

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 30 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 17
Tithi: Chathurthasi
Star: Kettai
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.39 am
Luhar: 12.13 pm
Asar: 3.13 pm
Maghrib: 6.23 pm
Isha: 7.36 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.24 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.00 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 10.50 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,40,231)	(+2,706)
1,87,08,561	2,07,518

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+17,897)
TN: 11,48,064 13,933

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

15,08,14,079

DEATHS

31,71,243

219

woorldometers.info

Lalu freed on bail, but will stay on in AIIMS Delhi

Ranchi: Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad was released from jail Thursday evening after completion of bail formalities in the special CBI court in Ranchi. After the Bar Council of India allowed lawyers to attend necessary court work, Prasad's lawyers submitted a bail bond and two sureties of Rs 1 lakh each in the Ranchi CBI court during the day. Accordingly, judge M K Mishra issued the RJD supremo's release order.

US tells citizens to leave India as Covid surges

Washington: The US government told its citizens to leave India as soon as possible because of the country's escalating Covid-19 crisis. In a Level 4 travel advisory --- the highest issued by the Department of State -- US citizens were told "not to travel to India or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so." There are 14 direct daily flights between India and the US and other services that connect through Europe, the department said.

COUNTER

POINT



Any wave?

Biden promises to widen government

Washington, April 29: Forty years ago, a newly-elected American president declared government the source of many of the nation's problems, reshaping the parameters of US politics for decades to come. On Wednesday night, President Joe Biden unabashedly embraced government as the solution. In an address to a joint

session of Congress and the nation, Mr Biden offered up government as both an organising principle for the nation's democracy and an engine for economic growth and social well-being. He issued a pointed rejoinder to the fiscal philosophy espoused by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, arguing that "trickle-down economics has never

worked," and offered in its place an eye-popping \$4 trillion in new government spending to bolster infrastructure and remake a social safety net that buckled for many Americans during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We have to prove democracy still works, that our government still works and can deliver for our people,"

Mr Biden declared.

Declaring that "America is rising anew" under his leadership, Mr Biden told China that the US will maintain a "strong" military presence in the Indo-Pacific "not to start conflict, but to prevent one" as Beijing became more assertive in the strategically vital region.

■ More on pg7

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Assets case: HC suspends jail term of ex-AIADMK MLA



Amazon to raise pay for over 5 lakh workers

WORLD | 7

SPORT | 8

Quinton powers Mumbai to big win



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Exit polls predict DMK's easy win in TN; NDA in Puducherry

■ **Stalin's sun will rise with 170 seats, say most surveys**

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

Almost all exit polls predicted a resounding victory to the DMK and its allies in Tamil Nadu while NDA and its alliance, led by the N.R. Congress, in Puducherry.

Released after the last voter exercised their franchise in the eight phase of election in West Bengal on Thursday evening, the exit polls conducted by various organisations in association with news outlets were unanimous in the DMK winning with a comfortable majority though they differed slightly in the numbers.

Republic TV, which went with CNX for the survey, said that DMK would get 160 to 170 seats as against the AIADMK and its allies winning 58 to 68, T.T.V. Dhinakaran's AMMK 4 to 6 and Kamal Haasan's MNM a maximum of 2 seats.

C-Voter, a reputed organisation that had got several surveys right in the past, particularly the 2016 state elections when it alone predicted a victory of the AIADMK, gave 166 seats to the DMK and allies. It said that AIADMK and allies will triumph in 64 seats and the AMMK and MNM two each.

Today's Chanakya that did the survey for News24 channel gave DMK a maximum of 175 seats with a plus or minus of 11 and AIADMK 57 (also with a plus or minus of 11) and other 2.

Axis My India's survey, taken for India Today, predicted DMK coalition grabbing 175 to 195 of the 234 constituencies with the AIADMK and allies left with just 38 to 54. Also P-

EXIT-POLL ASSEMBLY 2021

KERALA

	LDF+	UDF+	BJP
TODAY - AXIS	104-120	20-36	2
REPUBLIC - CNX	72-80	54-64	1-5
ABP NEWS C-VOTER	71-77	62-68	0-2
TODAY'S CHANAKYA	93-111	36-44	0-6

PUDUCHERRY

	NRC+BJP	CONG+	OTHS
REPUBLIC - CNX	16-20	11-13	0
TODAY-AXIS	20-24	6-10	0-1
C-VOTER	19-23	6-10	1-2
OVERALL	19-23	7-10	1

Marq's poll favoured DMK and allies with 165 to 190 and AIADMK with 40 to 65.

The exit polls results were congruous with most of the pre-poll surveys in Tamil Nadu that said that the DMK would come to power and its president is the favoured politician for the chief minister's post.

However, there was a unanimity in the exit polls on the question of DMK coming to power unlike the pre-poll surveys, some of which were iffy of a DMK sweep.

The C-Voter poll gave the DMK and allies a clear victory in each of the regions in the state. It said the DMK would win 11 to 13 seats in Chennai city, possibly acceding just 3 to 5 seats to the rival camp, 36 to 38 in northern Tamil Nadu with the AIADMK alliance, in which the PMK is a partner, getting just 8 to 10, and other one.

LDF predicted to make history

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 29

If the exit polls to be believed, Kerala will return to power a political formation for a consecutive second term for the first time in 43 years as the Pinarayi Vijayan-headed Left Democratic Front (LDF) is predicted to retain power in the state.

While the India Today-Axis My India survey predicted the LDF will win 104-120 seats and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF)

will be reduced to 20-36 seats. The BJP is projected to win up to 2 seats. The Republic-CNX survey (LDF: 72-80, UDF: 54-64and BJP: 1-5), the ABP News-C Voter exit poll (LDF: 71-77, UDF: 62-68, BJP: 0-2) , Today's Chanakya survey (LDF: 93-111, UDF: 36-44, BJP: 0-6) also predicted the return of the only Left ruled government in the country.

The Times Now-C Voter survey and the P-MARQ post-poll survey also predicted that the LDF will win 74 seats and the UDF 65. The BJPcould one seat, as per the surveys.

encounter at Besimari in Bongaigaon district was newly appointed commander of outfit's Western Command in place of Dhristi Rajkhowa who surrendered before the police a few months back. The surrender of Dhristi Rajkhowa was seen as a major setback for the Ulfa-I which had lost its

strength completely in Western Assam.

Assam Director General of Police Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta who informed about the encounter in his social media post on twitter said, "Police-Ulfa encounter took place at Besimari (Manikpur PS) in Bongaigaon district just some time back. Ulfa-I

EDGE FOR TMC IN BENGAL; BJP TO RETAIN ASSAM

ASHHAR KHAN | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 29

The results of a majority of the exit polls predict that Trinamul Congress' Mamata Banerjee has a hurricane edge that could make her retain power for the third time in West Bengal, while the BJP-led NDA will be a key player in the state, giving a robust challenge to the TMC. The BJP is tipped to retain power in Assam.

In West Bengal, most of the surveys predict that the ruling TMC will win at least around 150 seats, with the BJP putting up a formidable fight. The C-Voter survey data projects the TMC with emerge victorious, with 152 to 164 seats in the state, where a total 292 Assembly constituencies went to the polls. The BJP was projected to get 109-121 seats, and the Congress-Left-ISF alliance 14-25 seats. In the 2016 Assembly polls in the state, the TMC had won 211, the BJP had secured three seats and the Left and Congress had cornered 76 seats.

The Axis exit poll predicts an extremely close finish -- with the TMC winning 130-156 seats and the BJP winning 134-160 seats. The survey further states that the voteshare of the TMC is 44 per cent while that of the BJP is 43 per cent.

The C-Voter survey projects 58 to 71 seats for the BJP-led NDA and 53 to 66 seats for the Congress-led UPA in Assam.

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday informed the Madras high court that there is no need to impose a total lockdown on May 1, a day prior to counting of votes of the Tamil Nadu assembly elections.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice S e n t h i l k u m a r Ramamorthy directed that an elaborate report be submitted by Friday listing out the protocols to be followed on counting day, Covid-19 preparedness and the guidelines for the media. The bench was hearing a suo motu proceedings relating to newspapers reports on alleged shortage of oxygen and anti-viral drug Remdesivir.

Advocate-general Vijay Narayan made the submission in response to the suggestion given by the bench earlier that if necessary, the state may consider imposing a lockdown on May 1, which was traditionally a holiday and again on May 2, which is a Sunday. ■ P5

FB blocks posts for PM's sack, restores

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 29

Social media platform Facebook temporarily blocked posts containing hashtags calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi to resign, then reinstated them on Wednesday, saying the action had been taken erroneously, according to international media reports.

"We temporarily blocked this hashtag by mistake, not because the Indian government asked us to, and have since restored it," Facebook spokesman Andy Stone was quoted as saying. According to these media reports, #ResignModi was blocked on Facebook for several hours amid national controversy and public anger over the Union Government's response to the ongoing

Covid crisis.

The media reports said the Indian government had ordered U.S. social-media companies to block certain social media posts, saying Covid-related misinformation risked spurring a panic and were disrupting efforts to bring the pandemic under control. A second wave of the Covid pandemic is currently battering India leading to a severe shortage of hospital beds, oxygen and anti-viral drugs such as Remdesivir. India is now recording over three and a half lakh fresh Covid cases every day while the death toll is now crossing three thousand daily. Desperate appeals for help have become the norm on social media as people helplessly watch many of their family-members and friends die for want of timely medical care.

Vaccine shortage leaves states uncertain about fourth phase

Delhi drops plan for 5-star Covid facility

New Delhi, April 29: The Delhi government on Thursday informed the Delhi High Court that it has withdrawn the order to create of Covid-19 facilities for judges, staff and their families in a five star hotel here.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli took on record the latest order passed by the government and disposed of the suo motu petition initiated by the court on April 27.

The high court had taken cognisance of the news reports which said

cancelled via SMS and trust me, rescheduling is n't as easy as this text makes it sound. Just WOW. Vaccine Shortage is real," tweeted journalist Maya Mirchandani.

A total of 84.36 lakh people registered for vaccina-

that 100 rooms of Ashoka Hotel in national capital have been converted into a Covid health facility for judges of Delhi High Court on its request.

The high court said no communication of this kind was made to anyone in this regard.

Delhi government standing counsel Santosh K. Tripathi informed the bench that the April 25 order requisitioning 100 rooms of the hotel for setting up facilities for the judges and their families, has been withdrawn with immediate effect. — PTI

tions on Thursday. The Jharkhand and Kerala health ministers said vaccines are not available at this point. "It is the duty of the Centre to supply vaccines. Vaccine companies are saying they will supply the vaccine only in May end.

DON'T ADMINISTER REMDESIVIR AT HOME, SAYS CENTRE

New Delhi, April 29: The Union health ministry on Thursday issued the 'revised guidelines for home isolation of mild/asymptomatic Covid-19 cases', in which it advised against attempting to procure or administer Remdesivir injections at home, underlining that it should be administered only in a hospital setting.

The guidelines stated that systemic oral steroids are not indicated in mild cases and if the symptoms (persistent fever, worsening cough etc.) persist beyond seven days, the treating doctor should be consulted for treatment with low-dose oral steroids. Elderly patients aged more than 60 years and those with comorbid conditions shall only be allowed home isolation after a proper evaluation by the medical officer, it added. — PTI

OTHER STORIES

IGCAR develops high performance instrument

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

The country's premier Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam has developed high performance instrument - Pulsating sensor based conductivity meter. The device developed by Electronics & Instrumentation Group, is suitable for real-time monitoring of electrical conductivity of aqueous solutions in plants and field applications apart from its usage in chemical laboratories for analysis and quality control. Performance of the apparatus has been validated with many applications in IGCAR and found to be robust even in demanding environments.

The technology was transferred by IGCAR to M/s Serve XL Enterprises, Bengaluru on April 29. In an online meeting with the firm arranged by Incubation Centre-IGCAR, Dr. Arun Kumar Bhaduri, Director, IGCAR handed over the non-exclusive technology license agreement and the technology documents to Vikram Padaki, Proprietor of M/s Serve XL Enterprises. The meeting was attended by Dr. B. Venkatraman, Director SQRMG (IGCAR), S. Raghupathy, Director EIG (IGCAR), Dr. N. Subramanian, Head, Incubation Centre-IGCAR, G. Prabhakara Rao, Head, SISD (IGCAR) and other senior colleagues. The Incubation Centre-IGCAR has been set up recently by the Department of Atomic Energy.

Judges named for vacation court

Chennai, April 29: The Madras High Court and its Bench at Madurai will remain closed for summer vacation from May 1 to May 31.

The vacation court will be held on May 5 and 6, May 12 and 13, May 19 and 20 and May 26 and 27.

Justices R Suresh Kumar, P D Audikesavalu, G R Swaminathan and R N Manjula will be the vacation judges. They will sit on May 5 and 6, a release from High Court Registrar said.

Justices C V Karthikeyan, Krishnan Ramaswamy, S Kannammal and G Chandrasekaran are the vacation judges for the sittings on May 12 and 13.

Justices Anita Sumanth, M Nirmal Kumar, Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy and V Sivagnanam will sit on May 19 and 20, it said.

It will be Justices G Vijachandran, C Saravanan, Sathi Kumar Sukumara Kurup and T V Thamilselvi, who will sit on May 26 and 27.

The previous two days of the sitting dates will be the filing of cases days. —PTI

Naam Tamizhar doesn't figure in any of exit poll results

From P1

While the sweep in Chennai is on predictable lines as the state capital had been the DMK's bastion at one point of time, the huge numbers in northern Tamil Nadu is rather incredible because the PMK has been claiming the region to have a strong support there.

Similarly, in the Kongu region, C-Voter gives the DMK 33-35 seats and just 17 to 19 seats of the AIADMK, which is said to have a large following in the region. The prediction for south is not very surprising, given the fact the Congress is in the DMK camp, and there the DMK is expected to get 33 to 35 seats and the AIADMK 21 to 23.

Probably the two seats that the polls give to 'others' is the AMMK as the party has some standing in the southern region, which is primarily the part of the state that is Madurai and downwards of it in the map.

Of the five groupings that contested the elections, held on April 6, Seeman's Naam Tamizhar Katchi does not figure in any of the exit poll results, while the AMMK and its allies are given a maximum opportunity for six and MNM a remote chance for winning two. And all surveys are unanimous about it.

Puducherry, unlike the local predictions of the Congress still having an upper hand in view of the sympathy generated by the machinations of the BJP using the office of the Lieutenant Governor, is going to the NR Congress, led by N.R. Rangasamy, whose partner is the BJP, says C-Voter.



Scenes from various places in Chennai where people either don't wear the masks or pull them down.

Unmasking Chennai



Chennai adds 19,662 new active cases in last 20 days

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

Chennai city, which is witnessing a continuous surge in daily Covid-19 cases making containment activities herculean, has added at least 19,662 (200 percent increase) new active cases in the last 20 days.

It shows the city may further witness a surge in the new positive cases in the coming days. While active cases on April 8 were 11,633, the figure went up to 31,295 on April 28.

The daily tally of three zones - Teynampet, Kodambakkam and Anna Nagar - continues to record over 3,000 cases. According to the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) data on April 28, Teynampet topped the table with 3,293 cases followed by Kodambakkam which added 3,100 cases on Wednesday.

Five other zones, meanwhile, have crossed the 2,000-mark in active cases, causing concerns for the authorities. The tally of the top zones is as follows: Ambattur (2,689), Thiru Vi. Ka. Nagar (2,549), Adyar (2,479), Royapuram (2,034) and Valasaravakkom (2,033).

The Kodambakkam zone, which was reporting under 3,000 cases till last week, has now emerged as a hotspot, requiring more focus. Meanwhile, Tondiarpet, which reported 2,163 active cases last Thursday, registered a dip with 1,929 on Wednesday.

At a time when the second wave is devouring more lives in the city, Teynampet continues to retain the top slot with 556 deaths. Anna Nagar (531) and Kodambakkam (526) have also crossed 500-mark in death toll.

The zone-wise death toll is as follows: Tondiarpet (365), Royapuram (406), Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar (474), Ambattur (322), Adyar (374), Madhavram (121), Valasaravakkam (243), Alandur (189) and Perungudi (168). The total death toll in the city reached 4,661 on Thursday while the cases on April 8 were 4,292. That means 369 patients in the city succumbed to Covid-19 in the last 20 days. However, the GCC administration, so far, was able to administer 14,22,553 doses of Covid-19 vaccine since January 16. On Wednesday alone 25,356 beneficiaries in the city took the jab.

It shows the city may further witness a surge in the new positive cases in the coming days. While active cases on April 8 were 11,633, the figure went up to 31,295 on April 28

The screening centre to be set up in 10 days at KV Island Grounds will help in preventing Covid-19 patients from rushing to government hospitals during night, creating long queues. Many people are rushing directly to hospitals in ambulances or private vehicles. This will delay the attention of doctors for critically ill patients at the hospitals. We don't want to create a situation like in Maharashtra or Delhi here', he said.

Siddique appealed to the people to approach screening centres first if anybody is tested positive. The health workers at the screening centres will decide the course of treatment depending upon the patient's health condition. It will help to prevent demand for hospital beds and also make sure beds for those who are in dire need, he said.

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) will set up nine more screening centres, including a 24x7 screening facility at the Kendriya Vidyalaya in Island Grounds, and 2,400 more oxygen beds to deal with the second wave of the pandemic in the city, said M.A. Siddique, principal secretary, commercial taxes department, here on Thursday.

Siddique was appointed as the special co-ordinator to GCC for Covid-19 management.

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decide the course of treatment depending upon the patient's health condition. It will help to prevent demand for hospital beds and also make sure beds for those who are in dire need, he said.

Recognising the soaring demand for hospital beds in the city, he said that additional 2,400 beds will be set up shortly along with already available 2,545 oxygen-supported beds in the government sector. Out of this, at least 250 new oxygen-supported beds each in Government Royapettah Hospital and the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Egmore are functional now, he said.

He said 500 beds being set up for the Covid care centre to come up in the Chennai Trade Centre will also be oxygen-supported. The new facilities will be created by converting some non-oxygen beds to oxygen-supported beds and also by adding new beds," he said adding that the public can visit <http://covid19.chennaicorporation.gov.in/> for all information related to Covid-19, including the location of screening centres, sample collection centres, vaccination centres, fever camps and Covid care centres.

among the political parties.

Even the earlier guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India were contradictory in nature that the DMK organisation secretary R. S. Bharati gave a representation seeking clarifications on Thursday.

He said in a letter from the CEO it was mentioned that the counting officials

and party agents would carry a Covid RT-PCR test taken within 72 hours but the next set of instructions from the ECI said the test should have been prior to less than 48 hours of the counting.

Similarly in the first letter it was mentioned that alternatively anyone entering the counting centre should have taken one dose of Covid-19 vac-



— E.K. SANJAY

Black flag stir against Sterlite

ARULOLI M | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, APRIL 29

In response to the Supreme Court order to reopen Sterlite plant for oxygen production, anti-Sterlite activists groups in Pandarampatti village near here hoisted black flags in their village.

Residents of Kumareddiyapuram village which was the epicentre of the anti-Sterlite agitation in 2018, however refused to get involved as it was instigated by the Makkal Adhigaram-led anti-Sterlite group.

The anti-Sterlite groups against Makkal Adhigaram at Pandarampatti also did not participate in the protest. But, they petitioned Thoothukudi collector urging the government to reconsider the re-opening of Sterlite for oxygen manufacturing.

Some of the families of the victims of police firing of May 2018, led by Krishnamurthy, coordinator, Thoothukudi district people's federation, against Sterlite also petitioned the collector against oxygen production in company.

Corpn to set up 9 more screening centres, 2,400 oxygen beds

17,897 new cases, 107 deaths in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 29

The state has added 17,897 new Covid-19 cases and 107 deaths on Thursday, registering a jump from 16,665 cases and 98 deaths on Wednesday.

With this, the total Covid-19 tally in the state has touched 11,48,064 while death toll reached 13,933 including 4,701 in Chennai.

The daily new cases in Chennai have crossed the 5,000-mark with 5,445, a jump from 4,764 on Wednesday. The district recorded 40 more deaths registering a rise from 32 on Wednesday. Total number of cases in the district touched 3,28,520.

The Chengalpattu district, which added 1,219 cases on Wednesday, recorded 1,164 new cases. Seven people succumbed to Covid-19 in the district. Total cases in the district now stand at 78,757. The number of daily cases in

The daily new cases in Chennai have crossed the 5,000-mark with 5,445, a jump from 4,764 on Wednesday. The district recorded 40 more deaths registering a rise from 32 on Wednesday. Total number of cases in the district touched 3,28,520

Coimbatore has gone up to 1,008 on Thursday from 963 on Wednesday with one death.

While Selam (532), Madurai (604), Tirunelveli (849) and Thoothukudi (576) reported 500-plus cases, districts like Erode (473), Kancheepuram (352), Krishnagiri (371), Ranipet (334), Thanjavur (315), Tirupur (366), Trichy (403), Villupuram (359) and Vellore (337) recorded 300 plus cases. Apart from this, 10 districts crossed the 200-mark and six districts reported over 100 cases.

The contribution of Chennai and surrounding districts including

Thiruvallur and Chengalpet on Thursday was 7,401, a rise from 6,734.

Active cases continue to reach the 1-lakh mark with 1,12,556, a jump from 1,10,308. Daily total active cases in the Chennai district touched 31,308, a surge from 31,295 on Wednesday.

While Kancheepuram reported 11 deaths, Madurai registered 8 cases. Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu recorded 7 deaths. The tally goes as: C u d a l o r e - 4, K a n y a k u m a r i - 5, Namakkal-2, Selam-5, Thanjavur-3, Thiruvallur-2, Thirupur and Vellore-2. Besides, nine more districts reported one death each.

A total of 1,35,408 persons took RTPCR tests through 264 labs while total individual tests on Wednesday were 1,25,004. At least 2,21,40,645 individuals tested so far in the state.

Confusion over Covid test for counting agents

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 28

Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo's latest declaration that no one would be allowed inside the counting centres on May 2 if their body temperature showed more than 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit in the thermal scanner reading has created some confusion

among the political parties.

Even the earlier guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India were contradictory in nature that the DMK organisation secretary R. S. Bharati gave a representation seeking clarifications on Thursday.

He said in a letter from the CEO it was mentioned that the counting officials

and party agents would carry a Covid RT-PCR test taken within 72 hours but the next set of instructions from the ECI said the test should have been prior to less than 48 hours of the counting.

Similarly in the first letter it was mentioned that alternatively anyone entering the counting centre should have taken one dose of Covid-19 vac-

ination but the second letter said that they should have taken both the doses of the vaccine.

Besides pointing out the 'discrepancies and contradictions in the guidelines' issued by the CEO and ECI, Bharati said 'there is a great scarcity in getting the vaccines in the mofussil areas. In such background insisting upon the candidates

to have two doses of vaccine is a practical difficulty.'

Also he said that the direction to counting agents to wear PPE kits was not practically possible in the scorching sun for 14 to 16 hours.

'It is also advised by the medical experts that a PPE kit shall not be worn more than six hours by a person. It is the advice of

WHO and all the medical experts that PPE Kits are meant for Doctors who are treating Covid patients and the Lab technicians who are taking samples for Covid test,' Bharati said in the representation.

He wanted the ECI to clarify the doubts and dispense with the direction on counting agents wearing PPE.

May 1 challenge: Replenish jab stocks, prioritise highly +ve districts



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

Several UPHCs and private hospitals in the state seem to exhaust their stock of Covid-19 vaccines within a few hours of opening their doors to the public every day. Not all are able to cater to walk-ins since the spike in cases. Serpentine queues are seen outside vaccination centres and several of them are turned away as supplies have run out. Following the second wave and surge in Covid cases, the demand for vaccines from hospitals has

increased manifold. Healthcare establishments are finding the availability, purchase, pricing, supply chain and cold chain management of Covid-19 vaccine before it is administered to the people increasingly difficult and challenging to handle. Usually vaccines are supplied to healthcare units based on the average vaccinations they achieved over the last few days. Hospitals claim that with their demand for extra jabs not met, they have not

been able to increase the daily average.

Amid such mounting complaints, shortage of jabs is likely to disrupt plans to inoculate all adults from May 1. Despite Tamil Nadu government placing orders for purchase of 1.50 crore Covid-19 vaccines this week, experts and healthcare professionals are keeping their fingers crossed. Following widespread criticism, Serum Institute of India, makers of Covishield, announced a cut in price of the jab it plans to sell to states to ₹300 per dose from the earlier ₹400. Similarly, Bharati Biotech also slashed the price of its vaccine Covaxin to ₹400 per dose from the earlier ₹600. As experts have suggested the universal vaccination rollout can be based on spread

of disease in the areas. Vaccines can be delivered to districts in the state where positivity rate is above 15 per cent followed by other districts. This will also help ease the pressure on vaccine supplies. The health department can put a vaccine distribution system in place based on the availability, geographical locations and positivity rate to ensure those awaiting the second dose and also those above 18 get the jab without undue delay.

People waiting in a long queue near Greater Chennai Corporation health centre in Kodambakkam for Covid-19 vaccination.

— DC





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SHORT TAKES

BENGAL ASKS
CENTRE FOR
3.5 CR DOSESDC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, APRIL 29

As West Bengal has witnessed a new record in daily spike at 17,403 cases with 89 more deaths in the fresh wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the Mamata Banerjee government has urged the Centre to immediately send 3.5 crore doses of vaccines for 1.5 crore people aged between 18 and 45 years in the state to kickstart third phase of vaccination drive from them from May 1.

On Thursday evening the state health department informed that the 17,403 fresh cases were detected with the 89 additional deaths in the last 24 hours. Among the new cases, 3,912 were reported from North 24 Parganas, followed by 3901 in Kolkata which however saw 23 deaths, the highest among the districts.

The state government informed, "Government of West Bengal has requested Government of India to kindly arrange vaccine stocks and supply for the Government sector and the private sector hospitals in West Bengal in the following manner: 1) 2 crore doses for vaccinating 1 crore people in West Bengal in 18-45 year age group through the Government hospitals in WB. 2) 1 crore doses for vaccinating 50 lakh people in West Bengal through private hospitals in WB."

FIR FILED
AGAINST
PARAM BIR SINGHSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 29

The Maharashtra police have filed an FIR against former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh and 27 other police officers on the basis of corruption charges levelled against them by an inspector of police.

The FIR has been registered at Akola in Vidarbha against Singh, DCP Parag Manere and 26 other policemen. The city Kotwali police in Akola registered the FIR against the police personnel under various sections ranging from criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence and sections of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989.

The FIR has been registered on the complaint of police inspector Bhimrao Ghadge in which he has made a series of allegations of corruption against Singh and other officers.

These allegations have been made for a period when the former Mumbai CP was posted with the Thane police.

Akola police filed a Zero FIR (mode of lodging FIR in any police station irrespective of the offence committed in that area or any other area) at the Kotwali police station and it had been transferred to the Thane city police.

The FIR has been lodged under various sections ranging from criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence and sections of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities Act).

CHAR DHAM YATRA
DEFERRED AMID
COVID SURGE

Dehradun, April 29: Char Dham Yatra to the four famous Himalayan shrines in Uttarakhand, which was scheduled to begin next month, has been postponed in view of the massive surge in Covid-19 cases.

Announcing this here on Thursday, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat said conducting the yatra amid the raging pandemic is not possible. "Considering the rising cases of corona, it has been decided to suspend the Char Dham Yatra," Rawat told reporters.

However, the portals of the four Himalayan temples known as Char Dham will open as scheduled, he said.

Only priests will be allowed to perform daily prayers at the shrines and not devotees, the Chief Minister said.

"Though opening on schedule, no pilgrim neither from inside the state nor from outside will be allowed to visit the temples," he said.

Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are the four famous shrines.

Kedarnath is slated to open at 5 am on May 17. Badrinath at 4:15 am on May 18, Yamunotri at 12:15 pm on May 14 and Gangotri on 7:30 am on May 15.

Covid-19 cases have been rising drastically in Uttarakhand as in various other states.



Nuns from Missionaries of Charity stand in a queue to cast vote at a polling station in Kolkata during the 8th phase of West Bengal Assembly polls on Thursday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Violence mars last phase of
WB polls as over 76% vote

Last phase sees attacks on 3 BJP candidates allegedly by Trinamul men

RAJIB CHOWDHURI &
PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI | DC
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE,
APRIL 29

West Bengal recorded 76.07% polling at 35 seats spread over four districts in the eighth and final phase of the Assembly Election which saw attacks on three BJP candidates allegedly by the Trinamul Congress workers and street fights between the two rivals with bombs and sticks from Kolkata to the districts on Thursday.

While Birbhum topped among the four districts with 81.87% voting in 11 seats, it was followed by Malda with 80.06% polling at six seats and Murshidabad with 78.07% at 11 seats. Kolkata North, where seven hot seats went to the polls, again

recorded the lowest polling of the phase at 57.53%. An updated poll percentage is expected from the Election Commission on Friday.

Out of the 294 assembly seats, now only two-Shamsherganj and Jangipur in Murshidabad are left to go to the polls on May 16.

Among the three BJP candidates, cars of Anirban Ganguly who fought from Bolpur and Tarakeswar Saha who contested from Nanoo were vandalised during their visits to Dharampur and Satua in Birbhum despite a deployment of 224 companies of the central paramilitary forces and strict surveillance on TMC strongman and district of Anubrata Mondal by the EC.

Both escaped unhurt. The district also witnessed violent clashes between the TMC and BJP workers in spells, recovery of bombs at Khoirasol and Labhpur a senior Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officer, Sangram Keshari Mohanty, deputised on poll-duty there, visited famous Tarapith Temple in camouflage uniform with troops and offered puja to Goddess Kali.

Mr Mohanty, who is the CRPF Inspector General (Odisha Sector), said, "This is my first visit here. I felt good. I heard a lot about this place. It is my good luck to visit here. Since I am on election duty and tasked with supervision, I felt an urge to visit here. There is no problem in my visit as it is close to a booth. The conduct of the election has been good. We are assisting the state police as much as possible."

Irked by his role, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh tweeted a video of his visit and puja and wrote, "During the peak polling time in Birbhum, the IG of the Central Forces (CRPF) is surprisingly seen offering puja at Tarapith. Is he aware of his own responsibility - and duty! It is a cause of grave concern for common people."

Rattled by the controversy, the EC has sought a report with his explanation.

Meanwhile, BJP candidate Kalyan Choubey of Manicktala in Kolkata North claimed that TMC workers manhandled him and hit his car with sticks. In the morning two bombs exploded on the footpath in front of Mahajati Sadan on CR Avenue in Jorasanko.

No one was injured however. In Cossipore-

Belgachhia, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Santanu Sen, who recently tested Covid-19 positive, was seen casting vote at a booth wearing a PPE.

In Murshidabad, a CPI(M) worker Kader Mondal (50) died and three others were injured after Domkal TMC candidate Jafikul Islam's long convoy allegedly hit them at Shahbazzpur village hours before the poll began.

District CPI(M) leader Jamir Mollah alleged "The villagers protested his visit and tried to block his convoy which, led by Mr. Islam, dashed them while speeding away at around 12.30 am on Thursday."

Mondal's family lodged a complaint at Domkal police station.

Mr Islam however called it a road accident by someone else's car.

Mass Cremation



Relatives and family members perform last rites during mass cremation of Covid-19 victims at Swar Rekha Ghat cremation ground in Ranchi on Thursday. — PTI

FIGHTING | COVID

Villagers of Balaghat distt opened the 30-bed hospital in a girls college hosp

Villagers set up Covid Care Centre

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 29

People in a Madhya Pradesh village have set up a Covid Care Centre through crowdfunding to ensure locals infected by the virus have access to medical facilities.

Villagers of Lalborra in tribal-dominated district of Balaghat opened the 30-bed hospital in a government girls' college hostel in the area when they failed to arrange a bed in a hospital for a Covid-19 patient of the village.

"The villagers were moving from one hospital to another in the district to admit a woman Covid-19 patient. However, she could not be admitted to any Covid hospital in the district due to lack of bed. She was later admitted to a hospital in Indore", a village elder told this newspaper on Thursday.

Later, the villagers decided to open a Covid Care Centre in the area and approached the local administration to make provision of medical staff for the Centre.

"We have approached the local administration to

hand us over the government girls college hostel in the area to open the Centre. We have raised funds to create basic infrastructure in the Centre with provision of beds, oxygen concentrator machines, PPE kits for the patients as well as the doctors visiting the Centre. The Centre was opened on April 21", Lalborra gram panchayat sarpanch Aneesh Khan told this newspaper.

Several local social organisations, religious bodies and indi-

viduals including the local BJP MLA and former minister Gouri Shankar Bisen have made contributions

for setting up the Centre, he added. "Doctors and nurses from the nearby community health Centre

(CHC) of the state government visit the Covid care Centre twice daily to treat the patients.

Kerala sees over
30,000 cases for
third day in rowGILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 29

Kerala on Thursday reported 38,607 new cases of Covid-19 taking the number of active cases to 2,84,086 even as Chief Minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan announced that strict restrictions would be put in place in the state from next week.

The state also reported 48 deaths taking the death toll to 5,259. During the last 24 hours, 1.57 lakh samples were tested and the test positivity rate was 24.5 percent. As many as 21,110 persons recovered from the infection. The state reported 30,000 plus cases for the third consecutive day on Thursday indicating that the situation is aggravating very fast. Ernakulam district reported the highest number of cases - 5,369 followed by Kozhikode 4,990 and Thrissur 3,954.

As of now 5.93 lakh persons are under surveillance in the state including 5.69 lakh persons under home/institutional quarantine. The government has decided to enforce strict restrictions between May 4 and 9. The chief minister said the details of the restrictions would be announced later. The government has stopped all indoor and outdoor shooting of films, TV serials and documentaries. Vendors in markets including fish and meat markets have

been directed to keep a distance of four meters from each other and wear double masks.

The chief minister appealed to the people to maintain maximum restraint on the counting day on May 2. Members, supporters of political parties, general public should strictly remain indoors on the counting day.

Only officials and party workers entrusted with responsibilities would be allowed to enter the counting centres.

Meanwhile, Kerala Government Medical Officers Association (KGMOA) the largest body of doctors in the state, has urged the government to impose two weeks total lockdown in the state. The KGMOA said test positivity rate in 7 of the 14 districts had crossed 24 percent and a total lockdown was inevitable to check the spread.

Almost 80 percent beds in government hospitals in Ernakulam, Kollam and Idukki districts are occupied and situation is almost similar in many other districts. There is severe pressure on private hospitals. Lockdown is necessary to prevent the situation from going out of hand.

However the government on Thursday decided to enforce strict curbs in the state next week. The chief minister lockdown would be used as a last option.

VACCINE SHORTAGE LEAVES STATES
UNCERTAIN ABOUT FOURTH PHASE

FROM PG 1

This one-month delay will be dangerous. We need vaccines urgently to save lives," Kerala health minister K.K. Shailaja said. Jharkhand health minister Banna Gupta too had similar complaints. "The Centre wants to give free vaccines but the Jharkhand government wants to buy vaccines, which too are not available," he said.

In Mumbai, officials said vaccinations for 18-plus people can start only after enough vaccines are made available, and this may not happen from May 1. Delhi too said it had run out of doses and was waiting for fresh supplies from the manufacturers. Tamil Nadu is awaiting its order of 1.5 crore doses but is uncertain if the vaccinations for 18-

plus can start from May 1. Punjab and Rajasthan too said they do not have enough stocks to start vaccinating the much larger younger age group.

However, the Central government said the total vaccine doses available as of Thursday was 1.27 crore, while the total consumption of vaccines from January 16 to April 29 was 15.11 crores. As per an estimate, so far about 11.5 per cent of the Indian population of 130 crore people have got vaccinated, of which only 2.50 crore people have had both doses.

"More than one crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and Union territories and they will receive over 20 lakh more doses within the next three days," the Union health ministry said.

HC seeks norms
for counting day

FROM PG1

The advocate-general said all the government offices will be closed on May 1 being a public holiday, and there will not be much crowd outside. The state government has already decided to close on Saturday all the meat and fish stalls that attract crowds throughout the month. Moreover the camp for vaccination for people who are above 18 years of age is slated to

begin on May 1, he pointed out. The advocate-general also submitted that no gathering outside the counting venue, social distancing, disinfection, number of counting tables as per the size of the room, thermal scanner, sanitisation, PPE kits for counting agents will be followed on the counting day. Recording the submissions, the bench appealed to all political parties not to have any mass congregations.

PARADIP PORT TRUST

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No:MD/ACCTS/MK-R-11/2020/351 Dt. 01.04.2021

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DECCAN Chronicle

30 APRIL 2021

Govt needs to provide free vaccination to all in India

The registration for the forth phase of the vaccination programme against pandemic Covid-19 has started with some technical glitches in the registration portal that were promptly corrected. As per the government's account, more than 80 lakh people aged between 18 and 45 years registered themselves for the programme that starts on May 1. The government has made it mandatory for anyone to get a jab in the third phase to register with the portal. It has also said there will be no more free vaccination for this group, which makes up almost half of the eligible population.

The government had injected a lot of hope into the people whose lives and livelihoods were severely battered by the onslaught of the microorganism when it launched the world's largest vaccination programme on January 16 this year but most of the steps it has taken after that belied that hope. And worse, the latest decisions reflect poor understanding of the ground situation and a scornful neglect for the idea of universal vaccination against a deadly pandemic. The government has parliamentary clearance for spending money to get every eligible person vaccinated but has now passed that responsibility on to the state governments so far as its most productive section of the population is concerned. Worse, it has made the private sector an integral part of the programme with little regulatory protocols. The government's decision to allow the private manufacturers to fix the price of the vaccine doses, and then merrily grabbing the opportunity to make super profits, truly reflects the callousness with which it plans to wage the war on the pandemic. No elected central government in the world would dare force the elected bodies below them to compete with private companies for a product such as vaccines. There won't be many countries where the citizen's right to vaccination is linked to the acts of a philanthropist entrepreneur who himself is a beneficiary of governmental largesse.

The coordinates about which the people in the Union government work now defy all sense of democracy and decency and the constitutional principles which bind them to seats of power. The right to get vaccinated against a pandemic is nothing less than the right to life and the government is duty bound to protect it. Introducing a technological interface such as a registration portal is okay as long as it brings efficiency to how the government works; making it a condition to enjoy a fundamental right is not.

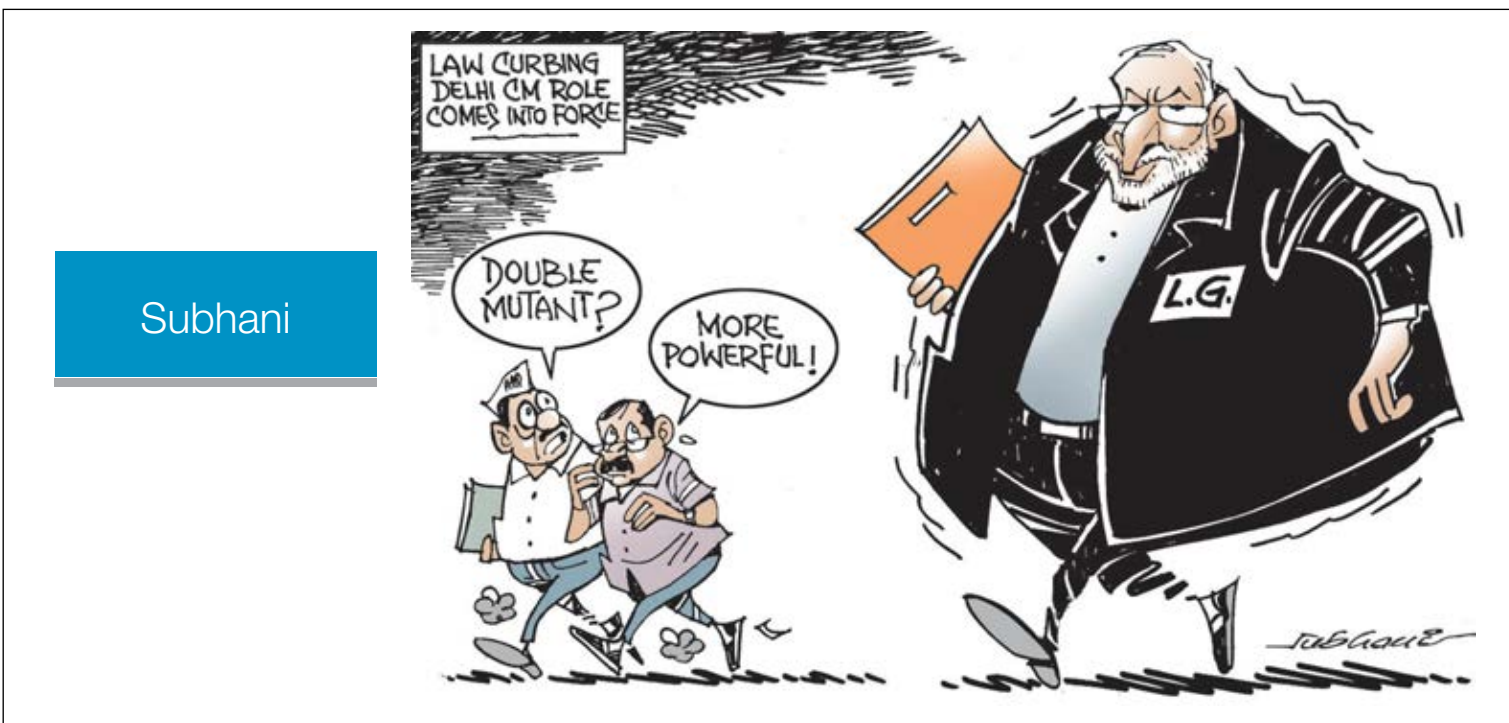
The Union government must rework its vaccination policy for the youth. Anything less than a universal vaccination programme for them is akin to discounting their right to life, and is unacceptable. Technology can be a tool for people to access it but it cannot be the sole determinant. Illiterate people have an equal right to the jab, and it is the government's job to ensure it. The financial burden must be borne by the Union government that has sought, and been granted, funds by Parliament for the purpose. Anything less will amount to undermining the survival of the future of the nation. The government can decide.

Stop politics over oxygen

In the dire emergency caused by the coronavirus pandemic liquid medical oxygen has become a crucial national resource. The order to open Vedanta's Sterlite Copper smelter plant on the southern coast of Tamil Nadu and produce oxygen for medical use is a logical step to augment availability. When production is scaled up to around 1,000 MT a day, it can add about 10 per cent to national capacity. To facilitate such production is a national task and all politicians of Tamil Nadu, including the head honchos of the government of the day who opposed the oxygen operations in court, should climb off their hobby horse and cooperate in using that oxygen to help people sickened by the virus to breathe.

An oxygen crisis exists not in terms of production but in transportation as the nation has an inadequate number of tankers. It is a logistical nightmare to be able to rush lifesaving LMO to every nook and corner of the country and oxygen will soon be required everywhere in the face of the bewildering scale and speed of the spread of the disease. To undertake supply on a war footing is the executive's job but it should not be hampered by the play of politics in deciding how much oxygen will go to which state and when. The people are fed up already with political leaders playing havoc with a fair and equitable distribution of oxygen, life-saving drugs, ventilators, hospital and ICU beds, besides vaccines.

The First World has responded to India's crisis by sending oxygen concentrators, non-invasive ventilators and various other medical equipment that can help in the crisis. Political leaders and the executive give directions to must ensure fair distribution so that patients can be helped in time and the mortality rate kept down. Having lost the battle against a second wave we must first ensure that the gravely ill receive treatment in time. The politics over who is right or wrong can wait and it's time to rein in ill-conceived comments about arresting those who criticise governments or spread rumours



Subhani

India's grim reality out in the open as myths busted



Karan Thapar

As I See It

It wasn't so long ago that we convinced ourselves we are a superpower or, at least, one that's definitely in the making. We believed the evidence was long and compelling — the world's largest democracy, the sixth biggest economy, a 1.38 billion-strong domestic market, excellence in IT and the West's back office, an unbeatable cricket team, the home of Bollywood, one of the most successful diasporas and, of course, a Prime Minister on first name terms with all the world's top leaders. The RSS was convinced this was because we are a Hindu majority nation. The BJP was more specific. It was because of Narendra Modi.

Well, an invisible virus has punctured the bubble of our pretensions. As Covid-19 increases by nearly 400,000 cases a day — mathematically projected to possibly reach a million a day in two weeks' time — our friends have shut their doors on us. From Paris to Hong Kong, Canberra to Dubai, flights from India have been barred. Meanwhile, our "enemies" are reaching out. China has offered assistance. Charities in Pakistan were the first to write to our PM. Days later Imran Khan tweeted his offer to help. This is, of course, kindness but it's likely to rattle the government.

So what went wrong? There are many answers but the one that concerns me is the argument which suggests that we brought this on ourselves. I'm referring both to our earlier belief that we're something special and have conquered the virus and also our irresponsible refusal to plan and prepare for the

worst. In other words, our judgment. And before I go into detail, let me add it's judgment, more than size and power, that one expects of a superpower. That's where we have failed.

First, after the number of new infections started to remarkably, though inexplicably, shrink from September onwards, we claimed victory. Just as Europe and America were experiencing second or even third waves, far worse than the first, we convinced ourselves that our fate would be different. In January, Prime Minister Modi told the World Economic Forum that India has "defeated" Covid. Three weeks later, on February 21, the BJP passed the following resolution: "It can be said with pride that India not only defeated Covid under the able, sensitive, committed and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but also infused in all its citizens the confidence to build an "Atma Nirbhar Bharat".

The party unequivocally hails its leadership for introducing India to the world as a proud and victorious nation in the fight against Covid." In March, the health minister, who is himself a doctor, added his personal touch. He claimed to the Delhi Medical Association that "we are in the endgame of the Covid-19 pandemic in India".

This misplaced, unscientific, irrational and downright foolish conviction that we are special is the cause of the crisis we face today. As a result, we did not plan for a second wave. In fact, we shut down the special facilities created to handle the first. Empowered committees that recommended

enhancing oxygen production in April 2020 were ignored. Even when it was decided to do so, the tenders were not placed for eight months. Time, we felt certain, was on our side. So, of the 162 plants sanctioned by the health ministry, only 33 have been installed. Consequently, today, we're forced to shut down virtually all industrial use of oxygen while we are desperately trying to import 50,000 tonnes from any country willing to sell it quickly.

I'll touch on only one more example of our irresponsible incompetence. We boast of being the vaccine manufacturer of the world. Yet with our eyes wide open, we failed to ensure we can produce enough to vaccinate ourselves. Once again, the explanation is we either didn't bother to plan or weren't capable of doing it intelligently.

Consider this — as far back as May or June last year we knew that if 75 per cent of our people were to be given a two-dose vaccine, we would need two billion jabs. That was elementary maths. We also knew that our existing vaccine production capacity could not produce anywhere near this number in the time-frame that we required. So, what did we do? A superpower would have immediately increased its capacity. Doubled or tripled it, if necessary. We did nothing. We blithely carried on as if there was no looming problem. Now we have a crisis. And, once again, the world we are so eager to impress simply cannot understand how we let this happen.

The picture which the world sees of India is not that of a potential superpower but an inept and flailing Third World country struggling but unable to handle a crisis it has inflicted on itself

Consequently, the picture which the world sees of India is not that of a potential superpower but an inept and flailing Third World country struggling but unable to handle a crisis it has inflicted on itself. Hospitals are paralysed by the lack of beds and oxygen, patients are dying in ambulances and, sometimes, on the streets, pavements and open fields have been converted into crematoria, and everywhere we have helpless, crying, forsaken citizens, with no one to turn to.

This is the grim image the Western press now has of our country. But as far as our government is concerned, it's even worse. Because all of this is compounded by the dawning realisation that the leader they once thought was strong and decisive now appears to have been unconcerned by the challenge he faced or incapable of responding to it. Indeed, his own behaviour suggests he was either ignorant of how bad things could become or unwilling to believe it.

So, today, the world is horrified by what they see of India and deeply dismayed. The bragadocio has been stripped aside. The exposed reality is ugly and impossible to hide.

Finally, there's also how we view ourselves. Our confidence in being special seems to have disappeared. This is not the exclusiveness that we sought. Television and the social media have brought home a different truth. We've been reduced to a nation that's more than frightened, we're in panic. The dream of achieving India's inevitable and irresistible destiny has metamorphosed into a nightmare where we know our own incompetence and irresponsibility is what haunts us. We long to wake up to a bright and beautiful morning. But when will this sleep of torment end?

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

KUDOS TO SC

The Supreme Court of India appears to be the saviour and redeemer of the country when passing through a crisis of high magnitude. It had saved the country on many an occasion through its bold judicial fiat and now it has come to the rescue of Covid suffering patients by ordering the opening of Sterlite for the strict purpose of production of oxygen. The SC has also ordered that the oxygen produced there should straight go to the Central pool who will supply the cylinders to the states according to their needs. A better directive than the above cannot be issued by any other Court than the SC's present directive. The SC has proved again that the judges are concerned more with the humanitarian aspect of any case than with the dry conditions of strict laws. Kudos to the wise men of the apex court.

Marudamalalayan, Coimbatore

BLOCKING CRITICISM

The extraordinary exuberance with the BJP ruling dispensation at the Centre reaches out to social media platforms including Twitter to remove posts that are highly critical of its inept handling of the catastrophic second wave of Covid-19 pandemic is quite baffling. What needs to be noted is that Facebook blocked posts tagged 'Resign Modi' for hours before restoring it later. Twitter removed posts critical of the union government citing the request of the government in this regard. All this can hardly shut the door for people and the media, both at home and abroad, from questioning and holding it accountable for its ineptitude and tepid response to a health crisis of epic proportions. The current dispensation at the Centre, known for displaying an exemplary commitment to muscular/hyper-nationalism and labelling its critics as anti-nationals is pulling out all stops to deflect criticism and obscure facts.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

WHAT IS A RARE CASE?

As a student of criminology, I want to know what is considered as rarest of rare cases for the courts to award capital punishment in the country. Madras HC has recently changed the death sentence awarded to a youth by the trial court for rape cum murder of a minor girl, just seven years old, as a life sentence stating that the crime cannot be considered as a rarest of rare cases to award capital punishment. The details of the happening and the brutality of the crime would normally chill the blood of any person with normal mind and sense and would have boiled the blood of the victim's parents and kin. The extreme torture was committed on a small girl who would not know even what is meant by sex by a brute whose brain was filled with no other motive except sex irrespective of the age of the victim. I wonder if this cannot be construed as rarest of rare cases of extreme criminality.

B.S. Jayaraman Iyer, Coimbatore

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Mahir Ali

How far is Biden ready to go on guns, minimum wage, healthcare?

It is somewhat disconcerting to find myself almost in agreement with US Senator Lindsey Graham, a particularly odious representative of the Republican leadership that propped up the Trump presidency for four years, and seems determined to perpetuate its sordid legacy.

But he was on the ball when he told *Fox News* Sunday: "AOC said his first 100 days exceeded her expectations. That's all you need to know."

Of course, what he meant by "That's all you need to know" is vastly different from the way many others would interpret New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's statement last Friday that the Biden administration has "definitely exceeded the expectations that progressives had".

When AOC entered the US Congress in 2018, contrary to the primary desires of the Democratic Party establishment — alongside Squad-mates Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib and Ayanna Pressley — she came across as a breath of fresh air: a legislator determined to challenge not just the egregious excesses of the Trump

administration but also the unsavoury realities of her own party's inclinations.

She had already done her bit by then for the unsuccessful Bernie Sanders campaign in 2016, and she did it again four years later. Last year's Sanders campaign, although hobbled again by the Democratic establishment, was more successful. At least in the sense that Biden advisers collaborated with Sanders associates in drawing up the election agenda.

Nonetheless, in the run-up to last November's election, it was logical to assume that, if elected, Joe Biden would go his own way — striving for bipartisanship, as was his wont during three decades in the Senate, and quite possibly achieving very little.

However, Mr Biden has managed to go reasonably far in his first 100 days — admittedly an arbitrary criterion that has been in vogue since the initial phase of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1933 inauguration. FDR assumed power during the depths of the 1930s depression, and tried to reboot the US economy through an unprecedented injection of govern-

ment resources.

It was a partial success — it actually took a world war to resurrect the US economy. Biden's efforts in the wake of Covid-19 have been compared with FDR's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, thwarted in large part by Johnson's Vietnam woes.

For all his flaws, Johnson did manage to legislate some of the most substantial provisions against racial discrimination since Lincoln's Emancipation Act 100 years earlier. Ever since, though, there have been efforts to claw back the advances, and Republican-guided voter suppression reached a new level of sorts in Georgia recently, after the state's voters gave Biden a tentative majority in the US Senate.

The President, meanwhile, has gone further in his stimulus packages than some of his detractors on the left expected, and has facilitated a considerably more substantial role in the Senate for Sanders than anyone might have anticipated. A partial consequence has been that, unlike in 2009 when the advent of Barack

Obama was followed by far too much of the "rescue package" being restricted to the economic culprits on Wall Street, the latest stimulus has sustained poorer households.

These are temporary measures, though. There is the prospect of a massive infrastructure package that would also seek to redress, in some measure, America's reliance on fossil fuels. Mr Biden recently presided over a virtual global summit ostensibly aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions more sharply than spelt out in the Paris agreement of 2015, but it has been pointed out that whereas the current administration is willing to pursue its goal through concrete measures, it has no objection to the rest of the world chasing the task through market mechanisms, which have hitherto proved grossly inadequate.

The Biden administration is also struggling with border immigration measures, and with foreign policy more generally: ties with China and Russia, in particular, remain dismal. The proposed withdrawal from Afghanistan, welcome at many lev-

els, is likely to effectively entail handing back power to the Taliban — without any official recognition of why the invasion 20 years ago was a grievous error.

But let's put foreign policy aside, even though US neocolonialism is an intrinsic part of America's postwar identity, not least in its Latin American "backyard". However even domestically, there's little hope of instituting a minimum wage of only \$15, let alone the kind of universal healthcare that is routine in comparable nations, or the kind of gun control that might reduce the regular mass shootings.

These three straightforward objectives are not even on Biden's agenda. And some of the items on his wish list face resistance not just from mindless Republicans but also from Democratic senators such as Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema.

Yes, Joe Biden has exceeded expectations in his first 100 days, but where he will — or can — go from here remains an open question.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,765.94	0.06
Nifty 50	14,894.90	0.20
S&P 500*	4,189.98	0.16
Dollar (₹)	74.03	0.45
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.21	0.06
Euro (₹)	89.72	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,472.61	0.13
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.02	1.11
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.059	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.675	0.055

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IFC to invest \$40 million in Upgrad

Online up-skilling platform Upgrad has concluded a funding round of \$40 million (about Rs 290 crore) from the World Bank arm IFC, bringing down the promoters' holding in the firm to 75 per cent. It had recently secured a \$120 million funding from Temasek Holdings. The equity infusion of \$160 million in two quick rounds takes the startup closer to unicorn status, valuing the six-year-old company at \$850 million.

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■ Q4, FY21 results can be reported till June 30 Companies get more time to file earnings

New Delhi, April 29: The Sebi on Thursday gave 45 days more for companies to file their fourth-quarter results and an additional one-month time to submit their annual results, as the regulator eased compliance requirements amidst the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The move comes after the regulator received representations from listed entities, industry associations and market participants requesting extension of timelines for various filings and relaxation from certain compliance obligations due to the virus situation and restrictions imposed by various state governments.

With respect to quarterly financial results, companies have been given 45 days till June 30, 2021 to file their March quarter results, the Sebi said in a circular.

Under the rules, companies are required to file their financial results within 45 days from the end of a quarter. As per that time frame, the deadline was May 15.

In the case of submitting results for the year ending March 31, the watchdog has extended the time till June 30 from the due date of May 30.

Normally, listed companies are required to file their annual results within 60 days from the end of a financial year.

In addition, a relaxation of one month till June 30 has been given for filing yearly secretarial compliance report.



Along with financial results, the Sebi has given a 45-day relaxation for companies to file their fourth-quarter statement of deviation or variation in use of funds report as well as an additional one-month time to submit their annual report in this regard.

In a separate circular, the regulator has eased compliance requirement for entities that have listed their debt securities or bonds.

Sebi said it has decided to grant relaxation to listed entities that have listed their non-convertible debentures (NCDs), non-convertible redeemable preference shares (NCRPS) and commercial papers (CPs) as well as municipal debt securities, from some compliance requirements.

The regulator has extended the deadline by 45 days till June 30 for submitting half-yearly financial results for NCDs, NCRPS and CPs while it has given another 30 days till June 30, for filing annual earnings.

Also, it has extended timeline by 30 days for fil-

ing annual results for entities that have listed their bonds under the Sebi Municipal Bonds norms.

Listed entities have been permitted to use digital signature certifications for authentication of filings/submissions made to the stock exchanges under the Sebi (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations for all filings until December 31, 2021.

The Sebi also extended timelines for compliance with certain regulatory requirements by trading members, clearing members and depository participants. The deadline for maintaining call recordings of orders or instructions received from clients has been extended till June 30, 2021.

The regulator has given time till June-end to brokers for operating the trading terminals from designated alternate locations. The Sebi has extended time till July 31 for submission of internal audit report and net worth certificate for the second half.

— PTI

‘Fight’ for chips may drag on till 2023, says Nokia CEO

KATI POHJANPALO APRIL 29

The global shortage of semiconductors that's plaguing automakers, data centre-owners and electronics manufacturers has turned into a "fight" that risks dragging on until 2023, according to the chief executive of Nokia Oyj.

"There's a fight going on. The shortage in general in the market could continue a year or even two," Pekka Lundmark said in an interview on Thursday. "This is not going to go away anytime soon."

Companies from Apple Inc. to Samsung Electronics Company and Honda Motor Company have flagged the chip supply shortage. Nokia management is spending growing amounts of time trying to address the problem, though the impact on the company's operations is "not material" for now, said Lundmark.

"You have to be in daily contact with your suppliers, make sure you are important to them," he said later in an interview with Anna Edwards on Bloomberg TV. "It is things like how important you are in the big picture, how strong your relationships are and how you manage expectations."

Chip shortage would complicate Lundmark's efforts to get Nokia back in the 5G game.

— Bloomberg

Gold demand jumps 37% in March quarter

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 29

Driven by consumer sentiments, gold demand jumped 37 per cent in the March quarter. However, demand will be dampened in the current quarter despite Akshaya Tritiya and the wedding season falling within the April-June period.

The demand for gold in January-March 2021 was 140 tonnes, up by 37 per cent compared to the low base of 102 tonnes in the same quarter of last year. Historically gold has seen March quarter demand of 160 and 190 tonnes in some of the years.

Jewellery demand was up by 39 per cent at 102.5 tonnes and investment demand by 34 per cent at 37.5 tonnes. Bar and coin demand saw the strongest first quarter since 2015.

"India's Q1 2021 gold



demand rose 37 per cent to 140 tonnes on the back of Covid containment and positive sentiment following the start of the vaccination programme. A combination of softening gold prices, buoying consumer sentiment following sharp pick-up in economic activity and return of social activities like weddings supported a 39 per cent growth in gold jewellery demand at 102.5 tonnes," said P. R. Somasundaram, managing director India, World Gold Council.

The average domestic

gold price of Rs 47,131 per 10 gm was 14 per cent higher against the same quarter last year, but was 6 per cent lower than the December quarter. It was 16 per cent lower than the August 2020 peak of Rs 56,000/10gm.

According to WGC, net bullion imports in the March quarter was 301 tonnes against 83.1 tonnes in Q1 2020, an increase of 262 per cent. Part of the imports was also meant for the Akshaya Tritiya and wedding season sales in the June quarter.

However, both these gold-buying events are expected to be lacklustre due to the surge in Covid-19 cases and lock-down and restrictions in some of the key markets.

"The outlook for the coming quarter is, however, cautious. As lock-downs are re-imposed in various regions," added Somasundaram.

HUL reports robust volume growth

New Delhi, April 29: FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) on Thursday reported a 13 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,190 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, riding on strong volume growth across categories. HUL had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,938 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Consolidated total income stood at Rs 12,542 crore against Rs 12,235 crore a year ago.

During the quarter, HUL

said it witnessed an "underlying volume growth of 16 per cent". Home care category saw a growth of 15 per cent driven by a robust recovery in fabric wash, while household care continued its strong performance delivering double-digit growth.

Foods and refreshment segment grew by 36 per cent, the company said, adding, "all our tea brands continue to grow in high double-digits. Ketchups, soups and ice creams also performed well with dou-

ble-digit growths".

"Nutrition volumes grew in double digits and we launched Rs 2 sachets in Horlicks and Boost. Our goal remains to drive penetration in this category," HUL said. Beauty and personal care grew by 20 per cent.

For the fiscal 2020-21, consolidated net profit was at Rs 7,999 crore compared to Rs 6,756 crore in 2019-20, a growth of 18 per cent. Consolidated total income was at Rs 47,438 crore versus Rs 40,415 crore. — PTI

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

AMAZON TO RAISE PAY FOR OVER 5 LAKH WORKERS

New York: Amazon said Wednesday that it plans to give more than 5,00,000 of its workers a raise as it seeks to attract new workers.

The online shopping giant, which already pays new hires at least \$15 an hour, said it will start increasing pay between 50 cents an hour to \$3 an hour starting next month.

Those getting raises include warehouse workers, who pack and ship orders, as well as those who work in Amazon's package sorting centers and other facilities.

Amazon said the pay raise is part of its push to hire more workers. The company has needed more people to get orders to shoppers during the pandemic as Americans increasingly shop online.

It hired 5,00,000 people in 2020 alone, bringing its total workforce to nearly 1.3 million people worldwide.

The pay announcement also comes after a failed union push at an Alabama warehouse, which put a national spotlight on working conditions at Amazon.

POPULATION GREW IN 2020 SAYS CHINA

Beijing: China's population grew last year, the government said on Thursday, following a report that a census might have found a surprise decline, possibly adding to downward pressure on economic growth.

The National Bureau of Statistics gave no details in its one-sentence statement and said the population figure would be reported later. But the unusual decision to respond to the report by The Financial Times reflected the issue's political sensitivity.

The Financial Times said people familiar with China's 2020 census expect it to show the population, which edged above 1.4 billion in 2019, declined for the first time since famine in 1959-61 killed millions of people.

The ruling Communist Party has enforced birth limits to restrain population growth since 1980.

Prez Biden calls white supremacy ‘terrorism’

Says global terror networks have largely moved beyond US

Washington, April 29: In his first joint address to the US Congress, President Joe Biden identified white supremacy as a domestic terror threat that America must remain vigilant against.

While discussing his decision to withdraw American troops from war-torn Afghanistan, Biden noted global terror networks have largely moved beyond the country and that white supremacists posed a bigger threat than foreign actors.

"We won't ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to our homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism," Biden said in the House chamber, which just three months ago was attacked by the supporters of former president Donald Trump in an effort to overthrow the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

"White supremacy is terrorism, and we're not going to ignore that either. My fellow Americans, look, we have to come together to heal the soul of this nation, the president said. In remarks, Biden acknowledged the January 6 attempted insurrection at the Capitol, saying it was an existential crisis that tested democracy.

"As we gather here tonight, the images of a violent mob assaulting this Capitol desecrating our democracy remain vivid in all our minds. Lives were put at risk many of your lives. Lives were lost. Extraordinary courage was summoned. The insurrection was an existential crisis a test of whether our democracy could survive. It did," Biden said. But he underscored that "the struggle is far from over" and that "the question of whether our democracy will long endure is both ancient and urgent." — PTI

US on the move again, says Biden

Washington, April 29: President Joe Biden triumphantly declared that the United States is "on the move again" in a rousing speech to Congress on Wednesday, calling for trillions of dollars to rebuild the post-pandemic US middle class and give new life to "forgotten" workers.

Lauding the success of mass vaccination against Covid-19, Biden told Congress and the nation on primetime television that "in America, we always get up."

"America is ready for takeoff," he said. "We are working again, dreaming again, discovering again, leading the world again."

Biden, who was celebrating the eve of his 100th day in office, called the vaccine rollout one of "the greatest logistical achievements" in US history.

But Biden quickly pivoted to insisting that this

national effort must now focus on rebuilding the economy and fighting inequality with "the largest jobs plan since World War II."

In a line that could have come from his populist Republican predecessor Donald Trump, Biden said working-class Americans had been ignored, while the top one percent got richer, and that his plans would give them a chance.

"You feel left behind and forgotten in an economy that's rapidly changing. Let me speak directly to you," Biden said, before going on to promise Americans "good-paying jobs that can't be outsourced."

In every aspect of the primetime television speech, Biden echoed his mantra that "America is back" — both in recovering from the Coronavirus disaster and in putting the turbulence of the Trump era behind. — AFP

U.S. TO MAINTAIN STRONG MILITARY IN INDO-PACIFIC

Washington, April 29: Declaring that "America is rising anew" under his leadership, President Joe Biden has told China that the US will maintain a "strong" military presence in the Indo-Pacific "not to start conflict, but to prevent one" as Beijing became more assertive in the strategically vital region. Using his maiden address to the joint session of Congress on the eve of his 100th day in office to make a strong case for huge new investments and tax reforms to overhaul the US economy and rebuild the middle class, Biden said, "we have acted to restore the people's faith in our democracy to deliver."

In his 65-minute address, Biden spent the majority of his time to discuss his economic and infrastructure plans for the nation, his foreign policy vision for America's role in the world and the Coronavirus pandemic. — PTI

Harris, Pelosi make history at first address to Congress

Washington, April 29: Vice President Kamala Harris and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have made history as they shared the stage during President Joe Biden's first joint session to Congress, marking the first time that two women sat behind a US president during an address to Congress.

Harris, 56, who is also the first Indian-American and also the first woman

of colour woman to become America's Vice President, sat behind the president's right side as he delivered his first speech to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday night.

Pelosi, 81, who became the first woman in her role in 2007, sat behind the President's left.

Harris entered the House chamber on Wednesday night to a round of

applause for Biden's address to Congress.

When asked about the significance of two women sitting behind the President for the address, Harris replied, "Normal," to reporters in the Capitol as she led the Senate delegation to the House chamber. Asked her view on the historic moment, Pelosi said, "It's about time."

— PTI

US advises its citizens to leave India as cases spike

Washington, April 29: The US has advised its citizens not to travel to India or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so and authorised the voluntary departure of family members of its employees in the Indian missions, saying the access to all types of medical care is becoming severely limited in the country amid a massive surge in Covid-19 cases.

The US has put India on Level 4 Travel Advisory, the highest level issued by the Department of State. The current Level 4 Travel Advisory asks US citizens not to travel to India or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so due to the current health situation in the country. The Department of State also authorised the voluntary departure of family members of US government employees in Mission India.

US Embassy New Delhi and Consulates General Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai will remain open and continue to provide emergency consular services.

"#India: Access to medical care is severely limited due to Covid-19 cases. US citizens wishing to depart should use available commercial options now. Daily direct flights to the US and flights via Paris and Frankfurt are available," the State Department tweeted.

In a health alert, the US Embassy in New Delhi said: "Access to all types of medical care is becoming severely limited in India due to the surge in Covid-19 cases."

"We urge US citizens to enrol in STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Programme) at step.state.gov in order to receive critical information from the Embassy related to health and safety in India," it said.

It asked American citizens to visit the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website for the latest information on travel restrictions.

"New cases and deaths

EU inches closer to Covid certificate

Brussels, April 29: The European Parliament on Thursday agreed its position on how a Covid certificate should work, bringing the EU closer to launching a document to open up travel within the bloc.

Europe intends to have a certificate showing the bearer's vaccination status, Covid test results and/or evidence of having survived the disease up and running in June, in time for the continent's summer vacation period.

While technical work has been ongoing to ensure the certificate is recognised across all 27 EU member states, final details have to be worked out involving capitals, the European Commission and the parliament.

The first change MEPs have called for to a commission proposal is the

name. Instead of a "digital green certificate" they want to call it an "EU Covid-19 certificate" — to avoid any implication of it becoming a "vaccine passport".

They said the document should "neither serve as travel document nor become a precondition to exercise the right to free movement" and should only be in use for 12 months.

Stressing that the certificate should not result in discrimination, parliament demanded that Covid-19 tests for travel should be free of charge. The commission has said that this issue should be left up to member states.

The parliament's negotiation position was announced on Thursday following a vote late Wednesday, with 540 MEPs in favour, 119 against, and 31 abstentions. — AFP

W.H.O.: POOR NATIONS GAVE 0.3% OF SHOTS

Lisbon, April 29: The head of the World Health Organisation says more than 1 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered globally but 82 per cent of them were given in high- and upper-middle-income countries.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says just 0.3 per cent of all vaccines administered so far were given to people in low-income countries.

"That's the reality," Tedros told an online health conference hosted by Portugal on Thursday. — AP

SHORT TAKES

Umpire, referee pull out of IPL

New Delhi: India's top umpire Nitin Menon has pulled out of the ongoing IPL after his family was struck by a couple of Covid-19 cases, while his Australian counterpart Paul Reiffel's attempts at leaving hit a dead end because of his country's suspension of air travel with India. It is learnt that Menon, a resident of Indore, has left the IPL bio-bubble after his wife and mother tested positive for Covid-19. Match referee Manu Nayyar too has left the bio-bubble in Ahmedabad following the death of his mother on Wednesday night. In Reiffel's case, the Australian government's imposition of a travel ban on flights to and from India in the wake of the rising COVID-19 cases here led to him being unable to leave the bubble after initial information suggested that he has made the move. — *PTI*

RR, DC, Sachin in Covid relief cash

New Delhi: IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals on Thursday said it has raised ₹7.5 crore to provide immediate support to people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic through its foundation. Delhi Capitals also on Thursday pledged ₹1.5 crore in support of the national capital's fight against the pandemic. "Players along with the team owners and team management have come forward to raise funds and have been working along with the Rajasthan Royals' philanthropic arm Royal Rajasthan Foundation (RRF) in partnership with the British Asian Trust (BAT)," a release issued by the franchise said. Meanwhile, Sachin Tendulkar donated ₹1 crore to procure oxygen concentrators for Covid-19 patients. The health-care system is crumbling due to the crisis with hospitals struggling to provide oxygen and crucial medicines to the patients. — *PTI*

Hasan, Shaheen skittle Zim for 176

Harare: Pakistan pace pair Hasan Ali and Shaheen Shah Afridi shared eight wickets between them to dismiss Zimbabwe for 176 on the opening day of the first Test in Harare on Thursday. Hasan rocked the top order with figures of 4/53 while Afridi polished off the tail with 4/43 as the home batsmen struggled to cope with the pace generated on a slow pitch at Harare Sports Club. Debutant Roy Kaia stood firm in the post-lunch session, top-scoring with 48 before falling leg-before to Hasan while Donald Tiripano chipped in with 28 and Milton Shumba, also playing in his first Test, scored 27. In the first session Hasan struck twice to give Pakistan an excellent start. — *AFP*
Brief scores: Zimbabwe 176 in 59.1 overs (R. Kaia 48; Shaheen Shah Afridi 4/43, Hasan Ali 4/53) vs Pakistan.

Five up for India women coach job

New Delhi: Former chief selector Hemlata Kala is among five female candidates who have applied to become the Indian women's team's head coach, a position that has been held by men since 2017. Mamatha Maben, Jaya Sharma, Suman Sharma and Nooshin Al Khadeer are the others who have presented their candidature for the job. Among the men, incumbent W.V. Raman has reappointed after his term ended with the home series loss to South Africa in March.

Live on TV

CRICKET

IPL: Punjab Kings vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FORMULA ONE

Portuguese Grand Prix: Practice 1 from 3.55 pm, Practice 2 from 7.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Southampton vs Leicester City from 12.30 am (Saturday) on Star Sports Select 2, HD

QUINTESSENCE

Sublime De Kock's unbeaten 70 brings Mumbai back to winning ways

New Delhi, April 29: Opener Quinton de Kock roared back to form with a blistering 50-ball 70 as Mumbai Indians beat Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets in their IPL game here on Thursday.

Put in to bat, Rajasthan rode on 42 by skipper Sanju Samson and Jos Buttler's 41 to post a competitive 171 for four but their efforts were overshadowed by de Kock, who struck six fours and two maximums to complete the task in 18.3 overs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. Krunal Pandya also played a useful cameo, smashing 39 off 26 balls with the help of two fours and as many sixes.

Mumbai openers Rohit Sharma (14) and de Kock put up 49 for the first wicket. The South African fetched his first boundary, a cover drive, and then launched into left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) for a four and a maximum. While Rohit played his trademark pull-shot to get a six in the fifth over.

De Kock hammered Chris Morris (2/33) for another maximum but Rohit perished in the sixth over, giving a dolly to Chetan Sakariya at mid-on.

Leg-spinner Rahul Tewatia (0/30) conceded three boundaries in the seventh over, two by Suryakumar Yadav (16; 3x4) and one by de Kock, as Mumbai got 14 runs.

However, Morris brought back Rajasthan by removing Surya, as Mumbai slipped to 83/2.

Krunal joined de Kock, who completed his half-century in 35 balls and then got a life. De Kock and Krunal added 63 runs for the third wicket and brought the side closer to a win. — *PTI*



Quinton de Kock of Mumbai Indians plays a shot against Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Thursday. — *IPL*

PUNJAB HAVE TASK CUT OUT AGAINST RCB

Ahmedabad, April 29: Punjab Kings will have to play out of their skins to get their stuttering campaign back on track when they face a high-flying Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League here on Friday.

Smarting from a five-wicket defeat at the hands of Kolkata Knight Riders, it will not be an easy task for a struggling Punjab side to stand up to the challenge thrown by a RCB team, which has been firing on all cylinders.

Following four losses and two wins, Punjab are currently placed sixth in the league table with four points, whereas RCB are second with 10 points from five wins, only behind Chennai Super Kings on net run rate.

Apart from the sole loss against CSK, RCB have emerged as strong contenders for a maiden IPL title, with many of their players striking form as the tournament progresses. In their six games, the K.L. Rahul-led side have gone on to make the three low totals batting first — 106, 120 and 123. — *PTI*

SCORECARD

Rajasthan Royals: Jos Buttler st de Kock b Rahul Chahar 41, Yashasvi Jaiswal c and b Rahul Chahar 32, Sanju Samson b Boult 42, Shivam Dube c and b Bumrah 35, David Miller not out 7, Riyan Parag not out 8. Extras (lb-2, w-3, nb-1) 6. **Total (for 4 wks, in 20 overs) 171.** **FoW:** 66-1, 91-2, 148-3, 158-4.

Bowler: Trent Boult 4-0-37-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-15-1, Jayant Yadav 3-0-37-0, Nathan Coulter-Nile 4-0-35-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-33-2, Krunal Pandya 1-0-12-0.

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma c Chetan Sakariya b Chris Morris 14, Quinton de Kock not out 70, Suryakumar Yadav c Jos Buttler b Chris Morris 16, Krunal

Pandya b Mustafizur 39, Kieron Pollard not out 16. Extras (lb-15, w-2) 17. **Total: (for 3 wks, in 18.3 overs) 172.** **FoW:** 49-1, 83-2, 146-3.

Bowler: Chetan Sakariya 3-0-18-0, Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-33-0, Mustafizur Rahman 3-3-0-37-1, Chris Morris 4-0-33-2, Rahul Tewatia 3-0-30-0, Shivam Dube 1-0-6-0.

VALLADOLID HOLD BILBAO TO STAY SAFE

Madrid, April 29: Valladolid twice came from behind to draw 2-2 with Athletic Bilbao and climb out of the Spanish league's relegation zone.

Shon Weissman scored an 85th-minute equaliser to give the visitors the point that lifted them to 17th place with five rounds left.

Valladolid are tied on 30 points with 18th-place Elche but are ahead on goal difference.

Athletic took the lead through Jon Morcillo in the 14th before Fabián Orellana levelled the match in the 70th and Raúl García put the hosts ahead again in the 76th.

The draw extended Valladolid's winless streak in the league to seven matches.

Athletic were looking to keep the momentum from a win over leaders Atlético Madrid on Sunday. They sit in ninth place and still have an outside chance of qualifying for the Europa League.

The match was originally scheduled to be played two weeks ago. It was postponed because of Athletic's participation in the Copa del Rey final. Barcelona can take over the league lead for the first time on Thursday with a win against Granada. — *AP*

Mahrez magic lifts Man City past PSG

Paris, April 29: Manchester City are in pole position to reach the Champions League final after coming from behind to beat Paris Saint-Germain 2-1 away in the first leg of their blockbuster semi-final on Wednesday, with Riyad Mahrez curling in the winner from a free-kick.

Marquinhos had powered in a header to give PSG an early lead and the deserved advantage at half-time at the Parc des Princes.

However, City skipper Kevin De Bruyne's cross dropped in to pull City level just after the hour and Mahrez beat Keylor Navas from a 71st-minute free-kick to complete the turnaround, giving Pep Guardiola's side the advantage going into next Tuesday's return in Manchester.

"The last 10 minutes of the first half was good and the second half was excellent in every department. We scored two goals away which is so important, but we have a hard job to do in six days," Guardiola told BT Sport.

"In general, so satisfied for the performance but it is halfway. We still have 90 more minutes to beat them and PSG is a team where anything can happen."

After starting so well, PSG lost their way after half-time and had Idrissa Gana Gueye sent off in the 77th minute as a



Manchester City's Riyad Mahrez (left) celebrates after scoring against Paris Saint-Germain during their Champions League first leg semi-final in Paris on Wednesday. — *AFP*

shocking tackle on Ilkay Gundogan earned the midfielder a straight red card.

Having already failed to win at home to Manchester United, Barcelona and Bayern in this season's Champions League, the Parisians face an uphill struggle in England if they are to reach the final for the sec-

ond year running. It is, then, first blood to Emirati-backed City against Qatar-owned PSG in a tie that is also a battle of competing Gulf nations. "We conceded two stupid goals," Marquinhos admitted to broadcaster RMC Sport.

Of the return leg, he added: "There is no point in us going there if we

don't believe we can turn it around."

After all the money pumped in by their owners from Abu Dhabi, City are eyeing a first ever Champions League final, and this was their first appearance in the semi-finals since 2016, when they defeated PSG in the last eight.

However, PSG can still

be optimistic about their prospects after sensational away performances against Barcelona and Bayern in the last two rounds. PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino is hoping to once again get the better of Guardiola, just as he did when his Tottenham side beat City in the quarter-finals in 2019. — *AFP*

IPL POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
CSK	6	5	1	0	10	+1.475
DC	7	5	2	0	10	+0.466
RCB	6	5	1	0	10	+0.089
MI	6	3	3	0	6	+0.071
KKR	7	2	5	0	4	-0.494
PBKS	6	2	4	0	4	-0.608
RR	6	2	4	0	4	-0.69
SRH	6	1	5	0	2	-0.264

ORANGE CAP		
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	311	
Faf du Plessis, CSK	270	
Prithvi Shaw, DC	269	

PURPLE CAP		
Harshal Patel, RCB	17	
Avesh Khan, DC	13	
Rahul Chahar, MI	11	

Sharp Shaw cuts KKR down to size

Ahmedabad, April 29: Prithvi Shaw's quickfire 82 off just 41 balls helped Delhi Capitals ease past Kolkata Knight Riders by seven wickets in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday. DC chased down the target in 16.3 overs.

The 21-year-old Shaw smashed 11 fours and three sixes during his blazing knock. He was well-supported by experienced Shikhar Dhawan (46 off 47 balls) and shared 142 runs for the first wicket.

Pat Cummins was pick of the bowler for the losing side as he took 3/24.

Asked to bat first, Kolkata Knight Riders made 154 for six against the in-form team from Delhi.

Opener Shubman Gill regained some form with a 38-ball 43 but Knight Riders slipped to 82 for five before Andre Russell smashed 45 off 27 balls to take them past the 150-mark at the Narendra Modi Stadium here.

Among Delhi Capitals bowlers, the spin duo of Axar Patel (2/32) and Lalit

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Nitish Rana st Pant b Axar 15, Shubman Gill c Steven Smith b Avesh Khan 43, Rahul Tripathi c Lalit Yadav b Stoinis 19, Eoin Morgan c Steven Smith b Lalit Yadav 0, Sunil Narine b Lalit Yadav 0, Andre Russell not out 45, Dinesh Karthik lbw b Axar 14, Pat Cummins not out 11. Extras (lb-6, w-1) 7. **Total (for 6 wks, in 20 overs) 154.** **FoW:** 25-1, 69-2, 74-3, 75-4, 82-5, 109-6.
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 4-0-34-0, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-31-0, Axar Patel 4-0-32-2, Avesh Khan 4-0-31-1, Lalit Yadav 3-0-13-2, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-7-1.
Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c Rana b Cummins 82, Shikhar Dhawan lbw b Cummins 46, Rishabh Pant c Mavi b Cummins 16, Marcus Stoinis not out 6, Shimron Hetmyer not out 0. Extras (b-1, nb-1, w-4) 6. **Total (for 3 wks, in 16.3 overs) 156.** **FoW:** 1-132, 2-146, 3-150.
Bowling: Shivam Mavi 1-0-25-0, Varun 4-0-34-0, Prasidh Krishna 3.3-0-36-0, Sunil Narine 4-0-36-0, Pat Cummins 4-0-24-3.

Yadav (2/13) snared two wickets each, while Avesh Khan (1/31) captured one. — *PTI*

COVID | EFFECT

FC GOA COACH, FOREIGN STAFF LEAVE INDIA

Margao, April 29: Indian Super League side FC Goa on Thursday allowed their foreign staffers, including Spanish head coach Juan Ferrando and some footballers, to leave the country ahead of their last AFC Champions League match in view of the restrictions being imposed on flights from India globally.

As India grapples with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, several countries, including Australia, Italy and Germany, have imposed travel bans on India.

The club said that it was a "pre-emptive measure in view of recent policies being taken by European and other countries in regards to travellers from India".

"FC Goa would like to inform that the club's foreign contingent including the Head Coach and foreign staff have been advised to travel back home immediately," a club statement read.

"This comes as a pre-emptive measure in view of recent policies being taken by European and other countries in regards to travellers from India as the nation battles the second wave of Covid-19 which has engulfed the country," it added. — *PTI*

S. KOREA INOCULATES TOKYO-BOUND ATHLETES

Seoul, April 29: South Korea began administering fast-track Covid-19 vaccines on Thursday to athletes, coaches and others expected to attend the Tokyo Olympics.

The Korean Sport and Olympic Committee said the first group of about 100 people received the first doses at a state-run hospital in Seoul at the start of the country's prioritized vaccination program for its Olympic delegation. They will be given second shots in the coming weeks.

A total of 930 athletes, coaches, officials and other support staff will be vaccinated ahead of the Tokyo Games, which is set to open on July 23. Athletes can receive the vaccines if they have already qualified for the Olympics or are in qualifying tournaments, so some may get vaccinated but not attend the games. — *AP*

Stage set in Portugal for Lewis vs Max Act III

Portimao (Portugal), April 29: The third instalment of what is shaping up to be one of Formula One's finest title duels in years moves to Portugal's sun-blessed Algarve this weekend with Lewis Hamilton leading Max Verstappen by a single point.

That the seven-time champion tops the nascent drivers' standings is for once a surprise with Red Bull enjoying a rare speed superiority over the Mercedes.

But a Verstappen error contributed to Hamilton's

opening win in Bahrain and a timely safety car intervention played kindly into Hamilton's hands after an uncharacteristic mistake at Imola.

A probable pointless finish after planting his car in a gravel pit was almost magically transformed into second behind the Dutch driver, with a fastest lap giving him the slimmest of leads.

For Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff, Red Bull were guilty of failing to exploit their cars' evident speed advantage.

"To come away leading

● **For Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff, Red Bull were guilty of failing to exploit their cars' evident speed advantage.**

both championships almost felt like a get out of jail free card, because our rivals didn't maximise the opportunity we gave them," he told the German team's website.

"And it just proves what a challenging season we have ahead of us and how

quickly things can turn around in Formula One."

The Algarve International Circuit holds a special place in Hamilton's heart as it was here six months ago that he notched up his 92nd Grand Prix win to surpass Michael Schumacher as the most successful F1 driver of all time.

And the Portimao track can play a part in another personal milestone. If Hamilton heads the timesheets after Saturday's qualifying it will be his 100th pole. History beckons for

Verstappen too — with victory lifting him into the championship lead for the first time in his career.

Last time out's Emilia Romagna Grand Prix was a chaotic classic which saw Lando Norris boasting a sparkling third for McLaren but left Valtteri Bottas feeling bitter after a crash with the Williams of George Russell led to an angry exchange between the pair.

Another leaving Imola frustrated was Verstappen's new teammate Sergio Perez. — *AFP*