

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 25 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 38°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Chithirai 12
Tithi: Triyodashi
Star: Hastam
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.55 am
Zohar: 12.18 pm
Asar: 3.29 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.32 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.51 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.45 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.20 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+82,195)	(+398)
1,66,84,985	1,89,947

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+13,776)
TN: 10,51,487 13,395

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

14,64,49,809
DEATHS
3,102,936

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
219
worldometers.info

Indonesia navy declares lost sub sank after finding debris

Banyuwangi (Indonesia): Indonesia's navy on Saturday said items were found from a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sunk and cracked open, and that there was no hope of finding survivors. Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as the discovery of debris near the location of KRI Nanggala 402's last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof the vessel had sunk. Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing. Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali, "If it's an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 metres to 400 metres to 500 metres...If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar." — AP

COUNTER POINT



Now, every day is my day!

COVID 2.0 | 2

Don't panic, says health secretary



WORLD | 5

Biden: Atrocities against Armenians were genocide



SPORT | 8

CSK to meet RCB today



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India chokes; 20 more die in Delhi hospital

■ Hospitals forced to buy time by lowering O2 pressure

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

A day after 25 patients died at the Ganga Ram Hospital, one of the capital city's biggest and most high-profile health facilities, for want of oxygen, twenty people died at Delhi's Jaipur Golden Hospital, their lives ebbing away as the hospital waited for oxygen to be replenished, officials said on Saturday. The harrowing nightmare for Covid-19 patients and their families continued throughout the day despite several high-level meetings called by the Centre for the last couple days as hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Gujarat continued sending SOS messages for oxygen to the Centre and states governments. The Maharaja Agrasen Hospital approached the Delhi High Court. At the Jaipur Golden Hospital in southwest Delhi's Rohini locality, the worst fears came true. "Oxygen pressure has dipped as we are running out of stock," medical director D.K. Baluja said as news came in of its 20 patients dying through the night. He said the hospital has over 200 patients and at 10.45 am, only half-an-hour of oxygen was left. Hospital officials added that over 80 per cent of the patients in the hospital were on oxygen support and 35 were in the ICU. At Ganga Ram hospital, authorities struggled to avoid a repeat of the earlier day's tragedy. The hospital requires a minimum of 11,000 cubic metres of oxygen daily but was left with just 200 cubic metres when a tanker with 1.5 tonnes of oxygen arrived at 11.35 am, officials said. ■ P4



A Covid-19 patient receives free oxygen, provided by a Sikh organization at Indirapuram Gurudwara, in Ghaziabad, Saturday.

— PTI

Will hang all those who stop O2 trucks, warns Delhi HC

New Delhi, April 24: The Delhi High Court said on Saturday that if any official at the central, state or local administration was obstructing in the picking up or supply of oxygen, then it would "hang" that person. The observation by a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli came during hearing of a plea by Maharaja Agrasen Hospital over shortage of oxygen for seriously-ill Covid patients. The court told the Delhi government to give it one instance of who was obstructing the oxygen supply and said "we will hang that man".

"We will not spare anyone," the bench added. The court told the Delhi government to inform the Centre also about such officials of the local administration so that it could take action against them. The high court also asked the Centre when the 480 metric tonne (MT) of oxygen per day allocated for Delhi would see the light of the day. "You (Centre) had assured us (on April 21) that 480 MT per day will reach Delhi. Tell us when will it come? The 480 MT per day is still to see the light of the day," the court said. — PTI

HC flags state's unpreparedness

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 24

The Madras high court said on Saturday there must be collective responsibility for the worsening of the Covid-19 situation in the state and the apparent unpreparedness in facing the second wave. The government may be better off in arresting congregations wherever they are possible, Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said. ■ P3

Covaxin to cost ₹600 for states, ₹1200 in private

New Delhi, April 24: Bharat Biotech on Saturday said it would provide its Covid-19 vaccine, Covaxin, to state governments at Rs 600 per dosage. The Hyderabad-based vaccine major also said that it would provide the vaccine to private hospitals at Rs 1,200 per dosage. In a statement, Bharat Biotech chairman and managing director Krishna M. Ella said the company is supplying the vaccine to the central government at Rs 150 per dosage. "We would like to state that more than 50 per cent of our capacities have been reserved for central government supplies," Dr Ella said. Recovering the cost is essential in the journey of innovation towards other vaccines, he said.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

India on Saturday recorded 3,46,787 new cases of Covid-19 and 2,624 deaths, both the figures being a record each after the start of the pandemic last year. At the same time over 2.19 lakh recoveries have been registered in the last 24 hours and Case Fatality Rate has come down to 1.14 per cent. Eleven states/UTs did not report any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours. Ten states -- Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan -- reported 74.15 per cent of the new cases in the country. While Maharashtra reported the highest daily

■ **OVER 2.19 LAKH** recoveries have been registered in the last 24 hours while Case Fatality Rate has come down to 1.14 per cent

new cases at 63,818 and 676 deaths, there was some respite in Mumbai where a major decline in fresh cases was noticed. Mumbai reported 5,888 new cases and 71 deaths while 8,549 people got cured. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) released the third Sero survey data, in which 36.30 per cent of Mumbai residents were found to be positive. The survey was carried out on blood samples of 10,197 people.

Tatas, ITC import oxygen carriers

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Facing flak from all quarters for the short supply of oxygen that has cost too many lives in the last two days, the Union government scrambled on Saturday to ensure the supply of the gas and announced its decision to import oxygen concentrators from abroad. The private sector has also joined

the effort with Tata Group and ITC tying with Germany-based Lynde group to import 24 cryogenic oxygen tanks each to help augment transport of medical oxygen. Government sources said it has placed an order for ten thousand oxygen concentrators which will start arrive from the US next week. The government has also tied up with private companies to import their oxygen concentrators.

Linde Group's India unit said the company has joined hands with Tata group to undertake measures to augment the availability of liquid medical oxygen across the country. To bolster the delivery infrastructure for medical oxygen, Linde India in partnership with Tata Group has secured 24 cryogenic containers for the carriage of medical oxygen from international sources, it said.

Apart from sourcing cryogenic containers, ITC said it is airlifting large numbers of oxygen concentrators for distribution, while its paperboards unit in Bhadrachalam has started supply of oxygen to neighbouring areas. "ITC Ltd has tied up with Linde India to airfreight 24 cryogenic containers of 20 tons each from Asian countries transport medical oxygen across the country," the company said.

Justice Ramana sworn in as 48th CJI



Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana was on Saturday sworn in as the 48th Chief Justice of India. He was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind. He will hold the post for about 16 months, until August 26, 2022. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and his predecessor CJI Sharad A. Bobde. Justice Ramana was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014. Born in an agricultural family on August 27, 1957, in Ponnavaaram village, Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Justice Ramana did his BSc, BL and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983. He began his career as a journalist of a leading

Telugu newspaper for a short while before turning to legal practice in 1983. During his student days, he was known as an activist, involved in issues concerning farmers and industrial workers. Appointed as a permanent judge of the Andhra Pradesh high court on June 27, 2000, Justice Ramana functioned as the acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh high court from March 10, 2013 to May 20, 2013.

He was appointed Chief Justice of Delhi high court on September 2, 2013. During his tenure in the Supreme Court, Justice Ramana has been a part of many significant rulings, including those on setting up of special courts for fast-tracking criminal cases against MPs and MLAs; bringing the CJI's office amenable to the Right to Information Act; and, lifting Internet restrictions in Jammu & Kashmir.

Royal thrashing for KKR



Rajasthan Royals posted a comfortable six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL game in Mumbai on Saturday. It was Royals' second win of the season, while KKR slumped to their fourth defeat in five games. — IPL

OTHER STORY

Daily count crosses 14K, active cases one lakh in state

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 24

With 14K mark in the daily active cases for the first time in the history of Covid19 in the state, daily positive cases count on Saturday has mounted to over 14K cases.

According to the data provided by the Health department, the state added a total of 14,842 new cases and 80 deaths, taking a jump from 13,776 new cases and 78 on Saturday.

With this, the total Covid19 tally in the state has touched 1,066,329 while death toll is 13,475 including 4,538 in Chennai.

Chennai registered 4086 new cases, a rise from 3842 on Friday. Meanwhile, the death toll came down to 25 compared to Friday that was 37. Now, total new cases in the district touched 305570.

New cases in Chengalpattu district jumped from 985 cases on Friday to 1163 on Saturday. However, deaths came down to 7 from 10 on Saturday. Total cases in the district now are 72706.

Number of daily cases in Coimbatore has also gone up to 1004 from 889 on Friday with three death cases.

Chennai, Coimbatore, and Chengalpattu on Saturday crossed the thousand mark adding together a cumulative total of 6253 cases.

While Madurai, Thiruvallur and Tirunelveli districts recorded over 500 cases, districts like Erode, Kancheepuram, Krishnagiri, Thanjavur, Thoothukudi, Thirupur, Trichy and Vellore districts recorded 300 plus cases. Apart from this, 6 districts crossed 200 mark and 8 districts reported over 100 cases.

The contribution of Chennai and surrounding districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu on Saturday was 6042 that is a rise from 5634 on Friday.

Count of active cases in the state crossed 14K cases. While the state reported 95048 cases on Friday, it went up to 100668 cases. The total active cases in the Chennai district now stands at 31506 that is a rise from 31170 on Friday.

While Thiruvallur apart from Chengalpattu also reported 7 deaths, five people died in Madurai. Four people lost their lives in Kancheepuram district as well. Kanyakumari, Thirupathur, Vellore also recorded three deaths each in addition to Coimbatore.

Two people each died at Ranipet, Selam, Tenkasi, Tirunelveli, and Trichy districts while Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Karur, Nagapattinam, Namakkal, Sivagangai, Theni, Thiruvannamalai, Thoothukudi and Villupuram recorded one case each.

A total of 1,22, 671 persons were subjected to RTPCR tests that is a slight dip from 1,22,900 on Friday. At least 2,15,25,113 individuals tested so far in the state.

Thousands flock to the Koyambedu wholesale market on Saturday to buy vegetables, fruits and flowers ahead of total lockdown. —DC



POTENTIAL THREATS

People waiting in a queue to get their vaccination at Omandurar government multi-super speciality hospital on Saturday. —N. Sampath



State health dept mulls oxygen storage in big tanks

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 24

While the demand for oxygen is soaring in the state as a result of fresh Covid-19 cases spiralling, the health department is planning to ensure a big tank-based storage system to avoid oxygen shortage.

This comes at a time when the state is expecting a peak of the second wave of Covid-19 by mid-May that will result in high demand for medical Oxygen up to 450 metric tonnes (MTs). Currently, the state is registering a steady rise, touching over 13,000 fresh cases every day.

Health secretary J. Radhakrishnan said that currently small hospitals were filling their cylinders from storage centres that were set up temporarily. This is not enough considering the present situation. The current demand of the state for medical purposes has gone up to 240 MTs with the total production capacity of 400 MTs per day. Since last year, the state has improved its storage capacity from 394 MTs to 881 MTs. The total storage capacity including the private sector is 1,227 MTs. So, we are planning to improve the storage capacity by setting up big tanks to distribute oxygen smoothly. Currently, the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC) has been entrusted to distribute Oxygen to



Lorries carrying oxygen from Puducherry on way to Omandurar hospital, at Perungalathur. —DC

the hospitals through their supply chain, he said.

Explaining the oxygen storage situation in the medical college hospitals in the city, R. Narayana Babu, Director of Medical Education, told DC that the storage capacity in all medical colleges had improved from 230 kilolitres (KLs) to 720 KLs over the year. In Omandurar Medical College Hospital (MCH), the capacity increased from 4 KLs to 34 KLs. Currently, enough oxygen is stored at hospitals to treat patients for the next six days.

Over 40 per cent of hospital beds are still vacant, said Dr Babu.

As per the health department data, out of the total 4,368 beds available in five MCHs in the city, 3,444 beds are occupied by 2,377 Covid-19 patients and 1,067 suspected cases. At least 924 beds are vacant.

In addition, 1,017 beds are vacant in 10 Covid-19 health centres across the city. Out of the total capacity of 1,750, at least 733 Covid-19 patients are accommodated. Meanwhile, the state mainly depends on private play-

ers such as INOX Air Products Private Limited, Praxair India Private Limited and JSW Steels to meet its daily medical oxygen demand. According to officials, INOX alone supplies 55-60 MTs of liquid medical oxygen every day to Tamil Nadu. The liquid medical oxygen has to be vapourised to a compressed gas before it is administered to the patient. Vedanta's Sterlite Copper in Thoothukudi district has offered to supply 1,050 tonnes of liquefied medical oxygen if allowed to run those units.

Don't panic, says health secretary

Health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan along with hospital Dean Dr R. Jayanthi addresses the media after inspection at Omandurar medical college and hospital corona ward on Saturday. —DC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 24

Health secretary J. Radhakrishnan assured that there was adequate supply of Remdesivir and other life-saving drugs, oxygen and also beds for coronavirus patients in the state and urged the people not to panic or fear about the pandemic.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, he requested the

people not to administer injections like Remesivir on their own without the help of doctors and insisted that all of them followed the Covid-19 protocols while coming out of their homes.

He said 40 per cent of the beds were vacant all over the State and requested the people to approach the screening centres — there are 12 of them in Chennai — first so that medical pro-

fessionals would assess them and then refer them to the appropriate facility for treatment or care.

In Chennai alone, an additional 2,400 beds had been created of late and the 363 doctors who were recently recruited for service at the 1,645 mini-clinics had been assigned Covid-19 duty at various hospitals and other facilities.

People can access information on bed availability at the 'Stop Corona' website, he said and made it clear that there was an adequate supply of oxygen in the State. Of the 400

tonnes oxygen made available daily, only 250 tonnes were being used, he said adding that more infrastructure was being built to increase the storage capacity.

Meanwhile, an official press release said demand for medical oxygen from Covid-19 treatment facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes was expected to rise and efforts were on to meet the demand.

'Oxygen manufacturing industries in the state have been instructed to explore methods to increase production. Tankers carrying

medical oxygen are being provided a Green Corridor along with police patrol wherever necessary to increase the availability of oxygen,' it said.

In order to resolve any issues related to medical oxygen supply faced by such hospitals/nursing homes, the Government has established a 24x7 call centre under the State Drug Controller. Hospitals/nursing homes in Tamil Nadu facing any shortage of medical oxygen may immediately call 104 for assistance, the release said.

The girl with that gun returns, raising fears



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

Selvi returned after more than three months. When she bid us goodbye one fine day after visiting us regularly for about seven months, we were sort of relieved. Selvi is Chennai Corporation's survey worker, one of the multitude of young people assigned to go from door to door to check on residents if they have been infected by Coronavirus. Initially, the vivacious girl's knock on the door was perceived as an irritating intrusion into the cloister that we had confined ourselves to, both out of fear and necessity. A gentleman in the downstairs flat put out a permanent printed message to Selvi without naming her, saying 'no one at home has a cough or fever or cold, thank you for your service.' He was on the mark because Selvi initially was enquiring if anyone at home had a cough or fever or cold, though her demeanor changed with the

passage of time. The message stuck close to the door endured Selvi's departure from the scene — when she stayed at home, jobless — and it remains on the wall even after she has returned. While I am not sure if Selvi took the message as a dictat and avoided knocking on the door or not, her visit to our apartment was a regular affair.

Starting off an Inquirer of Health (sorry if the term sounds like a newspaper title), she soon progressed into a monitor of health parameters. Armed with the gun, with which she will aim at the forehead and pull the trigger and then mumble a number, she knew if I had fever or not. The thermal scanner's display said everything. Probably she knew if I had a cough or cold by looking at me. One day I found something hanging from her neck like a medal. By then, the genial girl and I were on talk-

ing terms, exchanging a couple of words across the doorway — she always waited at the foyer and I never stepped out of the door. So I enquired about the dangling object. 'Pulse Oximeter, sir,' she replied, offering to check my oxygen level. Those were the days I was also hearing a lot about the Pulse oximeter. Till then we just inhaled oxygen from the air and lived happily and common people did not know anything about the oxygen saturation level and such things. But suddenly I was told that one should know such things. So I let her clamp the small device in my index finger and waited for the results. You are fine, she declared and left.

Since then, it was not only the thermal scanner that she directed at my forehead but also clipped the Pulse oximeter on my finger. Though the others in my house did not take Selvi very seriously, I was at her beck and call because the fear of Covid-19 had gripped us like a multi-fanged creature. It was not just the fear of contracting the virus that gave one the jitters even going for a test then was fraught with danger. Even if you had tested negative, a few men from the

Corporation would land up at your house and seal it with corrugated sheets and also put out a notice outside saying that danger lurked inside in the form of a Coronavirus victim.

Horrid anecdotes of people's encounter with the workers erecting the barricades had been telling and frightening. At a friend's house in Coimbatore, the men landed with corrugated sheets just because their son had come from New Zealand and had been asked to isolate himself at home. When asked how they can put up the barricade when no one had tested positive for Coronavirus, they demanded a certain amount of money. Of course, they were shooed away. In such a backdrop, when Selvi told me one day that a mobile screening unit would be passing through our street and that I could avail of the facility, I said 'no'.

Those were the times of total lockdown that gave a free hand to the police. So people who tried to cycle down to some place to find some means of getting morsels of food were beaten up. Old people who drove down to shops to buy essentials in the few hours that were permitted

had to take a drive back in a police jeep as their vehicles were seized. People who fell victims to ailments other than the domineering Coronavirus had nowhere to go for treatment as hospitals either took care of Covid-19 patients or did nothing. Adding to the melancholy was news about deaths, particularly of people known and famous.

The tension eased slowly and the restrictions were lifted only after the infection rates came down to a level that television channels stopped mentioning them. It was then the Corporation felt that Selvi and her ilk need not call on people. So, as all good things come to an end, Selvi's association with us and a lot of other families in our locality came to a happy end. But when she returned a few days back sans the Pulse oximeter and thermal scanner, she was asking questions on vaccination. Yet the old fears surfaced as she promised to return with those paraphernalia, sounding like a harbinger to the return of those dark days. Even if one is glad that the girl who was jobless for three months has started earning, one does not wish her a long tenure.



People throng Nochikuppam fish market on Saturday evening. —DC

Government bans 'girivalam'

K.SENTHIL NATHAN DC
TIRUVANNAMALAI, APRIL 24

In view of the rapidly spreading second wave of Covid-19 across the state, the government through GO 339 dated 31/3/2021 had announced new restrictions under the Disaster Management Act, which has now been extended till April 30. The restrictions include total lockdown

during the night hours between 10 pm and 4 am.

Under such circumstances, the Tiruvannamalai Chitirai Pournami girivalam at the popular Sri Arunachaleswar temple here which is to be observed between 12:16 pm on April 26 (Monday) and 9:59 am on April 27 (Tuesday), has been banned, stated a release from the collector.

Every full moon day of the month, girivalam is undertaken by pilgrims. The word girivalam is the origin of the Tamil word 'giri' meaning hill and 'valam' meaning 'coming around'. Hence, coming around the hill is called 'girivalam'. To complete one full round (girivalam), means traversing a distance of 14 km round the hill.

SHORT TAKES

Markets, meat shops see huge crowd

From P1

Monday being an auspicious day (muhurtham), many weddings had been arranged and people from faraway places had left to attend them much before the government brought in new restrictions, which included a limit of 50 attendees for marriage parties.

The other places that drew huge crowds were the fish markets, vegetable vends and meat shops. Sunday being Mahavir Jayanthi, meat shops are not allowed to open, anyway, even without the lockdown. But now the new restrictions have banned all religious activities, too, in places of worship, thus putting a question mark on celebrating the most important festival of Jains.

Fish markets in Kasimedu attracted an unprecedented crowd that would not heed to the constant advice of the police to follow Covid-19 protocols on Saturday early morning itself. It is said that in the first three hours 50 tonnes of fish was sold there.

Other fish markets in Nochikuppam, Kovalam and even Chintadripet inside the city saw huge crowds jostling to buy up enough fish for the next few days as the fear of a total lockdown hung over the population and also the fish vendors.

Liquor shops, too, saw brisk sales as tipplers lined up with a view to stocking up for the possible lockdown days. Bars, too, had a good number of patrons as it was not clear as to when they would open again after drawing the shutters at 10 pm in view of the new restrictions.

The crowds at the Central station continued with most passengers, migrant labourers, travelling to various destinations on the eastern belt of the country. It is said 45 trains leave Chennai Central station every day and most of them are booked fully till May 10.

Many restaurants, too, had substantial crowds as people did not know when they would be able to eat out the next time. After Sunday's total lockdown, Monday would start with a ban on all eateries serving their customers in their dine-in facility.

People entering TN need e-registration

From P1

Marriage parties should be restricted to 50 persons and funerals and related rituals to 25 persons, said the press release from the government on Saturday, which made it clear that the night curfew and Sunday lockdown would also continue.

Sports training, tennis and golf practices are all banned and only those preparing for international or national sporting events alone would be allowed to undergo training.

People entering Tamil Nadu from every state, other than Puducherry, and from abroad would have to have an advance e-registration through the website <http://eregister.tnega.org> and within the state travel in buses is allowed only for seated passengers. Taxis cannot carry more than three and auto rickshaws more than two passengers.

IT and ITES companies have to let 50 per cent of the employees work from home and e-commerce would be allowed within the stipulated time.



ZERO SHADOW DAY

Zero Shadow Day is observed in Chennai. The long shadows of objects at sunrise start becoming smaller and smaller as the day progresses until the shadow is smallest when it is exactly aligned north-south.

—DC

9 more succumb to Covid in Pondy, toll touches 737

Puducherry, April 24: Puducherry witnessed the deaths of nine more people during the last 24 hours, raising the toll to 737, the health department said on Saturday.

The nine deceased included seven men and two women and were in the age group ranging between 45 years and 93 years.

The Union Territory registered 899 new cases that were identified at the end of examination of 6,030 samples projecting a test positivity rate of nearly 15 percent, Director of Department of Health and Family Welfare services S

Mohan Kumar said.

Puducherry region accounted for 702 new cases out of the total 899 cases while Karaikal had 109, Yanam 50 and Mahe 38 cases.

The Director said the fatality and recovery rates were 1.41 percent and 85.64 percent respectively. As many as 7.58 lakh samples have been tested so far and of them 6.84 lakh turned out to be negative.

As many as 453 patients were discharged after recovery during the last twenty-four hours from hospitals.

Meanwhile, 31,140 health care

workers and 18,315 front line workers have been vaccinated so far.

As many as 1,13,485 people belonging either to the category of those above 60 years, those above 45 years having comorbidity or those getting second jabs have been covered so far under vaccination programme.

The weekend lockdown lasting 55 hours was brought into force at 10 pm on Friday and would end at 5 am on Monday. The government has however eased the curbs to enable availability of essential services.

In a video message to the people,

Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan said the weekend lockdown was meant to protect the people against the pandemic and to prevent the spread of the scourge.

She said the government had initiated all efforts to keep the pandemic at bay. While remaining indoors, people should use masks and maintain distancing while dining, the Lt Governor added.

She sought cooperation of the people as joint efforts would bring in ideal results and keep Puducherry out of bounds for the pandemic.

—PTI

PM's inept handling of Covid caused second wave: Ex-CM

Puducherry, April 24: Former Chief Minister of Puducherry and senior Congress leader V Narayanasamy on Saturday charged the Prime Minister Narendra Modi with inept handling of the COVID-19 situation.

The alleged ineptness has led to the second wave of the virus, said Narayanasamy.

In a video message to the people here, he said, "Lack of proper planning on the part of the Centre to address the need for drugs and oxygen in hospitals for the pandemic-stricken patients has resulted in the unabated rise of cases during the second wave of coronavirus."

He said vaccines were not available in several parts of the country and the Union Health Ministry had also failed to meet the requirements of the hospitals. The former Chief Minister said people from across the country were seen standing in queues to get the vaccines and returning disappointed as the drugs were in shortage. Medical oxygen too was not available, he said.

The Centre should have come out with proper plans to make the required medicines or vaccines and oxygen available; if this had been done on time the impact of the second wave of the pandemic now sweeping the country could have been faced with much strength, said Narayanasamy.

"I will only pin the blame on the Prime Minister for the present situation in hospitals," he said. Referring to Puducherry, Narayanasamy said his erstwhile government had made several arrangements and ramped up infrastructure. He said containment zones were created and they were under constant vigil by the revenue and police.

"All that we have done has now gone for a toss in the Union Territory, causing hardships to the people. The virus is spreading fast now and the number of cases alarming," he said. He called upon the territorial administration to ensure that adequate beds, vaccines and other facilities were available in the health facilities.

—PTI

Candidates advised to take Covid test: Collector

G. SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, APRIL 24

In view of the Corona second wave, candidates who contested in the recent assembly polls and their agents have been advised to undergo Corona tests, so that they may safely view the counting of votes on May 2, said Collector M. Govinda Rao here, on Saturday.

In a press release, the collector said, "The candidates and their agents may undergo Corona test on April 27, 28, and 29 in the places prescribed by the Returning officers (RO) of the respective constituencies. Test results will be available within 48 hours."

Inspecting the corona care centre at the Slum clearance board tenements at Pattukottai, the collector said a total of 1.2 lakh persons have been vaccinated against corona so far in Thanjavur district. There are 10,000 doses of vaccines at present, and those below 45 years can get vaccinated voluntarily.

There are no side effects due to the vaccine. Action has been taken against a person who floated rumours on social media that a person who has taken the vaccine, has died. Stern action will be taken against those who spread rumors. More than one lakh people who took vaccines are safe, and have not reported any side effects, the collector added.

HC drops contempt against director of collegiate education

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 24

The Madras high court has said the state should endeavour that the percentage of vacancy is reduced to 5 per cent and measures are taken ahead of vacancies arising to fill up the posts so that the process of education at government-aided colleges is not hindered.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made the observation while dropping a contempt petition filed by G.Krishnan, which sought to punish C.Jothi Venkateswaran, director of collegiate education, Chennai, for wilfully disobeying the order passed by the court, dated April 3, 2019 relating to filling up the vacancies to the teaching posts.

The bench said pursuant to the direction issued upon receipt of the contempt petition, an affidavit has been filed by the State. Such affidavit indicates that at the time that the rel-

evant order was passed by this Court directing the vacancies to be filled up expeditiously, there were 91 vacancies in teaching posts in government-aided colleges. The state's affidavit indicates that not only have the 91 vacancies that existed at the relevant point of time now been filled up, several subsequent vacancies have also been filled up and, against a total sanctioned strength at present of 2,139 posts in government-aided colleges, 1,818 posts have been filled up, leaving 321 vacant, the bench added.

The bench said, "While it is appreciated that there may always be some amount of vacancy, but the State should endeavour that the percentage of vacancy is reduced to 5 per cent and measures are taken ahead of vacancies arising to fill up the posts so that the process of education at government-aided colleges is not hindered. Since the affidavit indicates due compliance to the relevant order, Contempt petition is dropped".

HC orders notice on plea against AIADMK MLA

Chennai, April 24: The Madras High Court has ordered notice to the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption over a petition against a legislator for alleged misappropriation of the MLA Constituency Development Scheme fund.

Justice V Bhavani Subbarayan has ordered notice to DVAC returnable in two weeks, on a criminal original petition.

B R Aravindakshan, who claimed to be a social activist, submitted he had lodged a plaint in January this year with the DVAC against the legislator representing T Nagar here, B Sathyanarayanan (AIADMK).

The crux of the petitioner's allegation is embezzlement and misappropriation of MLA Constituency Development Scheme fund allotted during 2017-18.

The petitioner sought registration of a case and probe by the anti-graft body. —PTI

BJP wants Sterlite to be opened

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 24

BJP state president L Murugan wanted Sterlite Industries to open their copper smelting factory in Thoothukudi to produce oxygen, a facility the company

claimed that it had in the premises that was closed after the local people protested against its functioning.

Replying to a question from media persons at the BJP State headquarters on Saturday, Murugan said the government should allow Vedanta to open

the factory in view of the oxygen shortage that had gripped the country in these times of crisis.

He called the media to announce the party opening a facility to help those who suffered due to coronavirus and related problems.



The celestial wedding of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar held as part of Chithirai festival at Meenakshi Amman temple in Madurai on Saturday by following Covid-19 norms.

—K.Manikandan

Consider plea against illegal mining in K'giri: HC to collector

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 24

The Madras high court has directed the Krishnagiri district collector to consider a representation which complains about illegal mining resorted to by three private parties in the district.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while disposing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by R.Johnrobert Rugugandhi, which sought a direction to the authorities to take suitable action against illegal mining and cancel the license granted in favour of three private parties in S.F.No.78/1B and 78/1A (part) and 78/1B (part).

The bench said the griev-

ance of the petitioner was that the private respondents herein have resorted to illegal mining after obtaining a license. The petitioner says that despite representations to the authorities, there has been no response, the bench added.

The bench said mining licenses were issued in accordance with the law and the procedure in place in such regard. Rules and norms need to be adhered to while issuing a mining license and the license indicates a particular area which the licensee cannot exceed. "In such regard, the licensing authorities ought to keep a close vigil to ensure that the territory or area covered by the license is not exceeded by the licensee", the bench added.

The bench said since the

petitioner's grievance in the present case was that the private respondents have resorted to illegal mining. The Krishnagiri District Collector will consider the matter. The petitioner was permitted to make a detailed representation regarding the perceived illegalities committed by the private respondents. Such representation should be reached to the District Collector within four weeks, where upon the District Collector will consider the matter in appropriate perspective and communicate a reasoned decision to the petitioner within six weeks of the receipt of the representation upon affording a reasonable opportunity of hearing to all who may get affected by his order, the bench added.



Women helpline centres have been set up in 15 police stations in Vellore district to handle crime against women and girl children. People can contact the helpline centres. Women cops being given scooters by N.Kamini, DIG-Vellore, to attend to such complaints.

—K.Senthil Nathan

Suspect EVM tampering with security help, Nehru tells RO

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC TIRUCHY, APRIL 24

DMK principal secretary and party's Tiruchy West candidate, K.N. Nehru has filed a complaint with the RDO, Tiruchy, that two unidentified persons entered the counting centre located at the Jamal Mohamed College with a laptop, and that he suspected that they were involved in EVM tampering.

In his complaint to Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO), Tiruchy-cum-returning officer of Tiruchy west constituency, Viswanathan, on Saturday, Nehru pointed out that the EVMs were kept in a strong room located on the first floor in the college premises, and arrangements were being made to be ready for the counting. The security personnel for the counting centre were staying in the second floor, he added.

Nehru further said, on behalf of him, his representative had appealed to the officials in the all party meeting held on April 20, that the security personnel staying on the second floor were using laptops and mobile phones, and that they should be shifted somewhere else. Despite my request, the authorities have not taken any action till date.

The security staff still staying in the same place and using a laptop and cell phones has given room for suspicion that they could be involved in EVM tampering, added Nehru, and urged the RDO to ensure adequate protection for the strong room.

He further said some technicians were permitted to enter the restricted area to fix CCTV cameras on Friday based on the ROs permission, and during the wee hours of Saturday, the technicians had carried with them the laptop used by the security personnel, which is unwarranted and something not related to their work.

Nehru further said that he suspected the security personnel and technicians could be changing the voting pattern in the EVMs with the help of the laptop, and appealed to the RO to seize the laptop and keep the same in the strong room, and ensure that such incidents are not repeated till counting is over, pleaded Nehru.

Ensure strict enforcement of Covid protocol: HC to TN

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 24

The Madras high court has said considering the alarming rise in Covid19 cases in the rest of the country and the corresponding rise of cases in this State, the State may be better off in arresting congregations wherever they are possible, since the rate of infection of the virus in its present form appears to be

much more than what it was previously.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made the observation while passing interim orders on a Public Interest Litigation.

The bench said the petitioner says that the State ought to apply the Covid protocol more strictly than in vogue at the time that

the petition was instituted or when the petitioner made a representation on November 29, 2020. Unfortunately for all concerned, what the petitioner apprehended in November 2020 appears to have become a nightmare now and there was no doubt that collective responsibility must be taken for the worsening of the situation and the apparent unpreparedness in facing the second wave, the bench added.

The bench said at any rate, the guard must not be let down, so to say, and strict Covid protocol must be maintained and enforced both in wearing masks and in maintaining distancing norms. A recent advisory has been issued by the State and it was not for the Court to interfere in matters which fall exclusively in the executive domain; but considering

the alarming rise in cases in the rest of the country and the corresponding rise of cases in this State, the State may be better off in arresting congregations wherever they were possible, since the rate of infection of the virus in its present form appears to be much more than what it was previously, the bench added and posted it along with connected matter on April 26, 2021.

Justice Ramana had ensured end of internet ban in Kashmir

PARMOD KUMAR | DC with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana on Saturday was sworn as Chief Justice of India. He was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind. He is the 48th Chief Justice of India with a term of a little over one year and four months until August 26, 2022.

The swearing in ceremony of Justice Ramana, amongst others dignitaries, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and his predecessor Sharad A. Bobde.

Justice Bobde had his last working day in the top court on April 23. Justice Ramana was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014.

Born in an agricultural family on August 27, 1957, in Ponnayaram village, Krishna District, Justice Ramana did his B.Sc., B.L and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983.

Justice Ramana began his career as a journalist of a leading Telugu newspaper for a short while before turning to legal practice in 1983.

During his student days, he was known as an activist, involved in the issues concerning farmers and industrial workers.

Justice Ramana was appointed

● He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh. The bench had said the “clock should be turned back” as it quashed all decisions of the governor that precipitated its fall in January, holding them “violative” of the Constitution.

as a permanent Judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on June 27, 2000. He functioned as Acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court from March 10, 2013 to May 20, 2013.

He was appointed as the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court on September 2, 2013.

The new chief justice of India, has authored path-breaking verdicts as a Supreme Court judge and one of them led to the end of internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir, and another brought the apex court under the ambit of transparency law.

He will demit office on August 26 next year and have to deal with key task of ensuring smooth functioning of apex court amid resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic. The judgement penned by Justice Ramana in the Anuradha Bhasin case related to internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir following the abroga-

tion of Article 370 provisions has been hailed by many as one of the progressive verdicts.

It held that freedom of speech and conducting business on the internet are protected under the Constitution and had directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to immediately review curb orders.

The bench had directed the authorities in the Union territory to immediately review all orders suspending internet services and said orders not in accordance with the law must be revoked.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Ramana had in March last year declined to refer to a larger seven-judge bench a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Centre’s decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370.

He was part of a five-judge constitution bench that had held in November 2019 that the office of the CJI was a public authority under the Right to Information Act.

In the November 2019 verdict, the top court had also said “judicial independence has to be kept in mind” while disclosing information in “public interest”.

He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh.

ARMY RESCUES 2 KIDNAPPED ONGC STAFFERS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APR. 24

The Indian Army and Nagaland police with the support of some local villagers on Friday night rescued two employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), who were kidnapped earlier this week from Sivasagar, in Mon district of Nagaland. The operations are still on to trace the third abductee, Retul Saikia.

The rescued employees were identified as Alakesh Saikia and Mohini Mohan Gogoi. The police also recovered one AK 47 from the location, the ONGC employees were rescued.

Informing that security forces had launched joint coordinated operations since April 21, the day suspected Ulfa-I rebels had kidnapped three employees of ONGC from a rig site at Lakwa oil field in Assam’s Sivasagar district, security sources said that security forces have also sealed the international border with Myanmar.

Meanwhile, a total of 14 linkmen, who aided the United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (Ulfa-I) in kidnapping the three ONGC employees, were apprehended by Assam police. The Assam police also said that it has received specific information that the banned Ulfa (Independent) was involved in the kidnapping of three ONGC employees from

MAOISTS KILL ABDUCTED JAWAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, APR 24

A jawan who was abducted by Maoists three days ago in Chhattisgarh’s south Bastar district of Bijapur was brutally killed by the ultras, police said on Saturday.

Body of Murali Tati, who was a sub-inspector in district reserve group (DRG), an exclusive tribal counterinsurgency wing of Chhattisgarh police, was found on the outskirts of the village of Peddepara in Bijpur district early on Saturday morning, Bastar police said.

The slain jawan was abducted by Maoists near Palsumpara under Gangalur police station on April 21. Maoists’ west Bastar division owned responsibility for his killing. The jawan’s widow had earlier appealed to the Maoists to release.

Covid-19: New rules for pvt hosps in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 24

With many states witnessing a surge in deaths of Covid-19 patients due to shortage of oxygen, ventilators and critical care facilities, the Kerala government has initiated measures to prevent such a horrific situation in the state.

The state reported 26,685 new cases on Saturday taking the total number of active cases to 1,98,576. Besides, 25 deaths were also reported in Saturday taking the death toll to 5,080.

During the last 24 hours 1,31,155 samples were tested and the test positivity rate was 20.35.

In the wake of the huge spike in cases reported in the state over the past one week, the government apart from utilising the public health care infrastructure to the fullest, has decided to involve

the private hospitals in an organised manner for providing critical care to the Covid-19 patients.

Chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday convened a meeting of representatives of the private hospitals. The meeting decided to mandatorily set aside 25 per cent of beds mandatorily for Covid-19 patients.

The chief minister also directed the private hospitals to not to levy high charges for Covid-19 treatment. He assured the private hospitals that the pending dues connected with Covid care under Karunya scheme would be cleared in two weeks.

The private hospital managements have urged the chief minister not to impose uniform treatment rates for Covid related complications. They pointed out that the rates are based on the facilities provided in each hospital including speciality care.

Maha to float global tender for Remdesivir

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 24

To meet a growing demand for coronavirus vaccines and remdesivir injections in the state, the Maharashtra Government has decided to float a global tender for the procurement of these drugs used in the treatment of Covid-19.

Maharashtra, which is the worst coronavirus-affected state in the country, is facing an acute shortage of vaccines and remdesivir drugs. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced that the State Government will purchase these drugs from foreign companies.

“We have decided to float a global tender for remdesivir. For this, a five-member committee will be appointed and it will be headed by state chief secretary Sitaram Kunte,” he said in Pune.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has

directed the chief secretary to issue a global tender. It will decide on which vaccines should be purchased, Mr Pawar added.

CM Thackeray has also discussed the details of the vaccine with CEO of Serum Institute of India (SII) Adar Poonawala. The SII has agreed to provide vaccines to the state as per its production capacity. But we have to also keep other options open, he said.

The deputy CM claimed that the Centre has halved the supply of medical oxygen to Maharashtra.

“We were getting 250 metric tonnes of oxygen, but it has been reduced to 125 MT,” he added.

Maharashtra on Saturday recorded 67,160 new Covid cases taking its caseload to 42,28,836.

The state also registered 676 deaths due to the infection, taking the toll to 63,928. The state now has 69,4480 active Covid cases.

MADHYA PRADESH CONG MLA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APR 24

Tribal Congress MLA from Alirajpur district in Madhya Pradesh Kalawati Bhuria died of Covid-19 in a private hospital in Indore early on Saturday morning, family sources said on Saturday.

She is the first sitting MLA in MP who succumbed to the virus. She was admitted to the Shalby Hospital in Indore 14 days ago after she tested positive.

Her condition deteriorated fast two days ago and the end came early on Saturday morning, her family sources said.

“Her lungs were 70 per cent infected. She was on ventilator”, hospital’s medical superintendent Vivek Joshi said.

The 47-year-old leader who had shunned marriage to devote her time for social service was emerging as a key tribal leader of Congress in Madhya Pradesh, particularly among her tribe of Bhil in western belt of the state.

The niece of former Union Minister and Congress MLA Kantilal Bhuria, Kalawati was elected as Jhabua district zilla panchayat president four times before being elected as MLA from Jobat constituency in Alirajpur district in 2018 polls.

“She was a very popular leader in the tribal region in the state. Her death is an irreparable loss to Congress”, former minister and MP PCC vice-president Raja Pateria said.

Former chief minister and veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath expressed shock and grief over the untimely death of the party legislator. “The news of the sad demise of Jobat MLA Kalawati Bhuria is very disturbing and shocking. She was an active, gutsy, strong-willed and friendly legislator”, Mr Nath tweeted.

Meanwhile, two Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers of MP cadre died of Covid-19 on Friday.

The two deceased forest officers are Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Force Ashish Verma and Sendhwa divisional forest officer S S Meheta.

● The niece of former Union minister and Congress MLA Kantilal Bhuria, Kalawati was elected as Jhabua district zilla panchayat president four times before being elected as MLA from Jobat constituency in Alirajpur district in 2018 polls.



Covid patients getting free oxygen, by a Sikh organisation at Indirapuram Gurdwara in Ghaziabad on Saturday.

- PTI

Centre says Delhi got more oxygen than they asked for

On ground, people continue to beg for oxygen beds in hospitals

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

The harrowing times for Covid-19 patients and their families continues despite several high level meetings by the Centre for the last couple days as hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat continued sending SOS messages for Oxygen to the Centre and state governments and patients died due to lack of O2.

While Delhi Chief Minister Mr Arvind Kejriwal wrote to all States requesting them to divert their spare Oxygen reserves to Delhi, Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh ordered shutdown of operations of some of the state’s industries to divert Oxygen for medical use as five patients died at a hospital in Amritsar due its shortage. On his part Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said Delhi has been allotted more than the Oxygen quota they had asked for and UT government has to now rationalise the quota in a timely manner but on ground people continue to beg for Oxygen beds as Delhi hospitals kept pleading for Oxygen.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi held another round of meeting on measures to increase supply of Oxygen and related equipment. The government has announced to waive off basic customs duty and health cess on Oxygen and equipment related such as Oxygen concentrator and cylinders, ventilators and ventilator masks and all other devices that can be used for Oxygen generation.

Besides, Covid-19 related vaccines will also be exempted from

● IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP.

basic customs duty. Centre feels these measures will boost availability of these crucial items and make them cheaper. The exemption is for three months.

India on Saturday recorded 3,46,787 new cases and 2,624 deaths.

At the same time, over 2.19 lakh recoveries have been registered in the last 24 hours and Case Fatality Rate has come down to 1.14%.

Eleven States/UTs have not reported any Covid deaths in the last

24 hours. Ten states - Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan - reported 74.15% of the new cases in the country. While Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 63,818 and 676 deaths, there was some respite in Mumbai where major decline in fresh cases were noticed.

Mumbai reported 5,888 new cases and 71 deaths while 8549 people got cured.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation released the third Sero survey data, in which 36.30% of residents of Mumbai were found to be positive. The survey was carried out on blood samples of 10,197 people.

During the meeting, Prime Minister emphasised the immediate

need to augment the supply of medical grade oxygen as well as equipment required for patient care both at home and in hospitals.

It was suggested that import of equipment related to providing Oxygen to patients needs to be expedited.

This will boost availability of these items and make them cheaper.

Senior officials in the Centre said the Government is taking a lot of measures to improve supply of Oxygen and medical supplies.

IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP and more trains are on way.

CBI BOOKS FORMER MAHA HOME MINISTER

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 24

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday conducted searches at former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh’s premises in Mumbai and his hometown Nagpur after registering a case against him in connection with allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

However, the NCP has termed the agency’s action as a ‘political witch-hunt.’

“The preliminary enquiry (PE) prima facie revealed that a cognisable case is made out in the matter wherein former Maharashtra Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh and unknown others attempted to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of his public duty,” said the CBI FIR.

The CBI has charged Mr Deshmukh under Section 7 of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 2018, along with Section 120 B of the IPC. After registering the case, the CBI conducted a search operation at a number of locations including the premises of Mr Deshmukh in Mumbai, Nagpur and other places. A CBI team had arrived in Nagpur from Delhi on Friday night and carried out searches at Mr Deshmukh’s house.

Kejriwal writes to all CMs, seeks O2 supply for Delhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday wrote to Chief Ministers of all states requesting them for oxygen if they have any to spare.

Kejriwal said that he would be grateful if the chief ministers could provide Delhi with any oxygen, along with tankers, from their state or any organization in their state. He asked for this request to be treated as an SOS.

He also wrote that due to the severe rise in Covid cases in the last

few days, many Delhi hospitals had run out of oxygen.

Kejriwal wrote that while the Central Government is helping Delhi in this regard, the intensity of the spread is so severe that the quantity is proving inadequate.

Kejriwal tweeted, “I am writing to all CMs requesting them to provide oxygen to Delhi if they have spare. Though Central govt. is also helping us, the severity of corona is such that all available resources are proving inadequate.”

In the letter, he wrote,

“Delhi does not produce any oxygen. Due to the severe rise in corona cases in the last few days, many Delhi hospitals have run out of oxygen. Daily supplies of oxygen to Delhi are woefully short of our requirements.”

The CM added, “Central Government is also helping us a lot in this regard. However, the intensity of the spread is so severe that it is proving inadequate. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could provide us with any oxygen, along with tankers, from your state or any

organization in your state. Kindly treat this as an SOS. I would be personally grateful for your support.”

Two days ago, Kejriwal had said how in this time of crisis, all states should come together to help each other out. Calling the current wave a collective crisis, the Delhi Chief Minister had said, “If we decide to split ourselves into Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, India will not survive. We need to come together and unite as Indians and as human beings.”

India chokes; 20 more patients die in Delhi hospital for want of O2

From P1

“Patients are suffering. We feel sad to see people bringing their oxygen cylinders. Hospital has and is approaching all authorities and nodal officers but no help is coming. Hundreds of calls made, nobody is picking the calls,” hospital chairperson D.S. Rana said. “We were running oxygen at half the normal pressure. This supply of 1.5 tonnes of oxygen will may be two hours” added a hospital official.

In a pincer effect, the shortage of oxygen and

the explosion in the number of cases in Delhi have together stretched healthcare infrastructure to its absolute limits, leaving hospitals big and small struggling and coming up with band aid solutions - limited supplies to see them through for the next few hours before another SOS call.

Outside the hospitals, scenes of despair played out with queues of ambulances, frantic relatives and patients gasping for breath as they waited for help and hospitals, overwhelmed and helpless,

tried to deal with the multiple emergencies at their doorstep.

“We have alerted patients we are low on oxygen. Using back up now. Things are really uncertain. Haven’t received a refill for the last 44 hours,” said P.K. Bhardwaj, medical director, Saroj Super Speciality Hospital, a mid-sized hospital in Rohini.

“We are advising them to shift to another hospital. The patients are aware that we have been trying our best,” he said, adding that it has been getting just one metric tonne of

oxygen instead of the three it needs.

Batra Hospital in Tughlakabad Institutional Area received emergency oxygen supply from the Delhi government moments after it exhausted its stock, officials said. Executive Director of the hospital, Sudhanshu Bankata, said the facility exhausted its oxygen stock around 9 am. “We received an emergency supply from the Delhi government. It will last another one-and-a-half hours,” an official said.



IN BRIEF

Stop killings, Myanmar told

Jakarta, April 24: Indonesian President Joko Widodo has said that Southeast Asian leaders have demanded an immediate end to killings and the release of political detainees in Myanmar, in an emergency summit with its top general and coup leader in the Indonesian capital.

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also told Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing in the talks Saturday in Jakarta that a dialogue between contending parties in Myanmar should immediately start, Widodo said, adding that the situation in the troubled Southeast Asian nation is unacceptable.

Zarif to visit Iraq, Qatar today

Tehran, April 24: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is to visit Iraq and Qatar on Sunday, his ministry announced, following reported talks brokered by Baghdad between Tehran and regional rival Riyadh.

The talks in the Iraqi capital earlier this month, which have not been confirmed by either capital, were held at the level of officials not ministers and aimed at restoring relations severed five years ago, an Iraqi official and a Western diplomat said in Baghdad. Tehran has neither confirmed nor denied the reports saying only that it has "always welcomed" dialogue with Saudi Arabia. Riyadh has flatly denied them.

PoC shot: 7 deputies on leave

Elizabeth City (US), April 24: Seven North Carolina deputies have been placed on leave in the aftermath of a PoC man being shot and killed by members of their department serving drug-related search and arrest warrants, authorities said Friday.

The disclosure comes as calls increase for the release of deputy body camera footage amid signs, including emergency scanner traffic, that Andrew Brown Jr. was shot in the back and killed as he was trying to drive away.

Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office Maj. Aaron Wallio confirmed the number of deputies on leave due to the shooting in an email Friday.

New crew reaches ISS

Washington, April 24: A recycled SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts docked with the International Space Station early Saturday, the third time Elon Musk's company has safely delivered humans to the orbital outpost. The spacecraft named Endeavour, piloting herself autonomously, locked on to a docking port at 5:08 am Eastern time (0908 GMT), some 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the south Indian Ocean.

Two hours after the process was completed, Endeavour's quartet posed for photos with the last crew of four sent by SpaceX, and three Russian cosmonauts — making the ISS unusually crowded with 11 people in total.

CHAUVIN TO BE SENTENCED ON JUNE 16

Minneapolis, April 24: Sacked US police officer Derek Chauvin will be sentenced on June 16 for the murder of African American George Floyd in a case that sparked nationwide anti-racism protests. The Hennepin County District Court in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis, where handcuffed Floyd died last May, said in its online schedule that the white ex-cop will be sentenced at 1:30 pm (1830 GMT).

The ex-officer — who knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes — faces up to 40 years in prison after being found guilty of all charges Tuesday over the death of the unarmed man.

The crime was recorded by a bystander whose video shocked the world, triggering mass protests across the United States and beyond, while also prompting a national reckoning on racial injustice and police brutality.

Last year's killing of Floyd as he lay face down and handcuffed saying repeatedly "I can't breathe" has prompted some police reforms, but advocates, including President Joe Biden, say more is needed.

While the Chauvin trial progressed, Minneapolis was rocked by the police shooting of yet another African American.



New Zealand band Six60 perform at Eden Park in Auckland, on Saturday. Six60 is being billed as the biggest live act in the world since the Coronavirus pandemic struck after New Zealand stamped out the spread of the virus. — AP

Clot: US lifts J&J vax pause

New, more potent virus strain in Lanka

Washington, April 24: US health officials lifted an 11-day pause on Covid-19 vaccinations using Johnson & Johnson's single-dose shot, after scientific advisers decided its benefits outweigh a rare risk of blood clot.

The government uncovered 15 vaccine recipients who developed a highly unusual kind of blood clot, out of nearly 8 million people given the J&J shot. All were women, most under age 50. Three died, and seven remain hospitalised.

But ultimately Friday, the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention decided that J&J's one-and-done vaccine is critical to fight the pandemic and that the small clot risk could be handled with warnings to help younger women decide if they should use that shot or an alternative.

Above all else, health and safety are at the forefront of our decisions, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said. Our vaccine safety systems are working. We identified exceptionally rare events out of millions of doses" of the J&J shot and will continue to monitor them.

The US decision similar to how European regulators are rolling out J&J's shot comes after CDC advisers earlier Friday voted 10-4 to resume vaccinations but panelists made clear that they must come with warnings about the risk. The group debated but ultimately steered clear of outright age restrictions. This is an age group that is most at risk (of the clotting) that is getting vaccine predominantly to save other peoples' lives and morbidity, not their own. And I think we have a responsibility to be certain that they know this," said Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University College of Medicine, who voted against the proposal because she felt it did not go far enough in warning women. The panel members all agreed the J&J vaccine "should be put back into circulation, chairman Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas' health secretary, said.

— AP

Merkel defends new law

Bwelin, April 24: Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday defended a fiercely opposed new law imposing tough Coronavirus restrictions across Germany, including night curfews and school closures.

With many of its neighbours lifting restrictions despite higher virus rates, Europe's biggest economy is bucking the trend with the new national law dubbed the "emergency bra-

ke". Passed amid huge protests in Berlin this week, the law prescribes uniform national restrictions

GERMANY

and is designed to end a tug of war between the federal government and Germany's 16 states.

The law "is something new in our fight against the pandemic. And I'm convinced that we need it urgently," Merkel said in her weekly video podcast.

"If we manage to significantly and quickly reduce infections, gradual opening-up will be possible in the near future," she added. Tough measures will apply from Saturday in all regions with incidence rates of more than 100 new infections per 100,000 people over the last seven days.

— AFP

regation in the Pyrenees. With big smiles on their pale faces, the 15 participants exited the Lombrives cave to a round of applause and basked in the light of day while wearing special glasses to protect their eyes after so long in the dark. "It's really warm!" said one.

For 40 days and 40 nights, the group lived in and explored the cave without a sense of time. There were

irus is more highly transmissible than all found so far in the island. The droplets can remain airborne for nearly an hour, Malavige said. Health authorities feared that the new variant is spreading rapidly after last week's New Year celebrations with more younger people getting infected.

In the next two incubation periods, the disease can progress to a third wave, Upul Rohana, of the Public Health Inspectors said.

— PTI

NZ PAUSES TRAVEL BUBBLE WITH W. AUSTRALIA AFTER VIRUS CASE

Wellington, April 24: New Zealand on Friday paused arrivals from Western Australia, temporarily excluding the state's travellers from a quarantine-free bubble between the countries due to a Covid-19 outbreak.

"As set out in our Trans-Tasman bubble protocols, travel between New Zealand and Western Australia has been paused, pending further advice from the state government," a state-

ment on the New Zealand government website said.

Earlier on Friday the Perth and Peel regions were sent into a three-day lockdown after Western Australia recorded its first community transmission of the virus in 12 months. A man in his 50s, who recently left hotel quarantine, flew into Melbourne from Perth on Wednesday and tested positive for the Coronavirus earlier Friday.

— AFP

GERMANY

BERLIN RESTRICTS TRAVEL FROM 'HIGH-RISK' INDIA

Berlin, April 24: Germany will shut out all travellers arriving from India apart from its own citizens, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Saturday, as a new variant has made the South Asian country the latest Coronavirus hotspot. "We're very worried about the new mutation of the virus discovered in India. So as not to endanger our vaccination programme, India travel has to be significantly limited," Spahn told the Funke newspaper group.

— AFP

KUWAIT

ALL COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS FROM INDIA SUSPENDED

Dubai, April 24: Kuwait on Saturday suspended all direct commercial flights from India due to the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country.

The move came after instructions from health authorities. Kuwait's directorate general of civil aviation said that it had suspended all direct commercial flights from India, effective April 24. Passengers arriving from India or via another country will be banned from entering unless they have spent 14 days out of India.

— PTI

PAKISTAN

IMRAN EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH INDIA OVER CRISIS

Islamabad, April 24: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday expressed solidarity with the people of India battling the deadly wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, saying we must fight this global challenge confronting humanity together.

In a tweet, Khan said: Our prayers for a speedy recovery go to all those suffering from the pandemic in our neighbourhood and the world. His tweet came after Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi expressed support to the people of India.

— PTI

SPAIN

MALLORCA MAN INFECTS 22 WITH COVID, ARRESTED

Madrid, April 24: A Mallorca man who infected 22 people with Covid-19 has been arrested on suspicion of assault for going to work and the gym despite signs he had the virus, police said Saturday.

Police on the Spanish island began investigating at the end of Jan. after an outbreak in the town of Manacor; following reports an employee had "become infected but hidden his illness", a statement said.

Days before the outbreak was detected, he began to show symptoms.

— AFP

IRAN

TEHRAN BANS FLIGHTS FROM INDIA, PAKISTAN

Tehran, April 24: Iran's state-run IRNA news agency is reporting the country's civil aviation agency has banned all flights to and from India and Pakistan because of the dramatic surge in Coronavirus cases in the two nations.

IRNA says the decision was made by Iran's Health Ministry and it takes effect Saturday at midnight.

Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh, spokesman for Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation noted there are no routine flights between Iran and India and flights are operated occasionally.

He said flights to and from 41 countries were prohibited in Iran, while those who want to fly to other countries listed as high risk are required to have a test in Iran.

— AP

Lost submarine sank: Indonesia

Says vessel went down, cracked open April 21

Banyuwangi (Indonesia), April 24: Indonesia's navy on Saturday said items were found from a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sunk and cracked open, and that there was no hope of finding survivors.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as the discovery of debris near the location of KRI Nanggala 402's last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof of the vessel had sunk.

Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing. Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali, "If it's an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 metres to 400 metres to 500 metres...If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar." The navy previously said it believes the submarine

● **THE NAVY** previously said it believes the submarine sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand.

sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand. The cause of the disappearance was still uncertain.

The navy had previously said an electrical failure could have left the submarine unable to execute emergency procedures to resurface. Margono said in the past two days, searchers found parts of a torpedo straightener, a grease bottle believed to be used to oil the periscope, debris

from prayer rugs and a broken piece from a coolant pipe that was refitted on the submarine in South Korea in 2012. "With the authentic evidence we found believed to be from the submarine, we have now moved from the sub miss' phase to sub sunk," Margono said at the press conference, in which the items were displayed.

Margono said rescue teams from Indonesia and other countries will evaluate the findings. He said no bodies have been found so far. Officials previously said the submarine's oxygen supply would have run out early Saturday. An American reconnaissance plane, a P-8 Poseidon, landed Saturday and was set to join the search, along with 20 Indonesian ships, a sonar-equipped Australian warship and four Indonesian aircraft. Singaporean rescue ships were expected Saturday, while Malaysian rescue vessels were due Sunday.

— AP

Israel, Gaza engage in exchange of fire

Jerusalem, April 24: Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired some three dozen rockets into Israel overnight Saturday, while the Israeli military struck back at targets operated by the ruling Hamas group. The exchange came as tensions in Jerusalem spilled over into the worst round of cross-border violence in months. The barrage of rocket fire came as hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli police in east Jerusalem.

The clashes, in which at least four police and six protesters were injured, have become a nightly occurrence throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and show no signs of stopping. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he held talks with top security officials about Gaza and Jerusalem. He said he instructed officials to be ready "for every scenario" in Gaza. In Jerusalem, he said Israel would guarantee "freedom of worship" for everyone, and he appealed for calm.

"We ask now for people to obey the law and I call for a calming of tempers on all sides." The UN envoy to the region, Tor Wennesland, condemned the violence and said the United Nations was working with all sides to restore calm. "The provocative acts across Jerusalem must cease. The indiscri-

minate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres violates international law and must stop immediately," he said. "I reiterate my call upon all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalation, particularly during the Holy month of Ramadan and this politically charged time for all."

Meanwhile, Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, is weighing "a series of steps for possible responses," and preparations if the situation continued to escalate, the military said in a statement. He also postponed a trip to the United States that was scheduled for Sunday. The US also appealed for calm, while neighbouring Jordan, which serves as the custodian for Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, condemned Israel's actions.

Jerusalem, home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2014, similar tensions erupted into a 50-day war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group.

The Israeli military said a total of 36 rockets were fired into Israel throughout the night. It said six rockets were intercepted, while most of the others landed in open areas. There were no reports of injuries.

— AP

turday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognise that the

BORIS EX-AIDE'S WAR OF WORDS AGAINST UK PM

London, April 24: Dominic Cummings, once Boris Johnson's top aide and closest ally as his Chief Strategy Adviser, has unleashed a fierce war of words against his former boss after Downing Street pointed to him as the leak behind a controversial text message exchange between the UK Prime Minister and vacuum cleaner entrepreneur James Dyson.

In a lengthy blog post published on Friday, Cummings vehemently denied leaking any text messages and goes on to reveal several of Johnson's actions during his time as his aide as being foolish and unethical and ends by questioning his "competence and integrity". Downing Street has responded to deny any impropriety and stressed the adherence to all codes of conduct and transparency norms.

It is sad to see the PM and his office fall so far below the standards of competence and integrity the country deserves, writes Cummings.

I am happy to meet with the Cabinet Secretary (Simon Case) and for him to search my phone for Dyson messages. If the PM did send them to me, as he is claiming, then he will be able to show the Cabinet Secretary on his own phone when they were sent to me, he writes.

— PTI

Biden: Atrocities against Armenians were genocide

Washington, April 24 : President Joe Biden has formally recognised that the systematic killings and deportations of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by Ottoman Empire forces in the early 20th century were "genocide" — using a term for the atrocities that his White House predecessors have avoided for decades over concerns of alienating Turkey.

With the acknowledgement, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Sa-

● **WITH THE** acknowledgement, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Saturday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognise that the events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

turday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognise that the

events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

Biden used a presidential proclamation to make the pronouncement. While previous presidents have offered somber reflections of the dark moment in history via remembrance day proclamations, they have studiously avoided using the term genocide out of concern that it would complicate relations with Turkey — a Nato ally and important power in the Middle East.

— AP

OUT OF THE CAVE

One of the sensors was a thermometer inside a capsule

French isolation study ends after 40 days

Lombrives Cave, April 24: Ever wonder what it would feel like to unplug from a hyperconnected world and hide away in a cave for a few weeks? Fifteen people in France found out.

After 40 days in voluntary isolation in a dark, damp and vast cave, eight men and seven women who took part in a scientific experiment emerged Saturday from their self-seg-

regation in the Pyrenees. With big smiles on their pale faces, the 15 participants exited the Lombrives cave to a round of applause and basked in the light of day while wearing special glasses to protect their eyes after so long in the dark. "It's really warm!" said one.

For 40 days and 40 nights, the group lived in and explored the cave without a sense of time. There were

no clocks and no sunlight inside, where the temperature was 10 degrees Celsius (50 F) and the relative humidity stood at 100 per cent. The cave dwellers had no contact with the outside world, no updates on the pandemic or any communication with friends and family above ground.

Scientists at the Human Adaption Institute leading the 1.2 million-euro (\$1.5 million) "Deep Time" project say the experiment will help them better understand how people adapt to drastic changes in living conditions and environments, something much of the world can relate to because of Coronavirus pandemic. In partnership with labs in France and Switzerland, scientists monitored the 15-member group's sleep patterns, social interactions and behavioural reactions via

sensors. One of the sensors was a tiny thermometer inside a capsule that participants swallowed like a pill. The capsules measure body temperature and transmit data to a portable computer until they are expelled naturally. The team members followed their biological clocks to know when to wake up, go to sleep and eat.

— AP

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DECCAN
Chronicle

25 APRIL 2021



Sucheta Dasgupta

Off the beaten track

Hope and sorrow in the time of C-virus

A ghost lives in my body and watches over the state of my heart. It does not take up space. It refuses food and drink, and speaks only when spoken to. I consult it when I need to identify my feelings. For my benefit, it keeps a record of them. For some reason, strange or otherwise, I alone was never an adept at that.

The only time the ghost speaks to me of its own accord is when I am tired. Whenever I expend myself beyond my lung capacity, it tells me: This is how it felt for him, too, when, for instance, he resumed breathing for your sake, twice coming out from under ventilation. And the cold finger of guilt grips my heart.

The first time I heard the ghost speak was when I was perspiring over the griddle a full year after Baba died.

Baba went under ventilation three Marches ago, in the late spring of 2018. The lone tree tucked away at the back of the interstate bus terminus was full of stars.

Baba did not die of the coronavirus. Following cardiac and kidney failure, he died of septic shock. Between the two illnesses, the pneumonia was the common factor.

Baba, a doctor, has missed out on the whole pandemic plus the vaccine conversations.

I have given up exercising for fitness. There is no one to perform for, vie against, show off. It puts me on a better footing than the children in my neighbourhood, fretting because they want to but cannot play. Less than a month ago, I saw a desi mother supervising their games in the park as I silently applauded her. To me, she was the pith of society, salt of the earth. That was then, though. This is now. In-between, the coronavirus has exploded and is now spreading furious and fast.

Despite its no-pussyfooting bravado and stupendous majority, the government did not declare a lockdown on Holi. The Kumbh continued uninterrupted. The virus, meanwhile, reached the interiors and the second wave has since surpassed the first one. The daily case count is over three lakhs. Experts say the peak is many weeks away. India is notorious for its non-existent chains of primary and secondary medical infrastructure. My husband held that these omissions on the part of the government — failing to declare a curfew, call off the Kumbh and so on — fell on its policy blindspot.

Well, one didn't. The decision to hold an eight-phase legislative assembly election, ongoing in the present, was deliberate. My home state, West Bengal, was chosen for this singular punishment.

Our leaders thus dropped the ball when our severely constrained health workers had almost won the match. The latter slogged away alone. Many did not return home in days. The hospitals were full of despair.

A young man asked a photographer to click the smoke coming out of his mother's pyre. She was there.

The high courts stepped in. They bore upon the Centre to direct uninterrupted transport of oxygen across state borders. India is the world's largest producer of industrial grade oxygen. But earlier, state governments had refused to come on the same page on this simplest of measures.

Eventhough I am his eldest, I am not going to my hometown to perform Baba's annual rite. My younger sister will fill in for me. The coronavirus is a factor. But what made the decision for me is my awareness from the start that I have not been a good child. While he never needed me to, I did not help Baba take care of the family. No one took care of him, on the other hand. I spurned his wish for me to become a doctor. For the sake of my journalistic quest, I abandoned him.

My rishirin to Baba will be paid when I complete my memoir of our differences. Baba was a flawed man. But no one, including a never-genuinely exceptional me, had a mind like Baba's.

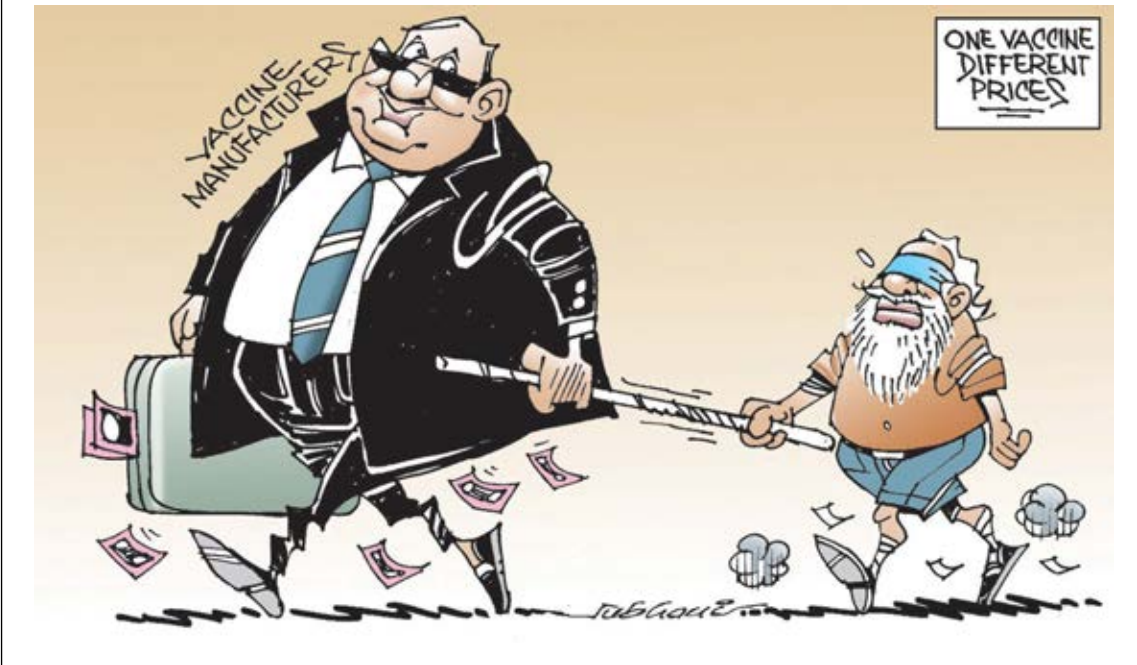
Periodically, the seed of my guilt bursts on my skin in angry hives. When I work very hard and accomplish a minuscule amount of good it goes away. I risk losing a bit of my memory of Baba whenever that occurs.

The young child I know in our condominium has started school. But school is online and she does not speak a word, and I worry that the lack of physical contact with classmates and peers will further rob her of that incentive. Whenever we meet, I am infected by her boundless energy. But she is more poised than I ever will be and never exposes her weak spots. Like her inability to articulate. Her absence of vocabulary.

I, too, had once chosen certainty over sharing, but I had been pushed to do that.

I dream of her growing up. To being from nothingness, darkness to light. Like Vak, daughter of Ambhrin, she will give a name to all existence, one by one, that will, in turn, give rise to noun, thought, knowledge and identity. That day, should I be around, she will probably look into my eyes with those great big ones of hers and there will be a reckoning. Or there will be not.

Subhani



An AWOL government



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

It is like a nightmarish déjà-vu moment for me. Opening the debate on the demands for grants for the ministry of health and family welfare in the Lok Sabha on March 17, 2021, I, at the outset, stated: "Mr Speaker Sir, this discussion is taking place at a point in time when the world is being engulfed, if not overwhelmed, by the second wave of coronavirus infections." These words have unfortunately proven to be prophetic in the case of our nation.

The last two weeks have been a nightmare for India as the second wave of Covid-19 hit the nation in all its fury. Overflowing hospitals, oxygen scarcity, hoarded life-saving drugs being sold on the black market, diagnostic centres stretched to a breaking point and hospitals approaching the courts to maintain oxygen supplies. The worst is even cremation and burial grounds not being able to cope with inflow of dead bodies and death numbers literally being fudged. People are being cremated on makeshift platforms set up on public pavements — denied dignity even in death.

The imagery of the past fortnight could not have been more bizarre. On one hand, the Prime Minister and home minister were addressing frenzied supporters in West Bengal and, on the other hand, sick and even dying people were being turned back from hospitals for lack of space.

The government is AWOL— absent without leave. What is, however, even far more felonious if it turns out to be true is that the Indian-origin double mutant strain, B.1.167, that is responsible for the current

rent rampage, was first detected as way back on the 5th of October 2020. Since both earlier mutations, E84Q and L425R, were discovered in the virus' crucial spike protein, its devastation potential should have been sequenced on a war footing. Instead, it was consigned to the back burner and never taken seriously because Covid infection numbers had started declining.

How could we have missed the second wave of Covid-19 with all the empirical evidence of hundred years of history staring us straight in the face? Downright negligence, coupled with hubris, made the governments, both at the Centre and some in the states, let their guard down.

Surprisingly, when the Prime Minister addressed the nation on Tuesday night, he said lockdown should be used as a measure of the last resort. On March 23, 2020, when India was at 341 cases and only seven dead, he was the most enthusiastic champion of a national lockdown.

All through the whole of last year, ministers and spokespersons of the NDA/BJP alliance kept touting it as the magic bullet that had saved millions of lives. *Jan Hai To Jahan Hai* (If there is life there would be paradise) — they sang in chorus. One year later, the Prime Minister and his band of not-so-merry men are singing an entirely different tune.

With a 32 lakh crore hole in the Union budget spread over two fiscals, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and no cushion to fall back upon, for the economy has been grossly mismanaged going back to the illogical demonetisation in November 2016, livelihoods are

now being prioritised over lives. If the wheels of the economy do not keep ticking, the Union government stares at the spectre of bankruptcy.

It is, therefore, not trite that even in times of a raging pandemic, the allocations in the Union budget for health in the current fiscal are at best tardy. I had pointed this out during the Parliament debate.

In 2020-21, the ministry received an allocation of ₹67,112 crores. This is an increase of a measly 3.9 per cent over the revised estimates of 2019-20 — ₹64,609 crores. In 2019-20, the cumulative public health expenditure of all the states put together was a meagre ₹1,96,659 crores. The Union government's performance was even worse at ₹36,339 crores.

We all know India's health system is in shambles. Last year in these columns, I had argued that what we need is a new health deal for India. I had calculated that India requires an infrastructure investment of ₹6 lakh crores to rebuild its public health system bottom upwards. The human resource cost to staff it is separate.

Given this state of play, a second wave meant that it would be each to their own. One would be primarily responsible for saving one's own life and those of one's loved ones.

Had we not experienced the same a year back? The disadvantaged sections of our society — the millions of internal migrants who keep the wheels of our economy turning — were compelled to walk home as they were doused with

with chlorine water, can-charged and made to suffer a million other ignominies by a callous state to prevent them from reaching their home and hearth. Once again as states announce lockdowns and curfews, you see the same stampede at bus stands and railway stations as people make a beeline back to their villages. The clock has turned a full cycle.

It, therefore, begs a question: Should people themselves not have come together to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour during the lull when cases had come down? But given our intrinsic sense of fatalism — it is all in God's hands — we threw all caution to the winds. This, even when it is known that there is never a government when it is required the most.

Maybe, given the hand-to-mouth existence of the bulk of our people who need to migrate to urban agglomerations to keep their body and soul together, it is not even humanly possible to think beyond the next meal. They are thus destined to play the Russian roulette, for the choice is a really a binary between death by hunger or death by virus.

Will this situation ever change? Can we build a state-of-the-art education and healthcare system for our people? The answer is yes. However, it would first and foremost require population control. With 135 crore people and growing by the minute, it is just not possible for any system to provide even the basic level of amenities required for a decent living. A broad national consensus regarding the need to contain population needs to be created at the earliest. How many more tragedies would it take to understand this?

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

TICKLISH PROBLEM

This is with reference to the Supreme Court advice to the Tamil Nadu government to take over Vedanta's Sterlite copper unit at Thoothukudi, which is closed since May 2018 over pollution concerns, to produce oxygen to treat Covid-19 patients. It is going to be a ticklish problem for the TN as the people of Thoothukudi, with the support of Opposition leaders, are bent upon stalling the functioning of the unit. Though their concerns may be valid, but taking into account the importance of producing oxygen to treat Covid patients, we feel the government, in consultation with the people of Thoothukudi and Opposition leaders, should thrash out their differences and start producing oxygen to save the precious lives of people in our country. Hope the government, without waiting for the election results on May 2, would take immediate action before it is too late.

N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

IMPROPER ACT

The broadcasting of a conversation with the PM by Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal is in very poor taste. He has failed to maintain the dignity and decorum of his office. The meeting between the PM and the state chief minister was for review of the Covid-19 situation and to take further course of action. Normally, top officials are not allowed in such high-level one-on-one meetings. Being a highly educated person and aware of the protocols it is very improper on the part of the CM to make the meeting reach the public by broadcasting it. It is a clear breach of the oath of secrecy he took while assuming the office of CM and such a foolish act warrants strict action including his dismissal. It is high time that the entire nation should support the government in the war against the coronavirus.

S. Hariharan,
Chennai

OPPOSITION SILENCE

The accident caused to a passenger train in Chhattisgarh due to sabotage by suspected Naxalites is highly condemnable. I just don't know what the Naxalites are going to achieve by killing their own compatriots and citizens and how they are going to usher in their "ideal state of the proletariat" by killing men of equal stature. It is very sad to note that none of the opposition leaders has uttered a word in condemnation of the mindless act of the Naxalites.

S. Nagarajan Iyer,
Coimbatore

Pradeep S. Mehta
and Prashant Tak

Haryana law a bad example: Populism won't create new jobs

Haryana is the latest addition to the growing phenomenon where Indian states are formulating laws and policies to reserve jobs for locals in the private sector. Other states that have undertaken such measures, though with negligible implementation, include Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Is it a race to the top or the bottom? It is certainly petty, immoral and may not achieve its objectives.

The Haryana government recently enacted the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020, which requires private establishments that employ 10 or more workers to reserve 75 per cent of new jobs with a monthly salary of less than ₹50,000 for domiciles of Haryana.

It has resulted in a rift between the state government and the private sector, as evident from the backlash it has received from private entrepreneurs and industry bodies. Many private sector firms have threatened to move out.

This practice of regional protectionism has a ripple effect, that is likely to push other states to follow suit due to populist considerations, or a race to the bottom. It will end up restricting the freedom of workers to migrate and access better employment opportuni-

ties. It may also push employers to leave places where such laws are applicable. Most critically, it will lead to the erosion of national unity.

The perceived economic rationale of such laws — to generate jobs for locals and boost local industrial ecosystems — seems to get defeated.

To govern a commercial ecosystem, the state government is entitled and mandated to enact laws concerning land, labour, capital and energy.

These laws are meant to ensure smooth commercial activity. Each or both of the objectives forms the economic rationale towards formulation of a law. Additionally, under the new paradigm of stakeholder capitalism, the government, private sector, labour and civil society need to work in a compact over each other's actions for inclusive and mutually beneficial governance.

While enacting this law, the Haryana government failed to do adequate pre-legislative exercises to test its economic rationale. It also undermined its compact of cooperation with the private sector. The law restricts the opportunities of migrant workers and disrupts the industrial ecosystem of Haryana. It seems like an expression of the state government's insecurity towards unemployment and a classic example of ad hocism in law-

making, driven by populism.

There already exists a trust deficit between the government and private sector, as each has avoided accountability towards the other on various occasions. The private sector knowingly failed to adequately distribute its acquired wealth and institutionalise precarious jobs. The government has overregulated the private sector, leading to a high compliance burden. The world is debating stakeholder capitalism vs shareholder capitalism: to ensure that every enterprise works for society, not just its owners.

In both instances of state supervision of business, however, labour has borne the brunt of the adverse consequences. What is unfortunate is that self-interest, rather than mutual interest, drives the solution of modern economic problems.

There is nonalignment between the problem statement specified in the statement of objects and reasons of the Haryana law and its objectives.

The statement specifies the influx of migrants competing for low-paid jobs as the prime reason for the adverse impact on local infrastructure and housing, and proliferation of slums. It further attributes these factors to the rise of environmental and health issues, thus affecting the quality of life and livelihood.

It's true there is migrant influx for low-paid jobs in Haryana or the entire National Capital Region as it is in Mumbai or Kolkata. There can be two possible reasons. First, availability of abundant work opportunities under different industry segments; and second, lack of work in the states where the workers migrate from.

However, the primary reason for the burden on local infrastructure, housing and proliferation of slums is not the presence of migrants. It can be attributed to factors like lack of state capacity in undertaking welfare measures, non-availability of decent jobs in the private sector. Further, the quality of life and livelihood is affected for the same reasons.

Therefore, the solution to address this doesn't lie in reserving jobs for locals but in enhancing the investment on local infrastructure, welfare measures and strengthening skill development initiatives. The solution also demands ensuring decent work for low-paid workers in particular. Decent work implies that the primary needs of workers, including health, food, shelter and clothing, are fulfilled. It also places a worker in a position where monetary savings are ensured and there is an opportunity for skill enhancement.

Ensuring decent work is a goal in

itself and has an economic rationale of increased productivity and development of human beings. Working towards it requires the efficient performance of the compact between the government, labour and the private sector.

The state governments also need to realise such quota enabling measures are accompanied by newer compliances for enterprises. The proliferation of compliance responsibilities dilute the state's agenda of facilitating the "ease of doing business" and also reduces the governance deficit.

The policies enabling employment quotas for locals is driven by populism. It has far-reaching consequences which goes beyond the direct impact on labour, the government and the private sector. It adversely affects the investment prospects for a commercial ecosystem, urban mobility of workers and has an immense opportunity cost. Therefore, any state action towards enhancing employment must be anchored through an economic rationale. This will be clear when the compact between the government, labour and the private sector is evidently functional.

The writers work for CUTS International, a global public policy research and advocacy group

KAUSHIK MITTER, Editor, R. MOHAN Resident Editor

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Penguin Vintage, ₹799
- THE FRONTIER GANDHI**
Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada (Translator)
Roli Books, ₹695

BUNCH OF
CAUTIONARY TALES
ON SEXIST ABUSE

DC CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi: #MeToo by Karan Puri (Invincible Publishers, ₹299) is a collection of six imaginary accounts of sexual abuse, its aftermath and denouement, mostly from the victim's perspective. Most are concise but lack in analysis. The language is simple and the reader gets to meet a variety of characters, including the male victim. The key to resolving the crisis is shown to be lying with the victims, themselves. The diversity of circumstance is possibly intended as a means to show how pervasive the problem of gendered as well as sexual harassment is, as present in Indian society today. Among the six cautionary tales, the story that leaves a lasting impression, however, is not directly to do with sexual harassment.

B'bye chick flicks, welcome cross-cultural crime fiction



Devapriya Roy

review

In *Club You to Death*, her sixth novel (and first cosy crime), bestselling author Anuja Chauhan chooses to set the action in the posh Delhi Turf Club, located in the salubrious environs of Lutyens Delhi. Modelled mostly on the Delhi Gymkhana — though in the Acknowledgements Chauhan credits, in addition, several other clubs from across the country — “The Army Club in Dinjan”, “the DSOI at Dhaura Kuan”, “the Press Club of India at Raisina Road”, “the sunny sky-blue Bangalore Club, the multi-balconied Catholic club, all clubs, basically!” — DTC, that bastion of “old, established Dilliwallas”, automatically brings her fans right back to the territory where her most memorable book *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* was situated.

Of course, *TPTG* was about the genteel, sometimes even shabby, lives of the propertied elite in an India that was still socialist, while, in stark contrast, *CYTD* is about the capital's super-rich, whose portfolios have multiplied several

hundred times since liberalisation, and their kin, the not-particularly-wealthy-but-still-super-privileged upper-classes — retired home secretaries and generals — whom we get to see up close and personal, warts and all, through Chauhan's wacky (and prismatic) lens.

There are three qualities that Chauhan novels are famous for: a toe-curling romance, mostly between polar opposites; a larger story where said polar-opposites are required to rise up to a challenge, whether war, investigative journalism, politics or cricket, that brings about a kind of coming-of-age — this is what gives Chauhan's popular fiction its signature heft; and most importantly, the way she uses a polyglossic register to bring alive a specific world, in English. And it is safe to say that in *CYTD* she doesn't disappoint on any of these counts.

The story begins with Akash 'Kashi' Dogra, an idealistic lawyer who tries to live down all his elite connections — schooling in “TVVS” and Doon for instance, and the DTC mem-

bership his father has bestowed upon him much like a family inheritance — by living in a barsaati in Nizamuddin, representing slums in the Supreme Court (and winning them large compensations from the government), and being continually inspired by his fiery girlfriend Kuhu Banerjee (“JNU ki Bangalan” to his mother Mala) who is busy building a school in Kalahandi.

Much against his will, Kashi finds himself at DTC on “Tambola Sunday”, and realises that he hadn't abandoned “the sprawling, sunlit, dahlia-edged lawns” awash with “the well-remembered Sunday morning bouquet of candylfloss, tandoor smoke and strong beer” because of his principles but chiefly because

DTC is second home to his ex-Bambi Todi, pint-sized heiress to the vast Todi fortune, who had dumped him unceremoniously three years ago, when her parents had fixed her match with tycoon Anshul Poddar, who also happened to be one of the most eligible bachelors in the national Marwari community. (However, Anshul had died tragically after the engagement.)

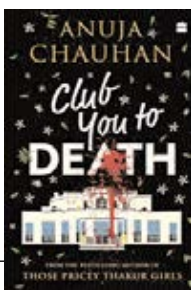
Fate conspires to throw Bambi and Kashi together again — rekindling old sparks — when, the day after Tambola Sunday, the club's handsome Zumba instructor Leo Matthews is found dead in the gym at DTC, and investigations reveal he had been poisoned. ACP Bhavani Singh, the true breakout character of this book, “cute as a cheeku and keen as a cheel”, is deputised to solve this case. Married to an English teacher and father to two grown-up daughters, Singh is mellow, decent, fit — single-handedly redeeming the image of the Delhi Police — and invariably uses the charming “hum” that is common in eastern UP and Bihar versus the “main” of I-obsessed Delhi, that Chauhan has translated cleverly into “we”. (That Singh uses the royal “we” is definitely one of the linguistic masterstrokes of this book.) Aided by his deputy, the irascible Padam Kumar, Bhavani Singh realizes quickly that he needs an “insid-

er” or two to navigate the murky corridors of DTC, and drafts in Kashi and Bambi to help. And soon secrets begin to tumble out by the dozens, leading, 350-odd pages later, to a proper Agatha Christie-like finale, where “Cheeku-cheel Bhavani” performs like Poirot in front of a gathering of all the players.

Having dominated the rom com segment for a decade now, it is understandable that Chauhan would want to venture into new territory — the cosy mystery — and, with *Baaz*, she had in fact experimented with the element of suspense in her tale. But it is also arguable that thanks to the OTTs, which seem to have rejected the Indian rom com firmly in favour of crime and drama as genres, its corresponding ripple effect in popular culture, seems to be translating into the popular fiction market as well. Is the age of rom com or chick lit — that term despised by Chauhan herself — over? At least for a phase? That is a question one cannot help but ask. (Meenakshi Madhavan Reddy's new novel, still in manuscript form, is a murder mystery too.) I must confess, my next question is somewhat shameful.

Can Pankaj Tripathi please play Bhavani Singh on screen?

Devapriya Roy is the author of five books, most recently Friends from College



By ANUJA CHAUHAN
HarperCollins India, ₹399

Those doughty homeboys with the wooden rackets



R. Mohan

review

This is the breeziest history of any sport ever written. Avoiding the clutter of excessive chronography and detailed accounts of the operations and decisions of the administration, the story of Indian tennis is told in engaging fashion with anecdote after anecdote bringing out the thrills and excitement of the sport while giving us more than a glimpse into the careers and achievements of old gladiators who have long departed. They had only a wooden racket and strength in their legs to play this fascinating game that is so well captured by the television cameras as the tennis court is just the right size to bring out the totality of the visual spectacle that the game is.

The descriptions of a budding generation of champions,

many of whom were Englishmen, should be an eye-opener for young people who may only have heard of the names but only a smattering of description of the skills that made them legends. The stirring deeds of Dr Hassan Ali Fyzee and his brother Dr Akhtar Ali were early signs of how well Indians took to tennis. And then up pops the name of Cota Ramaswami, a batsman who averaged 56.66 in Tests but was never picked again. He had the distinction of winning both the doubles ties that he played in for India in the Davis Cup. And there was the first tennis superstar of India in Mohammed Sleem while Ghaus Mohammed became the first ethnic Indian to get as far as the quarter-finals at Wimbledon.

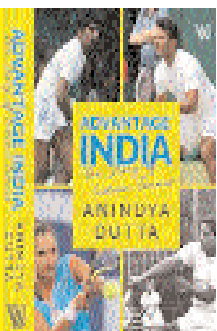
A fascinating story is the one about how T.K. Ramanathan

took his promising young son Krishnan to play in Wimbledon (juniors). While watching the final between Jaroslav Drobny and Frank Sedgman, Krishnan was fascinated by the players and simply kept looking at their faces as they exchanged strokes. “I didn't take my eyes off their faces during the match until Father tapped me out of my reverie and said, ‘Look at Sedgman's feet, not his face.’ As I watched Sedgman's dancing feet and remained in awe of his speed about court, it turned out to be a big tennis lesson for me — It is the feet that play tennis.” What a moment and how beautifully the technicality behind the game is captured.

As we read through a roll call of tennis greats, from two generations of the Krishnans, the Amritraj brothers and down to Leander Paes, a thought that springs to the mind is why did no Indian have the temperament and the wherewithal to win a Grand Slam though it is readily conceded that many of them had the talent. Two of them were particularly world class — Ramanathan Krishnan and Vijay Amritraj, and they came

the closest with the former entering the semi-final in Wimbledon twice and Vijay figuring in quarter-finals twice, in the year of the boycott in 1973 and then in 1981. In many such moments when within touching distance of greatest glory, they went down to those who were world-beaters. How come Krishnan could not beat Hoad or Rosewall when it mattered most, or Vijay beat Borg or Connors?

As we moved on from the era of great Indian players, came a



By ANINDYA DUTTA
Westland, ₹599

time when the exploits of collective Indians in the Davis Cup began to capture national attention. An India that was still far from emerging as a world power in terms of its economy, the national team did well enough to climb the heights to get to the challenge round of the Davis Cup — the first time in 1966 when they lost to Australia and in 1974 when, unfortunately, India did not even get a tilt at the title as the government would not allow the team to play South Africa, which still had Apartheid on its statute. That was a grave early disappointment for a bunch of eager over achievers who were spurred on by national pride.

The era of triumph for Indian tennis players in doubles came much later but when it did it took the nation once again by storm. While flag waving Indian spectators began to resemble Brazilians at soccer games, India became a force to be reckoned with in team events. But it was the Grand Slam titles won in doubles by the likes of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, known as the “Indian Express” (they won three titles together and 27 titles in all with differ-

ent partners) and then by the glamorous star Sania Mirza who took the women's game to its greatest heights in a transformational role as the Princess of Indian tennis that tennis picked up a huge following in India.

Leander Paes proved to be the most durable of India's doubles experts, winning 18 Grand Slams (and an Olympic medal) while partnering a variety of international stars like the Martinis — Navratilova and Hings. The author is at his best in answering a question that would have puzzled many an Indian sports aficionado. This is to do with whether all this hyper nationalism was truly worth it when the country could not so much as win an individual Grand Slam or a Davis Cup or its true equivalent in the women's game. “What is it about Indians and doubles?” he was asked at a corporate event and he answers it very well in his description of Indians being subtle and clever.

Ramanathan Krishnan responded best to the query on doubles, saying — “Subtle movements, good reactions and supple wrists. Add to that quick thinking on the court.

And there you have your answer.” The same attributes could be those that our cricketers have parlayed into success as world beaters. The precision needed in doubles play also enables singles players with versatility, including maybe even John McEnroe of whom it was said — “The best doubles team in the world is John McEnroe and anyone.” Indians as a group and playing with anyone may come a close second. This should open our eyes into appreciating more of our sportsmen's deeds on the wide doubles courts of the tennis world.

Sania Mirza's career, her exploits on the court, her brush with religious bigots and her fortitude in going on to be a path breaker for NextGen in women's tennis have been splendidly recaptured. It may be new to many that Rita Davar, an early woman tennis player, had three match points against her Dutch opponent in the junior girl's final in Wimbledon in 1952, which she lost 7-5, 1-6, 5-7. However, on the distaff side in the Open era, quite none has matched Sania's trail blazing ways. The book is a must read for all tennis lovers..

XI'S CHINA

By EDEL SECONDAT
India Foundation & Pentagon Press
₹395

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Nadal surges into Barcelona semis

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal stepped up his bid for a 12th Barcelona Open title with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Cameron Norrie in the quarterfinals on Friday, while Stefanos Tsitsipas will play Janik Sinner in the last four. Nadal, who captured his first Barcelona title as an 18-year-old at the 2005 tournament, will face Diego Schwartzman or Pablo Carreno Busta in Saturday's semifinals. Tsitsipas swept aside Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 6-3, the Canadian who recently teamed up with Toni Nadal, the uncle and former coach of the 20-time Grand Slam winner. Tsitsipas extended his winning run to eight matches. — AFP

Barty battles past Pliskova in QFs

Stuttgart, Germany: World number one Ashleigh Barty fought back to reach the semifinals of the WTA Stuttgart clay-court tournament with a 2-6, 6-1, 7-5 win over Karolina Pliskova on Friday. Barty faces fourth seed Elina Svitolina in Saturday's semifinal after the Ukrainian staged a remarkable comeback in her 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-2 win over Petra Kvitova. Second seed Simona Halep is yet to drop a set in Stuttgart as she reached the semifinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Ekaterina Alexandrova. — AFP

Toffees add to Gunners misery

Own goal from Arsenal goalkeeper gifts Everton first win in seven games

MAN CITY LOOK TO END TITLE DROUGHT



Everton's Richardson (left) vies for the ball with Granit Xhaka of Arsenal in an EPL match in London on Friday. — AFP

London, April 24: An own-goal from Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno handed Everton a 1-0 Premier League win on Friday as around 2,000 fans protested against Gunners owner Stan Kroenke outside the Emirates Stadium.

With both sides chasing places in Europe next season, it was Carlo Ancelotti's side who came out on top with a first win in seven games.

German keeper Leno turned a Richardson cross into his own goal in the 76th minute to give the Toffees victory.

Arsenal supporters had gathered outside the ground demanding Kroenke stand down after the club's attempt to join the doomed Super League project.

The result left Everton in eighth place, three points off the Champions League places after their first league win at Arsenal since 1996.

Arsenal are ninth, nine points off the top four.

“It was really important to stay attached to the top of the table,” Ancelotti told the BBC.

“The performance was good. It's all good news tonight and this gives us confidence for the next games. Finally I can say we are back.”

The game produced few

chances.

Everton's Gyfi Sigurdsson saw a 30-yard free-kick come back off the

crossbar.

Arsenal were furious when a second-half penalty, awarded for a foul by

Richardson on Dani Ceballos, was overturned by VAR for an offside in the build-up. — AFP

ARCHERY | WORLD CUP

Women's team storm into final

Guatemala City, April 24: Recurve women's team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari assured India of its first medal in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 after cruising into the final with a straight-set win over Spain here.

However, the men's team, which qualified as third seed, lost in the quarterfinals to their Spanish rivals 26-27 in a shoot-off after both teams were tied 4-4.

India are also in the medal hunt in three more events with newly-wed Atanu Das and Deepika advancing into the mixed pair bronze playoff. The duo will also vie for individual medals, having made the last-four in their respective sections.

In the women's semifinal, Spanish trio of Elia Canales, Ines De Velasco and Leyre Fernandez Infante were no match to the top seeded Indians, who drilled in consistent scores of 55, 56 and 55 to seal a 6-0 win and make their first World Cup final since Shanghai, 2016.

The women's team will take on seventh-seed Mexico in the gold medal clash on Sunday. They will start firm favourites in a depleted field without

● **India are also in the medal hunt in three more events with newly-wed Atanu Das and Deepika advancing into the mixed pair bronze playoff. The duo will also vie for individual medals, having made the last-four in their respective sections.**

Asian heavyweights Korea, China and Chinese Taipei.

Indian recurve women's team have won team gold in World Cup four times (Shanghai-2011, Medellin-2013, Wrocław-2013 and 2014) with former world number one Deepika being a constant in each event.

For the women's team, who is yet to clinch an Olympic quota, the win was a big boost ahead of the last Olympic qualification event — the World Cup Stage 3 in Paris in June.

In the quarterfinals, they eliminated hosts Guatemala City by an identical 6-0 margin on Friday at the Sports Complex Los Arcos. — PTI

