



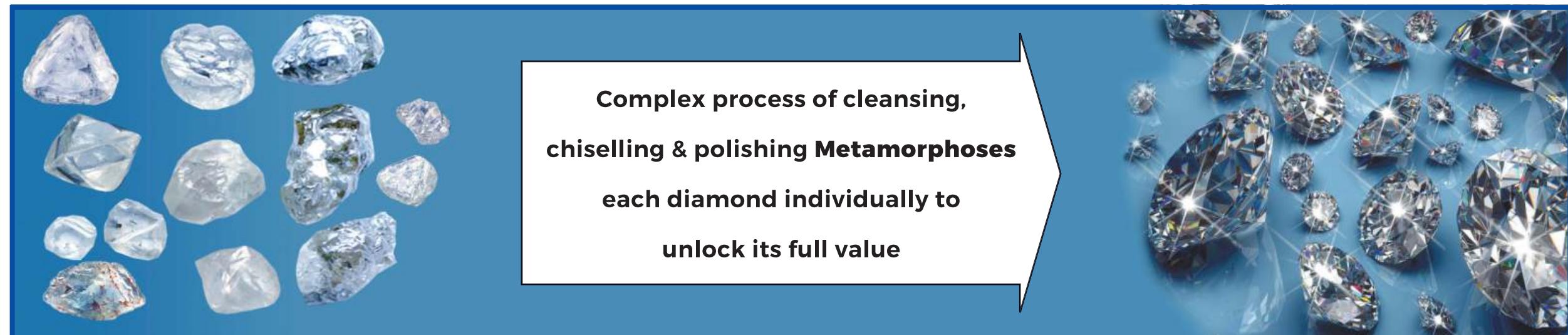
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on Sunday

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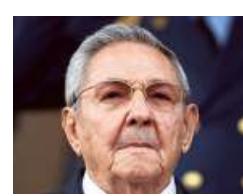
The Premier Institute for JEE Main, JEE Advanced, Boards, various Olympiads, KVPY & NTSE



Lalu Prasad may exit jail as he gets bail in Dumka Treasury case
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My phone is being tapped, will order CID probe: Mamata Banerjee
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Raul Castro resigns as Communist party chief, ending era in Cuba
page 9



Pollard, Rahul Chahar star in MI's win over SRH
page 14

NEARBY



A day after bail, Deep Sidhu arrested again

NEW DELHI
Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested actor-activist Deep Sidhu on Saturday in connection with an FIR lodged by the Archaeological Survey of India for allegedly damaging public property during the farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day at Red Fort.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

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Delhi reports 24,375 cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 24,375 new COVID-19 cases over 24 hours, the highest since the beginning of the pandemic. The total number of cases stood at 8,27,998.

Also, a total of 167 deaths were reported over 24 hours - the highest till now - taking the toll to 11,960.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

PM calls for more temporary hospitals, isolation centres

New cases rising at 7.6%, deaths at 10.2%, says Minister as States raise shortages

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a late evening meeting on Saturday with senior Central and State government officials to review the status of preparedness to handle the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting was held amid a record surge in cases in the country and several States complaining of shortage of staff, medicines and essential equipment.

"Various aspects relating to medicines, oxygen, ventilators and vaccination were discussed and PM stressed that there is no substitute to testing, tracking and treatment while directing that all necessary measures must be taken to ramp up the availability of hospital beds for COVID-19 patients. The Prime Minister also directed that additional supply of beds through temporary hospitals and isolation centres should be ensured," a release issued by the government said.

Mr. Modi reviewed the status of supply of Remdesivir and other medicines, and said the use of these medicines should be in accordance with approved medical guidelines and that their misuse and black marketing



No stock: Beneficiaries being turned back at a vaccine centre in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

must be strictly curbed.

The Prime Minister "has directed that the installation of approved medical oxygen plants should be accelerated," the release said, adding that 162 PSA oxygen plants were being installed in 32 States and Union Territories with funds from PM CARES.

It added that one lakh cylinders were being procured and would be supplied to the States soon. Mr. Modi asked all officials to make efforts to utilise the entire national capacity, in public as well as private sector, to ramp up vaccine production.

The Ministry added that there were 2,463 laboratories in the country with a combined daily testing capacity of 15 lakh samples.

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PM SUGGESTS CURTAILMENT OF KUMBH MELA ▶ PAGE 8

INDIA ADDS 2.56 LAKH CASES, 1,442 DEATHS ▶ PAGE 8

Uddhav call on oxygen fails to reach Modi

ALOK DESHPANDE
SOBHANA K. NAIR
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray reportedly tried to speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday about the severe oxygen shortage in the State, but could not get through, because the latter was campaigning in West Bengal, sources in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

"The CM called the Prime Minister at about 10:30 a.m.; this was his third attempt since yesterday to speak to Mr. Modi but we were told that he is busy campaigning in West Bengal and will return the call once he is back," a source in CMO said.

The Prime Minister addressed two rallies in West Bengal on Saturday - in Asansol and Gangarampur which go to the polls in the sixth phase of the Assembly election.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Sporadic violence marks fifth phase of Bengal poll

78.46% polling recorded across 45 constituencies

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

High voter turnout and sporadic incidents of violence marked the fifth phase of election in West Bengal on Saturday.

Polling was held in 45 Assembly seats across six districts - three in north Bengal and three in south Bengal. A turnout of 78.46% was recorded, according to the Voter Turnout app of the Election Commission of India.

Highest voting of 86.44% was observed in Haringhata, followed by 85.65% in Maynaguri and 84.22% in Jamalpur.

While the local residents alleged that the Central Armed Police Forces opened fire at Deganga Assembly segment in North 24 Parganas, the report by the Barasat Superintendent of Police denied the allegation.

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The Prime Minister addressed two rallies in West Bengal on Saturday - in Asansol and Gangarampur which go to the polls in the sixth phase of the Assembly election.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

Getting inked

In the fifth phase of the West Bengal Assembly poll, 78.46% voter turnout was recorded on Saturday

Top 5	% turnout	Bottom 5	% turnout
Haringhata	86.44%	Bidhannagar	61.10%
Maynaguri	85.65%	Kurseong	64.63%
Jamalpur	84.22%	Rajbari	64.84%
Phansidewa	84.10%	Darjeeling	66.32%
Sandeshkhali	84.00%	Kamarhati	67.00%



Poll duty: A newly married couple after casting vote at Santipur in Nadia district on Saturday. ■ PTI

rested after a firearm was recovered from his possession. Violence was reported at the Santipur police station area in Nadia after miscreants lobbed crude bombs at a person, who had to be rushed to hospital.

At Gayeshpur in Nadia, Trinamool supporters ransacked the house of a BJP supporter.

The CEO said senior pol-

ice officers are in Gayeshpur and a night camp of police would be stationed in the area.

Besides Nadia, where eight seats went to the polls, violence between Trinamool and BJP supporters was reported in North 24 parganas, where polling was held for 16 seats.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

+ 4 Sikhs among eight killed in U.S. shooting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Four Sikhs, including three women, were among eight people killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx facility in the U.S. State of Indiana staffed by a large number of Indian-American employees. The incident has shocked community leaders who appealed to President Joe Biden to tackle the growing hate crimes and violence.

The gunman was identified as 19-year-old Brandon Scott Hole, a former employee. He allegedly killed himself after the shooting

late on Thursday night at the FedEx facility in Indianapolis. Hole was interviewed by FBI agents last year, after his mother called the police to say that her son might commit "suicide by cop".

The incident is the worst attack on Sikhs in the U.S. after the Oak Creek Gurdwara mass shooting in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, where seven members of the community were killed. About 90% of the workers at the FedEx facility are said to be Indian-Americans.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

T.N. sees over twofold jump in investments

VIKAS DHOTI
NEW DELHI

Fresh investments into Tamil Nadu more than doubled to over ₹1,00,000 crore during the pandemic-hit 2020-21, with the southern State witnessing the second highest investment outlay, as per a private study. Maharashtra retained the top spot for a second year in a row.

Tamil Nadu jumped from the ninth position in 2019-20, when 465 projects worth ₹47,833 crore were announced, to second in 2020-21, with 573 projects worth ₹1,02,652 crore, as per data

compiled for *The Hindu* by Projects Today, an independent firm tracking investment projects in the country.

Tamil Nadu was ranked 12th among all States in 2018-19, with a 3.67% share of fresh investments into India of ₹16,86 lakh crore. While overall investments in 2019-20 dropped sharply to just ₹10,86 lakh crore, the State's share had risen to 4.41% of the total investments.

Project investments fell a further 1.23% in 2020-21. However, Tamil Nadu's share of the country's investments more than doubled to 9.6%.

NIA declares ₹7 lakh bounty on Hidma

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has declared a reward of ₹7 lakh for the arrest of Madvi Hidma, who heads the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Battalion 1 of the Maoists, a lethally armed and trained unit of the banned group active in southern Chhattisgarh, one of the worst areas affected by Left Wing Extremism.

Though the reward has been announced in a 2019 case, pertaining to the killing of Chhattisgarh legislator Bhima Mandavi, the State police had said Hidma was involved in the April 3 ambush at the Sukma-Bijapur border where 22 security personnel were killed.

A ₹10 lakh reward has also been announced for information leading to the arrest of CPI (Maoist) general secretary Basavaraju, alias Nambala Keshava Rao, 66. He already has a reward of ₹1.85 crore on his head, announced cumulatively by Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

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ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Seamless procurement ensuring Minimum Support Price (MSP) and timely payment have been the major challenges for the Haryana government during the harvesting season year after year.

However this year, the task is even bigger amid the ongoing farmers' agitation seeking legal guarantee for MSP; the fear of discontinuation of the "mandi system" in the wake of the three farm laws looming large over the farming community and a sense of "resentment" against the ruling regime.

Much before the inception of the procurement season for wheat on April 1 this year, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala announced that the government would aim at transferring money directly to the accounts of the farmers within 48 hours. Chief Minister Manohar Lal too, following a meeting with the officials concerned, assured to pay 9% interest in case of delayed payments.

Govt's false promises

However, these announcements seem to remain "empty promises" for many farmers at new grains market in Sohna here.

Girraj Singh, a young farmer from Nuh's Bhirawati village, sold over 300 quintals of wheat to separate commission agents 10 days ago, but he is yet to get the money. In an urgent need of money for his niece's wedding,

Girraj has borrowed a few thousand from the *arthiya* (commission agent). "The government was quick to send me a text message for my turn to sell off the produce but the wait for the message from the bank [about the amount to be credited] seems endless," he quips.

Timely payment matters

Dharambir, who runs Ganga Prasad-Hiralal commission firm, quickly reads through his "*bahee khaata*" (ledger account) to claim that none of over a dozen farmers, who sold off their wheat through him since the beginning of the procurement season, had



Farmers wait for their turn to sell their produce while others ready bags of wheat at the Sohna new grain market. ■ ASHOK KUMAR ■ ASHOK KUMAR



Not quite a fair deal for farmers

Though farmers at Sohna are happy that they are getting Minimum Support Price, they complain about delayed payment from the Haryana govt. and lack of mandis

got the money.

He said that farmers were getting the promised MSP, but timely payment mattered the most. He says that, unlike other commission agents in the mandi, around two dozen in number, he was not scared to call "a spade a spade" and seeking basic amenities for farmers and labourers at the mandi for a long time.

The toilets are dirty. There is no arrangement for water and light. The problem of waterlogging is perennial every monsoon and the less said the better about sanitation. Repeated complaints have been to the market committee, the Deputy Commissioner and even at the CM Window system, but there has been no action," an angry Dharambir says.

Though Gaya Prasad (42) gives a big thumbs up to the present regime for streamlining the procurement system over the years, he recalls how he would have to spend several nights at the mandi

to wait for his turn, but now he received a text message on his mobile informing him about his turn.

Against farmers' stir

"It is hassle free. It just takes a few hours now," he says. He also claims that earlier, it took 15-20 days for payments, but this year he had received the payment for a procurement made just three days ago. He



discredits the farmers movement on the Delhi borders being "politically motivated", but supports the demand for MSP. He does farming on around 20-acre land taken on lease, but finds it difficult to make both ends meet. "It is difficult to survive for a farmer without a guarantee for a minimum price," says Prasad.

Though Sohna mandi caters to around 60 villages in its vicinity, the farmers in the area prefer to go to bigger mandis in Nuh. More

than 53,000 quintals of wheat has already been procured at the mandi till April 15, and as per the estimates of market committee secretary Krishan Kumar, another 15,000 quintals is expected to reach in a week's time before the culmination of the procurement process.

Movement regulation

Mr. Kumar informs that 1,640 farmers have registered under "Meri Fasal, Mera Byora" scheme, adding that registration was now almost cent per cent in the State. He, however, argues that restricting the number of farmers reaching the mandis every day was "impractical".

"It is difficult for the farmers to store the crop at home after harvesting. They prefer to come straight to the market to sell it off. It is not pragmatic to regulate their movement. The government too realised this and the Chief Minister announced to allow farmers to come out-of-turn," says Mr. Kumar.

JNU issues strict COVID norms, shuts sports stadium

COVID-19 patients running pillar to post to secure bed

A few complain about lack of facilities at Lok Nayak Hospital

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Saturday ordered a slew of restrictions amid rising number of COVID-19 infections in the national capital.

In a circular, the university said, the sports stadium has been closed with immediate effect and yoga activities in the offline mode have also been suspended. It, however, said such activities can be run in online mode.

Dining facility at canteens and eateries in the campus will also be closed with immediate effect, said the university.

"Dining facility at Aravali guest house canteen as well as other canteens and eateries will be closed and only home delivery and takeaway will be allowed," said the administration.

The operation of canteens and 'dhabas' of the schools, special centres and residential areas shall be only in takeaway and home delivery mode.

"The hostel residents are strongly discouraged from visiting other hostels and going out of the campus or to schools/centres, unless it is absolutely essential," the circular stated.

JNU added that visitors' movement will only be allowed through the north gate, and "other gates shall remain closed till further orders". It advised residents to avoid "non-essential movement" inside or outside the campus.



A beneficiary gets vaccinated at Lok Nayak Hospital in New Delhi on Monday. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

tals tested him.

As per rules, COVID-19-suspected patients can also be admitted at a hospital for COVID-19 treatment.

"Yesterday [Friday] early morning, his condition worsened and we went to Ambedkar Hospital. There, they gave him oxygen. He was a suspected COVID-19 patient and was referred to Safdarjung and Lok Nayak Hospital. When we went to Safdarjung, they said that they did not have beds. Finally, we got a bed at Lok Nayak around 11.30 a.m.," he said.

Mr. Singh said that though the admission was almost smooth, facilities were "not good".

Vinay Kumar, 33, also said that he had to go to four hospitals to get his mother admitted. "First, we went to a private hospital when she started having breathing issues. There, the X-ray report

showed some patches in her lungs. Then, we went to ESI, Vivek Vihar, where doctors referred us to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. When we reached the hospital, they informed us that they did not have any beds. In the end, around 1.30 a.m. today, we managed to get a bed at Lok Nayak Hospital," he said.

Gopal, 35, a daily wage labourer from Mangolpuri said that they had to go to three other hospitals before Lok Nayak Hospital in search of beds to get his wife admitted. "Finally, when we came here around 9.30 p.m., she fainted. While waiting to get admission, only after we started shouting, they rushed her to the hospital," he added.

Lok Nayak Hospital had around 650 vacant beds on Saturday afternoon, as per a government website.

According to a notice from JMI, the tests that were scheduled to be held on April 20, 22, 24, and 26 will be held at a later date.

"The Competent Authority, keeping in view of COVID-19 surge in Delhi and weekend curfew imposed by

the Government of NCT of Delhi, has postponed the Ph.D. Entrance Tests which were earlier announced to be held on 20, 22, 24 and 26 of April 2021 till further orders [sic.]," it said.

On Wednesday, the university had announced it

will defer the exams for Classes 10 and 12 at JMI schools, scheduled to be held from April 15, following the Central Board of Secondary Education's decision on Wednesday to cancel Class 10 exams and defer Class 12 examinations.

Jamia Millia Islamia defers PhD entrance examination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) on Saturday announced it would defer the PhD entrance examinations in view of an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 cases in the national capital.

According to a notice from JMI, the tests that were scheduled to be held on April 20, 22, 24, and 26 will be held at a later date.

"The Competent Authority, keeping in view of COVID-19 surge in Delhi and weekend curfew imposed by

the Government of NCT of Delhi, has postponed the Ph.D. Entrance Tests which were earlier announced to be held on 20, 22, 24 and 26 of April 2021 till further orders [sic.]," it said.

On Wednesday, the university had announced it

A day after bail, Deep Sidhu arrested again

Held in connection with ASI complaint

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested actor-activist Deep Sidhu on Saturday in connection with an FIR lodged on the basis of a complaint by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for allegedly damaging public property during the farmers' tractor parade violence on Republic Day at Red Fort, officials said.

The arrest came after a Delhi court granted bail to Mr. Sidhu, who was arrested on February 9 in connection with the Red Fort violence.

Unjustifiable plea
Special Judge Neelofer Abida Pervaiz had granted relief to the accused on Friday on a personal bond of ₹30,000 and two sureties of a like amount.

The court noted that the accused was in custody since February 9, with a 14-day remand in police custody.

It said that a police plea for further incarceration for the sole purpose of voice sampling was not

justifiable.

Rejecting the prosecution's contention that the accused might abscond if released on bail, the court said: "The accused as per the own case of the prosecution is a well-known public figure with deep roots in society and such apprehensions are capable of being allayed by imposing stricter conditions."

"It would violate and infringe the fundamental right to life and liberty guaranteed to the accused, if the accused is denied bail on such nature of accusations and material only on the ground that the investigating agency is yet to establish the identity of the other members of the unlawful assembly," the judge noted.

While granting bail, the judge directed Mr. Sidhu to deposit his passport with the investigating officer and appear before the police station as well as the court as and when required.

On January 26, thousands of protesting farmers clashed with the police at ITO in Delhi, the agency claimed in its FIR.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) on Saturday said water supply in parts of the Capital is likely to remain affected for a week due to "reduced availability" of raw water from the Upper Ganga Canal.

The water utility said the "production" capacity at

Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi water treatment plants was reduced by 25 per cent to 30 per cent.

"Water supply in areas of East Delhi, Northeast Delhi, South Delhi and NDMC will remain affected in the evening... The situation may remain so for a week until the situation improves," it said.

Water supply to remain affected for a week: DJB

Night and weekend curfews spell trouble for sex workers

'People are not allowed to go out between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. or on the weekends, how will we get patrons?'

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Still recovering from the impact of the lockdown and subsequent restrictions from last year, Delhi's sex workers have been dealt another blow with the city government announcing night curfews, weekend curfews and other curbs to stop the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the Capital.

The exodus of migrant workers – their core clientele – during the 2020 national lockdown left them with little to no work. Left with no other choice and facing starvation, sex workers slashed their fees by up to 75%.

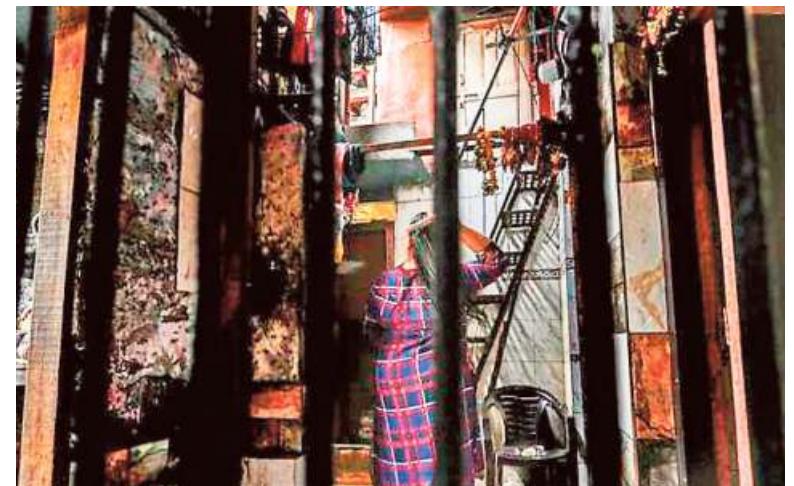
Just as business was beginning to pick up, the city government last week announced a night curfew between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. On April 15, a weekend curfew was also declared that threatens to erode their earnings further.

"Before the lockdown, we used to charge ₹1,000 per client. After it was announced, fees came down to ₹250 per client as there were virtually no customers," said Kusum, president of the All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW).

"We cater to labourers, rickshaw pullers, autorickshaw drivers, taxi and truck drivers. These people left for their villages last year. We had started getting most of them back, charging up to ₹500 till recently, before the COVID-19 cases surged again. The weekend curfew will take away clients who were part of the weekend rush due to the night curfew," she added.

Delhi's red light district on Garstain Bastion (GB) Road, officially called Shradhanand Marg, has an estimated 68 *kothas* (brothels) and around 5,000 sex workers.

Kajal*, a sex worker, said the night curfew had already negatively impacted trade and the weekend curfew would make matters worse. "Over the last week, the number of



The 2020 lockdown had left the sex workers with little to no work.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

C Our core clientele left for their villages last year. We had started getting most of them back before the COVID-19 cases surged again

KUSUM
President of the All India Network of Sex Workers

clients suddenly dipped because of the night curfew. We do most of our business between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. when the movement of people is not allowed," she said.

"Many regular customers decided to visit us over the weekend, but now weekend curfew has been announced. From our point of view, it is four days – including Friday night – of no work. COVID slashed our income by half and these curfews by another half of what was left," she complained.

Simran*, who used to work in a brothel on GB Road before the lockdown, has opted to become a "domestic sex worker" – working from a house occupied by other professionals like herself.

"Customers have dipped by 80%. If there were around 10 clients for each girl before the lockdown, that number is now down to two. We fear this will go down to nothing because of the curfews," she said, adding: "The average factory worker is no longer allowed to step out either at night or on the weekend, so how will he visit? We need help to sur-

vive. I do not know how we will be able to feed ourselves if things go on like this."

Survived on donations

During last year's lockdown, the sex workers were left to fend for themselves as there were no direct cash benefits transferred to their bank accounts or food kits from the government from NGOs and civil society groups.

The vaccination drive started in Delhi three months ago but there is no emphasis on prioritising the job for sex workers, they rued.

"No government helped us back then and no government is doing that now. We survived on donations from NGOs and other groups. This time, not a lot of us have documents needed to get a shot of the COVID vaccination," Kajal said.

"Even at that time [the lockdown], when neighbours were helping each other in times of need, we were looked down upon because of our 'dirty trade' and left on our own," said Simran.

According to Amit Kumar, country head of the AINSW, the Supreme Court had directed the Central and State governments to provide relief to sex workers in an order on September 29, 2020. "As part of this, dry ration kits were distributed to them for a few months but that too has stopped now," said Mr. Kumar.

* Name changed on request

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, APR. 18	RISE 05:53 SET 18:49
MONDAY, APR. 19	RISE 09:56 SET 00:00
TUESDAY, APR. 20	RISE 05:52 SET 18:50
	RISE 10:48 SET 00:25
	RISE 05:51 SET 18:50
	RISE 11:45 SET 01:15

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 35 18
Safdarjung 35 18
Palam 35 19

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Drop in morning temperature likely. A pleasant morning and very warm day. Surface winds likely to light.

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

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THE HINDU

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Nizamuddin dargah to remain closed till April 30

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia Dargah will remain closed till April 30 in view of the surge in COVID-19 cases, its chairman Afsar Ali Nizami said on Saturday.

"We took the decision keeping in view the daily rise in novel coronavirus cases in the Capital. Even though we have been following all COVID-19 protocols, including wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, we thought it best to keep the dargah closed till April 30," he said.

In case the prevailing situation does not improve, we can extend the dargah's closure further, he added.

The holy month of Ramzan is currently on and Muslims from across the country come to pay obeisance at the dargah.

High Court Chief Justice tests positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court Chief Justice D.N. Patel has tested positive for COVID-19 and is in home isolation, according to court sources.

They said the chief justice is asymptomatic.

Three other judges
Earlier this week, three other judges of the Delhi High Court had tested positive. They are exhibiting mild symptoms and are also in home isolation.

The Delhi High Court, which had resumed full-fledged physical hearing from March 15, decided to again adopt the virtual mode of proceedings from April 9 to April 23 in view of the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in Delhi.

IN BRIEF

50 inmates get vaccine at new centre in Rohini jail

NEW DELHI
The Delhi prisons department on Saturday said that a COVID-19 vaccination centre has been established in Rohini jail and a total of 50 inmates have been inoculated so far. Director General (Prisons) Sandeep Goel said a vaccination centre was opened in Tihar jail on March 23. "Earlier, the eligible and willing inmates of Rohini jail were being taken outside to the nearest vaccination centre under police guard," Mr. Goel said.

Only 274 ICU beds vacant as Delhi reports 24K new cases

A record 169 deaths reported in 24 hours; active COVID cases near 70,000 mark

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 24,375 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, the highest since the beginning of the pandemic, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday.

The total number of cases stood at 8,27,998.

Out of the total 16,979 beds available for COVID-19 treatment, 74.8% were occupied. Significantly, 93.25% of the total 4,062 ICU beds are occupied and there were only 274 ICU beds vacant in Delhi on Saturday night, as per a government website.

The hospitals which did not have a single ICU bed include bigger Delhi government-run hospitals such as Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital and Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, and central government-run Safdarjung Hospital.



COVID-19 vaccination in progress at a centre in Delhi during the weekend curfew on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

A total of 167 deaths were also reported in the past 24 hours – the highest fatality count so far – taking the death toll to 11,960.

The test positivity was 24.56% on Saturday, which is the highest in months. This means that 24 out of 100 people taking the tests are test-

ing positive for the virus.

A total of 99,230 tests were conducted in a day, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 7,46,239 people have recovered and there are 69,799 active cases in the city.

"Under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi government has

deputed IAS and DANICS officers in government and private hospitals across Delhi to ensure better COVID management," said Health Minister Satyendar Jain.

Nodal officers

He said that the government has deployed IAS officers as nodal officers in 10 State government hospitals to oversee overall COVID-19 management.

"15 DANICS officers posted in private hospitals across Delhi to handhold the management and oversee adherence of all COVID measures.

24 DANICS Probationers deployed in State government hospitals to assist the nodal IAS officers in overall general superintendence," he said.

Meanwhile, a total of 48,046 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the Capital in the last 24 hours, as per the bulletin.

Need more medicines, oxygen, CM tells Centre

'Will take any step to curb infections'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid the surge in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said he had spoken to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan about the shortage of oxygen, beds and essential medicines such as Remdesivir and Tocilizumab in the Capital.

Mr. Kejriwal said the government was in the process of adding 6,000 beds across various facilities over the coming three-four days and requested the Centre for assistance.

I told Dr. Vardhan there is a huge shortage of beds in Delhi. In November, the Centre allotted us 4,100 beds. This time, they have provided 1,800 beds even though this wave is three times more fatal than the previous ones," he added.

There are around 10,000 beds under the Centre in Delhi of which at least 50% must be reserved for COVID-19, he said, adding: "At AIIMS, there are 1,162 beds out of which only 23 are reserved for COVID patients."

On test results taking 3-4 days instead of 24 hours, the Chief Minister said strict action would be taken against labs that accept more samples than their capacity and do not provide results in 24 hours.

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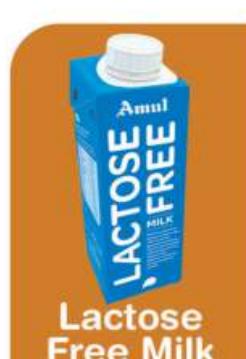
Taaza
200mL | ₹14*



Gold
1L | ₹68*



Slim N Trim
1L | ₹75*



Lactose
Free Milk
250mL | ₹25*



A police checkpoint at Ridge Road; a vegetable vendor on an empty road in Delhi as the city observed weekend curfew in light of rising number of COVID cases. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR, V.V. KRISHNAN



Traders, residents embrace weekend at home

Police strictly enforce weekend curfew; markets considering reduced operational timings between noon and 7 p.m.

CITY TEAM
NEW DELHI

The first day of the weekend curfew, which came into effect on Friday night, saw fewer people venturing out and strict enforcement at most locations.

While the streets of south Delhi were devoid of traffic, Delhi Police and civil defence volunteers were seen stopping vehicles at traffic lights and pickets set up on the main roads, asking for e-passes and identification from drivers as well as commuters.

Less traffic
Vehicular traffic was visibly less across the city with police personnel manning checkpoints. Vehicles bearing "COVID duty" stickers or a particular hospital's name were allowed to sail through, though some ordinary vehicles without any such identifiers also managed to pass some checkpoints without being stopped.

The number of buses, auto rickshaws and app-based cabs were also less. At checkpoints, the passengers were questioned about why they were out on the road.

Policemen on bikes were seen patrolling the streets and questioning pedestrians on what they were doing outside. Residential colonies



An empty Connaught Place during the weekend curfew on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

like Greater Kailash 1 and 2, Defence Colony and Anand Lok set up barricades at all entry points to ensure only residents could enter the colonies.

Delivery agents of food delivery apps were wearing their company T-shirts and were seen delivering from restaurants that are permitted to be open only for home delivery.

Only shops selling groceries and essentials were open, with fruit and vegetable vendors saying they did not face any issues in pro-

curing produce from mandis in the morning.

No panic buying

Several grocers across CR Park reported low footfall. Comparing it to last year's restrictions, the shopkeepers said people were now more equipped to handle the curbs and that buying in bulk had not yet started.

Biplab Pramanik, a shopkeeper, said: "Unlike last year, the panic among customers about the curfew is comparatively less as there were a couple of days bet-

ween the announcement and the implementation. There was not much chaos this time."

"On Saturday, we saw a small number of people come to the shops for basic items but beyond that there was not much activity. But with the cases increasing, we now need to wait and watch as to what other restrictions are imposed over the next few days," said Mr. Pramanik.

Shopkeepers and traders in west Delhi's Moti Nagar said that their business will

major retail markets.

Strict action

In a joint statement issued by representatives from retail markets such as Khan Market, Connaught Place, Karol Bagh, Chandni Chowk, Aurobindo Place, Lajpat Nagar and Janpath and Green Park among others, the associations demanded stricter enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour.

The operational timings at such markets could be between noon and 7 p.m.

The association also demanded strict action against street hawkers to break the chain of infection.

Over 150 arrested

Till 8 p.m. on Saturday, the police had arrested 164 people, registered 363 FIRs and issued 2,432 challans for violating the weekend curfew.

Delhi Police COVID helpline number received over 1,500 calls till Saturday evening. The majority of the calls related to queries pertaining to what is allowed and what is not during the night and weekend curfews, apart from issues related to difficulties in obtaining e-passes or movement passes.

(With inputs from Jaideep Deo Bhanji, Hemani Bhandari, Shinjini Ghosh, Nikhil M Babu and Jatin Anand)

According to an order issued on January 15, all 11 districts were asked to send samples for testing to SpiceHealth and the total number of samples to be sent daily was 13,500. The number was later increased to 25,000, as per officials. In the April 16 order, SpiceHealth is not mentioned in the list of labs for any of the 11 districts.

"To ensure districts have adequate number of slots available in labs to get their samples processed within a stipulated time frame (preferable 24 hours and latest

within 48 hours). The lineage of public and private labs with each district of Delhi is amended with immediate effect," read the April 16 order which amended the January 15 order.

"Since SpiceHealth is not on the list, we did not send any sample to them on Saturday," a district official said.

The testing facilities of other labs are also stretched, and many labs have 2-3 days delay in collection of samples from home. People have also complained about getting results late.

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IN BRIEF

Delhi govt. stops sending samples to private testing laboratory

SpiceHealth has been removed from list of approved labs

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has decided to stop sending samples for RT-PCR tests to SpiceHealth, which was testing the highest number of samples, as per an official order.

The Hindu had reported earlier this week that multiple districts had complained

that test results from SpiceHealth are getting delayed over 72 hours. SpiceHealth had then said that there was only a "slight delay".

The order issued on April 16 by the Health Department has removed SpiceHealth from the list of labs to which samples are sent by the collection centres, compared to an earlier order.

Samples collected by government-run testing centres are sent to private and government labs.

When contacted,

IN BRIEF



H.D. Kumaraswamy,
son test positive

BENGALURU
Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Chief Minister of Karnataka H.D.

Kumaraswamy has tested positive for COVID-19. He announced this on Twitter on Saturday and urged those who came in close contact with him over the last few days to get tested. Mr. Kumaraswamy's son, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, has also tested positive.

Kerala expresses concern over border closure

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala on Saturday expressed concern over the Kanniyakumari district administration's decision to close 12 inter-State border roads and impose restrictions on the movement of people and goods. In a letter sent by Chief Secretary V.P. Joy to his Tamil Nadu counterpart Rajeev Ranjan, the government pointed out that the closure of border roads was bound to create immense hardships for large sections and also severely hit economic activities in both States.

HC allows 9-year-old girl to visit Sabarimala

KOCHI
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court has directed the State government to allow a nine-year-old girl to visit the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple and have darshan along with her parents. The Bench passed the directive on Saturday while allowing a petition filed by Nanditha Raj of Vaikom. The petitioner said her parents had made a vow before her birth that they would take the child once for Sabarimala darshan. Her parents had secured online bookings for darshan. However, her request was rejected.

Karnataka, Kerala see record new cases

Fresh high of 17,489 and 13,835 cases in the two States; testing level 'low' in A.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka on Saturday reported its highest single day spike with 17,489 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total to 11,41,998. Of these, 11,404 cases were from Bengaluru Urban alone.

Last year during the first outbreak, the State reported the single day peak of 10,947

COVID-19

cases on October 7. Bengaluru Urban's record was 5,121 on October 8. With 80 more deaths, the toll rose to 13,270.

The test positivity rate (TPR) for the day stood at 12.20%.

As many as 1,43,308 tests were conducted in the last

24 hours, including 1,30,209 RT-PCR tests.

On Saturday, a total of 2,31,870 people were vaccinated. The State has vaccinated 67,18,709 people so far.

Kerala, too, recorded the highest case spike in a single day on Saturday when 13,835 persons were found to be positive from 81,211 samples tested in the past 24 hours.

In October last, the daily spike was just over 11,000 cases and that too, on just one day. The TPR shot up to 17.04%. On Saturday, 27 new deaths were added to the toll. The active case pool in the State was 80,019, with Ernakulam district having the maximum number at 11,992, while Kozhikode had 11,393 patients. The active case pool was swelling in Kannur



Crying out loud: A child undergoing a COVID-19 test in Kochi on Saturday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

(7,903), Malappuram (6,365) and Kottayam (6,089).

Total hospital admissions stood at 10,539, and 20,702 persons were added to home or institutional quarantine, which totalled 2,08,003 people in quarantine.

The State's cumulative death toll was 4,904.

Telangana on Friday reported 4,446 more people with coronavirus. The toll rose as 12 more patients died on Friday the highest reported number in seven months.

Also, 598 people were detected with the virus in Greater Hyderabad.

COVID-19 infections rose

rapidly in Andhra Pradesh although it continued to test a limited number of samples in a day, at around 35,000.

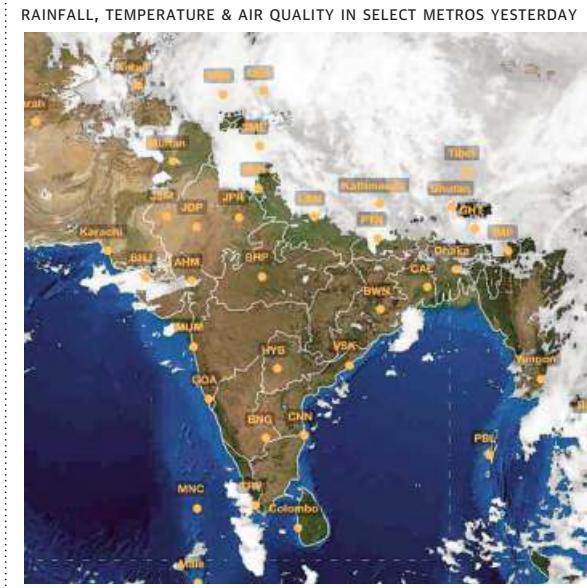
With an additional 7,224 infections and 15 deaths on Saturday, the State's TPR went up to 20.12% from 35,907 samples. Chittoor saw four new deaths, Nellore three, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool two each and Guntur, Krishna, Kadapa and Vizianagaram one death each in the past day.

The number of persons testing positive for COVID-19 in a day breached the 9,000-mark in Tamil Nadu on Saturday, touching 9,344, and 39 persons died.

Chennai, along with Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Tiruvallur and Tiruchi districts, accounted for a little over 50% of the fresh cases.

(With inputs from Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad and Vijayawada bureaus)

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Sunday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Sikkim. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, Jharkhand, coastal Andhra Pradesh, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	36.4	33.0	18.6	Kozhikode	5...	34.5...	24.9
Ahmedabad	39.8	26.4	22.0	Kurnool	40.2	27.7	
Aizawl	0.6	27.9	15.9	Lucknow	38.3	25.7	
Alahabad	38.8	30.3	25.6	Madurai	37.2	24.7	
Bengaluru	33.4	22.4	17.5	Mangalore	35.7...	24.5	
Bhopal	39.0	22.0	17.5	Mumbai	34.0...	23.8	
Bhubaneswar	38.6	25.5	21.0	Mysuru	34.7...	21.0	
Chandigarh	0.2	32.2	22.0	New Delhi	24.4...	18.2	
Chennai	36.2	26.5	21.0	Port Blair	31.7	23.2	
Coimbatore	36.3	25.5	21.0	Puducherry	35.5...	25.4	
Dehradun	32.7	18.1	15.0	Pune	38.3	20.3	
Gangtok	19.7	8.9	5.5	Raipur	34.4	24.4	
Goa	34.4	25.8	21.0	Ranchi	37.0	23.1	
Guwahati	25.0	20.0	17.0	Shillong	43.3	21.8	10.8
Hubballi	36.0	22.0	17.0	Shimla	19.0	8.5	
Hyderabad	37.2	25.2	20.0	Srinagar	10.4	7.2	
Imphal	30.3	16.0	11.0	Tirupati	34.0...	24.6	
Jaipur	35.2	23.4	18.0	Vijayawada	38.8	26.6	
Kochi	32.8	25.0	20.0	Kolkata	34.7...	26.8	
Kohima	25.8	18.0	12.0	Vishakhapatnam	38.8	26.6	
					33.5...	25.9	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday					
CITIES	SO. NO.	CO	PM 2.5	PM 10	CODE
Ahmedabad	20	40	23	59	132
Bengaluru	6	37	65	82	72
Chennai	5	23	51	45	46
Delhi	11	26	61	114	108
Hyderabad	5	72	34	82	105
Kolkata	16	19	104	80	100
Lucknow	10	65	62	303	248
Mumbai	1	3	73	88	80
Pune	5	26	44	91	79
Vishakhapatnam	18	48	21	18	39

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

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

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

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

NORTH & EAST

Karnataka mandates permission to book halls

District authorities will issue passes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

outdoor weddings.

Revenue Minister R. Ashok, Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai and Health and Family Welfare Minister K. Sudhakar on Saturday held a videoconference with the Deputy Commissioners and senior officials, and instructed them to strictly implement the orders. Mr. Bommai said FIRs would be registered against owners of community halls/auditoriums

who failed to enforce the COVID-19 rules. Mr. Ashok said Deputy Commissioners had also been instructed to ban all religious festivals/temple jatras to be held in May or June.

Three-fold rise in demand for oxygen in Karnataka hospitals

Hospitals' association appeals to govt. for better supply

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in Karnataka, the demand for medical oxygen has in the last few days shot up three-fold compared with the average 200 metric tonnes required per day. Most hospitals, especially medium and smaller hospitals, said they were running out of stock.

The situation took a turn for the worse on Friday, with some smaller hospitals asking families to shift patients admitted in their hospitals to other facilities as they would touch the zero mark in oxygen supply any time.

In a video appeal, Vijay Raghav Reddy, owner of Swastik Hospital in Bommasandra in the city, pleaded with the government to supply additional medical oxygen to his hospital, failing which many of his patients may die. "We need 36 jumbo cylinders for our nine patients and we will run out of oxygen any time. Last time, we handled more than 40 COVID-19 patients at a time, but never faced oxygen deficiency. This year, suppliers say they do not have any oxygen and we cannot retain patients here without more supply," he said, adding that he was arranging to shift pa-

tients to other facilities.

DIRECTORATE GAS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION 01, SHIVAJI NAGAR BOPAL

TENDER NOTICE
The Tender are invited from registered contractors in appropriate class under centralized registration system of PWD having valid registration as mentioned in the column of category of contractors and interested bidder for the following works. The details of the work will be available at the website <http://www.mptenders.gov.in>

S. NO.	SYSTEM TENDER NO.	NIT NO.	NAME OF WORK	PROBABLE AMOUNT OF CONTRACT	EARNEST MONEY	COST OF TENDER FORM	TIME PERIOD OF WORK	CATEGORY OF CONTRACTORS
1.	01/DJR/GASRA/HAT/2021	2021-BGT RR_138881_1	DISPOSAL OF CHEMICAL WASTE LYING IN THE CAMPUS OF UNION CARBIDE BOPAL	3716.00 Lakhs (37.16 Crore)	3716000.00	20000.00	06 Months	REGISTERED CONTRACTOR IN PMD UNDER CENTRALIZED SINGLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM AND THE INTERESTED BIDDERS

(1) The Tender Form & other details can be purchased from the website through online payment. (2) The purchase date of Tender Form will be from 8.4.2021 from 9.30 AM to 4.5.2021 upto 5.30 PM (3) The details of N.I.T. and other information may be available at the above website. (4) The envelope related to the tender containing mandatory documents may be physically received in this office on dated 7.5.2021 up to 5.30 PM. (5) The interested bidder can participate in the bid process. However they should get themselves registered in Central Registration System of MPWD prior to signing of the contract.

(BASANT KURRE) DIRECTOR

GAS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION, BOPAL

WESTERN RAILWAY CORRIDUM NOTICE

Corridum to be issued to Tender No. BCT/21-22/07 dttd. 09.04.2021 due for Opening on 18.05.2021 is as follows:- Existing As: Tender Notice No. BCT/21-22

FROM PAGE ONE

PM calls for more temporary hospitals

The three-tier health infrastructure to treat COVID-19 according to severity of the disease now included 2,084 dedicated COVID hospitals (of which 89 are under the Centre and 1,995 with the States), 4,043 dedicated COVID health centres and 12,673 COVID care centres. They have 18,52,265 beds in total.

"The Centre gave 34,228 ventilators to States last year. Fresh supply would be made available – 1,121 ventilators are to be given to Maharashtra, 1,700 to Uttar Pradesh, 1,500 to Jharkhand, 1,600 to Gujarat, 152 to Mad-

hya Pradesh and 230 to Chhattisgarh," the Minister said.

During the meeting, the issues of augmenting supply of oxygen cylinders, stepping up supply of Remdesivir in hospitals, adding to the ventilator stock and enhanced supply of vaccine doses were raised by almost all the States and the Union Territories. Several states also demanded dovetailing of medical oxygen supply lines and capping of prices of essential drugs such as Remdesivir, which they claimed was being sold in the black market at exorbitant prices.

The Single Bench of Justice Aparna Kumar Singh passed the order in the case of fraudulent withdrawal of ₹3.13 crore.

The decision will pave the way for Mr. Prasad's release after being lodged in the Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi on December 23, 2017. He is now under treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

Earlier, he was granted bail in three cases related to fraudulent transactions in the Deoghar and Chaibasa treasuries. He was convicted and imprisoned in four cases for fraudulently withdrawing money from the district treasuries of Jharkhand from 1990 to 1996 when he was the Chief Minister of undivided Bihar.

In the Dumka treasury case, the trial court had held

ram lashed out at Mr. Modi saying that he should have been at his desk coordinating with the State governments instead of campaigning in West Bengal.

Hitting back, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal in a strongly worded statement said he was "saddened to see Uddhav Thackeray's gimmicks" on the issue of oxygen supply and added that Mr. Thackeray needed to "stop his daily dose of shameless politics and take responsibility".

Sporadic violence marks fifth phase of Bengal poll

Biddhanagar and Baranagar, two constituencies bordering Kolkata, witnessed large-scale violence as supporters of the Trinamool and the BJP clashed. Supporters of both parties hurled bricks and stones at each other and also engaged in physical violence in the Shantinagar area of Bidhannagar.

A huge contingent of Central forces had to be rushed in to control the situation.

In Baranagar constituency, BJP candidate and actor Parno Mitra was allegedly gheraoed by Trinamool activists while she was touring the constituency.

Later in the day, the Trinamool supporters alleged that personnel of the Central forces used force against them. In adjoining Kamarpatti constituency, BJP candidate Raju Banerjee alleged that he was attacked by Trinamool supporters at the behest of Trinamool candidate Madan Mitra.

In the fifth phase of election, the ECI had deployed the highest number of 1,071 companies of Central forces.

Despite the unprecedented deployment of forces, voters and polling agents alleged that they were being threatened.

NIA declares ₹7 lakh bounty on Hidma

According to a police dossier accessed by *The Hindu*, Rao was last spotted in the "cut-off" area in Odisha's Malkangiri district in November 2019. An engineer, Rao heads the intelligence and military wing of the banned group and is active in the Abujhmad area of Chhattisgarh. Rao replaced Ganapathi as general secretary in February 2017. A reward of ₹10 lakh each has also been announced for information on Polit Bureau members Mallojula Venugopal and Katkam Sudarshan.

Venugopal who often issues statements on behalf of the banned group by the name "Abhay" also has a reward of ₹1.55 crore on his arrest as announced by the States of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Odisha. Sudarshan has ₹4 crore reward by other State police.

The rewards were announced by NIA on April 1 against 21 Maoists, including the top leadership.

Four Sikhs killed in U.S.

"This is very heart-breaking. The Sikh community is devastated by this tragic incident," community leader Gurinder Singh Khalsa said after meeting family members of the employees of the FedEx facility.

Late Friday night, the Marion County Coroner's Office and Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department

(IMPD) released the names of the victims.

Four victims who belong to the Sikh community are: Amarjeet Johal, Jaswinder Kaur, Amarjeet Skhon, and Jaswinder Singh.

U.S. President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have expressed condolences over the tragic killings.

It said the Kashmir police advisory was draconian and undemocratic.

Lalu gets bail in fodder case

It paves the way for the release of RJD chief from prison after 39 months

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA



With the leader: RJD supporters in Patna celebrating after Lalu Prasad got bail on Saturday. ■ PTI

Mr. Prasad guilty under Sections 120(B), 420, 409, 467, 468 and 471 of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act and sentenced him to seven years in prison.

"Lalu Prasad has already served over half of the jail term in this case, and the High Court granted bail to him on this basis," Mr. Prasad's lawyer Prabhat Kumar said. Associate lawyer Devashish Mandal said they would now "move the special CBI court in Ranchi on Monday

to seek Mr. Prasad's release from jail following the High Court order".

Senior lawyer Kapil Sibal appeared for Mr. Prasad in the virtual hearing.

"With the bail granted in the Dumka treasury case in which Mr. Prasad has already served three-and-a-half years in jail, he is likely to be released from jail by Monday or Tuesday after 39 months and 25 days in incarceration," Mr. Mandal said.

While granting bail, the court directed that Mr. Prasad should not leave the country or change his address or mobile number without permission during the bail period.

Celebrations in Patna

As news of the bail announcement came in, RJD leaders and workers in Patna gathered to celebrate at 10 Circular Road, residence of Rabri Devi, former Chief Minister and wife of Mr. Prasad. Party workers distributed sweets and shouted slogans of "Lalu Prasad zindabad".

"It's time for us to celebrate as the bail granted to him was long due, and it will pave the way for him to come out of the jail," senior party leader Shivanand Tiwari said.

Addressing presspersons, Tejaswi Yadav, Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly and younger son of Mr. Prasad, said, "We are happy that bail has been granted by the honourable court to Lalu Prasadji, who is also suffering from several serious diseases and admitted to AIIMS in New Delhi. Our priority will be to act as per doctor's advice."

Panel to list indigenous inhabitants in Nagaland

It seeks to filter 'non-original' residents

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI



Mmhonlumo Kikon

December 1, 1963 – the day Nagaland attained Statehood – was the cut-off date for determining the "permanent residents" of the State. Apart from non-Nagas, the "outsiders" implied Nagas living in areas beyond the boundaries of Nagaland could be left out of the RIIN.

"The JCC will be headed by Home Commissioner Abhijit Sinha and include members from the Central Nagaland Tribes' Council, Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation and the Tenyeme People's Organisation," Mmhonlumo Kikon, the adviser to the State government, said.

IAF chief set to visit France next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, is scheduled to leave for France on Tuesday on a three-day visit. He will hold talks with senior French military officials and take stock of the production and delivery timelines of some of the remaining Rafale jets.

The IAF chief is scheduled to hold extensive talks with the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, Philippe Lavigne, on ways to further expand cooperation between the two forces, sources said.

There is a possibility of Air Chief Marshal Bhadauria flagging off a batch of five or six Rafale jets from the Merignac airbase in the French port city of Bordeaux for India, they said.

Dassault Aviation, the manufacturer of Rafale jets, was scheduled to send six Rafale aircraft to India by April-end.

Second squadron

The arrival of the new batch of the aircraft will pave the way for the IAF to raise a second squadron of the Rafale jets. The new squadron will be based in the Hasimara airbase in West Bengal.

The first Rafale squadron is based in the Ambala Air Force Station. A squadron comprises nearly 18 aircraft. Dassault Aviation has delivered 14 jets to the Indian Air Force so far.

Sources said the Chief of the Air Staff is also likely to visit a couple of French military bases.

Pak. man held in drug smuggling case

BSF, NCB seize 20.57 kg of heroin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a joint operation, the BSF and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested a Pakistani national and an Indian on Saturday and seized 20.57 kg of heroin being smuggled via Punjab, an NCB press release said.

A team of the BSF's 14th battalion spotted the Pakistani national attempting to push the heroin consignment using a 13-ft PVC pipe over the fence in Ferozpur, the release said.

The suspect, identified as Amjad Ali of Lahore, was arrested and the drugs were seized by the team.

A mobile phone, one power bank and a 16-ft piece of cloth was found in his possession, apart from some documents related to

Jarnail Singh of Ferozpur.

The NCB arrested Jarnail Singh from Vadodara. He is now being questioned to track down other members of the syndicate.

"The NCB will seek assistance in arresting the Pakistani nationals who are involved with Amjad Ali," said an agency official.

The NCB's Amritsar unit has taken up further investigation.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed the names of two other Pakistani nationals, residents of Lahore and Kasur, respectively.

The intended receivers on the Indian side were also identified and searches conducted at their possible hideouts in Punjab and Gujarat.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Janayak Janta Party (JJ) leader and Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to resume talks with the farmers who have been protesting against the farm laws enacted by the Union government.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Chautala said that a team of senior Cabinet Ministers could be set up to resume talks with farmers and reach an amicable solution.

"I would like to bring to your kind attention that our *annadattas* (farmers) are on the roads at the Delhi border agitating in respect of the three newly enacted farm laws of the Central government. It is a matter of concern that such an agitation is going on for more than hundred days. I truly believe that every problem has a solution by way of mutual discussion. The earlier discussion between the Central government and farmers' union brought few solutions

to the concerns raised by 'Sayukt Morcha'. In this regard, a team consisting of three to four Senior Cabinet Ministers may lead the delegation for resuming talks with farmers so as to bring an amicable conclusion in this issue," he wrote.

"We hope the authorities concerned will act with a sense of responsibility and duty to reduce environmental footprint and societal need for conservation of every drop of water."

The directions came on a plea moved by petitioner Haider Ali seeking action against the use of groundwater for maintaining cricket fields.

Sources said the Chief of the Air Staff is also likely to visit a couple of French military bases.

Resume talks with farmers, Dushyant urges Modi

Set up a team of senior Cabinet Ministers: Haryana Dy. CM



Extending support: Actor Sonia Mann, along with farmers, taking part in a tractor rally in Amritsar on Saturday. ■ AFP

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking remedial action against the use of groundwater for maintenance of playgrounds at least during the time no match is actually being played and exploring utilisation of STP (sewage treatment plant) treated water."

Save potable water

"Every effort is required to save potable water for drinking, and cricket or other such grounds may be maintained, as far as possible, from the sewage treatment plant of high quality having no pathogens and offensive components. Also rainwater harvesting and storage of such water may be ensured," the Bench said.

Must for environment

"It may also include ensuring that effective rainwater harvesting and water storage or recharging systems are installed in all playgrounds to

inter alia include prohibiting use of groundwater for maintenance of the playgrounds at least during the time no match is actually being played and exploring utilisation of STP (sewage treatment plant) treated water."

Regulate groundwater use in cricket fields'

Act with a sense of responsibility to reduce environmental footprint, says NGT

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The recent shooting of two Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) in Pakistan's Cholistan desert, with the poachers brazenly getting themselves photographed with the carcasses of birds in their hands and guns on their shoulders, has left wildlife activists in Rajasthan shocked and outraged. The GIB, which is the State bird of Rajasthan, is considered India's most critically endangered bird.

The EGI said the security forces were trying to escape scrutiny about the events behind instances of violence.

The NIA had taken over the investigations in the killing of Bhima Mandavi and four security personnel from Chhattisgarh Police in 2019 but the central agency was handed over the case documents and properties by the police only in March 2020, the agency said.

In a statement, the guild said the police had forbidden journalists from reporting live encounters with militants "on the plea that it is likely to incite violence" or that it can promote "anti-national sentiment". Nothing can be further from the truth."

The EGI said the security forces were trying to escape scrutiny about the events behind instances of violence.

"Live reporting from conflict areas, including encounters between security forces and militants, is one of the most important journalistic duties of any responsible media, and requires extreme grit and determination on the part of reporters. At best, there may be some guidelines that can be issued with respect to reporting from such scenes, with the aim of protecting the integrity of tactics and plans of security agencies, as well as to avoid journalists from interfering with the evolving situation and from sensationalising the issue that can stir up emotions at audience's end," the guild said.

It said the Kashmire police advisory was draconian and undemocratic.

save the groundwater," the Bench said. The green panel said conservation of water was of utmost importance to the environment.

'Save potable water'

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Regulate groundwater use in cricket fields'

Act with a sense of responsibility to reduce environmental footprint, says NGT

him Yar Khan district, and his accomplices, also attacked wildlife officials of that country when they tried to stop the group from hunting GIBs and chinkara deer.

The grassland habitat with grass cover in the Cholistan desert, where the GIBs were foraging, is similar to the habitat in Rajasthan's Desert National Park (DNP), where the GIB's last remnant wild population is found. The DNP, situated near the towns of Jaisalmer and Barmer, forms a part of the mighty Thar desert.

National Park (DNP), where the GIB's last remnant wild population is found. The DNP, situated near the towns of Jaisalmer and Barmer, forms a part of the mighty Thar desert.

The GIB's population of fewer than 100 in Rajasthan accounts for 95% of its total world population. The Inter-

national Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), a global authority on species survival, which categorised the GIBs as "endangered" in 1994, was forced to upgrade the species to the status of "critically endangered" in 2011 because of continued threats faced in the survival of these large birds.

Poll for 2 seats in Bengal, 1 in Odisha put off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Saturday adjourned polling for the Jangipur and the Shamshergunj Assembly constituencies in West Bengal scheduled for April 26.

Revolutionary Socialist Party candidate Pradip Nandy, 73, died on Friday after testing positive. He was the second candidate in the State to die of COVID-19 within 24 hours.

Congress candidate for the Shamshergunj constituency Rezaul Haque died of the infection on Thursday.

The EC also adjourned the bypoll for the Pipili Assembly constituency in Odisha following the death of Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj also due to the virus. "These political parties will be provided an opportunity to nominate another candidate," it said.

Trinamool pressuring EC, says Modi

PM says Mamata Banerjee is indulging in politics over the deaths at Sitalkuchi during polling

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused the Trinamool Congress of pressuring the Election Commission of India (EC) to thwart the polling process in West Bengal. At a public meeting at Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman, Mr. Modi said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was "trying all means to subvert and stop the election".

"This time, Didi [Ms. Banerjee] and her party are not being allowed to resort to rigging. This is the reason she is trying all means to subvert and stop the election," he said.

The PM's remarks come at a time when the Trinamool Congress has urged the EC to merge the remaining three phases of polls in the State because of the second wave of COVID-19.

Mr. Modi raised the issue



Sharp statements: Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally in Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman district on Saturday. ■ PTI

of the panchayat election held in 2018 in the State, and said the people of West Bengal had not forgotten how their democratic rights had been subverted during that election. "In 20,000 seats, which is almost one-third of the total seats, Trinamool candidates won without a contest. Those who had filed their nomination from the Opposition had to take shelter in other States. Nomina-

tion papers had to be submitted on WhatsApp," he said.

He referred to the communal riots during Ram Navami in Asansol in the past three years, and blamed the Chief Minister for the violence. "Who stood with rioters, who were indulging in politics of appeasement," Mr. Modi asked.

On the deaths at Sitalkuchi in the previous phase of polling, he said the Chief Mi-

This time, Didi and her party are not being allowed to resort to rigging. This is the reason she is trying all means to subvert the election

NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister

Mr. Modi, who promised ₹8,000 to every farmer as pending benefits from the PM Kisan Scheme for the past three years, alleged that Ms. Banerjee had stood as a wall between West Bengal's people and the Central welfare schemes.

Later, at a public meeting at Gangarampur in the northern part of the State, the Prime Minister said politicians had "crossed dangerous limits of vengeance".

"Mamata Banerjee is abusing me almost every day as I raise the Trinamool Congress's track record of corruption," Mr. Modi said, referring to several remarks by her directed at him in the last week of March and April.

Defending his mode of addressing the Chief Minister as *Didi-O-Didi*, he said that during the entire election, he had been referring to Ms. Banerjee as *Didi* and was "sometimes saying it twice".

nister was indulging in politics over the deaths.

On Friday, the BJP leadership had released audio tapes of a conversation between Ms. Banerjee and the Trinamool candidate after the Central armed forces opened fire, killing four persons in the Jor Patki gram panchayat area at Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar district. The Trinamool leadership said there was nothing wrong in the conversation, and raised questions over the tapping of telephones of party leaders.

From hospital to booth



Against all odds: COVID-19 patients sitting inside an ambulance outside a polling station after voting in the fifth phase of the West Bengal Assembly election in Siliguri on Saturday. ■ AFP

Over 60% turnout in Rajasthan byelections

Congress, BJP locked in direct contest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

A total of 60.71% of the voters cast their votes in the by-elections to the Sujangarh (Churu), Sahara (Bhilwara) and Rajsamand Assembly constituencies in Rajasthan on Saturday.

The highest polling was recorded at 67.18% in Rajsamand, followed by 59.76% in Sujangarh and 56.56% in Sahara. The bypolls will decide the fate of 27 candidates. The votes were cast at 1,145 booths amid strict security measures, while all norms under the COVID-19 related guidelines were complied with.

The general polling started at 7 a.m. and continued till 5 p.m. After that, voters who were COVID-19 positive and those staying in quarantine exercised their franchise till 6 p.m. with strict adherence to the protocol.

Chief Electoral Officer Praveen Gupta said each of these voters was provided with a personal protective equipment (PPE) kit.

The counting of votes will be held on May 2. The ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP are locked in direct contest in the three seats. The byelections were necessitated after the death of MLAs Bhanwar Lal Meghwal (Sujangarh), Kailash Tripathi (Sahara) and Kiran Maheshwari (Rajsamand).

The Congress has fielded Mr. Meghwal's son Manoj Meghwal in Sujangarh, Tripathi's wife Gayatri Devi in Sahara and mining industrialist Tansukh Bohra in Rajsamand. The BJP's candidates are veteran leader Hemaram Meghwal in Sujangarh, former MLA Ratanlal Jat in Sahara and Maheshwari's daughter Deepi Maheshwari in Rajsamand.

Cong. moves to 'insulate' candidates

Party leaders hold closed-door meeting with candidates in Guwahati

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

After the candidates of one of its allies returned from Rajasthan on Friday in view of the COVID-19 surge, the Congress has reportedly booked a few hotels across Assam to "insulate" its candidates from possible poaching by the BJP.

The candidates are expected to be kept out of bounds till the Assembly election results are declared on May 2.

On Saturday, senior Congress leaders assembled the party's candidates at a hotel on the outskirts of Guwahati for a closed-door meeting. The party said one must not read too much into the meeting where only "general discussions" related to the day of counting were held.

But there is speculation that the party plans to keep



Pulling out all the stops: Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, centre, with AICC Assam general secretary Jitendra Singh, right, at a press conference in Guwahati. ■ FILE PHOTO

"Mahajot (grand alliance) will get a big majority".

The Congress heads the 10-party *Mahajot* whose constituents include the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Bodoland People's Front.

"Our candidates are not

going anywhere. We have just given certain directions to party candidates on the preparation for the counting day because of past experiences," Mr. Singh told presspersons ahead of the meeting.

He made light of the sudden exit of all the AIUDF candidates from Assam soon after the third and final phase of polling was held on April 6. "They went to Rajasthan after a hectic election campaign and returned to Assam after offering prayers at the Ajmer Sharif," he said.

The AIUDF leaders had, however, said they were wary of the BJP indulging in horse-trading.

They cited the examples of Meghalaya, Manipur and Goa, where the Congress failed to form the government despite emerging as the single largest party.

Balakrishna to visit Abu Dhabi today

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is in UAE on three-day visit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will visit Abu Dhabi on Sunday, the Ministry has said.

The visit comes against the backdrop of reports that the UAE has been holding backchannel talks to restart dialogue between India and Pakistan.

"At the invitation of his counterpart, Mr. Jaishankar will be visiting Abu Dhabi on Sunday. His discussions will focus on economic cooperation and community welfare," Arindam Bagchi, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson, said.



The announcement came within hours of the declaration by Pakistan that Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi will visit the UAE for three days from Saturday. Is-

Iamabad said Mr. Qureshi would discuss "regional issues" with the UAE leadership. It is not clear if there will be an unexpected ice-breaking moment between the two sides in the UAE.

While Pakistan has welcomed the reports of third party mediation, India has maintained silence as it goes against its traditional position on diplomacy with Pakistan. India maintains officially that issues with Pakistan are of a bilateral nature that has no space for third party mediation or intervention.

This issue is expected to feature in the discussion in the UAE.

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited

(A group company of Indian Oil)

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NOTICE INVITING BID

Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Wednesday, the 28th April, 2021, inter alia, to consider and approve the Audited Financial Statements (Standalone & Consolidated) of the Company for the Quarter and Year ended 31st March, 2021 and to recommend dividend (Equity & Preference) for the Financial Year 2020-2021, if any. The said notice can be accessed on the Company's website at <http://www.cpcil.co.in> and also on the Stock Exchange website at <http://www.bseindia.com> and <http://www.nseindia.com>.

As communicated to the stock exchanges on 30th March, 2021, it is further notified that the Trading Window for dealing in securities of CPCIL is under closure from Thursday, the 1st April, 2021 to Friday, the 30th April, 2021 (both days inclusive) for all 'Insider' as per the Insider Trading code of the Company. The Insider Trading Code is available on the Company's website www.cpcil.co.in.

For Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited
Sd/-
(P. Shankar)
Place: Chennai
Date: 16th April, 2021
Company Secretary

My phone is being tapped, says Mamata

CM says she will order a CID probe

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Alleging that her phone is being tapped, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday that her government would order an inquiry by the Crime Investigation Department.



Mamata Banerjee

She was addressing a public meeting at Galsi in Bardhaman, a day after the BJP released audiotapes in which she is heard speaking to her party candidate at Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar after four persons were killed in firing by Central forces on the polling day on April 10.

"They [BJP leaders]

are eavesdropping even on our everyday conversation. It seems they are tapping our phone calls... I will order a CID probe into the issue. I will not spare anyone involved in such snooping activities," she said, adding she knew who were behind the issue.

While the BJP leadership alleged that the conversation in the audiotape proved that the Trinamool was doing "politics over bodies", the Trinamool leadership said there was nothing wrong in the talk. Senior Trinamool leaders on Saturday also wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer alleging that tapping the Chief Minister's phone by

the BJP is an illegal act. They said tapping the phone was violation of the right to privacy of the Chief Minister.

"They [BJP leaders] have come from outside and occupied all the hotels and guest houses and all of them are COVID-19 positive," she said.

She said her party had sought clapping the remaining three phases (April 22, 26, and 29) but the Election Commission had reduced the time for the campaign.

"This means we can campaign for fewer days. Just because Narendra Modi has

sought clapping the remaining three phases (April 22, 26, and 29) but the Election Commission had reduced the time for the campaign.

Dasgupta, who led the delegation to the CEO's office here, told reporters that he had apprised Mr. Aftab of the conversation that apparently took place between Ms. Banerjee and the Trinamool Congress' Sitalkuchi nominee, and pointed out that it could lead to untoward situations in the next three phases of the polls.

The Trinamool has already described the audio clip as "bogus" and said no such conversation took place.

BJP urges EC to scan Mamata audio clip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) delegation on Sunday urged Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Arif Aftab to take note of a purported audio clip – in which Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is heard proposing a rally with the bodies of the Cooch Behar firing victims – as "such move could lead to more tension" in the State amid the ongoing elections.

Senior BJP leader Swapan

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Rijiju tests positive for COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said that he has tested positive for COVID-19 but is feeling "fit and fine".

The 49-year-old tweeted, "I'm taking the advice of the doctors. I request all those who have come in my contact recently to be observant, exercise self-quarantine and get themselves tested. I'm physically fit and fine."

Mr. Rijiju was in Uttarakhand on Friday to inaugurate a Water Sports and Adventure Institute in Tehri. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat, who recovered recently from the infection, was with him at the inauguration.

Testing sets a record on a day fresh cases touch 2.56 lakh

14.95 lakh samples studied; 1,442 deaths in India as global total reaches 3 mn

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

As many as 14,95,397 samples were tested in India on Friday (results of which were made available on Saturday), the highest number of tests conducted in a single day in the country.

This is the second consecutive day the number of tests is crossing the 14 lakh mark. On September 24, 2020, 14,92,409 tests were carried out, which was the highest until the record was broken on Friday. A total of 26.49 crore samples have been tested in the country since the beginning of the pandemic.

India registered 2,56,695 new COVID-19 cases as of 9.20 p.m. on Saturday. As many as 1,442 deaths were also recorded on the day.

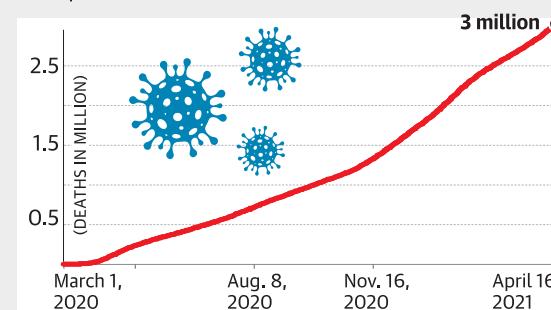
1.47 crore total cases

The country has so far reported a total of 1,47,78,623 cases and 1,77,117 deaths.

The figures do not include

Death count

As of April 16, 3 million COVID-19-related fatalities have been recorded worldwide. On January 14, 2021, the two million-mark was breached, and back on September 28, 2020, the one million-mark was crossed



cases and deaths from Jharkhand and Ladakh. The data is sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily COVID-19 figures.

Maharashtra reported 67,123 infections (accounting for nearly 26% of the new cases) on Saturday, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 27,334 new infections and Del-

hi with 24,375 new cases.

Maharashtra also recorded the highest number of casualties (419) on Saturday. Delhi followed with 167 new deaths, while Chhattisgarh registered 138 new casualties.

About 27.14 lakh COVID-19 vaccination doses were administered in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on Saturday.

India is reporting the second highest number of average daily deaths ahead of U.S. and Mexico.

It is about 16,000 doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is about 8 lakh doses lower than what was recorded the previous Saturday.

As of April 16, 3 million COVID-19-related fatalities have been recorded worldwide. The pace of deaths has quickened lately. On September 28, 2020, the one million global death mark was crossed, about 250 days after the first such fatality was recorded in China. On January 14, 2020, the two million mark was breached, taking about 110 days. The latest million was crossed in just over 94 days.

As of April 16, Brazil leads the world in the daily average reported deaths. It reported over 2,860 deaths on Friday. It accounts for one in every four deaths every day worldwide.

Swami Awadeshananda Giri, who heads the Juna akhara, later announced that "protecting the lives of

PM suggests curtailment of Haridwar Kumbh Mela

Seer of Juna akhara announces the end of its participation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As over 2.3 lakh COVID-19 cases were reported in India on Saturday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought a curtailment of the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar. The Juna akhara, a prominent congregation of Hindu seers, announced that it was ending its participation in the event at his best.

Tweeting on Saturday morning, Mr. Modi said that he had spoken to Swami Awadeshananda Giri over the telephone and, after enquiring about the health of the Hindu seers gathered for the Kumbh, suggested that the event be curtailed. "I made a suggestion that now that the Shahi Snans (ritual baths in the Ganga on specific dates) were done, the rest of the events could be undertaken in a symbolic way," he tweeted.

Swami Awadeshananda Giri, who heads the Juna akhara, later announced that "protecting the lives of



Crowds dwindle: Har Ki Pauri Ghat in Haridwar wears a deserted look on Saturday, after many seers left. ■ PTI

Indians was more important amid the rising pandemic" and that the akhara had today performed the ritual immersion of deities, which usually happens at the end of the Kumbh.

The Kumbh Mela sees lakhs of devotees converge every 12 years and involves many rituals, including ritual baths in the Ganga on specific dates.

This time, on the day of the Baisakhi Snan on April 14, more than 9.5 lakh devotees from various akharas took a dip.

One seer, Mahamandleshwar Kapil Dev Das, reportedly died of COVID-19, while scores of seers tested positive for the coronavirus.

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani declared that all pilgrims returning from the Kumbh to the State would undergo COVID-19 tests at railway stations and other ports of entry.

Sonia for reducing immunisation age

'Those above 25 should be eligible'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, in her address to the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Saturday, said the government must reconsider its priority for vaccine candidates by reducing the immunisation age to 25 and above, especially for those with comorbidities.

Ms. Gandhi said the second wave of COVID-19 had caught the government off guard once again, despite the fact that it had a year to prepare.

She urged the government not to take an adversarial position. "Let us ensure that the suggestions our party puts forward are considered by the Government of India in the spirit of true democratic traditions. Taking on these challenging times as Indians, rather than as political opponents, will be true Rajadharma," Ms. Gandhi said.

She urged the government to waive GST on medicine and medical equipment required to fight COVID-19, provide ₹6,000 as monthly financial assistance to the needy families and ensure safe transportation for the migrant workers who had already started returning home due to partial lockdowns in various cities.

She said the high GST rate was also flagged by the Con-



It is imperative to provide monthly income support and transfer an amount of ₹6,000 in every eligible citizen's account

gress Chief Ministers in a recent meeting with her. Drugs such as remdesivir and medical oxygen as also other basic supplements were subjected to GST at 12%. Even basic equipment such as oximeters and life-saving critical equipment such as ventilators were subjected to 20% GST. "In the current state of affairs, this is inhuman and untenable," she said.

Fresh partial curfews and travel restrictions to control the situation would once again restrict economic activity, pushing the daily waggers to an edge, Ms. Gandhi pointed out.

"It is, therefore, imperative to provide monthly income support and transfer an amount of ₹6,000 in every eligible citizen's account," she said.

She urged the govern-

Cong. blames Centre's 'arrogance'

CWC releases 14-point 'chargesheet' against PM on the handling of pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a severe indictment of the handling of the pandemic by the Union government, the Congress, after a meeting of its working committee on Saturday, released a 14-point 'chargesheet' accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of pushing the country to an unprecedented catastrophe.

"We regret to say the nation is paying a very heavy price for the thoughtlessness and unpreparedness of the NDA government to tackle the gravest disaster that has hit the country and has affected millions of families claiming 1,75,673 lives so far," senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram said reading out a statement agreed upon by the Congress Working Committee (CWC).

Former party president Rahul Gandhi said there has been "constant declaration of victory" by the government and a sense of arrogance that has led to this situation. "The government

has taken off all the warning systems and shut them down. We are in the middle of the ocean in a storm and now the ship has no idea where to go

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress leader

has reached out to Mr. Modi and the Ministers concerned pleading for relief. "Some of them were left with only a few days of vaccine, no oxygen or ventilators. But there has been thundering silence on the part of the government.

Other than the CWC members, the meeting chaired by party president Sonia Gandhi was attended by Amarinder Singh, Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, all Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States.

In her opening comments, Ms. Gandhi said the government was caught off guard, despite having a year to prepare. She accused the Centre of giving "preferential treatment" to some States, saying the Congress Chief Ministers have repeat-

edly reached out to Mr. Modi and the Ministers concerned pleading for relief. "Some of them were left with only a few days of vaccine, no oxygen or ventilators. But there has been thundering silence on the part of the government.

Instead of listening to the constructive suggestions, Ms. Gandhi said, the Union Ministers have attacked the Opposition leaders. "This convoluted 'me versus you' debate is childish and totally unnecessary," she said.

Briefing reporters at the end of the meeting, Mr. Chidambaram said all the suggestions made at the CWC

meeting will be collated and sent to Mr. Modi by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Foremost among the 14-point chargesheet issued by the party was the government's failure to create sufficient awareness that a waning pandemic could be a precursor to a second wave that may be more devastating than the first. The vaccination programme also failed on several accounts, the chargesheet said.

Primarily, the government, the party said, failed to grant emergency-use approval to other vaccines from the U.S., the U.K., the European Union and Japan, under a "misguided notion of atmanirbhar".

The production and supply of the two approved vaccines were not scaled up, the bureaucratic control over the programme caused many unnecessary hurdles. The vaccine roll out should have been left to the State governments and public and private hospitals.

Trade union asks Modi to stop reverse migration

Fear has gripped nation again: BMS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention in stopping the reverse migration of workers amid the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the country.

The Central trade union, affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, wrote that India had dealt with the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 successfully under Mr. Modi's leadership, but the "second wave has returned to haunt us and fear has gripped the entire nation once again".

"Sir, the pictures of migrant workers travelling back to their hometowns still haunts India and as the second wave grips India the fear of migration looms large, not only for the workers but the industries as well... It is also worth noting that the state has already used up its resources during

last year and a lockdown in these situations may result in an economic depression we will find it very tough to recover from," wrote BMS general secretary Binoy Kumar Sinha.

The BMS said the government should enforce guidelines so that industries and workers can continue to function.

"We request you to kindly take a quick call to stop this migration as it is already making headlines and providing work for these migrants in places of their stay... We request you to kindly get into dialogue with the State governments and direct them to ensure that the migration is halted for the upkeep of the faith of workers, life of the industries and growth of the nation as per the forecasts," the BMS said.

The letter said the BMS had started an awareness drive for workers about the use of masks, hand sanitizers, and physical distancing.

Assembly Secretariat in Bihar shut till April 25

44 staff members test positive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA

As the COVID-19 positive cases continue to surge in Bihar, a multi-party virtual meeting called by Governor Phagu Chauhan is under way on Saturday to review the situation and take suggestions from all political parties.

Meanwhile, the Assembly Secretariat was shut with as many as 44 staff tested COVID-19 positive in the last three days. Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha has ordered complete closure of the Assembly Secretariat till April 25.

On Friday, the State go-

vernment ordered the closure of gyms, sports complexes and museums till May 15 in view of the surging pandemic cases.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar held a high-level meeting on Friday to review the steps taken so far to check the spread of the infection in the State.

In the past 24 hours, 6,253 positive cases were detected in Bihar.

As many as 1,688 deaths have been reported with 112 deaths in the past 16 days.

The total number of active cases in the State is 33,465 and the recovery rate is 88.57%.

Family haunted by COVID-19 deaths

Four brothers die during the first wave of pandemic in Odisha's Angaraon

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

As the second wave of COVID-19 sweeps through the country, a family in remote Angaraon in Odisha is haunted by the tragedy that the virus visited on them last year.

The Sahu family in Ganjam district had little notice of the disease that was to wipe out an entire generation – four brothers who fell victim to the novel coronavirus, three within days of each other.

In the months that followed, the women forged bonds to help one another through the devastating time. Sujata Sahu, Kama Sahu, and Truptimayee Sahu and other women members of the family, however, have little safeguards this time round either. They continuously pray that nothing happens to them this time.

"What else could the epidemic have snatched from us? All our earning men succumbed to coronavirus one after another. Though the tsunami of grief left family members shattered, we cannot afford to stay indoors now," says Sujata, whose husband, Krushnachandra, was the first victim of the virus. The youngest of five sons of Mohanta Sahu, Krushnachandra, died on July 16 before he was admitted for full-fledged treatment.

Tragedy continued to stalk the family. Their elder brother, Basudev, 48, who ran a medicine store, started experiencing uneasiness. As with Krushnachandra, he died on July 16 while he was admitted for full-fledged treatment.

Tragedy continued to stalk the family. Their elder brother, Basudev, 48, who ran a medicine store, started experiencing uneasiness. As with Krushnachandra, he died on July 16 while he was admitted for full-fledged treatment.

However, before the result came, his condition deteriorated and he died on July 14 while on his way to Bhubaneswar.

Around this time, his elder brother, Mangaraj, 45, who ran a medicine store, started experiencing uneasiness. As with Krushnachandra, he died on July 16 before he was admitted for full-fledged treatment.

Tragedy continued to stalk the family. Their elder brother, Basudev, 48, who ran a medicine store, started experiencing uneasiness. As with Krushnachandra, he died on July 16 while he was admitted for full-fledged treatment.

"We know the second wave is much more dangerous than the first. But if we do not come out of our house to manage businesses, the food insecurity will kill us before the second wave of COVID-19 does," said Truptimayee, who helps manage the drug store.

The deaths of the Sahu brothers, their grocery shops are now managed by their wives while Mangaraj's eldest daughter has dropped out of nursing studies to run the drug store in Angaraon.

"We know the second wave is much more dangerous than the first. But if we do not come out of our house to manage businesses, the food insecurity will kill us before the second wave of COVID-19 does,"

Our lands are under threat, say Tamils in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province

Systematic effort to change Tamil areas' demographics, alleges Batticaloa MP Shanakiyan Rasamanickam

MEERA SRINIVASAN
BATTICALOA

Over the last few months, farmers of Mavadi Odai in Sri Lanka's eastern Batticaloa district frequently spotted something crop up on their land overnight – a border stone they had not planted.

"The Forest Department people come and put their stones when we are asleep, and then claim the land to be theirs," says Marimuthu Raveendrakumar, 51, speaking of a growing insecurity among residents over land that they returned to only in recent years, after years of displacement during the civil war. According to many in Batticaloa, the land where Tamil communities have resided and farmed for generations, is increasingly under threat from different governmental bodies that oversee agriculture, conservation and archaeology.

The 36 Tamil families in

Mr. Raveendrakumar's village which lacks motorable roads – it takes over 45 minutes to cover a 3-km stretch to reach here – do small-scale farming for a living. A plot of land is all they have assuring them of a livelihood. A majority owns under 5 acres. "But every day, the Forest Department is claiming a new patch of land here to be theirs," he says.

Apart from tackling the Forest Department's moves, the people of Mavadi Odai constantly dread wild elephants, and more recently, powerful humans eyeing their natural resources. Not far from their homes, a rapid sand mining operation has begun, with huge machines extracting truckloads of sand on a daily basis, villagers note. Following the intervention of local MPs, district authorities ordered that it be paused.

Locals have not been able to obtain permission to

mine sand in the resource-rich area. "We would be far more careful and not mine as deep as them, because we know our terrain, we know how our village gets flooded every monsoon," says a farmer.

Sand mafias'

"The mining companies exploit the villagers' poverty, get cheap labour, and make huge profits selling the sand. They don't care about how that damages the environment here," says Kanapathypillai Mohan, who heads 'Thamizh Unarvaalargal', a locally-run organisation that "stands up for Tamil people's rights".

"We had seen sand mafias only in films, but here we see them in action right in front of our eyes, that too with the blessings of some prominent local politicians aligned to the Rajapaksa government," he alleges.

Admitting that sand min-



Sites such as the Kusalanamalai temple in Batticaloa district are increasingly under threat, say locals. • MEERA SRINIVASAN

ing is going on in a "drastic manner" in the province, Anuradha Yahampath, Governor of the Eastern Province, says the Geological Department takes "all factors into consideration" while issuing licences, but some who obtain the licence are "violating" the conditions.

Asked about allegations of the Forest Department taking over agriculture land, the Governor, the highest official in the Province appointed by and representing the President, said in some

instances, land is being freshly demarcated to indicate forest areas. "There are some other cases where people have encroached into forest areas, and we are looking at alternative lands that can be offered to them. It is very important that we provide agricultural land to our people, and at the same time, protect our forests," Ms. Yahampath says, adding that a "strong environmental committee" headed by the Governor, with members of the Navy, Army and special task force, is looking

into the concerns over land, "the biggest issue" in the Province.

Land-related conflicts

The government's efforts are yet to inspire confidence among the people, going by their accounts. In fact, land-related conflicts in Batticaloa have escalated after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa came to power, they note.

Livestock farmers in Mayilathamadu, about 70 km from town, have been agitating for months, against colones of Sinhalese agricultural families, set up reportedly by the country's Mahaweli authority that administers land and irrigation, on fields their cattle have been grazing for decades. Like some other farmers' organisations and residents in the civil war-affected north and east, they too have recently filed a case, accusing governmental departments of taking control of their lands in the pretext of expanding forest cover, boosting domestic

Buddhism in these traditional Tamil areas," says an office bearer, requesting anonymity.

The Tamil-majority district is flanked by Trincomalee and Ampara, that together make the multi-ethnic Eastern Province that has been home to Tamils, a sizeable Muslim population who are also Tamil speaking, and a smaller proportion of Sinhalese. The clamour for land from different agencies, according to Batticaloa parliamentarian Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, is not a coincidence, but has a more sinister motive. "It is nothing but a systematic effort to change the demographics of the Tamil-majority areas."

Pointing to past moves by "majoritarian governments" in post-Independence Sri Lanka, of "settling" Sinhalese people in Tamil-speaking areas, the MP said: "We are only seeing similar attempts now. And they are happening at an accelerated pace after the Rajapaksa returned to power."

Raul Castro steps down as head of Communist Party of Cuba

His family's six-decade rule comes to an end; Miguel Diaz-Canel is the likely successor

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HAVANA

Raul Castro said on Friday he is stepping down as head of Cuba's Communist Party, ending an era of formal leadership that began with his brother Fidel and country's 1959 revolution.

The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island.

He said he was retiring with the sense of having "fulfilled his mission and confident in the future of the fatherland."

"Nothing, nothing, nothing is forcing me to make this decision," said Mr. Castro, part of whose speech to the closed Congress was aired on state television. "As long as I live I will be ready with my foot in the stirrup to defend the homeland, the revolution and socialism with



An era ends: Raul Castro at the 60th anniversary of Cuban revolution in Santiago de Cuba on January 01, 2019. • REUTERS

more force than ever."

Mr. Castro didn't say who he would endorse as his successor as first secretary of the Communist Party. But he previously indicated he favours yielding control to 60-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded him as President in 2018 and is the standard bearer of a younger generation of loyalists who have been pushing an economic opening without touching one-party system.

Photographs released by the official Cuban News Agency showed Mr. Castro, dressed in an olive green uniform, entering the compound with Mr. Diaz-Canel by his side.

Mr. Castro's retirement means that for the first time in more than six decades Cubans won't have a Castro formally guiding their affairs and many had been expecting the change.

"One has to step aside for

the young people," said 64-year-old retiree Juana Busutil.

Pace of reforms

The transition comes at a difficult time for Cuba, with many on the island anxious about what lies ahead.

The pandemic, painful financial reforms and restrictions imposed by the Trump administration have battered the economy, which shrank 11% last year as a result of a collapse in tourism and remittances. Long food lines and shortages have brought back echoes of the "special period" that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

Much of the debate inside Cuba is focused on the pace of reform, with many complaining that the so-called "historic generation" represented by Mr. Castro has been too slow to open the economy.

Junta leader set to join ASEAN summit

The summit on Myanmar's situation will be held in Jakarta on April 24

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing will join a special ASEAN summit next week, the Thai Foreign Ministry said on Saturday, his first official trip since masterminding a coup against the deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The February 1 putsch triggered a massive uprising, bringing hundreds of thousands of protesters to the streets to demand a return to democracy, while civil ser-

vants have boycotted work in a bid to shutter the junta's administration.

The military has deployed lethal force to quell the anti-coup movement, killing more than 720 people.

The international community has largely condemned the generals for use of force against unarmed civilians – imposing targeted sanctions against top military brass, their families and army-linked businesses.

But regional leaders have sought to open communica-



Min Aung Hlaing

Over 23,000 prisoners released

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YANGON

Myanmar's junta on Saturday announced it pardoned and released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional New Year holiday, but it wasn't immediately clear if they included pro-democracy activists who were detained in the wake of the coup in February.

Iran names man behind Natanz attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN

Iran named a suspect on Saturday in the attack on its Natanz nuclear facility that damaged centrifuges there, saying he had fled the country "hours before" the sabotage happened.

While the extent of the

damage from the April 11 sabotage remains unclear, it comes as Iran tries to negotiate with world powers over allowing the U.S. to re-enter its nuclear deal and lift the economic sanctions it faces.

Already, Iran has begun enriching uranium up to 60% purity in response –

three times higher than ever before, though in small quantities. The sabotage and Iran's response to it also have further inflamed tensions across the West Asia, where a shadow war between Tehran and Israel, the prime suspect in the sabotage, still rages.

State television named the suspect as Reza Karimi, 43. It showed a passport-style photograph of a man identified as Karimi, saying he was born in the nearby city of Kashan, Iran. The report also aired what appeared to be an Interpol "red notice" seeking his arrest.

Insulting Prophet should be same as denying Holocaust'

Pak. PM speaks after anti-France protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISLAMABAD

Western governments should treat people who insult the Prophet Muhammad the same as those who deny the Holocaust, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said Saturday.

Speaking a week after violent protests in Pakistan by a radical Islamist party outraged by French government support for magazines publishing cartoons of Mohammed, Mr. Khan said insulting the Prophet hurt Muslims around the world.

"We Muslims have the greatest love & respect for our Prophet," he tweeted.

"We cannot tolerate any

such disrespect & abuse."

The group Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) was banned on Thursday after days of violent protests.

"... call on Western govts who have outlawed any negative comment on the holocaust to use the same standards to penalise those deliberately spreading their message of hate against Muslims by abusing our Prophet," Mr. Khan tweeted.

Denying the Holocaust is illegal in several EU countries – including France – and offenders can be jailed.

Mr. Khan suggested the ban on TLP was not because of its motivation, but rather its methods.

U.S. woman charged for 'threatening' to kill Harris

Nurse held after Secret Service probe



Kamala Harris

In one of the videos, "Phelps stated: 'Kamala Harris you are going to die. Your days are numbered already.' Phelps expressed how she believes Ms. Harris is not actually 'Black' and how during inauguration she disrespectfully put her hand on her clutch purse instead of the Bible."

After outcry, Biden set to lift cap on refugees in May

President had signed an order limiting admissions at 15,000

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Facing swift blowback from allies and aid groups, the White House said President Joe Biden plans to lift his predecessor's historically low cap on refugees by next month, after initially moving only to expand the eligibility for resettlements.

In an emergency determination signed by Mr. Biden earlier on Friday, he stated the admission of up to 15,000 refugees set by former President Donald Trump this year "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest." But if the cap is reached before the end of the budget year and the emergency refugee situation persists, then a presidential determination may be issued to raise the ceiling.

That set off a deluge of criticism from top allies on Capitol Hill such as the se-

ond-ranking Senate Democrat, Dick Durbin of Illinois, who called that initial limit "unacceptable."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said later that Mr. Biden is expected to increase the cap by May 15.

Mr. Biden has been consulting with his advisers to determine what number of refugees could realistically be admitted to the U.S. between now and October 1, the end of the fiscal year, Ms.

Psaki said. "Given the decimated refugee admissions program we inherited," she said it's now "unlikely" Mr. Biden will be able to boost that number to 62,500, as he had proposed in his plan to Congress two months ago.

The new allocations provide more slots for refugees from Africa, West Asia and Central America and lift Mr. Trump's restrictions on resettlements from Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

Prince Philip laid to rest at royal funeral

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WINDSOR

Queen Elizabeth II on Saturday bid farewell to her late husband, Prince Philip, at a royal funeral like no other, restricted by coronavirus rules but reflecting his long life of military and public service.

The Duke of Edinburgh, who died on April 9 at age 99, was interred in the Royal Vault at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle after a 50-minute service attended by just 30 guests.

The Queen, 94, seen for the first time since his death, sat alone dressed in mourning black, with a white-trimmed, black face mask. Close family, also masked, sat socially distanced in the historic Gothic chapel.

Prince Philip – described by royals as "the grandfather of the nation" – was Britain's longest-serving royal consort and was married to the Queen for 73 years.

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NOTIFICATION

Admission Notification for January 2021 Cycle (2020-21 Academic Year)

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Special Note: A separate Entrance Exam for M.B.A. Course Only

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* Last Date of receiving of Applications: 26-04-2021 for Admissions (Entrance Exam

Fee Rs.500/- (25 \$ for Foreign Students) * Date of Entrance Examination: 27-04-2021

* Announcement of Entrance Exam Result: 27-04-2021 * Commencement of Admission: 28-04-2021 to 30-04-2021

Note: Programmes listed above will be offered subject to the minimum admissions requirement-50 students per course. If any course cancelled, student can opt any other programmes for which they are eligible, if not their fee will be returned.

Commencement of Online Admissions : 17.04.2021 Last Date For Admission up to : 30.04.2021

For eligibility conditions for the above programmes, fee and other details please visit official websites

www.kuvempu.ac.in OR www.kuvempu-online.in

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SNAPSHOTS



Star dust

In six expeditions led over the last two decades, researchers led by those from CNRS in Paris have made an estimate of the amount of extraterrestrial dust falling on the Earth every year. In the expeditions, the researchers collected micrometeorites that measure between 30 and 200 micrometres and estimated that 5,200 tonnes of them fall on Earth every year.



T.Rex, a total

In all, 2.5 billion *Tyrannosaurus rex* individuals have walked on the Earth, a new study published in *Science* estimates. Using facts known about *T. rex* and the relation between body mass and population density observed in living creatures, the study estimates that at any time about 20,000 individuals inhabited the Earth. Multiplied by 1,27,000 generations, this yields the total number.

J&J scientists refute 'class effect' to blame for clots in those who got its vaccine

They say the two vaccines are 'substantially different' and have different effects

REUTERS

Scientists at Johnson & Johnson on April 16 refuted an assertion in a major medical journal that the design of their COVID-19 vaccine, which is similar AstraZeneca's, may explain why both have been linked to very rare brain blood clots in some vaccine recipients.

The U.S. earlier this week paused distribution of the J&J vaccine to investigate six cases of a rare brain blood clot known as cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST), accompanied by a low blood platelet count, in U.S. women under age 50, out of about 7 million people who got the shot.

The blood clots in patients who received the J&J vaccine bear close resemblance to 169 cases in Europe reported with the AstraZeneca vaccine, out of 34 million doses administered there.

Both vaccines are based on a new technology that uses a modified version of adenoviruses, which cause the common cold, as vectors to ferry instructions to human cells. Several scientists have suggested the issue may be a "class effect" linked to this type of vaccine.



Rare adverse effect: Both Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca vaccines have witnessed very rare brain blood clot events in a few vaccine recipients. ■ GETTY IMAGES

In a letter on Friday in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, J&J scientists refuted a case report published earlier this week by Kate Lynn-Muir and colleagues at the University of Nebraska, who asserted that the rare blood clots "could be related to adenoviral vector vaccines."

In an interview with Reuters on Thursday, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert and an adviser to the White House, said the fact that they are both adenovirus vector vaccines is a "pretty obvious clue" that the cases could be linked to the vector.

Specifically, they noted that the J&J vaccine uses a human adenovirus while the AstraZeneca vaccine uses a

chimpanzee adenovirus. The vectors are also from different virologic families or species, and use different cell receptors to enter cells.

The J&J shot also includes mutations to stabilise the so-called spike protein portion of the coronavirus that the vaccine uses to produce an immune response, while the AstraZeneca vaccine does not.

"The vectors are very different," said Dr. Dan Barouch of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Harvard's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, who helped design the J&J vaccine.

"The implications of issues with one vector for the other one are not clear at this point," he said in an interview earlier this week.

The J&J scientists said in the letter there was not enough evidence to say their vaccine caused the blood clots and they continue to work with health authorities to assess the data.

A panel of advisers to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are expected to meet on April 23 to determine whether the pause on use of the J&J vaccine can be lifted.

ARIES facility will host the support centre for Aditya-L1

The centre will expand the visibility of Aditya-L1 in the international arena

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

The Indian programme to study the Sun and the region between the Sun and the Earth from space - Aditya-L1 - is due to be launched next year. It will carry seven payloads which have been developed by various institutions across the country. Once the mission is launched, there will be a need for a ground support centre to monitor and coordinate the work on its various payloads. This role will be played by the ARIES facility (short for Aryabhatta Research Institute for Observational Sciences) which is situated near Nainital. In January 2021, an agreement was signed to this effect based on the proposal submitted by the ARIES team, led by Dipankar Banerjee, Director of ARIES, who is a solar physicist and co-chair of the science working group of the Aditya-L1 mission. With about four to five personnel,

this centre will come up at Haldwani, where ARIES is setting up a data centre also.

Guest users

Researchers who may not even be associated with core Aditya-L1 team will be able to book a specific payload to conduct observations for a particular time. Any PhD student or postdoctoral fellow in a research institution can submit observing proposals through the online proposal submission system. "The main aim of this centre is to let every researcher in India perform analysis over scientific data obtained from Aditya-L1. The total number of guest users will be from a few tens to a few hundreds," says Prof. Banerjee. A time allocation committee comprising senior and expert scientists will evaluate proposals based on their merit and feasibility to decide the priority. "We are open to users outside India by giving hand-outs of da-

ta analysis during international meetings and online training in the later phase of the mission," he adds.

Studying lower corona

The Aditya-L1 Support Centre (ASC) will provide training through regular workshops for the guest users. Apart from this, it will provide ready-to-use Python and Java apps for the satellite data and demos and handouts to facilitate the guest users. An ARIES team has re-

cently developed an algorithm to study the accelerating solar eruptions in the lower corona called CMEs Identification in Inner Solar Corona (in short, CIISCO), where CME stands for coronal mass ejection. Prof. Banerjee explains how this will be put to use: "The centre will also provide source code for advanced data analysis. For example, it will provide the source code for CIISCO that we have developed in ARIES to detect accelerating



Ground station: The Aditya-L1 Support Centre, to come up near Nainital, will provide training through regular workshops for guest users. ■ ARIES

The group has developed several advanced image processing algorithms to detect fine-scale structures in the solar atmosphere.

CMEs in the solar atmosphere.

The group has also developed several advanced image processing algorithms to detect fine-scale structures in the solar atmosphere. Such techniques are important to capture dynamics at different spatial and temporal scales. Prof. Banerjee gives an example of this: "While ISRO will provide raw and calibrated spectra of the solar atmosphere, at ASC we will further process the spectra to derive meaningful quantities such as intensity, Doppler velocities and line widths and provide these quantities to the scientific community."

The facility will store aligned data from other observatories. That is, data taken at other wavelengths of observation than by Aditya-

L1 and aligned in time and space so that they complement Aditya-L1 observations.

Long-term plans

The centre will host a compendium of the location and duration of different features on the solar surface such as coronal holes, prominences, flares, CMEs and sunspots. "We will employ automated methods to detect these features," he says. Continuous monitoring of the location and duration of these features will help in monitoring the Earth directed CMEs and thereby, the space weather. "Also, it will help us to understand the long-term evolution of these features and underlying physical mechanisms responsible for this," says Prof. Banerjee.

This centre will expand the visibility of Aditya-L1 beyond India at the international level.

Also, it will expand its visibility within India. It will allow every interested individual to be able to perform scientific analysis of the data," he adds.



Question Corner

Warmth and change

How does temperature determine the sex in some specific reptile and fish embryos?

Bearded dragon embryos can use two different sets of genes to become a female lizard – one activated by the sex chromosomes and the other activated by high temperatures during development (*PLOS Genetics*).

This so-called temperature-dependent sex determination was discovered in the 1960s. Now, for the first time the molecular details of how it happens have been found by scientists from the University of Canberra.

It is known that male bearded dragons have ZZ sex chromosomes, while females have ZW sex chromosomes. However, hot temperatures can override the ZZ sex chromosomes, causing a male lizard to develop as a female.

The researchers discovered that, initially, different sets of developmental genes are active in the two types of females, but that ultimately the pathways converge to produce ovaries, according to a release.

The findings support recent research proposing that ancient signalling processes inside the cell help translate high temperatures into a sex reversal.

This study is the first to show there are two ways to produce an ovary in the bearded dragon, revealing partially how temperature determines sex.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Can Covaxin booster dose prolong protection?

The booster dose will be given six months after the second dose, the company is to follow up the participants for at least six months

R. PRASAD

In a meeting held on March 24, the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the India drug regulator permitted Bharat Biotech to carry out a phase-2 trial of Covaxin wherein a booster dose is to be administered six months after the second dose to further improve vaccine efficacy. Currently, two doses of Covaxin are administered 28 days apart.

In the phase-2 trial 380 participants were recruited in all and were split into two groups of 190 each to receive either 3 microgram or 6 microgram of the vaccine. With the SEC directing Bharat Biotech to conduct the booster dose study only in the cohort that received 6 microgram of the vaccine, the phase-2 booster dose trial will be limited to 190 participants.

The booster dose will be given six months after the second dose and the company has been directed to follow up the participants who get a booster dose for at least six months.

Virologist Dr. Jacob John, formerly with CMC Vellore, feels that providing a booster dose will be a good idea in increasing the duration of protection. "The immunological principle says that to make long-lived antibody secreting cells as well as long-lived memory T cells, the first and second dose

should be given 28 days apart and the third dose should be given with a minimum gap of four months after the second dose and optimally five months after the second dose," he says.

Priming and boosting

According to him, when only two doses of the vaccine are given with a gap of 28 days between doses, the immunity would last for about a year or so. "So if the disease is around for more than a year, then a booster dose is needed after a year if only two doses are given one month apart," says Dr. John. "The reason being that the first dose is a priming dose while the second dose given 28 days later is partially priming and partially boosting. As a result, the boosting effect of the second dose is short-lived, which is about a year."

Since Covaxin uses an inactivated virus platform, the virus does not multiply in the body and so the antigen level is maximum only for a day or two. In order to stimulate the immune system, a second dose is needed.

He warns that when the second dose is given less than 28 days after the first, no boosting effect is achieved, and when given after 28 days, the booster effect is only partial and will last for about a year. So a booster dose will be needed after a year if the disease is



Working sequence: The first dose is a priming dose while the second dose given 28 days later is partially priming and partially boosting, and hence its boosting effect is short-lived, says Jacob John. ■ GETTY IMAGES

around. "If the third dose is administered four-five months after the second dose, the immunological principle is that the immunity will be long-lived. This is because the antibody secreting cells will be treated specially by the body and will be taken into the bone marrow and will live for years and continue secreting antibodies," Dr. John says.

North Arcot study

He recalls the North Arcot (in Tamil Nadu) Polio study of 1986-95

where the inactivated polio vaccine was tested as three doses under the government's watch. As required by ICMR, the study compared oral polio vaccine (OPV) and the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV).

While the CDC recommends four doses, most countries use three doses of inactivated polio vaccine. In the beginning, three doses of inactivated polio vaccine were given, with the second and third doses given with one month gap. But even after three doses a booster was needed a year later.

But the second dose given with

at least eight weeks gap after the first resulted in higher antibody levels and longer duration of protection. However, a booster dose is still required and so the third dose is given a year after the second dose.

In the North Arcot Polio study of 1986-1995, Dr. John and his team administered the first dose at 14 weeks and the second dose at 22 weeks later. The third dose was administered at nine months of age. "Polio almost disappeared," Dr. John vividly recalls. Despite the very encouraging results of the study, the government dumped inactivated polio vaccine and instead went ahead using oral polio vaccine to combat polio in the country. Unfortunately, even the results of the study were not published.

Drop in cases

But in 1998, Dr. John and three others included the critical data of the North Arcot Polio study in a paper in *The Lancet*. The paper dealing with district-level disease surveillance showed that increasing vaccine coverage both in private and public health facilities resulted in a substantial drop in the prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases. In the case of polio, the drop was from 150 cases in private hospitals and 116 cases in government hospitals in 1989 to just 14 polio cases in private hospitals

and five cases in government hospitals six years later in 1995. "The intervention was not to eradicate but to contain polio," says Dr. John recalling the study.

Even in the case of the HPV vaccine, three doses were initially given, with the second dose given a month after the first and the third dose given at six months. "Scientists soon found that the second dose was irrelevant. If the gap between the first and second dose is more than five months then a third dose is not required," he says. "Protection between the first and second dose is not good. But since there is no pandemic and we don't need short-term protection, the second dose of HPV is generally administered six months later. If both short-term and long-term protection is needed then three doses at 0-1-6 months interval are needed for HPV."

Given the immunological principle that immunity will be long-lived when a third dose of inactivated vaccine is given four-five months after the second dose (SEC has asked Bharat Biotech to give the booster dose six months after the second dose) and examples of long-lived immunity in case of IPV and HPV vaccines, which too are inactivated vaccines, Dr. John is optimistic that protection from Covaxin can be prolonged with a booster dose.

The story of 220-million-year-old rat-like creatures via microfossils

The teeth were studied and compared with previously reported cynodonts

ASWATHI PACHA

The Tiki Formation in Madhya Pradesh, a treasure trove of vertebrate fossils, has now yielded a new species and two genera of cynodonts, small rat-like animals that lived about 220 million years ago.

The researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, used scanning electron microscopy to study about 10 teeth samples collected from the village of Tiki in Shahdol District, Madhya Pradesh.

The teeth were studied for size, crown shape, structure of the cusps and compared with previously reported cynodonts. The results showed that they had found a new species, and they named it *Rewaconodon indicus*, indicating India, the country it was discovered from.

The team also identified two new genera from the area. The first was named *Inditherium floris*, after India and the Latin word *therium* meaning beast. As the teeth had a flower-shaped crown, it earned the species name *floris*. The second was



Lively ancestor: Artist's impression of a cynodont, a group that ultimately gave rise to the present-day mammals. ■ JULIO LACERDA

named *Tikiodon cromptoni*, after Tiki Formation and Greek word *odon* meaning tooth. The species name is after paleontologist A.W. Crompton.

Teeth trail

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The researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, used scanning electron microscopy to study about 10 teeth samples collected from the village of Tiki in Shahdol District, Madhya Pradesh.

"The teeth were very different from the ones found in Laurasia which includes North America, England, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Belgium.

"This possibly suggests abiotic interchange between India and Laurasia regions and/or similarity in paleoclimatic conditions, but this requires further study," according to the paper, which is recently published in the *Journal of Paleontology*.

for example, different teeth in the front of mouths compared with the back), a secondary palate in their mouths, which, like humans, allowed them to breathe and eat at the same time. Some cynodonts show evidence for the inferred presence of whiskers and fur."

DNA analysis

When asked if DNA studies can be done on these teeth Dr. Ray explained that as the samples are extremely old, the organic matter would have completely degraded making it impossible to look at DNA.

About eighty cynodont genera have been reported from around the world. The ones similar to the newly discovered ones were previously found in Laurasia which includes North America, England, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. "This possibly suggests abiotic interchange between India and Laurasia regions and/or similarity in paleoclimatic conditions, but this requires further study," according to the paper, which is recently published in the *Journal of Paleontology*.



Copyright war

How will the U.S. Supreme Court verdict in the Oracle vs. Google case affect the software industry?

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

The story so far: On April 5, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favour of Alphabet Inc.'s Google in a case where it was accused by Oracle of violating the country's copyright law. The case, dubbed "the copyright case of the century," began with Oracle's charge in the San Francisco federal district court in 2010 that Google's Android platform infringed upon its copyright in a platform called Java SE. In the process of finally being decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 6-2 verdict, this case made its journey through a federal district court and an appellate court twice.

What is the background of the case?

Oracle's lawsuit came shortly after it acquired Sun Microsystems, which had developed the Java language. Consequently, it came to own the copyright in Java SE (standard edition), a platform that programmers use to build programs that work on any personal computer. Oracle's charge was that Google copied a part of this platform's program while developing the Android platform for programmers.

What did the courts find?

The courts found that Google did negotiate with Sun Microsystems, prior to it being bought by Oracle, to license the use of the Java platform in Android. But negotiations fell through. Eventually, as the Supreme Court noted, it created the Android platform software using the services of about 100 engineers who worked for more than three years. But Google also wanted the millions of Java programmers around the world to be able to work with Android seamlessly. As Justice Stephen Breyer wrote in the majority opinion, "It also copied roughly 11,500 lines of code from the Java SE program."

The Supreme Court said Google's copying was transformative, as it 'copied only what was needed to allow programmers to work in a different computing environment' (which is Android) using a familiar programming language (Java)

and the second was whether the copying constituted fair use, if the answer to the first was in the affirmative.

In ruling in Oracle's favour, the Federal Circuit had held that the portion of the copied code is copyrightable and that Google's act did not constitute fair use. The Supreme Court decided to sidestep the first question, saying, "In reviewing that decision, we assume, for argument's sake, that the material was copyrightable." The question of the copyrightability of the code remains significant also because the lower courts gave different judgments on it. But the Supreme Court decided the second question in Google's favour, saying that its copying of a part of the code constituted fair use, and therefore it did not violate the copyright law.

What is fair use?

According to the U.S. Copyright Office, "Fair use is a legal doctrine that promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works in certain circumstances." So, activities such as "criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research" may qualify under fair use. In other words, these activities can be exempt from copyright infringement charges.

How did the court decide that Google's action came under the ambit of fair use?

Section 107 of the U.S. copyright law provides a framework to judge fair use. It contains four factors, in the following order – the purpose of the use, the nature of the copyrighted work, the substantiality of the portion used in relation to the whole work, and the effect of the usage upon the potential market.

The court decided to start with the second factor, the nature of the copyrighted work. What worked in Google's favour was that the court made a distinction between a code "that actually instructs a computer to execute a task" and the code that Google copied, which were the lines of an API (application programming interface), which "allows programmers to call upon prewritten computing tasks for use in their own programs". To understand this, it is best to go back to the district court's explanation of what happened. That court said, "An API is like a library. Each package is like a bookshelf in the library. Each class is like a book on the shelf. Each method is like a how-to-do-it chapter in a book. Go to the right shelf, select the right book, and open it to the chapter that covers the work you need."

The Supreme Court said Google's copying was transformative, as it "copied only what was needed to allow programmers to work in a different computing environment" (which is Android) using a familiar programming language (Java).

What is the implication of this ruling?

There is a view that the software industry is relieved that the Supreme Court differentiated between the type of code Google copied, i.e., software interface, and other creative codes. Digital rights group Electronic Frontier Foundation said, "This decision gives more legal certainty to software developers' common practice of using, re-using, and re-implementing software interfaces written by others, a custom that underlies most of the internet and personal computing technologies we use every day."

COVID-19 vaccines and blood clots

Why are adverse events after immunisation of concern and what do experts say?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: Reports of rare blood clots occurring after COVID-19 vaccination have led some countries to limit the usage of AstraZeneca's vaccine for certain categories of people, while other countries have paused the administration. More recently, the United States put the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on hold after reports of blood clots emerged.

What are these adverse effects?

An adverse effect following immunisation with the AstraZeneca jab is not merely blood clots in large vessels, but also a low platelet count. The effect is similar to heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT), where heparin, which is used to clear clots, actually causes blood clots and a fall in the platelet count. "The heparin combines with platelet factor 4 to form a complex. This immune complex induces an abnormal immune response, in which antibodies are generated against the complex. This antibody-platelet factor 4-heparin immune complex binds to platelets and activates them. The platelets form clots everywhere. The low platelet count is because the platelets are used up," said Vincent Rajkumar, haematologist and oncologist, Mayo Clinic, United States.

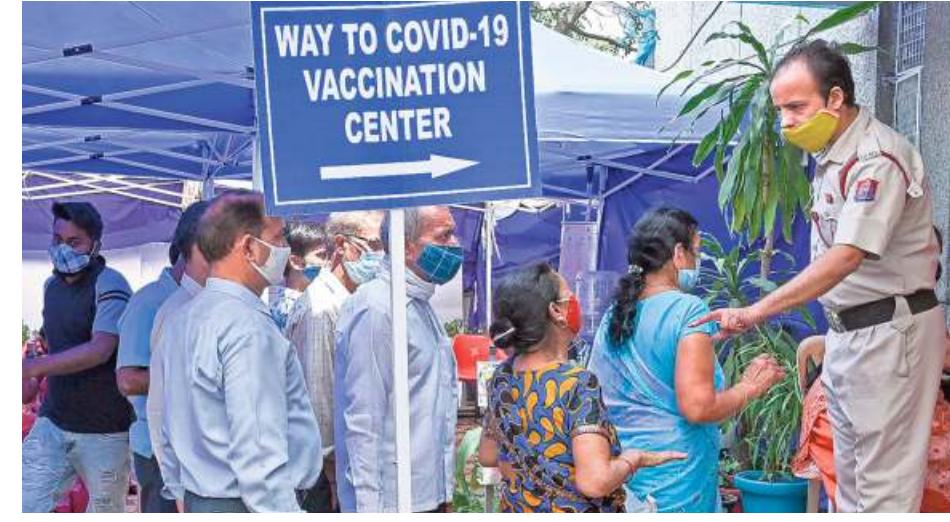
A similar process seems to follow vaccination, except there is no heparin trigger. Scientists are still trying to establish a clinical definition for this adverse effect.

The World Health Organization's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety conducted a review of the latest evidence of rare adverse blood coagulation events with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. It said, "A very rare new type of adverse event called Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), involving unusual and severe blood clotting events associated with low platelet counts, has been reported after vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines Vaxzevria and Covishield." Further, the WHO committee said that a specific case definition for TTS is being developed by the Brighton Collaboration to assist in identifying and evaluating reported TTS events and aid in supporting causality assessments.

At this stage, a 'platform-specific' mechanism related to the adenovirus-vectorized vaccine is not certain, but it cannot be excluded. Research should include all vaccines using adenoviral vector platforms. So far, TTS has not been linked to vaccines built on mRNA platforms (Pfizer or Moderna), the group added.

Why are we discovering this only now? The answer lies in the rarity of such incidents. "The EU data put the deaths at 1 in 1,00,000, while in the U.K., it is one in 25,000, and in the U.S., it is one in a million. Since the event is so rare, it is unlikely that any kind of vaccine trial could have thrown up such rare side effects. You probably need two million or more trial participants to find such a rare event, and it is practically impossible to study so many," said Dr. Rajkumar.

While specific TTS has not been assigned to any post-vaccination adverse event in India, post facto analyses have shown that heart attacks and brain strokes (that could be



People waiting in a queue for vaccination, in New Delhi on April 10. ■ AFP

Researchers at Oxford University state that the risk of rare blood clotting following COVID-19 infection is several times higher than it is after vaccination

caused due to clots) were major factors for hospitalisation and deaths.

In India, where Covishield (from the AstraZeneca stable) is being used widely, an analysis, by the expert group

investigating serious adverse events following immunisation (AEFI), of 79 deaths caused after vaccination found that over 50% of the people had heart attacks and brain strokes.

The concern is that even with the very low rate of occurrence, in a few otherwise healthy people, such adverse reactions have proven to be fatal. Another issue is the current inability to identify vulnerable groups in a population.

Does the vaccine prevent more harm than it may cause?

Decisions in the medical field are governed by the risk-versus-benefit principle. If the benefits of undergoing a procedure or taking a drug far outweigh the risks, then it is sensible to proceed. But in this case, the clots have the potential to cause fatalities, and that is seen as an "unacceptable risk" by some.

Gagandeep Kang, eminent virologist and vaccinologist who worked on the Rotavirus vaccine, said, "I'd like for every vaccine and drug to be 100% safe. But that is not possible. So, we have to try and handle the situation as best as we can." Her argument is that adverse events are bound to occur, but we need to make sure that every such event is investigated thoroughly. With any adverse event, there will be reasonable geographic variation. For instance, there is a difference in the occurrence of TTS between the U.S. and the U.K. In India, there is a mechanism in place and an analysis of deaths after vaccination is available in the public realm. But detailed analysis for every case is important, added Dr. Kang.

As of now, since a larger number of people have got their first dose, we are seeing these adverse events among them. When the population that is totally vaccinated increases, it might even manifest among that group, said Dr. Kang. But she added, "Is this serious enough a risk? Actually, the risk is greater with COVID-19 infection than with the vaccine, I'm going with this point of view."

In fact, Panagis Galatsatos and Robert Brodsky said in Hopkins Medicine, "Some

people infected with SARS-CoV-2 develop abnormal blood clotting ... In the lungs (pulmonary embolism), legs (deep vein thrombosis) and elsewhere."

A recent study by researchers at the University of Oxford stated, "The risk of the rare blood clotting known as cerebral venous thrombosis (CVT) following COVID-19 infection is around 100 times greater than normal, several times higher than it is post-vaccination or following influenza." The authors counted the number of CVT cases diagnosed in the two weeks following the diagnosis of COVID-19, or after the first dose of a vaccine. They then compared these to calculated incidences of CVT following influenza, and the background level in the general population. They concluded that compared to current COVID-19 vaccines, the risk of CVT following COVID-19 is eight to 10 times higher, and compared to the baseline, approximately 100 times higher.

What lies ahead?

Dr. Kang has a prescription: "We know what we have to do. You need to watch out for symptoms to indicate clotting, and you must know when it occurs – adverse effects usually occur four to 20 days after the first dose right now." While fever, body pain and tiredness after vaccination last a couple of days and are not worrisome, symptoms of concern during this extended period include chest pain, persistent abdominal pain, shortness of breath, pain in the extremities, severe headache and blurry vision. "Fortunately, we know that HIT has a specific treatment – treating with intravenous immunoglobulin and anticoagulants (other than heparin). We will be able to prevent deaths as a result of vaccination," said Dr. Kang. A simple D-dimer test can also be done to check whether blood clots have formed.

There are two takeaways, said Dr. Kang. First, a rare side effect does not have the same rate of occurrence around the world. So, each country must pay attention to AEFI that manifest as TTS. Second, since a class effect is suspected, paying attention to vaccines built on adenovirus platforms is important.

Meanwhile, a German and Austrian group led by Andreas Greinacher of University Medicine Greifswald, Germany, has differentiated the blood clots arising after vaccination. It has also outlined a way to test patients exhibiting the symptoms. The group has developed a screening assay to determine whether the person has developed these specific antibodies.

Assessing students amid a pandemic

What methods can Boards employ for evaluation after the cancellation of exams?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

The story so far: Faced with a massive surge in COVID-19 cases, the Central government cancelled the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) Class X examination and postponed the Class XII examination scheduled to be held from May 4. The decision, which will be reviewed by the Ministry of Education on June 1, was followed by the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE or Class X) and Indian School Certificate (ISC or Class XII) examinations also being postponed, with a review scheduled in the first week of June. As of Saturday, the International Baccalaureate and several State Boards had taken similar decisions.

What are the challenges?

Aligning examinations of various Boards is a practical necessity since admission to higher education courses must be done uniformly and entrance examinations have to be conducted for professional courses. While the government has bought itself time to address the wildfire spread of COVID-19 by getting public examinations out of the way, students are left wondering about the nature of formative academic assessment that will be applied to their Class X performance during the year gone by, which was marked by a shift to online classes and TV-based instruction. For many, it was a total lack of access without electricity, connectivity, computers and smartphones. The challenge now is to take up formative assessments where pen-and-pencil annual examinations cannot be held.

What is formative assessment?

The annual high-stakes public school examination is referred to as a summative assessment. It had to be cancelled or deferred this year due to the pandemic, and the academic system had to fall back on continuous evaluation techniques or other metrics. This is known as formative assessment. According to the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the key aspects of this pattern are use of observation, quizzes, assignments and feedback. While summative assessment is described as a 'testing of learning', formative assessment is 'testing for learning', which helps teachers assess the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and suggest remedial measures. The CBSE introduced a formative assessment system through a Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) framework in 2009-10, but abandoned it in favour of a compulsory public examination for Class X, eight years later.

However, the year 2020-21 stands apart due to the disruption to routine schooling and the use of online and remote instruction. UNESCO says that in such a remote-learning situation, formative assessment has to rely on Learning Management Solutions and digital tools such as the open-source Moodle, Google Classroom and Schoology, and other tools that facilitate the creation of adaptive instructions for personalised learning.

Many teachers in India used video-calling tools to deliver instructional material and to coach and assess students. The Boards must now come up with a formative assessment framework that fixes clear metrics.

How have schools responded?

After the latest move by the Centre, prominent CBSE schools say they will not face disruption because they conducted periodic internal examinations, practicals, as well as "pre-Board" testing for Class X. This will be useful to evaluate students.

However, the switch from a reformist model of formative assessment to the traditional public examination was not seen as a move forward by others. The decision to reintroduce a public examination for Class X in CBSE was defended by the then Human Resource Development Minister, Prakash

Javadekar, as the removal of discrimination against 1.93 crore secondary students of State and other Boards who continued to take an exit examination.

Can all schools assess fairly? The question of schools' capabilities to conduct sound formative assessments has become important because not all have similar facilities. While CBSE schools may be more urbanised, the picture for other Boards is mixed. The Unified District Information System for Education data show that in 2017-18, there were 1,88,742 rural schools and 83,207 urban schools under all managements.

Data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) for the same year indicate that only 4% of rural households and 23% of urban households had a computer. Internet access was restricted to 15% of rural and 42% of urban households.

What reforms are needed?

As COVID-19 cases from the first wave dropped, CBSE launched a competency-based assessment plan for Classes VI to X in March this year, aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. It was prepared jointly with the British Council, for science, mathematics and English. The aim was to strengthen critical thinking and analytical capacity for competency-based learning.

In fact, even the National Policy on Education, 1986, had de-emphasised rote learning and recommended a CCE-like framework. The NEP 2020 emphasises (formative) assessment for learning and critiques existing Board examinations as forcing students "to learn a very narrow band of content/material in a single stream". Future reforms would, therefore, have to work on two fronts – to ensure access to learning for every student, in classrooms or remotely, and make formative assessment possible through a scientifically designed set of metrics.

Amul



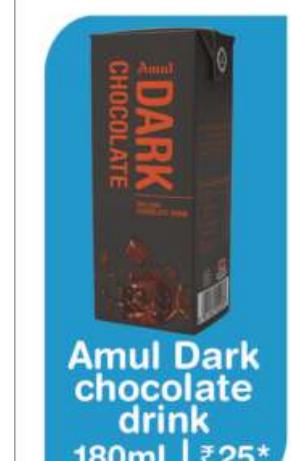
Strawberry Milkshake 200mL ₹ 30*



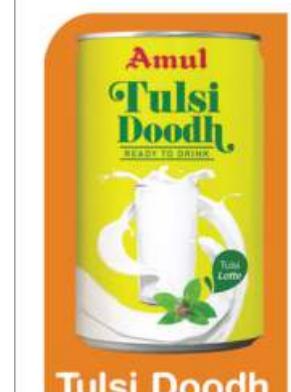
Lassi 250mL ₹ 20*



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TEHREEK-E-LABAIAK PAKISTAN

The rally of the radical clerics

The religious party, which was once backed by the establishment, is turning up the heat on Prime Minister Imran Khan over anti-France protests

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

The banning of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) by the Imran Khan government last week has added one more chapter to Pakistan's complicated relations with Islamist politics. The organisation started by the late Khadim Hussain Rizvi often drew attention because of the controversial remarks made by its founder on social media and TV. In recent years, Pakistan saw a surge in the TLP's activities, thanks to global developments and local opportunities.

In an era of globalisation of information and diseases, a French school teacher's lessons on freedom of expression provided a lifeline to the TLP, which has built a vast support network inside Pakistan based on its campaign against "blasphemy". Samuel Paty, the middle-school teacher, showed his students the controversial cartoons on Prophet Muhammed that had appeared in the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. His assertion of freedom attracted the wrath of a young Chechen who beheaded him on October 16, 2020. Subsequently, French President Emmanuel Macron hardened his position on Islamist extremism. As Mr. Macron attacked radical Islamists, Rizvi called on Pakistan to end its relationship with France, and summoned his Barelvi followers to flood the streets of Islamabad. But within days of calling for the protest, Rizvi succumbed to COVID-19. After his death, the organisation took a more

militant turn under his son Saad Hussain Rizvi.

To the outside world, the outrage against France expressed by a cleric may appear difficult to fathom but the Samuel Paty incident had touched upon the incendiary topic of blasphemy, which has the potential to stir up Pakistan's politics. For several hardline Islamist groups in the country, the issue of blasphemy is above and beyond the state of Pakistan. For them, anyone who attempts to question what they believe the core tenet of Islam – respect for Prophet Muhammed and the unshakable recognition that the Prophet is the final messenger of the faith – should be punished with death. The TLP has been in the forefront of such groups.

The protest against blasphemy gave a foundational opportunity to the TLP when in 2010, Mumtaz Qadri, a bodyguard of the then Governor of Punjab Salman Taseer, shot him dead in the picturesque Kohsar Market of Islamabad. Taseer had finished his lunch in an Italian restaurant in the market and had emerged to sit in his vehicle when Qadri shot him in the back in point blank range. Taseer had championed the cause of Asia Bibi, the Christian woman who was accused of blasphemy by the clerics. As the police arrested Qadri and produced him in court, the followers of Khadim Rizvi arrived with flowers that they showered on the killer. When the anti-blasphemy politics was growing in popularity in Pakistan, several religious leaders joined Rizvi to form a reli-

gious party which was named Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA). They organised public events, calling for the release of Qadri.

In 2017, when Rizvi approached the Election Commission to register the new party, the Commission raised objections over its name. Then Rizvi announced the formation of the TLP as a political arm of the TLYRA. Within a few years, the TLP has grown to become one of the most powerful religious parties that have made blasphemy a key political issue.

Street power
The protests demanding action against France, therefore, is not just a challenge from a fringe extremist organisation. The TLP has elected representatives in the Sindh Assembly and has the street power to bring life in the country's main cities to a halt. The TLP has demanded Mr. Khan's government expel the Ambassador of France, cut ties with Paris and stop using French pro-

ducts. The TLP also urged the National Assembly to discuss its demands and take legislative measures.

Arrest of leaders

When protests continued, the government arrested Saad Hussain Rizvi, the current leader. The arrest, in turn, sparked nationwide protests and gridlock, which stretched from rural Punjab to Karachi and Lahore. The arrest of the leadership and finally the banning of the organisation show the extent of the threat posed by the TLP. These factors, however, do not complete the picture of the organisation and its real intentions. That is partially met by conspiracy theories that are typical of Pakistan's politics.

The real strength of the TLP lies probably in the fact that it was initially sponsored by the all powerful 'establishment' of Pakistan – the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In recent years, several political or non-governmental moves to mobilise large public gatherings had the invisible hand

of the establishment. These public movements like the one led by Tahir-ul-Qadri, a Pakistani-Canadian cleric, have served mysterious purposes. Typically boosted by media platforms, these new age religious figures command enormous public support.

The 2017 protests against the government of Nawaz Sharif that was backed by the establishment helped the TLP acquire a dynamism of its own and grow in strength

port and viewership that are used by them to launch public protests.

Qadri had launched a similar anti-corruption movement against the Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari governments during 2012 to 2015. There was no clarity about the forces behind the protests but the movements

did achieve the goal of ultimately bringing political change. Now, an Army-friendly government is in power in Islamabad.

ISI role

New ISI chief Faiz Hameed is close to the current Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa. According to Pakistani columnist and author Ayesha Siddiqi, Mr. Hameed played a role in fomenting the 2017 protests against Mr. Sharif by the Barelvis that included the TLP. The protest was part of the anti-Sharif wave that had destabilised his government. Those protests helped the TLP acquire a dynamism of its own and grow in popularity, at least among the hardcore sections of society.

The organisation served a purpose in the establishment's fight to create a friendlier government in Islamabad but it did not stop there.

The TLP went ahead, taking up more causes such as the anti-France protests and eventually putting the Khan government under pressure.

The TLP appears to have become a burden for the establishment that once had courted it. The issue before the Pakistan government now is how to bottle the genie, which is going to be a difficult affair at a time when the country is under a lot of pressure from the Financial Action Task Force to crack down on terror outfits. For now, the government may have found it easier to ban the TLP rather than dealing with the issue of blasphemy. But it doesn't mean that the authorities are free of the threat the TLP poses.

Tens of thousands of the organisation's followers took to the streets, protesting the government decision. The visuals of mayhem and arson in the past few days will serve as a warning of sorts for the state of Pakistan and its establishment.

In a way, the TLP's story is not different from many extremist organisations that the establishment once bet on – a creation of convenience that has outlived its utility.



In Focus

■ Khadim Hussain Rizvi, the founder of TLP, rose to prominence when he and his supporters backed the assassin of Salman Taseer and held protests demanding death for 'blasphemers'

■ Officially launched in 2017, the TLP has members in the provincial Assembly of Sindh and has tens of thousands of followers across the country

■ The TLP has been protesting for months demanding the Pakistan government cut ties with France and boycott French products over the blasphemy row

NAMBI NARAYANAN

The battles of a space dreamer

The former scientist welcomes the SC order for a probe into his arrest in 1994

TIKI RAJWI

When S. Nambi Narayanan, a senior ISRO scientist, was arrested on November 30, 1994, on charges of leaking secrets pertaining to the Indian space programme to foreign nationals, little did anyone think it would one day be looked upon as the starting point of one of the most extraordinary battles for justice the country has witnessed.

Mr. Narayanan's name was closely linked to two Maldivian nationals, Mariyam Rasheeda and Fousiyya Hassan, who were arrested by the police on espionage charges. In May 1996, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which had taken over the case from the Kerala police, dismissed the charges against Mr. Narayanan and the other accused, terming the case a fabricated one. Two years later, the Supreme Court endorsed the CBI's closure report. But the damage was done.

The incident, which grabbed headlines as the ISRO spy scandal, shattered the lives and careers of ISRO scientists Mr. Narayanan and D. Sasikumar. In Kerala, the spy case fuelled a fierce political controversy, eventually leading to the resignation of the then Chief Minister K. Karunakaran.

Following his acquittal, Mr. Narayanan was reinstated in ISRO in what he himself describes as a 'desk job' at the Bengaluru headquarters. The scientist, who was



instrumental in introducing the liquid propulsion technology in ISRO, had been working on cryogenic propulsion when the spy case broke. In 2001, he retired from service without achieving his goal. But the battle, in another sense, was only beginning for Mr. Narayanan.

Legal fights
He had moved court for compensation and action against the police officers responsible for framing him. It is in this context that the April 15 Supreme Court order directing the CBI to look into the report submitted by Justice D.K. Jain Committee needs to be viewed. In 2018, the Supreme Court awarded Mr. Narayanan ₹50 lakh as compensation, noting that he was "arrested unnecessarily, harassed and subjected to mental cruelty". The apex court also constituted a three-member panel headed by Justice D.K. Jain (Retd.) for finding "ways

and means to take appropriate steps against the erring officials".

Mr. Narayanan had appeared before the committee in December 2020. The CBI report submitted to the Supreme Court in 1998 had reportedly listed the investigative flaws committed by then Additional Director General of Police Siby Matthews, and SPs S. Vijayan and K.K. Joshua. In April 1999, Mr. Narayanan had also moved the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) claiming compensation from the Kerala government for the mental agony that he had been forced to undergo.

In March 2001, the NHRC had awarded him an interim compensation of ₹10 lakh. The Kerala High Court, in 2012, had directed the State government to pay the sum to Mr. Narayanan.

The 79-year-old, who lives in Thiruvananthapuram, views the April 15 Supreme Court decision as an additional forward in

exposing the forces that fabricated the spy scandal. Looking back at the grueling court battles, Mr. Narayanan said he was forced to fight from a compelling need to defend himself.

At one point, his children had encouraged him saying he alone could prove his innocence. "They were right after all. Now people have a tendency to glorify my fight. But I was forced to fight out of necessity," he observed on Saturday. Mr. Narayanan also looks fondly back at his days at Princeton University in 1970. Princeton, where he did his Masters, helped him "build the platform for his space dreams", he recalls. The story of the initial days of the Indian space programme and the grueling saga of the spy case were later recounted in his biography *Ready to Fly*, which came out in 2017. In 2019, Mr. Narayanan was awarded the Padma Bhushan, which, according to him, had come as a pleasant surprise. The upcoming film, *Rocketry: The Nambi Effect*, directed by Madhavan, also is based on his life.

When the landmark verdict of the Supreme Court came out in 2018, Mr. Narayanan had told the media that he planned to do something that he had been forced to put off for almost 25 years – spending time with his family. While commenting on the latest SC decision, Mr. Narayanan says he has succeeded in fulfilling that dream in the past several months.

GUILLERMO LASO

A victor of circumstances

The centre-right candidate's win curtails the pink tide in Ecuador further

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

In a turnaround of sorts, Guillermo Lasso became the President-elect of Ecuador following a run-off second round vote in presidential elections in the Latin American country. Mr. Lasso, a former banker who belongs to the centre-right Creating Opportunities (CREO) party, won 52.4% of the vote in the run-offs, defeating his opponent Andrés Arauz of the leftist Union of Hope coalition, who secured 47.2% despite leading in the first round with 32.7% over Mr. Lasso's 19.7%.

This was Mr. Lasso's first presidential victory in three campaigns since 2013 but it did not come easily. In the first round, not only was his vote share some distance behind Mr. Arauz's, but it was also barely more than that of third place candidate Yaku Perez of the indigenous coalition Pachakutik. Mr. Perez won 19.4% and fell short of second place by just 32,115 votes and went on to challenge the results. Both Mr. Arauz and Mr. Perez's coalitions belong to the left side of the political spectrum as opposed to Mr. Lasso's centre-right and traditionalist platform, but there has been no love lost between the platforms that the former two politicians represent.

Mr. Arauz was the handpicked nominee of popular ex-President Rafael Correa, who continues to exert a significant influence in Ecuador despite being out of

power since 2017, living in Belgium. Mr. Correa's coming to power in 2007 heralded the Ecuadorian version of the Latin American pink tide, a current that led to several left-wing parties winning power across the continent. Mr. Correa, a U.S.-educated economist, re-oriented government policy in Ecuador to effect redistribution and welfare, spending programmes that resulted in significant drops in poverty in the country.

Radical trident
He also formed a radical trident of sorts in alliance with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Bolivia's Evo Morales by forming regional coalitions. Initially, Mr. Correa promised the recognition of rights and interests of the indigenous people, but they fell out with the government over issues such as the policies of mineral extraction from protected areas. With Mr. Correa using strong-arm measures to quell protests



authoritarian" tendency due to Mr. Correa's run-ins with the judiciary and the media. But these steps by the other contenders do not suffice in explaining Mr. Lasso's victory.

Ecuador has been ravaged by COVID-19 with the GDP shrinking by 7.8%. As many as three Health Ministers resigned recently, for being unable to implement a proper vaccine distribution system to stem the effects of the pandemic. More than 17,500 deaths have been registered for a high 5% case fatality rate (among the highest in Latin America). The outgoing President Lenin Moreno was also a handpicked choice of Mr. Correa, but who disavowed his own policy platform after coming to power and undertook severe austerity measures that led to denunciation by Mr. Correa and protests across the country. While Mr. Arauz could manage to delineate a clear difference with Mr. Moreno and promised a revert to the redistributive policies of Mr. Correa, the mixed legacy of Correismo and the new contradictions within the Ecuadorian Left allowed Mr. Lasso to come up trumps.

Mr. Lasso will, however, have a tougher time in the presidency as the CREO only has 12 seats in the 137-member National Assembly with the Union for Hope and Pachakutik controlling 76 seats together. But for now, his win will curtail the pink tide in Ecuador even further.

CM YK

HDFC Bank's Q4 net rises 16% to ₹8,434 cr. as advances climb

The private sector lender reports a 13.6% increase in consolidated advances

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 15.8% rise in its consolidated net profit at ₹8,434 crore for the quarter ended March 2021, buoyed by an increase in advances.

"Consolidated advances grew by 13.6% from ₹10,43,671 crore as on March 31, 2020, to ₹11,85,284 crore as on March 31, 2021," HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing.

The consolidated net profit for the year ended March 2021 was ₹31,833 crore, up 16.8%.

Total income (consolidated) increased to ₹40,909.49 crore for the January-March quarter of FY 2020-21 from ₹38,287.17 crore in the year-earlier period.



Building a buffer: The bank's total provisions were 153% of gross NPAs as of end March 2021. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

The full-year income (consolidated) in 2020-21 rose to ₹55,885.28 crore from ₹47,068.28 crore.

NPAs inch up

On the asset front, the bank's gross non-performing assets as of March 31, 2021, stood at 1.32% of the

gross advances, slightly up from 1.26% in the year-earlier period. In absolute value, the gross NPAs were worth ₹15,086 crore at the end of FY21, an increase from ₹12,649.97 crore.

Net NPAs were 0.4% (₹4,554.82 crore) as against 0.36% (₹3,542.36 crore).

Provisions for bad loans and contingencies were raised to ₹4,693.70 crore for the reported quarter, from ₹3,784.49 crore set aside in the year-earlier period.

"The bank also continues to hold provisions as on March 31, against the potential impact of COVID-19 based on the information available at this point in time and the same are in excess of the RBI prescribed norms," HDFC Bank said.

The bank held floating provisions of ₹1,451 crore and contingent provisions of ₹5,861 as on March 31. Total provisions (comprising specific, floating, contingent and general) were 153% of the gross non-performing loans as of end March 2021, it said.

PLI scheme for ACs, LED lights to exclude 'mere assembly'

DPIIT's norms prioritise production of basic components

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) has notified the PLI scheme for ACs and LED lights and said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would be done to support manufacturing of components which are not made in India presently.

It said that mere assembly of finished goods would not be incentivised and companies investing in basic/core components would get a higher priority.

Earlier this month, the government approved a production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for white goods – Air Conditioners (ACs) and LED lights – with an outlay of ₹6,238 crore. It will be implemented over



2021-22 to 2028-29.

According to the notification, the Empowered Group of Secretaries chaired by Cabinet Secretary will monitor the PLI scheme, undertake periodic review of the outcome under the scheme, ensure uniformity of all PLIs and take appropriate action to ensure that the expenditure is within the prescribed outlay.

DPIIT said that the incentive per beneficiary will be applicable on incremental sales (net of taxes) of manufactured goods (as distinct from traded goods) over the base year (2019-20) subject to ceilings.

Focus on 'Made in India'

"Mere assembly of finished goods shall not be incentivised. Selection of companies for the scheme shall be done so as to incentivise manufacturing of components or sub-assemblies which are not manufactured in India presently with sufficient capacity," it said.

Support under the scheme will be provided to companies/entities engaged in manufacturing of components of ACs (such as copper tubes, aluminium foil and compressors) and LED lights (like LED chip packaging, resistors, ICs, and fuses).

Online advice helps cut 45% litigation: LegalKart

'Most queries on property, family issues'

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI
With technology making inroads into the Indian legal system, citizens are now seeking legal advice online at affordable cost, leading to a drastic reduction in litigation, said Arvind Singhatiya, founder & CEO, LegalKart.

LegalKart, an online platform, provides legal advice and all kinds of documentation help through an app.

"Right legal advice and right documentation can prevent 50% of litigation," Mr. Singhatiya said. "Preventive legal care is helping individuals save lot of time and money in uncertain litigation and empowering them with the right legal ap-

proach," he added.

"In the last eight months, we have received feedback that with the help of independent legal advice through our platform and proper documentation, more than 45% users were able to cut-short their litigation or avoid it completely," Mr. Singhatiya added.

He said currently 35% of the users were seeking advice on family matters, while 40% were discussing property related matters. The rest were start-ups and people posing miscellaneous queries.

For a fee of less than ₹500, an individual can buy 15 minutes of time from a lawyer 24x7 on the app.

SpiceJet eases free change norm to 5 days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

SpiceJet on Saturday said passengers will not be charged any fee for changing the date or time on their tickets at least five days prior to the date of departure.

Earlier, zero fee was applicable only for changes done at least seven days prior to the journey, the airline said in a press release.

"Under the new offering, passengers booking direct domestic flight tickets from April 17 to May 10 can enjoy a one-time waiver on the change fee for the travel period between April 17 and May 15," SpiceJet clarified.

'Pharma exports grew 18.7% in FY21'

Pharmexcil says best performance of \$24.4 bn came amid global contraction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

India's pharmaceutical exports grew 18.7% to \$24.4 billion in the financial year ended March 31, spurred by strong demand for the country's generic drugs.

The industry posted its best export performance in value terms despite the global pharma market shrinking by 1.2% in 2020. This was due to a surge in demand for made-in-India generics, owing to their quality and affordability, said Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) Director General Ravi Udaya Bhaskar.

Sharing quick estimates released by the Centre's Department of Commerce, Pharmexcil said in a state-



ment that drug formulations and biologicals remained the second-largest commodity exported by India. In the previous fiscal, pharmaceutical exports had increased by 7.57% to \$20.58 billion.

"We have observed a big leap in exports in March to \$2.3 billion," Mr. Bhaskar said. This was the highest in

any month during the fiscal and 48.5% higher than March 2020's exports of \$1.54 billion. The year-earlier period's performance was hurt by lockdowns and supply chain disruptions, he said. The March 2021 numbers were provisional, the official added.

Mr. Bhaskar said the 18.7% growth was the best in eight financial years.

North America remains the largest market for Indian pharmaceuticals, accounting for a more than 34% share. Exports to the U.S., Canada and Mexico recorded a growth of 12.6%, 30% and 21.4% respectively.

Exports to Africa increased 13.4% as against the previous fiscal's growth of 2.24%. South Africa emerged as the second-largest market for Indian pharmaceuticals. Exports to the country increased 28%, while Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania were the other major markets in Africa.

Growth in exports to Europe, the third-largest market, was about 11%.

There is a growing demand for Indian pharmaceutical products in non-traditional markets such as Latin America (growth of 14.5%), CIS countries (23.5% growth) and Middle East (17.5%).

The growth rates for less unexplored markets such as Australia (21%) UAE (43%), Uzbekistan (125%) and Ukraine (40.6%) were also encouraging, Pharmexcil said in the release.

SPORT

Ankit Narwal moves up

BOXING

SPORTS BUREAU

KIELCE (POLAND)

Ankit Narwal outsmarted Uzbek boxer Akhmadjon Akhmedov and advanced to the men's 64kg pre-quarterfinals of the World youth boxing championships here.

The results:
Men: Pre-quarterfinals:
49kg: Chongtham Bishwamitra bt Parviz Khosroshahi Mahdi (Iri) 5-0; **56kg:** Sachin bt Jose Valdez Jiminez (Col) 5-0; **+91kg:** Jugnoo lost to Levente Kiss (Hun) 4-1.

Preliminary rounds:
64kg: Ankit Narwal bt Akhmadjon Akhmedov (Uzb) 5-0; **75kg:** Manish bt Daniel Ilyushonok (Isr) 4-1.

Women: Pre-quarterfinals:
48kg: Gitika bt Arailym Marat (Kaz) 5-0.

Rich haul for India on final day

SWIMMING

SPORTS BUREAU

TASHKENT

Srihari Nataraj came up with yet another personal-best performance, bagging the men's 50m backstroke gold in 25.11 seconds on the concluding day of the Uzbekistan Open swimming championships, on Saturday.

Sajan Prakash won the men's 100m butterfly for his fourth gold at the event while S. Danush came first in the men's 200m breaststroke.

Maana Patel emerged victorious in the women's 50m backstroke event and Divya Satija secured the women's 100m butterfly gold.

Amul



American Nuts Cup
₹25* | 100 mL



Ice Lickz Orange
₹15* | 50 mL



Tricone Two in One
₹30* | 120 mL



Combo Afghan Dry Fruit
₹260* | 750 mL + 750 mL Free



Butterscotch Bliss Tub
₹190* | 1 L



Sundae Chocolate Magic
₹190* | 1 L



Choco Chips Tub
₹200* | 1 L



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IN BRIEF



Chawrasia on fire, shares fifth spot in Austria

VIENNA
S.S.P. Chawrasia carded a superb four-under 68 in the second round to grab a share of the fifth position at the Austrian Open. At four-under 140, he is three shots behind leader Alejandro Canizares (67, 70). Shubhankar Sharma carded four-under 68 to be T-20th. PTI

Ko takes over at the top; Aditi slips to 50th

KAPOLEI (US)
Aditi Ashok slipped to the 50th spot after a two-under 70 in the third round of the Lotte Championship here on Friday. She is now eight-under 208. New Zealand's Lydia Ko returned a seven-under 65 to take a one-stroke lead. PTI

ITF women's events cancelled

NEW DELHI
The two back-to-back \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournaments, scheduled to be held on clay in Jhajjar from April 26, have been cancelled. The organisers of the two tournaments, Joygaon Tennis Academy, expressed confidence of hosting the events in future, in better times.

Gujrathi returns to Champions Tour

Praggnanandhaa makes debut

CHESS

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

In a first, two young Indians – Vinit Gujrathi and R. Praggnanandhaa – will be part of a field headed by World champion Magnus Carlsen when the \$100,000 New in Chess Classic online event begins on April 24.

Vinit returns to the \$1.5 million Meltwater Championships Tour as one of the nine wild-cards in the 16-player field while Praggnanandhaa gains playing rights as the winner of the recent Polgar Challenge rapid event.

Praggnanandhaa, 15, last faced an elite field in November 2018 when he was included in the blitz section of the Tata Steel event in Kolka-

Manika to train with Sharath in Chennai

K. KEERTHIVASAN

CHENNAI

In a bid to start preparations for the mixed doubles table tennis event at the Tokyo Olympics, Manika Batra will train in the city with Sharath Kamal and a few others from April 20 to 25.

"We are planning to do some basic work. First, I will have to sit and chat with her [Manika] to chart out our course of action. Rajath Kamal, my brother, will be the video analyst. Of course, paddlers Sudanshu Grover and Manush Shah will assist us," Sharath told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

Sharath plans to travel to Pune, which is Manika's training base, in May. "But that depends on the COVID situation prevailing in the country," he said.

Sixers snap Clippers' streak

MI pulls off another heist, defends 151 against troubled SRH

Bumrah (1/14), Rahul Chahar (3/19) and Hardik (two direct hits) change the game after Pollard cameo gives the side a fighting chance



Swing factor: Pollard's innings proved decisive in the final analysis. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

IPL 2021

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar once again bowled Mumbai Indians to victory, defending a modest target, this time against Sunrisers Hyderabad, at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Saturday.

MI had produced a similar win against Kolkata Knight Riders in its previous game.

Chasing 151, SRH started strongly, thanks to a 22-ball 43 from opener Jonny Bairstow. The Englishman added 67 with skipper David Warner for the first wicket, setting a base for his side, before he was dismissed hit-wicket. Chahar then triggered a middle-order collapse with a spell of three for 19 before Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult finished things off, securing a 13-run win for the defending champion.

Bairstow cut loose in the third over, picking up 18 runs off Boult with three fours and a six before hitting Adam Milne for two sixes in the very next over. His innings, though, came to a tame end when he stepped on the stumps, trying to go deep in the crease as he attempted a

lap-shot against Krunal Pandya. At the other end, Warner was cautious during his 36 before he was run out by a Hardik Pandya direct hit.

What followed then was a familiar story of the SRH middle- and lower-order struggling to force the pace and losing wickets against tight bowling.

Earlier, valuable knocks from openers Quinton de Kock (40), Rohit Sharma (32) and some power hitting from Kieron Pollard (35 n.o.) at the end helped MI post a competitive 150 for five.

Electing to bat, the openers wasted no time in maximising the PowerPlay (53/0) on a pitch that has been known to become progressively difficult to bat on.

De Kock started with two boundaries in the first over while skipper Rohit punished the short balls, with a couple of sixes over the leg side. Vijay Shankar then struck twice in quick succession, removing Rohit and Suryakumar Yadav to put the brakes on MI's scoring.

While Rohit mistimed a length delivery straight to deep mid-wicket, Suryakumar fell to a ball that stopped on him and prompted a simple return catch.

Hit wickets in IPL

- Musavir Khote (MI) vs. KXIP, 2008
- Misbah-ul-Haq (RCB) vs. KXIP, 2008
- Swapnil Asnodkar (RR) vs. CSK, 2009
- Ravindra Jadeja (CSK) vs. Deccan Chargers, 2012
- Saurabh Tiwary (RCB) vs. MI, 2012
- Yuvraj Singh (SRH) vs. MI, 2016
- Deepak Hooda (SRH) vs. Delhi Daredevils, 2016
- David Warner (SRH) vs. KXIP, 2016
- Sheldon Jackson (KKR) vs. Rising Pune Supergiant, 2017
- Riyan Parag (RR) vs. KKR, 2019

- Hardik Pandya (MI) vs. KKR, 2020
- Rashid Khan (SRH) vs. CSK, 2020
- Jonny Bairstow (SRH) vs. MI, 2021

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS

Quinton de Kock c sub (Suchith) b Mujeeb 40 (39b, 5x4), Rohit Sharma c Virat Singh b Vijay Shankar 32 (25b, 2x4, 2x6), Suryakumar Yadav c b Vijay Shankar 10 (6b, 1x4, 1x6), Ishan Kishan c Bairstow b Mujeeb 12 (21b), Kieron Pollard (not out) 35 (22b, 1x4, 3x6), Hardik Pandya c Virat b Khaleel 7 (5b, 1x4), Krunal Pandya (not out) 3 (3b); Extras (lb-6, w-4, nb-1); 11; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 150.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-67 (Bairstow, 7.2), 2-71 (Pandey, 8.6), 3-90 (Warner, 11.3), 4-102 (Virat, 14.1), 5-104 (Abhishek, 14.5), 6-129 (Samad, 17.4), 7-130 (Rashid, 17.6), 8-134 (Vijay Shankar, 18.5), 9-135 (Bhuvneshwar, 19.1).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Boult 3-4-0-28-3, Bumrah 4-0-14-1, Milne 3-0-33-0, Krunal 3-0-31, Rahul Chahar 4-0-19-3, Pollard 2-0-10-0.

Toss: Mumbai Indians.

MoM: Kieron Pollard.

MI won by 13 runs.

Innings scan

MI	Dots	SRH
49	4	54
10	4	7
6	6	8
53/0	PP	57/0
7.50	RR	6.96

Next assignment

MI: April 20 vs. DC, Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

SRH: April 21 vs. PBKS, Chennai, 3.30 p.m.

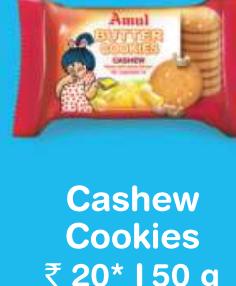
Amul



Butter Cookies
₹ 10* | 32 g



Oats & Honey Cookies
₹ 15* | 50 g



Butter Cookies
₹ 65* | 1200 g



Chocolate Cookies
₹ 65* | 1200 g



Elaichi Butter Nankhatai
₹ 80* | 1200 g



Elaichi Rusk
₹ 30* | 1200 g



Milk Rusk
₹ 30* | 1200 g

*MRP (inclusive of all taxes, conditions apply)

IN BRIEF



RCB looking for three in three

But Kohli's men will have to deal with well-stocked KKR

S. DINAKAR

There will be some captivating game-changers in the day game between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Kolkata Knight Riders at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sunday.

Yet, while RCB has discovered the tenacity to edge out the opposition in close encounters to top the table, KKR, the other night in Chennai, suffered a brain fade against Mumbai Indians.

Chasing just 153, and 72 without loss at one stage, KKR inexplicably dug a hole, with its big-strikers hitting only thin air at the death.

When the asking rate was a stroll, KKR's trump card, powerhouse Andre Russell, could manage just nine off 15 balls.

The strategy RCB batsmen adopt against mystery spinner Varun could hold the key. Will we see a calculated onslaught? Maxwell, this season, has been batting with maturity and power.

KKR, too, has match-winners in Chennai's Dinesh Karthik and skipper Eoin Morgan. Then the fiery Pat Cummins will be a threat.



Game on: Maxwell vs Varun should be a fascinating duel.

dew during the critical evening phase. The contest will witness home boy Varun Chakravarthy matching his skills against three magnificent strikers of the ball – Virat Kohli, AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell.

And you never know when the sleeping giant with the willow, Russell, will wake up.

TODAY'S MATCHES



CHENNAI, 3.30 P.M.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 26

RCB 12 | KKR 14

In 2020

Played 2 | RCB 2 | KKR 0

STAR SPORTS 1 & SELECT 1 (SD & HD)

PBKS faces Rabada-Nortje test

Rahul's men eye swift turnaround vs DC after Friday's collapse

AMOL KARHADKAR

One of the highlights of last year's IPL was the sight of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje causing mayhem in tandem. Delhi Capitals' wait to watch the South African duo in action together for the first time this season will end against Punjab Kings at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

While Rabada made his presence felt in his maiden outing, the loss against Rajasthan Royals, Nortje – after serving an extended isolation of 10 nights because of a false positive test report for COVID-19 – is set to be-

gin his IPL-14 sojourn.

And the duo couldn't have wished for better timing to spew venom – it will be interesting to see whether the PBKS batting, tormented by Deepak Chahar's swing on Friday night, can lift itself for what promises to be another challenging examination.

With Chris Woakes having impressed in both of DC's outings so far, Nortje is set to replace Tom Curran in the team. Barring that, the



Back in the hunt: Rabada and Nortje, who formed a lethal pair for DC in 2020, will play against PBKS. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

Sebastova helps Latvia seal tie in third rubber

Ankita fights back, but to no avail

BILLIE JEAN CUP

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

FORMER

GOALLESS

DRAW

WINNER

IN

GROUP

STAGE

ON

SATURDAY

IN

CHENNAI

AT

THE

MA

AT

THE