—the B.1.617 variant was found in more than



Every citizen of our country is confident that we will emerge stronger and better equipped from the current crisis.

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON THE PREVAILING COVID-19 SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

Gaspng Delhi to import tankers, ready-to-use oxygen plants

Amid Covid horror, Kejriwal govt to get 18 cryogenic tankers from Thailand & 21 O2 plants from France

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

With the hospitals and coronavirus patients in the national capital gasping for life-saving oxygen for days now, resulting in a number of fatalities, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said his government will import 18 cryogenic tankers from Thailand and 21 ready-to-use oxygen plants from France.

The CM claimed that the situation has improved in Delhi in the past two days after the unprecedented emergency situation witnessed in the city last week due to an acute crisis of oxygen.

Due to a shortage of tankers, the Delhi government was also facing problems in transporting its oxygen quota decided by the Centre, he said.

Within a month, the Delhi

government would set up 44 oxygen plants at various hospitals, including 21 that will be imported from France. The Centre will install eight oxygen plants by 30 April, Kejriwal said during an online press briefing. He thanked the Centre for providing five oxygen tankers to Delhi.

The Delhi government has also urged the Centre to provide Indian Air Force aircraft for bringing oxygen tankers from Bangkok. The tankers will start arriving in Delhi from tomorrow, he said.

"We are in talks with them and have received a positive response so far," he said.

Kejriwal, who had sought the help of chief ministers of other states and the country's top industrialists to resolve the oxygen crisis in the national capital, said "tremendous" cooperation has been received, with many of the contributors wish-



ing to remain anonymous.

"We have received a positive response from many of them. Most of them have placed one condition only that they wish to remain anonymous. This is an example of their nobility and I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to all the governments, industrialists and organisations that are helping us tide over these tough times," the CM said.

He claimed that the number of SOS messages received

from hospitals has reduced now as teams of the Centre and the Delhi government spent nights trying to overcome the oxygen shortage in the national capital.

"Last week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday were particularly critical for Delhi. Oxygen was running low and we were fearful of a major mishap and deaths due to shortage," Kejriwal said.

Pointing out that the current Covid wave is extremely dangerous and contagious, he pointed to the growing demand for ICU beds for serious patients in the city.

The Delhi government will add 1,200 ICU beds by 10 May, including 500 each associated with LNJP and GTB hospitals and 200 at Radha Soami Satsang Beas Covid centre, he said.

The CM said, "It has been noticed that the current wave

is particularly dangerous. Those who are contracting it are not able to recover as swiftly as was noticed during the previous waves. ICU wards are in great demand. All hospitals at this point have all their beds occupied, including ICU beds." Kejriwal said the Central government arranged for 500 ICU beds at the DRDO complex and within three hours of making an official public announcement of their availability, all 500 were full.

"Today, I visited Ramleela Maidan in front of GTB Hospital. We are trying to convert that into a 500-bed ICU centre. The main Ramleela Maidan in front of LNJP Hospital is also being converted into an ICU centre with a capacity of 500 beds and 200 ICU beds are being readied at Radha Soami Satsang Beas. These 1200 ICU beds will be ready by 10 May," the CM added.

Covid patient fails to get bed in hospital, dies; family attacks staff

PTI

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Family members of a woman, who allegedly died due to COVID-19 after failing to get a bed at Apollo Hospital in south Delhi, attacked the staff of the private healthcare facility on Tuesday, police said.

However, they said no complaint has been filed in this regard so far.

"The hospital received a woman in a critical condition at theemer-

gency in the early hours of Tuesday. Immediate medical attention appropriate to her condition was given by a team," the hospital's spokesperson said in a statement.

"Given the paucity of beds, the family was advised to shift the patient to another facility with available beds. Unfortunately, the patient died around 8 am, following which her family members resorted to vandalism, destruction of hospital property and assault on our

doctors and staff," it said.

While the hospital deeply condemns the death of the patient, it is deeply shocked at the behaviour of the patient's family against doctors and healthcare workers who are providing untiring services amidst the pandemic, the spokesperson said in the statement.

Pictures circulating on social media showed blood on the floor, broken doors and furniture strewn around inside the hospital.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SH. AASHISH GUPTA
Administrative Civil Judge
Admittance Rent Controller
Commercial Civil Judge
(South East)
Room No. 203,
Saket Courts,
New Delhi
SS-59/2021

1. Trishla Harish, r/o Late Sh. Inder Kumar Harish, E-294, III Floor, Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi.

— Petitioner

Versus
1. State (NCT of Delhi)

2. Mrs. Snigdha Harish, r/o Late Sh. Inder Kumar Harish, r/o E-294, III Floor, Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110048.

Email:
snigdharish@yahoo.com

3. Mr. Varun Harish, r/o Late Sh. Inder Kumar Harish, r/o H.No. 104, Douglas Street, ST. IVES Suburb New South Wales 2075, Australia.

Email:
varunharish23@gmail.com

Whereas, on application U/s 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 has been made by Trishla Harish, successor of

Late Inder Kumar Harish for grant of Succession Certificate in respect of debts/securities of deceased.

And whereas the said applicant shall come for hearing on 28-05-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Therefore, the public at large is hereby given notice if any person has objection to the grant of Succession Certificate in favour of the said applicant, he may file written or oral objections in writing, in person or through duly appointed pleader, on the said date and time.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 16-04-2021.

ACJ/CCJ/ARC (South East)

Saket Courts,

New Delhi

Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING ATTENDANCE OF DEFENDANT (Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)

District Judge (Comm-02), Room No. 03, Saket Courts Complex, New Delhi CSDJ/949/18

M/s. Agarwal Agencies Pvt. Ltd.

—Plaintiff Versus M/s. Bhasin Infotech & Infra-

structures & Ors.

—Defendant

To:

Sh. Harpreet Singh, Bhasin Infotech & Infrastructures, 28, Raja Garden, New Delhi-110015

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 20th day of May, 2021, the day fixed for the trial of the suit, you will be deemed ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 7th day of April, 2021.

District Judge (Comm-02),

(South-East)

Saket Courts, Complex, New Delhi

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-31/2020

Jitender Kumar Versus

State & Anr.

(Petitioners)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-35/2021

Amit Sinha & Ors.

Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-37/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-39/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-41/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-43/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-45/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To:

All concerned.

Where in the abovenoted

IN THE COURT OF MS. PREETI PAREWA L.D. ACJ/CCJ/ARC

Room No. 03, Ground Floor Patiala House Courts New Delhi

Petition No. SC-47/2021

Prabhat Kumar Versus

State of NCT

(Petitioner)

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

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Outgoing Trinamool Congress government should keep the Covid-19 issue beyond politics as saving lives of people is the most important thing

SAYING THAT TMC IS 'UNFAIRLY BLAMING THEM (PM MODI AND UNION HOME MINISTER SHAH) FOR THE CRISIS'

STATE BJP SPOKESPERSON SHAMIK BHATTACHARYA

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 2021

03

HP augmenting capacity against Covid surge: CM

Thakur asks officials to enlist all facilities that could be used for providing better medical care to Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 27 APRIL

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday said the state government is upgrading and enhancing its capacity to meet out any eventuality amid spike in cases of Covid in the last few days. He visited the newly-inaugurated Mother Child Hospital (MCH), Sundernagar in Mandi district to get first hand information regarding facilities in this hospital which would be dedicated for the Covid patients.

The CM also visited the old buildings/structure of BBMB colony at Salapar to explore the possibilities of creating additional facilities for covid-19 patients if the situation warrants.

Thakur held a review meeting on Covid-19 situation at SLBS Government Medical College Ner Chowk in Mandi district and said in view of the sharp surge in the number of Covid cases in the State, the government had decided to upgrade the bed capacity for patients in the state to around 5,000 beds.

He stated that Ner Chowk Medical College had been dedicated as Covid-19 hospital and an additional 100 bedded makeshift was coming up in the adjoining complex of the hospital which would be comple-



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur inspecting MCH Sundernagar on Tuesday.

SNS

ed within next 4-5 days.

"Around 1,000 bed capacity will be created for Covid patients in Radha Swami Complex at Parour in Kangra district while work on MCH building at Mandi would be completed within a month for which additional funds had been provided," he added.

He further stated that the state government had urged the people visiting Himachal to get RTPCR negative report and stay

in home isolation for at least two weeks.

The chief minister directed the officers to ensure uninterrupted supply of oxygen at the health facilities and asked them to provide oxygen facility to maximum beds in the Medical College Ner Chowk. He said that the bed capacity of the hospital at Ratti must be enhanced from 25 beds to 50 beds.

Thakur directed the officers

to enlist all such institutions/buildings in the district that could be used for providing better medical facilities to the covid-19 patients in case of increase in number of patients.

He also felt the need for strengthening home isolation facilities in the state and said that efforts would be made to strengthen health care facilities in Bilaspur and Hamirpur district to lessen the load of Medical College Ner Chowk.

He also directed the officers to ensure proper coordination among them for effective tackling this pandemic.

He also visited Radhaswami Satsang Vyas complex at Khaliyara to explore possibilities of setting up 200 bedded prefabricated structures if required.

Significantly, Himachal had recorded 1,692 cases in the last 24 hours with 27 deaths, taking the toll of total active cases to 14,326 with 1,350 deaths.

HP Cong seeks compensation for farmers over crop damage

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 27 APRIL

A delegation of Himachal Pradesh Congress led by state chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore on Tuesday met chief minister Jai Ram Thakur and urged him to provide compensation to farmers for damages incurred in recent heavy rains, snowfall and hailstorm.

Rathore submitted a memorandum to the CM and said Himachal in the last few days had witnessed unprecedented snowfall, hailstorm and rain all across the state which had resulted in huge damages to horticulture and agricultural crops.

Rathore stated that he had recently visited the affected rural areas of Theog, Narkanda Kotkhai and Baghi to meet farmers and assess the situation.

"Thousands of fruit trees like apple, cherry and that of stone fruits have been uprooted and damaged. In a few places, whole orchards have been totally destroyed."

The vegetable growers have also faced huge damages due to hailstorms in the low lying areas of the state.

Not only the apple growing belt but lower Himachal



HP Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore submitting memorandum to CM Jai Ram Thakur in Shimla on Tuesday. SNS

HP Congress chief says farmers' crops have suffered heavy damages in recent rains and they should be adequately compensated for these losses

package from the Central government for these losses due to inclement weather conditions.

Rathore has demanded that fungicides and anti hail nets should be provided free of cost from the horticulture department and in addition, interest of KCC limits should be waived off. Besides, the due payments of orchardists from HPMC and HIMFED should be released immediately, he added.

Rathore urged the CM to constitute a special team comprising officials of Revenue, Horticulture and Agricultural departments to assess the damage to crops across the state.

4644 bottles of liquor on way to 'dry' Bihar seized by Haryana Police

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL

gled from Rohtak to Bihar by hiding cartons under the chips.

A case under Excise Act was registered against the arrested accused and further investigation is underway, the spokesperson said. Meanwhile, Haryana Police has seized over 996 kilogram (kg) narcotic substances in the past seven months in Sirsa district alone.

Giving this information here today, Haryana Police spokesperson informed police have impounded the truck from Rohtak district and seized 4644 bottles of liquor which were packed in 387 cartons. The said consignment was found concealed under chips and other confectionery items.

A police team during patrolling had got a tip off about smuggling of huge consignment of liquor in a truck coming from Rohtak-Jhajjar road. A trap was laid near a temple on Delhi-Rohtak road and a truck was intercepted. On checking the vehicle, it was found loaded with 950 packets of chips and other eatables. Soon after removal of these bags, a consignment of 387 cartons containing 4644 bottles of illicit liquor hidden beneath chips was recovered.

Police has arrested the driver identified as Rajbir alias Raju, a resident of district Sonipat. Primary probe revealed that seized liquor was to be smuggled from Rohtak to Bihar by hiding cartons under the chips.

The spokesperson urged the people to come forward fearlessly and share information about the sale, consumption and use of narcotics with the police. In addition to taking stern action against those involved in peddling of drugs, "we are also making people aware about ill-effects of drug addiction", he added.

Haryana sets up Oxygen Control Room amid raging Covid surge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL



tion as issued by health department.

It will ensure each district issues its own distribution plan, operates an early warning system and attends to emergent requests from the deputy commissioners. Mapping of oxygen manufacturing plants and monitoring their transition from industrial oxygen to medical use will also be done through the control room.

It will also monitor messages on Oxygen War Room (whatsapp group) which comprises deputy commissioners and administrative secretaries and initiate timely action.

The spokesperson said that the State Oxygen Control Room will be operated from Room number 43-A, situated on the eighth floor and the helpline number of the Control Room is 0172-2740833.

The spokesperson further informed the Union ministry of home affairs under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 had issued directions that the use of liquid oxygen is not allowed for any non-medical purpose and that all units manufacturing liquid oxygen shall maximize their production and make it available to the govern-

ment for medical purposes only with immediate effect and until further orders.

Meanwhile, managing director, Haryana State Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation, Anurag Agrawal for industrial estates and director, MSME, Vikas Gupta for the rest of the state have been appointed for mapping of liquid oxygen manufacturing plants and monitoring their production and diversion to medical use.

A letter in this regard has been issued by the chief secretary to the departments concerned.

government to send the Haj pilgrims for Haj till now. He said that the decision to call or not to call the Haj pilgrims would be taken by the Saudi government at its own level.

The spokesperson informed that Haj Committee India, Mumbai, and State Haj Committee will take further action only according to the decision of the Saudi Arabian government. Therefore, Haj applicants are requested to be prepared at their level by taking both doses of Covid-19 vaccine before going on Haj.

He said that if Haj pilgrims are facing problems regarding the administration of the Covid-19 vaccine, then the Haryana Haj Committee can be contacted on the helpline number 0172-2741438 and 9815489590.

Punjab govt imposes additional restrictions to curb Covid spread

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL

On the directives of Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, the Punjab home department on Tuesday allowed all shops including those in malls and multiplexes to close by 5 p.m. with home delivery upto 9 p.m.

Disclosing this here today, a spokesperson of the Chief Minister's Office said that the home department has issued detailed order today imposing additional restrictions to be strictly imposed throughout the state forthwith till further orders. However, daily night curfew (already enforced from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.) will now be from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. on all days prohibiting all the non-essential activities. Week-end curfew from 5 a.m. on Saturday upto 5 a.m. on Monday would be imposed. However, all essential activities would remain exempted. All private offices including the service industry have been allowed to work from home only.

Pointing out further, the spokesperson said that the chemist shops and shops deal-

ing with supply of essential goods like milk, dairy products, vegetables, fruits besides manufacturing industry have been exempted from Covid restrictions however subject to adherence of Covid protocols. The movement of employees, labour of the manufacturing industry and vehicles carrying them has also been allowed. However, the concerned industry would issue them requisite permission for the purpose.

Likewise, activities including 'to and fro' movement of passengers travelling by air, train, buses, construction activities in both the urban and rural areas, agriculture including procurement, horticultural, animal husbandry, veterinary services, e-commerce and movement of all goods, vaccination

out-reach camps have also been exempted from the aforesaid restrictions subject to strict adherence of health protocols.

Meanwhile, on the issue of oxygen supply in the state in view of Covid pandemic, the CM said Punjab needs daily 300 metric tonne of oxygen but there has been no positive response from the Central government. He further added that the state government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure best possible medical care for the Covid patients and it has adequate number beds and is in the process of preparing 2200 more. "On the vaccination front, we have only one day of stock left and that is why the Health Department has been directed to order 30 lakh doses of covishield for the 18-45 age group", said Amarinder.

Rajnath urges HP Govt to involve ex-servicemen in fight against pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 27 APRIL

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday took stock of Covid situation in Himachal Pradesh in a telephonic conversation with Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and discussed the situation and facilities in the state. Singh suggested the Governor to involve the ex-servicemen of the state in the fight against Covid pandemic and to take

benefits of the military services.

Rajnath Singh said Himachal Pradesh had a large number of ex-servicemen and various types of military services were also available in the state. "This is a phase of pandemic and during this difficult time, the state should utilize the services of its ex-servicemen. The military guest house, rest house and other medical facilities can also be used in the fight

against Corona pandemic," he added.

The Union minister expressed satisfaction over the various efforts being made at the state level against the pandemic and said 'we can together overcome this challenge and in this testing time everyone should contribute at their level'.

Bandaru Dattatreya thanked the defence minister for his concern towards Himachal Pradesh and said that people of state are fighting collectively against this

pandemic. "The military services are already rendering their valuable services in this direction and their services must be used effectively to achieve victory in this battle," he added.

He assured the Union minister that by preparing an action plan as per his suggestions more and more services of ex-servicemen at the regional level will be strengthened to fight against this pandemic.

Punjab CM to lead people in offering virtual 'ardas' on 1 May to mark Guru Tegh Bahadur's 400th birth anniv

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 27 APRIL

Amidst the unprecedented Covid pandemic, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh would virtually join the people in offering 'Ardas' (Sikh prayer) from his residence on the auspicious occasion of 400th Prakash Purb (birth anniversary) celebrations of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib on 1 May.

Divulging details of the day-long programme on this his-

toric occasion, a spokesperson of the Chief Minister's Office said that the Gurparub celebrations would begin from the residence of Tourism and

Thereafter, the live telecast of special Gurpan Kirtan/Gurmat Sangeet program on various TV channels/digital platforms would begin with Gurmat Sangeet by Bhai Manjit Singh Shant and Nivedita Uppal followed by Kirtan by Bhai Gagandeep Singh Ganganagar Wale, Bhai Sukhjinder Singh, Bhai Arvinder Singh Noor, Bhai Tar Balbir Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh Namdhari from 12.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

It may be recalled that the executive committee led by CM

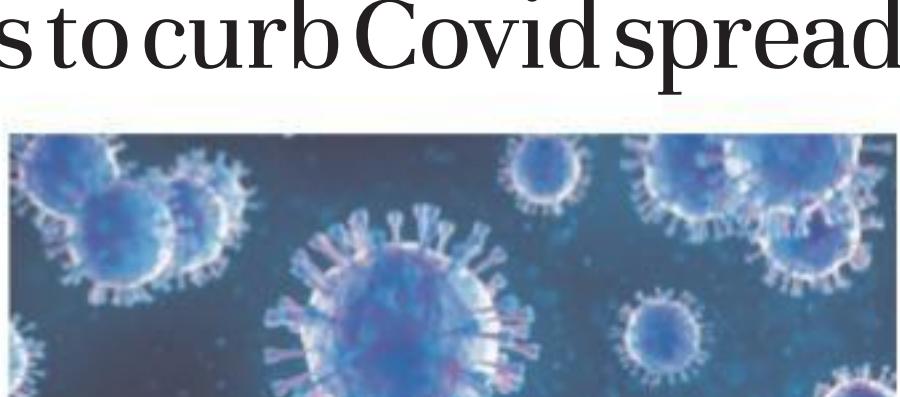
set up to oversee the historic celebrations had already decided on April 23 to hold virtual celebrations to commence the historic 400th Prakash Purb of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib amid the uncertain situation resulting from the continuous surge in Covid cases.

The CM had also appealed to the people to watch the events on TV and offer 'Ardas' from their homes and avoid congregating at the religious places in view of the crisis situation.

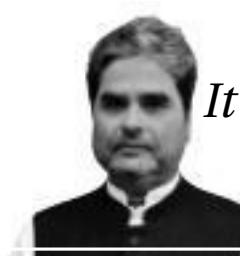


Cultural Affairs Minister Charnjit Singh Channi at Morinda from 11 a.m. with Gurmat Sangeet by Bhai Gagandeep Singh Ganganagar Wale, Bhai Sukhjinder Singh, Bhai Arvinder Singh Noor, Bhai Tar Balbir Singh and Bhai Balwant Singh Namdhari from 12.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

It may be recalled that the executive committee led by CM



paper.thestatesman.com



It's a national horror movie that we are watching live.

DIRECTOR VISHAL BHARDWAJ

India

Violating Covid norms: Penalty sought against star campaigners

Seeks directions to 'ensure compulsory home quarantine of persons who campaigned in Bengal'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

A plea was moved in Delhi High Court on Tuesday seeking directions to the EC to take action, like imposing penalty and lodging FIRs, against "star campaigners" and leaders of all political parties for allegedly violating Covid-19 norms during the Assembly polls in West Bengal.

The application by Vikram Singh, former DGP of Uttar Pradesh and also chairman of think tank Centre for Accountability and Systemic Change (CASC), has also sought directions to the Centre and the Election Commission to "ensure compulsory home quarantine of persons who campaigned in the last one week of the West Bengal polls".

Singh, represented by advocate Virag Gupta, claimed in his plea that "masking rules were flouted with impunity" by the political parties, their leaders and campaigners during the rallies, public meetings and roadshows conducted during the ongoing pandemic.

This "unhindered and uncared-for all out campaigning" has resulted in the rise in coronavirus cases in that state where the positivity rate has gone up from 5 per cent to 24 per cent, claimed the application filed through advocate Gaurav Pathak.

It further contended that the lackadaisical action of ECI in implementing its own guidelines and non-cancellation of permission given for roadshows and rallies is evident from the number of campaigners catching Covid".

The Election Commission had guidelines for conduct of

general elections/by-elections during Covid-19 published in August 2020, but failed to implement the same," it said and sought prosecution of ECI officials "who failed to enforce their mandatory Covid guidelines".

"Whatever little action that the commission is now taking is only under public pressure and amounts to only lip service," it contended.

The application also alleged that "most of the political leaders who were involved in election campaigning were not seen to be following any rules on home quarantine, even after their contacts were turning out to be Covid positive".

Singh had earlier this month moved an application before the commission for ensuring that masks are worn mandatorily by everyone involved in campaigns during the ongoing polls in various states

and Union Territories. The high court had issued notice to the Centre and EC on 8 April on the earlier application. The earlier and latest applications have been filed in Singh's main petition seeking to bar campaigners and candidates from campaigning in the Assembly elections for repeatedly violating the mandatory guidelines issued by the poll panel in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry were held in various phases. The polls started on 27 March and will conclude on 29 April.

Singh has contended in his petition that despite the orders and guidelines of the Centre and EC, "election campaigning is going on in full swing, without any regard to the Covid-19 regulations".

Man carries mother's body in two-wheeler

HYDERABAD, 27 APRIL

The second wave of Covid-19 has not only created a crisis for oxygen, medicines and hospital beds, but even Ambulances to carry back the dead for their last rites. In a shocking incident the body of a woman, suspected of being infected with the virus, was transported to her native place on a two-wheeler after family members failed to arrange for Ambulance.

The matter came to light after a video of the son and son-in-law carrying the body on motorbike became viral, although Andhra Pradesh has an Ambulance service that can be availed by dialling 108. The incident took place on Monday as the 50-year old woman was taken to a private hospital at Kasibugga in Srikakulam district. The doctor prescribed for a CT scan after her oxygen level was found to be low. SNS

'Double masking' could reduce Covid exposure by 95%: Experts



Kolkata Police personnel distributing face masks during an awareness drive on Covid 19 in Kolkata on Tuesday. ■ SNS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

With the highest ever spike in the number of Covid-19 positive infection rate reaching 32 per cent in Bengal many city experts who are attending to novel coronavirus-affected patients are encouraging the use of two face masks, a practice popularly known as 'double masking'.

The use of the 'double masking' method could create a stronger barrier against the deadly viral disease, according to the experts. They felt that 'double masking' with cloth and surgical masks can prevent leakage of air and fit the contours of the face better.

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) based in the United States conducted a study in this regard and revealed that wearing a double mask ~ cloth or surgical reduces exposure to the Covid-19 virus by nearly 95 per cent.

"We should follow the CDC recommendations made based on extensive studies. The use of 'double masking' will prevent cough particles by more than 90 per cent," said Dr Kundan Chowrasia, Covid care specialist attached with the Nightingale Hospital in the Shakespeare Sarani area. "I have heard about the CDC studies on 'double masking'. I do also advise people to use 'double

masking' to prevent the virus as much as possible because Bengal has recorded the highest ever Covid infection rate 32 per cent till Monday," said Dr Sukumar Mukherjee, senior general medicine expert and a leading member of the state government's global advisory board (GAB) on Covid management and prevention. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention recorded that an unknotted surgical mask can only block 56 per cent while a cloth mask 51.4 cough particles. A knot and tuck surgical mask blocked 77 per cent. However, a combination of cloth and a surgical mask blocked cough particles up to 85.4 per cent. On the other hand, rattled by the virtually uncontrollable spike in the number of Covid positive patients, the state government has urged the private healthcare units to increase the number of indoor beds in their respective hospitals in the city and districts. After AMRI Hospitals group, Apollo Gleneagles has also decided to increase 300 more beds in its unit along the EM Bypass.

Another unit Narayana Netrodaya at Salt Lake has also decided to increase another 35 beds.

Solar scam: Saritha Nair gets 6-year jail term

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
27 APRIL

The judicial first class magistrate court-III in Kozhikode on Tuesday sentenced Saritha Nair, second accused in the cheating case related to solar scam, to six years rigorous imprisonment and a penalty of Rs 40,000.

The court found Saritha guilty of breach of trust, cheating, forging documents and other offences. Biju Radhakrishnan, first accused in the case, had applied for leave as he is in quarantine due to Covid. Biju's verdict will be pronounced later.

This is one of the 30-odd complaints registered against the duo in the case in 2013. Businessman Abdul Majeed was cheated of Rs 42.70 lakh. ■ SNS

JB Lama is no more

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

Veteran journalist Jagat Bandhu Lama, who joined The Statesman in 1957 as a sub-editor, and was associated with the paper for over six decades, passed away today. He would have been 88 in July. He is survived by his daughter and two grandchildren.

Considered an expert on the North-East and consulted on occasion even by government interlocutors for his deep and profound knowledge of the region's problems, JB, as he was known to his friends and colleagues, shouldered the responsibility of the North East page for several years. His editorial comments on the region were distinguished by their pithiness and insight.

An ever-smiling, free-spirited man with a delightful sense of humour, his column 'Endangered Eden' was a critical commentary on the North East that was savoured by readers for years. He later taught at the Statesman Print Journalism School.

bring the long association to an end," Ravindra Kumar, editor and managing director of The Statesman, fondly remembers.

"No challenge was too daunting for him and it was well past his retirement that he accepted the responsibility of overseeing the North-East page. From commissioning writers to editing their copy ~ some of it quite spotty ~ he never missed a deadline."

"While young at heart, he was a traditionalist in the best sense of the word, never averse to reprimanding me gently and in measured words if he thought a headline was over the top, or if the paper's coverage of an event failed to meet his exacting standards. JB was a senior colleague one could lean on, a man whose guidance was always available not just to youngsters but to older journalists seeking answers. All of us in The Statesman will miss him for in many ways he represented the ideal many of us aspire to," Kumar added.

His infectious smile made his presence unmissable as did his delightful tongue-in-cheek humour. A true-blue Statesman journalist, he continued to serve the newspaper way past his retirement in 1999, only to hang up his boots a few years ago due to failing health.

"From the day I first met him, in the mid-1980s, until the day he walked into my room some three years ago ~ for the umpteenth time I may add ~ to say he was too tired to continue, JB typified the newspaper he loved passionately and served with distinction for 61 years. Quiet, understated and thorough in the practice of his craft, JB represented everything that is good and noble about this profession. It was the death of his wife in 2018 that forced him to

Genetically modified virus identified in Kerala

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
27 APRIL

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday said the genetically modified Covid viruses are on the rise in Ker-

ala and he underlined the necessity to strengthen the preventive measures to overcome the challenge posed by the new strains of the virus.

The chief minister said the new variant of Covid virus, which are genetically modified,

are highly contagious, and those have been found in many parts of the state. The areas where such viruses were detected will have to be completely closed, he added. He said the UK variant and the more deadly South African variant were

found in many parts of Kerala. "These viruses are more transmissible than the existing strains. The UK variant is found in the northern districts. In these circumstances, the restrictions are to be tightened to curb the spread," the CM said.

TENDER

Himachal Pradesh Public Work Department INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)							
The Executive Engineer Seraj Division HP.PWD Janjehli Distt. Mandi on behalf of Governor of Governor of H.P invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractor registered with HP PWD for the works as detailed in the table.							
Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender	Eligible class of Contractor	Starting date for download bid	Deadline for submission of bid
1	Construction of Science Lab cum multipurpose hall at Govt. Degree College at Lambathachan Janjehli Distt. Mandi (SH- C/o Building portion WS&SI Septic tank, Soak pit, Rain water harvesting system and site development	6,94,30,939/-	5,00,00/-	5,000/-	Class A	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM
2	Construction of Patkari Bhara-Shill Kashmidhar road including motorable bridge over Bakhar Khad Km 0/000 to 17/500 (SH- C/o 30.00 mtr span RCC Box girder bridge at RD 0/00 including both side approaches and Geological investigation) under NABARD RIDF XXVI	2,79,82,773/-	3,12,400/-	5,000/-	Class A-B	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM
3	C/o 45.00 mtr span Bow string bridge over Tirthan Khad (SH- C/o approach R/Wall both side at Balichowki)	21,21,171/-	39,400/-	500/-	Class C-D	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM
4	C/o Science block of Govt. Senior Secondary School Shanti in Tehsil Balichowki Distt. Mandi (SH- C/o Building portion WS & SI, Septic tank, Soak pit and rain water harvesting system)	1,40,27,206/-	1,72,800/-	5,000/-	Class A-B	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM
5	C/o Shilbagi to Deol Jentsila road km 0/000 to 8/250 (SH- C/o 30.00 mtr span on ROC Box Girder over Deol Khad at RD 3/15 i/c both side approaches) under NABARD XXVI	94,93,099/-	1,51,000/-	2,000/-	Class B-C	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM
6	C/o Shilbagi to Deol Jentsila road km 0/000 to 8/250 (SH- C/o R/Wall CD works GSB, WBM I&II side drain and parapet and M/T) under NABARD XXVI	0.62,50,744/-	5,00,00/-	5,000/-	Class A	29.04.2021 at 11.00 AM	18.05.2021 at 10.00 AM

The bidder are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in

Executive Engineer
Seraj Division HP.PWD
Janjehli Distt. Mandi H.P
For and on behalf of Governor of H.P

0430/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT e -Procurement Notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (inRs.)	EMD (inRs.)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Eligible class of Contractor	Time Allowed
1	Ordinary repair to Paonta Rajbari Shilai Meenus Hatkol road NH 72B (New NH 707) Km 0/00 to 105/00 (SH- Construction of PCC R/Wall at RD 101/802 to 101/820).	Rs. 10,77,587/- only	21,552/-	500/-	Class "C" & "D"	2 Months
1. The Executive Engineer HPPWD NH Division Nahan Distt. Sirmour(H.P) on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids in electronic tendering system, in 2 Cover System for the under mentioned works from the eligible and approved contractors/firms registered with PWD Department.						
2. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website https://www.eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: https://www.eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app . Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CA's can use the same in this tender.						
3. Key Dates:						
1. Date of Online Publication						
2. Document Download Start and End Date						
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date						
4. Date of Technical Bid opening						
4. TENDER DETAILS:						
The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 2 Cover: Cover 1: shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Documents/ Eligibility Information". Cover 2: shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will quote his offer for each item.						
5. BID OPENING DETAILS: The bids shall be opened on 11.						



Never before has there been so much insult to the truth...

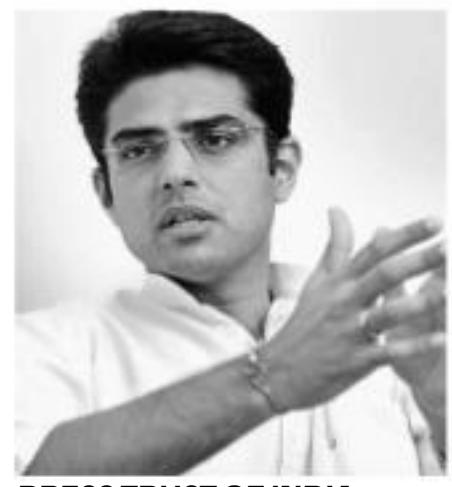
SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV
ACCUSING BJP GOVERNMENT IN UP OF LYING ON OXYGEN AVAILABILITY

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 2021

05

Can't allow India to become battlefield, says Pilot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Asserting that the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic must be treated as a national medical emergency, senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Tuesday said the Centre must step up to the plate and not leave the states to fend for themselves as India cannot be allowed to become a "battlefield for oxygen and Remdesivir".

Pilot called for transparent parameters and criteria for allocation and distribution of essentials such as ventilators, oxygen and Remdesivir.

"Once this is done using an acceptable and a well-determined formula then there won't be criticism and the blame game would stop. Right now there is a knee-jerk reaction. It should be done in a scientific and transparent manner," he said.

Noting that India is passing through an extremely precarious phase, Pilot said the government ought to step in and control or mandate the pricing of the vaccines.

"We cannot leave it to companies to decide on the pricing of life-saving vaccines, keeping margins and profits as criteria. India cannot leave it to companies, corporations or individuals to look at investments, returns, margins and profits etc," he said.

Pilot asserted that the Centre needs to step up the plate to defeat the pandemic and "can't leave the states to fend for themselves".

With states scrambling to arrange for essentials such as oxygen, Remdesivir injection and ventilators, Pilot said the government should have prepared formula and parameters for it, and distributed the resources accordingly in a transparent manner.

"There is different information coming out over the demand and allocation for oxygen. The Government of India should clearly set out three-four parameters. This is the

Priyanka: Govt failed us, support each other

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Alleging an abdication of leadership and governance by the Centre in the face of the Covid-19 second wave, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday urged people to show compassion and be each other's strongest support to tide over the coronavirus crisis.

In a Facebook post titled 'We Shall Overcome', Priyanka Gandhi said that "by gathering up our strength amidst

Rajnath approves hiring of contractual staff to tackle Covid

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Defence minister Rajnath Singh has approved temporary hiring of additional contractual staff over and above the authorisation in 51 identified high-pressure Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) polyclinics across the country to tide over the current Covid crisis.

The contractual staff, including one each of medical officer, nursing assistant, pharmacist, driver and chowkidar for identified ECHS polyclinics, will be hired through station headquarters for night duty, beyond normal working hours, for a period of three months, the defence ministry said today. The ECHS polyclinics where staff strength is being augmented are in Lucknow, Delhi Cantt, Bengaluru, Dehradun, Kotputli, Amritsar, Meerut, Chandigarh, Jammu, New Delhi (Lodhi Road), Secunderabad, Agra, Ambala, Greater Noida, Gurdaspur, Pune and Trivandrum.

The ECHS clinics in Jalandhar, Kanpur, Gurgaon, Gurugram (Sohana Rd), Hoshiarpur, Mohali, Chandimandir, Allahabad, Ghaziabad (Hindon), Pathankot, Jodhpur, Ludhiana, Ropar, Tarataran/Patti, Kolkata, Danapur (Patna), Khadki (Pune), Palampur, Bareilly, Kolhapur, Yol and South Pune (Lohegaon) are also going to be covered under the scheme. The other ECHS clinics where staff strength is being enhanced are in Vishakapatnam, Jaipur, Guntur, Barrackpore, Chennai, Gorakhpur, Patiala, Noida, Bhopal, Kochi, Vellore and Ranchi.

The move will ensure availability of immediate medical attention even during night hours to acute cases in these areas to the veterans and their dependents.

despair, by doing whatever we can to provide comfort to others, by refusing to tire and persisting with the will to carry on against all odds, we shall overcome".

Writes to Yogi: Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday wrote to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath, alleging low testing for Covid, a shortage of oxygen beds and a sluggish vaccination drive in the state, which is battling a "terrible" second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Before Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building,
Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001
O.A. No. 810/19 Dt. 10-02-2021
STATE BANK OF INDIA Versus **Applicant**
Mr. Ranbir Singh And Anr. Respondent
To, **Defendant**
1. Mr. Ranbir Singh S/o Sh. Ram Kishan R/o House No. 143, Greater Noida, D Beta 1, Gautam Budh Nagar. **Also at:** Honda Cars India Ltd., Plot No. A1, Sector 40-41 Surajpur Kasna Road, Greater Noida, G.B. Nagar-201306

2. M/s Idea Builders Pvt. Ltd. Red Apple Residency NH-58, Near KDP Circle Meenut, Road, Raigarh Extn., Ghaziabad, U.P. **Also at:** C-10, Ramprastha Ghaziabad, U.P. **Also at:** C-29, Vivek Vihar, Delhi-95 Whereas the above named applicant(s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs 31,55,622/- (Rs Thirty One Lakh Fifty Five Thousand Six Hundred Twenty Two Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 04-05-2021 at 10:30 A.M.

Takes notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.
By order of the Tribunal for Registrar DRT-II, Delhi

Before Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building,
Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001
O.A. No. 753/19 Dt. 10-02-2021
STATE BANK OF INDIA Versus **Applicant**
Mr. Dheeraj Malik And Anr. Respondent
To, **Defendant**

1. Mr. Dheeraj Malik, R/o House No. 15A/I J, 2nd Floor, Jawahar Colony 1, Faridabad, Haryana. **Also at:** D&H Consultants Sect-16, Faridabad, Haryana - 121002, Also at : 1st Floor, Fruit Garden NIT 5 Faridabad Haryana -121005

Whereas the above named applicant(s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs 32,46,406/- (Rs Thirty Two Lakhs Forty Six Thousand Four Hundred Six Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on 04-05-2021 at 10:30 A.M.

Takes notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.
By order of the Tribunal for Registrar DRT-II, Delhi

RESTORATION OF SPECIAL TRAIN

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to restore the Special train no. 05483/05484 Alipur Daur Jn. - Delhi Jn. - Alipur Daur Jn. as per details given below :-

05483/05484 Alipur Daur Jn. - Delhi Jn. - Alipur Daur Jn. Express Special Train (Bi-Weekly)

Train No. 05483	STATIONS		Train No. 05484	Arr. Dep.	
Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.
--	10:30	Alipur Daur Jn.	20.40	--	
21:45	--	Delhi Jn.	--	07:35	

Days of Run: 05483 Ex Alipur Daur Jn. from 01.05.2021 on Tuesday & Saturday and 05484 Ex Delhi Jn. from 03.05.2021 on Monday & Thursday to till further advice.

Accommodation: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Reserved 2nd seating

Stoppages: Hasimara, Dalgaon, Binnaguri, New Mal Jn., Siliguri Jn., Baghdogra, Thakurganj, Aluabari Road, Kishanganj, Dalkola, Barsoi Jn., Azamnagar Road, Labha, Kathiar Jn., Semapur, Karalgola Road, Kursela, Naugachia, Thana Bihpur Jn., Narayanpur, Pashraha, Mahesh Khunt, Mansi Jn., Khagaria Jn., Sahibpur Kamal Jn., Lakhminia, Begu Sarai, Barauni Jn., Mokameh Jn., Bakhtiyarpur Jn., Patna Jn., Danapur, Ara, Buxar, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Mirzapur, Vindhya Chal, Prayagraj Jn., Bharwari, Fatehpur, Kanpur Central, Rura, Phaphund, Etawah, Firozabad, Tundla Jn., Aligarh Jn., Khurja Jn., Ghaziabad and Delhi Shahdara stations

Note: All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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

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WALK-IN INTERVIEW FOR CONTRACTUAL ENGAGEMENT OF CMP AND PARA-MEDICAL STAFF

- A Walk-in interview for contractual engagement of CMP and Para-medical staff over Lucknow Division Northern Railway under Divisional Hospital, Lucknow has been scheduled. The Period of Re-engagement/contract will be purely on temporary basis.
- Applications in prescribed performa along with all requisite documents (as mentioned in Point 7.4) from eligible candidates are invited on following email ID: lucknowparamedical@gmail.com. Last date for application is 03/05/2021.
- The details regarding posts, vacancies, eligibility is as follows:

Sr. No.	Name of post	Vacancy	Minimum Qualification	Age Criteria for contractual employee
1.	CMP/GDMO	12	MBBS with internship 1 Year.	Not exceeding 53 year (except reengaged employees)
2.	Radiographer (2800 gp)	04	10+2 with Physics and Chemistry with Diploma in Radiography/X-Ray Technician/ Radiodiagnosis Technology (2 years course) from recognized Institute.	19-33 Year
3.	Lab Tech. (2000 gp)	13	B.Sc. with Bio-Chemistry/Micro Biology/Life Science or equivalent plus Diploma in Medical Lab. Technology (DMTL) or equivalent or B.Sc. in Medical Technology (Laboratory) from recognized Institutions.	18-33 Year
Total		29		

4. The age limit specified should be as on 1/05/2021 and in case of re-engaged employee the age criteria is that they should be below age of 65 years during period of engagement.

5. Age relaxation will be given to candidate belonging to SC/ST/OBC category as per extant rules.

Date and Time of Walk in Interview **VENUE** **Note-** Interview may be conducted through electronic media. Candidates will be provided with a link for interview on registered mobile number.

05 & 06-05-2021 10:00 AM onwards On line

6. REMUNERATION
In Case of re-engaged staff, remuneration is guided by existing railway policy.

For contractual staff it will be guided by railway board letter No. 2017/trans/01/policy/12.04.2018.

7. TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The engagement is purely on contractual basis. The service rendered as Re-engagement/contract of para-medical staff is a arrangement for meeting up the requirement of the pandemic situation and it will not confer any right for automatic regularization/absorption in any circumstances. The full time CMP and Para-medical staff who enter into contract/Re-engagement with the Railways will not have any claim over his/her continuity in service or automatic extension of the term contract / Re-engagement. The Railway administration has full right reserved to discontinue Contract / Re-engagement at any stage.

7.2 All other terms and condition as laid in Railway Board's letter no EING/2005/RC/4/SC/2 dated 31/03/2020 and others as mentioned from time to time shall be binding upon the Para-medical staff.

7.3 After selection of the CMP and Para-medical staff, the names of the remaining candidates who appeared in the walk in interview will be kept on waiting list and in event of any vacancy arises in future will be filled by these candidates.

Application form for Walk-in-interview for engagement of Contract Medical Practitioners

The Divisional Railway Manager

Northern Railway, Lucknow.

- Whatsapp Mobile No. :
- Name (in block letters) :
- Father/Husband's Name (in Block letters) :
- Permanent address :
- Postal Address (With alternate Mobile No if any) :
- Date of birth :
- Age as on 01-05-2021 (_____ Days _____ Months _____ Years)
- Category to which belongs i.e. SC/ST, OBC, UR (Please write _____)
- Nationality :
- E-Mail address :
- Educational/professional Qualification.

Examination	Year of Passing	Board/Medical College/University	No. of attempts	Percentage of marks
High School/Equivalent				
Intermediate/Equivalent				
MBBS (Aggregate %age)				
PG (MD/MS/Dip) Kindly indicate discipline				
Others				

12 Registration No. of Medical Council _____

13. Experience, If any. _____ (please attach documents)

14. Self-attested scan copy of the following documents required to be sent alongwith this form :

a. Certificate indicating the Date of Birth (High School/Equivalent certificate)

b. MBBS Degrees, PG (if any)

c. Internship completion certificate.

d. Registration certificate for Medical council of State/India.

e. Certificate in support of caste in case of SC/ST & OBC issued by the appropriate authority.

f. Pension Payment order (PPO) in case of retired Railway doctor and Retired/State Govt. Doctors only.

I _____ hereby declare that all details are given by me in this application are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that in the event of any information given herein being found false or incorrect or in the event of misstatement or discrepancy detected at any before or after my engagement, my contract will be liable to be terminated and I will be liable for civil or criminal legal action. I understand that I am not eligible for any TNDA for this interview.

I am bound with all rules, regulation and instruction of Railway Board regarding the CMP at any stage.

Place _____ Date _____

Asean & Myanmar

Quite the most amazing facet to the Asean conference on the junta-sponsored brutality in Myanmar was the presence of the embattled country's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the high table in Jakarta. If the briefing by Southeast Asian leaders is any indication, the representatives of the regional bloc have agreed on a plan with Myanmar's junta chief to end the crisis in the country. Viewed through the Asean prism, this indubitably signifies a measure of forward movement although both sides have skirted the core issues in the embattled nation. Nor for that matter did the General respond to demands that the killing of civilian protesters stop. "We tried not to accuse his side too much because we don't care who's causing it," was the Malaysian Prime Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin's rather unconvincing plea. "We just stressed that the violence must stop. For him, it's the other side that's causing the problems. But he agreed that violence must stop." Asean leaders wanted a commitment from Min Aung Hlaing to restrain his security forces, which an activist monitoring group says have killed 745 people since a mass civil disobedience movement erupted to challenge his coup on 1 February. Another critical demand pertains to the release of political prisoners. There may be hope yet as Min Aung Hlaing "did not reject what was put forward by me and many other colleagues," Muhyiddin said.

Of considerable significance was the consensus that was reached on five points and suitably highlighted in the statement advanced by the "group chair", Brunei. Specifically, an end to violence, a constructive dialogue among all parties, a special Asean envoy to facilitate the dialogue, acceptance of aid, and a visit by the envoy to Myanmar. The five-point consensus did not mention political prisoners, although the chairman's statement said the meeting "heard calls" for their release. "He (Min Aung Hlaing) said he heard us, he would take the point in, which he considered helpful," was the Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong's response. "He was not opposed to Asean playing a constructive role, or an Asean delegation visit, or humanitarian assistance." The subtext is obvious ~ Asean has stopped short of exerting pressure on the Myanmarese junta even at the peak of the crisis. Very pertinently has Lee remarked that the process has a long way to go, "because it is one thing to say you will cease violence and release political prisoners, it is another thing to get it done". Considering that freedom for prisoners was not one of the points on which consensus was reached, it is not clear why the Prime Minister of Singapore referred to the release of political prisoners. Nor for that matter was there an immediate comment from Min Aung Hlaing. Nonetheless, an essay towards a consensus is welcome. While Asean's policy of non-interference makes it difficult to tackle contentious issues, the entity is regarded by the United Nations, China and the United States as best placed to deal with the junta directly. A consensus is not a halfway house.

A Fact of History

A fact of history has eventually been recognised. More than a hundred years after World War I ended, President Joe Biden has delved into history, recognising the mass killings of Armenians by the Ottoman empire as genocide. The Eastern Question and the ferment thereof has been revived again. Mr Biden's recognition of the mass killings fulfills a campaign promise and was advanced on the same day Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day was observed in Armenia and by the Armenian diaspora. "Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring," Biden said in a statement. "The American people honour all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today." Sad to reflect that events have made the use of the word "genocide" quite frequent. Only last weekend, the House of Commons severely condemned the treatment of Uighurs in China as "genocide". Which is not to forget the brutal persecution of freedom fighters by the Pakistan army during the liberation struggle of 1971. Fifty years after, it is the grandstanding over liberation and the centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that has generated a romantic euphoria on either side of the border. The persecution by General Yahya Khan's forces has been relegated to the footnotes of the subcontinent's history. Last Saturday, Turkey's Foreign Ministry summoned the US Ambassador, David Satterfield, to Ankara, according to an official statement. The Deputy Foreign Minister, Sedat Onal, told Satterfield that Ankara rejected Biden's comment and "found it unacceptable and condemned it in the strongest terms." The statement, Turkey claimed, has caused a "wound in ties that will be hard to repair." The nub of the matter must be that Mr Biden had expressed his regret in good faith, as absolute as it was sincere. During his campaign for President last year, Mr Biden said he would "support a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide and will make universal human rights a top priority." In a letter last Wednesday, a bipartisan group of 100 members of the House of Representatives urged him to become the first US President to recognize the killings as genocide. "The shameful silence of the United States Government on the historic fact of the Armenian genocide has gone on for too long, and it must end," the lawmakers wrote. "We urge you to follow through on your commitments and speak the truth." Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said earlier this week that Biden's characterisation of the killings would harm relations between the NATO allies. In his reckoning, Mr Biden's recognition "distorts the historical facts, will never be accepted."

Covidnama

Science has progressed at an astonishing pace during the pandemic. Six months ago, there were a handful of vaccine candidates in clinical trials. Today, 13 vaccines have been approved and 29 are in Phase 2 or 3 trials. Despite the incredible achievement of proceeding from scratch to having so many approved vaccines within a year, the final challenge remains: producing enough doses to vaccinate the world's population, and distributing vaccines in a fair and equitable manner because till everyone is vaccinated the danger of recurrence of coronavirus would not be over



The Covid-19 pandemic will be remembered by history as a public health emergency that was mishandled by the entire international community. Starting with China, where the virus originated, either through a lab accident or through the Chinese penchant for eating exotic animals, coronavirus attained pandemic proportions because of the reluctance of the Chinese in informing other countries about the outbreak of the disease. Then, we had the unpardonable delay by WHO in recognising Covid-19 as a pandemic and alerting the international community.

President Trump facilitated the spread of the pandemic in the USA by not wearing a mask in public and repeatedly telling his countrymen: "It's going to disappear. One day, it's like a miracle, it will disappear." Then, Italy launched a 'hug a Chinese' campaign in February 2020 at the time when Chinese travellers were carrying the virus to Italy. Sadly, common people suffered grievously for their leaders' foolhardiness.

Thankfully, our leadership never underestimated the deadly potential of coronavirus but we were done by in some peculiar Indian characteristics ~ our know-all attitude, refusal to acknowledge our mistakes, doing little but hoping for outstanding results, trumpeting our success even when the job was only half done, and endless politicking.

In the second half of March 2020, when coronavirus was making its entry in India, our leaders convinced themselves that a lockdown for a few weeks would eliminate the virus. A member of the Niti Aayog declared that India would be coronavirus free by 15 May 2020. There was little scientific evidence behind such an assertion, which was based only on a personal understanding of the pathology of coronavirus.

Whether the sixty-eight-day lockdown slowed the coronavirus pandemic is debatable, but the effect on livelihoods of millions of the poor was catastrophic. Once lockdown was imposed, migrant workers, who had no means of sustenance left in their adopted cities, headed to their native places on foot, on bicycles, inside dumper trucks, in the blazing sun, in the most inhumanly distressing ways possible. The political leadership pointedly ignored their plight; even the Supreme Court convinced itself that there was little movement of migrant

labour and the few who were on the roads were being taken care of. Later on, in the face of irrefutable evidence of the sufferings of migrant workers and to prevent recurrence of a mass exodus, the Government promised to roll out a tech-driven system of 'one nation, one ration card' and put in place a system for registration of migrant workers. However, the current exodus of migrant workers, in identical circumstances, shows that these much-publicised measures were not implemented on the ground. Our love of religiosity and politics is squarely responsible for the current wave of infections.

Not a single person objected when elections for assemblies in five States, various municipalities and zilla parshads were announced. Political leaders went mask-less at the head of large crowds during elections. Large religious congregations were held with State support. A satirical meme showing a single person in a car being fined by policemen but large mask-less gatherings going on merrily, sums up the attitude of the administration. Looking at newspaper headlines, and the caustic observations of various High Courts, one gets the impression that the Government is trying to show control over the pandemic by hiding the actual number of deaths and infections.

PM Modi had endorsed "test, track, treat, follow Covid-appropriate behaviour and vaccinate" as the golden mantra to contain Coronavirus infections. Yet, suddenly, our country, that was in the forefront of the international vaccination drive appears to have run short of vaccine doses. Opposition parties have blamed India's generosity in sharing 65 million vaccine doses, mostly with poorer nations, for the vaccine shortage. Charity, per se, is an admirable concept, and as the PM has pointed out, in line with our ethos of vasudhaiva kutumbakam. However, before exporting the vaccine, we should have first ramped up our vaccine production to fulfil both domestic and international demand. Although, the Government insists that enough vaccine doses are available, its hurried negotiations with foreign vaccine makers indicates otherwise.

Sadly, immeasurable harm is

done to our fight against Covid by the sense of complacency that sets in after only a few days of reduction in Covid infections. The public immediately forget social distancing and quickly put down their masks, trade bodies lobby for more opening up and the Government plans mega-events. This lack of seriousness is exacerbated by apologists for the Government, who are permanently in denial mode, playing down the scourge of the coronavirus pandemic by comparing Covid statistics of India to that of other countries. Obviously, the ratio of the number of infected persons in India to its large population is quite small, which enables the apologists to claim that Covid is almost non-existent in India.

Knowing that the percentage of Indians fully vaccinated against Covid is insignificant, the apologists prove their point by comparing the number of persons vaccinated in India to the number of persons vaccinated in other countries. Then, relying on flawed figures, apologists argue that Covid-19 is not as fatal as it was earlier. No one points out that comparison with other countries is meaningless because each country fights Covid on its own and after nearly 1.55 crore Covid infections and 1.82 lakh Covid deaths, the time has come to stop believing that Covid-19 would leave our shores soon or by itself.

Decoding a disease by a study of its epidemiology takes years if not decades, so medical studies of Covid-19 are still scientifically incomplete and the conclusions of experts are not fully reliable. As of now, the exact mode(s) of transmission of coronavirus are still unknown; a proper cure for Covid-19 is yet to be discovered and the efficacy and the period for which various vaccines offer protection against Covid-19 is a matter of conjecture.

Not knowing much beyond the fact that coronavirus assails our airways and is highly infectious, the only sure way to counter the virus is to remain masked, maintain hygiene and social distancing and halt all non-essential and non-business activities for the next one year. Mass congregations for elections, religious activities or sports, all should be totally

banned. We should also aim at vaccinating at least 100 crore persons in the shortest possible time, through efficient vaccine management.

The current surge in Coronavirus infections has started a zero-sum blame game between the Centre and non-BJP States, while the public looks on disapprovingly ~ at the abysmal healthcare facilities, little improved since the first wave of coronavirus infections with critical medicines, hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and ventilators again being in short supply. We have to stop believing that this is the last wave of coronavirus infections; more waves may be lurking in the shadows and our fated inertia may prove fatal for many of our countrymen. Rejuvenating our crumbling healthcare infrastructure is the only way to contain the coronavirus pandemic, or the other pandemics that may visit us in future.

Along with healthcare, enabling the education system to impart online learning at all levels, is necessary. We have to plan, so that another academic year is not lost. In any case, even after the pandemic is over, online learning will help students in remote areas and would also decongest our overcrowded classrooms. Science has progressed at an astonishing pace during the pandemic. Six months ago, there were a handful of vaccine candidates in clinical trials.

Today, 13 vaccines have been approved and 29 are in Phase 2 or 3 trials. Despite the incredible achievement of proceeding from scratch to having so many approved vaccines within a year, the final challenge remains: producing enough doses to vaccinate the world's population, and distributing vaccines in a fair and equitable manner because till everyone is vaccinated the danger of recurrence of coronavirus would not be over.

Yet, co-operation is the last thing on the mind of countries like the USA and EU member-states which are practising 'vaccine nationalism', even with millions of vaccine doses lying in their freezers. British writer Damian Barr has succinctly written: "We may be in the same storm, but we are in different boats." Melinda Gates was more direct: "This pandemic has magnified every existing inequality in our society ~ like systemic racism, gender inequality, and poverty."

To stop the pandemic fully, we can only pray to God to make the political leadership of all countries see reason.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES
Pay up, PhilHealth

There is no excuse for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp.'s continuing failure to reimburse hospitals for health claims a year after the pandemic struck, and especially when hospitals are overwhelmed with patients due to the recent surge of Covid-19 infections. PhilHealth owes an astounding P28 billion in health claims to 700 private hospitals belonging to the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines Inc., according to its president Dr. Jose de Grano.

Even more deplorable is that these were debts owed for March to December 2020, when the pandemic started, and not counting the unpaid claims for the first months of this year when record numbers of infections again overwhelmed an already ailing health system. If public hospitals and other private health facilities were included, PhilHealth's debts for 2020 alone would amount to P50 billion, according to De Grano.

Considering the unbearable situation of recent weeks, when people were dying in their homes or outside hospitals without getting treatment, PhilHealth's failure to pay the claims is untenable for the overburdened hospitals. In recent weeks when the country recorded its highest numbers of positive cases and deaths, people desperately went hospital-hopping even outside of Metro Manila to find a bed for their sick loved ones. Hospitals in the National Capital Region went beyond their capacity, in terms of beds and health personnel, to accommodate critically ill Covid-19 patients. A few hospitals had to close down some units as many of their nurses, doctors, and health care workers also came down with the virus.

The dire situation in public hospitals was seen at the Philippine General Hospital, one of the three COVID-19 referral hospitals, which had 220 of its PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER 250 beds occupied by Covid-19 patients. The PGH also reported a high mortality rate of five patients dying per day in the past three weeks, showing the severe situation a year after the pandemic began.

Last week, patients at the National Kidney and Transplant Institute were seen sleeping on the hallways and on hospital grounds as the facility ran out of beds to accommodate both Covid-19 and kidney patients. Amid the upsurge of Covid-19 cases, which prompted the reimposition of strict lockdowns in Metro Manila and neighboring provinces, the government had been pressing private hospitals to increase their bed capacity for Covid-19 patients. Private hospitals were already running at full or critical capacity and were short of health care workers due to infections within their ranks, De Grano pointed out. And yet while fending for themselves, these hospitals have had to contend with the financial constraints brought about by PhilHealth's failure to settle those account payables ~ for a year and counting. What's PhilHealth's excuse? Officials of the graft-ridden agency invoked the need to observe processes to make sure that health claims were valid. But should this take a year, and in the time of a raging pandemic when hospitals are the critical battlegrounds for saving people's lives?

PhilHealth president and CEO Dante Gierran issued a Debit-Credit Payment Method (DCPM) last April 8 supposedly to fast-track the payment of claims to hospitals. But as it turned out, this program is not fast or efficient enough. Per De Grano, the DCPM was only made available to hospitals in the NCR Plus, or Metro Manila and the nearby provinces placed under a modified enhanced community quarantine this month. Apparently in response to the complaints of hospitals, Malacañang on Thursday announced the DCPM would now be applied to all high-risk and critical areas in the country.

ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIP

SIR, The Indian women's recurve team ~ comprising Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari ~ should be congratulated for clinching a gold medal by playing superbly and beating Mexico in the intriguing final in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 on Sunday in Guatemala City.

It

is India's first World Cup team gold after seven years. Before this, India won gold in the World Cup four times in women's recurve ~ Shanghai (2011), Mendellin (2013) and Wroclaw (2013 and 2014).

Undoubtedly, this victory will boost the confidence of the team and help them to play brilliantly in the final qualification event and secure a team place for the upcoming Olympics.

Yours, etc., Sourish Misra, Kolkata, 26 April.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Women on the Bench

SIR, While women are underrepresented in most areas of national life, an important area where this is more acute and visible is the judiciary and the legal field.

This was recently brought to

the attention of the Supreme Court by the Supreme Court Women Lawyers Association through a petition which sought the court's intervention to consider more women for appointment

as judges in high courts. The petition noted that there are many qualified and experienced women lawyers who deserve to be appointed to the bench, and sought some provision or a ratio to be considered for their elevation. In the last 70 years, only

eight women have been appointed to the Supreme Court, out of a total of 247 judges. It has only one woman judge now. Women are poorly represented in other legal positions also. There are only 17 women designated as senior counsel in the Supreme Court as against 403 men.

Judiciary at all levels needs gender sensitisation in dealing with crimes against women. The traditional symbol of justice as the blindfolded goddess holding the scales is meaningless now seeing that women judges are very rare.

The newly appointed Chief Justice of India has the responsibility to change the situation, and he can do so through the collegium which selects judges for the higher courts.

Yours, etc., Shovonlal Chakraborty,

Kolkata, 25 April.





Saving life is more important than producing steel and JSW would ramp up supply of liquid medical oxygen.

SAJJAN JINDAL
CHAIRMAN, JSW GROUP

THUMBNAILS

Norms for bank auditors: The Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday issued guidelines for appointment of statutory auditors by banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), including housing finance companies. "Guidelines for appointment of statutory central auditors (SCAs)/statutory auditors (SAs) of commercial banks (excluding RRBs), UCBs and NBFCs (including HFCs)" will be applicable for financial year 2021-22 and onwards. However, non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size below Rs 1,000 crore have the option to continue with their extant procedure, it said. PTI

CIL plans oxygen plants: Coal India Limited on Tuesday said that three of its subsidiaries are considering installing oxygen generation plants to tide over the shortage of the life saving gas. The statement comes at a time when the country is facing oxygen shortage amid the resurgence of Covid-19. The PSU further said that it is on high alert to guard its employees by ramping up the medical infrastructure and availability of oxygen cylinders across its subsidiaries to combat the rise of Covid-19. PTI

ADB help: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Tuesday said it has provided \$1.5 billion to India to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. The institution had announced a package of \$20 billion in April 2020 to provide financial support to 26 countries to help fight the pandemic, it said in a release. PTI

Adani waives charges: Adani Ports and SEZ (APSEZ), the nation's largest private sector operator of sea ports, has waived charges for ships, exclusively carrying Covid-related equipment, and said such vessels will be given priority berthing. Billionaire Gautam Adani's group has also secured about two dozen cryogenic tanks for transporting medical oxygen, from the UAE, Thailand and Saudi Arabia, it said in a series of tweets. PTI

Mi smartphones & TV: Smartphone and smart TV maker Mi India on Tuesday announced the launch of its most premium flagship devices of 2021 ~ Mi 11 Ultra, Mi 11X series (smartphones) and Mi OLED TV 75. Commenting on the launch, Manu Kumar Jain, managing director, Mi India said: "The brand Mi aims to introduce products that are not only premium but are packed with best-in-class technology that our consumers can count on." SNS

CAIT plea: Retailers association CAIT has petitioned commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal against foreign e-commerce companies allegedly flouting lockdown norms to deliver non-essential items and unfairly gaining market share at the cost of small merchants. PTI

JSPL to sell stake in Jindal Power to Worldone

The deal is valued at around ₹3,015 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL



Jindal Power and Steel (JSPL) today said its board has approved divesting its entire equity interest in Jindal Power to Worldone, a promoter group company, for ₹3,015 crore.

The board of directors of JSPL has approved the divestment of its entire equity interest (representing 96.42 per cent of the issued and paid up capital) in Jindal Power by way of sale of shares, to Worldone Pvt Ltd, a promoter group company and a related party to the company, JSPL said in a regulatory filing. The equity value is an all-cash offer of ₹3,015 crore, the company added.

JSPL said Worldone was selected by way of an elaborate bidding process run by an independent third-party merchant banker, Grant Thornton Advisory, wherein the acquirer submitted the highest binding bid on acceptable terms and conditions.

The proposed sale is subject to necessary approvals of shareholders of the company, regulatory clearances, go-ahead from lenders of the company and Jindal Power, contractual approvals and other such consents, permissions and sanctions as may be necessary in line with extant relevant guidelines.

JSPL said the divestment is in line with JSPL's strategic objective to continuously reduce its debt, focus on its India steel business and significantly reduce its carbon footprint by almost half as part of its ESG (environment, social and corporate governance) objectives.

The equity value is an all-cash offer of ₹3,015 crore for 96.42 per cent stake in Jindal Power, including 3,400 MW coal fired powerplants in Chhattisgarh and other non-core assets owned by Jindal Power.

VR Sharma, managing director of JSPL, said this divestment is in line with the company's ESG

objectives to be amongst the top 10 lowest Co2 emitting steel companies of the world.

"Looking to the future, JSPL will be a key growth driver in the Indian steel industry and will now focus on undertaking expansion of its Angul steel plant from 6 MTPA (million tons per annum) to 12 MTPA.

"Infrastructure spending in India is bound to grow exponentially and JSPL is fully aligned with GoI's vision of achieving 300 MTPA steel production by 2030. We firmly believe in the India growth story and its potential to be an engine of global growth," he said.

JSPL said the long stop date for completion of the proposed sale is 12 months which may be mutually extended by the parties thereto, failing which the proposed sale shall terminate.

The company's board also approved the execution of a binding share purchase agreement, a loan agreement and other ancillary agreements, in relation to the proposed sale and accordingly, the company has executed a share purchase agreement.

The share purchase agreement with the Worldone and Jindal Power captures the entire understanding between the parties in relation to the sale of shares held by the company.

The company's board also approved entering into a loan agreement with Jindal Power to convert the existing capital advances and inter corporate deposits availed by JSPL from Jindal Power aggregating to ₹4,386.28 crore into an unsecured loan.

development and MFCs.

According to RLDA, the sites are strategically located and are well-connected to prominent landmarks. The development is expected to boost tourism and retail segments while contributing to the local economy as well. The multi-functional complexes, it is hoped, would provide opportunities to small investors to invest in commercial spaces, with assured footfalls, added Ved Parkash Dudeja, vice-chairman, RLDA. The bidder would be selected through an online single-stage bidding process.

The final developer would be mandated to complete construction at eachsite; even commission the same within two years. These sites would also enhance facilities for rail users, including shopping,

bookstall, ATM, food stall, medicine, variety store, not to mention a budget hotel. The developer would be permitted to market and sub-lease the built-up area for any legal and lawful activity.

Similarly, the Sikar junction falls in the north western railway zone and boasts of handling around 22 trains and 5700 passengers per day. The Bharatpur station, on its part, falls in the western railway zone and caters to about 20 pairs of trains and 7000-8000 passengers per day. It is well connected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) today reported 6.14 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹1,241.1 crore for the fourth quarter ended 31 March 2021.

The auto major had posted a net profit of ₹1,322.3 crore in January-March quarter of financial year 2019-20, MSI said in a regulatory filing.

However, revenue from sale of products stood at ₹22,959.8 crore as compared with ₹17,187.3 crore earlier, up 33.58 per cent.

The company said it sold a total of 4,92,235 vehicles during the fourth quarter, higher by 27.8 per cent as compared to the same period of the previous year.

Sales in the domestic market stood at 4,56,707 units, up by 26.7 per cent. Exports were at 35,528 units.

On a standalone basis,

Maruti Q4 profit drops 6% to ₹1,241 crore

PROGRESS REPORT

► Maruti Suzuki India reported 6.14 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹1,241.1 crore for the fourth quarter ended 31 March 2021.

► Revenue from sale of products stood at ₹22,959.8 crore as compared with ₹17,187.3 crore earlier, up 33.58 per cent.



► The company sold a total of 4,92,235 vehicles during the fourth quarter, higher by 27.8 per cent as compared to the same period of the previous year.

the auto major said it reported a 22.69 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at ₹4,389.1 crore, as compared with ₹5,677.6 crore in fiscal 2019-20.

Consolidated revenue from sale of products declined to ₹66,571.8 crore, as against ₹71,704.8 crore in FY20, it added.

On a standalone basis, the company reported a 22.69 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at ₹4,389.1 crore, as compared with ₹5,677.6 crore in fiscal 2019-20.

For financial year 2020-21,

the company reported a 22.69 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at ₹4,389.1 crore, as compared with ₹5,677.6 crore in fiscal 2019-20.

Consolidated revenue from sale of products declined to ₹66,571.8 crore, as against ₹71,704.8 crore in FY20, it added.

On a standalone basis, the net profit for the last fiscal stood at ₹4,229.7 crore, down by 25.1 per cent as

compared with fiscal 2019-20.

The company said that profit last fiscal was impacted on account of lower sales volume, increase in commodity prices, adverse foreign exchange movement, and lower non-operating income partially offset by lower operating expenses, and cost reduction efforts.

During the last fiscal, the company said it sold a total of 14,57,861 vehicles, down 6.7 per cent as compared with FY20 and lower by 21.7 per cent as compared to FY19.

In 2020-21, the company's sales in the domestic market stood at 13,61,722 units, down 6.8 per cent and exports were at 96,139 units, lower by 5.9 per cent as compared to the previous year, it added.

Hindustan Zinc: Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc on Tuesday reported 85.2 per cent rise in net profit at ₹2,481 crore for the quarter ended 31 March 2021 on the back of higher income.

The company had posted a net profit of ₹1,339 crore in the year-ago period, Hindustan Zinc said in a filing to BSE.

The income increased to ₹7,242 crore in the quarter under review over ₹4,861 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said.

"Net profit for the quarter was ₹2,481 crore, up 85 per cent Y-o-Y and 13 per cent sequentially, driven by recovery in metal prices and strict cost discipline," the company said in a statement.

Company's CEO Arun Mishra said: "We are conscious of the fact that the country is going through Covid pandemic the scale of which has not been seen before. We are doing whatever we can including supplying liquid oxygen from our smelters to hospitals in and around Udaipur. I am also happy to inform we exited the year at run-rate of 1.2 MTPA."

Tata-Mistry case: Shapoorji seeks review of SC verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 27 APRIL



During the quarter, the bank made additional provision aggregating ₹803 crore on account of change in NPA provision rates on loans to commercial banking segment. Net of the adjustments, specific loan loss provision for fourth quarter would have been ₹1,969 crore.

Meanwhile, the board authorised the bank to raise funds in Indian or foreign currency by issue of debt instruments, including but not limited long term bonds, non-convertible debentures, perpetual debt instruments, AT 1 Bonds, infrastructure bonds and Tier II capital bonds up to an amount of ₹35,000 crore.

It further said, the shareholders' funds of the bank grew by 20 per cent on annual basis and stood at ₹1,01,603 crore as on 31 March 2021.

Gross non performing assets (NPAs) fell to 3.70 per cent of the gross advances as on 31 March 2021, from 4.86 per cent in the year-ago period.

Net NPAs too came down to 1.05 per cent from 1.56 per cent.

On consolidated basis, the lender posted a net profit of ₹2,960.40 crore during the quarter ended March 2021 against a loss of ₹2,195.57 crore in the year-ago period, Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Total income increased to ₹21,028.45 crore in the latest quarter from ₹20,786.23 crore in the same period a year ago.

On consolidated basis, the lender posted a net profit of ₹2,960.40 crore during the quarter ended March 2021 against a loss of ₹2,195.57 crore in the year-ago period, Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing.

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Kate, Duchess of Cambridge strokes a lamb during a visit with Prince William to Manor Farm in Little Stainton in Durham, England on Tuesday.

Murder trial: The murder trial of an Indian-origin man found dead in an alleyway in west London last year changed course at a London court on Tuesday when the accused pleaded guilty to the killing. Manpreet Singh, 21, admitted murder of 37-year-old Baljit Singh on the second day of a trial at Isleworth Crown Court and will be sentenced at the same court on Wednesday, the Police said.

Iran wants nationals freed from US jails: Iran said it was seeking the release of all Iranian prisoners held in the US amid talks in Vienna on nuclear deal. Cabinet spokesman Ali Rabiei also hinted that another exchange of prisoners between Iran and America was possible, saying that the idea of a swap of prisoners has always been on the agenda.

Britain's Covid vaccination drive extended to 42-year-olds and above

LONDON, 27 APRIL

People aged 42 and above will be able to book their Covid-19 jab starting Tuesday as the UK's National Health Service (NHS) vaccine programme expands further to more younger age groups.

The latest cohort of eligible people will start to receive a text message inviting them to get their jab through the National Health Service (NHS) Booking Service. Those who are due to turn 42 by 1 July this year are also eligible to make an appointment under the latest extension of the vaccine rollout.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who is 42, said he was "really looking forward" to receiving his text to book a jab. "I'm very excited to open up vaccination to 42-year-olds standing by my phone awaiting my text," said the minister. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our national effort. When you get the call, get the jab, he said. According to government figures, more than 33.7 million people in the UK have now received their first dose and almost 12.9 million are fully vaccinated.

Just two weeks after rolling out the vaccine to those aged 45 and over, we are now ready to invite those aged 42 and 43, as the largest vaccination programme in NHS history continues at speed, said Professor Stephen Powis, NHS Medical Director.

The NHS currently vaccinates against COVID-19 using three approved vaccines, Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Oxford/AstraZeneca. People who cannot go online can call the service on 119 instead to book their jab. PPI

In fight against virus, Biden looks for path back to normal

Biden's first move as Prez was to swiftly overcome vaccine issues & triple ability to administer it

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

President Joe Biden spent his first 100 days in office encouraging Americans to mask up and stay home to slow the spread of the coronavirus. His task for the next 100 days will be to lay out the path back to normal.

When he entered office, Biden moved swiftly to overcome vaccine supply issues and more than tripled the country's ability to administer them. But ending the coronavirus pandemic, the central challenge of his presidency, will require more than putting shots into arms - a task now growing more difficult as demand sags - but also a robust plan to help the nation emerge from a year of isolation, disruption and confusion.

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention officials said a focus in the coming weeks will be on easing guidance for vaccinated people, both in recognition of their lower risk and to provide an incentive to get shots.

We're excited about the progress we've made, and the opportunity ahead of us, and because of the vaccination program we built we're further along than almost anyone predicted, said White House Covid-19 coordinator Jeff Zients in a Monday interview. It means we're closer to returning to normal.

On Inauguration Day, the notion of Covid-19 vaccine supply eclipsing demand seemed fanciful, with only priority groups eligible for shots and communicating in clear terms what activities can be safely resumed by those who are vaccinated. Key milestones include Biden's July Fourth pledge that Americans can safely gather with friends and family, and the start of the new school year.

and an underground economy emerging for extra doses for everyone else. Now, shots are so plentiful in many places that the Biden administration is encouraging states and pharmacy partners to set up walk-in sites for doses without appointments.

One of Biden's first actions in office was to increase the federal government's orders for the vaccines to ensure supplies for all Americans by early summer. Now the US is able to turn to sharing some of the precious supply with the world, as the White House announced on Monday that it would do with roughly 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced in the US.

At the same time, the White House was instrumental in an agreement reached with drugmaker Sanofi on Monday to help scale up production through next year of Moderna's two-dose shot, which makes up more than 40 per cent of doses administered in the US.

Believing most Americans who have yet to get a shot would do so if it were easier, the White House has deployed billions of dollars towards ads encouraging shots, community programmes to bring doses to the hardest to reach Americans, and tax credits to encourage employers to give their workers paid time off to get protected.

More than half of Americans approve of President Joe Biden after nearly 100 days on the job, according to agencies' polling, a level of support that his Republican predecessor Donald Trump never achieved and one that should help Democrats push for infrastructure spending and other big-ticket items on Biden's agenda.

The national opinion poll of 4,423 adults from April 12-16 found that 55 per cent approved of Biden's performance in office, while 40 per cent disapproved and the rest were not sure.

Biden received the highest marks for his handling of the pandemic, with 65 per cent supporting his response. In 38 January, 38 per cent approved of Trump's handling of the health crisis.

Ninety-per cent of Democrats, 61 per cent of Independents and 39 per cent of Republicans said they approved of Biden's response, the poll showed.

Fifty-two per cent of Americans also said they liked Biden's handling of the

economy and 53 per cent said the same about his impact on US jobs, which in both cases were a few percentage points higher than Trump's marks on jobs and the economy during his final month in office.

But Biden received his strongest criticism on immigration, as his administration continues to grapple with a surge of migrants arriving at the US-Mexico border: 42 per cent approved of the President's border policy, while 49 per cent disapproved.

More than half gave Biden strong marks for bipartisanship, though Democrats were much more likely than others to credit Biden for unifying the deeply divided electorate. Fifty-six per cent approved of Biden's efforts, including 88 per cent of Democrats, 23 per cent of Republicans and 48 per cent of Independents.

Americans were also generally supportive of Biden's stance on the environment and racial inequality, with 54 per cent and 51 per cent approving of his record so far, respectively.

The increase could be dramatic for workers who earn the current minimum of \$10.95 an hour.

Those workers would receive a 37% pay hike, though the increase would be rolled out gradually, according to the terms of the order.

All federal agencies would need to include the higher wage in new contract offerings by 30 January of next year.

By 30 March, agencies would need to implement the higher wage into new contracts.

The increase would also be in existing contracts that are extended. The wage would be indexed to inflation, so it would automatically increase with each year to reflect changes in prices. The tipped

minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour for federal contractors would be replaced by the standard minimum by 2024.

Biden has pushed to establish a \$15 hourly minimum wage nationwide for all workers, making it a part of his Covid relief package. But the Senate parliamentarian said the wage hike did not follow the budgetary rules that allowed the \$1.9 trillion plan to pass with a simple majority, so it was not included in the bill that became law in March.

World

Biden to sign \$15 minimum wage for federal contract workers



ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

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ONCE IN A PINK MOON



Pink supermoon hangs above Statue of Liberty in New York on Tuesday.

Russian court restricts Navalny's anti-corruption foundation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 27 APRIL

A court in Moscow ruled on Tuesday to restrict the activities of an organisation founded by imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny pending a decision on whether it should be outlawed as an extremist group.

The Moscow City Court's ruling on Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption came amid a sweeping crackdown on Russian President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, his allies and his political infrastructure.

The Moscow prosecutor's office petitioned the court this month to label the foundation and Navalny's network of regional offices as extremist groups and effectively outlaw their activities, exposing members and supporters to lengthy prison terms. If the court grants the request, it would be a crippling blow to Navalny's beleaguered team. He has been in prison since January, and

many of his aides and associates were arrested or face criminal charges.

On Monday, the prosecutor's office ordered Navalny's offices in dozens of Russian regions to suspend their activities, prompting them to effectively shut down. The Tuesday ruling on the foundation just barred it from performing certain activities.

Ivan Pavlov, a lawyer representing the foundation, said the organization is no longer allowed to use the media or the internet to distribute content or to organize rallies and public events, take part in elections or use bank deposits.

Restrictions on the foun-

dation, however, will not disrupt its work, director Ivan Zhdanov said on social media, arguing that most of the restrictions don't apply to the anti-corruption organization's activities.

Some nonsense, Zhdanov tweeted. (These) aren't going to influence our work in any way. Navalny's foundation opened 10 years ago and has since targeted high-ranking Russian officials with exposures on corruption, many in the form of colourful and wide-

watched YouTube videos.

One of its latest posts, which has received 116 million views, alleges that a lavish palace on the Black Sea shore was built for Putin through an elaborate corruption scheme. The Kremlin has denied there are any links to Putin.

Along with the foundation, Navalny set up a vast network of regional offices in dozens of Russian regions when he was campaigning to run against Putin in the 2018 presidential election.

The arrest triggered protests across Russia that proved to be the biggest show of defiance in years. However, they didn't stop authorities from putting Navalny on trial for violating the terms of a suspended sentence while he was in Germany. The sentence stemmed from a 2014 embezzlement conviction widely that Navalny has characterised as politically motivated. He was ordered to serve 2 years in prison and last month was transferred to a penal colony notorious for its harsh conditions.

Iran nuclear talks resume in Vienna amid new complications

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 27 APRIL

World powers were set to resume high level talks in Vienna on Tuesday focused on bringing the United States back into the nuclear deal with Iran, in their first session since comments surfaced from the Iranian foreign minister alleging that Russia was trying to scupper the pact.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has thus far refused to comment on the remarks from foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, made in a interview.

Russia's top representative at the Vienna talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, who has outwardly been one of the most optimistic about the possibility of getting

said before the talks.

The US is not at the table because it unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then President Donald Trump, who restored and augmented American sanctions in a campaign of maximum pressure to try and force Iran into renegotiating the pact with more concessions. President Joe Biden wants to rejoin the deal, however, and there is a US delegation in Vienna taking part in indirect talks with Iran.

The deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The reimposition of American sanctions has left the country's economy reeling, and Tehran has reacted by steadily increasing its violations of the restrictions

of the deal, such as increasing the purity of uranium it enriches and its stockpiles, in a thus-far unsuccessful effort to pressure the other countries to provide relief.

The ultimate goal of the deal is to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, something it insists it doesn't want to do. Iran now has enough enriched uranium to make a bomb, but nowhere near the amount it had before the nuclear deal was signed.

The comments from Zarif, who himself helped negotiate the original 2015 nuclear deal, have the potential to complicate the Vienna talks, which are focused on how the US would roll back its sanctions and which ones and how Iran would return to compliance.

CEOs of 40 US companies create global task force to help India fight Covid-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

In a show of solidarity, the CEOs of about 40 top American companies have come together to create a first-of-its-kind country-specific global task force to mobilise resources and coordinate efforts to help India fight the battle against Covid-19.

A collective initiative of the US-India Business Council of the US Chamber of Commerce, and the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum and Business Roundtable, the task force during its meeting here on Monday committed to get 20,000 oxy-

gen concentrators to India in the next few weeks, Deloitte CEO Punit Renjen told.

The new US public-private partnership to provide India critical medical supplies, vaccines, oxygen and other life-saving assistance amid an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases is called the 'Global Task Force on Pandemic Response: Mobilising for India.'

A number of American companies have come together over the weekend. We are focused on doing our very best to help in any way that we possibly can. As the PM said, we were very confident, our spirits were up after successful

ly tackling the first wave, but this storm has shaken the nation. It is up to us to help in any way possible, Renjen said. Observing that the first issue is around oxygen and its concentrators, Renjen said they have commitments to get 20,000 oxygen concentrators to India in the next few weeks.

The first 1,000 will arrive in the middle of this week, he said, adding that by May, they expect another 11,000 oxygen concentrators to reach the country. "Our goal is to get 25,000, and maybe even a number higher than that," he added. The second issue is to look at oxygen cylinders with 10-litre and 45-litre capacity.

As US troops leave Afghanistan, lawmakers fear dark future for women

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

since Biden announced plans to withdraw troops by Sept. 11 after two decades of war.

When Biden made his announcement on 14 April, he said the United States would continue providing assistance to Afghan security forces and to civilian programs, including those for women and girls.

Members of Congress, many of whom are skeptical about the plans to bring home the 2,500 remaining troops, worry the US departure would cede control to the Taliban, whose 1996-2001 rule severely curtailed activities for Afghan women.

Since the Taliban was driven from power, the international community has poured billions into Afghanistan's development. Gains for women and girls in access to education and public life are repeatedly touted as one of the major successes.

Women have been underrepresented during peace talks, despite promises that they would have a place at the table. read more

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, a senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee and its only woman member, said Khalilzad, who also served under former Republican President Donald Trump, had not made including women enough of a priority. She said there was too much uncertainty about the plans for Afghanistan after

11 September to know whether women's rights would be protected.

"They at least recognize it's an issue, which is a start," Shaheen told. Shaheen, who is also on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said women's rights had been discussed at every briefing she had been to.

"I think it's important for us to continue to do everything we can," she said.

Harsh restrictions

Under the Taliban, women were barred from education or work, required to fully cover their bodies and faces and could not leave home without a male relative. "Moral offences" were punished by flogging and stoning.

Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, the foreign relations

committee's chairman, said after a classified committee briefing last week that he had continuing concerns about ensuring rights for Afghan women and minorities will be protected.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said he had no doubt the Taliban would close schools and again impose harsh restrictions on women. The 11 September deadline—which marks 20 years since the attacks on the United States that prompted Washington to go to war in Afghanistan—extended the US presence there beyond the 1



Climate control without the AC

A recent paper describes a material that can reflect away the heat that falls on it, as well as cool by radiating in that special way

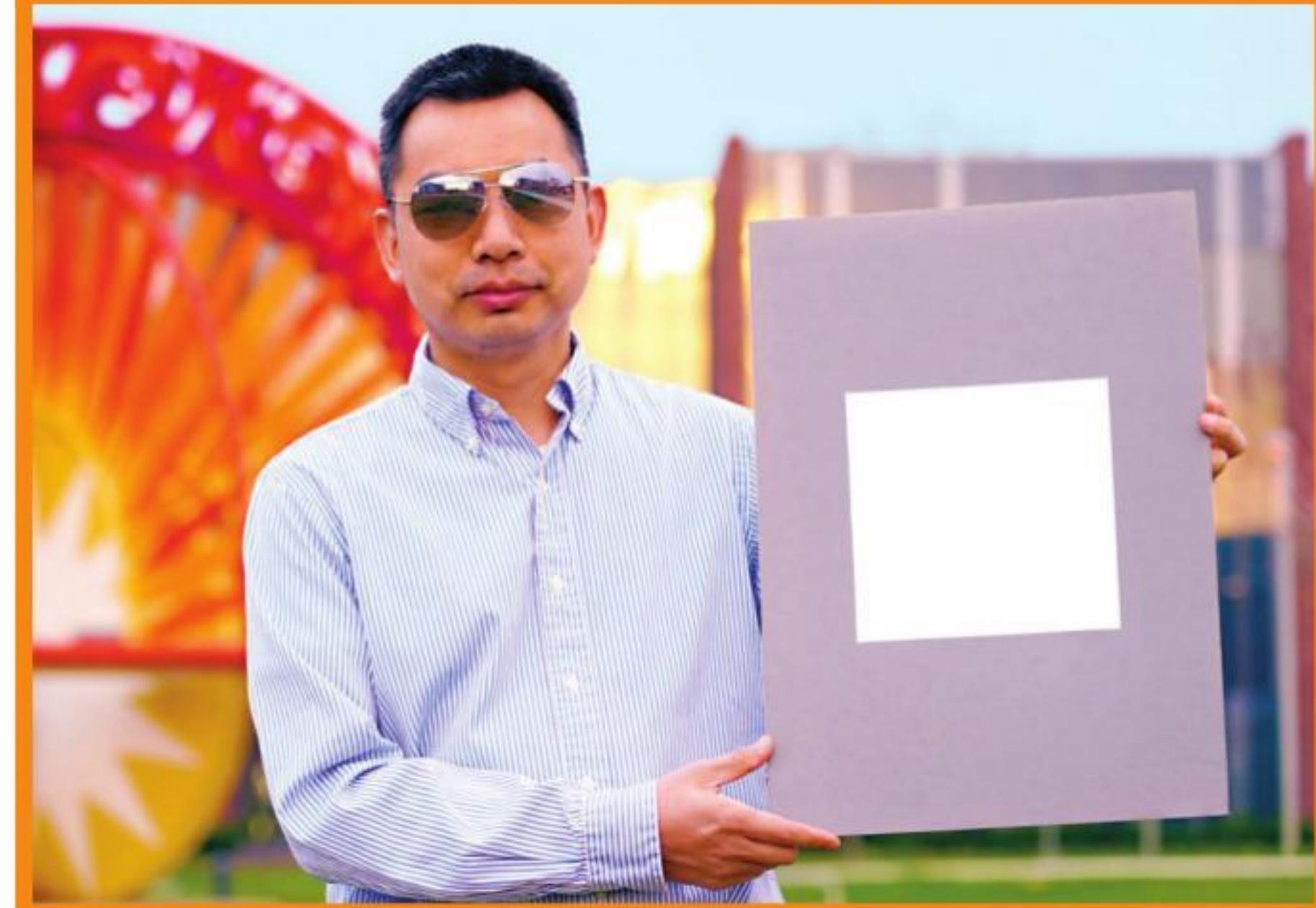
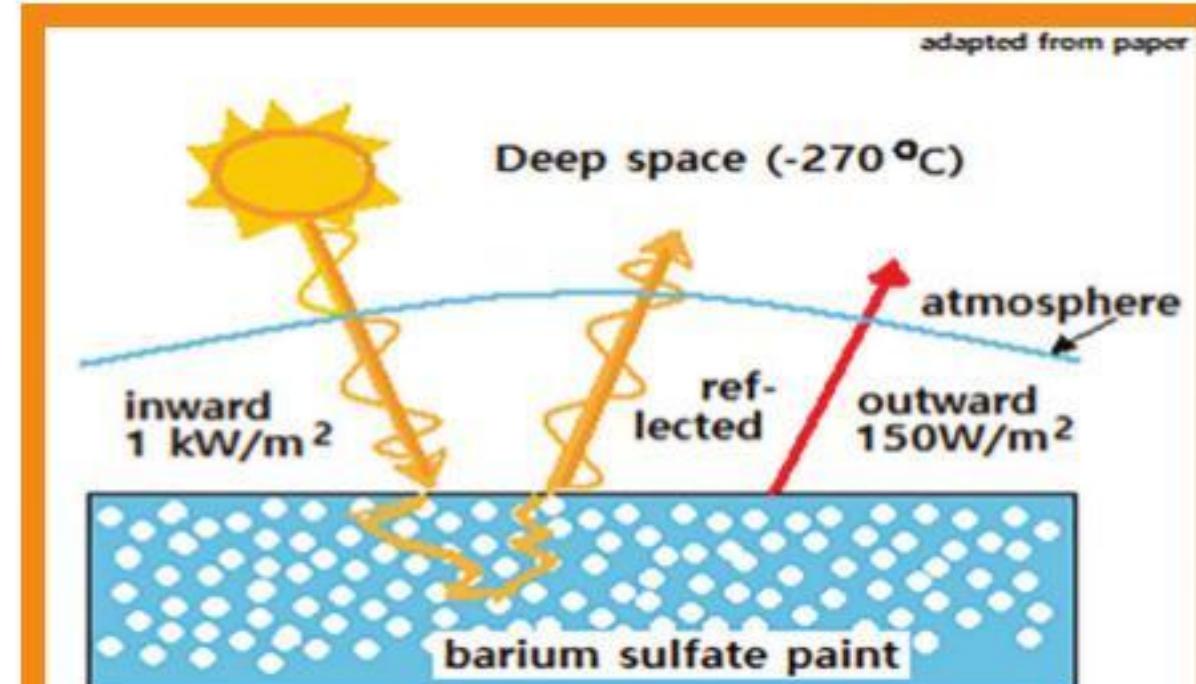
S ANANTHANARAYANAN

Rising carbon dioxide in the air and rising temperatures have driven up the use of air conditioning in homes and workplaces, and hence the consumption of electricity. As much of our electricity comes from burning coal, the increased load leads to more carbon dioxide in the air and, in turn, greater need for air conditioning. Homeowners and architects would welcome a way out of the spiral.

The last few decades have seen several groups working on methods of "passive cooling", or cooling things down without conventional refrigeration units. One approach has been with surfaces that reflect, in place of absorbing heat from sunlight or the surroundings. Another approach is with special surfaces that radiate in such a way that heat travels not just out from the warm object but passes through the atmosphere as well.

Xiangyu Li, Joseph Peoples, Peiyan Yao and Xiulin Ruan (*in photo*), from Purdue University, Indiana, US, in a paper in the journal, *Applied Materials and Interfaces*, of the American Chemical Society, describe a material that can reflect away the heat that falls on it, as well as cool by radiating in that special way.

It is well known that wearing white or painting buildings white would reflect heat and help things stay cooler. Buildings even use a complex, multi-layer covering, to promote reflection, or use a reflective metal layer. But those are expensive procedures and are not even possible for many applications. Single-layer



paints have been used, but they often need thick coats and are only partially effective. The best high reflection paints, the paper says, are only 91 per cent reflective.

While warm objects do cool by radiation of heat, most of the heat that is sent out is absorbed by the surrounding air and the ambient temperature goes up, which sends the

heat right back, and reduces the cooling that radiation brings about. There is, however, a special band of wavelengths of radiation which does not heat the surroundings and is able to pass through the atmosphere, and away to outer space. Radiation at this band would thus cause real, net cooling, of the object and the Earth as well. This radiation band, known as

pler arrangement, an "ultra-white" paint, which results in high reflectivity as well as emission in the special band of frequencies. A reason why existing high reflectivity paints, which contain a suspension or film of titanium dioxide particles for selective emission, have not resulted in cooling of more than two °C, is mainly that titanium dioxide particles absorb

the "sky window", is in the infra-red region, in the wavelength range of eight to 13 micrometres, a band of wavelengths at which none of the components of the atmosphere can absorb radiation.

A first material that favoured radiation of heat in this wavelength band was silicon, the material of electronics and solar cells. A group at Stanford University created a composite film, made of silicon dioxide and hafnium dioxide. Silicon dioxide emits strongly at nine micrometres and hafnium dioxide at nine to 13 micrometres. The film, when laid over an object, would thus warm by the heat of the object and radiate at those wavelengths. Combined with an arrangement for reflectivity of 97 per cent, the Stanford group reported cooling by four to five °C, of an object placed in open sunlight. The system also works with a comparatively cheaper material, titanium dioxide, in place of hafnium dioxide.

What the group at Purdue University has now reported is a far sim-

ilar ultraviolet light, the paper says. The way materials absorb light when photons fall on them is that photons knock about the electrons of atoms in the material and pass on their energy to the material.

The quest has hence been for materials where electrons are more firmly bound, and photons of ultraviolet light cannot knock them loose. Using such materials, however, leads to less reflectivity and what we gain by the better materials gets set off by their effect, the paper says.

The arrangements the Purdue team report are a film with nanoparticles of an alternative material, barium sulphate, and an acrylic paint that contains barium sulphate. With barium sulphate, the paper says, it takes higher energy for electrons to be separated from atoms. The result is that photons of the ultraviolet are not absorbed, while they are still reflected by the film or paint. By choosing a proper distribution of particle sizes, the team has achieved reflectivity of 97.6 per cent, the paper says.

Another property of barium sulphate particles is that their internal, mechanical vibrations are strong at the frequency that corresponds to the wavelength of nine micrometres. It is within the "sky window" of nine to 13 micrometres. The particles in a film or paint, hence, convert a large fraction of heat energy in an object at nine micrometres and send it out, to pass through the atmosphere and away from the Earth!

During trials conducted, the temperature of a sample dropped 10.5 °C below the ambient temperature during the nights and stayed 4.5–10 °C below the ambient temperature during daytime. Whereas the temperature of a control test with commercial paint increased 6.8 °C above the ambient temperature between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Overall, the barium dioxide film achieved an average cooling power of 117 W over every square metre. The cooling capacity of a one tonne AC unit is about 3.5 kW. In comparison, a film-covered rooftop with an area of 50 square metres could provide 570 W of cooling.

The cooling by a conventional AC unit is during the time it is on and working, whereas the cooling film would work continuously. And the cooling could be twice as much, as the walls would also be painted. Most of the area under the roof could, hence, be fairly well cooled, with no power consumed.

Three of the authors of the paper are in the process of obtaining a patent for the technology. The material, therefore, may soon be commercially available.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

PLUS POINTS

Malaria vaccine



A malaria vaccine developed by the same team behind the Oxford coronavirus jab has been found to be 77 per cent effective in providing protection against the mosquito-borne disease, in what is a major scientific breakthrough for the world.

This is the first time that a vaccine for malaria has surpassed the 75 per cent efficacy goal set by the World Health Organisation, raising fresh hope that the disease can be one day eradicated. The findings come from the first 12 months of an ongoing phase two trial, which was first launched in Burkina Faso in May 2019 and involves 450 children, aged five to 17 months.

Professor Adrian Hill, whose work at Oxford University's Jenner Institute set the foundations for the Oxford Covid jab, designed and developed the malaria vaccine. He said the latest results, published in *The Lancet*, "support our high expectations for the potential of this vaccine".

—THE INDEPENDENT

Covid & heart diseases



Individuals are often born with defects in their hearts and they are called congenital heart diseases. Examples of CHD include a wide spectrum of diseases including atrial septal defect and ventricular septal defect (commonly referred to as "hole in the heart"). Currently, advanced surgical options help repair such defects during childhood. However, some aspects of the disease processes still linger well into adulthood and sophisticated care is needed for such individuals.

There are only a handful of leaders whose clinical research focus has emphasised on enhancing the quality and care of outcome in adult congenital heart disease patients. Dr Mahesh Aradhya (*in photo*) has enhanced community health literacy to understand the healthcare needs of this emerging population and examine the impact of quality of care on their outcomes. Originally from Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences in Bangalore, he is a fellow of the American College of Cardiology.

Dr Aradhya pointed out that lack of access to quality speciality ACHD care is associated with increased mortality in such patients. He is one of the pioneers in establishing such services in the southern US state of Arkansas in his role as staff cardiologist at the North East Arkansas Baptist Hospital.

The improvement of CHD care has increased the number of patients surviving into adulthood. There are more than 1.5 million patients, and the initial surgeries for CHD are often not curative as the patients have residual abnormalities, remarked Dr Aradhya.

An important reason for discussing this ACHD population during the coronavirus pandemic is related to the increasing number of emergency room visits for such patients due to exacerbation of their heart ailments. The ACHD patients, depending on the complexity of their original heart lesions, often present with sudden acute decompensated heart failure, pulmonary hypertension, arrhythmia and develop the necessity for implantation of a pacemaker or cardioverter defibrillator or for cardiac catheterisation. All of those are important co-morbidities that worsen outcomes due to coronavirus or flu infection.

Adults with CHD have worse perioperative outcomes from non-cardiac surgery. Moreover, such patients have multiple neuropsychological issues, liver and kidney dysfunction, blood-related problems and endocrinopathy. The abnormal cardiac physiology predisposes unique challenges during pregnancy and poses a great risk for common age-related or acquired co-morbidities like hypertension, warned Dr Aradhya.

Those co-morbidities, including development of heart failure and lung edema, make such adult patients with congenital heart diseases highly vulnerable to a down-hill clinical trajectory during Sars-CoV-2 infection. Additionally, 20–30 per cent of people with severe CHD have congenital physical, developmental or cognitive disorders resulting in increased healthcare resource utilisation. The trail-blazing work of Dr Aradhya ensures higher quality of life in this special population of patients with debilitating heart diseases from birth.

—SUBHENDU MAITI



LISE ELIOT

Everyone knows the difference between male and female brains. One is chatty and a little nervous, but never forgets and takes good care of others. The other is calmer, albeit more impulsive, but can tune out gossip to get the job done.

These are stereotypes, of course, but they hold surprising sway over the way actual brain science is designed and interpreted. Since the dawn of magnetic resonance imaging, neuroscientists have worked ceaselessly to find differences between men's and women's brains. The research attracts lots of attention because it's just so easy to try to link any particular brain finding to some gender difference in behaviour.

But as a neuroscientist long experienced in the field, I recently completed a painstaking analysis of 30 years of research on human brain sex differences. And what I found, with the help of excellent collaborators, is that virtually none of those claims has proven reliable.

Except for the simple difference in size, there are no meaningful differences between men's and women's brain structure or activity

that hold up across diverse populations. Nor do any of the alleged brain differences actually explain the familiar but modest differences in personality and abilities between men and women.

MORE ALIKE THAN NOT

My colleagues and I titled our study "Dump the Dimorphism" to debunk the idea that human brains are "sexually dimorphic." That's a very science-y term biologists use to describe a structure that comes in two distinct forms in males and females, such as antlers on deer or the genitalia of men and women.

When it comes to the brain, some animals do indeed exhibit sexual dimorphism, such as certain birds whose brains contain a song-control nucleus that is six times larger in males and is responsible for male-only courtship singing. But as we demonstrate in our exhaustive survey, nothing in human brains comes remotely close to that.

Yes, men's overall brain size is about 11 per cent bigger than women's, but unlike some songbirds, no specific brain areas are disproportionately larger in men or women. Brain size

THEY ARE ALMOST THE SAME

You don't have a male or female brain – the more brains scientists study, the weaker the evidence for sex differences

is proportional to body size, and the brain difference between sexes is actually smaller than other internal organs, such as the heart, lungs and kidneys, which range from 17 to 25 per cent larger in men. When overall size is properly controlled, no individual brain region varies by more than about one per cent between men and women, and even those tiny differences are not found consistently across geographically or ethnically diverse populations.

Other highly touted brain sex differences are also a product of size, not sex. They include the ratio of grey matter to white matter and the ratio of connections between, versus within, the two hemispheres of the brain. Both of those ratios are larger in people with smaller brains, whether male or female. What's more, recent research has utterly rejected the idea that the tiny difference in connectivity between left and right hemispheres explains any behavioural difference between men and women.

A ZOMBIE CONCEPT

Still, "sexual dimorphism" won't die. It's a zombie concept, with the latest revival using artificial intelligence to predict whether a given brain scan comes from a man or woman.

Computers can do this with 80 to 90 per cent accuracy except, once again, this accuracy falls to 60 per cent (or not much better than a coin flip) when you properly control for head size. More troublesome is that these algorithms don't translate across populations, such as European versus Chinese. Such inconsistency shows there are no universal features that discriminate male and female brains in humans – unlike those deer antlers.

Neuroscientists have long held out hope that bigger studies and better methods would finally uncover the "real" or species-wide sex differences in the brain. But the truth is, as studies have gotten bigger, the sex effects have gotten smaller.

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SOFTWARE VERSUS HARDWARE

We must be doing something right,

because our challenge to the dogma of brain sex has received pushback from both ends of the academic spectrum. Some have labelled us as science "deniers" and deride us for political correctness. On the other extreme, we are dismissed by women's health advocates, who believe research has overlooked women's brains – and that neuroscientists should intensify our search for sex differences to better treat female-dominant disorders, such as depression and Alzheimer's disease.

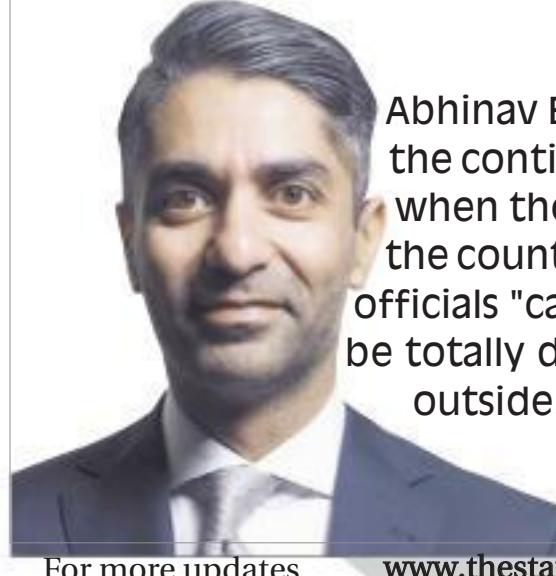
But there's no denying the decades of actual data, which show that brain sex differences are tiny and swamped by the much greater variance in individuals' brain measures across the population. And the same is true for most behavioural measures. About a decade ago, teachers were urged to separate boys and girls for mathematics and English classes based on the sexes' alleged learning differences. Fortunately, many refused, arguing the range of ability is always much greater among boys or among girls than between each gender as a group.

In other words, sex is a very imprecise indicator of what kind of brain a person will have. Another way to think about it is every individual brain is a mosaic of circuits that control the many dimensions of masculinity and femininity, such as emotional expressiveness, interpersonal style, verbal and analytical reasoning, sexuality and gender identity itself.

Or, to use a computer analogy, gendered behaviour comes from running different software on the same basic hardware. The absence of binary brain sex features also resonates with the increasing numbers of people who identify as non-binary, queer, non-conforming or transgender. Whatever influence biological sex exerts directly on human brain circuitry is clearly not sufficient to explain the multidimensional behaviours we lump under the complex phenomenon of gender.

Rather than "dimorphic," the human brain is a sexually monomorphic organ – much more like the heart, kidneys and lungs. As you may have noticed, those can be transplanted between women and men with great success.

The writer is professor of neuroscience, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, US. This article first appeared on www.theconversation.com



VOICE OF REASON

Abhinav Bindra (in photo, left) has questioned the continuation of the Indian Premier League when the Covid-19 pandemic has virtually left the country crippled, saying our cricketers and officials "can't just live in their own bubble, and be totally deaf or blind to whatever is going on outside."

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Tye's query: Rajasthan Royals' pace bowler Andrew Tye, who had left for Australia on Sunday, expressed surprise over companies owning the Indian Premier League franchises spending so much money when Indians were struggling for basic medical amenities.

Akhtar's appeal: Shoaib Akhtar says the current Indian Premier League and the forthcoming Pakistan Super League should be postponed owing to the Covid-19 situation in the two countries. Akhtar said saving human lives was more important than cricket.

Morris' choice: South African all-rounder Chris Morris, who guided Rajasthan Royals to a six-wicket victory against Kolkata Knight Riders in an Indian Premier League game on Saturday, says his favourite players in world cricket are Sanju Samson and Hardik Pandya.

Kings upbeat: Punjab Kings fast bowler Chris Jordan said his team were close to putting in the "perfect performance" and the mood in the camp was upbeat despite their defeat by Kolkata Knight Riders which left them sixth in the Indian Premier League standings.

Positive tests: Captain Rani Rampal is among seven members of the Indian women's hockey team and support staff who have tested positive for Covid-19, officials said on Monday. They were tested on April 24, having self-isolated after returning from home.

Shooting setback: The Indian shooting contingent for the Tokyo Olympics, already reeling after the national camp was postponed recently, suffered another blow to Tokyo preparations when the World Cup in Baku (21 June - 2 July) was cancelled on Monday.

Lazio victorious: Lazio revived their hopes of Champions League qualification and subjected AC Milan to a second consecutive Serie A defeat as Joaquin Correa scored twice in a 3-0 win for the club at the Stadio Olimpico on Monday. Milan are in fifth place.

First duo: Alan Shearer (Newcastle) and ex-Arsenal forward Thierry Henry have become the first two players inducted into the Premier League's Hall of Fame. Shearer, 50, is the Premier League's all-time top scorer, with 260 goals in 14 Premier League seasons.

Tokyo Games: Japanese towns and cities have been forced to rethink plans to host Olympic teams because the coronavirus will prevent public appearances and require costly safety measures. Okuzumo spent more than \$5 million to welcome India's hockey team.

Brisbane boosted: In a major boost to Brisbane's chances of securing the rights to host the 2032 Olympics and Paralympic Games, the Australian government on Monday pledged "the federal authorities will cover half the cost" of the quadrennial Games.

New man: Julian Nagelsmann appears to be Bayern Munich's first choice to replace coach Hansi Flick. The 33-year-old has indicated his desire to leave current club RB Leipzig. Nagelsmann has asked to be released from his contract, reports DPA.

Brett Lee donates: Inspired by his countryman Pat Cummins' gesture, former Australian pacer Brett Lee on Tuesday decided to donate one bitcoin (approximately Rs 40 lakh) to help India in its fight against the raging COVID-19 pandemic. "I'd like to donate 1 BTC (Bitcoin) to Crypto Relief to help with the purchase of oxygen supplies for the hospitals across India," Lee said in a statement.

CSK favourites against SRH

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Operating like a well-oiled unit, Chennai Super Kings will start as overwhelming favourites when they clash with struggling SunRisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League match here tomorrow.

The MS Dhoni-led CSK have bounced back in style after losing their opening match. They are on a roll with four straight wins and hope the new venue, Feroz Shah Kotla, favours them.

The three-time champions had an underwhelming 2020 season but the team, packed with seasoned players, are now displaying the efficiency they are known for. All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been the driving force behind CSK's impressive run so far. His blistering assault on Harshal Patel in the final over shut out Royal Challengers Bangalore on Sunday.

He has been among the wickets with his accurate left-arm spin, apart from effecting stunning run-outs. CSK openers Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad have found form while Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu are due for big knocks. CSK batters are aware of the Rashid Khan threat but the rest of the SRH attack does not add up to much.

Hyderabad rely heavily on their foreigners, led by skipper David Warner, who is assisted by Jonny Bairstow, Kane Williamson and Khan. Their biggest weakness is a



CSK openers Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad have found form while Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu are due for big knocks. CSK batters are aware of the Rashid Khan threat but the rest of the SRH attack does not add up to much.

fragile batting order and their over-reliance on the top order. The inability of the team's

Indian middle order to step up has let SRH down very often and the think-tank needs to get the combination right if they have to move out of the last spot in the standings. Warner needs to shrug off his poor run and, for that, he needs to negotiate CSK paceman Deepak Chahar, who has an impressive ability to strike upfront. The presence of Jadeja, Imran

Tahir and Sam Curran implies a strong CSK bowling unit. SRH will need one among Warner, Bairstow and Williamson to play a big knock and hope the middle order can make a meaningful contribution. Hyderabad's bowling has been inconsistent with Bhuvneshwar Kumar proving ineffective and T Natarajan absent with an injury.

De Villiers powers RCB to 171/5 against DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, 27 APRIL

The ever-reliable AB de Villiers (in photo) hit an unbeaten 42-ball 75 to power Royal Challengers Bangalore to 171 for five against Delhi Capitals in the IPL on Tuesday.

It was a collective effort from the Delhi bowlers -- Ishant Sharma (1/26), Axar Patel (1/33), Kagiso Rabada (1/38), Amit Mishra (1/27), Avesh Khan (1/24) -- who all picked one-wicket apiece. De Villiers, who hit three fours and five sixes, was the top scorer for RCB.

The veteran South African hit 22 runs off the last over bowled by Marcus Stoinis (0/23) that included three sixes.

Rajat Patidar (31) and Glenn Maxwell (25 off 20 balls) also provided valuable contributions.

Put in to bat, Devdutt Padikkal (17) and skipper Virat Kohli (12) were off to a flying start, amassing 30 runs in 3.5 overs. The youngster opened his account with a boundary off Ishant in the first over. The duo hit five fours. However, that changed as DC bowlers effected back-to-back blows.

Pacer Avesh provided the Capitals with the first breakthrough, dismissing the RCB captain for 12 in the fourth over. In the very next ball, Ishant, playing his first match of the season, got rid of the dangerous Patidar.

With two new batsmen in



the middle, the seasoned speedster went on to bowl a wicket maiden to slow down the proceedings as RCB collected 36 runs for the loss of two wickets in the Powerplay.

Maxwell played a short cameo, smashing two maximums and a boundary but was caught at longon by compatriot Steve Smith of leggie

Barring de Villiers all RCB batsmen were guilty of not capitalising on good starts.

SCOREBOARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore Innings:	
Virat Kohli b Avesh Khan 12	
Devdutt Padikkal b Ishant 17	
Rajat Patidar c Steven Smith b Axar 31	
G Maxwell c Steven Smith b a Mishra 25	
AB de Villiers (wk) not out 75	
Washington Sundar c and b Rabada 6	
Daniel Sams not out 3	
Extras: 2 (b 0, lb 0, w 2, nb 0, p 0)	
Total: 171 (5 wkts, 20 Ov)	
Bowler: Ishant 4-1-26-1, Rabada 4-0-38-1, Khan 4-0-24-1, Mishra 3-0-27-1, Patel 4-0-33-1, Stoinis 1-0-23-0	

Champions' league

BERLIN, 27 APRIL

Record winners Real Madrid face Chelsea and last year's runners-up Paris Saint-Germain are up against Manchester City as the Uefa Champions League returns after a week of turmoil in the football community over an ill-fated Super League project.

Zinedine Zidane's Real have advanced over Atalanta and Liverpool into their first semi-final since 2018, and in La Liga as defending champions are fighting Barcelona and Atletico Madrid. "We've not won anything yet, but we're in Europe and the Liga," Zidane said ahead of Tuesday's first-leg date.

Chelsea have shown big improvement since Thomas Tuchel became their manager in January, with the German aiming for his second straight final after 2020 with PSG. The Blues ousted City last week in the FA Cup semi-finals and are unbeaten in three pre-

vious continental dates with Real, the last being the 1998 European Super Cup. "There's a lot of confidence -- we have a great team, a very confident bunch of guys. We're going to go in and try to win this thing," said Chelsea's American forward Christian Pulisic.

While Real have an unrivalled 13 titles and Chelsea lifted the trophy in 2012, the ambitious duo of PSG and City finally want to taste glory as well in the elite event, with one of them assured of making the final.

City beat PSG en route to their only previous semi-finals appearance in 2016 but the French have plenty of confidence having beaten title holders Bayern Munich in a quarter-final rematch of last year's final.

"We've eliminated the champions of Europe, we're in the semi-finals and we'll have to work even harder," PSG forward Neymar said. IANS

Despite the withdrawal of four players from the Indian Premier League over the past couple of days owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, franchises say there are no major problems related to the mental health of the cricketers. The sudden departure of three

Australian players -- Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals), Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) and India's own R Ashwin (Delhi Capitals, in photo) led to speculation players felt oppressed in the bio-bubble amid the massive daily rise in the numbers of Covid-19 infections in India.

English player Liam Livingstone (Rajasthan Royals) had earlier left for his country, citing bubble fatigue.

However, the franchises IANS spoke to said the play-

ers' pull-outs were attributable to personal reasons and not related to their mental health. "The players who left have cited personal reasons. Now, it is evident that the three Australians left owing to fears they would be locked out since Australia might restrict flights. It is not related to any mental health issue. This is the same with Ashwin. It appears that someone in his family is fighting Covid," said a franchise official.

Despite the withdrawal of four players from the Indian Premier League over the past couple of days owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, franchises say there are no major problems related to the mental health of the cricketers. The sudden departure of three Australian players -- Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals), Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) and India's own R Ashwin (Delhi Capitals, in photo) led to speculation players felt oppressed in the bio-bubble amid the massive daily rise in the numbers of Covid-19 infections in India.

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Morgan all praise for bowlers after victory

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, 27 APRIL



Kolkata Knight Riders skipper Eoin Morgan (in photo) praised his spinners, who had confused batsmen with their variations as they led their side to a convincing five-wicket win over Punjab Kings in an Indian Premier League match last night. Both Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy conceded runs at under six an over.

The former took two for 22 in his four overs while the latter scalped one for 24 as KKR restricted PK to 123/9 in 20 overs. "The advantage we have over most spinners is that our spinners are variation bowlers. They don't rely on drift and turn. They control their lengths well and rely on a tiny amount of turn and today they were exceptional," said Morgan after the match.

The two spinners bowled the middle overs, choking the scoring, and eventually made the winning difference. The left-handed Morgan, who had led England to the 2019 World Cup win, also praised pace bowler Shivam Mavi for picking up the dangerous Chris Gayle early.

"(It was) only his second game this season. The match-up against Gayle was favourable. He bowled well in the last game and started well here. For him to make an impact is a huge credit to

the league to go on and whether its organisers and participating players should be doing more to express empathy. On Monday, Kolkata Knight Riders' Rs 15 crore buy, Australian pacer Pat Cummins, donated USD 50,000 to the Indian government, hoping that it would inspire more to contribute.

Amin lauded the players for carrying on and giving some joy amid the gloom.

"When you all walk out onto the field, you are bringing hope to millions of people who have tuned in," he said.

"While you are professionals and will play to win, this time you are also playing for something much more important," he added.

As of now, the IPL still has 14 Australian players, including big names like Steve Smith (in photo, right) (Delhi Capitals), David Warner (in photo) (SunRisers Hyderabad) and Cummins. Ricky Ponting (DC) and Simon Katich (Royal Challengers Bangalore) are among the high-profile Australian coaches, while iconic former players such as Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee and Lisa Sthalekar are part of the tournament's commentary team.

The eight-team event is being played in front of empty stands across six venues and has even barred food from outside the designated team hotels in its latest dictats to strengthen the bio-bubble.

The crisis outside the IPL's bio-bubble has led to some talk about whether it is appropriate.

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COVID cloud on IPL: BCCI assures safe return to foreign players

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI/MELBOURNE, 27 APRIL

The BCCI stepped in to assuage apprehensions of foreign cricketers, especially Australians, at the IPL as a second wave of COVID-19 infections battered India, prompting the government Down Under to suspend air travel with the country besides asking players to make their own arrangements for return.

The fear of being locked out of their own nation drove the likes of Andrew Tye to take an early flight back to Australia while Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa also exited their franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore's bio-bubble on Monday.

A day later, Australia announced that it was suspending air travel to and from India till May 15 amid the swirling COVID-19 cases. The BCCI wrote to the foreign players telling them that their safe return home will be its responsibility once the tournament ends on May 30.

"We understand that many of you are apprehensive about how you will get back home once the tournament concludes... We want to assure you that you have nothing to worry about," BCCI COO Hemang Amin said in a letter addressed to the players. "The BCCI will do everything to ensure that you reach your respective destinations seamlessly. The BCCI is monitoring the situation very closely and is working with the government authorities to make arrangements to get you home once the tournament concludes."

"Be reassured that the tournament is not over for BCCI till each one of you has reached your home, safe and sound," he added.

Mumbai Indians' Australian batsman Chris Lynn hoped that Cricket Australia would arrange a chartered flight for those who have stayed back after CA checked on their travel plans.

"Texted back that as Cricket Australia make 10 per cent of every IPL contract was there a chance we could spend that money this year on a charter flight once the tournament is over?" Lynn told News Corp media.

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