THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2021



NATION 4

Sumitra Mahajan reacts to fake reports of her death, asks, 'What was the urgency to announce?'



SPORT 8

Rahul stars as Punjab Kings stun Mumbai Indians by 9 wickets

TABLOID 11

Bollywood actress Sushmita tries to aid Delhi's oxygen crisis



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Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson feeds a lamb at Moor Farm at Stoney Middleton in England on Friday.

Assam elections: Congress shifts its candidates to resort

Guwahati: The Assam unit of the Congress has herded its Assembly poll candidates to a resort in Sonapur, about 30 km east of Guwahati. The move ahead of election results on May 2 is apparently to stop the ruling alliance led by the BJP from luring its candidates away. The Congress had fielded 95 candidates in the threephase poll that ended April 6. It left the remaining 31 seats to its coalition partners in the 10-party Mahajot, or grand alliance.

More on Page 4

Ambani bomb scare: Another cop arrested

Mumbai: The National Investigating Agency, prob-ing the Mansukh Hiran murder case, on Friday arrested another Mumbai cop in connection with the crime. Mumbai Police Inspector Sunil Mane was arrested on Friday morning and produced before a special NIA court. The court sent him to NIA custody till April 28.

Glacier burst in Chamoli district

Chamoli: Uttarakhand issued an alert late Friday night after the breakdown of a glacier in the Sumna area of Niti Valley. CM Tirath Singh Rawat said he has alerted the local administration and was in constant touch with the district administration & BRO.



I am getting more oxygen under the tree than in the ICU!



Max: 34°C Min: 20°C **RH:** 25% **Rain:** 1%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana Tithi: Chaitra Shudda Dwadasi till 7.11 pm Star: Purvaphalguni till 6.20 am; Uttaraphalguni till 4.21 am (Sunday)

Varjyam: 12.57 pm to 2.25 pm **Durmuhurtam:** 5.57 am to 7.37 am

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am **SUNSET TODAY 6.52 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM** MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.16 PM

MOONSET TODAY 5.06 AM

■ MP: 5 die in ICU due to lack of oxygen ■ 3.32L cases, 2,263 deaths in 24 hrs 25 Covid+ die in Ganga Ram hrs

after hospital sends oxygen SOS

with agencies input NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

In a black day for India, 25 Covid-19 patients died in Delhi's prominent hospital - Sir Ganga Ram hours after the hospital authorities publicly pleaded for medical oxygen. In Madhya Pradesh, 5 Covid-19 patients, who were undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit of a private hospital in Jabalpur, died reportedly due to lack of oxygen, trig-gering a public outcry. India also broke the global record of single-day cases for the second consecutive day on Friday with 3.32 lakh fresh cases and 2,263 deaths in 24 hours.

Ganga Ram sources said low pressure oxygen could be the likely cause of the deaths of 25 Covid patients as healthcare staff was reduced to manually ventilating patients in its ICU and emergency department.

Thursday evening, the hospital had put out what it called "an urgent SOS". 'At 8 pm, oxygen in store is for 5 hrs for peripheral use till 1 am and lesser for high flow use. Need

AGE CORRESPONDENT

As a severe crisis for med-

ical oxygen builds up across the country, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi

on Friday urged states

and UTs to be strict with

hoarding and black mar-keting of essential medi-

cines, injections and oxy-

gen. During a meeting with the chief ministers

of 11 states and UTs which

have reported the maxi-

mum number of cases, the

PM said that the Central

government is working

on all possible options to

reduce the travel and

turnaround time of oxy-

gen tankers. For this,

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23



Relatives react during the cremation of a Covid victim at Bhairav Ghat Hindu Crematory as coronavirus cases surge in Kanpur on Friday.

PM Modi holds meet with CMs on O2

Delhi chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal apologises for live-streaming the meeting

request for vaccine raw material

Americans first, says US on India's

urgent oxygen supplies at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. At present 510 Covid patients admitted with 142 patients on high flow oxygen support. Hospital is in touch with agencies. Need urgent supplies."

On Friday morning, an oxygen tanker did reach Ganga Ram, but it was enough only for about five hours depending on consumption, an official at Ganga Ram said. Till evening, there was no further replenishment and a hospital spokesperson said they were awaiting

KUMARASWAMI

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

In comments that spell

bad news for India which

had urgently requested

the United States to

ensure supply of vaccine

raw materials, the US on

Friday made it clear that

its policy is "America First". India, struggling to contain the second

deadly wave of Covid, is

now desperate to vacci-

empty oxygen tankers are

also being transported by the Indian Air Force to

supplies. Hospital chairman Dr D.S. Rana said it is wrong to say the deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage as they provided oxygen to patients manually when the pressure dipped in the ICU. Other prominent hospitals of Delhi, like Holy Family and Akash Healthcare, also sent out SOS messages for oxygen while requests for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds from family members, friends and well wishers kept flooding

Turn to Page 4

nate its huge 1.3 billion

population quickly.

The US state depart-

ment spokesperson said

engaged in an ambitious

and effective and, so far,

successful effort to vacci-

nate the American peo-

ple" and that the US

administration has a

the American people'

'special responsibility to

reduce one-way travel

Washington that

is"first

briefing

and foremost

■ More on Page 3

Armed Forces to import oxygen **generation plants** from Germany

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Amid reports of shortage of oxygen, Armed Services has decided to import oxygen generation plants and containers from Germany. Some 23 mobile oxygen generation plants are being airlifted from Germany and they will be deployed in military hospitals catering to

Covid patients. These oxygen generating plants are expected to reach India within a week.

Each plant has a capacity to produce 40 litres of oxygen per minute and 2,400 litres an hour. At this rate it can cater to 20-25 patients round the clock. The advantage of these plants is that they are easily portable.

More on Page 3

has provided more than

15 crore doses of essential

medicines to the states

free of cost and safety of hospitals should not be neglected. He further said

awareness must be increased to alleviate

panic purchasing of medi-

cines.Interestingly, some

part of the meeting was

televised at Delhi chief

Kejriwal's end, which the

PM did not appreciate.

Terming the conduct "inappropriate," PM said

this is the first time a CM has broken protocol and

live streamed a meeting.

Mr Kejriwal apologised to

the PM but his office

issued a statement, say-

ing, "The CM address was

minister

14 Covid-19 patients die as fire engulfs hospital ICU in Maharashtra



A man at the site of the completely burn ICU of a Covid-19 hospital in Virar in Mumbai on Friday. At least 14 Covid patients died in the fire.

Short circuit in AC unit may have been the cause; probe ordered

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, APRIL 23

At least 14 Covid patients died in a major fire at a Covid centre in Virar, Maharashtra's Palghar district, in the wee hours of Friday. The fire broke out at around 3 am in the ICU on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital which had 17 Covid patients. According to the sources, the cause of fire seems to be a short circuit in an air conditioning unit of the hospital. The surviving patients under critical care have been moved to hospitals in

Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse Patil ordered a thorough probe Maharashtra Director General of police (DGP). The Maharashtra government announced Rs 5 lakh compensation each to the legal heir of the deceased. The government will also provide Rs 1 lakh to those who have serious

injuries. Maharashtra chief min-

THE TRAGEDY comes two days after 22 Covid patients who were either on ventilator or oxygen support, suffo-cated to death when their oxygen supply stopped suddenly due to a malfunction in the main storage at a civic hospital in Nashik

expressed grief over the incident and directed the administration to make arrangements for the treatment of those people who were admitted to the Vijay Vallabh Hospital. The cause of the fire

ister Uddhav Thackeray

should be investigated properly. The administration has been instructed to see whether the appropriate fire safety measures were taken in the hospital," Mr Thackeray said

Surendra Singh Raj of Satyamev Jayate, an NGO based in Vasai and Virar, alleged that most of hospitals including this hospital in Vasai and Virar did not have fire safety equipment, fire alarm and smoke detectors. Relatives of the victims reached the hospital soon

after they got to know of the incident and demand-ed that stringent action be taken against those responsible for the TV visuals showed the smoke-filled ICU in a disarray after the blaze, with

the ceiling falling off in some places, beds and other furniture strewn around and kin of the deceased wailing outside the hospital. In his tweet in Marathi,

the state home minister said, "A fire broke out in the intensive care unit of Vijay Vallabh Hospital in Virar, killing 13 patients The incident is very unfortunate and painful A heartfelt tribute to the victims of the accident! The Director General of Police has been directed to conduct a thorough inquiry into the incident. Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis also demanded an in-depth inquiry and

■ Turn to Page 4

Railways has started "Oxygen Express" and Centre diverted Bengal's oxygen to UP, says Didi

Mamata skips PM's meet, says not invited

RAJIB CHOWDHURI

In an explosive claim,

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the Centre of diverting tonnes of oxygen from the state to oth ers ruled by the BJP, such as Uttar Pradesh, after she skipped Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level meet with other CMs on Covid-19.

Durgapur Burdwan West, the TMC supremo alleged: "Oxygen and medicines are unavailable here in the market. The oxygen, which was being supplied by SAIL to our state, is now being diverted to UP. The chain in Bengal is taken away to create scarcity of oxygen here. We have fixed the total oxygen, consumed in industrial units, for use in medical purposes. That means we have taken over industrial oxygen for

health purposes."
The CM added: "As a result, we were able to arrange 5,000 cylinders yesterday. Altogether, we

PM Modi triggers speculation about 2 phases being clubbed together AGE CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, APRIL 23

PM Narendra Modi on Friday wrapped up his campaign Assembly elections in West Bengal in a virtual address with an advice to the voters that triggered speculation about the remaining two phases of polls being clubbed due to rising Covid-19 cases in the state. Mr Modi in his speech suggested to people to go out "only once"to vote though the polls are scheduled on April 26 and 29

■ More on Page 3

have 20,000 cylinders in stock now. I have also spoken to another state for providing us oxygen supply as the Central

Turn to Page 4

time. He added that the Centre ■ Turn to Page 4 SC: Didn't plan to shift Covid cases from HCs

PARMOD KUMAR

Peeved over facing criti-

cism for having taken suo motu cognisance of the worsening Covid situa-tion in the country and gaps in its management, the Supreme Court on Friday said it did not stop the high courts from hearing Covid-related cases or thought of transferring them to itself.
Apparently displeased over the criticism by a section of senior lawyers based on the "perception" that the top court, after taking suo motu cognisance of the prevailing "heath emergency", will

transfer to itself all the

matters

Covid-related

We never said a word and did not stop the HCs. We asked the Centre to go to HCs and report to them. What kind of perception are you talking about?

— Supreme Court

being heard by the high courts, a bench that comprised Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat said: "You have imputed reading the order."

motives to us without court accepted senior lawyer Harish Salve's request seeking to recuse from being the

amicus curiae to assist

SENIOR ADVOCATE Harish Salve on Friday recused himself from being amicus curiae in the SC's suo motu proceedings on shortage of oxygen and mismanagement by the Centre during the ongoing crisis.

the court in this matter. The court had on Thursday appointed Mr Salve as amicus curiae and had said earlier it will hear only solicitor general Tushar Mehta and Mr Salve on this matter on

there cism,

Pointing to Supreme

Court Bar Association president Vikas Singh, Justice Rao said: transfer the case? Even before reading the order, was criticism about something which was not there in the order. how being institution destroyed.

Continuing to voice anguish over the criti-Justice senior Dushyant Dave: "You have imputed motives to us without reading the order.

Refusing to retreat, Mr Dave, appearing for the Gujarat High Court Advocates Association, said: "The entire country thought that you will transfer Covid-related

■ Bill will combat hate crimes against Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders US Senate approves bill to fight hate crimes

Washington, April 23: The Senate on Thursday overwhelmingly passed a bill that would help combat the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, a bipartisan denunciation of such violence during the coronavirus pandemic and a modest step toward legislating in a chamber where most of President Joe Biden's agenda has stalled.

expedite the review of hate crimes at the **Justice Department and** provide support for local law enforcement in response to thousands of reported violent incidents in the past year

▶ THE MEASURE would

expedite the review of hate crimes at the Justice Department and provide support for local law

enforcement in response to thousands of reported violent incidents in the past year. Police have seen a noted uptick in such crimes, including the February death of an 84-year-old man who was pushed to the ground near his home in San Francisco, a young family that was injured in a Texas grocery store attack last year and the killing of six Asian women in shootings last

month in Atlanta.

The names of the six women killed in Georgia are listed in the bill, which passed the Senate on a 94-1 vote. Mr Biden applauded the measure, tweeting, "Acts of hate against Asian Americans are wrong, un-American,

and must stop." The House is expected to consider similar legislation in the coming

satisfied, I did my best as CJI **PARMOD**

Bobde: I leave

KUMAR NEW DELHI, APRIL 23



Friday he

leaving was Supreme Court with the satisfaction that he did his best in leading the institution and leaves with "happiness, goodwill and very fond mem-ories". "I leave with the satisfaction that I did my best. I hand over thebaton to Justice Ramana who will, I am sure, very ably lead the-court," Chief Justice of India Bobde said in his farewell speech on his last working day.

Saying he is experiencing mixed feelings as he bids farewell to the Supreme Court, Justice IndiaBobde said: leave this court with happiness, goodwill with very fond memories of wonderful arguments, excellent presentation, good behaviour, commitment to the cause of justice from not only the Bar but all

connected with it ■ More on Page 2







measure



SHORT TAKES

29-year-old Delhi **police SI dies** of Covid-19

New Delhi: A 29-year-old Sub Inspector posted with the Delhi Police died due to Coronavirus at a hospital in Ghaziabad on Friday morning, police said. He was posted at Bharat Nagar police station, which falls under the jurisdiction of Delhi Police's northwest dis-

trict, they said. According to a police official, he tested positive on April 15 and was admitted to a private hospital in Ghaziabad on April 19 where he had been undergoing treatment. He had severe symptoms of Coronavirus

and was in critical condition. A plasma donor was also arranged but his lung was severely affected, the police official said. The deceased had joined Delhi Police in 2015 and is survived by his wife and a two-vear-old daughter who live in Wazirabad, the officer said. According to police, around

1,500 Delhi Police personnel tested positive for the coronavirus during the second wave since March end. More than 8,000 personnel of the force have been exposed to the virus. Out of them, around 7,000 have recovered and over 1.000 are still under treatment, police

4 arrested for remdesivir blackmarketing

New Delhi: Four persons were arrested here in two separate incidents for alleged black-marketing of remdesivir injections, police said on Friday. According to police, they received information and laid a trap on Wednesday near Parmanand Chowk in north Delhi"s GTB Nagar area. "Around 1.15 pm, one Talwinder Singh, a resident of Amritsar in Punjab, was apprehended and three vials of remdesivir injections were recovered from his possession," deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj said.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed that he was selling the injection on higher price as its demand was shooting and there was scarcity of the injection, the DCP said. Later, 68 more injections were recovered from his possession. The accused supplied the injection across the country through a courier company based at Chandni Chowk in old Delhi, police said. — PT

₹5,000 ex-gratia to construction workers in city

New Delhi: The Delhi government on Friday said it has disbursed ex gratia payments of ₹5,000 each to construction workers registered under the Delhi **Building and Other Construction Workers** Welfare Board as aid. In a statement, the city government said a total of 2,10,684 construction workers will be granted the aid under this scheme. "At present, the Delhi government has disbursed ₹52.88 crore to 1,05,750 construction workers and in the coming days, more construction workers will be granted this ex-gratia relief," it said. Wrong to say deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage: SGRH head

25 Ganga Ram patients die as hospitals gasp for oxygen

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Twenty-five of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's "sickest" Covid-19 patients died in 24 hours and the lives of 60 more hung in precarious balance, officials said on Friday, as the scramble for oxygen got increasingly frantic in hospitals across the national capi-

Sources said low pressure oxygen could be the likely cause of the deaths in Ganga Ram, one of the city's biggest and most high-profile hospitals where healthcare staff was reduced to manually ventilating patients in its ICU and emergency department.

The hospital announced the deaths shortly after 8.00 am.

After the unprecedented crisis of the morning, an oxygen tanker did reach Ganga Ram in Central Delhi at 9.20 am but it was enough to last up to about five hours depending on consumption, an official at Ganga Ram said.

"It is wrong to say the deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage. We provided oxygen to patients manually when the pressure dipped in the ICU," SGRH chairman Dr D. S. Rana said.

More than 500 coronavirus patients, including around 150 on high flow oxygen support, admitted in his hospital.

"Ventilators and BiPAP machines are not working effectively. Lives of another 60 'sickest' patients are at risk. Major crisis likely," a senior official at the hospital said.

The oxygen emergency was mirrored at the Max Hospitals as well.

Though no deaths were reported, Max Healthcare sent out an SOS on Twitter at 7.43 am, saying that Max Smart and Max Hospital Saket had less than an hour of oxygen left for about 700 patients



Relatives mourn the death of a family member due to Covid-19 at LNJP Hospital in New Delhi on Friday as coronavirus cases surge in the national capital.

Delhi sees record 348 Covid deaths, over 24K cases

New Delhi, April 23: Delhi logged 24,331 fresh Covid-19 cases and a record single-day jump of 348 deaths on Friday while the positivity rate stood at 32.43 per cent, according to the latest health bulletin.

The city has reported around 2,100 deaths due to the deadly virus in the last 11 days.

It had recorded 306 Covid deaths and 26,169 cases with a positivity rate of 36.24 per cent, the highest since the pandemic began a year ago, on Thursday. On Wednesday, 24,638 cases and 249 deaths were registered with a positivity rate of 31.28 per cent.

Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in Vasant Kunj also posted on Twitter at 4.20 pm that it was left with only one hour of oxygen and asked for help at the earliest.

A senior official of the Batra Hospital said the oxygen situation at their facility is extremely poor. Sources at the Holy Family hospital also said that they had received from the Delhi govern-

The capital had withighest single-day jump so far, with a positivity rate of 32.82 per cent on Authorities Tuesday. 306 deaths on logged Thursday, Wednesday, 277Tuesday, 240 on Monday, 161 on Sunday, and 167 on

Saturday. With the fresh cases, the national capital"s cumulative tally climbed to 9,80,679 on Friday. The death toll stands at 13,541, the bulletin stated.

A total of 75,037 tests including 43,711 RT-PCR tests, were conducted the previous day, it said.

ment but the "stock can six hours". Meanwhile, Dwarka-located Aakash Healthcare managed to refill their cylinders through small vendors across the city.
St Stephen's hospital in Tis Hazari also said they

tanker in the morning.
Faced with a staff shortage and resource crunch, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) also discontinued contact

had received a oxygen

average of around 90,000 tests a day being conducted in the capital. So far, over 8.75 lakh patients have recovered in Delhi, it The number of active

cases in the city increased to 92,029 from 91,618 on Thursday, the bulletin

The number of people under home isolation increased to 48,502 from 46,585 on Thursday, while that of containment zones mounted to 23,561 from 22,000 the day before, it

tracing of exposed healthcare workers and quarantine of asymptomatic consymptomatic

healthcare

workers (HCWs) will be tested and only those testing positive will be isolated and managed as per the clinical condition. The decisions were taken, on Thursday, at a Covid-19 review meeting held under the chairmanship of AIIMS direc-

Oxygen shortage: Good samaritans come to rescue of Covid patients

New Delhi, April 23: With hospitals in the city scrambling to shore up oxygen supplies, good samaritans and social organisations across Delhi-NCR are giving a new lease of life to Covid-19 patients gasping for breath by opening "oxygen langar" for them and

refilling cylinders for free. Inderjeet Singh Monty, the president of Mayapuri Trading Association, told a news agency, "We have been helping hospitals and people with free oxygen supply from this Mayapuri plant for the past five days now. Every day, over 500-600 people come here to get their oxygen cylinders refilled. Anyone in need of oxygen for a patient in their family can come and get the

oxygen cylinder refilled brainchild

Abhishek Gupta, plant's owner, the noble initiative is getting all sorts of support from the administration as well as the Delhi police which has helped them in supplying oxygen to several West Delhi private hospitals and in some cases to patients' homes as well.

The plant, with a refilling capacity of 1,500 oxygen cylinders per day, is operating round-the-clock keeping in view the ongoing crisis.
"The whole cost of this

is borne out by Abhishek Gupta. He just told us to help manage the things on ground and see that peo-ple's demands are being met smoothly. He is not bothered about money and wants to help people in whatever way he can amid the worst health crisis that the city and whole nation has seen," said Mr

Inderjeet Singh Monty, president of Mayapuri Trading Association, said: "We have been helping hospitals and people with free oxygen supply from this Mayapuri plant for the past five days now. Every day, over 500-600

people come here to get their oxygen cylinders refilled. Anyone in need of oxygen for a patient in their family can come and get the oxygen cylinder refilled here."

Monty, who is also a member of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC). Mr Gupta, even after several attempts, could not be reached for comment.

Also, rising up to the occasion in these challenging times is a gurud-

wara in Ghaziabad's Indirapuram. It has opened an "oxygen langar" for Covid-19 patients and promises to supply oxygen in its premises to patients till the time they don't find a bed for themselves in a hospital.

They have also launched a helpline number for the people to call and book

oxygen cylinder.
"We are not giving or refilling oxygen cylinders. We are asking people to come here at the Indirapuram Gurudwara along with the patient in their car and we will provide oxygen to them.

"Be it two, four, or eight hours, we will provide oxygen till the time the patient does not get a bed in the hospital," said one Gurpreet Singh in a viral video informing people about the initiative.

PM's review meet: Kejriwal draws flak for live streaming

There was no instruction on live sharing, says CMO's office

New Delhi, April 23: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's televised comments during the interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday regarding pandemic situation in the national capital and acute oxygen crisis in hospitals has triggered a row, with the Union government officials accusing him of "playing politics"

The officials also accused him of descending to a "new low" with his decision to broadcast the "private conversation" of the meeting.

His entire speech was not meant for any solution but for playing politics and evading responsibility. All chief ministers spoke about what they are doing to improve the situation but he had nothing to say on what he is doing, a source said, suggesting that his remarks, which were made public, have not gone down well with the central government. "He (Kejriwal) raised the

point of airlifting oxygen, but did not know that it is already being done. He spoke about oxygen express by the railways but railway officials say that he has not communicated anything about it to



HIS ENTIRE speech was not meant for any solution but for playing politics and evading responsibility. All chief ministers spoke about what they are doing to improve the situation but he had nothing to say on what he is doing, a source said, suggesting that his remarks, which were made public, have not gone down well Keiriwal with the central government.

the ministry," the Central government source said. Responding to the sharp reaction of the Union government officials, the chief minister's office (CMO) issued a brief statement, saying "today, the CM address was shared live because there has never been any instruction, written or verbal, from Central govt that the said interaction could not

be shared live. "There have been multiple occasions of similar interactions where matters of public importance which had no confidential information were shared live. However, if any inconvenience was caused we highly regret that."

During the meeting, Kejriwal said the Centre should take over all oxygen plants through the Army and requested Modi all states to ensure smooth

movement of tankers coming to the national capital.

"People in major pain due to oxygen shortage. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. I request you with folded hands to direct all CMs to ensure smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi," he said during the meet-

"We need a national plan to deal with the crisis. The government should take over all oxygen plants through the Army and every tanker coming out of the oxygen plant should be accompanied by an Army escort

vehicle," he said.
PM Modi held a meeting on Friday with chief ministers of 10 states with the most number of Covid-19

Safdarjung OPD guard dies of Covid, widow in **HC for ₹50L aid**

New Delhi, April 23: A woman, whose husband was deployed as a guard in the OPD of

Safdarjung Hospital during the pandemic and died due to Covid-19, has moved the Delhi High Court seeking ex gratia payment of ₹50 lakhs in terms of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan

Justice Prathiba M Singh issued notice to the Centre, Delhi government and New India Assurance Company Ltd seeking their stand on the woman's plea which also seeks an insurance scheme for health workers fighting COVID-19, and Rs one crore in terms of the scheme of the Delhi government.

According to the petition, the woman's husoand died due to COVID 19 on June 14 last year while deployed as a guard outside the Out Patient Department (OPD) of the Safdarjung Hospital.

She has claimed that she is entitled to ex gratia payment, in terms of the schemes announced by the Centre and Delhi government for COVID warriors or family of employees on Covid-19 duty, who died due to

coronavirus. She has also claimed, in her plea, that she had approached the Public Grievance Cell and

other authorities.

However, she did not receive a satisfactory reply and therefore, she moved the high court for relief, her petition has said. The court has listed the matter for further hearing on July 6.

Govt deputes 6 teachers to count bodies of Covid victims at GTB Hospital 'Task not apt for post of a teacher'

New Delhi, April 23: The the DDMA Northeast Delhi government on authority and ensure that Friday issued an order all calls regarding hearse deputing six teachers at the GTB Hospital in the city for monitoring of dead bodies and ensuring that calls for hearse vans are disposed of timely.

The order, which comes following a recent spike in deaths due to Covid-19, has attracted the ire of the teachers' association, which said the task was not apt for someone holding the post of a teacher.

"The teachers are deployed for monitoring of dead bodies coordinating with GTB hospital with immediate effect. The teachers will, according to their shift, contact the nodal officer of GTB for the purpose and ensure that Covid guidelines are being followed by rightful authorities," said the order issued by the sub-divisional magistrate of North East Delhi. The teachers will also

remain in contact with

vans be disposed of on time," it added. Ramnivas Solanki, the

general secretary of the MCD Teachers' Union, said: "The move to depute teachers for counting dead bodies in morgues is not apt for the post of a teacher, hence they should be relieved of this

"Éver since the pandemic, teachers have been deputed for several tasks, including at isolation centres, vaccination camps for distribution of food and other aid as well as monitoring implementation of restrictions.

"We demand that if during the course of duty, someone gets infected Covia-19. should be kept reserved for them so they and their families do not have to undergo physical and mental stress," Solanki



Family members, wearing PPE, perform last rites of a Covid-19 victim at Nigambodh Ghat crematorium in

Delhi request for 'Oxygen Express' is likely to be met from Rourkela

New Delhi, April 23: Facing a severe shortage of medical oxygen, the Delhi government has requested the Railways to operate 'Oxygen Express' trains to save Covid-19 patients gasping for breath in the city's hospitals, Railway Board chairman Sharma said on

The request came minutes after a meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the chief ministers of states having high Covid-19 caseloads, including

In the meeting, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal appealed to the Centre to provide medical oxygen to the

national capital. The Delhi government is the latest to have lined up for 'Oxygen Express' services after Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, Mr Sharma said

▶ THE DELHI government is the latest to have lined up for 'Oxygen Express' services after Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, Railway **Board chairman Suneet** Sharma said

Each tanker of 'Oxygen Express' trains can carry around 16 tonnes of medical oxygen, he said, adding that these trains travel at a speed of around 65 kmph.

"We have received a request from Delhi just now and we are still planning its movement. We will likely get the oxygen from Rourkela," the Railway Board chairman

"Andhra Pradesh has asked for oxygen to be moved from Angul in Odisha. We have asked the Delhi government to keep their trucks ready. Our wagons and ramps are ready in the NCR area," he

Sharma said the 'Oxygen Express' train headed for Uttar Pradesh will reach Lucknow on Saturday and the one for Maharashtra will reach Nagpur on Friday night and then proceed towards Nashik, from where oxygen will be dispersed to different cities.

When asked why the 'Oxygen Express' trains were taking so long to reach their destinations, Mr Sharma said it is because of the sensitive material they are car-

For the 'Oxygen Express,' the Railways has issued transportation rates and weight requirements. The rules are valid till October 15. Also, the Railways will not levy any surcharges and will provide five hours' free cargo-handling time. Goods and Services Tax (GST) will

'Contact nodal officer first for oxygen requirement'

New Delhi, April 23: The Delhi High Court on Friday asked hospitals and nursing homes to first approach the nodal officer of the AAP government to meet the requirement of oxygen for seriously ill Covid-19 patients. Å bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli was hearing two separate pleas by two private hospitals, which were running out of medical oxy-

The bench said if the requirements are not met even after contacting the nodal officer, the hospitals shall contact senior advocate Rahul Mehra and lawver Satvakam. The two hospitals are Bram Health Care Ltd and Batra Hospital.

I leave with satisfaction that I did my best, says CJI Bobde in farewell PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde on Friday said that he is leaving the top court with a satisfaction that he did his best in leading the institution and leaves with 'happiness, goodwill and very fond memories.

"I leave with the satisfaction that I did my best. I hand over the baton to Justice Ramana who will, I am sure, very ably lead the court," CJI Bobde said in his farewell speech on his last working day in the Supreme Court.

Saying that he is experiencing mixed feelings as he is bidding farewell to the Supreme Court, CJI Bobde said, "I leave this court with happiness, goodwill with very fond memories of wonderful arguments, presentation, excellent



Sharad A. Bobde

good behavior, commitment to the cause of justice from not only Bar but all connected with it,

Having spent 22 years on the bench as judge starting with Bombay High Court. CJI Bobde said that his stay in the Supreme Court has been his richest experience. "Camaraderie with my brother judges has been wonderful", he said. CJI Bobde recalled the transition to the virtual mode through video-conferencing

Coronavirus pandemic broke out during his tenure and called for ironing out many unsatisfactory things about the virtual hearings. He thanked the registry for helping make a success of the virtual hearing. The Attorney General K.K.Venugopal congratu-lated CJI Bobde for steering the Court during the pandemic in March last year when the bar thought

the court will close down. "But then CJI Bobde rose to the occasion and started virtual hearing and almost 50,000 cases have been disposed of. It's a great achievement," Venugopal underlined.

As Attorney General Venugopal said that CJI should have a minimum of three year tenure, Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Vikas Singh said that 65 years is no age for a top court judge to retire and advocated amendment to constitution to increase it. Hailing CJI Bobed for his involvement with the issues, Vikas Singh said, "Till the last day you were concerned about what is happening. You had taken up such a contentious matter of Covid on the last day too. This shows the involvement of the judges to ensure oxygen supply can be maintained in the hospi-

CJI Bobde was a judge for 21 long years, elevated to the Bombay High Court on March 29, 2000 as additional judge and sworn in as Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court on October 16, 2012. He was elevated to the Supreme Court on April 12, 2013 and took the oath as the CJI on November 17, 2019

SHORT TAKES

Health minister

should resign: PC

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Friday said Health Minister Harsh Vardhan should resign for the callous negligence of not taking earlier the steps that are now being taken in view of a surge in Covid-19 cases. "Despite warnings in April 2020 (by the empowered group) and in Oct-Nov 2020 (by the parliamentary committee), why did the government not take the steps it is taking since yesterday? Is this not gross and callous negligence? Will no one be held accountable? Should not the health minister and the health secretary be asked to resign?" he asked on Twitter. The former minister said people are crying to get patients admitted in hospitals, pleading with doctors to examine the patients, carrying oxygen cylinders on their back while bringing the patients and hospitals are rushing to high courts seeking oxygen supply. -PTI

Snowfall in high reaches of HP

Shimla: Several high reaches in Himachal Pradesh received snowfall and other areas witnessed rains in the last 24 hours, the meteorological (MeT) department said on Friday. Meanwhile, a five-storey building collapsed in Sanjauli locality of Shimla city due to heavy rains in the wee hours on Friday. However, no one was living in the building except the caretakers who had been safely evacuated a day earlier after the building tilted towards one side, a police official said. Kalpa in Kinnaur district and Keylong in Lahaul-Spiti district witnessed 38.4 cm and 20 cm snowfall, respectively, MeT centre Shimla director Manmohan Singh said. The upper reaches of Jubbal, Kotkhai Narkanda, Rohru, Khadrala, Dodra-Kwar and Manali also witnessed sever-

Odisha sends 02

al inches of snowfall. - PTI

to Vizag, Pune Bhubaneswar: Odisha on Friday sent two consignments of medical oxygen to Visakhapatnam of Andhra Pradesh and Pune in Maharashtra. Two tankers carrying the medical oxygen from an industrial unit in Jajpur left for Visakhapatnam early in the morning through a special corridor for unhindered transportation of the life saving material. On Thursday, the first consign ment of 20 tonnes of med-Visakhapatnam from Angul. A team of Odisha police escorted the tankers for prompt and unhindered transportation of the oxygen so as to reach thousands of needy patients without any delay. "A dedicated corridor

FIR AGAINST 13 CANDIDATES FOR VIOLATING RULES

is being provided by Odisha

police," said the state police.

Kolkata: The Election Commission (EC) has till Friday lodged FIRs against 13 candidates for allegedly violating Covid-19 safety protocols and issued showcause notices to 33 others contesting the West Bengal assembly elections in the remaining seventh and eighth phases for the same reason, an official said. The full bench of the EC directed officials during a virtual meeting to continue "strictly dealing" with candidates violating the Covid-19 safety protocols, he said. "A showcause notice is first sent to a candidate for alleged violation of coronavirus protocols. If the officials are not satisfied with the reply of the notice, they must lodge an FIR. The officials must also send a compliance report to the Commission,' he said. Of the 13 candidates against whom FIRs were lodged, six are from Birbhum district. The EC decided to book anyone violating the coronavirus safety protocols under the Epidemic Disease Act as well as the IPC Section 188 (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), the official said. At Friday's meeting, the poll panel also asked dis-

trict election officers and

senior officials of the CEOs

Court had to intervene for

non-implementation of the

Covid protocol, a source in

the poll panel said. -PTI

office why the Calcutta High

Armed forces step up in time of crisis

To import portable oxygen generation plants from Germany, MoD extends tenure of SSC doctors

PAWAN BALI NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Amid reports of shortage of oxygen in the hospitals during the second wave of Covid across the country, Armed Forces Medical Services has decided to import oxygen generation plants and containers from Germany to cater to

the shortage. Some 23 mobile oxygen generation plants are being airlifted from Germany. These will be deployed in military hospitals catering to Covid patients. These oxygen generating plants are expected to reach within a

Each plant has a capacity to produce 40 litres of oxygen per minute and 2.400 litres an hour. At this rate, it can cater to 20-25 patients round the clock. The advantage of these plants is that they are easily portable.

Earlier this week, defence minister Rajnath Singh had directed the Armed Forces and other stakeholders to go ahead with the procurement of critical medical requirements under emergency powers of procurement. As per the orders issued on Friday, DG AFMS has been sanctioned emergency procurement powers of ₹5 crore, Maj. Gen. rank medical officers ₹3 crore and Brigadier rank medical officers ₹2 crore.

Punjab CM

seeks funds

for vaccines

from Centre

Chandigarh, April 23:

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Friday described the

rinday described the vaccination policy for 18-plus as "unfair" towards the states and demanded central fund-

In an online meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

on the Covid-19 situa-

tion, the CM also sought

parity in rates of the

vaccine to be given to the

states and the Centre,

according to a statement.

vaccination policy for

the 18-plus as "unfair"

towards the states, the

Puniab CM said at rates

declared by one manu-

facturer, it will cost over

₹1,000 to his state. Demanding Central

Demanding Central funding for the vaccina-

tion drive, Mr Singh also

sought permission for

the use of the State

Disaster Response Fund.

according to the state-

ment. Regular vaccine

supply must be ensured

to maintain the supply

chain, he said, adding

that due to short supply,

the number of people

who took the jab in the

past one week has been

slightly low at 75-80,000

While Punjab received

fresh supplies on Thursday, the current

stocks can last only

demand for vaccine is

increasing, he stressed.

Singh

expressed concern over

"lack of clarity" on the

quantity of vaccine to be

made available by the

Centre after May 1 and

how the manufacturers

will regulate supplies to

different states and pri-

vate purchasers. The

state government, on its

part, has constituted an

expert group for advice

on the vaccination strat-

egy for those aged 18-45,

also

days as

Describing the new

ing for it.

THE ARMY'S base hospital, Delhi Cantonment, has been converted into an exclusive Covid facility for the armed forces and veterans. Its capacity is being increased from 250 to 1,000 beds.

IAF HAS also swung into action by carrying out sorties from various parts of the country to airlift oxygen containers, cylinders, essential medicines, equipment required for setting up and sustaining Covid hospitals

In Delhi, the Indian Army's Base Hospital Delhi Cantonment has been converted into an exclusive Covid facility for the Indian armed forces and veterans. Its capacity is being increased from 250 to 1,000 beds. All OPDs has been shifted and function at Army Hospital Research and Referral.

Also, in a significant decision, the defence ministry is giving an extension to Short Service Commissioned doctors in AFMS till December 31, 2021, to tide over the current surge in medical services. This will augment the strength of AFMS by 238 more doctors.

Indian Air Force (IAF) has also swung into action by carrying out sorties from various parts of the country to airlift oxygen

containers, essential medicines, equip ment required for setting up and sustaining Covid hospitals and facilities in the fight against a fresh surge in Covid-19 cases. The IAF transport air-

craft and helicopters have been pressed into service. These include transport aircraft C-17, C-130J, IL-76, An-32 and Avro. Chinook and Mi-17 helicopters are on standby. Tasks under-taken include airlift of

doctors and nursing staff

Vizag and Bangalore for

various hospitals at Delhi. The C-17 and IL-76 aircraft of IAF have started airlifting big empty oxygen tankers from their place of use to the filling stations across the country to speed up the distribution of much-needed oxygen. It is to be noted that Air Force is only transporting empty oxygen tankers to filling stations in other states to save time on one way and they come back through road or railways. This is because it's not safe to fly tankers filled

with liquid oxygen. In addition to this, the C-17 and IL-76 have transported a large quantity of load comprising bio-safety cabinets and autoclave machines for setting up an additional Covid test facility at Leh. The IAF transport and helicopter assets are on standby to be deployed at short notice.

Titli, Mukti Bhawan actor dies from Covid

New Delhi, April 23: Veteran actor-filmmaker Lalit Behl, known for featuring Mukti

films like *Titli* Bhawan, passed away due to Covid-19 related complications, his son, director Kanu Behl said on Friday.

The 71-year-old actor was diagnosed with Covid last week and was getting treated at the Apollo hos-pital. "He passed away in the afternoon. He had a history of heart ailments and had Covid, so it got complicated. He had an infection in his lungs which got severe and that, with the previous medical history nad, complicated his health further," Kanu said. A known stage actor,

Bandish Bandits' actor Mistry dies

Mumbai: Popular

Gujarati and Hindi film actor Amit Mistry, known for starring in films like Shor In The City, Bey Yaar and Amazon Prime Video series Bandish Bandits, died on Friday following cardiac arrest. The 47year-old actor was at his residence in Andheri with his mother when he breathed his last around 9.30 am. "He woke up, had his breakfast and even exercised before arrest," the actor's manager Maharshi Desai

directing and producing Doordarshan telefilms Tapish, Sunehri Jild. — Agencies



C-17 and IL-76 aircraft airlifted cryogenic oxygen containers from Air Force Station Hindan to filling station in Panagarh, West Bengal. The IAF airlifted big, empty oxygen tankers and containers to various filling stations across the country to speed up the distribution of the much-needed medical oxygen in treating Covid-19 patients. - PTI

Modi ends Bengal campaign, tells people to vote 'only once'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, APRIL 23

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday wrapped up his long campaign for the Assembly election in West Bengal in a virtual address with advice to the voters that is likely to trigger speculation in the political circle about whether the remaining two phases — seventh and eighth — of polls would be clubbed due to an explosion of Covid-19 cases in

Mr Modi, who had kickstarted his poll campaign on February 7 from Haldia in East Midnapore, toured the state nearly 12 times since then and addressed two rallies on April 17 during the fifth phase of polls in his last visit here, suggested to the people to go out "only once" though the polls are scheduled on April 26 and 29. Now only two phases of

polls are left to be held in Bengal. From the perspective of polls, it would have been my last rally if I could have come to you physically for thanksgiving. Virtually anyway, it is my last campaign rally also," the PM said in his virtual rally for the voters of Kolkata, Birbhum, Malda and Murshidabad. Keeping the rising Covid-19 cases in mind, he observed, "So far people of Bengal cast their votes very well. The polling has been so heavy that can be an inspiration for the nation. I appeal to you to continue this in the next phases also. Though only two phases are left, you have to go out only once to cast your votes. You will

ensuring that you follow the Covid-19 protocol.' His suggestion came close on the heels of the

ruling Trinamul Congress' demand to the Election Commission to club the remaining phases of polls due to a massive spike in Covid-19 cases. Mr Modi also pinned his hope for the BJP to come to power in the state and repeated his wish to attend the oath-taking ceremony. "Bengal will win. BJP

will win. We will win altogether. Bengal will make progress a lot. It will be a Sonar Bangla. You are taking a big and solid step towards Sonar Bangla on May 2 in the life of Bengal. The new government will be built by the BJP. On its swearing-in ceremony, I will remain present to convey my thanks to you."

CM Mamata condemns police firing, orders probe

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, APRIL 23

A day after two persons were injured in the West Bengal police firing during the polling, chief minister Mamata Banerjee condemned the shooting and announced an "investigation and action" against the cops involved in the incident. Calling for restraint by

police personnel, the Trinamul Congress supremo also warned them that they will not be under the protection of the Election Commission after the polls. 'Seven agents of our

party went missing in the last phase of polls held yesterday. They were kidnapped. The firing was done at one or two places also. I have made it clear that there will be an investigation as well as action. We do not support firing, done by whoever," Ms Banerjee, who is also the state home minister, said

at Durgapur in Burdwan West on Friday. On Thursday two vil-lagers suffered bullet injuries after the state police opened fire after coming under attack allegedly by the BJP

workers. Clearly defying Ms Banerjee's instructions, a police officer, Asadur Rahman, who is also the investigating officer in the same case, however, allegedly defended the firing and also threat-ened to repeat it in a district court.

The Bagda police station sub-inspector made the threat during a hearing after producing five persons, arrested for attack on the police, before additional chief judicial magistrate Debasis Santra of the Bongaon court.

Govt to give free food grains to poor

New Delhi, April 23: The under this scheme," food government on Friday decided to resume providing free food grains to the poor in May and June to help them tide over the economic hardship in the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, officials

"We will provide 5-kg additional food grains for free to PDS beneficiaries under the PMGKAY for two months — May and June. This time, we are not providing pulses and public distribution

cast your votes while

Pandey said.
The Pradhan Mantri
Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY) announced in 2020 for three months till July and extended November to combat the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the

tional 5 kg wheat and rice along with 1 kg pulses to each family per month was provided to beneficiaries registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). But this year, only grains will be given.

Free grains — which will be distributed on the same pattern as earlier — will be given to 80 crore beneficiaries. The free grains will be over and above the monthly entitlement under the National Food Security Act—when the countr (NFSA), he said.

food grains will be said.

required to meet demand for two months. The move, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to the poor, will cost the excheauer over ₹26,000 crore, including on account of interstate transportation of food grains, he added.

PM Modi stressed that it is important that the poor have nutritional support is facing a second wave of the coro About 80 lakh tonne of navirus pandemic, they

Setback to India: US defends ban on vaccine raw materials

KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

In comments that may spell bad news for India had urgently requested its close strategic partner the United States to ensure supply of vaccine raw materials. the US has publicly made it clear that its policy is "America first". India is currently being battered by a second deadly wave of Covid and is now desperate to vaccinate 1.3 billion population as quickly as possible against the deadly virus.

The US state department spokesperson said briefing in Washington that the "first and foremost is engaged in an ambitious and effective and, so far. successful effort to vaccinate the American peo-

Govt to import tankers from S'pore, UAE

special responsibility to the American people'

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar had on Monday spoken to his counterpart US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken and is understood to have reiterated Delhi's request that was made several weeks ago. The state department

spokesperson 'What I will say broadly is that the United States first and foremost is engaged in an ambitious and effective and, so far, successful effort to vaccinate the American people. That campaign is well underway, and we're doing that for a couple of reasons. Number one, we have a special responsibility to the American people. Number two, the American people, this country has been hit harder than any other

more than 550,000 deaths, tens of millions of infections in this country alone. But there's also a broader point here that I made yesterday that it's, of course, not only in our interest to see Americans vaccinated: it's in the interests of the rest of world Americans vaccinated."

Pointing out that 'when it comes to India, the Quad and the arrangement with the Quad, including to increase capacity in India", the spokesperson added, "So as we are more comfortable in our position here at home, as we are confident that we are able to address any contingencies as they may arise, And we will, of course, always do as much as we

Indonesia sub AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 India is rushing its sec-

India to send

1 more rescue

vessel to find

ond deep submergence rescue vehicle (DSRV) through the air to locate the missing Indonesian submarine. It is likely to reach the

location by Saturday. The Indian DSRV on Thursday to assist Tentara Nasional

Indonesia-Angkatan Laut (TNI ĂL Indonesian Navy) in search and rescue efforts for the submarine KRI Nanggala. However, since it is travelling through the sea it will take some days to reach the location. So now India has decided to send its other DSRV through the air to start a search and rescue mis-

The submarine which went missing Wednesday was report-edly exercising in a location 25 miles North of Bali with a crew of 53

personnel.
This submarine is expected to have oxygen for 72 hours.

"As assured by defence minister Rajnath Singh to his Indonesian counterpart Indian Navv aug ments search effort for KRI Nanggala, as part of Operation Teman. Intervention System of second DSRV being mobilised for airlift to Indonesia. It is likely to arrive by tomorrow - 24 April," said officials in the Indian Navy. Teman means friend in Bahasa,

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to change the timings of Train No. 06527 KSR Bengaluru -New Delhi Special Express at following stations as per the details given below:-

STATION	Train No. 06527				With Effect From
	Existing Timings		Revised Timings		
	ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.	26.04.2021 (Monday)
Solapur	07:15	07:20	07:10	07:20	
Ahmednagar	11:47	11:50	11:44	11:50	

and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App.

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

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & Download Railmadad app. Please join



SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely Tannu D/o Lt. Ved Pal R/o H.No. Balmiki Mohalla, Village Mungeshpur Delhi has been missing since 22.03.2021 at about 05:30 AM from her house. In this regard a case vides DD No. 80A Dated 23.03.2021 has been registered at PS. Bawana, Delhi. The description of missing girl is as under:

Name: Tannu, Father's Name: Lt. Ved Pal, Age: 19 years Height: 5'4", Face: Long, Built: Thin, Complexion Wheatish, Wearing: Green Pant and T-Shirt. ID Mark:

She is handicapped from her right leg. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the

undersigned. Website: http://cbi.nic.in e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in Fax : 011-24368639 : 011-24368638, 24368641

DP/943/ON/2021

P.S., Bawana, Delhi Ph.: 011-27751949 27756090

several states flagging scarcity of medical oxygen amid a surge in Covid-19 infections, the government is in talks for the import of highcapacity oxygen-carrying tankers from Singapore

and the UAE and directed

states to revive closed

oxygen plants for augmenting its production. The move came after home minister Amit Shah reviewed the coronavirus situation in the country on Friday, a home ministry statement said. In separate letters, the

New Delhi, April 23: With Centre asked all states to prepare a list of oxygen producers jurisdiction respective and directed them to uninterrupted supply and transport of oxygen in the places

where there is a demand. With a view to make available additional tankers for movement of oxygen, the home ministry is coordinating liftof high-capacity tankers from abroad. including Singapore and the UAE, by Indian Air Force transport planes,

the statement said

In the review meeting, the minister suggested various measures to augment the supply of oxygen for medical purposes. A home ministry expert group is also optimising and rationalising the

allocation of oxygen to various states and union territories keeping in view the active cases and to reduce time for movement of medical oxygen, the statement said.

statement said Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla asked all states and union territories to ensure adequate

porting vehicles and to make provisions exclusive corridors for transportation, treating these vehicles like ambulances. The home ministry is also facilitating movement of medical oxygen across the country following an approved allocation plan. The Indian Air Force

empty tankers after delivery of oxygen to destination state and union territory to oxygen producing locations to reduce movement time.

has started transporting Indonesia.

SHORT TAKES

4 held for illegal

sale of Remdesivir

Lucknow: Four people were arrested here on Friday for alleged black-marketing of remdesivir injections, the police said. After receiving a tip-off, a team from Naka Hindola police station arrested Ram Sagar, Amandeep Madan, Ankur Vaishya and Anshu Gupta near the Charbagh Metro station, police commissioner D.K. Thakur said. The police has recovered 116 Remdesivir injections and ₹1.94 lakh from the accused, he said, adding that an FIR was registered against them. Remdesivir injections are currently in high demand as the drug is used in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had earlier directed officials to take strict action against those involved in the blackmarketing of remdesivir and oxygen cylinders in the state. — PTI

Army rescues 8 stuck in Ladakh

Srinagar: The Army has rescued eight civilians who were caught in heavy snowfall in Khardung La area of Ladakh region, a defence spokesman said on Friday, The spokesman said the Siachen Brigade launched a rescue operation as soon as heavy snowfall disrupted traffic along the route from North Pullu-Khardung La Top-South Pullu, leading to civilian vehicles getting stranded near Khardung La Top and North Pullu on Wednesday. "At a distance of five Kilometres from North Pullu towards Khardung La Top, three vehicles were stranded between snow slides and one vehicle had overturned. Indian Army detachments from North Pullu along with the **Avalanche Rescue Teams** cleared the snow slide and rescued eight civilians from the site," the spokesman said. — PTI

14 patients die as fire engulfs hospital ICU

■ Continued from Page 1 strong action against the people responsible for the inci-

The tragedy comes two days after 22 Covid patients who were either on ventilator or oxygen support, suffocated to death when their oxygen supstopped suddenly due to a malfunction in the main storage at a civic hospital in Nashik.

Earlier, on the intervening night of March 25-26, nine Covid patients had died in a fire tĥat broke out in Mumbai's Dreams Mall, which housed a Covid-designated hospital on its third floor.

SC: Didn't plan to shift **Covid cases** from HCs

■ Continued from Page 1 matters from high courts to

the Supreme Court. Justice Bhat shot back: "We never said a word and did not stop the high courts. We asked the Centre to go to high courts and report to them. What kind of perception are you talking

The bench took a dim view of a section of senior lawyers, including Mr Dave, Ravindra Shrivastava, Chander Uday Singh, Vivek Tankha, Sanjay Hegde, former attorney general Mukul Rohatgi, former Patna high court judge and senior advocate Anjana Prakash and others taking exception to the top court taking suo motu cognisance of the alarming Covid situation, while nine high courts across the country — including Delhi, Bombay, Allahabad, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Calcutta, and Sikkim – had taken up the matter. The Supreme Court had said on Thursday that the high courts were exercising their jurisdiction in the best interest of the country, but this was creating confusion and diversion of

resources. Seeking to recuse himself as amicus curiae, Mr Salve told the court: "It is a most sensitive case this court will look into. I don't want this case to be decided under a shadow that I knew the CJI from school and college and of alle gations being made or there being a conflict of interest.

Poaching fears: Assam Cong shifts its candidates to resort

Cong feels ruling BJP may lure its candidates if it falls short of majority

MANOJ ANAND

Fearing poaching, the Assam Congress has shifted its candidates of Assembly polls into a resort in an obvious attempt to insulate them from being lured away by the ruling party which the Opposition feels is going to fall short of the majority.

The Congress had fielded 95 candidates in the three-phase polls that ended on April 6. It left the remaining 31 seats to its coalition partners in the 10-party Mahajot, or grand alliance.

Though officially they deny, but facts remain that it was the "manoeuvring ability" of BJP minister Himanata Biswa Sarma, who once in Congress was a nightmare for the BJP

CBI to grill

TMC neta

for his role

in coal scam

AGE CORRESPONDENT

The CBI on Friday

issued summon to

leader Vinay Mishra for

questioning in connection with its ongoing

probe into the multi-

crore cattle and coal

According to sources, Mr Mishra will have to appear before the agency

on May 3. He was recent-

ly granted bail in con-

nection with the cattle

smuggling case till May

3 on the condition that he appears before the

Mr Mishra is reported-y close to Mamta

cattle smuggling — are being probed by the

Enforce ment Directorate (ED) and CBI. The CBI has already recorded state-ments of Abhishek

Banarjee's wife and oth-

ers as part of its investi-

The ED recently arrest-

connection

ed Mr Mishra's brother

with the coal smuggling

case. Bikas Mishra was

arrested from Delhi

after a brief interroga-

tion. A designated court

in Delhi later sent him to

the ED custody. The CBI

had earlier carried out

raids at multiple loca-

tions in West Bengal, including Mishra's

including

premises.

gation into the scams.

ın

nephew Banarjee.
— coal and

CBI on the same date.

Banerjee's Abhishek

Both scams

Congress

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

Trinamul



A nurse injecting dose of Covid-19 vaccine to a woman at TRP Indoor stadium in Guwahati on Friday.

is now haunting Opposition the most. Political observers point out that the memory of 2010 Rajya Sabha polls in which four Assam BJP Rumi Nath, Shambhu Singh Mallah,

Kartik Sen Sinha and Abhijit Hazarika — were lured away by Himanta Biswa Sarma, then a Congress minister, on the day polling was held, is still afresh into the mind

Opposition in 2010.

This was more visible when Rupjyoti Kurmi, the party's three-time MLA from Mariani constituency, told reporters that the BJP has been sending feelers to a few candidates. "Everybody knows what happened in Goa and Manipur. The BJP will try to buy some victors among us or browbeat the opposition MLAs with threats of implicating them in some cases or the other," he said. Congress spokesperson Bobbeeta Sharma played

don't want to leave any-

Congress had snatched

away a sure RS seat of

down the issue and told reporters, "The candidates want to stay together for a few days in a relaxed environment away from public contact.

MP: 'Lack of oxygen' kills 5 Covid patients in hospital

CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, APRIL 23

Five Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a private hospital in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh died reportedly due to lack of oxygen, triggering a public outcry. The incident took place

in a private Covid hospital at Ukhari in Jabalpur city on the intervening night of Thursday-Friday. Fifty Covid-19 patients were admitted to the ICU of the hospital when the

incident took place. According to the police, some relatives of the patients admitted to the Covid hospital rushed to the medical facility after learning about the alleged disruption in oxygen supply in the ICU ward.

Jabalpur district collector Karmayeer Sharma ordered a probe into the incident. He constituted a four-member team to

probe the incident.

They staged noisy protests at the hospital when they found that five patients died due to a reported lack of oxygen.

The police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, a senior district police officer told this newspaper.

"We arranged oxygen filled cylinders to supply oxygen to the patients admitted in the ICU, following instructions by Jabalpur district superintendent of police Sidharth Bahuguna", the police

officer said.

The measure saved the

who were put on oxygen, he added. Meanwhile,

Jabalpur collector district Karmaveer Sharma ordered a probe into the incident. He constituted a four-member team to probe the incident.
The five deceased Covid-

19 patients were Pramila Tiwari, Gautam Tiwari, Anand Sharma , Gautami Roy, and Devendra Kuraria.

The tragic incident comes close on the heels of the deaths of ten Covid-19 patients reportedly due to lack of oxygen in a government hospital in Shahdol in MP last fortnight.

Madhya Pradesh on Friday reported 13,590 fresh cases of coronavirus positive taking the tally of



'Virar fire no national news,' says mantri, kicks off row

SONU SHRIVASTAVA

Maharashtra health min-ister Rajesh Tope on Friday landed himself in a controversy after he said that Virar hospital fire was not national news. He made the statement when asked if the incident will be discussed with Prime minister Narendra Modi. Mr Tope's remarks came

at a time when Maharashtra has reported close to 35 deaths of patients in hospital fires since January 2021. Last month, a fire broke out on the first floor of Dreams Mall in Bhandup, killing 11 patients in Sunrise Hospital which is housed on the third floor of the Mall. Ten infants had been killed in a fire that broke out at a special newborn care unit of the Bhandara district hospital in January. 14 Covid patients on Friday died in fire at the

Palghar district on Friday. Before going to attend a video conferencing meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister, Mr Tope told the reporters that they are going to apprise the PM about the oxygen and

■ Condolences pour in after fake news of ex-Speaker's death

ICU of the four-storeyed

Vijay Vallabh Hospital in



A family member of a victim reacts after a fire at a Covid-19 hospital in Virar

Remdesivir injection situation." The Virar fire incident is not national news, but the state government on its own will provide all the assistance," he said.

When reporters informed him that 14 people were killed in Virar fire, the Minister said, 'We as a state government will provide complete help to them. The Maharashtra Government provides Rs five lakh to the victims. The Vasai and Virar Municipal Corporation will also provide ₹5 lakh. Thus, ₹10 lakh would be

'Hospital staff asleep when fire broke out⁵

Mumbai: Relatives of some of the victims, who died in a fire at a hospital in Maharashtra's Palghar district early on Friday, alleged that the staffers of the facility were asleep when the blaze broke out and there was nobody to help the patients come out of the ICU. They also alleged that the hospital did not fulfil the basic fire

safety requirements.

Angry and distraught family members of the patients gathered outside the hospital. "All this is hospital administration's mistake. Its staff members were asleep when the fire broke out. There was not a single employee inside the ICU to help the patients come out," a relative of one of the deceased

provided to the families of the victims.'

The minister said that the government would provide the same help to the victims of Virar Hospital as it provided to the deceased of the oxygen leak tragedy in Nashik.

3rd Mumbai cop held in Ambani threat case

SHAHAB ANSARI

ation Agency (NIA) on

A lookout notice was also issued against the Trinamul Congress leader and all the airports, ports and borders had been alerted regard-

The National Investig-

Friday arrested Mumbai police officer Sunil Mane connection with the Mukesh Ambani threat case and Mansukh Hiran murder case. After Sachin Vaze, who is now suspended, and Riyaz Kazi, Mane is the third Mumbai police officer to be arrested in the high-profile security threat case. A special court in

Mumbai remanded Mane to NIA custody till April 28. He was called for interrogation Thursday night and arrested subse-

The NIA in its remand

application stated that they want custody of Mane to obtain his electronic devices and call data records because they suspect that he has played a role in the conspiracy to kill Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran. Sunil Mane was the incharge of Unit-11 of the Mumbai crime branch.

The NIA has so far arrested five persons in this case, including prime suspect Waze. According to the NIA, another arrested police officer Kazi collected evidence like digital video recorder (DVR) from the housing society where Waze lived and he also collected fake number plates of cars used in the crime.

Tharoor falls for Mahajan death hoax RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY Shashi Tharoor and BJP spokesman Sambit Patra

BHOPAL, APRIL 23

Sabha Former Speaker and BJP leader Sumitra Mahajan was on Friday flabbergasted when the misinformation on her death was circulated in social and other media, leading to the pouring of condolence mourning her "demise"

Ms According to office, Mahaian's WhatsApp message ran the fake news about her death late Thursday inspiring other social media networks as well as some maintine media to run the story.

posted condolence messages mourning her death in their Twitter accounts. leaving Ms Mahajan, who was currently recuperating from fever in a private hospital in Indore, shellshocked. Her younger son Mandar

later issued a statement saying that her mother was very much in good health. "My mother is fine. She has even tested negative

for coronavirus", a videorecorded statement by Mr Mahajan said. According to the former

speaker's public relations officer Rajesh Agrawal, Mr Tharoor rang up Mr Mahajan this morning



Sumitra Mahajan

expressing his regret over his wrong tweet on the for-

mer LS speaker.
In another Twitter post, Mr Tharoor said, "Spoke to Sumitra Mahajanji's son to convey my sincere apologies for last night's misinformation. He was most gracious & understanding. Delighted to hear that she very much better.

■ Continued from Page 1

Express my best wishes to her and her family".

LS Speaker Om Birla's officer-on-special duty N.K. upta nad contacted Ms Maĥajan's office to verify the news at around 11.30 in the night on Thursday, Mr Agrawal said.

According Agrawal, Ms Mahajan was admitted to Hospital in Indore on Wednesday when she developed a fever as a precautionary measure since three of her family members have tested been positive for coronavirus recently. She has tested negative for coronavirus. She was going to be discharged from the hospital

25 Covid+ die in Ganga Ram Hospital

■ Continued from Page 1 social media. Some managed to get what was required, mostly at exorbitant prices, as many hospitals across the country continued to beg for oxygen from the Centre. In Delhi, the cylinders arranged by Delhi chief secretary Vijay Dev helped save a few lives and aided in shifting some critical

still there. All this happened despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi and senior Central government officials hold-

patients to other hospitals

where oxygen supply was

ing meetings to discuss 'oxygen".

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal pleaded with the PM for oxygen and urged the government to airlift oxygen from West Bengal and Odisha plants and also increase Delhi's quota of oxygen given the high caseload.

"We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. Despite being a CM, I am not able to help the people of Delhi. I request you with folded hands to direct all CMs to ensure smooth

movement of tankers coming to Delhi,' Mr Kejriwal told the PM.

Amid the rising cases of infections and death there was a ray of hope as the number of recoveries are much higher than those critical. Compared to the 2,263 deaths, over 1.93 lakh recoveries were registered in the last 24 hours. India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1.37 crore , taking the national recovery rate to 83.92 per cent. The National Mortality Rate has been falling and currently stands at 1.15 per

Delhi and several other cities are also struggling for space to cremate or bury their near and dear ones who succumbed to the deadly virus. With all crematoriums running out of space, people were forced to cremate their family members in parking lots, and in some places several dead bodies in one big pyre.
On Wednesday,

Karnataka, also grappling with rising cases, had "allowed" people to bury or cremate their dead in their private lands or farm houses.

Union home secretary

Ajay Bhalla once again wrote to states and UTs to provide adequate security Oxygen-transporting vehicles, and to make provisions for exclusive corridors for such transportation, treating these vehicles like ambulances.

The first "Oxygen Express" train that left Visakhapatnam Thursday arrived Nagpur on Friday with seven tankers. Three of the seven tankers have been unloaded at Nagpur Junction railway station. Each tanker is carrying 15 tonnes of medical oxygen

tion in that case.' Government sources said that as Ms Banerjee had skipped the CMs' meeting with the PM, chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay represented West Bengal at the review meeting, held via video conferencing.

assumes significance as the state government stated: "The ministry of health and family welfare had recently on 21st April. allotted 200 MT of oxygen from different plants located in West Bengal to outside the state.

As per the current patient load and the rising trend of infections, it is expected the consumption level in West Bengal will radically rise to

Bengal's oxygen roughly 450 MT per day in the next couple of

government wants to kill Bengal in every possible way. Where would I get my share of oxygen from since SAIL has been directed to supply it to UP? I also need to look into it. How can one state's share be given to another? If there is a need, no discrimination should be made. I also have no objec-

Centre diverted

The CM's grievance

weeks.

It added: "Hence, present allocation of Liquid Oxygen to outside West Bengal will jeopardise the medical treatment of Covid patients in the state. Govt of West Bengal has accordingly requested Govt of India on 22nd April 2021 to consider the need of the state and NOT to divert the medical oxygen available in the state elsewhere."

On Mr Modi's latest meeting with CMs, Ms Banerjee said: "I heard about the PM holding a meeting today with only those ten states where the infection has been on the rise. We were not invited. If invited, I would have attended the meeting.

Accusing the Centre of 'negligence" in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic despite advisories from the WHO to stock oxygen, the Trinamul Congress chief also wondered why the BJP government cannot utilise the PM-Cares funds for supply of vaccines, oxygen and essential medicines.

PM Modi holds meet with CMs on oxygen On oxygen supply, PM Modi took note of the points raised by the states minister also objected to

■ Continued from Page 1 shared live because there has never been any

instruction, written or verbal, from the Central government that the said interaction could not be shared live.' 'There have been multi-

ple occasions of similar interactions where matters of public importance which had no confidential information were shared However, if any inconvenience was caused we highly regret that," Delhi CMO said even as

the Central government accused Mr Kejriwal of playing politics over oxy-

During his interaction with the PM, Mr Kejriwal raised alarm that a "big tragedy" may happen due to oxygen shortage in Delhi hospitals and the Centre should take over all oxygen plants through the Army. He requested the PM to direct the chief ministers of all states to ensure the smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi. The chief

different rates being charged from state governments and the Centre for the Covid-19 vaccine, and said "one nation, one rate" policy should be followed. Meanwhile, noting that the virus is affecting several states as well as Tier 2

and Tier 3 cities at once, PM assured the Centre's full support to all states. He added that the ministry of health is monitoring the situation closely and issuing necessary advice to states from time to time.

and said there is continuous effort to increase the oxygen supply. He added that every state should ensure that no oxygen tanker, meant for any state, is stopped or gets stranded. He also urged the states to set up a highlevel coordination committee to carry oxygen to different hospitals of the This committee should ensure that as soon as there is allotment of

can deliver Oxygen as per requirement in different hospitals of the state immediately. Expressing grief on

recent incidents of oxygen leakage and fire at hospitals, PM Modi said the administrative staff of the hospital needs to be made more aware about the safety protocols. PM Modi also urged the administration to continuously make people aware so that they do not indulge in panic



THE ASIAN AGE

24 APRIL 2021

No time to lose, ramp up vaccine production now

The Supreme Court's reference to the various high courts hearing matters related to the supply of drugs and other medical essentials as "creating some confusion" and "diversion of resources" is a bit perplexing but its direction to the Union government to place before it a "national plan" on the way it proposes to face the challenge is welcome. How the government will be taking on the virus given the way it has been spreading the length and breadth of the county, choking and extinguishing lives and disrupting and decimating livelihoods is a question most right-thinking people in the country are asking now. The news of people dying for want of oxygen in a country which is priding itself as the pharma hub of the world is unacceptable; and police in a state obstructing trucks lifting oxygen cylinders for hospitals in another state signals the poor coordination at the national level in the face

of a crisis that was long waiting to happen.

As of now, the facts on the ground are disturbing — we are facing a shortage of all the stuff that is needed to save lives — critical drugs, oxygen, hospital

Almost four months have passed since the Drugs **Controller General** of India approved two vaccines -Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute of India and Covaxin, by **Bharat Biotech** International, but the production has not increased by one dose even now

beds, intensive care units, ventilators and vaccine. India, which had reported the second largest number of cases in September-October last year, showed a remarkable improvement in the following months with the daily numbers coming to a few thousands. The numbers started spiralling only in March this year, giving the government time to plan for a situation should it go out of

From the looks of it, the government has faltered on every count, except making fancy noises. It launched a vaccination programme, calling it the world's largest. It was true, because we were to vaccinate about 100 crore people. But none asked the question nor the government bothered to answer as to where the vaccine will come from to inoculate all these people. Almost four months have passed since the Drugs Controller General of India approved two vaccines — Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute of India and Covaxin,

by the Bharat Biotech International for emergency use, but the production has not increased by one dose even now. It was only a couple of days ago that the company was given ₹3,000 crores which it would use to expand production which will take roughly three months. The same is the case with the other manufacturer, who was granted ₹1,500 crores.

It is in this background that we should view the government's announcement of opening up vaccination for all those who are aged above 18. This is a welcome step but the government must also ensure that we have enough vaccine to administer to the newly eligible group of people. The government must, as the Supreme Court suggested, draw up a time-bound plan to ramp up production of vaccine, drugs and oxygen and distribute them. It has this week asked two public sector companies to manufacture Covaxin; it must follow up on this decision, use the compulsory licensing route, if necessary, and rope in other manufacturers so that we have the drugs, vaccines and other essentials to save lives. There is no time to waste

Resetting the green agenda

silver lining has been spotted amid the gathering clouds of global warming. Inspired by a champion in Joe Biden's United States rejoining the fight against climate change triggered by global warming, Japan, Canada, Britain and EU, have promised to cut emissions by half before the end of the 2020s. China and Russia kept aside their differences with the US to pledge cooperation in cutting back on coal and petroleum emissions and India pointed to its agreement with the US to help with the effort at reining in the carbon footprint. Biden's emphasis on the "moment of peril" representing an economic opportunity seemed to have

The US resolve to aim at a 52 per cent cut below 2005 levels is extremely ambitious and is certain to face big political hurdles in the form of the Republicans who deny the science behind climate change and are likely to turn the clock back if they were to return to power in 2024. There will be a steep economic cost too in committing to the cuts which envisage converting all vehicles to electric traction, using natural gas in coal-fired power plants and afforestation, besides developing cutting edge technologies in carbon capture. The industrialised nations have a historic respon-

sibility to set things right and they seem more prepared to face it now. Handling the ground realities may be tougher even as the US histo largest emitter, and China, currently the biggest polluter, get down to the task that may require enormous funding and new paradigms in energy use from solar and wind resources. In per person terms, India may be expending only one seventh of an American's energy use but it has a role to play in balancing its economic needs. The coronavirus pandemic may have enforced cuts but those are bound to lift as the world economy reboots. The only metric science advocates to save the planet is zero emissions and it is moot whether man can achieve that when he is so enamoured of consumption.

THE ASIAN AGE

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"Two could be counted coincidence And three a play of chance Four is stretching it too far Five has definitely crossed the bar By six we resort to causal sense the dancers must define the dance."

Marlowe was on the verge of being arrested and executed for his atheistic remarks but contrived to disappear and reinvent himself as the author of Shakespeare's plays. (That's my story, anyway, in my novel called *Black Swan*, which... *How many times have I* told you not to advertise your trashy

In other societies in our diverse world, a proselytising atheist would probably have his or her head chopped birth, that God doesn't dictate books,

-Ed) — and other pronouncements from which the taboo has been removed. But even in these societies

This observation, gentle reader, has been occasioned by the fact that Prof. Dawkins has been stripped of the 'Humanist of the Year" award he was given in 1996 by the American Humanist Association. They withdrew it because Prof. Dawkins had tweeted messages denying that people could

Prof D is an evolutionary biologist and knows that every human being is born with either XX chromosomes, contained in each of more than thirty trillion cells in their bodies, which make them grow as females, or XY chromosomes, which determine that they are male. That's biology. It can't be changed, not by hormone treatment or by surgery to chop off penises and testi-cles and devise artificial vaginas or by

Obviously, if one ignores biology and asserts that people can choose their gender by saying so, then men who assert that they are women and vice versa have to be accepted as such. But assertion has never been the criterion

Prof. Dawkins recognises that unharmful assertion has to be respected. "Is trans woman a woman? Purely semantic! If you define gender by chromosomes, then, no! If by self-identifica-

Reacting to the news that his award had been withdrawn, Prof. Dawkins said he'd erase it from his CV but couldn't find it as he had no record or recol-

recognition of people who assert that they have transitioned to the opposite gender has had several feminists objecting to trans-women entering women's toilets and changing facilities, being sent to women's prisons and participating in women's sporting events. The trans lobby has denounced these feminists as reactionary bigots. Joining or informing the debate was the case of Keira Bell.

who sued the Tavistock Clinic for encouraging her as a teenager to undergo hormone blocker therapy, claiming that she was much too young as a pre-teenaged girl to take an informed decision about transitioning to being a male. Other similar cases have been launched by parents who claim that their children have been

In the debate, advocates of transgendering point out that some males, estimated at one in 500 or one in a thousand, have an extra X chromosome. In most males with an extra X, there seem to be no symptomatic effects, though in some there is a decreased creation of testosterone - which doesn't according to most medical science amount to any "trans" state of being. A male is a

One of the pernicious fallacies I have heard in India is that our population of eunuchs, known as "hijras", are transgender. A learned medical practitioner tells me that hijras are born males whose testicles are trapped in infancy in their bone structure and therefore don't develop. This makes their bodies

and they manifest secondary sexual features of both genders — but are bodily male with penises. The reason we don't find hijras in, say, Europe, is because infants receive medical attention from nurses and doctors and the obstruction to the testicles' descent and growth is detected and easily dealt

out of fundamental decency. That there should be no socio-political discrimination against such people goes without

Jackson actually imagined that he was born in the wrong-coloured body. Nevertheless, he underwent all sorts of treatment to change his features, to lighten his skin and to make his hair Caucasian rather than Afro. His efforts could be seen as insulting to black features and identity but there were no voiced objections.

Evolution has determined that we



The God business is good business all across India



nere has been a palpable rise in religiosity across the country, evidenced by the visible accretion of places of worship and with it an aggressive assertion of identity either by appearance, statues, processions and loud calls to worship and music. This should worry us. The US National Intelligence Council's Global Trends Report finds a co-relation-ship between religiosity and poverty. It found an inverse relationship in countries where the percentage of people who prayed daily was high and low per capita GDP. Clearly, if you are too obsessed by damnation, the condensed to live you are condemned to live

This rise in religiosity is across the religious spectrum. Following the increasing employment of Muslim youth in the Middle East and the flow of oil money into India, we of mosques. The mosques had their effect on Muslim attitudes. Christians were well placed during the British era and churches got prime locations. The flow of missionary money still continues, and more houses of God are manifestations of this. True, no great churches have been built but there is a profusion of small churches all over the country. Both these religions are institutionally well organised and regulated. But the Hindu response to this has been pretty laissez-faire with unregulated expansion.

it here and now!

I was recently in the rural areas of Telangana and noticed that even small villages now have two or three temples, when very clearly one could do. This is not just because of the wide choices of gods available to Hindus; it owes more to the fragmentation of Hindu society into myriad castes, *gotras*, *jatis* and clans. Many of them are side by side and it seems that they are actually competing with each other. have been noticing how the growth of temples and their embellishment are a response to each other. In this respect, they are not very different from sari, jewellery and sweetmeat

There is also another very basic, more worldly, reason for this profusion of temples. We are increasingly seeing a profusion of extra-constitutional civic organisations that informally sanction or condone economic activity in villages, like we have been seeing with resident welfare associations in urban areas, where incomes are derived from "licensing" parking agents, fruit vendors and petty services. The village committees too have discovered such income streams, quite a few of them patently illegal like sand mining, unlicensed liquor vending, etc.

Religion is now, not just increasingly a part of our more so, of our economics. Tourism contributes as much as 9.6 per cent of our with domestic tourism accounting for 88 per cent of it. In 2019 the number of foreign tourists who came to India was around 90 million. By contrast, domestic tourism totalled over 1,400 million visits, clearly suggesting that its implied economics are far bigger than the foreign business. It also suggests that very many of our people make several trips for tourism every year. While the concentration of the Centre's tourism promotion efforts focuses on Delhi-Agra-Jaipur "Golden Triangle", the

highest number of foreign tourist arrivals (20.1 per cent) are in Tamil Nadu. Delhi draws half that. The southern states see the most foreign and domestic tourist traffic because of the number of

important religious places

like Tirupati and Madurai.

The location of Tirupati

Under the CPI(M) government, Kerala temple boards actually advertise the magical powers of their stone idols. After all, what else can be expected from a philosophy that derives inspiration from mummified corpses in Moscow's Red Square?

within it makes Andhra Pradesh India's biggest domestic tourist destination. Religious tourism is now very big business. What does this suggest?

Must we be worried?

A Pew Global Attitudes survey shows that more than 25 per cent of Indians reported having become more religious over the past 4-5 years. The trend is valid across religions and in keeping with other attitudinal surveys. Between 2007 and 2015, the share of respondents in India who perceived religion to be very important increased by 11 per cent to 80 per cent now. A NSSO report shows that average expenditure on religious trips has more than doubled during this period. Clearly, this is a expanding busi ness sector and also, given the trends, the sky is the

limit (no pun intended). While the economic activity and employment it generates is a cause for happiness all around, we must also ponder about the other ramifications of this growing religiosity. The growth of blind faith, superstition and aggressive religioneering (my two-bit coinage) presents a clear and present danger to India evolving as a modernised society which values reason and tempers collective behaviour. The building of temples is a profitable business. That's why unscrupulous entrepreneurs and social scoundrels build more shrines, increasingly usurping public spaces. And we know from experience that once the gods and religious figures get installed in a place, they cannot be dislodged. A good share of our traffic

oottlenecks are due to Sant Kabirdas posed this

telling question in a simple and beautiful verse: *Pathar* puje hari mile, to main puju pahar/ tante te chakki bhali, pis khaye sansar? Sadly, the truth now is that a stone idol (now increasingly often made of POP and plastic, sometimes from China) offers a better rate of return (RoR) than a chakki, that calls for enterprise rather than irrational faith. Thus, with religiosity and religioneering big business now, it is increasingly common to see governments promoting "religious tourism".

Actually, there is increasingly an unstated and subtle competition now implying that my idol is better than yours. The Venkateshwara temple at Tirumalai is India's biggest money-spinner. This Vaishnavite shrine attracts 40 million devotees each year. Telangana has now embarked on promoting the Yadagirigutta temple near Hyderabad to become a religious tourism draw. This is also a Vaishnavite temple, but devoted to a different avatar of Vishnu, and manifestations of that avatar -Jwala Narasimha, Ganda bheranda Narasimha and Yogananda Narasimha. Under the CPI(M) government, Kerala temple boards actually advertise the magical powers of their stone supposed to make us rational and believe God was a figment of mankind's fer vid imagination. After all, what else can be expected from a philosophy that derives inspiration from mummified corpses in Moscow's Red Square and

Beijing's Tiananmen? Jawaharlal Nehru, our first PM and foremost founding father of the new India, then contemplated the new India to be guided by reason and infused with the scientific temper. Instead, we are now increasingly a people driven by dogma and blind faith. Religion and blind faith are our biggest faultlines and the cause of much social friction and breakdown of orderly public behaviour and order.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues. held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

BOBDE'S LAST SWIPE

The final act of Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde, who retired on Friday, to hear a suo motu case regarding the Covid-19 crisis scuttled the proactive intervention of the high courts in the matter, coming as it did a year too late. One year ago, when the country went into lockdown and hundreds of thousands trudged home leading to close to 600 deaths, he and his bench chose to remain silent. Now when his help was expressly no more required because the high courts had acquitted themselves admirably in resolving the oxygen crisis, he chose to step in, putting a question mark on his motive and his career.

> Priyanka Mathur Kolkata

BOOK YOUR JAB

THE UNION HEALTH ministry has clarified that vaccination against Covid-19 for those above 18 years will begin across the country from May 1. The CoWin portal will be made ready for 18+ beneficiaries by April 24. Registration to book appointments will begin from April 28. The present system of private vaccination receiving doses from the government and charging up to ₹250 per dose will cease to exist and private hospitals will procure shots directly from vaccine manufacturers. All vaccination will be part of the national vaccination programme. Anushka Panwar

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

AN EXTENSIVE research on sports fan loyalty inter alia concluded that sports consumption differs strongly from sports loyalty, though fan followings may appear indistinguishable. The spin merchants of the Super League, dreaming of billions piling in bank accounts, have since been rudely reminded of this seminal reality. The placard by protesting fans — we pay the money that is looted by the rich — speaks volumes of a fan's deepset and innate ownership of the game itself. Cricket has no real fans, just spectators.

R. Narayanan

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



Transgenders' rights must be respected; they need empathy

From Pate Pay Pair by Bachchoo

ichard Dawkins is our world's best-known atheist. In the West, where he lives, publishes and pronounces, this is not a crime. I am sure the religious believe that he will get what's coming to him when he dies. But not on earth.

It wasn't always thus. One story goes that the playwright Christopher books here? —Ed)

off. In the West, there are no punish-

ments threatened for saying that God doesn't exist, that virgins don't give that the earth goes around the sun, that vaanar armies of the Indian epic were probably adivasis (sure of that last one?

new heresies are born.

choose their gender

the surgical removal of breasts.

for truth.

tion, yes. I call her 'she' out of cour-

lection of receiving it. The continuing debate about the

misled by institutions which facilitate gender transformation".

male for all that.

produce male and female hormones

As Prof. Dawkins recognises, people who are trans should be afforded the courtesy of being recognised as such

I don't think someone like Michael

don't live inside but are our bodies. That some don't want to be their bodies has in this day and age to be tolerated if

Navalny ends hunger strike

Moscow: Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said on Friday that he was ending a 24-day hunger strike he launched to demand medical treatment behind bars, after allies said his life was in danger. The announcement came after Navalny's personal doctors said on Thursday that he had received treatment at a civilian hospital and urged him to put a stop to his protest. "Taking into account the progress and all the circumstances, I am beginning to end my hunger strike," Navalny said on Instagram.

130 migrants die in shipwreck

Cairo: More than 100 Europebound migrants are feared dead in a shipwreck off Libya, independent rescue groups said, in the latest loss of life as attempts to cross the Mediterranean increase during the warmer months. Humanitarian organisations have accused the Libyan coast guard and European authorities of failing to meet their responsibilities to save lives. A Libyan coast guard official said that they searched for the boat but could not find it with their limited resources.

Over 120 hurt in Jerusalem clash

Jerusalem: Over 100 Palestinians and 20 Israeli police were wounded in overnight clashes in annexed east Jerusalem, medics and police said on Friday, as tensions mount over a police ban on gatherings and videos of attacks on youths. The violence broke out outside one of the entrances to the walled Old City where far-right Jews had completed a march during which participants harassed Palestinians and chanted "death to Arabs". There have been nightly disturbances in the area since the start of Ramadan on April 13 with Palestinians complaining that police were blocking access to the promenade around the walls, a popular gathering place for Palestinians after the end of

4 killed, 23 hurt in Dhaka fire

the daytime Ramadan fast.

Dhaka: At least four people, including a woman, were killed and 23 others injured after a fire broke out at a chemical warehouse here in the Bangladeshi capital early on Friday, according to media reports. The fire started at the ground floor of the building in Old Dhaka's Armanitola area after 3 am, Mahfuz Riben, an official at the Fire Service and Civil Defence department, told the Dhaka Tribune. He said the ground floor stored a number of inflammable substances. The fire was brought under control by 6 am. as 20 fire tenders were rushed to the scene. Officials are yet to identify all the deceased, though it is said the building's security guard is among

MEXICAN PREZ PUSHES FOR AFFORESTATION

the dead, the newspaper

reported

Kopoma (Mexico), April 23: Mexican President Andrs Manuel Lpez Obrador has made a strong push for his oftquestioned tree-planting programme, trying to get the United States on board to fund a massive expansion of the programme into Central America as a way to stem migration.

Lpez Obrador pitched his Pla nting Life programme, which aims to plant 1 billion fruit and timber trees, to US President Joe Biden at Thursday's climate change summit.

Lpez Obrador claims the programme can help prevent farmers from leaving their land and migrating to the United States though he also proposed that the US grant six-month work visas, and eventually citizenship, to those who participate

in the programme. But environmentalists question whether planting big swaths of commercial species sometimes on land that held native forests idea and opinions are mixed in Mexico on whether the programme is really working, or whether it can offset Mexico's other policy of encouraging the use of fossil fuels.

You, President Biden, can finance the Planting Life program in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, Lpez Obrador said during Thursday's videoconference session of the summit.

Single vaccine dose can cut Covid rate 65%, says study

UK study says 1 jab of two-dose vaccine protects vulnerable, healthy people

London, April 23: A single dose of either the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech cines, currently being administered in the UK, the rate Coronavirus infections by around 65 per cent, according to a new UK study on Friday.

A combination of two studies by the University of Oxford and the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which are yet to be published, also found that a single jab of the two-dose vaccines protected older and more vulnerable people almost as well as younger and healthier individuals. The findings indicate a promising effect on hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19 infections after vaccinations. But researchers caution that vaccinated peo-ple could still be re-infected and trigger an asymptomatic spread of the deadly virus, making the need for social distancing and face masks still crucial.

The researchers analysed Covid-19 test results from more than 350,000 people in the UK between December 2020 and April 2021 and found that 21 days after a first jab — the time it takes the immune system to mount a decent

response — new Covid-19 infections dropped. "Odds of new SARS-CoV-2 infection were reduced 65 per cent in those =21 days since first vaccination with no second dose versus unvaccinated individuals without evidence of prior infection," the study noted. "In those vaccinated, the largest reduction in odds was seen post second dose (70-77 per cent). There was no evidence that these benefits varied between Oxford/AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech cines," it added.

The researchers, in the large community surveillance study, conclude that vaccination with a single dose of Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, or two doses of Pfizer/BioNTech, significantly reduced new SARS-[Covid-19] infec-

The second study, in nearly 46,000 adults who had been vaccinated with dose, found strong antibody responses — a sign that the vaccines are stimulating the body's defence system to protect against the virus — in all groups. These antibody responses were "broadly sustained out to 10 weeks afterwards", the researchers said. "We don't yet know exactly how much of an antibody response, and how long, is needed to protect people against getting Covid-19 in the long term – but over the year, information from the survey should us to answer questions," said Professor Sarah Walker. chief investigator on the from Oxford University.

Both studies are based on data from the Covid-19 Infection Survey, a partnership between the University of Oxford, the ONS and the government's Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). The results will come as a boost for the UK's vaccination programme. — PTI



co-founder of BioNTech Ozlem Tureci (right), Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla (left), and Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (second left), during an official visit to the Pfizer pharmaceutical company in Puurs, Belgium

US defends limiting export ALL FLIGHTS FROM of raw material for vaccine

Washington, April 23: Defending US' restrictions on the export of key raw materials for the manufacture of Covid-19 vaccine that threatens to slow India's vaccination drive, a senior State Department official has said the Biden administration's first obligation is to take care of the requirements of the American people.

When asked when the Biden administration would decide on India's request to lift a ban on the export of vaccine raw materials, State Department spo-kesperson Ned Price said:

SINGAPORE

PASS HOLDERS,

NOT ALLOWED

INDIAN VISITORS

Singapore, April 23: All

long-term pass holders

and short-term visitors

who have travelled to

India within the last 14

days will not be allowed to

enter or transit through

Singapore from April 24,

as the city state was on

approval

said

"heightened

enter

pandemic,

Thursday.

"...the United States first and foremost is engaged in an ambitious and effective and, so far, successful effort to vaccinate the American

"That campaign is well underway, and we're doing that for a couple of reasons. Number one, we have a special responsibility to the American people. Number two, the American people, this country has been hit harder than any other country around the world more than 550,000 deaths, tens of millions of infections in this country al-

It is not only in the US interest to see Americans vaccinated; but it is in the interests of the rest of the world to see Americans vaccinated, he said.

The point the Secretary (of State Antony Blinken) has made repeatedly is that as long as the virus is spreading anywhere, it is a threat to people everyw-here. So as long as the virus is spreading uncontrolled in this country, it can mutate and it can travel beyond our borders. That, in turn, poses a threat well beyond the US," Price said in resp-

designated

the spread of

deadly vir-

Concern

UK begins Covid 'red list' travel ban

London, April 23: The red expert committee, they list Covid-19 travel restrictions came in force for India on Friday, which bans entry for travellers from the country and requires British and Irish nationals and long-term UK residents returning home to undergo a compulsory 10-day hotel quarantine.

Experts are still study-

ing whether any of the

mutations mean the vari-

ant can be transmitted

more easily, is more dead-

ly or can evade the effec-

tiveness of vaccines or

natural immunity.
At this point they are

designated Variant Under

Investigation (VUI) with a

year, month, and number.

Following a risk assess-

against Covid-19, accord-The ing to a media report. The decision will also Public impact people who have Health England (PHE) confirmed 55 more cases Singapore, said of the so-called double Education Minister Lawrence Wong, co-chair mutant Indian variant, from of the multi-ministerial Coronavirus cases tracked task force handling the until April 14, taking the total for the Variant Under Investigation (VUI) in the UK to 132.

In addition, people who have recently travelled to India and have not completed their 14-day stay-home notice (SHN) by 11.59pm on Thursday night will have to complete their additional seven-day SHN at a dedicated facility rather than their places of residence. This group will undergo three polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for

be Variant of Concern (VOC), PHE said of the Indian variant, designated as VUI-21Apr-01. The last flight from India before the red list cate-

des 40 countries considered high-risk zones for comes in as **UNITED KINGDOM** ants of the us, landed at Heathrow Airport in London from De-

lhi on Thursday evening. Earlier, Heathrow had confirmed that it turned down requests for at least eight additional flights that were seeking landing rights ahead of Friday's 4am cut-off to avoid long queues and crowds building up at the airport.

gorisation, which inclu-

new

Families and students who were able to make it back in time must now self-isolate at their own homes or student accommodation registered on passenger locator forms and take follow up coronavirus tests for the National Health Service (NHS) to continue track-

INDIA BANNED FOR FULL 30 DAYS

Toronto, April 23: Canada has said it would ban all flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days due to the growing wave of Covid cases in that region.

Transport Minister Omar Alghabra said the ban would start late Thursday, speaking hours after India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections in the previous

UNITED STATES AMERICANS ASKED TO NOT TRAVEL TO **INDIA, 4 NATIONS**

Washington, April 23: The to avoid travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Maldives due to the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the region.

In a series of travel advisories on Thursday, the authorities also urged Americans to reconsider travel to China and Nepal.

JAPAN THIRD COVID-19 **EMERGENCY IN** TOKYO, OSAKA

Tokyo, April 23: Japan declared a third state of emergency for Tokyo and three western prefectures on Friday amid skepticism it will be enough to curb a rapid Coronavirus resurgence ahead of the Olympics in July.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the emergency for Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo from April 25 through May 11. Japan's third state of emergency since the pandemic began comes only a month after an earlier emergency ended in

Minority groups laud US report for tagging India

India is country of particular concern, groups advise US

Washington, April 23: Several Indian-American Muslim, Sikh and Chris-Musilii, Sikii and Chila tian groups have applaud-ed the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its latest report wherein it has recommended India be designated as a "country of particular concern (CPC)" for the alleged deterioration of religious freedom in the country.

In separate statements, these groups urged the US State Department to accept the recommendations of the USCIRF, a Congress-constituted quasi-judicial body. Its annual report on international religious freedom and recommendations are non-binding on the US government.

"Designating India as one of the world's worst violators of religious freedoms, while unfortunate, is expected and jus-tified," said Rasheed Ahmed, executive director of Indian-American Muslim Council. "We hope the US Department of State will accept the USCIRF's rec-ommendations and designate India as a CPC this

The USCIRF, in its report, has said, "Designate India as a • INDIA HAS in the past said the US body on international religious freedom has chosen to be guided only by its biases on a matter on which it has no locus

'country of particular concern,' or CPC, for engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)." India has in the past

said the US body on international religious freedom has chosen to be guided only by its biases on a matter on which it has no locus standi. The Federation of Indian-American Christian Organisations applauded the designation of India as a CPC by the USCIRF. 'FIACONA whole-heartedly agrees with USCIRF in their decision to continue the designation of India as a CPC for the year 2021," a statement said. In a joint statement, three US-based Sikh organisations thanked the USCIRF for analysis of status of religious minorities in India.

Russian troops pull back from Ukraine

Moscow, April 23: Russian tion of Russian troops troops began pulling back to their permanent bases on Friday after a massive buildup that caused Ukrainian and Western

On Thursday, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared the sweeping maneuvers in Crimea and wide swaths of western Russia over, and ordered the military to pull the troops that took part in them back to their permanent bases by May 1. At the same time, he ordered their heavy weapons kept in western Russia for another massive military exercise сапеа Zapad (West) 2021 later this year.

The weapons were to be stored at the Pogonovo firing range in the south-western Voronezh region, 160 kilometers (100 miles) east of the border with could intervene to protect Ukraine. The concentra- civilians there.

amid increasing viola-tions of a cease-fire in the conflict Ukraine raised concerns in the West, which urged the Kremlin to pull its forces back.

The US and NATO have said the buildup was the largest since 2014, when Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and threw its support behind separatists in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. Moscow has rejected Ukrainian and Western concerns about the troop buildup, arguing that it's free to deploy its forces anywhere on Russian territory. But the Kremlin also sternly warned Ukrainian authorities against trying to use force to retake control of the rebel east, saying it

Brexit fishing water tension flares up

Paris, April 23: The French government called on Friday for a quick implementation of a post-Brexit accord on mutual access to fishing waters, after French fisherman blocked trucks trying to bring in catches from Britain overnight.

'We're acting within the spirit of European solidarity and cooperation with the UK, but the urgency demands an acceleration of our collective efforts,' Europe Minister Clement Beaune and Maritime Minister Annick Girardin

More than a hundred fisherman launched the blockade late Thursday at Boulogne-sur-Mer, France's busiest fishing hub, to protest a "sham" deal on access in place since Britain left the European Union on January 1.

Despite a provisional trade accord, they say UK authorities have granted licences to only 22 of the 120 French boats seeking permission to fish between six and 12 nautical miles from the British

SPACE I VOYAGE | Four astronauts to reach International Space Station after 23-hour ride in Dragon capsule

SpaceX launches 3rd crew with recycled rocket

astronauts into orbit on Friday using a recycled rocket and capsule, the third crew flight in less than a year for Elon Musk's rapidly expanding company. The astronauts from the US, Japan and France should reach the International Space Station early Saturday morning, following a 23hour ride in the same Dragon capsule used by SpaceX's debut crew last May. They'll spend six months at the orbiting lab.

It was the first time

SpaceX reused a capsule

and rocket to launch astro-

Cape Canaveral (US), April nauts for Nasa, after years **23:** SpaceX launched four of proving the capability on station supply runs. The rocket was used last November on the companv's second astronaut flight. Embracing the trend, spacecraft commander Shane Kimbrough and his crew weeks ago wrote their initials in the rocket's soot, hoping to start a tradition. "If you have rapid and

complete reusability, then that is the gateway to the heavens. That's what we're trying to get done, and the support of Nasa makes a huge difference," Musk said after the launch. Just a week ago, Nasa aw-

arded SpaceX a nearly

provide the lunar lander that will deliver astronauts to the surface of the moon – Musk's Starship, intended to be fully reusable to attain his ultimate prize of carrying astronauts to Mars and building a city

Flying in a recycled capsule on Friday provided a bit of deja vu for Nasa astronaut Megan McArthur. She launched in the same seat in the same capsule as her husband, Bob Behnken, did during SpaceX's first crew flight. This time, it was Behnken and their 7year-old son waving goodbye. McArthur blew kisses

USD 3 billion contract to and offered virtual hugs. Also flying SpaceX on Friday: Japan's Akihiko Hoshide and France's Thomas Pesquet, the first European to launch in a commercial crew capsule.

It was a stunning scene: The launch plume glowed against the dark sky, reflecting the sunlight at high altitude. Despite the early hour, spectators lined surrounding roads to watch the Falcon take flight an hour before sun-rise. Liftoff was delayed a day to take advantage of better weather along the East Coast in case of a launch abort and emergency splashdown.



(From Left), European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet, NASA astronauts Megan McArthur and Shane Kimbrough, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide, wearing SpaceX spacesuits, as they prepare to depart the Neil A. Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building to board the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft at Nasa's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Friday.

INDICATOR	%	
Sensex	47,878.45	-0.42
Nifty 50	14,341.40	-0.45
S&P 500*	4,184.37	1.19
Dollar (₹)	75.02	-0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.13	0.07
Euro (₹)	90.46	-0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,273 ▼ 24	0.05
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.76	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.035	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.574	0.018
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

Reliance buys **UK** country club Stoke Park

Reliance Industries Ltd has bought Britain's iconic country club and luxury golf resort, Stoke Park, which featured in James Bond movies, for 57 million pounds (about Rs 592 crore). The acquisition adds to Reliance's current stake in Oberoi hotels and hotel/managed residences in Mumbai that it is developing. Over the past four years, Reliance has announced \$3.3 billion in acquisitions.

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■ Breach of RBI's data storage norms

Amex, Diners barred from adding clients

MUMBAI, APRIL 23

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday imposed restrictions on American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd from on-boarding new domestic customers onto their card networks over non-compliance with the central bank's norms on storage of payment system data. The ban will come into effect from May 1. The ban, however, will not impact existing customers, the central bank said in a

American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd are payment system operators authorised to operate card networks in the country under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act.

Imposing the restrictions on American Express and Diners Club, the RBI said, These entities have been found non-compliant with the directions on Storage

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, APRIL 23

increasing trend.

Summer crop sowing in

the country is 21.5 per cent higher than last year. This

is the second successive

year, the area under sum-

mer crops has shown an

The total summer crop

area has increased to 73.76



of Payment System Data." In April 2018, all payment system providers were directed to ensure that within a period of six months the entire data (full end-to-end transaction details / information collected / carried / processed as part of the message payment instruction) relating to payment systems operated by them is stored

in a system only in India. They were also required to report compliance to the RBI and submit a boardapproved system audit report (SAR) conducted by

CERT-In empanelled auditor within the timelines specified. Again, in June 2019, the

lakh hectares from 60.67

As on April 23, 2021, the

area sown under pulses

has increased to 12.75 lakh ha from 6.45 lakh ha, near-

ly a 100 per cent increase.

The increased area is

mainly reported from the

states of Tamil Nadu, MP,

West Bengal, UP, Gujarat, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Mah-

lakh hectares a year ago.

RBI said all data related to payment must be stored in India and such information, if processed abroad, should be brought back within 24

'The entire payment data shall be stored in systems located only in India," the RBI said, adding, "The data should be deleted from the systems abroad and brought back to India not later than one business day or 24 hours from the payment processing, whichever is earlier."

The RBI had also clarified that the data stored in India can be accessed or fetched when required for handling disputes or so.

arashtra and Karnataka.

Area under oilseeds has

increased 16 per cent to

10.45 lakh ha from 9.03

lakh ha in West Bengal,

Maharashtra, UP, Tamil

Nadu, Andhra Pradesh,

Rice area too has

increased 16 per cent to 39.10 lakh ha from 33.82

Gujarat.

Karnataka,

and Chhattisgarh.

Cadila gets nod to use hepatitis drug for Covid

New Delhi, April 23: Zydus Cadila on Friday said it has received restricted emergency use approval from the drug regulator for using Pegylated Interferon alpha-2b (Peg-IFN) in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults.

The drug firm had sought the DCGI's approval for the hepatitis drug's additional indication for treating Covid-19. The company has now received restricted emergency use approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the use of 'Virafin', PegIFN in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults, Zydus Cadila said

in a filing.

PegIFN has very wellestablished safety with multiple doses in chronic Hepatitis B and C patients.

A single dose subcuta-neous regimen of the antiviral Virafin will make the treatment more convenient for the patients, the filing said.

When administered early on during Covid, Virafin will help patients recover faster. It will be available as a prescription drug for use in a hospital/institutional setup, Cadila said.

Area under summer crop up 21%

lakh ha in West Bengal,

Odisha.

Telangana, Karnataka, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. Encouraging water levels

in most reservoirs helped in protecting both the rabi summer crops. As whole productivity and production is expected to rise significantly.

for the third week

Market ends in red

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

The market registered third successive week of decline as Covid-19 cases continued to rise.

During the holiday-truncated week, the Sensex slumped 953.58 points, or 1.95 per cent, while the Nifty-50 tanked 276.50 points, or 1.89 per cent. The big fall in the

Sensex on Monday by 882 points was not challenged by the bulls effectively though the market closed in the green on Thursday, gaining over 375 points.

Nifty-50 and Sensex ended 65 and 202 points lower on Friday, closing at 14,341 and 47,878, respectively. But the broader markets ended in the green, with Nifty Mid-Cap 100 and Nifty Small-cap 100 rising 0.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent, respectively.

On Friday, foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,360.76 crore but the domestic institutions were net buyers by Rs 1,995.59 crore, as per the

provisional data. "A deadly wave of coronavirus infections raises concerns over business recovery," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

Reports of a possible increase in capital gains tax in the US took a toll on the global equities, which also impacted the Indian market just before the weekend close as traders didn't want to carry risks, with Mondays, of late, witnessing bear attacks.

The earnings season has not boosted market sentiments, as it did in the pre-

by Sergio Busquets and

sending a shot into the far

top corner, despite a touch

Yet Getafe were level four

minutes later as Angel met

Marc Cucurella's cross

and the ball cannoned off

the unsuspecting Clement

restored Barca's lead with

Sofian Chakla failing to

spot Soria coming out before passing the ball

beyond the goalkeeper and

The game looked secure

when Messi made it three. Lenglet's looping header

gave him the chance to vol-

ley left-footed against the

post but the ball

own-goal

Lenglet and flew in.

into his own net.

Another

Getafe goalkeeper



vious quarter, since big IT companies and banks have reported mixed financial performance so far and the market is more focused on the likely fallout of full blown pan-

India andemic.
HCL Technologies' March 2021 quarter operating performance, with a 6 per cent decline in consolidated net profit, missed expectations due to salary hike and the special one-time bonus, according to analysts. The company on Friday proposed an interim dividend of Rs 10 per share to mark the \$10 billion annual revenue milestone.

Joseph Thomas, head of research, Emkay Wealth Management, said, "The markets continued to remain extremely subdued with losses during the course of the whole week, across sectors and segments. The main reason for the downtrend is the rising cases of the virulent pandemic. While the fundamentals support a robust economy, it is too early to assess the potential damages."
"But the probability of

the resurgence of the pandemic impacting growth and therefore earnings, is quite high for the first two quarters of this year,' Thomas said.

Honda to go all-electrical by 2040, put \$46 bn in R&D

SHIHO TAKEZAWA

Honda Motor Company set what it called a challenging target for all of its sales to be electric vehicles by 2040 as it tries to keep up with the global EV race and revive profits under the leadership Toshihiro Mibe.

The Japanese company also said it will invest about 5 trillion yen (\$46 billion) in research and development over the next six years, "regardless of fluctuations in our sales revenue."

Automakers around the globe are rushing into the EV sector as the industry shifts to electrification and self-driving cars. Among them, Jaguar Land Rover has vowed to go fully electric by 2025, and Volvo by

Honda's new goals include EVs accounting for 40 per cent of sales in North America and China by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2035. It has a 20 per cent goal for Japan by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2035. Japan's target is different because it is a huge consumer of hybrids, Mibe said. The carmaker wants to achieve an operating profit margin of 7 per cent even as it shifts to EVs. he said.

Toyota Motor Corp. has been able to assuage investors' concerns on EVs with the introduction of its "bZ4X.

— Bloomberg

Virus emergency in **Tokyo and Osaka**

Tokyo: Only three months before the postponed Olympics are set to open, Tokyo and Japan's sec ond largest metropolitan area of Osaka have been placed under emergency orders aimed at stemming surging cases of the Coronavirus. The measures. which take place during Japan's "golden week" holiday period, are meant to limit travel and keep people out of public places. They are to end on May 11, just ahead of a widely reported visit to Hiroshima by International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, Bach said this week that the visit, reported for May 17-18 is still in the "planning phase."

Green bags maiden Australian contract

Melbourne: Allrounder Cameron Green landed his maiden national contract but big names. including Matthew Wade and Travis Head, missed out as Cricket Australia on Friday announced a 17-strong list of contracted players for the upcoming season. Green was the only new name in the contract list which has been trimmed down to 17 players from 20 in previous years. However, Joe Burns, Mitchell Marsh and Marcus Stoinus along with former Test vice-captain Head and wicketkeeper-batsman Wade failed to get a deal for the 2021-2022 season. — PTI

Nadal rallies past Nishikori, in last 8

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal needed to go the distance for the second successive day in Barcelona before beating Japan's Kei Nishikori to make the last-eight and stay on course for a 12th title at the tournament. The World No.3 triumphed 6-0, 2-6, 6-2 over 2014 and 2015 champion Nishikori and next faces Britain's Cameron Norrie, a fellow left-hander, for a place in the semifinals. Nadal, who suffered a surprise quarterfinal exit at the Monte

Carlo Masters last week, had also

required three sets to beat Belarusian qualifier Ilya Ivashka,

ranked at 111, in his Barcelona

opener on Wednesday. — AFP

Magical Messi on the double Pugilist Sachin Leo's brace fires Barcelona to victory over Getafe, Atletico beat Huesca lands 8th gold through by a piercing pass

Madrid, April 23: Lionel Messi gave up the chance for a hat-trick on Thursday as Barcelona held off a late fightback from Getafe to win 5-2 and stav in the race at the top of La Liga.

Messi scored twice and could have had a third in injury-time at Camp Nou but deferred a penalty to Antoine Griezmann, who completed what was in the end a comfortable victory. After beating Athletic Bilbao to lift the Copa del

Rey last weekend, Barca are now in the hunt for the double, sitting five points behind Atletico Madrid but still with a game in Atletico had earlier

brushed aside Huesca 2-0 to register back-to-back victories for the first time since January and with Real Madrid also seeing off Cadiz on Wednesday, there is no margin for error now in a thrilling battle for the

None of Spain's leading trio appear to have been affected by an incredible few days off the pitch, which saw Real Madrid, Atletico and Barcelona all sign up for the hugely controversial European Super League on Sunday.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (right) duels for the ball with Getafe's Damian Suarez during their Spanish league match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Thursday.

Atletico withdrew from the breakaway competition on Wednesday but and and Real Madrid remain part of a project that would transfabric the of European football.

Getafe were wearing tshirts in protest against European Super League, even as they gave Barcelona a guard of honour to mark the Catalans' cup success. Messi now has 33 goals in all competi-

tions and 25 in the league. one more than the total scored by the whole Getafe team. Getafe are not safe yet, four points the gap above the bottom three. Messi got to work in the minute,

arrowed back to the striker, who finished from the angle with his right. Getafe teed up a nervy 20 minutes when Ronald Araujo trod on the

ankle of Enes Unal, who scored the penalty to give the visitors hope. But Barcelona pulled away with two late goals, Araujo heading in a corner from Messi, who then passed up the chance to score his third by giving Griezmann

ver and six bronze medals

Leicester ride on Vardy heroics, rout West Brom

Leicester, April 23: Jamie Vardy ended his twogoal drought as Leicester blitzed West Brom 3-0 on Thursday to strengthen their grip on a Premier League top-four place and snuff out the Baggies' revival.

Brendan Rodgers' men were wobbling after losing their previous two topflight matches but produced a dazzling attacking display against the insipid visitors at the King Power

Stadium. First-half goals from Jamie Vardy, Jonny Evans and Kelechi Iheanacho gave West Brom a mounclimb Leicester kept a firm grip

on the match after the break.

Third-placed Leicester now have a valuable fourpoint lead over Chelsea and West Ham, with just six games to go.

Rodgers praised Leicester's attitude, saying he was only focusing on his own team in the battle for a Champions League spot. 'Jamie Vardy has done it

throughout his career and Kelechi Iheanacho is now showing his qualities he can still improve as he is still making too many mistakes, but he is getting in there," he told BT

'This group will some-

times lose games but they are so honest and they want to be better. When you have that it is the dream ticket. It is all you can ask for as a coach," he added.

James Maddison made his first start since February as the FA Cup finalists took a firm grip on the match and they could easily have scored five or six goals in a onesided opening 45 minutes. West Brom had beaten

Chelsea and Southampton to give themselves a glimmer of hope that they could survive but they remain in 19th spot, nine points from safety, and look doomed.

Insigne scores twice as Napoli blitz Lazio

Milan, April 23: Ten-man Atalanta missed the chance to move second in Italian league on Thursday with a 1-1 draw against Roma.

But Napoli thrashed Champions League rivals Lazio 5-2 to boost their hopes of a return to elite European football next

Bryan Cristante rifled in a long-distance equaliser to rescue a point for Roma in a game where both teams finished with 10

The visitors had dominated taking the lead after minutes through Ruslan Malinovskiy in the Stadio Olimpico.

Napoli move just three points behind second-

placed Milan. Lazio dropped to five points behind Napoli in sixth.

Roma are a further three points behind in seventh with their Champions League hopes dwindling. Lazio's five-match win-

ning streak ended but they are still not out of the Champions League running with a game in Napoli took the lead

through a Lorenzo Insigne penalty on seven minutes awarded following a VAR review, the first of a brace on the night for the team skipper.

Matteo Politano, Dries Mertens and Victor Osimhen also found the back of the net in Napoli's

New Delhi, April 23: claimed at the event's 2018

Indian boxer Sachin edition. (56kg) on Friday added an On Thursday, Gitika unprecedented eighth gold to the country's historic medal haul at the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland, a day after all seven women swept the top honours in an astonishing performance.

Sachin rallied to defeat Kazakhstan's Yerbolat Sabyr 4-1 in a gritty performance by the end of which his confident opponent was left with a bloodied face and exhausted

The Indian was off to a spirited start and was definitely impressive with his counter-attacks but the Kazakh clinched the opening round 3-2.

Sachin intensified his attacks after the break with his right straights fetching him the points. He drew level by getting a split verdict in his favour in the second round.

The final round belonged to the relentless Sachin as Sabyr ran out of steam. India thus ended their campaign with 11 medals — eight gold and three bronze medals to claim the top spot in overall stand-

This was an improvement on two gold, two sil-

(48kg), Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg), Poonam (57Kg) vinka Choudhary Arundhati Sanamachu Chanu (75kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) ensured a perfect finish to the women's campaign.

Earlier, Asian youth silver-winner Ankit Narwal (64kg), Bishwamita Chongthom (49kg) and Vishal Gupta (91kg) ended with bronze medals following semifinal losses in the men's draw.

Sachin is the first Indian male boxer since 2016 to finish on top. It was his namesake Sachin Siwach, now a senior camper, who fetched a gold in that edi-

India fielded a 20-member team — 10 men and as many women — in this year's event which featured 414 boxers from 52

countries. "This has been an amazing effort from our youth boxers especially when the players had to be confined at home for most part of the last year and only make do with online training sessions," said Boxing Federation
India President Ajay
— PTI

ARCHERS ATANU, DEEPIKA MARCH INTO SEMIFINALS

Guatemala City, April 23: Country's top archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari battled heavy winds to storm into their respective semifinals of the recurve section as India continued to make giant strides in the World Cup Stage 1 here.

Returning to the World Cup after almost two years, Das and Deepika, who got married last year, also paired up to advance to the bronze playoff in the recurve mixed event on Thursday night to keep India in the hunt for five medals.

Defying severe winds at the Sports Complex Los Arcos here, Deepika, who qualified as the number three seed, displayed some incredible shooting to down German archer Michelle Kroppen in straight sets. She will next face Alejandra Valencia of Mexico

in her quest for a gold medal on Sunday Meanwhile, Das was a bit lucky in the quarterfinal as his Candian rival Eric Peters had a miss in the last set as the Indian wrapped it up 6-4 to keep himself in line for his first ever individual podium.

His previous best was a fourth-place finish in





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

THE ASIAN AGE, NEW DELHI, SATURDAY, 24 APRIL 2021

ORANGE **Shikhar** Dhawan, DC KI Rahul, **PBKS Rohit** Sharma, MI **PURPLE**

Harshal Patel, RCB

Rahul Chahar, MI

Deepak Chahar, CSK

Off the field



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola poses with an RCB

Guardiola wants to learn cricket rules

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola on Friday said that it may be time for him to learn the rules of cricket after being sent a Royal Challengers Bangalore jersey by their captain Virat Kohli. "It's time to finally learn cricket's rules. Thanks to my friend @virat.kohli for the shirt. Now is your turn to use your Man City shirt," said Guardiola in an Instagram post along with a video of him holding up the jersey.

RCB have got off to a flying start in the IPL, having won their first four matches.

Morris not worth the money: KP

Following a bidding war, Chris Morris was eventually snapped up by Rajasthan Royals for ₹16.25 crore, becoming the costliest ever cricketer in IPL history, but former England cricketer Kevin Pietersen has said that the South African went for way too much money.

This is going to sound harsh, but he went for a lot more money than I would have ever paid for, to be completely honest. I just don't think that he's worth that kind of number. I think there's pressure on him. He's not a first choice for the South African side. So, I think we're expecting too much. There's too much talk about him, Pietersen said.

Archer will not play IPL, confirms ECB

The England and Wales A Cricket Board on Friday announced that star fast bowler Jofra Archer will not play in the ongoing 14th Îndian Premier League, compounding his franchise Rajasthan Royals' misery. The 26-year-old Archer returned to bowling this week with higher intensity, and the ECB and Sussex medical teams will continue to monitor his

progress. "Archer will now step up his training regime starting next week and will be in full training with Sussex. It is expected that he will return to cricket in the next fortnight if he can continue to bowl and prepare pain-free," the ECB said in a

statement. "The ECB will confirm which matches he is expected to play in due course.

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KING-SIZE WIN

Rahul, Gayle guide Punjab to a 9-wicket victory over Mumbai

Chennai, April 23: Punjab Kings humbled defending champions Mumbai Indians by nine wickets in their IPL match here on Friday. Chasing a modest target of 132, Punjab Kings completed the task with 14 balls to spare.

Punjab Kings captain KL Rahul scored an unbeaten 60 and veteran Chris Gayle remained not out on 43 for the victors.

Earlier, MI skipper Rohit Sharma scored his first half-century of the season but still his team could only manage 131 for 6.

Rohit said it was not a bad wicket to bat on. "You can see how Kings won with nine wickets in hand. If you get 150-160 you're always in the game and that is something we've failed in the last two games, we need to look at

"We can look at it either way — their bowlers bowled very well in that powerplay. Ishan was tyring to hit but couldn't get it, even myself. We were trying but the wicket was easy. In the last four games we really batted well in the powerplay but today we failed to do so," added Rohit.

Rohit scored 63 off 52 balls while Suryakumar Yadav contributed 33 off 27 balls on a sluggish Chepauk surface.

The duo added 79 for the third wicket while Kieron Pollard chipped in with an unbeaten 16 off 12 balls towards the end.

Punjab Deepak Hooda was economical with 1 for 15 in 3 overs, while Mohammed Shami and Ravi Bishnoi had the joint best figures

Punjab Kings produced a discipline bowling performance to restrict Mumbai Indians to 131 for six despite a fine half-century by Rohit Sharma in the IPL here on Friday. Mumbai struggled to 21 for one in the first six overs, the lowest powerplay score this season after being put into bat.

A 79-run stand between Rohit (63 off 52) and



Punjab Kings skipper KL Rahul en route to his unbeaten fifty against Mumbai Indians in an IPL game on Friday.

27) steadied the ship for found it extremely diffithe five-time champions cult to get going early in but they could not find the final flourish, managing only 34 runs in the last five overs for the loss of

Ravi Leg-spinner Bishnoi, playing his first game of the season, was the standout bowler for Punjab Kings with two wickets for 21 runs in four in four overs) was also impressive.

Suryakumar Yadav (33 off far at Chepauk, batsmen in seven overs.

four wickets.

cult to get going early in the innings on a slow sur-

Quinton de Kock perished as early as the second over after he mistimed one off spinner Deepak Hooda caught at mid-on.

Ishan Kishan (6 off 17) came ahead Suryakumar Yadav at overs. Lead pacer number three but the Mohammad Shami (2/21 southpaw struggled once again before being caught behind in Bishnoi's first As has been the case so over, making it 26 for two

Rohit, at the other end, managed to keep the scoreboard ticking. Leftarm spinner Fabian Allen bowled a high full toss to Rohit in the 10th over and he duly dispatched it over the cow corner for a six to release some pressure.

Suryakumar joined Rohit in the middle, batting suddenly started looking much easier. A well-set Rohit started playing the ball late and was good with finding the gaps. Suryakumar, at the other end, got into the groove with a four and six

SCORECARD

Mumbai Quinton de Henriques b Deepak Hooda 3, Rohit Sharma c Allen b Mohammed Shami 63, Ishan Kishan c Rahul b Ravi Bishnoi 6, Suryakumar Yadav c Gayle b Ravi Bishnoi 33, Kieron Pollard (not out) 16, Hardik Pandya c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 1, Krunal Pandya c Pooran b Mohammed Shami 3, Jayant Yadav (not out) O. Extras (b 4, w 2) 6. Total (for six wickets in 20 overs)

4-112, 5-122, 6-130. Moises Bowling: 3-0-12-0. Henriques Deepak Hooda 3-0-15-1, Mohammed Shami 4-0-21-2, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-21-2, Fabian Allen 3-

0-30-0, Arshdeep Singh 3-0-28-1.

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul (not out) 60, Mayank Agarwal c Suryakumar Yadav b Rahul Chahar 25, Chris Gayle (not out) 43. Extras (nb 1, w 3) 4. Total (for one wicket in 17.4 overs)

132. FoW: 1-53. Bowling: Trent Boult 2.4-0-30-0, Krunal Pandya 3-0-31-0, Jasprit Bumrah 3-0-21-O, Rahul Chahar 4-0-19-1, Jayant Yadav 4-0-20-0, Kieron Pollard 1-0-11-Ó.

off left-arm pacer Arshdeep. Their partner-ship ended after Suryakumar failed to execute a reverse sweep to be caught at short third man off Bishnoi's bowling, leaving Mumbai at 105 for three with 23 balls left in the innings.

Some much-needed lusty blows were expected from the likes of Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard in the death overs but Punjab keep them quiet.

— Agencies

POINTS TABLE Points +1.0090 3 0 2 - 0.228 3 0 2 - 0.700

Padikkal is one for future: Virat

Mumbai, April 23: Devdutt Padikkal is a "great talent" and "one for the future", feels RCB captain Virat Kohli, who is happy that the stylish left-hander has put to rest all debates with regards to his strike-rate after his maiden IPL hundred against Rajasthan Royals here on Thursday.

Padikkal smashed an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls in an opening stand of 181 with his skipper as RCB won the game by $10~\mathrm{wick}$ -

"It was an outstanding innings. He (Devdutt) bat-ted really well for his first season last time as well. There was a bit of a talk about accelerating after 40-50, this was the best way to put it to rest," Kohli said.

"He is a great talent, great one to look forward in the future. I had the best seat in the house," Kohli couldn't stop praising the 20-year-old Bangalorean enough.

Kohli enjoyed playing a passive role as the skipper wanted his young teammate to get a hundred.

Tonight, my role was different and I wanted to hang in there. In the end I picked my spots, the pitch was good. We spoke about it (the 100), he (Devdutt) said finish it off. He said (there could be)many more to come, I told him 'you tell me that after you get the first one.'"

Padikkal to build on this knock, "I want him to build from here and really help the team. He deserved to get the hundred today, flawless innings.

He also praised the bowling attack for restricting dred it wouldn't have mat-Royals to 177 for nine on a tered to me if the team placid deck.

It was an outstanding innings. He (Devdutt) batted really well for his first season last time as well. There was a bit of a talk about accelerating after 40-50, this was the best way to put it to rest

> - VIRAT KOHLI RCB skipper

stand-out names bowlers, but we have effective bowlers. Guys who can do it day in day out. Four out of four times we've been the stand-out team in the death overs. We actually restricted 30-35 runs. Dev's innings was outstanding, but for me the bowling which was aggressive, optimistic was key.'

Padikkal was waiting for his turn

Young Padikkal said that all he wanted to do after recovering from COVID-19 was to wait for his turn.

"To be honest it's been special, all I could do was wait my turn. When I had Covid all I wanted was to to come here and play, and when I missed the first one (game), it really hurt me,' Padikkal said.

He said he didn't think about the hundred as he was okay had skipper Kohli scored the winning runs before he completed his three-figure mark.

"The ball was coming on really well, and when we get into a partnership like that it gets easier. No real tension when the hundred came, I told Virat to go for it. At the end of the day even if I didn't get a hunwon.

NATARAJAN OUT Knight Riders seek revival OF IPL, TO HAVE **KNEE ŚURGERY** Mumbai, April Live on TV Chennai, April Kolkata Knight Riders vs Raiasthan Rovals

Cummins' late blitz against Chennai Super Kings, a pumped-up Kolkata Knight Riders will finally look to bring their campaign back on track after a hat-trick of defeats when they face a beleaguered Rajasthan Royals in their IPL clash here on Saturday.

Big on paper, KKR, led
by England's World Cup
winning skipper Eoin

Morgan, have so far failed to come together as a unit and slipped to sixth in the table after starting the tournament on a high against Sunrisers Hyderabad. Facing bottom-placed Rajasthan Royals, who

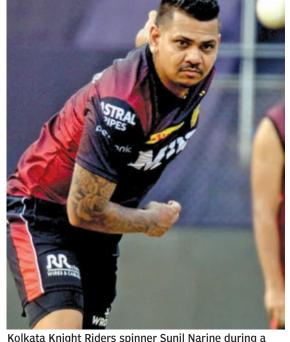
have been the most inconsistent team so far in the season, KKR will be desperate for a turnaround. The rise of Pat Cummins as a batsman in

their 18-run defeat to CSK will provide a big boost but it can't paper over the failure of their star bats-men, who have floundered even while chasing even modest target. The seamers too have leaked runs in the death overs.

Having struggled on Chepauk's slow surface, KKR had hoped to return to winning ways at the Wankhede but Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad took their attack to the cleaners and amassed a massive 220 for 3 in their previous match. If that was not all, their

famed top-five, including Shubman Gill and Morgan, surrendered inside the Powerplay.

Andre Russell Dinesh Karthik then revived the chase before



Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Sunil Narine during a training session in Mumbai.

Cummins produced some sensational powerhitting, slamming a 34-ball 66 not out before running out of partners as KKR finished on 202 after being 31/5 in 5.2 overs.

"Everyone's pumped. I am sure if we get a win or two and we will be on our way and flying. I think there's a feeling that we can win from basically Cummins anywhere,"

The other positive has been Russell's return to form. It was his 54 off 22 balls that had set the tone and it would not be a bad ploy for Morgan to promote the Jamaican up in the order, while Cummins

provides late blitz. The skipper will himself look to get back among runs, while he will be equally concerned about Gill, who once again failed to convert his starts and he returned

with a golden duck against CSK. Rajasthan Royals, on the other hand, are com-ing into the match after a humiliating 10-wicket loss against RCB. Sanju Samson's men have failed to inspire after posting their only win of the tournament, against Delhi Capitals in their second

Samson has fizzled out after a blazing 119 against

Star Sports 1, HD1 **HEAD to HEAD**

from 7.30 pm on

Matches

KKR 12 RR

TIE

 Rajasthan Royals won both tied matches in Super over

FOR THE RECORD

 Sanju Samson with 96 sixes in become the second Raiasthan batsman after Shane Watson (109 sixes in 76 innings) to complete a century of sixes in IPL.

 Andre Russell who has scored 5,972 runs at an average of 26.78 in 298 innings needs 28 runs to become the sixth West Indian and 46th batsman overall to complete 6,000 runs in T20.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES KKR beat Royals by 37 runs at

• KKR beat Royals by 60 runs at STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

Punjab Kings and the top and middle-order look brittle with Jos Buttler, Manan Vohra and David Miller enduring poor

form. Bowling is also a big concern for the inaugural edition champions as their big buy Chris Morris and Mustafizur Rahman have struggled to check runs.

They also have limited overseas options with Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes ruled out.

Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer T Natarajan has been ruled out of the ongoing IPL due to a knee injury for which he will have to undergo a surgery

The 30-year-old Natarajan had played only two out of the four games for Sunrisers Hyderabad this season. He originally sustained this injury during the tour of Australia earlier this year.

"I am sad to miss the remaining games (this IPL). Since I played well last season and went on to play for India, my expectations were high. Unfortunately, I have to undergo knee surgery and will miss this season," the yorker specialist said in a video posted by Sunrisers Hyderabad on their official twitter handle. He, however, did not specify when the surgery

will take place.
"I have no words to say right now. I wish Sunrisers to go out and win every game this season. Best wishes," added the bowler.

It is understood that he never fully recovered from the injury caused by the heavy workload he endured on the tour of Australia. "He went for rehabilitation at the NCA but it is now evident that even when he was declared fit to make a return against England, he was not 100 per cent match ready. Now he could be out for a longer period as he had rushed his comeback without doing proper rehab," a source said.



RCB's Devdutt Padikkal celebrates his century against Rajasthan Royals.

AXAR RECOVERS FROM COVID-19, JOINS DELHI

Chennai, April 23: All-rounder Axar Patel has rejoined the Delhi Capitals squad after recovering from COVID-19 and said that getting to meet his teammates after a 20-day quarantine comes a close second to his Test debut as the "best moment" of his life.

The 27-year-old had initially checked into the Capitals' team hotel on March 28 in Mumbai with a negative test report but he returned positive for the dreaded infection on April 3 and was transferred to the BCCI's designated medical facility with mild symp-

"It has been really great to come out of quarantine after 20 days and meet my teammates. This is the best moment in my life after my Test debut," Axar was

quoted as saying in a media release from DC. The left-arm spinner added that watching his IPL side win most of its matches kept him motivated.

"I was alone in my room for 20 days and I didn't have anything to do. I was watching the matches and one good thing was that our team won most of the matches, so I got even more motivated to re-join the side," he

Earlier, the Delhi Capitals posted a video of Axar

meeting his teammates in the camp. "Smiles and hugs all around as Bapu returned to the DC camp," the franchise posted.

"Aadmi dekh ke hi toh mujhe maza aa raha hai (I'm getting joy just by seeing people)," Patel said in the