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NEARBY



Capital reports 11,491 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI
Delhi on Monday witnessed the biggest spike in COVID-19 cases with 11,491 infections being reported over 24 hours. The total number of cases in the city stood at 7,36,688.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Nizamuddin mosque can open for Ramzan'

NEW DELHI
The Centre informed the Delhi High Court on Monday that the Nizamuddin Markaz mosque can be made operational for devotees to offer prayers during Ramzan, which is likely to begin from April 14.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

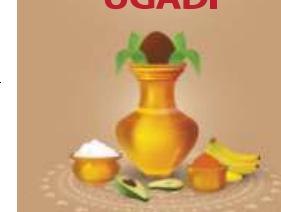
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THE HINDU

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As cases surge, panel approves Russia's Sputnik V vaccine

DCGI nod awaited amid more cases of mutant strains

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Russia's COVID-19 vaccine – Sputnik V – has been recommended for emergency use authorisation in India following a meeting of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Monday, *The Hindu* has confirmed.

If approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), Sputnik V would be the third vaccine to be made available in India after the Serum Institute of India's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

The Hindu had reported

Adding to the mix

Sputnik V, the third COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use in India, is similar to the AstraZeneca 'Covishield vaccine' in terms of design

- Sputnik V was granted emergency approval in Russia without proper controlled trials. However, results of such trials were published later in *The Lancet*, showing a 91.6% efficacy
- Before India, the vaccine was approved under emergency use authorisation in 59 countries
- There are no definitive studies establishing the efficacy of the vaccine against the newer variants
- The vaccine can be stored as a ready-to-use solution in water frozen to -18°C or as freeze-dried powder stored at 2-8 °C

On April 4 that this vaccine was likely to be cleared for public use within 7-10 days.

The recommendation comes amid the recent record surge of fresh COVID cases. On Monday, India re-

ported 948 cases with the U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants of the virus, according to the Health Ministry.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 10

India reports 1,60,695 cases

As of 11.55 p.m. on Monday, India reported 1,60,695 COVID-19 cases and 864 deaths due to the infection. The country has so far reported a total of 1,36,86,074 cases and 1,71,073 deaths. ▶ PAGE 10

Over 50 test positive in SC

Over 50 staff members in the Supreme Court have been tested COVID-19 positive, triggering alarm bells in the highest court. Judges have resumed hearing cases via video-conferencing ▶ PAGE 10

Amid sharpest spike, Haryana imposes night curfew

State registers single-day high of 3,818 cases; restrictions in force till further orders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Amid the surge in COVID-19 cases in Haryana, the Manohar Lal government on Monday announced night curfew between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m., effective Monday night.

The order was issued as the State recorded the sharpest single-day spike of 3,818 COVID-19 cases, pushing the tally to 3,20,699, while 14

more fatalities took the death toll to 3,282, a health department bulletin said.

The government said movement of individuals for all non-essential activities has been barred. "No person shall leave their homes or shall move on foot or by vehicle or travel or stand or roam around any road or public place during the said hours," said the State Disas-

ter Management Authority. The restrictions will remain in force till further orders.

Legal action

According to the order, any person violating the directions will face action under the provisions of Section 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC and other legal

provisions as applicable.

The order said exemption has been granted to officials manning law and order, emergencies and municipal services as well as media persons with accreditation.

"There shall be no curbs on inter and Intra-State movement of essential and non-essential goods," said the order.

(With inputs from PTI)

Religious fervour



Safety first: Naga sadhus wearing masks wait for taking a dip in the Ganga during 'Shahi Snan' at the Kumbh Mela, in Haridwar on Monday. ▶ REUTERS (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

Govt. bars meals on short haul flights

Order comes into effect on April 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With COVID-19 cases on the rise, the Ministry of Civil Aviation on Monday barred airlines from serving in-flight meals for flights shorter than two hours.

On long flights, airlines must ensure that passengers seated on adjacent seats are served food in a staggered manner. The order comes into effect on April 15.

"The passengers would be informed of the above practices before the start of the catering services by way of passenger announcements," the order said.

The government had imposed similar curbs last year. When domestic flights res-

umed on May 25, 2020 after a gap of two months, the government had restricted meal service.

In the recent past, the government has issued a slew of guidelines in order to ensure strict compliance with COVID-19 protocols and instructed airlines to place passengers who flout norms on the no-fly list, and asked airports to impose fines.

The latest order comes at a time when air travel demand has registered a decline. An analysis of daily passenger departures released by the Ministry shows a 28% decline over the past two weeks – dropping from 2.83 lakh departures on March 27 to 2.04 lakh on April 8.

(With inputs from PTI)

'Northeast citizens faced bias amid pandemic'

Region seamlessly fits Indians' imagination of a Chinese person: study

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A study commissioned by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) on racial discrimination and hate crimes against people from the northeastern States found that the "northeast India seamlessly fits [an] Indian's imagination of a Chinese person".

The study found that 78% of the people from the region who were interviewed believed that physical appearance was the most important reason for prejudice.

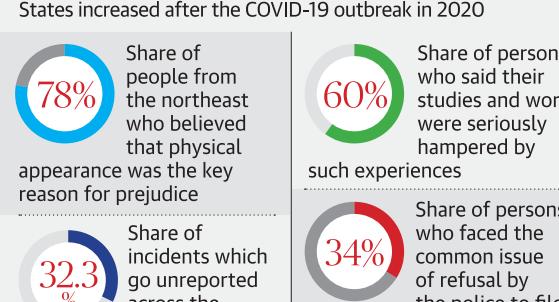
Amid the COVID-19 outbreak last year, people from the region "faced an increased number of acts of

hate and prejudices against them". A series of attacks were reported in various parts of the country, where people from the region were "harassed, abused, and traumatised" and were disparagingly called "coronavirus", the study said.

Hate crimes
The Hindu accessed the findings of the unpublished report. The Centre for Criminology and Victimology at the National Law University (NLU), Delhi, conducted the study under the aegis of the ICSSR, Delhi, on the prevalence of hate crimes against the people of the region in six metropolitan cities –

Victims of prejudice

A study by the National Law University, Delhi, found that acts of racial discrimination against people from the northeastern States increased after the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020



The study's associate is Garima Paul of the NLU.

G.S. Bajpai, chairperson of the Centre, said the majority of those interviewed faced discrimination when it came to renting accommodation, visiting a restaurant

and even while finding transportation.

"The study revealed that the hate crime and racial discrimination against people from the northeast is deep-rooted even in the cosmopolitan cities. Even in restaurants they faced issues forcing them to eat mostly in eateries run by people from their communities," Professor Bajpai said.

The study quoted a 2020 report from the Right and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) that found a significant upsurge in acts of racial discrimination against people from the region. It mentioned 22 reported cases of racial discrimination or hate crimes between February and March 25, 2020.

(Continued on ▶ PAGE 8)

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Our Panelist for Mock Interview

Shri M.C. Gupta (Retd. IAS)

* Former Chief Secretary Govt. of Haryana

* Former Director of IPA

Ranjiv Singh Dalal (Retd. IPS)

* Former Director General of Police, Haryana

Shri Anil K. Sinha (Retd. IAS)

* Former Director National Institute of Disaster Management Govt. of India

Shri S. Ranjan Tayal (Retd. IFS)

* Former Ambassador to South Korea, Uzbekistan

Dr. Bala Prasad (Retd. IFS)

(Ex Special Secretary to Govt. of India)

Shri A.K. Upadhyay (Retd. IPS)

Shri Saurabh Kumar (Retd. IFS)

(Former Ambassador to Vietnam, Ireland)

Shri M. Ramachandran (Retd. IAS)

* Former Secretary Govt. of India

* Former Chief Secretary Govt. of U.P.

Shri R. Srinivasan IES (Retd.)

(Retd. Advisor to the Govt. of India)

Dr. G.C. Srivastava (Retd. IAS)

* Ex-member Secretary 12th Finance Commission

* Vice Chairman Central Administrative Tribunal

Shri B.B. Srivastava (Retd. IAS)

* Former Secretary to the Govt. of India Department of Land Resources (Ministry of Rural Development)

Shri A.K. Mangatra (Retd. IAS)

(Former Secretary to Govt. of India)

Prof. Rajveer Sharma

(Retd. Prof. of Political Science D.U.)

Crowds reappear at transport hubs, but not out of lockdown fear

Migrant workers say they are going on planned trips or to vote in polls

SHINJINI GHOSH
ANUJ KUMAR
ASHOK KUMAR
NEW DELHI/GHAZIABAD/
GURUGRAM

The number of COVID-19 cases in the Capital is rising steeply again, but this time the migrant labourers are not caught in a panic even after strict measures were reintroduced in Delhi to control the spread of the virus.

Though the situation has an eerie resemblance to last year, they say their predicament is not comparable to the lockdown days.

Travelling to Bihar's Begusarai district from Anand Vihar railway station, Ram Baran, a car mechanic in Faridabad, said: "We cannot get scared of the virus and live constantly in fear. Last year, I was jobless for over four months. We have already faced the worst and we are not thinking about that scenario anymore. I am going to my village to bring my daughter back. As for any lockdown in the future, we will see what happens."

Nineteen-year-old Miyaz, who was waiting at the Anand Vihar railway station,

said he was on his way from Ahmedabad, Gujarat, to Bhagalpur in Bihar. "I am going to my village as my parents want to see me. Even though there are restrictions in Ahmedabad, our factory is still operational and we cannot afford to miss out again. Last year, we were forced to return to our villages when the lockdown was announced suddenly. We cannot afford to miss work and wages again," said Mr. Miyaz.

Planned visits
Several workers said they were going on scheduled trips to their villages and would return to the city after a few weeks.

Raju, 32, who works at a shop in Nehru Place, said: "There is some work in the village, so I am travelling to Bhagalpur. Last year, we faced hurdles during the lockdown and we were not among the ones who could travel back. Hopefully, the situation will not repeat and we will not be left without work yet again."

No unusual rush
Station Superintendent of Gurugram railway station, S.L. Meena, told *The Hindu* that there was no unusual rush of passengers to suggest an exodus of migrants fearing a lockdown.

"We have more than the



Clockwise from above: Passengers wait for their train at the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station in Delhi; crowds at a platform in Gurugram railway station; passengers packed inside a vehicle at the Kaushambi bus stand in Ghaziabad on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR, ASHOK KUMAR, ANUJ KUMAR

usual rush today [Monday] because of a large number of devotees reaching Gurugram from the neighbouring States for Sheetla Mata fair. But the number of devotees too is far less compared to pre-pandemic days," said Mr. Meena.

He added that the number of trains passing through the station was reduced to 46 from the 98 that plied in the pre-lockdown period, including six local trains.

In the pre-lockdown period, around a dozen local trains ran on the route.

"The footfall at the railway

station has drastically reduced from 60,000 a day before the outbreak to just 5,000 now. Many daily passengers on local trains lost their jobs due to the pandemic, reducing the footfall. This is why the number of passengers remains low despite some trains being restored," he said.

Inqlabi Mazdoor Kendra central committee member Shyambir Shukla said there was a sense of fear among the workers in Gurugram, but they were not planning to return to their homes

since industries were still operational. "The managements of some factories have assured them that a complete lockdown-like situation was unlikely and therefore they have decided to stay on," said Mr. Shukla.

The number of passengers at the Kaushambi bus stand, which saw huge crowds of migrant workers in 2020, is swelling again. However, this time, the pandemic is just one of the factors on their mind. Many of them are heading home not because of the surge, but because of



Clockwise from above: Passengers wait for their train at the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station in Delhi; crowds at a platform in Gurugram railway station; passengers packed inside a vehicle at the Kaushambi bus stand in Ghaziabad on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR, ASHOK KUMAR, ANUJ KUMAR

the wedding and harvest season, besides the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh.

Caution to the wind
Most of them were also not conforming to COVID-19 protocols. Buses to Azamgarh and Lucknow were crammed, despite instructions that the capacity should be just 50%.

Conductors feel that as long as passengers are not standing in the aisles, the protocol is followed.

Rakesh Yadav, station in-charge, said there has been a

20% rise in passengers in the last two days.

"There are a number of factors and the virus is just one of them. We have enough buses and there is no pressure as of now," he said.

Sanitiser dispensers and infrared thermometers too were absent in some places.

Mr. Yadav said the arrangement existed, but was missing at that particular moment. "Conductors and passengers are advised to follow COVID-19 protocols, but some don't," he said.

Madhuban, standing in

front of a bus of Bihar State Transport Corporation, said he is rushing home to Gorakhpur to attend the upcoming panchayat polls.

Nearby, Rakesh, a daily wager from Pilibhit, was languishing on the floor.

"The project I was working on in Noida is over, so I am heading home. Abhi toh night curfew hai, pata nahin aage kya ho (there is a night curfew now, who knows what will happen next)," he wondered.

'Drop in passengers'
At the Sahibabad railway station, the sanitiser dispenser had dried up. Station master Virendra Gupta said there has been a drop in the number of passengers in the last few days. Sanjay Kumar, senior commercial clerk, said 25 reservations used to be cancelled a day till March end, now the number has gone up to 35-40 a day. "There has been a decline in the number of non-reserved tickets as well," he said.

Lal Kuan, on the outskirts of Ghaziabad on the Aligarh-Etah-Kanpur route, which emerged as an epicentre for migrant passengers last year, has yet to see the crowd swell. But here conductors continue to fill the seats that are left vacant at Kaushambi. Again, COVID protocol is conspicuous by its absence.

Police to submit chargesheet in Red Fort violence case soon

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police will soon submit chargesheet in the Red Fort violence case that happened on Republic Day during the farmers' tractor rally against the new farm laws, said a senior police officer on Monday.

The officer added that till

date, 16 people have been arrested, including actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu.

The arrested have been charged under IPC Sections like attempt to murder, rioting, damaging public property and other serious criminal offences.

"We have strong electronic evidence against the accused and that

is the reason none of them got bail despite several attempts. The forensic reports have been received and a few other reports are awaited," the officer added.

Another senior police officer added that their focus is to submit the chargesheet at the earliest to begin the trial in the case.

tacked by agitating farmers who took out a tractor rally to protest against the Centre's farm laws.

Meanwhile, a city court on Monday reserved its order on the bail application of Mr. Sidhu. Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen said that an order on the plea will be pronounced on April 15.

On January 26, more than 500 police personnel suffered injuries after being at-

Did not detain Lakha Sidhana's cousin illegally

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday refuted allegations that it had "illegally" detained gangster-turned-activist Lakha Sidhana's cousin Gurdeep Singh in Punjab.

Mr. Sidhana is wanted in connection with the Republic Day violence during the farmers' rally in the Capital, the police said.

It is learnt that misinformation is being propagated on social media regarding the detention of Gurdeep Singh alias Mundu by a Delhi Police team in Punjab, said the police.

On April 8, a Special Cell team that was in the vicinity of Patiala in search of Mr. Sidhana, questioned Mr. Singh. He was asked about the movements of Mr. Sidhana and thereafter, was relieved with a direction to join inquiry as and when required, said the police.

Gautam Buddha Nagar currently has a death toll of 93 with a mortality rate of 0.33%. The recovery rate of patients reached 94.51% on Monday, the data showed.

Meanwhile, the number of active COVID-19 cases in U.P. reached 81,576 while the overall recoveries reached 6,14,819 and the death toll reached 9,224 on Monday,

Noida reports 239 fresh COVID-19 infections

Highest number of cases so far this year

the data showed.

Flouting COVID rules

Meanwhile, as many as 2,172 people were issued challans across Noida and Greater Noida on Monday for not wearing face mask in public place, the Gautam Buddha Nagar police said.

Challans were also issued to owners of 1,624 vehicles for flouting COVID-19 protocols and traffic rules, the police said, adding five vehicles were impounded.

Amid a surge in cases of COVID-19, the district police is now making announcements in public places and patrolling crowded areas to raise awareness.

"As many as 2,172 people who were found without face masks in public places were issued challans and ₹2.17 lakh collected from them in fines," a police spokesperson said.

"Action was taken under Section 188 (disobeying government order) against 91 people and FIRs were lodged in 28 such cases," he added.

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4.	School of Human Ecology	PhD Human Ecology	07
5.	School of Human Studies	PhD Psychology	07
6.		PhD Women's and Gender Studies	04
7.		PhD Disability Studies	05
8.	School of Liberal Studies	PhD Economics	06
9.		PhD Mathematics	05
10.		PhD Sociology	12
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How to apply: Only online applications are accepted through University's website www.aud.ac.in. For details about eligibility conditions for admission, process of admission, reservation, fee etc, please refer to the Bulletin of Information available on the website. Last date of submission of online application is 28th April 2021.

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1	DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE HARYANA, PANCHKULA	SELECTION OF AGENCY FOR FACILITY MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN STATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE (SERC), HARYANA 112	03.04.2021 17.04.2021	EMD 2 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	7988639705 haryana100.pol@hry.nic.in
2	PWD B&R, BHAWANI	SPECIAL REPAIR BY PROVIDING AND LAYING WIDENING & STG. ON BABA JAGAN NATH MANDIR TO MASSA MANSI AT VILLAGE LOHARI JATTU FROM KM 0.00 TO 2.10 IN BHAWANI DISTT. (ROAD ID NO. 9980)	09.04.2021 03.05.2021	89.10 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01664242436 pwd-eepd-bhawan@hry.nic.in
3	PWD B&R, PANCHKULA	TENDER FOR SPECIFICATION, REQUIREMENT FOR PROVIDING CATERING SERVICES FOR PWD B&R REST HOUSE, SECTOR 1, PANCHKULA	10.04.2021 29.04.2021		https://etenders.hry.nic.in	pwd-eepd-panchkula@hry.nic.in
4	PWD B&R, FATEHABAD	SPECIAL REPAIR OF NEHLA TO KHERI ROAD KM 0 TO 5.70 (ROAD ID 5527) IN FATEHABAD DISTT, AND 09 OTHER WORKS	08.04.2021 03.05.2021	570.88 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01667220120 pwd-eepd-fatehabad@hry.nic.in
5	PWD B&R,SIRS	CONSTRUCTION OF SUN HEALTH CENTRE AT VILLAGE BAJEKAN IN SIRS DISTRICT, + 1 NO. OTHER WORK.	15.04.2021 29.04.2021	75.86 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01666220530 pwd-eepd-sirs@hry.nic.in
6	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING, SIRS	REPLACEMENT OF PUMPING MACHINERY, REPAIR OF WATER WORKS STRUCTURES, FHT CONNECTION AT VILLAGE BHOOA, DISTT. SIRS "CONSTRUCTION & REPLACEMENT OF PUMPING MACHINERY, REPAIR OF EXISTING WATER WORKS STRUCTURES, PROVIDING FHT CONNECTION AND ALL OTHER WORKS CONTINGENT THERETO AT WATER WORKS BHOOA"	09.04.2021 16.04.2021	10.45 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01666-221925 ee2sirs@phedharyana.gov.in
7	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING, SIWANI	UP GRADATION OF SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT (STP) OF 4.00 MLD CAPACITY BASED ON MOVING BED BIO REACTOR (MBBR) TECHNOLOGY LOCATED AT TOSHAM ROAD - SIWANI TOWN	09.04.2021 15.04.2021	EMD 4 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	eesiwani@phedharyana.gov.in
8	PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING KURUSHETRA	PROJECT REPORT BOQ & COST ESTIMATE PREPARED BY EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC HYGIENE ENGINEERING DIVISION KURUSHETRA FOR UPGRADATION & COMMISSIONING AFTER CONVERSION OF EXISTING & MLD CAPACITY SEWAGE TREATMENT BASED ON MOVING BED BIOLOGICAL	08.04.2021 28.04.2021	EMD 8 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	0172-2583005 eecord@phedharyana.gov.in
9	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,NARNAUL	RAW WATER ARRANGEMENT FOR PROPOSED MULTIMODE LOGISTIC HUB AT NARNAUL, DISTRICT MOHINDERGARH, BY PROVIDING & LAYING 600MM DI PIPE LINE, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION OF RAW WATER BALANCING RESERVOIR, PUMP CHAMBER, PANEL ROOM, PUMPING MACHINERY,(ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL COMPONENTS) AT BOOSTING STATION NEAR ND-II AND ALL OTHER ALLIED WORKS.	CLOSING DATE 26.04.2021	1412.19 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xen-wsmnri.lrr@gov.in
10	IRRIGATION & WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT HARYANA,SRIS	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER COURSE OF Q/L RD 11260-R OF LOHARGH IST. DISTY. FOR A LENGTH OF 1600 FEET (EXTENSION)+04 OTHER WORKS	CLOSING DATE 20.04.2021	4.78 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	xenrorisrs@rediffmail

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, APR. 13
RISE 05:58 SET 18:46
RISE 06:45 SET 19:55
WEDNESDAY, APR. 14
RISE 05:57 SET 18:47
RISE 07:16 SET 20:49
THURSDAY, APR. 15
RISE 05:56 SET 18:47
RISE 07:50 SET 21:43

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 39 18
Safdarjung 39 18
Palam 40 22

Delhi Pilm Today
39°C A comfortable morning and hot day with partly cloudy sky. Surface winds would be mainly light.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
40°C Rise in day and night temperature likely. Easy morning and hot day with partly cloudy sky.

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IN BRIEF

Stray cow kills teenager in north-east Delhi
NEW DELHI

A 15-year-old boy was killed by a stray cow in north-east Delhi's Bharat Nagar, the police said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday afternoon when the victim, Rudhir, was returning from a park. The cow charged the victim. An autorickshaw driver, who was passing through the area, rushed the minor to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead. A case has been lodged in connection with the matter.

JNU to carry on with online classes this semester
NEW DELHI

Interacting with JNU students over a Facebook Live event, V-C M. Jagadesh Kumar said that the current semester of the university would continue online and that the university will take a decision on offline classes in the next academic session after studying the COVID-19 situation.

Delhi govt. begins digital conference on air pollution
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Monday started a two-day digital round table conference with experts on reducing air pollution in Delhi. "We do not want to wait till September when air pollution increases in Delhi," Environment Minister Gopal Rai said.

Labourer kills father for refusing him money
NEW DELHI

A labourer allegedly stabbed his 61-year-old father to death on Sunday for refusing to give him money in Fatehpur Beri, the police said on Monday. Balwan, 29, was drunk at that time, an officer said. He has been arrested. Manohar Lal died during treatment at AIIMS Trauma Centre.

Only slight delay in results, asserts private lab

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Responding to a story published in *The Hindu* on Monday about Delhi government officials stating that RT-PCR test results from SpiceHealth are getting delayed, SpiceHealth said that there has been a "slight delay".

"SpiceHealth has been closely working with the Delhi government since November 2020. Despite the fact that payments to the company have been held up for the past many months, SpiceHealth has continuously scaled up its operations, accepted and processed all samples," the company said in an email.

"Owing to the sudden spike in cases and people taking the RT-PCR test recently, there has been a slight delay in processing the test reports. This, too, has been addressed to a large extent and we have ensured to control this situation while closely working with the government," it further read.

Surge continues, Capital reports 11,491 new cases

For second day, Delhi records peak number of infections

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi on Monday witnessed the biggest daily spike in new COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic, with 11,491 new cases being reported in the last 24 hours, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The total number of cases stood at 7,36,688.

Sunday had also reported the highest number of daily cases ever at 10,774.

A total of 72 fatalities were recorded in the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 11,355, read the bulletin.

Test positivity at 12.44%
A total of 92,397 tests were also conducted in a day, the bulletin added.

Of the total cases, 6,87,238 people have recovered and there are 38,095 active cases at present.



A health worker collects swab sample from a woman on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Jain said that the government has requested the Centre to increase COVID-19 beds in Central government-run hospitals. "Around 2% of beds in Delhi government's COVID care centres are occupied. We have added nearly 5,000 beds in the last week, with the number of available beds being further escalated," he said. The Minister requested people to stay at home as much as possible and to step out only when it is absolutely necessary.

Sixth serological survey

The Delhi government also started the sixth serological survey from Monday to understand how much of the population has developed antibodies against the virus, officials said. The sample collection will go on till April 25 and 28,000 samples are expected to be collected.

The test positivity, which is the percentage of people testing positive out of the total tests conducted, jumped to 12.44% on Monday.

Out of the total 12,008 beds for COVID-19 treatment, 42.2% were vacant.

A total of 74,397 beneficiaries were vaccinated in the city till 6 p.m. on Saturday, said a Delhi government spokesperson.

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Schools shut for all classes, clarifies DoE

No Class 9-12 student should be called to school'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) on Monday issued a circular to clarify that all schools in the Capital shall remain closed for all students until further orders.

The clarification was issued after an order by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Saturday stated that students of Classes 9-12

may be called to school for providing academic guidance and support for examinations and project.

This contradicted the DoE's circular issued on Friday that ordered that all academic and exam activities through physical mode for all classes shall remain suspended till further orders.

The circular added that the heads of schools are authorised to call teachers/staffers as per requirement.

should be called physically to the school for mid-term exams/pre-board exams/annual exams/Board examinations, practical exams/project works/internal assessments or any other academic and non-academic activities till further orders.

The circular added that the heads of schools are authorised to call teachers/staffers as per requirement.

DU to continue online classes for UG, PG

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

In view of rising COVID-19 cases, DU on Monday issued a notification stating that classes for UG and PG courses will continue online.

Research scholars will be permitted to continue with their academic work with the consent of respective department heads and follow COVID-19 protocol issued by the Centre.

"Final-year students, in small batches, are allowed to visit their respective colleges or departments for their laboratory, practicals, library and related activities..." the notification read.

The university also said that 50% staffers will be allowed to attend office on working days.

'Nizamuddin mosque can open for Ramzan'

Central govt's nod conveyed to HC

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Centre informed the Delhi High Court on Monday that the Nizamuddin Markaz mosque should be made operational for devotees to offer prayers during the month of Ramzan, which is expected to begin from April 14.

The Centre made the submission before Justice Mukta Gupta while hearing a plea by the Delhi Waqf Board to reopen the Nizamuddin Markaz where the Tablighi Jamaat congregation are held.

It has been locked since March 31 last year. On March 24, 2021, the Centre had said that 50 persons chosen by the Waqf board can pray

at the mosque during the 'Shab-e-barat' holiday.

The Centre's counsel said offering of prayers at the mosque during Ramzan should be subject to the guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) with regard to social distancing and other precautions in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases.

The Centre also stated that the Waqf Board should give the names of the office bearers and employees of the mosque, who will be running and managing operations, to the Station House Officer concerned.

The officers will be permitted to be present inside the mosque throughout the day during Ramzan.

EDMC has signed contract worth crores with blacklisted company, alleges AAP

'Company penalised by Delhi HC, got no relief from SC'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The AAP on Monday alleged that the BJP-ruled East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) has signed a contract amounting to crores of rupees with a company which was "blacklisted" by the municipal corporation in 2010.

"The company was penalised by the High Court and did not get relief from the Supreme Court and is now get-

ting contracts very easily from the BJP-ruled civic body," said AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said in a statement.

Responding to the allegations, BJP claimed that the AAP-ruled Delhi government has multiple contracts with the same company.

"In 2010, it was found that it takes the full amount from the government, but does not give the entire amount to security personnel," he said.

same company has security contracts of dozens of Delhi government departments," BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said.

Mr. Bharadwaj said that BJP Delhi chief Adesh Gupta should answer why a "blacklisted" company is being roped in by the EDMC.

"In 2010, it was found that it takes the full amount from the government, but does not give the entire amount to security personnel," he said.

Bureau of Indian Standards told to monitor manufacture, sale of helmets

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday noted that it was essential for the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to strictly monitor the manufacture and sale of helmets as it concerns the safety and security of the consumers.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh made the observation while hearing the plea of an NGO

claiming no action has been taken by the BIS on over 1,400 complaints made by it from 2019 till date highlighting various alleged illegalities and irregularities in manufacture and sale of helmets.

On plea of NGO, Uptrarit Consumer Foundation, the High Court directed the BIS to look into the complaints made by the NGO and to file

14 private hospitals declared COVID facilities

Over 100 private hospitals told to reserve up to 80% ICU beds for infected patients

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Monday declared 14 private hospitals in the city as "full COVID-19" facilities, including Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Sarita Vihar, Sir Gangaji Ram Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, Max SS Hospital, and Fortis Hospital in Shalimar Bagh. They have been instructed not to admit non-COVID-19 patients.

In addition, 19 private hospitals have been directed to reserve at least 60% of their ICU beds for COVID patients.

The government added that 101 private hospitals have been directed to re-



Arvind Kejriwal

serve at least 60% of their ward bed capacity for COVID-related treatment.

At six Delhi government-run hospitals, the number of ICU beds without ventilator has been increased to 487. There are now 1,913 non-ICU COVID beds in these hospitals as against 1,320 earlier.

The move came hours after Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal held an emergency meeting to review the measures taken to minimise the spread of COVID-19 in the Capital.

He also urged asymptomatic patients and those with mild symptoms to not go to the hospitals so that beds remain available for the critical COVID patients.

government and private hospitals to deal with the surge in the number of cases.

Mr. Kejriwal said the bed count must be at par with what it was in November last year when the city was witnessing another surge.

"We will further request the Centre to increase COVID beds in Central government hospitals," the Chief Minister said.

He also urged asymptomatic patients and those with mild symptoms to not go to the hospitals so that beds remain available for the critical COVID patients.

Oppn. attacks govt. over poor healthcare facilities

BJP for all-party meet to discuss strategy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The BJP and the Congress on Monday hit out at the Delhi government for failing to tackle the rising COVID-19 cases in the Capital saying that its healthcare structure had once again fallen apart due to the virus.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had always claimed that everything was under control and Delhi was fully prepared to deal with any eventuality.

However, the surge in the COVID-19 infection cases in the city has exposed the false claims of the government. It has also brought into open the path-

etic condition of the healthcare services and hospitals.

The BJP leader said that if there was shortage of space in the hospitals, several stadiums that fall under the domain of the Delhi government should be turned into temporary hospitals to treat patients. "We demand that an all-party meeting to discuss the strategy should be called," he said.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said that facilities in government hospitals should be strengthened immediately.

Baisakhi spirit



Girls wearing traditional attire dance on the eve of Baisakhi in Amritsar on Monday. • PTI

Odisha govt. clears plan for cancer hospital

It will be operational by January 2024

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Monday gave its consent for the establishment of a state-of-the-art cancer hospital at Bhubaneswar.

The proposed hospital – Bagchi-Shri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Institute – would be provided 20 acres free of premium in Infocity-II, Bhubaneswar, for establishment of the hospital.

The State Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Naveen

Patnaik approved the proposal.

The Bengaluru-based Sri Shankara Cancer Care Foundation, a charitable institute with philanthropic practice, volunteered to establish the hospital. Subroto Bagchi, co-founder of Mindtree and Chairman of Odisha Skill Development Authority, and his wife Susmita Bagchi have pledged ₹ 210 crore for the cancer hospital.

According to the proposal, the cancer hospital will be equipped with 250 beds initially which will be operational by January 2024. Later, it would be made 500-bedded hospital. With advanced cutting-edge cancer

care, the hospital proposed to earmark 25% beds for free treatment and another 25% beds for patients supported under different government health schemes.

Help for poor patients

Remaining 50% patients will pay for the services and the revenue generated will be utilised for expansion and supporting the poor patients.

"It will be an oncology centre of excellence with academic and research facilities with major categories of services such as surgical, medical and radiation oncology, imaging nuclear medicine, paediatric and haema-

to-oncology and centre for lung disease," the government said.

Besides, the Cabinet also approved the establishment of Bagchi-Karunashraya Palliative Care Centre at Bhubaneswar. This will be first of its kind in Odisha.

Bengaluru-based Karunashraya Hospice Trusts partnered with the Bagchi couple who had pledged ₹30 crore for the centre.

Apart from hospital-based palliative care, the centre would provide the same at homes too. The new centre would train local doctors, health care providers and care-givers on palliative care.

Political drama unfolds as BJP rebel exits ring

Party using wrong tactics in Rajasthan bypoll, alleges Cong.

MOHAMMED IQBAL
SAHARA (BHILWARA)

The withdrawal of candidature by Bharatiya Janata Party's rebel leader Ladulal Pitliya for the Assembly by-election in Saharanpur has turned into an unsavoury episode and led to tension between the two major political parties in the fray ahead of polling scheduled for April 17. Mr. Pitliya is at present quarantined at home amid the political drama.

Mr. Pitliya, who had left the BJP in 2018 and fought as an Independent in the Assembly polls, filed his nomination papers this time as well. He had returned to the BJP fold in February this year, but the ticket for the bypoll was given to septuagenarian leader Ratanlal Jat, who was earlier elected an MLA twice from Saharanpur.

The rebel leader, who owns a readymade garments' business in Bengaluru, took back his nomination a day before the last date for withdrawal.

A letter and some audio messages doing rounds on social media suggested that he was forced to exit the electoral fight through pressure exerted by some politicians in BJP-ruled Karnataka.

With the Congress accusing the BJP of using wrong tactics in the by-election, a notice for 14-day home quarantine was slapped on Mr. Pitliya last week on the ground of not presenting a negative RT-PCR report on COVID-19 infection despite having arrived in Rajasthan from another State. BJP State president Satish Poonia termed it a "politically motivated" action to stop Mr. Pitliya from joining the party's



An election meeting of the RLD in support of its candidate Badri Lal Jat in Saharanpur constituency. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

election campaign.

Though Mr. Pitliya has tested negative in his latest diagnosis, he has neither ventured out of his home nor issued any statement in support of the BJP. He has a strong hold in the Jain community and his popularity increased after his philanthropic works during the COVID-19 lockdown in Bhilwara district last year.

Absence of migrants

District BJP Minority Morcha president Hamid M. Sheikh told *The Hindu* that the party's organisational structure in the constituency was quite strong and the impact of the episode involving Mr. Pitliya would be minimal. "Our bigger worry is the absence of about 40,000 migrant workers living in other States. The polling percentage will be affected if they don't come here by the voting day," he said.

Congress candidate Gayatri Devi, wife of Saharanpur MLA Kailsah Trivedi who died in October 2020 after being infected by COVID-19, expects to get sympathy votes from

the party's supporters. However, her candidature was initially opposed by Mr. Trivedi's brother Rajendra Trivedi, who was a strong claimant for the ticket.

Though Ms. Devi had earlier fought the panchayat polls in Bhilwara district, Saharanpur Sarpanch Sangh president Ratni Devi Tiwari submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot with the demand for changing the party candidate. AICC general secretary Ajay Maken thereafter visited the constituency to launch a damage control exercise.

RLD eyes Jat votes

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) has fielded Badri Lal Jat as its candidate in an attempt to get the support of Jat community, which comprises the majority in Saharanpur's population. Babulal Mali, a resident of the town, said the RLP, by fielding Mr. Jat, had tried to make a dent into the BJP's vote bank, as he is the brother of BJP leader Roop Lal Jat, who was the party's candidate in the 2018 Assembly election.

Ensure vaccine supply, Cong. tells CM Lal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Amid rising Covid 19 cases, Haryana Congress president Kumari Selja has written a letter to Chief Minister Manohar Lal, asking about ensuring arrangements of adequate stock of the Corona vaccine in the State.

She also demanded that the State government set up more vaccination centres across the State at the earliest.

"The rising pace of Corona in Haryana has put the people of the State in a fix. This epidemic has disturbed everyone's life. Today, every resident of Haryana is worried about the increasing cases of Corona. In such times of crisis, the Corona vaccine is the only ray of hope. To fight this epidemic, it is extremely important to emphasise vaccination at the earliest," she said.

Ms. Selja demanded from the Chief Minister that adequate stock of Corona vaccine be immediately arranged in Haryana, so that every resident could be given the Corona vaccine at the earliest.

"Along with this, it should also be ensured that the Corona vaccine would reach people as early as possible. For this, more vaccination centers should be set up in the State," she added.

'Stop elective surgeries in State hospitals'

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Monday directed State-run hospitals to stop all elective surgeries for decongesting the health facilities in the wake of the sharp rise in COVID-19 cases.

"Non-essential admissions are to be avoided while all elective surgeries are to be stopped. Only emergency surgeries need to be taken up with universal precautions," said the State government issuing COVID-19 protocol for hospitals.

The move was in order to maintain social distancing, decongest health facilities and see that health care personnel as well as non-COVID-19 patients did not get infected, the State Health and Family Welfare department said.

On Sunday, 1,379 persons were found to be infected by COVID-19. Two persons succumbed to the disease.

Patient wrongly declared dead in Patna

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PATNA

A State-run hospital in Bihar's capital has courted controversy by declaring an alive COVID patient dead and handing over another person's body to his kin, prompting an inquiry into the incident.

The incident took place at Patna Medical College and Hospital on Sunday.

The hospital authorities declared Chumnu Kumar, a resident of Mahamadupur village in the Barh sub-division in Patna district who was undergoing treatment for COVID-19, dead and handed over the body of another person to his brother.

As soon as the incident came to light, Patna District Magistrate Chandrasekhar Singh shot off a letter to the hospital authorities asking them to investigate the matter and take action against the person responsible for the incident within 24 hours.

He also asked them to take steps to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future.

SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE



General public is here by informed that one female Namely: Beena Paani Santra, W/o Shri Sukumar Maithi, R/o H. No. T-235/A-1, Hill Marg, Baljeet Nagar, Delhi. Age: 24 years, Height: 4'5", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Red Colour Saree and Blue Colour Blouse and Hawa Chappal in feet, has been missing since 25.03.2021 at 9:30AM from her house in the area of P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 88A, dated 25.03.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Patel Nagar, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this female but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

SHO
P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi
Ph. 011-25872637, 8750870434
DP/751/CD/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL



General public is here by informed that one girl Namely: Poonam, D/o Lt. Chhoti Lal, R/o Gali NI Near Mansa Ram School, C/o Narshi Yadav, Kapashera, New Delhi, Age: About 13 Years, Height: 5', Face: Long, Complexion: Shallow, Hair: Black, Wearing: Unknown has been reported missing since 16.05.2021 from the jurisdiction of PS Kapashera, New Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 224/15, dated 16.05.2015 U/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Kapashera, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph: 011-25063758, 7065036226

SHO
P.S. Kapashera, New Delhi
Ph. 011-25063758, 7065036226
DP/589/SW/2021

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED BOY



General public is here by informed that one boy Namely: Sahil, S/o Md. Subrati, R/o H.No. A-815, Prem Nagar, Amarapuri, Nabi karim, Delhi. Age: 04 years (now around 12 years), Height: 3', Complexion : Fair, Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Wearing: Maroon Colour T-Shirt, Blue Colour Capri & Sipper in feet, has been Kidnapped on 10.04.2014 at 3:00PM from in front of his home in the area of P.S. Nabi Karim, Delhi.

In this regard a FIR 173/14 dated 10.04.2014, U/s 363 IPC has been lodged at P.S. Nabi Karim, Delhi and as reward ₹1 Lakh has been declared by government for recovery of the child. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this boy but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this boy kindly inform to the following.

ACP-Anti Human Trafficking Unit,
Daryaganj, Central District, New Delhi
E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: http://cbi.nic.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph: 011-23242670, 9971129845

DP/743/CD/2021

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Mohd. Nanhen S/o Mohd. Ishe R/o T-511/2, Gali Dargah Wali, Chamailion Road, Sadar Bazar, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case E.F.I.R. No. 027404/17 u/s 379/411/34 IPC registered at P.S. Sadar Bazar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon that the said Mohd. Nanhen could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the accused Mohd. Nanhen has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Mohd. Nanhen is required to appear before the court to answer the said complaint on or before 15.05.2021.

By Order

Ms. Shivili Talwar,
Metropolitan Magistrate, Central Distt.,
Room No. 247, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

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PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that my client, SHRI KULWANT SINGH GROVER, S/o JASBIR SINGH, R/o P. O. SAWADA ENCLAVE, NEW DELHI is the sole & absolute owner of Property bearing No. 12-A/1, measuring 80 Sq.Yds., in KHASRA No. 548/135, situated at Village Shekh Sarai now known as Savitri Nagar, New Delhi-110117. The said property is being registered in the office of the Sub Registrar, New Delhi on 02nd November, 2001 as Document No. 9148, in Addl. Book No. 1, Volume No. 2577 on pages 162 to 166 executed by SMT. INDER GROVER in favour of SHRI KULWANT SINGH GROVER S/o JASBIR SINGH. The said property is registered in the above captioned property, is reported to have been missing, lost, misplaced or misplaced and is not traceable. A Report/Complaint in this regard (lost / sale deed) being LR. No. 306575/2021, dated 10.04.2021 has been lodged by him in Crime Branch, Delhi. It is hereby informed that the Police Force (Bihar) Financial Institution or Entity has any sort of claim, rights, lien, charge or dispute/litigation of any nature (whatever) in the above captioned property on the basis of aforesaid lost / misplaced Sale Deed, should contact and file a complaint in the concerned Court or competent authority.

SACHIN KUSHIK (Advocate)
Office at M-52, Basement,
Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017
Mobile: 991163700, 9858150000

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IN BRIEF



Tension in Tirupati after stones pelted at Naidu

CHITTOOR Tension prevailed in Tirupati on Monday when some unidentified persons resorted to pelting stones at Telugu Desam Party national president N. Chandrababu Naidu while he was campaigning for the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election. Two TDP activists received minor injuries in the incident.

VACB raids Shaji's houses in Kannur, Kozhikode

KOZHIKODE A special unit of the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Monday raided the residential houses of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) legislator K.M. Shaji in Kannur and Kozhikode for allegedly amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income.

Kerala to insist on masks, cut crowding

Indoor groups limited to 100 people, hotels to shut by 9 p.m.; ICUs of private hospitals full in Telangana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Monday imposed some curbs on everyday activities in a bid to curb COVID-19 infections. The police would enforce the mask mandate and ensure social distancing. Indoor dining was restricted to less than half the seating capacity, and hotels should close down shutters by 9 p.m.

Open-air and indoor gath-

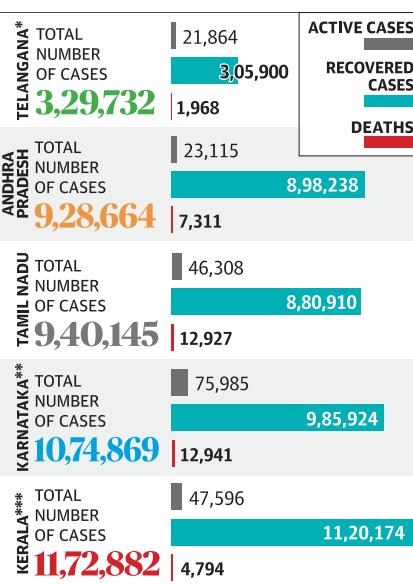
Flouting rules

People hardly follow COVID-19 guidelines during festival time. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



No social distancing: People thronging K.R. Market in Bengaluru on the eve of Ugadi on Monday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Sunday | **Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons



**Karnataka has a mismatch of 318 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

***Kerala has a mismatch of 318 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

erings should not have more than 200 and 100 attendees respectively. The government warned against communal feasting and suggested supply of parcel meals. Supermarkets should not hold retail events. Chief Secretary V.P. Joy chaired a meeting of law enforcement, health, and revenue officials on possible curbs.

The police reportedly argued against sweeping restrictions and appealed for limiting curbs to pandemic hotspots. A dip in testing over the weekend resulted in

lower numbers on Monday, and the test positivity rate (TPR) rose to 12.53%. The State added 5,692 new cases after testing 47,596 samples. In Karnataka, the Health

and Family Welfare department said the positivity rate on Monday stood at 8.24%, for 9,579 new cases. Of the total, 6,387 cases were from Bengaluru Urban. The num-

ber of deaths stood at 52. On

Monday, 82,240 people were vaccinated, taking the total in the State to 59.88 lakh.

Telangana recorded 2,251 cases on Sunday with lower testing and recorded six more deaths. The highest case total of 355 was from Greater Hyderabad.

Andhra Pradesh reported 11 more deaths and 3,263 infections on Monday morning. The cumulative tally increased to 9,28,664 and the death toll reached 7,311 with a death rate of 0.79%.

Chennai and its neighbouring districts - Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur and Kanjeevapuram - accounted for almost half of the 6,711 new COVID-19 cases reported in Tamil Nadu on Monday. The State reported over 6,000 fresh cases for a second consecutive day.

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

SC judge recuses from Maudany bail hearing

Appeared for the accused several years ago, says Justice Ramasubramanian

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice V. Ramasubramanian, recused himself on Monday from hearing a plea by PDP leader Abdul Nazir Maudany to relax his bail condition and permit him to stay in his hometown in Kerala till the pendency of the trial in the 2008 Bengaluru bomb blast case, in which he is an accused.

The Bench, headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, and including Justice A.S. Bopanna, adjourned the hearing.

Justice Ramasubramanian recollected in court that he had appeared for Maudany, presently represented by se-



Abdul Nazir Maudany

nior advocate Jayant Bhushan and advocate Haris Neeraj, before the Madras High Court several years ago.

The CJI had orally re-

marked that Maudany was a "dangerous man" in the previous hearing.

He has spent 11 years in jail since arrest and seven years under conditional bail," the application said.

"More than six years have elapsed and the trial has still not been concluded. The trial was protracted on account of the lethargic attitude of the respondent (State of Karnataka). The case before the trial court is crawling at a snail's pace and the progress of the trial was

hampered on several occasions due to various reasons such as recall and re-examination of witnesses, transfer of special public prosecutor thrice, transfer of presiding officer thrice and now on account of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic," Maudany's present application said.

The prosecution miserably failed to adhere to the schedule of the trial fixed earlier, it said. "On many occasions the trial was delayed, even scuttled due to the inability of bringing the witnesses on time," it said.

"He has spent 11 years in jail since arrest and seven years under conditional bail," the application said.

Election for 3 Kerala RS seats on April 30

High Court wanted poll before May 2

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission announced on Monday that polls to three Rajya Sabha seats from Kerala, which it earlier scheduled for April 12 but later put off, would take place on April 30.

The Kerala High Court had, earlier on Monday, directed the EC to complete the elections before May 2.

On March 17, the EC had announced elections to fill the three seats being vacated due to the retirement of Abdul Wahab, K.K. Ragesh and Vayalar Ravi on April 21.

"However, on the eve of the date on which the Notifi-

cation was to be issued, the Commission received a reference from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, wherein a question of constitutional propriety was raised," the EC said in a statement on Monday. Elections to the Kerala Assembly, the members of which have to vote for the Rajya Sabha elections, are ongoing, and results would be announced on May 2.

The Kerala High Court had, earlier on Monday, directed the EC to complete the elections before May 2.

On Monday, the EC said notification would be issued on Tuesday. Last date for nominations will be April 20 and for withdrawal of candidature April 23.

Maharashtra adds over 51,500 fresh cases, 52,000 recoveries

State to see muted Gudi Padwa celebrations today; processions, bike rallies banned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

For the first time in more than 45 days, Maharashtra's recoveries outweighed its case surge, with the State reporting 51,751 new COVID-19 cases on Monday as opposed to a robust 52,312 recoveries.

The State's active case tally has dipped marginally to 5,64,746. As many as 258 deaths (169 of which were reported in the last 48 hours, while the rest were from an earlier period), pushed the total death toll to 58,245.

The State's recovery marginally rose to 81.94%. While the total case tally has now reached 34,58,996, the cumulative recoveries stand at 28,34,473. "Of 2,23,22,393 laboratory samples tested thus far, 34,58,996 (with the average case positivity rising to 15.49%) have returned positive, with over 2.08 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Sur-



Tranquill: A deserted view of Haji Ali Dargah near Worli in Mumbai on Monday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

veillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate. The State's case fatality rate had incrementally declined to 1.68%.

In a bid to break the virus chain, the State will see muted Gudi Padwa (the Maharashtra New Year) celebrations on Tuesday, with the Uddhav Thackeray-led government prohibiting a gathering of more than five peo-

ple in public places between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. across the State while banning processions and motorbike rallies.

Spike in Pune, Mumbai

Pune district reported over 9,500 new cases to take its total case tally to 6,61,407. As per State Health Department figures, six deaths were reported as the total death toll

rose to 8,532. As per district authorities, however, 86 fatalities were reported. The district's active cases stood over 99,000 cases, while the death toll reached 10,796.

Mumbai reported 6,893 new cases, taking its total case tally to 5,27,391, of whom 89,125 are active. A total of 43 fatalities took the city's death toll to 12,066.

In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, the Kalyan-Dombivli civic body reported 1,527 cases to take its tally to 1,03,384. No deaths, however, were reported for the second consecutive day.

Satara in western Maharashtra reported 991 cases and 10 deaths, taking its tally to 74,108, of whom 7,837 are active, while the total death toll climbed to 1,949.

Nagpur reported over 5,700 cases as its tally reached 2,89,992, of whom 59,756 are active. Thirteen deaths took its toll to 4,331.

Remdesivir will not be sold through retail shops: Pawar

Vials will be supplied directly to hospitals to prevent hoarding

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Finance Minister Ajit Pawar on Monday said Remdesivir vials will not be sold through retail shops, but provided directly to hospitals through distributors to prevent black marketing and hoarding.

"Once provided directly to hospitals, only needy patients will have access to it. District Collectors will control the distribution," said Mr. Pawar at a meeting organised to take stock of the COVID-19 situation in the State in the wake of rising cases and deaths.

Mr. Pawar also said that 30% of funds from the District Planning and Development Council (DPDC) can now be used to implement measures to fight COVID-19.

Divisional Commissioners will get additional rights to spend funds for facilities in acquired private hospitals.

He said, "The entire State

machinery is working on a war footing. We are putting enormous efforts to ensure sufficient oxygen supply to hospitals. If required, a liquid oxygen plant can be set up near hospitals. Funds can be made available through the National Health Mission, Public Health Department,

added. Laparoscopy is a minimally invasive surgical procedure.

Earlier, the NCP president had undergone an emergency endoscopy for the removal of a stone from his bile duct at the hospital on March 30 following which he was advised complete rest for seven days.

"He was to be operated af-

ter 15 days. Accordingly, he got admitted to the hospital yesterday and underwent the surgery this morning," Mr. Pawar said.

Mr. Pawar's party shares power with the Shiv Sena and the Congress as part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance in Maharashtra.

After his condition dete-

riorated, he was shifted to a hospital in neighbouring Mumbai on Sunday night.

Dhanare died in the early hours of Monday. He is sur-

vived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

Deepika steps down as chairperson of Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival

Actor says she won't be able to give fest undivided focus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Actor Deepika Padukone on Monday announced she has resigned as the chairperson of Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival owing to her work commitments.

Ms. Padukone had replaced filmmaker Kiran Rao to become the chairperson of the festival in 2019. The 35-year-old actor posted on Instagram that she decided to step down from the position as she won't be able to give the

festival "undivided focus".

"Being on the board of MAMI and serving as Chairperson has been a deeply enriching experience. As an artist it was invigorating to bring together cinema and talent from all over the world to Mumbai, my second home," she said.

"I have come to realise however, that with my current state of work, I will be unable to give MAMI the undivided focus and attention it requires," Ms. Padukone said in the note. The actor added

NCP chief undergoes gall bladder surgery

Sharad Pawar stable, recovering at Breach Candy Hospital, says Nawab Malik

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar underwent a gall bladder surgery at private hospital in Mumbai on Monday, Maharashtra Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik said.

The 80-year-old leader was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital on Sunday.

A successful laparoscopy surgery was conducted to

day on our party president Sharad Pawar saheb's gall bladder by Dr. Balsara," Mr. Malik said in a statement.

He is in a stable health condition and is recuperating at the hospital, Mr. Malik added.

He was to be operated af-

ter 15 days. Accordingly, he got admitted to the hospital yesterday and underwent the surgery this morning," Mr. Malik said.

Mr. Pawar's party shares power with the Shiv Sena and the Congress as part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance in Maharashtra.

After his condition dete-

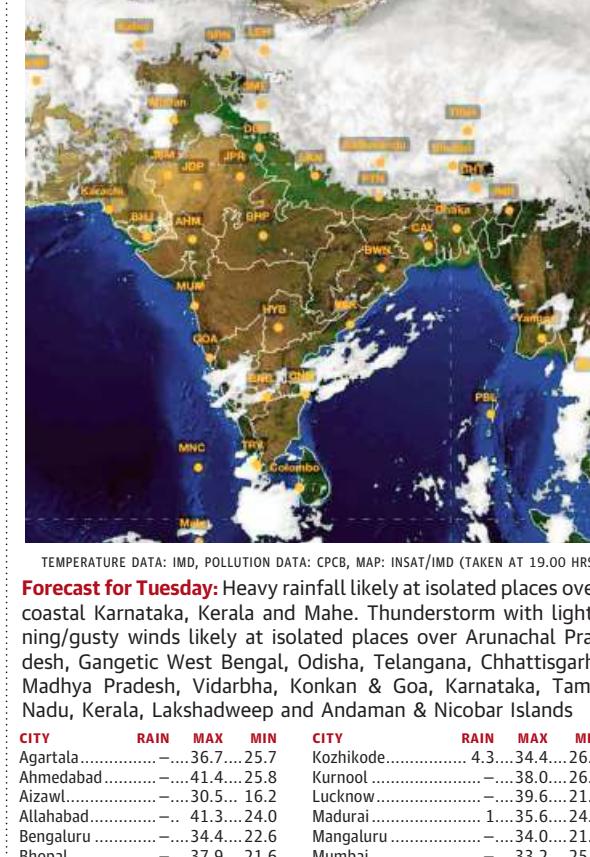
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Dhanare died in the early hours of Monday. He is sur-

vived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY





Salvaging strategy

Rational safety measures and scaled up vaccinations can rein in COVID-19

India's aggressive second wave of coronavirus infections marked by over 1,50,000 cases a day and many deaths is clearly the result of irrational exuberance early in the new year. After prematurely assuming that COVID-19 was virtually over, governments made rash decisions to allow large religious gatherings and political campaigns with little regard for disease control. The lapse is now threatening a nascent economic recovery. Rather than view the crisis as a political setback, the government should focus on a mitigation strategy that will not hobble the economy, while stopping the wildfire spread of the virus. A key intervention would be to protect the labour force through a scaling up of vaccinations in industry and workplaces. Employers must also be encouraged to retain or opt for staggered working hours and work-from-home protocols. The national vaccination strategy, however, remains inscrutable and non-transparent, since more vaccines, including WHO-approved ones, remain unavailable to Indians for unspecified reasons. Allowing all proven vaccines to be offered in cities with suitable cold chain capacity at prices comparable to European or U.S. acquisitions – typically under \$20 a dose for mRNA vaccines – would be as much a decision on the economy as on public health, making more Covishield and Covaxin doses available to priority recipients. This cannot, of course, be a silver bullet, given the big population that remains to be covered, the fast pace of virus spread enabled in part by variants and younger age groups showing symptomatic disease. At present, the social vaccine – masking, healthy distancing and public etiquette – is vitally important, more so because the health system is not equipped to handle severe disease countrywide.

The scientific view of pandemic fatigue is that people see the opportunity cost of prolonged adherence to demanding restrictions as too high, considering the value of things lost. That includes access to education, meeting with loved ones, performing life rituals, and the conflict of both work and home confined to the same space. This universal experience is made worse in India by deficits in housing, mobility options and good living conditions. It is important for the government, therefore, to come up with rational activity curbs, keep them stable and incentivise people, including through financial rewards. These initiatives can lower the perception of lost opportunities and compensate workers in the affected sectors such as the travel, food and hospitality industries. This road map can be reviewed when vaccines become widely available and cases decline, although a return to a carefree past is a long way off. Political communication on the state of the pandemic lacked a clear sense of purpose during festivals and poll campaigns. Now, the COVID-19 strategy can avert costly partial or full lockdowns only with public cooperation, and that calls for building credibility and trust.

Save the deal

U.S. and Iran should rebuild the lost trust and resolve the nuclear crisis before time runs out

The Vienna talks between the remaining members of the Iran nuclear deal – China, Russia, the U.K., France, Germany and Iran – have raised hopes for the revival of the agreement from which then President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. in May 2018. After the initial round of talks, European and Iranian diplomats have said efforts to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the deal is officially called, are on “the right track”. An American delegation, led by Robert Malley, the White House special envoy for Iran, is also in Vienna, though the Americans and the Iranians would not hold direct talks. All sides agree that bringing the deal back on track is ideal, but who will blink first? The U.S. wants Iran to end its uranium enrichment and centrifuge development programmes and return to the 2015 agreement, while Tehran has demanded the U.S. lift all sanctions imposed by Mr. Trump and still enforced by President Joe Biden. The agenda at Vienna, therefore, is to produce a road map for the revival of the JCPOA by addressing these two critical issues – Iran’s nuclear enhanced programme and American sanctions.

The Biden administration has displayed flexibility in its approach towards Iran. The President appointed a special envoy, ended the U.S.’s support for Saudi Arabia’s war against the Houthis, Iran-backed militants, in Yemen and promised to lift sanctions if Tehran returns to the JCPOA terms. The administration has also reportedly made an offer to Iran to release \$1 billion of Iranian money frozen in South Korea as part of the sanctions in exchange for ending its 20% uranium enrichment. But a wary Iran, which was fully compliant with the agreement when Mr. Trump abandoned it and slapped back sanctions, has rejected the offer, seeking more concrete measures from the U.S. The challenge both sides are facing is a lack of time. Iran holds its presidential polls in June. If the U.S.’s best chance to address Iran’s nuclear programme is through the revival of the JCPOA, the best possibility of reviving the agreement is to do it (or at least agree on a road map) before the presidential election. There are external dangers as well. Iran-backed Shia militias in Iraq continue to target U.S. forces and bases in Iraq. The Israel-Iran shadow conflict is now being fought inside Syria and on the seas. Last week, an Iranian ship was attacked in the Red Sea. If security tensions rise in the region involving Iran and its proxies, it could derail the diplomatic efforts. The U.S. and Iran should exercise restraint, stay focused on talks and rebuild the lost trust, and take measures to get the deal back on track that would resolve the nuclear crisis in return for dismantling the sanctions regime.

Designing a resolute COVID-19 response

Control has to be quick and the damage being caused contained as the pandemic has resurfaced in a fully open society



K. SRINATH REDDY

The virus has gone.” That was in January 2021. “No, it hasn’t. It is back with more family members to attack us with greater force.” This is in April 2021. These scene changes are akin to what happens in village feuds or urban brawls that feature in news reports across India. While leaders are debating whether India is experiencing a second wave or Delhi is experiencing a fourth wave, the virus is spreading rapidly across the country, helped by the more infectious variants that arrived from abroad or emerged at home as a ‘double mutant’.

Changes, a year on

There are several differences from the pandemic which we experienced in 2020, both in its spread and in our response. The virus affected relatively small numbers by March 2020, by the time the lockdown was announced. The long nationwide lockdown gave governments across the land time to strengthen the health system capacity, streamline administrative coordination, power up procurement and production processes for essential equipment and supplies, educate people on the dangers posed by the virus and advise personal protection measures that needed to be adopted. Release from the lockdown was phased, limiting transmission even as society gradually opened up. Large cities and neighbouring districts were more affected, with urban crowding and mobility driving the transmission. Rural areas and less developed States were mostly protected. This time, the pandemic has resurfaced in a fully open so-

cietiy. There was unrestricted movement, markets were crowded, domestic and international travel was brisk, election campaigns were boisterously run for local bodies and assemblies, religious gatherings received state support and cricket matches were celebrated as a joyful advertisement of return to normalcy as rest of the world was still struggling with the pandemic. Masks were mandated nationally and the public decided to follow the leaders and celebrities who disdained to wear them in public. The virus had an open road for its travel, with only the welcome arches missing.

We now need to proceed beyond reflections and remonstration on what went wrong, to design and deliver a resolute response that can help us to rapidly regain control and limit the damage. This has to incorporate several strategic components, cohesively connected and collectively implemented, to have a sustained impact. They are:

First step is decentralisation

Decentralise the response to district level. Knowledge of existing and evolving local conditions matters, for the design and the delivery of an effective response. Local data gathering and analysis provide real time intelligence for rapid response. Local community networks are important channels for information dissemination and for partnering the administration in implementation. We need consultative policymaking at the national level, inter-departmental planning at the State level, and data-driven decentralised decision making for situation adaptive implementation at the district level. The district collector must coordinate health-care services across all facilities in the district and be empowered to commandeer hospitals, hotels and transport facilities as needed.

Prevent super spreader events and mandate masks. Testing num-



bers are again being projected as the best measure of an efficient and effective response. This is incorrect. While tests are indeed an important component of the strategy, we cannot test asymptotically infected persons and mildly symptomatic persons who do not report themselves. These constitute a very large number at any time, as we know from antibody surveys. We cannot randomly and repeatedly test large proportions of the population to detect virus presence in such potentially infective persons. Masks, if worn well and regularly in public and even in indoor gatherings, will greatly reduce risk of transmission from any infected person, known or unknown. Even the more infectious variants will be blocked by effective masks, even where physical distancing is not possible.

Stop the events

What is absolutely essential is preventing super spreader events. Crowding, whether indoor or outdoor, offers the virus an opportunity to seed itself among many exposed persons who then carry it elsewhere to perpetuate the chain of transmission. There should be a ban on large gatherings, for at least the next eight weeks. Travel restrictions too must be imposed during this period. The notion that all of India has acquired or will soon acquire herd immunity must be dispelled with clear messaging for some months to come.

Use smart testing and tracing, but case detection needs more. The past year has taught us that vi-

ral tests are useful but have limitations. A single RT-PCR test can miss between 30%-40% cases, due to limitations posed by swab collection, transport efficiency and laboratory competency apart from testing too early or too late during the infection when a replicating virus is not detectable.

We need to detect possible cases through household surveillance of symptomatic individuals by primary health-care teams supported by citizen volunteers. All suspect cases and household contacts must be tested. Positive cases must be isolated and provided home or hospital care depending on severity. Symptomatic but negative persons and household contacts should be re-tested three to five days later but wear masks and observe distance even at home till the re-test result too is negative and the infected person has recovered. Genomic analyses must be performed in at least 5% of test positive samples. Contact tracing, for persons from whom the case may have acquired the infection and to whom the case may have passed it on, needs to be conducted with speed and efficiency. Local networks help in early case detection and contact tracing. The use of just apps will not do.

Step up vaccine rollout

Speed up vaccine rollout, recognising value and limitations. The benefit of currently available vaccines is to provide protection against severe disease, not infection *per se*. This information must be clearly conveyed to the public, politicians and the media so that wrong expectations of complete protection against infection do not lead to laxity in behaviour or an outcry of vaccine failure.

Given this objective, available vaccines must be prioritised for vulnerable persons. Initially, the aim must be to immunise all persons above 35 years of age and all younger persons with at-risk health disorders. We must get

more vaccines quickly into the supply chain by incentivising greater production volumes of already approved vaccines and waiving the requirement of a bridging trial for domestic manufacture of vaccines approved by credible international regulators, subject to submissions of full trial data to our regulators. We must train more vaccinators for delivery closer to home, stepping up daily administration rates at more centres.

Social support is key

Involve people, not just instruct. Citizen engagement is critical for a successful pandemic response. Formal and informal networks that exist at the local level must be activated and supported to educate people and motivate them for adopting COVID-19-appropriate behaviours, symptom reporting, providing contact information and registering for vaccination, while providing social support to affected families. Masks can be produced at the State or district level, for free distribution to households by community-based organisations. People partnered public health must become the credo and lasting legacy of the COVID-19 campaign.

Provide empathetic social support. District authorities must identify vulnerable persons and families who may suffer hardships due to loss of income, shelter or incur high health-care costs. Proactive support must be provided from public financing, as state policy, even as philanthropy is mobilised to supplement. Children must be supported for education at home or in the neighbourhood, through voluntary agencies, to overcome the digital divide of online teaching. Social solidarity must become the soul of our pandemic response.

Prof. K. Srinath Reddy, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is President, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). The views expressed are personal

A second chance for Nepal’s young democracy

An all-party consensus government seems the only way to break the deadlock and ensure stability



ATUL K. THAKUR

It can be said that the only constant in Nepali politics is ‘unpredictability’. Nepal’s democratic transition has been shaped through the efforts and sacrifices of common citizens and leaders and the expectation was that the forgotten Nepali would soon get something better than the discriminatory political culture that started way back in 2015 with the new Constitution and selective political manoeuvrings.

While it was time to deepen the footprints of the key institutions of democracy, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli succeeded in making himself a bigger institution than the Constitution and Parliament. It was never possible for Mr. Oli to grow beyond a permissible stature in a functional democracy without misinterpreted nationalism, vulnerable Presidential, federal system and flawed decision-making processes.

Supported by the President Bidya Devi Bhandari, which was a surprise, Mr. Oli briskly dissolved the Lower House of the federal Parliament on December 20, 2020, which only undermined the democratic spirit and dampened the prospects of stability and equitable growth in the country

even further. Even when the Supreme Court reinstated the dissolved Parliament on February 23, 2021 and disputed the legal status of Nepal Communist Party (a merged entity of Communist Party of Nepal-ML and Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre), Mr. Oli continues to survive in the new age of Nepali politics where accountability is seldom seen as a virtue.

The obsession with the positioning of India and China, more so with the abolition of the monarchy, has been a survival game in Nepali politics. The tendency to raise the bogey of the “hostile” neighbour has weakened politics and has failed the idea of representing constituent interests. It would be helpful to reckon the present round of serious institutional crisis as the culmination of an accountability-free political culture and the misunderstood institutional processes – where the successes or failures of decisions are attributed to outsiders – instead of opting for probity in public life and owning the outcomes.

Constitutional provisions

Among the key factors of the ongoing political stalemate in Nepal are certain rigid constitutional provisions that have made it possible for Mr. Oli to take cover behind a shield and continue, as getting into election phase or looking for the possibility of a caretaker coalition government is a very difficult proposition. Instead of incorporating the provision of a no-confidence



motion in its true spirit as a multi-party democracy, Nepal gets an unusual clause (Article 100(4)) in its new Constitution that allows a no-confidence motion only two years after the formation of the government – and even this can happen only when one fourth of the total number of existing members of the House of Representatives of the House of Representatives may table a motion of no-confidence in writing that the House has no confidence in the Prime Minister. Article 100(5) is even more perplexing which necessitates the motion of no-confidence shall also indicate the name of a member proposed for the Prime Minister.

Overcoming such arduous challenges is surely very tough for the three leading parties (Nepali Congress, Maoist Centre and Janata Samajbadi Party) seen in the race to bring the Oli government down.

Even to exercise the choice of a no-confidence motion, two parties of these three have to be on the same front for getting the magical number of 68 Parliamentarians. With no consensus or ethical obligations among the wary political parties, the hiatus is likely to sustain itself.

The three major parties opposing Mr. Oli’s continuance as the Prime Minister have 142 seats in Parliament, a number that is well sufficient to end the deadlock, enter into a post-Oli era and form a new government.

However, Mr. Oli has astutely managed to outwit his political opponents both within his party and the Opposition by playing on their differences. While the Nepali Congress is facing an endemic limitation with the decision-making process, its leadership has not shown any clear temptation to explore the possibility of playing any significant role in the ongoing crucial phase in Nepali politics.

The Baburam Bhattarai-led Janata Samajbadi Party was expected to be playing an active role in coalition experiments with the Maoist Centre, Nepali Congress and Madhes-based parties, however, no such action was noticed from this camp as well. Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Baburam Bhattarai and former Co-Chair with Mr. Oli in the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party formed an informal alliance with Madhav Kumar Nepal as they both wanted Mr. Oli to be unseated in the wake of his decision to dissolve the House of Representatives on December 20 and demanded his resignation. Their demands were limited only to Mr. Oli’s resignation and were not oriented toward the building of an alternate front, which gave a much needed respite to Mr. Oli.

After the Supreme Court of Ne-

pal reinstated Parliament in February this year, it came out with the next historic verdict on March 7 in which the top court had scrapped the legal status of the ruling Nepal Communist Party. This led to a formal division in the united communist alliance, besides ensuring a split in the Dahal-Nepal faction. Mr. Nepal, along with other UML leaders loyal to him, was left with no option but to return to the old party. Mr. Dahal had to revert to his old party, the Maoist Centre, even as four of its law makers defected to Mr. Oli’s UML. Mr. Dahal has also missed taking a political step, in playing safe.

A way out

The political muddle apart, this is no time for elections, especially with a second wave of COVID-19 infections. Nepal also stares at a lack of sufficient numbers of vaccines which has left the population vulnerable. Also, good governance cannot be ensured by a government that is caught up in survivalist compulsions.

The best way forward would be in giving democracy a good chance. For now, this can be made possible by the political parties alone. They have to aspire to ensure peace, progress and stability; the easiest option would be to work towards a consensus government with all the major parties joining hands and running it collectively.

Atul K. Thakur is a policy analyst and columnist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

West Bengal elections

The violence in West Bengal during the fourth phase of elections has raised the political temperature in the State, already at boiling point with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and the head of ruling Trinamool Congress on the one side and the Opposition BJP backed by its top leaders on the other side unleashing acerbic rhetoric at each other. Though political violence has remained one of the ugliest aspects of the political landscape of West Bengal for decades, the BJP’s aggressive campaigning aimed at capturing power in the

country’s most crucial eastern State and an equally proportionate response from the mercurial State leader has now morphed into one of the most intense battles. The Election Commission of India has its task cut now to ensure free and fair elections.

M. JAYARAM,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

■ The elections have turned into a battle with the Election Commission’s decision to conduct the polls in eight phases, speaking volumes of its partisan stand. It is painful to see the people suffering and even losing

their lives. The ECI’s blatant attempt to please Big Brother is deplorable.

SUKUMARAN C.V.,
Palakkad, Kerala

■ The ECI’s ability to ensure fair and peaceful polling anywhere depends on the State’s political culture. The paranoid Chief Minister’s intemperate utterances against the central government and the ECI have created an atmosphere of fear. Politicians should not view political power as an end in itself; they should have the humility to accept the people’s mandate.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Prince Philip

In the passing of Prince Philip, India has lost an old friend. It was his odd sense of humour which landed him in controversies on many an occasion. One can recollect his having looked at a dilapidated fuse box, quipping that it must reflect the quality of workmanship here. One also recalls Prince Philip reinventing himself as an environmentalist but not before some controversial beginnings.

A.V. NARAYANAN,
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Exams and politics

The gathering political storm around the board

examinations is unfortunate. I am a student of Class X.

Calling off the examinations at this juncture would nullify our hard work over the whole year.

Even deferring the examinations to a later date would not help students in any way. However, physical examinations can be

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conducted by observing all precautions. A 30% reduction in the syllabus and/or putting off the examinations would amount to risking our future. This has to be considered.

AANYA SINGHAL,

Noida, Uttar Pradesh

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
The story titled “Sririvilliputhur Congress candidate dies” (April 12, 2021, some editions) erroneously said that CPI(M) Polit Bureau member G. Ramakrishnan was among those who had tested COVID-19 positive during the poll campaign. Actually, he was infected before the campaign started.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers’ Editor’s office can be contacted

Not on the same page at sea

L'affaire Lakshadweep shows not a betrayal by the U.S. but a different understanding of navigational freedom



ABHIJIT SINGH

India's strategic community was agitated last week when the *USS John Paul Jones* carried out a freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) 130 nautical miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands. Indian observers reacted with shock and dismay at what some described as an unnecessary provocation by the U.S. Navy. The disquiet in Delhi was heightened by an unusual press release by the Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, that said the operation, which was carried out in India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), "asserted navigational rights and freedoms... without requesting India's prior consent". Many saw this as political signalling by the U.S., oddly, at a time when U.S.-India relations are on a high.

Different interpretations

In the aftermath of the incident, the U.S. Pentagon defended the military operation off India's waters terming it "consistent with international law". For the U.S. Navy, FONOPs are a way of showing that the maritime claims of certain states are incompatible with international law. India's requirement of prior consent for the passage of foreign warships through Indian EEZs, U.S. officials believe, is a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Articles 56 and 58, Part V of the Law of the Sea, they point out, entitle U.S. warships to high-seas freedoms in the 200-nautical mile EEZs of another coastal state.

India interprets the maritime convention differently. Indian experts note that the UNCLOS does not explicitly permit the passage of military vessels in another state's EEZ. When it ratified the convention in 1995, New Delhi stated, "India understands that the provisions of the Convention do not authorize other States to carry out in the exclusive economic zone and on the continental shelf military exercises or manoeuvres, in particular those involving the use of weapons or explosives without the consent of the coastal State." This po-



"Indian observers have come to accept U.S. FONOPs as an instrument in Washington's military and diplomatic toolkit that gives the U.S. Navy leverage in the contest with China in the South China Sea." The USS Ronald Reagan and USS Nimitz carrier strike groups steam in formation in the South China Sea in July 2020. *AP

sition is consistent with India's domestic law – the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones of India Act of 1976 – and remains unchanged.

Despite disagreements over navigational freedoms, however, India and the U.S. have refrained from a public airing of differences. Indian observers have come to accept U.S. FONOPs as an instrument in Washington's military and diplomatic toolkit that gives the U.S. Navy leverage in the contest with China in the South China Sea. U.S. officials, too, have learnt to take Indian posturing in their stride. Washington knows New Delhi's real concern is the possibility of greater Chinese naval presence in Indian waters, in particular the threat of People's Liberation Army Navy submarines near Indian islands. Delhi's pronouncements on foreign military activity in Indian EEZs, they know, don't need to be taken literally.

Needless to say, U.S. FONOPs in Indian EEZs have been relatively low key, serving mainly to check a box on the U.S. Navy's record of activity in Asia. Since 2016, the U.S. Navy has carried out three forays through Indian EEZs keeping well outside In-

dian territorial waters. In contrast, U.S. warships challenged excessive Chinese claims thrice in 2016, four times in 2017, six in 2018, eight in 2019, and nine in 2020. Most patrols are said to have come within 12 nautical miles of the territorial sea limit around China's islands. Those statistics say something about the U.S. Navy's strategic priorities in Asia.

Lakshadweep: A smart choice

The choice of Lakshadweep for the FONOP doesn't seem incidental. U.S. planners are likely to have known that a U.S. naval foray close to the 'strategic' Andaman and Nicobar Islands would be controversial. Besides necessitating a response from New Delhi, it could have exposed a wrinkle in the relationship that both sides have so far been discreet about: the disagreement over interpretation of the UNCLOS. U.S. planners are likely to have calculated that a naval operation in the waters off Lakshadweep would be unremarkable. With maritime boundaries around the Lakshadweep more settled than the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (where straight baselines on the Western edge of the islands have in the past raised uncomfortable questions), Indian officials could even af-

ford to ignore the operation.

To guard against any misreading of intent, the U.S. Navy coupled its FONOP in Indian waters with another sail through the territorial seas of the Maldives, a country with which the U.S. signed a defence agreement in 2020. The idea, ostensibly, was to signal to China that the U.S. Navy is committed to upholding the rules-based order in the waters of opponents and partners alike. Alas, the U.S. 7th Fleet erred in releasing a press statement that set the issue ablaze. Once social media picked up the story, it took on a life of its own.

Bridging the divide

There are lessons for both India and the U.S. from l'affaire Lakshadweep. The U.S. must recognise that FONOPs have implications for New Delhi that go beyond the infringement of Indian jurisdiction in the near seas. Such operations normalise military activism close to India's island territories that remain vulnerable to incursions by foreign warships. The U.S. Navy's emphasis on navigational freedoms in the EEZs encourages other regional navies to violate India's domestic regulations in the waters surrounding the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. U.S. hectoring on the subject isn't acceptable as Washington is yet to ratify the UNCLOS.

But New Delhi, too, must rethink its stand on freedom of navigation in the EEZs. It isn't enough for Indian officials and commentators to say U.S. FONOPs are an act of impropriety. The reality is that India's domestic regulation is worryingly out of sync with international law. India's declaration of straight baselines delineating zones around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (on the Western edge), in particular, is a discrepancy that cannot be explained as a minor departure from the provisions of the UNCLOS.

The U.S. Navy sail through the waters off Lakshadweep highlights a gap in the Indian and American perception of navigational freedoms, complicating an already complex domain of international maritime law. Yet it is not the betrayal of a friend that many have sought to portray the FONOP to be.

Abhijit Singh is a former naval officer and a Senior Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

ford to ignore the operation.

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Scaling up vaccine production

There are several legal means that the government should employ to scale up production of COVID-19 vaccines



MURALI NEELAKANTAN & PRABHUSH RANJAN

develop and test their own vaccine candidates.

IP-based solutions

Under Section 100 of the Patents Act, 1970, the Central government has the power to authorise anyone (such as specific pharmaceutical companies) to use any patents or patent applications for the "purposes of government". Under this provision, the Central government can licence specific companies to manufacture the COVID-19 vaccines. The other option is to make use of Section 92 of the Patents Act, which allows the Central government to issue a compulsory licence (a licence issued to manufacture the patented product without the consent of the patent holder) in circumstances of national emergency or extreme urgency or in case of public non-commercial use. The pandemic is a circumstance of national emergency. Thus, the Central government, under Section 92, can issue a notification in this regard. Subsequently, any company willing or directed by the government to manufacture the COVID-19 vaccine can be issued a licence.

Another option available to the government, as some commentators have pointed out, is that all COVID-19 vaccine projects that are funded by the taxpayer's money should not claim IP rights in the first place or if patents are granted, they should not be enforced. This would make the wider dissemination of research outcomes possible facilitating easy replication by other manufacturers. This can be done in the context of Covaxin that has been developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology.

The government needs to explore the production capabilities of the pharmaceutical companies in the public sector to build India's manufacturing competence. For instance, Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation, a State government public sector undertaking, can manufacture Covaxin immediately. A licence could have been issued to this entity by the government last year and we would have had higher supplies of COVID-19 vaccines this year. These legal options have been available to the government all along. The government should have used these options to build India's manufacturing capacity, which would have placed us in a better position to fight the second wave. There is still hope and a chance to respond to this lament. Will the government listen?

Murali Neelakantan is Principal Lawyer at Amicus, Mumbai, and Prabhush Ranjan is with South Asian University, New Delhi. Views are personal

India's South Asian opportunity

Peace with Pakistan is not just a bilateral matter, but is essential for India to transform South Asia

UDAY BALAKRISHNAN

Pakistan-obsessed.

An economically transformed and integrated South Asian region could advantageously link up with China's Belt and Road Initiative and even join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest trading bloc of 15 countries, accounting for 30% of its GDP, as a much valued partner.

Writing in a commemorative volume in honour of the late Sri Lankan economist Saman Kelegama, Professor Selim Raihan of the University of Dhaka brings out India's overwhelming 'size imbalance' in South Asia: "The shares of India in the total land area, population, and real GDP of South Asia in 2016 are 62%, 75%, and 83%, respectively. The two other big countries in South Asia are Pakistan and Bangladesh with shares in regional GDP of only 7.6% and 5.6%, respectively."

Given its size and heft, only India can take the lead in transforming a grossly under-performing region like South Asia. Collectively with a population of slightly over 1.9 billion, South Asia has a GDP (PPP) of \$12 trillion. Contrast this with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Numbering nearly 700 million, ASEAN has a GDP (PPP) of around \$9 trillion and a per capita income which, at \$14,000 (PPP), is closing in on China, with member states like Vietnam starting to grow spectacularly.

India's moment

This is the moment for India to think big and act big by ambitiously aiming to engineer a South Asian economic miracle in half the time China did. If this sounds impossible, so did China's rise in 1972. But for that to happen, India needs to view a peace with Pakistan not as a bilateral matter, to be arrived at leisurely, if at all, but as essential and urgent, all the while viewing it as a chance of a lifetime, to dramatically transform South Asia for the better, no less.

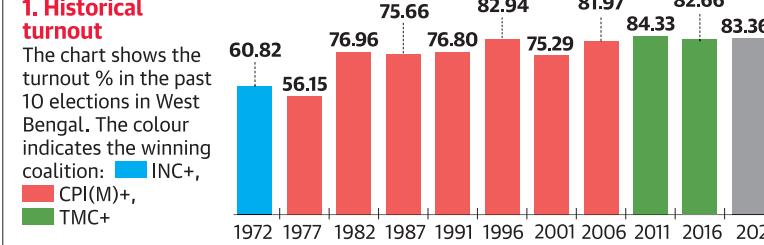
Uday Balakrishnan teaches at IISc, Bengaluru. Views are personal



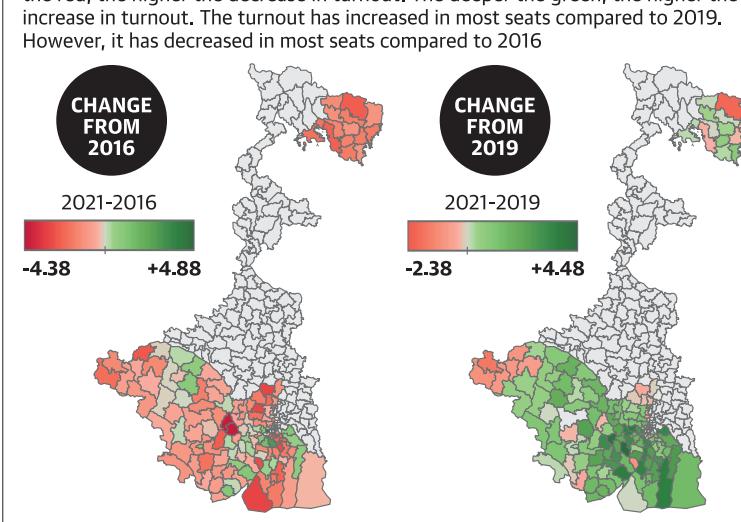
DATA POINT

No major change in turnout

1. Historical turnout



2. Change in turnout | The maps show the change in turnout (% points) in the 2021 polls compared to the 2016 Assembly polls and 2019 LS polls. The deeper the red, the higher the decrease in turnout. The deeper the green, the higher the increase in turnout. The turnout has increased in most seats compared to 2019. However, it has decreased in most seats compared to 2016.



3. Turnout break up

The table lists the share of seats across various turnout ranges. In about 80.7% of the seats in 2021, a turnout of >80% was recorded. In 2016, there were 83.7% such seats and in 2019 there were 77%

Turnout %	2021	2019	2016
>80	80.7%	77.0%	83.7%
70 to 80	18.5%	23.0%	15.6%
60 to 70	0.7%	0.0%	0.7%

4. Increase/decrease ranges

In 76.3% of the seats, the turnout decreased from 2016, in the range of 0 to 5% points. In 75.6% of the seats, the vote share increased from 2019, in the range of 0 to 5% points

Change % points	From 2016	From 2019
-5 to 0	76.3%	24.4%
0 to +5	23.7%	75.6%

SOURCE: MAPS FROM DATA MEET

DATA FROM ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA, VOTER TURNOUT APP, LOKDHABHA

*FOR THE FOUR PHASES COMPLETED

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 13, 1971

India will have 1 bn people by 2000

United Nations, April 12: U.N. experts predict that there will be more than a billion people in China by the year 1990 and more than a billion in India by 2000, when the world's population will total almost 6.5 billion. Those and other projections by the U.N. Population Division are given in the latest issue of the monthly bulletin of Statistics, circulated here this week-end. The latest comparable U.N. estimates of actual population for mid-1969 are 740 million for China, 537 million for India and 3.552 billion for the world. The projections show that the world's population will top four billion by 1975, nearly five billion by 1985, 5.5 billion by 1990 and six billion by 1995, and hit 6.493 billion in 2000. Between 1975 and 2000, they indicate, the population of the world's more developed regions will go from 1.147 billion to 1.453 billion. The number of people in the Soviet Union, the world's third most populous country with an estimated 240 million in mid-1969, is figured to increase from 235 million in 1975 to 316 million in 1990 and 329 million in 2000. The fourth-ranking United States, with an estimated 203 million people in mid-1969, is expected to have 219 million people in 1975 and 252 million in 1985, the last year of projections for industrialised western countries.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FROM THE APRIL 12, 1921 ISSUE AS THERE WAS NO ISSUE ON APRIL 13, 1921

Dyarchy at work
(From an Editorial)

In proroguing the Bengal Legislative Council on Friday last, Lord Ronaldshay, the Governor of Bengal, made an important speech in which he took some considerable pains to deal with the new reformed constitution. His Lordship expounded it in a way which ought to have astounded even the most optimistic of those Moderate politicians who fondly sought to mislead the country, fortunately without any appreciable success, that under the new constitution we had everything essential, including almost the full budget right. Lord Ronaldshay, however, roundly told the members of the Council that he and "the reserved half of Government" were not their servants and that, in refusing to grant their demands in certain respects, the members "treatment of it has not been quite in accordance with the intentions of Parliament".

ANND-NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

SEC approves Russia's Sputnik V vaccine

Sputnik V, developed by Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, claims to be one of the three vaccines in the world with efficacy of over 90%.

"The vaccine's efficacy is confirmed at 91.6% based on the analysis of data on 19,866 volunteers, who received both the first and second doses of the Sputnik V vaccine or placebo at the final control point of 78 confirmed COVID-19 cases," noted the information released on the vaccine's official website.

RDIF to produce shots

It adds that the vaccine supplies for the global market will be produced by the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) international partners in India, Brazil, China, South Korea and other countries.

While Dr. Reddy's will

market the vaccine in India, RDIF has tied up with other Indian companies – Hetero Biopharma, Gland Pharma, Stelis Biopharma and Virchow Biotech – to produce 850 million doses of Sputnik V in the country every year. RDIF jointly with partners and manufacturers is ramping up the production of Sputnik V. The cost of one dose of the vaccine for international markets is less than \$10 (Sputnik V is a two dose vaccine). The (freeze-dried form) of the vaccine can be stored at a temperature of +2 to +8 degrees Celsius, which allows for easy distribution worldwide, including hard-to-reach regions," noted the website.

Dr. Reddy's Labs, which is conducting a trial on the Sputnik V's suitability on India, had previously applied, on February 19, for emergency use authorisation of the vaccine.

Sensex and rupee slip on fear of pandemic

"Consumer non-durables output has shrunk in three of the last four months, suggesting that sentiment remains weak at the bottom of the pyramid," Ms. Nayar added.

Retail inflation through 2020-21 was the highest in the last seven years at 6.2%, said Devendra Pant, chief economist at India Research and Ratings. "Rising retail inflation and falling wage growth is a double whammy for consumption demand, which even otherwise is under pressure."

Higher fuel prices due to a combination of higher

crude prices and elevated excise duties pushed transport and communication inflation to 12.5%, the highest since the current inflation index series began, Mr. Pant said.

Among services, household goods and services inflation hit a 10-month high while recreation and amusement services touched a 9-month high. While some relief is expected in April's inflation numbers, as base effects from last year's national lockdown kick in, the uptick in inflation is expected to resume thereafter, Ms. Nayar reckoned.

+ EC slaps 24-hour ban on Mamata Banerjee

In its April 8 notice, the EC cited a speech by Ms. Banerjee in Cooch Behar on April 7 asking women to "gherao" Central Armed Police Force personnel if they "create disturbances".

In her reply to the notice, the Chief Minister said she had called on voters to democratically protest when anyone, including CAPFs, tried to obstruct their right to vote. "Gherao is one of the democratic ways of registering public protest and accepted and there is no reason why gherao should be considered as illegal...I have only emphasised that voters should exercise their franchise in a free and fair manner and that intimidation of the electorate, by any external force whatsoever (including CAPF), will not be tolerated," she said in her reply.

'Northeast citizens faced bias amid pandemic'

"The risk of being victimised in racial hatred remains subtle yet deeply entrenched. The highest number of incidents was reported from Mumbai (44.7%). Interestingly, 78% of the northeast people believed that physical appearance was the most important reason for prejudice. It appears as if the northeast India seamlessly fits Indian's imagination of a Chinese person," the report said.

Offensive and abusive language were reported to be most common across all the six cities. Mumbai recorded the highest offensive and abusive language-related crime (74%), followed by Chennai (72%), Pune (67.3%), Delhi (64%), Hyderabad (48.7%) and Bengaluru (43.3%).

More than 60% of those interviewed said their studies and work were seriously hampered by such experiences.

"The most pervasive reasons behind hate crime incidents against the northeastern people as per our data analysis were public attitude and insensitivity (44.5%). The incidence of non-reporting of the incidents was 32.3%. As many as 34% of persons faced a common issue of refusal to file FIR by the police. The fear of hate crime was experienced to be particularly high in Chennai (74%)," the study said.

It said the M.P. Belbarah Committee in 2014 recommended amendments to the IPC by creating new offences under Section 153C and 509A to deal with comments, gestures and acts intended to insult a member of a particular racial group. "It also suggested to make such offences as 'gender-neutral', 'cognizable' and 'non-bailable' with imprisonment extendable up to three years or five years with fine, respectively," said the study.

More than 60% of those interviewed said their studies and work were seriously hampered by such experiences.

SC to consider listing plea on Rafale deal after two weeks

Petition seeks filing of FIR for cheating, criminal breach of trust and under PCA

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Monday said it would consider listing after two weeks a writ petition filed by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma seeking registration of an FIR and an investigation under the Official Secrets Act into a French media report that France's anti-corruption agency, Agence Francaise Anticorruption (AFA), found aircraft manufacturer Dassault Aviation paid €1 million to an Indian company in connection with the 2016 Rafale deal.

Mr. Sharma mentioned the petition, without explicitly referring to the details, before a Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde.

The petition has made Prime Minister Narendra



To the streets: Congress supporters during a protest in New Delhi, demanding an investigation into the Rafale deal. ■ AFP

Modi as the first respondent, followed by Sushen Mohan Gupta, Defsys Solutions Private Ltd., Dassault Reliance Aerospace Ltd., the Centre and the CBI in that order.

The petition urged the court to order the registration of an FIR under various

offences such as cheating and criminal breach of trust and sections under the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Official Secrets Act.

It urged the court to issue "appropriate writ direction for cancelling/quashing agreement of September 23,

The September 2016 deal was signed by the Defence Ministers of India and France and called 'Rafale deal', the petition said.

CBI asks Anil Deshmukh to join probe on April 14

Ex-Maharashtra Home Minister is facing corruption charges

DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI The CBI has asked former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh to join the preliminary inquiry on Wednesday in connection with the corruption allegations, said an agency official on Monday.

"The statement of Assistant Commissioner of Police Sanjay Patil of the Mumbai police was again recorded on Monday," the official said.

PAs examined

On Sunday, the agency had examined two personal assistants of Mr. Deshmukh, as



Anil Deshmukh

their names had come up during the probe.

The CBI has already recorded the statements of former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh,

suspended assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze and a DCP of the Mumbai police, following the Bombay High Court's directive to conduct the preliminary enquiry.

Complainant's statement
The statement of Jayshree Patil, also a complainant in the matter, has also been taken by the CBI.

It was alleged that some police officers had been told to collect ₹100 crore every month from bars and restaurants in Mumbai. After the High Court ordered the initial probe, Mr. Deshmukh had resigned.

The visit comes just over

French Foreign Affairs Minister arriving today

Tour comes amid Rafale reports

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, will visit India from April 13 to 15, the Embassy of France announced on Monday. Mr. Le Drian will hold talks with his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar, and participate in the Raisina Dialogue.



The ministerial talks are expected to focus on "all aspects of the bilateral strategic partnership" covering joint ventures in the Indo-Pacific and cooperation at the UN Security Council where India has completed the first three months of its stint as a non-permanent member.

Cautious approach

Despite close strategic partnership between the two sides, India in recent weeks has adopted a cautious approach at the UNSC. India has participated in the "Arria-formula" meetings, the consultation among the 15 members of the UNSC over conflict zones and other contentious issues, while expressing reservations about the format of the meeting. On March 8, India, Russia and China were the only three countries that did not sponsor the meeting on "women, peace and security".

The articles also detailed how Mr. Gupta obtained crucial documents on the Indian negotiating team involved in the Rafale deal and supplied them to Dassault Aviation.

Deliveries of the Rafale jets are currently under way and the Indian Air Force has so far received 14 of the 36 jets.

Mr. Le Drian and Mr. Jaishankar will be joined by Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne at the Raisina Dialogue which has emerged as the biggest diplomatic lecture series of India. He will also hold talks with Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar during his stay here.

President discharged from AIIMS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind, who recently underwent a bypass surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), returned to the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday.

"I have returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan after my surgery. My speedy recovery is thanks to wishes and prayers of all of you and exceptional care given by doctors and nursing staff at AIIMS and Army's RR hospital. I am thankful to everyone! I am glad to be back home," he was quoted by the Twitter handle of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

SC dismisses plea to convert INS Viraat into a museum

Dismantling of 67-year-old warship will continue, says court



No revival: The decommissioned INS Viraat on its way to the Alang ship breaking yard. ■ FILE PHOTO

ministry of Defence with their proposal. But the government had maintained a non-committal tone in the High Court and asked Envitech to approach the Shree Ram Group with a proposal to repurchase the ship.

"The HC had allowed you to make a representation and the government has refused. You have not challenged the rejection," Chief

Justice Bobde told Ms. Sharma, dismissing the petition. On February 10, the court had ordered a stay on the process of dismantling the ship at an Alang yard in Gujarat. The carrier was bought by Shree Ram Group in a bid. The 67-year-old iconic warship was towed to the breaking yard after over a three-decade service in the Indian Navy.

"It has come to our knowledge that miscreant elements plan to stall Ambedkar Jayanti Program (like Republic Day), in the name of Kisan Andolan and thereby pitting Dalits against the

Dalit groups, farm unions clash over Ambedkar event

Move to stop Haryana CM's unveiling of Babasaheb's statue

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Tensions are brewing between some Dalit groups and protesting farm unions. The latest trigger is the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's plans to block Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's from unveiling a statue of B.R. Ambedkar on his birth anniversary on April 14. On Monday, the All India Ambedkar Mahasabha (AIAM) said that "no one will be allowed to prevent celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti".

The AIAM is a platform of Dalit groups who agitated against the amendment to the SC/ST Atrocities Act in 2018.

"It has come to our knowledge that miscreant elements plan to stall Ambedkar Jayanti Program (like Republic Day), in the name of Kisan Andolan and thereby pitting Dalits against the



Fight continues: Farmers at the protest site in New Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

the statue of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. Except for the Chief Minister, if anyone else unveils this statue, the farmers have no objection."

"Those who mocked the Constitution have no right to unveil the statue of Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar," said Rakesh Tikait, who heads a major faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union.

A ND-NDE

Trinamool insulting SC community: PM

Modi holds multiple rallies in West Bengal, says Mamata has been 'clean bowled' in Nandigram

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed multiple election rallies in West Bengal on Monday, accused the Trinamool Congress leadership of insulting the Scheduled Castes community in the State.

Addressing a public meeting in Bardhaman town, Mr. Modi alleged that a senior Trinamool leader had called members of the Scheduled Castes "beggars".

"Didi" has neither condemned such remarks nor has she sought any apology," he said.

He added that no Trinamool leader could have made such a comment without the knowledge of the Chief Minister.

Mr. Modi said, "Baba Saheb Ambedkar's soul is hurt by the insult hurled at Scheduled Castes."

"You have committed biggest mistake, biggest sin, by insulting Dalits," he said.

Mr. Modi's remarks were directed at Trinamool leader Sujata Khan Mondal.



Putting pressure: Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigning in Burdwan on Monday. • PTI

Later in the day, speaking in Kalyani, Mr. Modi raised the issue of his recent visit to Orakandi in Bangladesh, the birthplace of Harichand Thakur, the founder of the Matua sect.

"When I visited Orakandi, a priest of Matua sect said that I was the first Prime Mi-

nister to visit the birthplace of Harichand Thakur," Mr. Modi said, adding that the appeasement politics of Ms. Banerjee had hurt the interests of the Matuas and the Namasudras.

The BJP was committed to granting citizenship and justice to the refugees, he said.

Modi said the people of Nandigram had "clean bowled" Ms. Banerjee and that "her innings was over".

He added that the people of West Bengal had understood her game plan, that she wanted to hand over control to her nephew.

"The people have asked the entire team of Didi to leave the field in the first four phases of polls," Mr. Modi said.

"The reality of West Bengal is that it is game over for Didi," Mr. Modi repeated.

In a meeting in Barasat, Mr. Modi accused the Trinamool of corruption and "cut money".

He also said that votes for the BJP would ensure that each farmer gets ₹18,000 which is pending under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and benefits under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Elections in Bardhaman, Nadia and North 24 Parganas districts, where Prime Minister addressed public meetings on Monday, are scheduled in the fifth phase on April 17.

NRC will have no impact on Gurkhas, says Amit Shah

Trinamool Congress is spreading lies to create fear, he says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KALIMPONG/DHUPGURI

Seeking to allay fears created among the people of the hills by the "lies" of the Trinamool Congress, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asserted on Monday that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will have no impact on the Gurkhas.

Mr. Shah, during an address after a roadshow in Kalimpong, said as long as the Narendra Modi-led BJP government was there at the Centre, no Gurkha would be harmed.

"NRC has not yet been implemented, but whenever it is done, not a single Gurkha will be asked to leave," he said.

"The Trinamool Congress is lying about the possible fallout of NRC on the Gurkhas in order to create fear among them," he said.

"We will form an SIT and send those responsible for the wrongdoings behind bars," Mr. Shah said amid chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Jai Gurkha'.

Darjeeling and its adjoining areas were rocked by movements and protests, which at times turned violent, in favour of a separate Gorkhaland in 1986 and in 2017.



Allaying fears: Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressing a public meeting in Dhupguri on Monday. • PTI

than 1,200 Gurkhas had lost their lives, but they did not get justice.

The Home Minister also alleged that the Mamata Banerjee government had also been responsible for the death of many Gurkhas in recent times.

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movements and protests, which at times turned violent, in favour of a separate Gorkhaland in 1986 and in 2017.

Later, addressing a rally in the Dhupguri Assembly constituency, Mr. Shah declared that the BJP was ahead in 92 of the 135 seats that went to the polls in the first four phases of the West Bengal Assembly election. He also asked people to give a grand farewell to Ms. Banerjee by

ensuring that the saffron party wins over 200 seats.

Chandra appointed Chief Election Commissioner

He is set to assume charge today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday appointed Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra as the next Chief Election Commissioner. The incumbent CEC Sunil Arora's tenure ended on Monday.

In a statement, the Law Ministry said: "The President has appointed Shri Sushil Chandra, the senior-most Election Commissioner, as the Chief Election Commissioner in the Election Commission of India."

Mr. Chandra would assume charge from Tuesday. A notification to that effect was issued by the Legislative Department on Monday.



Sushil Chandra

Mr. Chandra took office as an Election Commissioner on February 15, 2019, after retiring as the chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes. A 1980 batch Indian Revenue Service officer, Mr. Chandra had worked in the areas of international taxation and investigation.

Mamata seeks ban on Ghosh for Sitalkuchi remark

The entire thing was planned by Amit Shah and PM Modi was aware of the situation, she says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A war of words over the Sitalkuchi firing continued to rage on Monday. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee assured the voters that she would not spare those responsible for the firing and urged the Election Commission of India to ban State BJP president Dilip Ghosh.

Mr. Ghosh had warned on Sunday of more "Sitalkuchi-like incidents" if the "bad boys of Trinamool Congress" did not abide by the law.

State BJP president is saying Central forces should open fire... Do they have anything in their heads? Those who speak about opening fire should be banned," Ms. Banerjee said at a public meeting.

Trinamool leader Abhishek Banerjee also played a recording of Mr. Ghosh's speech at a rally in north Bengal, and said several BJP leaders had made statements that the forces should shoot to kill.

Five persons died in two separate incidents of firing at Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar district on April 10 when polling was under way at the Assembly constituency.

"Will you vote for those firing upon the people or for those working for the people," Ms. Banerjee asked at

another rally, urging the people to reply to the bullets with ballot.

The Trinamool also lodged a formal complaint with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer against the remarks made by Mr. Ghosh.

A delegation comprising senior leaders of the Samyuktta Morcha also visited the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and raised concerns about the deaths at Sitalkuchi.

The entire thing was planned by Home Minister Amit Shah and the Prime Minister was aware of the situation," Ms. Banerjee retorted.

Former State BJP president Rahul Sinha, who is contesting the polls from Habra in North 24 Parganas, said there was "no big issue if eight instead of four people were killed and those killed were terrorists trying to disrupt the polling process".

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another rally, urging the people to reply to the bullets with ballot.

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The delegation led by Left Front

chairperson Biman Bose also

demanded action against Mr. Ghosh.

Mr. Bose expressed surprise that there was no vi

deo evidence of the security

forces being attacked, or

their weapons being snatched,

as claimed by the

Commission.

NCB busts drugs network, arrests four

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has arrested four persons and seized 34 consignments of psycho-tropic drugs, mostly Tramadol, during searches in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They were to be dispatched to the United States, European nations and other countries.

Tramadol is used as a pain suppressant and resilience booster by Islamic State fighters in Syria and insurgents in African countries.

The agency seized 30.50 lakh Tramadol tablets, 70,000 codiene-based cough syrups and about 15 kg of amphetamine.

Military exercise in Bangladesh ends

General Naravane attends closing ceremony

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday granted time to Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, her son Rahul Gandhi and others accused in the National Herald case to submit their response to a plea by BJP MP Subramanian Swamy seeking to lead evidence before the trial court.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait posted the case for May 18.

Counsel of the Congress leaders informed the High Court that they could not file replies as their office was closed due to COVID-19 and sought more time.

On February 22 this year, the High Court had issued notices to the Gandhis, AICC general secretary Oscar Fernandes, Suman Dubey, Sam Pitroda and Young Indian (YI) on Mr. Swamy's plea. The High Court had also stayed the trial court proceedings till further orders.

Mr. Swamy has moved the High Court against a trial court's February 11 order declining his plea to lead evidence to prosecute the Gandhis and the other accused in the case for now.

The trial court had said that Mr. Swamy's application to lead evidence would be considered after his examination in the case was over.

The BJP MP has sought summoning of certain witnesses, including the Secretary General (registry officer) of the Supreme Court, a deputy land and development officer, and a deputy commissioner of Income Tax.

Gen. Naravane also interacted with the senior officers of the participating nations and military observers from other countries, the statement said. On Sunday, he had delivered the keynote address on "Changing Nature of Global Conflicts: Role of UN Peacekeepers".

The exercise, which started on April 4 at Bangabandhu Senanibas, saw participation by four countries, along with observers from the U.S., the U.K., Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Singapore.

The aim of the exercise was to strengthen defence ties and enhance interoperability among neighbourhood countries to ensure effective peace keeping operations, the Army said.

Delhi HC seeks report on plea by 3 Bangladeshi youth

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the Centre, the Delhi government and the police about the steps they had taken to trace the antecedents of three Bangladeshi youth, including a minor, who were allegedly abducted from their country

and brought here in March.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh also issued notice to the Bangladesh High Commission and the Border Security Force on a plea by the three youth, seeking to be sent back home.

The High Court will hear the case again on May 5.

ODISHA JOINT ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, 2021 (OJEE-2021)

No.: OJEE / 150 Date: 09/04/2021

RE-TENDER CALL NOTICE

Re-Tender Call for Proposal and Quotation for conducting the Joint Entrance Examination 2021 (Computer-Based-Test) Examination

Re-Tenders are invited from eligible, reputed and qualified IT Firms with sound technical and financial capabilities for implementation and maintenance of Computer Based System for conducting entrance examination of OJEE 2021 under two bid system. The tenderers must apply in the prescribed tender documents available on the websites of OJEE, i.e. www.odishajee.com / www.ojee.nic.in. The last date of submission of the tender is 24th April, 2021 by 5:00PM. Tenderers, who have already submitted bids, have to submit fresh bids again. However, EMD deposited will be adjusted.

Note: Chairman, OJEE may relax one or more conditions at his discretion. The OJEE Authority reserves the right to cancel the tender without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Chairman, OJEE

OIPR-14020/11/0001/2122

h-01:

Online Tender Notice No:4 of 2021-22

Sports Authority of Gujarat Block No.14/3rd Floor, Dr.Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Gandhinagar (Third Attempt)

Secretary, Sports Authority of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Block no. 14, 3rd floor, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Sector-10, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The Last date of Submission of proposed will be dt.03/05/2021; 18:00 hrs.

The tender may be download from the website www.nprocure.com.

For any further information contact to PIU Branch in the office of Secretary, Sports Authority of Gujarat, Block no. 14, 3rd floor, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Gandhinagar in office hour.

INF/61/21-22

ANDHRA PRADESH MEDICAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Plot No.9, Survey No.49, IT Park, Mangalagiri-522503, Guntur District, Amaravathi Region, Andhra Pradesh, email : ce.apmhdc@gmail.com

Tender Notice No./APMSIDC/TECHNICAL/2021-22, Dated : 12-04-2021

Tenders are invited through e-procurement platform (Reverse Tender cum e-Auction) for 1) Establishment of New Government Medical Colleges at

a) Vizianagaram b)

India reports 1,60,695 cases and 864 deaths

Maharashtra reports 51,751 infections, 258 casualties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI
As of 11.55 p.m. on Monday, India reported 1,60,695 COVID-19 cases and 864 deaths.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Ladakh and Manipur. The data is sourced from covid19india.org, an independent aggregator of daily COVID-19 figures.

Only 11.8 lakh tests were conducted on Sunday (for which results were made available on Monday), about 2.3 lakh fewer than Saturday's but 2.8 lakh more than the previous Sunday. A total of 25,78,06,986 samples have been tested in the country as of April 11 since the beginning of the pandemic, says the ICMR.

The country has so far reported a total of 1,36,86,074 cases and 1,71,073 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 51,751 infections (accounting for nearly 33% of the new cases) on Monday, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 13,604

Changing hotspots

From 63% of India's cases between March 15 and 21 (Week 5), Maharashtra's share reduced to just 42% between April 5 and 11 (W8). The share of Chhattisgarh and U.P. has surged

State	Weeks							
	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
MH*	41%	51%	55%	61%	63%	60%	54%	42%
CG**	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	8%
U.P.	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	7%
KA***	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Delhi	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	5%	5%
T.N.	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Kerala	34%	23%	15%	9%	5%	3%	3%	3%

MH*: MAHARASHTRA | CG**: CHHATTISGARH | KA***: KARNATAKA

and Chhattisgarh with 13,576. Maharashtra also recorded the most casualties (258) on Monday. Chhattisgarh followed with 107 deaths, while Uttar Pradesh and Delhi had 72 each.

Over 10.45 crore vaccine doses were administered in India as of 7 a.m. on Monday.

From 63% of India's cases between March 15 and 21, Maharashtra's share re-

duced to 42% between April 5 and 11. In the same period, Chhattisgarh's share increased from 3% to 8%, and that of Uttar Pradesh increased from 1% to 7%. The share of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka remained stable in the range of 3% to 5%.

Kerala's share has been decreasing. Between February 15 and 21, its share was 34%. Between April 5 and 11, it reduced to 3%.

Marching barefoot, the seers took a dip in the river as they were showered with flower petals from helicopters arranged by the Uttarakhand government.

Few wear masks

Masks were not worn by a large proportion and physical distancing appeared impossible in an event in which, according to the mela administration, over 17 lakh people had taken a dip in the river in the first few hours up



No worries: People taking a dip in the Ganga at Haridwar in Uttarakhand on Monday. ■ REUTERS

to 10 a.m. Mela inspector general Sanjay Gunjyal said 100% compliance with COVID-19 norms was not possible with such a large crowd of seers converging on the ghats, but efforts were on to ensure that everyone adhered to them.

While Har Ki Pauri, considered the holiest of the ghats, was reserved for the

akadas from 7 a.m. onwards, common people took the dip at the other ghats of the Ganga.

Former King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, on his maiden visit to Haridwar, was among the devotees who took a bath in the river.

It was the second 'royal bath' during the ongoing Kumbh Mela, which has

been limited to just one month due to COVID-19 spike.

The last 'royal bath' was conducted on the occasion of Mahashivratri on March 11.

More than 20,000 police and paramilitary personnel kept an eye over the mela area spread over 600 hectares.

Week-long curfew in Bhopal

Bench seeks detailed affidavit by April 15 on steps taken to control pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

A week-long 'corona curfew' was imposed in Bhopal city on Monday night to curb the rising cases of COVID-19 in the Madhya Pradesh capital.

The curfew came into force at 9 p.m. and will remain effective till 6 a.m. on April 19, an official order said.

The decision to impose the curbs on movement of people and operation of business and commercial establishments was taken non-a day when Bhopal recorded more than 800 COVID-19 infections.

Bhopal Collector Avinash Lavaniya issued an order under Section 144 of the CrPC.



Round-the-clock alert: Ambulances outside the COVID-19 ward at the Government Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad. ■ PTI

phase. It is so steep and galloping that the government never envisioned it. If you apply for a test, you will get a report after several days. It takes around seven days to get the RT-PCR report," Chief Justice Vikram Nath remarked.

In fact, the Chief Justice himself initiated the fresh *suo motu* petition on Sunday.

The court was particularly concerned about the shortage of Remdesivir injections and long queues of kin of patients outside the hospitals

to procure injection vials.

The Advocate-General briefed the court about the steps taken by the government while suggesting that media reports were "overhyping" the situation.

"After hearing you, we are mesmerised and feel that we have unnecessarily taken cognisance, but the situation is quite grim," the Bench said.

Following the court's tough stand, the government late on Monday evening announced a range of measures to fight the pandemic. These include restricting staff attendance to 50% at offices and commercial establishments. Only 50 persons would be allowed at marriages. No political rally or social gathering would be allowed.

Earlier, some judges, including Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, had preferred to sit in the court to virtually hear the day's cases. Monday, nevertheless, saw no exception. All Benchers of the top court functioned from home.



The Supreme Court will tighten social distancing norms in the coming days.

Concern as over 50 SC employees test positive

Judges resume hearing cases from residences via videolink

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Over 50 staff members in the Supreme Court have been tested COVID-19 positive, triggering alarm bells in the highest court.

Judges have resumed hearing cases from their residences via videoconferencing, as was the practice during the lockdown in 2020.

Earlier, some judges, including Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, had preferred to sit in the court to virtually hear the day's cases. Monday, nevertheless, saw no exception. All Benchers of the top court functioned from home.

Monday said the physical mentioning of cases had been suspended for the time being, considering that most of the cases were of Registry staff.

The coming days are crucial for the court. It is a time of transition at the very top. Chief Justice Bobde is retiring on April 23 and Chief Justice of India-designate, Justice N.V. Ramana, is taking over from April 24.

Monday's hearings were rescheduled by an hour to sanitise the courtrooms and other premises.

Hearings at 10.30 a.m. were postponed to 11.30 a.m. and those scheduled at 11 a.m. were pushed to noon.

'Maharashtra moving to lockdown tyranny'

Fadnavis blames it on coalition govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Criticising the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government for allegedly mismanaging the COVID-19 situation in Maharashtra, former Chief Minister and Opposition leader Devendra Fadnavis said the State was moving from a democracy to "lockdown tyranny".

At a campaign rally for

the BJP candidate in the Pandharpur-Mangalwadi Assembly bypoll, he said the MVA's ineffectual handling of the situation and its ham-fisted actions had brought the State to its present crisis. "Today, Maharashtra has the highest number of COVID-19 cases and fatalities in the country. This is the situation of despair that this government has plunged Maharashtra into," he said.

Vaccinate on the basis of need, not age, she urges PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday to allow emergency approval to all vaccine candidates and open vaccinations to people on the basis of "need and experience instead of age".

Ms. Gandhi, who wrote the letter after interacting with Chief Ministers of Con-

gress-ruled States last week, flagged concerns regarding the availability of the vaccines with State governments.

At a separate press conference, the Congress said at least 30 crore of India's population had co-morbidities like hypertension, diabetes and other lifestyle diseases, and asked the Modi government to give a timeline by when these vulnerable groups would be vaccinated.

Party spokesperson Ajay Kumar said though Mr. Modi and his Ministers were ex-

pected to set up a 'war room' to tackle the second wave of COVID, "they were busy in the battle for Bengal".

On a day when Centre approved Russian vaccine, Sputnik, the Congress launched an online campaign for "vaccination for all". "While it will be necessary on the one hand to substantially ramp up our domestic production capacity, it will also be prudent to allow emergency use authorisation of all the vaccine candidates that have the required clearances, without any further

delay. Accordingly, with enhanced availability, categories eligible for vaccination should be expanded on the basis of need and exposure

rather than just age," Ms. Gandhi wrote to the Prime Minister.

As States talked about travel restrictions, closures and lockdowns, Ms. Gandhi appealed to Mr. Modi to consider putting in place a scheme for guaranteed minimum monthly income of ₹6,000 for every eligible family.

Rahul's call
Earlier in the day, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "The country needs vaccines against coronavirus. You also raise your voice

- 14 Payments from sweet song about old king (9)
16 Metal tip of spear pierces fish (5)
17 Train's audible signal (5)
19 A lot many return and rally round farm worker (5,4)
23 Passage leads to ancient, legendary location encircling Yemen's wadis, ending in Sana'a yard (8)
24 Sign over a troubled mutual (6)
26 Insubstantial spread - slice of pita bread with oats (10)
27 Sentimental, short message on social medium (4)
28 Cocoons in nests designed with extremely cosy interiors (7)
29 Spooner describes river originating at range (7)
- DOWN
2 Hotels constructed over land (7)
3 John hides - Avtaar looks (5)
4 Firm invested in Asia's re-development without initially arranging capital (7)
6 Played out an act on the radio (6)
7 Monograph about representation of sounds with symbols (9)
8 Wild fowl rears laid eggs (7)
9 Act to restrict reproduction? (4-6,3)
15 Old store drapes upper class clothing line lavishly (9)
18 University close to Pakistan's south gets student to forget lessons (7)
20 Policeman's beat starting out from lawns close to the river (7)
21 Stylish opener for England run out in an unusual manner before delivery (2,5)
22 Inferior dope, doctor's injected (3-3)
25 Machine-cut soap (5)
- ACROSS
1 What is paid for maintenance of luxury car in a large city (7)
5 Spiderman's weapon - on Batman's portal? (3,4)
10 Man, perhaps, leaving a passage? (4)
11 Company's chief batting for woman taking bribes... in the end, it spells trouble (3,2,5)
12 Doctor stops one condition of the eyelids (6)
13 Psalms from Indian religious work or its edited version (8)

SUDOKU

3	5							
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	6			8				
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	6				8			
3	5	9	6					
3	7		9		4			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13219

S	P	I	T	E	S	M	L	T	A
I	R	O	D	E	Y	A	T		
C	H	N	N	I	C	A	S	W	
O	M	E	S	H	T	K			
N	A	I	A	D	P	R			
A	P	R	O	V	R	O			
C	O	M	P						



DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

As we just bid adieu to the one year 'panni anni' (pandemic anniversary's social media nickname), chances are you are still working from home. The video call fatigue is real and many of us now dread them. That does not have to be the case; you could switch it up just want to look more professional for your video meetings.

MetroPlus has rounded up some technical tips to upgrade your at-desk camera settings, from ergonomics to tweaking your camera to the right setting to have you look like you are in a fancy remote studio instead of the same room in which you likely ate breakfast that morning.

Get situated

First, we have to get that posture as close to perfect as possible. You look your best in a video call if you are sitting ergonomically and if you want to get specific, websites such as Omnicalculator.com have tools that help calculate this, where you can punch in your height

How to be PIXEL PERFECT



Your next video meeting could be as professional as that of a studio's. Here are some tips and tricks on how to achieve that in an efficient and affordable way

while wearing shoes and your desk height. Ultimately, your thighs and feet should be parallel to the floor, with your thighs and lower legs forming 90 to 110-degree angle. In many cases, you do not need to worry about standard chair height, as they are adjustable and their position is easily changed. Your elbows and underarms should lie straight on the table and armrests; try to have a 90 to 110-degree angle at the elbow. The key is to avoid dreaded 'tech neck'; you should be looking straight, you should be looking at the top third part of the screen. Plus, your monitor, if there is a webcam attached, should be tilted at 10 to 20 degrees. The aforementioned margins are basic suggestions, and since each



In focus Various video call set-ups with optimal lighting and angles
■ GETTY IMAGES / ISTOCK; SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

body is different, it is advisable to keep tweaking until you feel totally comfortable. Such metrics are ideally important as desk time over the past year has increased and the more comfortable you are, the more seamless your recording experience.

The glow-up

Lighting is everything, and not all webcams that come built into laptops offer the clarity they promise. While some may opt for an external HD webcam, fixing up your lighting can help out. There are the basic tips: no backlight, and try to leverage natural light as much as possible. Many now opt for a ring light; initially a must-have for professional shoots, we saw a ton of them being used for social media live-streaming in 2020, often seeing them in the reflections of the subject's eyes and glasses. Ring lights, often costing between ₹1,000 and ₹5,000, help evenly distribute warm or cool light onto the subject without creating washout and invites little shadow. Be sure to position your light about two feet away from you. This helps the camera auto-focus easier, making recording that much simpler. Ring lights are also a vanity favourite because they help minimise the appearance of blemishes in the camera recording.

Need a quick hack? Open up a white image or a blank word processing document on your

WHAT OF DSLRS?

And it gets fancier; a more technically savvy lot may want to hook up their long-neglected DSLR to their laptop via an HDMI or USB cable. Companies including Canon and Sony have a way to connect their cameras to your computer, dependent on the model. All you may need is a USB cable, which should have come with your camera box.

Users can download corresponding softwares: EOS Webcam Utility Beta for Canon and Imaging Edge Webcam for Sony. Be prepared for the occasional bugs and for the possibility of quite a bit of battery power being eaten up, so charge and plan your calls accordingly.

monitor or laptop and use that as a light source on your face.

... and action!

The camera is important – very important. Everything you have set up so far has led to the success of this final gadget. As mentioned, not all laptops or tablets come with the best built-in webcams and many may choose to buy an external webcam. Most people who want to save some money will realise the best

webcam they own is actually in their own hand: the smartphone. Teamed with great lighting, the smartphone can go a long way in a video meeting that you are not dialling into from your phone. Applications that convert your smartphone into an external webcam such as Epocam, IP Webcam and Droid Cam have surged in popularity. They are installed on your smartphone and computer and in a few simple steps once the two devices are connected to each other either through WiFi or USB, it all works. Just remember to silence incoming notifications so your video meeting does not get interrupted.

Frame rate is an integral deciding factor; it impacts the style and viewing experience. Basically, different frame rates yield different viewing experiences, and choosing a frame rate often means thinking about multiple factors – in this case, it is how realistic you want your video to look. Therefore, either setting your camera or choosing a webcam that offers 60 frames per second is ideal. And of course, angles. Straight ahead and at the subject's eye-level are advisable. We have seen tilt shots and high up angles for more casual environments such as YouTube vlogs.



Take two OnePlus 9 and 9 Pro with the Hasselblad cameras
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

TECH-A-BYTE



Upcycled for medical

Samsung Electronics is recycling its old Galaxy smartphones into healthcare equipment for under-served people in India, Morocco, Vietnam and Papua New Guinea. Old phones will be remodelled as eyecare equipment to screen patients with eye diseases, the company said in a statement.

When the South Korea handset maker introduced the recycling programme in 2017, it made a handheld camera to enable diagnosis of an internal organ. The smartphone captured images, and the Galaxy device used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to analyse images for ophthalmic diseases. It then connects to an app that evaluates patient's data to suggest treatment, Samsung noted.

Samsung says the recycling initiative diverts e-waste from landfills to units making medical devices for under-served communities. The electronics company made a portable retina camera using old smartphones, and used it on over 19,000 residents in Vietnam. It now plans to extend the programme to India, Morocco and Papua New Guinea. The company will also make smartphone-based portable colposcopes to screen for cervical cancer.

Talk to the doc

Online healthcare platform, Practo, has introduced vernacular language options for its tele-consultation service on both its app and website. The platform will offer consultation in 15 languages, including Marathi, Tamil, Kannada and Bengali, with more to be added soon, the company said in a blog post. Earlier this year, the firm piloted the language options by offering Hindi as the alternate option to users.

During this time, 25% of all online consultations on the platform were conducted in vernacular languages, with Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, and Kannada (in that order) emerging as their preferred language(s) for consultation, Practo noted, and added that 65% of all vernacular consults were from users aged 60 and above.

Please send feedback and queries on Wireless articles to techknow@thehindu.co.in

CMYK

THE HINDU

SWETA AKUNDI

// I sleep with
all the lights in my room
turned on because
the presence of things
to hold onto
makes you feel
less lonely //

This entry, featured by Poems India on Day 2 of National Poetry Writing Month (NaPoWriMo), drew its co-founder Shivam Tomar's attention, for how feelings of isolation were interwoven in its lines. Loneliness, he has discovered, is a recurring theme in this year's NaPoWriMo.

April, being National Poetry Month, sees poetry communities and platforms hosting the NaPoWriMo challenge – of writing a poem a day. To get beginners started on this, hosting platforms put out prompts for each day.

It's a tradition that began in 2003 in the US, as a blog post, but is just as relevant this year, especially given the pandemic, believes Rohini Kejriwal, founder of Alipore Post. "Poetry helps people open up and find their voice," says Rohini.

A poetry enthusiast herself, Rohini started hosting NaPoWriMo last year, after COVID-19 hit. She observes the influence the past year has had on not just budding poets, but also the prompts she has been putting out.

"I wanted to provoke people to write about the words that have stayed with us in our lexicon, ones that we have encountered over and over: 'protest', 'vaccine', 'elegy', 'migration', and so on," says Rohini.

"While last year, I leaned more towards warmer prompts, that could help people free themselves from the situation they were in, this year, I think more seriousness has come through in the prompts. It reflects where I am, right now," she adds.

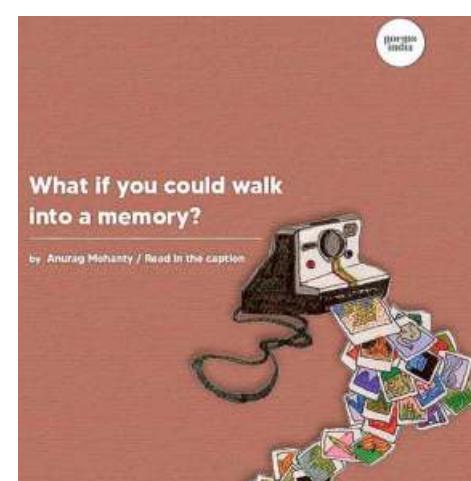
The pandemic, she believes has influenced people's writing as they are spending more time reading and introspecting. Experiences of living without human contact or losing loved ones, or even losing two of the five human senses set off visceral reactions.

Prompts are generally kept vague, so as to evoke different ideas in different people, based on their lived experiences. But with the pandemic putting a majority of the world through similar circumstances, the reactions to prompts too find common themes.

"That feeling of being stuck is universal. For example, for the prompt 'Earth', in any other circumstance, you would expect lots of 'Nature' poems, but this year, there is imagery of the changes we need to be making to make it a better place. I also feel that last year, the collective



A SECOND WAVE in verse



The influence of the pandemic is evident in themes of isolation, nostalgia and hope, popular in this year's National Poetry Writing Month challenges

fear and uncertainty was reflecting, whereas this year, a little more activism is coming through in people's words," says Rohini.

Same prompt, different take

One of the 350 people who have responded to Rohini's prompts, Bahrain-based Kaav Raaj has been participating in NaPoWriMo for three years. "I see things differently now because of how long we have been in this situation," says the 21-year-old

spoken word poet. She points to her two different poems she wrote, this year and last year, using the same prompt: 'Ode to My Throat Chakra'. Where last year, it was about the 'rising up' of a voice, speaking of 'connection' and 'listening', this year the take was entirely different – one that reflected how drained she felt. "I wrote about my throat being parched because of the constant need to talk. After the pandemic, content creators were in a

NaPoWriMo2021 Rohini Kejriwal of The Alipore Post; and (bottom) a screenshot from Poems India's Instagram page • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



WHERE TO RECEIVE PROMPTS

Either log on to napowrimo.net, or follow these pages for a variety of prompts every day:

- Poetry Dialogue
- The Alipore Post
- Poems India
- Let's Escape April
- Harnidh Kaur
- Poetry Plant Project

way forced to engage more online, as there was a pressure to constantly put things out there."

Poems India's Shivam also believes that there was a definite shift in the way people have been responding. Nine days into April, the four-year-old platform had received over 1,500 submissions.

"Our first prompt was 'Every moment is a memory of a previous one'. This prompt attracted a lot of submissions, where people talked about living in shells, anxious about their future," says Shivam.

In fact, he lists mental health, along with sexual abuse at home, and parenting, as the top themes in a pandemic world. "Even with happier prompts, people are getting nostalgic, and reflecting on their lives pre-pandemic," he adds.

Reading poetry, says Shivam, helps us see that we are not alone. Rohini too, has been reading a lot of pandemic poetry. "One of the interesting pandemic projects I came across this year are the 'Dear Vaccine' poems," she says.

Dear Vaccine is a global community that invites people to promote COVID-19 vaccination through poetry. A collaboration between the Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University, and The University of Arizona Poetry Center, the project invites people to write using any of these four prompts: 'Dear Vaccine', 'We liked', 'It's the...' or 'Vaccine please'.

Ask Rohini, what she would like to write and she says, "Dear Vaccine, please work your miracle on us all."

Success secrets

Kubbra Sait on discussing the importance of gratitude in her podcast

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Kubbra Sait's mother once gifted her a cylindrical, cat-shaped jar, which she uses as a repository of gratitude. In it, you would find chits where she has written about the things she is thankful about. The latest chit is about her homecoming. She was in Europe for over seven months due to shooting and travel restrictions. Despite having a good time there, she wished to return to her home in Mumbai. So, when she did, about two weeks ago, she made sure to add to her gratitude jar.

"You actually realise that so many things that you ask for on the fly, actually happen. And, when they happen, I think it is important to acknowledge those moments," she says over a video call from her home. "Gratitude is not the lack of wanting something but it is the appreciation of getting something that you wanted."

Kubbra discusses gratitude at length in *My 3 Secrets to Success*, an Audible podcast, featuring celebrities from various fields speaking about success. 'Gratitude' is atop her list of three secrets to success, followed by 'challenging yourself' and 'getting good sleep'.

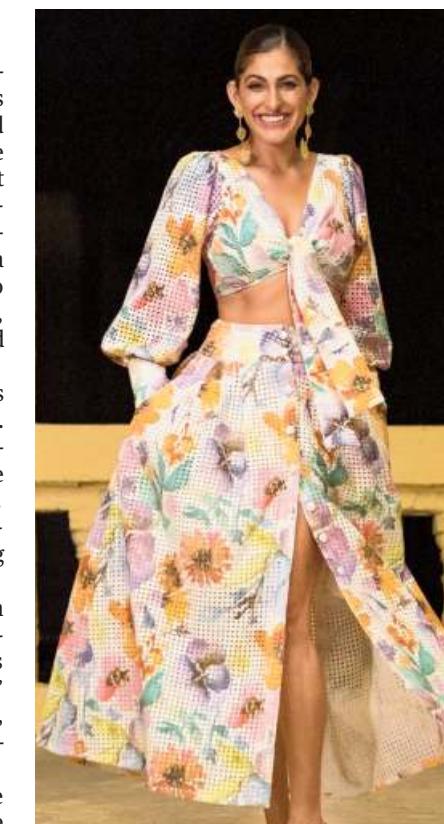
Kubbra, however, finds it a bit strange that she was invited to the show, because she believes that success is 'overrated' "Every little thing that you do can be called success, depending on how you weigh it," she says, "I have definitely moved a few notches up from where I was as I took the opportunities that came my way. I think when you do what you've always wished to do and do it well, that's success."

She has been in three different careers and been successful in all of them. She was a marketing specialist at Microsoft in Dubai over a decade ago. Then, in the early 2010s, she began hosting shows. She did a few films, too, including *Ready, Sultan* and *Gully Boy*, among others.

But her performance as Kukoo in *Sacred Games* widened her popularity. Last year, Kubbra was in *Jawaani Jaaneman* alongside Saif Ali Khan and in two OTT shows – *Illegal - Justice, Out of Order* on Voot and *Waqat From Home* on Amazon Prime.

Kubbra does not consider one career

C As an actor, I think the liberating thing is that you are never yourself; you are always associating yourself with some other soul. So, in that sense, it feels magical



Magical moments
Kubbra Sait • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

more successful over another, but finds acting most fascinating. "As a host, I never associated myself with my profession. I believe that what you do, who you meet, what religion you follow, where you work... all these are extensions of you. As an actor, I think the liberating thing is that you are never yourself; you are always associating yourself with some other soul. So, in that sense, it feels magical."

There are more projects lined up this year, including Apple TV's *Foundation*. Apart from these, she is also working on a memoir, which, at 37, might seem like a vanity project. Kubbra says there is a reason for it. "To let people know, through my experiences, that I am broken, I have failed, I have been down and out and had the courage to stand up again. If this resonates with someone, then my job is done."

For now, however, Kubbra is glad to be back home, in the presence of her white Persian cat, Shifu Sait, who keeps distracting her during the call. "The traffic, rice and dal, my cat... I realised how much emotional comfort I find in India."

Living the DREAM

NBA referee Suyash Mehta, the first person of Indian origin to become an official in the world's most prestigious league for basketball, discusses his journey

PRADEEP KUMAR

Born to immigrant parents in the US, Suyash Mehta is the first person of Indian descent to become an NBA referee. "My parents came to America in the '80s and my father pursued a career in medicine. My mother was a botanist but later raised

four kids. Our whole upbringing was based on our parents educating us about Indian values. Our first language was Hindi and then we ended up learning English," he says, over a Zoom call from the US. Suyash was a medical student, but pursued refereeing part-time. However, when there was an opportunity

to take it up full-time, he grabbed it.

Excerpts from an interview:

Tell us about your journey.

• I used to play a bit



Time out Suyash Mehta looks on during a preseason game

• GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

of club basketball during my time at the University of Maryland. It was quite an untraditional path for me because I never thought that I will be a referee. It was something that I was doing as a part-time job in the college. I had this opportunity after college that allowed me to try out for the minor league, and it was the toughest decision of my life because the same year, I had ta-

ken my MCAT to go to medical school. I remember sitting down with my parents and having to explain to them that I may not be going to medical school and that I will be pushing back my decision till the time I pursue this dream of becoming an NBA referee. Luckily for me, it paid off. I would not trade it for anything in the world.

What sort of pressure is it to officiate in an NBA game?

• It's an entirely different realm of players; their athleticism, and ability to play basketball is unmatched and they are the best in the world for a reason. It takes a while to get used to it and am still

learning at every game through my mentors. It's an internal competition with myself and each time it pushes me to get better. You are on the court with the best players in the world and you have to make right decisions.

How do you handle the criticism?

• We are so used to hearing the fans and all the boos. However, this year, when there are no fans in the arena, sometimes you miss it. But it has never really fazed me too much. Pre-pandemic when the arenas were packed, it was always in the background. It was a cool ability

to block it out and sometimes it really sharpened my focus.

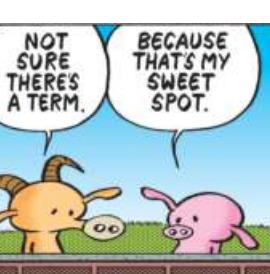
What sort of preparation is required of a referee officiating an NBA game?

• The lifestyle of a referee is not too far off from athletes. We don't eat fast food. We take health very seriously because it's the only way you can have longevity in this career, especially because you may be doing it twice as long as some of the players. So, it's everything: from working out to staying conditioned, to doing cardio, to doing weightlifting. In the off-season, you are always preparing for the start of the next season.

POOCHE CAFE



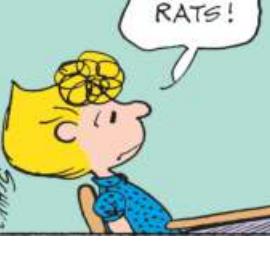
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



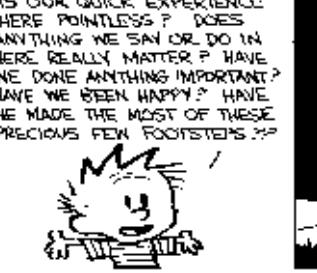
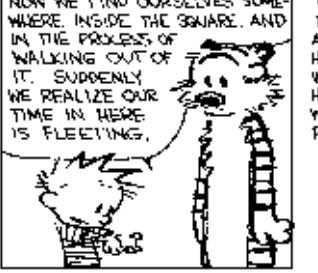
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Iran blames Israel for nuclear plant outage, pledges revenge

Tehran says Israel aims to foil nuclear deal talks; possible minor explosion: official

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI

Iran blamed Israel on Monday for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged its centrifuges and vowed it would take "revenge".

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack. It rarely does for operations carried out by its secret military units or its Mossad intelligence agency. However, Israeli media widely reported that the country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused a blackout at the nuclear facility.

While the extent of the damage at Natanz remains unclear, a former Iranian official said the assault set off a fire while a spokesman mentioned a "possible minor explosion".

Suu Kyi hit with criminal charge

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with a fresh criminal charge on Monday.

"Amay Suu has been charged again under section 25 of the natural disaster management law," lawyer Min Min Soe said after a court hearing.

"She has been charged in six cases altogether – five charges in Naypyidaw and one in Yangon."

In Tamu, near Myanmar's border with India, a six-year-old girl was shot dead while walking to the shop to buy snacks on Monday, a local said.



Deepening rift: A satellite view of Iran's Natanz nuclear facility, south of the capital Tehran. ■ AFP/MAXAR TECHNOLOGIES

The attack also further strains relations between the U.S., which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord, and Israel, whose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to stop the deal at all costs.

"My policy as Prime Minister of Israel is clear: I will never allow Iran to obtain the nuclear capability to carry out its genocidal goal of eliminating Israel," Mr. Netanyahu said. "And Israel will continue to defend itself against Iran's terrorism."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, meanwhile, warned Natanz would be reconstructed with

more advanced machines. That would allow Iran to more quickly enrich uranium, complicating the nuclear talks.

Emergency power

"The Zionists wanted to take revenge against the Iranian people for their success on the path of lifting sanctions," Iran's state-run IRNA news agency quoted Mr. Zarif as saying. "But we do not allow (it), and we will take revenge for this action against the Zionists."

Officials launched an effort on Monday to provide emergency power to Natanz, said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's civilian nuclear programme. He said the sabotage had not stopped enrichment there, without elaborating.

Britain opens official probe into ex-PM's lobbying efforts'

Cameron allegedly lobbied Ministers on behalf of a firm

REUTERS
LONDON



David Cameron

Britain has launched an official independent probe into former Prime Minister David Cameron's efforts to lobby Ministers on behalf of financier Lex Greensill, *The Sun* newspaper and the BBC reported.

The probe is likely to be independent and carried out on behalf of the Cabinet Office, the BBC said.

While Mr. Cameron was British Prime Minister from 2010 to 2016, the Australian banker Greensill was brought in to work with the

solvent finance firm.

The *Financial Times* and *Sunday Times* newspapers have reported that Mr. Cameron contacted Ministers directly to lobby on behalf of Greensill Capital, including sending texts to Finance Minister Rishi Sunak and arranging a private drink between Greensill and Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

In his first comments on the row on Sunday, Mr. Cameron said that in his representations to government he was breaking no codes of conduct and no government rules.

A grim new year for debt-trapped women

Ongoing protest against microfinance is the latest from Rajapaksas' support base

MEERA SRINIVASAN
POLONNARUWA



Pushed to penury: Women protesting in Polonnaruwa, demanding that their loans be cancelled. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

M. Champa Irangani is in no mood to celebrate 'Avurudu', or New Year, the biggest annual festival that Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community observes mid-April, while Tamils celebrate the Tamil New Year around the same time.

"The New Year will dawn only the day our debts are cancelled. Until then we cannot celebrate. Surely not,

when so many women have

died by suicide under the

pressure of microfinance

loans," she says, seated with

dozens of affected women

who have been observing a

'satyagraha' off the main

road in Hingurakoda town,

in Sri Lanka's Polonnaruwa district, for a month now.

Seeking relief

They want their microfinance debt abolished, and an alternative source of credit that will free them from poverty, rather than worsen it. Their experience, shared by tens of thousands who have taken microfinance loans in Sri Lanka, not only counters popular claims in South Asia of microcredit alleviating poverty and empowering women, but also highlights the devastating consequences of the individualised, high-interest microfinance loans, entangling women in a pile of debt.

Ms. Irangani feels especially let down since there has been no relief in over a year after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whom she voted for, came to power pledging – among other things – to abolish their loans.

Their ongoing protest is the latest against the Rajapaksa government – after the farmers' agitations in the southern Hambantota district – from among those who backed their party in

the 2019 and 2020 polls.

President Rajapaksa's astute election campaign in 2019 had two main thrusts – enhancing national security, on the heels of the Easter terror bombings that April, and improving rural livelihoods to develop the country. His poll manifesto 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour', which has since graduated to a national policy framework, promised to "ensure relief of village women falling victim from unregulated micro finance schemes", instead of offering "government-sponsored concessionary loan schemes and agricultural loans".

Ms. Irangani had reason to be hopeful. "I went all out and canvassed for their candidate in the general elections [August 2020] too, asking women in my village to back their party so our fate might change, but here we are, hearing of more and more indebted women dying by suicide [nearly 200 women, according estimates]. They simply don't care." The government has spoken of possible low interest loans as alternatives, but the women are not convinced yet.

Drawing a circle in the air, she says: "Livelihoods have become a big zero". If the pandemic severely affected the economy – with external sector earnings dropping, foreign reserves draining, and the rupee plummeting to 203 against the U.S. dollar –

daily-waged agriculture labourers like her, who were already reeling under debt, were in for even harder times, amid growing joblessness, falling wages and uncertainty.

Ms. Irangani's "debt trap" began when she returned to Sri Lanka some years ago, after working as a domestic help in West Asia for seven years. Exhausting her meagre savings in an unexpected court battle, she resorted to a loan to survive, and soon, one loan led to another, as companies relentlessly sold easy loans at her doorstep. The lending companies had done the same with war-affected Tamil women in the north and east, who were struggling to rebuild their lives.

"It all sounded like a dream at that time, but eventually turned out to be a mirage," Ms. Irangani recalls. The then incumbent government did not see through the measures announced in its last leg in power.

That is when President Rajapaksa made the promise, renewing the hopes of affected women. As that hope fades now, the women seated off the main road in Hingurakoda say that if the government does not meet to their demands by the end of the month, they will launch a "fast unto death". "We want to raise this issue nationally. We cannot afford to lose this struggle, we will not give up," Ms. Priyanthika Kumari says.

The women paid exorbitant interest rates – 40 % to over 200 % – amid harass-

REGEN-COV prevents symptomatic infection'

Cocktail effective in trials: Regeneron

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Regeneron will seek U.S. approval for its COVID-19 antibody cocktail as a preventative treatment after a trial showed it helped reduce the risk of symptomatic infections in households where someone else is ill, the U.S. drugmaker said on Monday.

REGEN-COV, as the combination shot of casirivimab and imdevimab is called, reduced the overall risk of progressing to symptomatic COVID-19 by 31%, and by 76% after the third day. The trial also demonstrated that it shortened symptom duration and markedly lowered viral levels, Regeneron said

in a statement.

The drug has emergency U.S. approval for mild to moderate COVID-19 patients, and the company is hoping the latest trial convinces regulators to expand its deployment. EU regulators have voiced some support and are letting countries decide if they want to use it.

Beyond reducing symptomatic infection risk, the total number of weeks patients experienced symptoms was nearly halved (45%) with REGEN-COV, and the viral burden was cut by 90%-plus, potentially helping halt the disease's spread.

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

China on Monday signed a \$500 million loan agreement with Sri Lanka, in a move that Colombo hopes would boost its foreign reserves that are under severe strain since the pandemic struck last year.

This is the second instalment of the \$1 billion loan sought by Sri Lanka last year. The first was released in March 2020, just as the pandemic hit Sri Lanka. The approval comes a month after Sri Lanka obtained a currency swap facility from China for \$1.5 billion. Meanwhile, the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) also sanctioned

Sri Lanka's request for a \$180 million loan in February. Sri Lanka already owes more than \$5 billion to China from past loans.

Speaking over telephone with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month, Chinese

President Xi Jinping assured Sri Lanka of "as much assistance as China's capacity allows", in the fight against COVID-19.

Sri Lanka, like many pandemic-hit countries, is facing an acute economic crisis for over a year now, with its rupee plummeting to nearly 203 against the U.S. dollar.

The country's foreign reserves dropped to \$4.05 billion in March this year, after its exports and tourism sector earnings, and foreign remittances dropped considerably in the last 12 months.

Sri Lanka is due to repay some \$4.5 billion of its outstanding debt this year and the government has said it is "exploring all options".

India extended a \$400 million swap facility through the Reserve Bank of India, and provided a three-month rollover, but the facility was not further extended. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka settled the swap in February this year.

Meanwhile, Colombo is awaiting New Delhi's response on two requests made last year by the government.

While PM Mahinda Rajapaksa sought a debt moratorium on the debt Sri Lanka owes India, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa requested Prime Minister Modi for a \$1 billion currency swap last year. Neither request has been cleared by New Delhi as yet.

U.K. reopens after three months of lockdown

A major step towards freedom: Johnson

REUTERS
LONDON

Crowds queued up outside shops, pubs started selling pints at midnight and hairdressers welcomed desperate customers on Monday as England started to reopen its economy after three months of lockdown.

After imposing the most onerous restrictions in Britain's peacetime history, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the reopening was a "major step" towards freedom but urged people to behave responsibly as the virus was still a threat.

Mr. Johnson, whose unruly hair style has become a trademark look, was one of thousands who flocked to hairdressers and barbers to have a hair cut on Monday, having waited since early January when the latest lockdown was introduced.

Some folk lined up at bars after midnight or in the morning to raise a pint with

fellow revellers. Hundreds of thousands of businesses have been closed since January when England entered a third lockdown to stem surging infections driven by the "Kent" variant of the virus. The U.K. has the fifth highest death toll in the world.

Getting people spending again is crucial for Britain's recovery after official data showed that 2020 was the worst year for its economy in more than three centuries with a 9.8% decline in gross domestic product.

In north London, Maggie Grieve reopened the Beauchatcher hairdresser salon to work through the long list of bookings.

"I'm so excited to see my clients: to see how they are and give them that feeling that they get from having had their hair done," Ms. Grieve, who manages Beauchatcher hairdressers, told Reuters.

Protests erupt after U.S. police shoot dead Black man

Police fire teargas and flash bangs to disperse crowds

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MINNEAPOLIS

A suburb of Minneapolis was under curfew early on Monday after U.S. police fatally shot a young Black man, sparking protests not far from where a former police officer was on trial for the murder of George Floyd.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the police station in Brooklyn Center, northwest of Minneapolis, with police later firing tear-gas and flash bangs to disperse the crowd, according to an AFP video-journalist. Mayor Mike Elliott imposed a curfew from 1 a.m. on Monday until 6 a.m. The mother of Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old Black man, told a crowd earlier on Sunday evening that he called her to say he had been pulled over by police, local media reported. Katie Wright said she heard officers tell her son to put his phone down, and then one of the officers ended the call. Soon after, her son's girlfriend told her he had been shot.

The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension confirmed to AFP it was "investigating an officer-involved shooting incident" in Brooklyn Center but declined to

identify the victim.

According to a statement from the Brooklyn Center Police Department, officers pulled over a driver for a traffic violation. When they discovered he had an outstanding warrant, they tried to take him into custody. He got back into his car, and one of the officers fired their weapon, striking the driver, who died at the scene. ■

Pakistan human rights icon I.A. Rehman dead

He was an advocate of Indo-Pak. peace

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI



Ibn Abdur Rehman

later detained, reportedly because of her decision to take up Mr. Ansari's case.

Indian reunited

In a legal plea to President Mamnoon Hussain in November 2017, Mr. Rehman wrote that it would be to Pakistan's credit if it listened to humanitarian calls and "the chances of relief for Pakistani citizens in Indian prisons might improve if [the President] could remit the remaining period of Hamid's prison term."

A year later, Mr. Ansari was released and returned to his family in Mumbai, where he lives now. "It is said that once a person leaves this world, everything stays back and only deeds go along. Rehman Saab was one of the chosen ones who brought happiness in the dark lives of many broken houses," Mr. Ansari said.

Mr. Rehman was born in Haryana, and studied at Aligarh Muslim University before moving with his family to Pakistan in the wake of violence during Partition. He considered himself a protégé of the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and then took to journalism, writing for an Urdu paper, and later becoming the Chief Editor of *Pakistan Times* in 1989. He often visited India to pursue India-Pakistan dialogue during period of tensions between the two countries, and was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding in 2004.

ELSEWHERE

Prince Harry has arrived back in Britain for his grandfather Prince Philip's funeral on Saturday. Prince Harry praised his grandfather Prince Philip for providing unparalleled devotion and dedication to Queen Elizabeth, his "Granny", and said he would be missed by the nation and the world for his "service, honour and great humour". ■ REUTERS

Clashes in Lahore after Islamist leader held

Pakistan police on Monday arrested the Islamist leader of Tehreek-e-Labiqa party, a day after he threatened the government with protests if it did not expel France's Ambassador over depictions of Prophet Muhammad. Clashes soon erupted in Lahore between police and Saad Rizvi's supporters. ■

MARKET WATCH

	12-04-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	47,883	-3.44
US Dollar	75.05	-0.43
Gold	46,070	-1.40
Brent oil	63.87	-1.22

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	744.65	-78.95
Asian Paints	2602.20	-28.60
Axis Bank	635.60	-32.60
Bajaj Auto	3541.00	-110.30
Bajaj Finserv	9163.15	-465.90
Bajaj Finance	4511.00	-361.20
Bharti Airtel	522.45	-22.80
BPCL	403.95	-21.65
Britannia Ind	3812.75	15.05
Cipla	902.40	19.35
Coal India	124.70	-4.80
Divis Lab	3779.65	-27.30
Dr Reddys Lab	4996.95	-236.65
Eicher Motors	2427.20	-94.40
Grasim Ind	1376.60	-63.40
HCL Tech.	1009.40	-36.00
HDPC	2419.85	-94.05
HDFC Bank	1367.05	-54.70
HDFC Life	687.30	-7.55
Hero MotoCorp	2786.10	-126.80
Hindalco	336.20	-24.85
Hind Unilever	2462.00	-14.00
ICICI Bank	538.55	-27.65
IndusInd Bank	844.40	-79.25
Infosys	1425.75	-15.30
Indian Oil Corp	87.00	-4.70
ITC	205.30	-7.80
JSW Steel	604.15	-16.85
Kotak Bank	1742.50	-56.75
L&T	1345.15	-58.95
M&M	751.50	-39.65
Maruti Suzuki	6520.60	-306.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17501.70	-90.70
NTPC	99.05	-3.75
ONGC	98.05	-5.75
PowerGrid Corp	201.15	-7.15
Reliance Ind	1911.15	-70.90
SBI Life	872.45	-37.65
State Bank	328.85	-24.15
Shree Cement	29881.05	-1867.70
Sun Pharma	619.35	-17.40
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	655.60	-24.20
Tata Motors	286.55	-31.65
Tata Steel	851.55	-47.95
TCS	3246.55	-75.70
Tech Mahindra	1039.85	-13.15
Titan	1510.45	-81.55
UltraTech Cement	6509.40	-316.45
UPL	589.55	-45.35
Wipro	432.60	-17.50

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.86	75.18
Euro	89.13	89.52
British Pound	103.04	103.49
Japanese Yen (100)	68.45	68.75
Chinese Yuan	11.44	11.49
Swiss Franc	81.04	81.39
Singapore Dollar	55.83	56.08
Canadian Dollar	59.71	59.96
Malaysian Ringgit	18.11	18.20

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Microsoft to buy AI firm Nuance in \$19.7-bn deal
 Microsoft Corp said on Monday it would buy artificial intelligence (AI) and speech technology firm Nuance Communications Inc. in a \$19.7 billion deal, including net debt, as it seeks to bolster its cloud strategy for healthcare. The deal comes as both companies, which partnered in 2019 to automate clinical administrative work, gain from a boom in telehealth services. REUTERS

RTGS to be unavailable for 14 hours on Sunday
 MUMBAI
 The RTGS service for high-value transactions will remain unavailable for 14 hours from midnight of Saturday due to technical upgrade to further improve the disaster recovery time of the system, the RBI said in a statement. The popular National Electronic Funds Transfer, or NEFT, for transfers of up to ₹2 lakh will continue to be operational as usual during this period. PTI

Flipkart, Adani sign logistics, data unit pact
 AHMEDABAD
 E-commerce firm Flipkart has entered into a strategic and commercial partnership with the Adani Group for logistics and data centre-related businesses. Under the pact, Flipkart would work with Adani Logistics Ltd. to strengthen Flipkart's supply-chain infrastructure and enhance the ability to serve its customers. Flipkart would also set up its data centre at AdaniConneX Pvt. Ltd.

Network gear rules to cover satellite services
 NEW DELHI
 Companies providing satellite connectivity via gateway set-up in India will have to install network equipment as recommended by the government, according to new norms issued by the Department of Telecom. At present, only BSNL has a gateway through which it provides satellite-based communication services to agencies like security forces. PTI

Retail inflation quickens to 5.52%

Industrial output shrinks 3.6%; 'we are far from seeing sustained recovery, need government support'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's industrial output fell for the second successive month in February 2021, contracting 3.6% year on year, even as retail inflation quickened to a four-month high of 5.52% in March, as per data released by the National Statistical Office on Monday.

Electricity was the only sector to register positive growth of meagre 0.1%, while manufacturing output shrank 3.7% and mining slipped 5.5%, as per the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Revised data

The IIP had contracted 0.87% in January, as per revised data, compared to a 1.6% dip estimated earlier. Final data for November 2020 was also revised up-



Base effect: Food inflation helped drive up the March print, partly spurred by lower prices a year earlier. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

wards, with industrial output in the month shrinking 1.6% compared to a 1.9% dip estimated earlier.

The base effect played a role on both the indices, said

price rise print in March, was partly bolstered by the lower price trends last year even though food prices have declined month-on-month.

'29-month high'

"Core inflation jumped to a 29-month high of 5.96% in March 2021 from 3.95% a year ago and 5.88% in February due to demand and increase in commodity prices," said Devendra Pant, chief economist at India Ratings and Research.

Aditi Nayar, principal economist at ICRA Limited, termed the core inflation near 6% as 'unnerving' but added that the decline in prices of vegetables such as onions as well as a reversal of the base effect was expected to dampen the food inflation to around 2.2-5% in April 2021.

Industry seeks vaccines for all age groups, expedited supply

Lockdown not a solution, keep factories, shop floors open: CII



Uday Kotak
 maintaining stringent COVID-related protocols for public places and workplaces.

To control the rampant spread of infections, CII recommended that no meeting or gathering comprising more than 10 people be permitted for any purpose.

"Factories and shop floors must be kept open for economic reasons so that production and supply chains are not disturbed," it said. "Work from home" should be adopted wherever possible, and in cases where it is not feasible, only one-third attendance of employees should be permitted, the CII added.

owing and enforcement of safety and hygiene protocols by all sections of society is absolutely critical," he added. The industry body reiterated that lockdown was not a solution in the present times and requested for

lockdown not a solution, keep factories, shop floors open: CII

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Chennai, has ordered liquidation of Thiru Arooran Sugars Ltd. after lenders did not find any viable plan for revival of the company.

In 2019, the NCLT had ordered insolvency proceedings against Thiru Arooran Sugars in a case filed by the State Bank of India (SBI) for alleged default of ₹149.36 crore.

An SBI-led consortium had granted credit facility to the tune of ₹159.94 crore to the company in 2016.

In his petition, R. Raghavendran, the resolution professional for Thiru Arooran Sugars, said that the liquidation value for the land and building had been fixed at about ₹183.2 crore.

He added there was uncertainty owing to semiconductor shortages, lockdowns and input costs.

"A deep structural slowdown in the industry even before the pandemic, combined with the impact of COVID-19 in [FY21], has pushed all vehicle segments back by many years. Recovery... will require time and effort, by all stakeholders," said SIAM president Kenichi Ayukawa.

They performance has also to be seen in the context of no revision in the motor third party tariff, slow pickup in automobile sales as also the weak economic sentiment.

Up to February, motor insurance premium, one of their mainstays, was 3.83% lower at ₹63,268.32 crore. Of this, third-party premium at ₹39,067.87 crore was lower by 4.12%.

Gross direct premium rises 5.2% to ₹1.98 lakh crore

firms) increased 3.35% to ₹1,69,840.05 crore. These companies between them account for more than 85% of the non-life market.

In March, a busy month

for insurers on account of customer rush to benefit from tax breaks available on certain covers, the general insurers' premium increased 14.59% to ₹15,683.39 crore, according to flash figures released by insurance regulator IRDAI.

Comprising general insurers (all of whom deal in health insurance too), standalone health insurers and the two specialised PSU insurers (ECCG and AIC of India), the non-life segment reported ₹1,98,734.68 crore in gross direct premium underwritten for 2019-20, it totalled ₹1,88,916.61 crore.

Of this, the gross direct premium underwritten by the general insurers (25

Yes Bank fined ₹25 cr. in AT-1 bonds case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Markets regulator SEBI on Monday imposed a penalty of ₹25 crore on Yes Bank in the matter of mis-selling the lender's AT-1 bonds a few years ago.

Besides, the watchdog has imposed a fine of ₹1 crore on Vivek Kanwar, who was the head of the private wealth management team, and ₹50 lakh each on Ashish Nasar and Jasjit Singh Banga.

They need to pay the penalty within 45 days.

Yes Bank Ltd. and certain officials devised the "devious scheme to dump the AT-1 (Additional Tier-1) bonds on their hapless customers," SEBI noted.

"Our investments over

Lockdown fears spook markets, Sensex falls 3.5%

Rupee slumps to 9-month low at 75.05

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Fears of the rapid spread of COVID-19 and its possible impact on the economy drove benchmark stock indices down by about 3.5% on Monday. The slump was led by a meltdown in banking and finance stocks.

The S&P BSE Sensex plunged 1,707.94 or 3.44% to 47,883.38. All the 30 shares of the Sensex except for Dr. Reddy's Laboratories closed in the red. The top three losers included IndusInd Bank (down 8.6%), Bajaj Finance (7.39%) and SBI (6.87%). The NSE Nifty 50 too plunged 524.05 points or 3.53% to 14,310.80. Top gainers were D.R. Reddy's and Cipla.

"We expect the rupee to weaken versus the USD as have other [emerging market] currencies, and we expect that for the next six months, the Indian economy may progress in fits and starts; the relatively slow progress of vaccination in India means that we will be slower to recover compared to the U.S.," said R. Venkaraman, MD, IIFL Securities.

Recording its sixth straight session of loss, the rupee plunged to an almost 9-month low, depreciating

knowledge," he added.

"Our performance in Q4 caps three quarters of consistently robust performance in a pandemic year, and gives us a strong exit from FY21," V. Ramakrishnan, CFO, said.

In the quarter, BFSI rose 13.3% (year-on-year), retail and CPG fell 0.9%, life sciences and healthcare climbed 19.3% and manufacturing was up 1.3%.

Growth was led by Continental Europe at 11.7%, while North America grew 5.9%, and the U.K. climbed about 1%.

In Q4, TCS added 19,388 employees to its rolls on a net basis, its highest ever in a quarter. It added a net of 40,185 during the year, taking headcount to 4,88,649.

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Rahul and Hooda lift PBKS above phenomenal Samson's reach

Punjab captain's 91, No. 4 batsman's 28-ball 64 set a target of 222; RR skipper's 119 almost gets side over the line, but Arshdeep holds his nerve to secure four-run win

IPL 2021

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Is there something in a name?

Punjab Kings – unlike William Shakespeare – could well believe there is, after a dramatic four-run victory over Rajasthan Royals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Monday night.

The team known as Kings XI Punjab until last season – and which often found itself on the losing side of tight contests in 2020 – must be pleased with edging a thriller and starting this year's campaign with a win.

Perfect combination

It would be unfair to skipper K.L. Rahul (91, 50b, 7x4, 5x6) and Deepak Hooda (64, 28b, 4x4, 6x6), however, to credit a change in nomenclature for Punjab's victory. The gentle classicism of Rahul combined beautifully with the brutal hitting from Hooda, as the duo helped PBKS post 221 for six after being put in.

That would prove enough to nullify a brilliant 119 off 63 balls (12x4, 7x6) from RR skipper Sanju Samson, who was out off the last ball, caught by Hooda near the deep extra-cover boundary off Arshdeep Singh when five were needed. Samson had nearly pulled off a heist in his first match as captain.



The sizzlers: Sanju Samson nearly took Rajasthan Royals home after K.L. Rahul and Deepak Hooda had powered Punjab Kings to a mammoth total. Chetan Sakariya had a memorable day for Royals. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI



It would have been worse if Rahul hadn't dropped his counterpart Samson off Arshdeep a little later. The RR skipper gave another chance and also survived an lbw verdict, thanks to DRS, on his way to a third IPL hundred. Nobody else went past 25. Samson was, however,



given excellent support down the order by Shivam Dube (23) and Riyan Parag (25) after RR was reduced to 70 for three when Jos Buttler (25) was cleaned up by Jhye Richardson.

Earlier, Rahul and Hooda put on 105 for the third wicket off just 47 balls, after a 28-

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS

K.L. Rahul c Tewatia b Sakariya 91 (50b, 7x4, 5x6), Mayank Agarwal c Samson b Sakariya 14 (9b, 2x4), Chris Gayle c Stokes b Parag 40 (28b, 4x4, 2x6), Deepak Hooda c Parag b Morris 64 (28b, 4x4, 6x6), Nicholas Pooran c Sakariya b Morris 0 (1b), Shahrukh Khan (not out) 6 (4b, 1x4), Jhye Richardson c Morris b Sakariya 0 (2b); Extras (w-4, nb-2): 6; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 221.

Fall of Wickets
1-22 (Mayank, 2.4 overs), 2-89 (Gayle, 9.5), 3-194 (Hooda, 17.3), 4-201 (Pooran, 17.6), 5-220 (Rahul, 19.2), 6-221 (Richardson, 19.6).

PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

Sakariya 4-0-31-3, Mustafizur 4-0-45-0, Morris 4-0-41-2, Shreyas 3-0-40-0, Stokes 1-0-12-0, Tewatia 2-0-25-0, Parag 1-0-7-1, Dube 1-0-20-0.

ROYALS BOWLING

Sakariya 4-0-31-3, Mustafizur 4-0-45-0, Morris 4-0-41-2, Shreyas 3-0-40-0, Stokes 1-0-12-0, Tewatia 2-0-25-0, Parag 1-0-7-1, Dube 1-0-20-0.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Ben Stokes c & b Shami 0 (3b),

Manan Vohra c & b Arshdeep 12 (8b, 1x4, 1x6), Sanju Samson c Hooda b Arshdeep 119 (63b, 12x4, 7x6), Jos Buttler b Richardson 25 (13b, 5x4), Shivam Dube c Hooda b Arshdeep 23 (15b, 3x4), Riyan Parag c Rahul b Shami 25 (11b, 1x4, 3x6), Rahul Tewatia c Rahul b Meredith 2 (4b), Chris Morris (not out) 2 (4b); Extras (lb-2, w-6, nb-1): 9; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 217.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Stokes, 0.3), 2-25 (Vohra, 3.2), 3-70 (Buttler, 7.3), 4-123 (Dube, 12.4), 5-175 (Parag, 16.2), 6-201 (Tewatia, 18.1), 7-217 (Samson, 19.6).

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PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

TV PICKS

IPL: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.
UEFA Champions League: Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m.

IN BRIEF



Sathiyan renews contract with Okayama Rivets

CHENNAI
India's star paddler G. Sathiyan, ranked World No. 38, has renewed his contract with top tier Japanese club Okayama Rivets in the Japanese T-League for the new season (2021-22), most likely to begin in September. "I will continue my pursuit with the club post-Olympics and play 8-10 matches depending on the international calendar," Sathiyan said.



Veronika Kudermetova wins maiden WTA title

CHARLESTON
Russia's Veronika Kudermetova won her first WTA title, beating Danka Kovinic 6-4, 6-2 in the final, at the Volvo Car Open on Sunday. The 23-year-old Kudermetova did not drop a set in six matches at the season's first clay-court tournament – a feat last accomplished here by Serena Williams in 2012. AP



DeRozan spurs San Antonio to a win

DALLAS
DeMar DeRozan scored 33 points, including the deciding jumper with one second to play, to lift visiting San Antonio 119-117 to a win over Dallas that snapped a five-game losing streak on Sunday.

The results:
New York 102 bt Toronto 96; LA Clippers 131 bt Detroit 124; Portland 98 lost to Miami 107; Dallas 117 lost to San Antonio 119; Memphis 125 lost to Indiana 132; Minnesota 121 bt Chicago 117; Cleveland 109 lost to New Orleans 116; Orlando 87 lost to Milwaukee 124; Denver 87 lost to Boston 105; Charlotte 101 lost to Atlanta 105. REUTERS

Wounded Bayern needs a comeback

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON
The second legs of the Champions League quarterfinals will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday. Here's a look at the scenario for Tuesday.

PSG vs Bayern Munich (3-2): Bayern heads to Paris on Tuesday as a team of walking wounded, while PSG is likely to be without its best defender Marquinhos and key midfielder Marco Verratti.

But Bayern's concerns are worse. Serge Gnabry won't return from isolation in time to face PSG.

Former PSG striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting is still deputising for the prolific Robert Lewandowski.

Lewandowski did return to training on Monday, but the club he ruled out for Tuesday's game.

Chelsea vs. Porto (2-0): Winning the Champions League might be the only path back into the competition next season for Chelsea. For all the progress under Thomas Tuchel, the London club is still fifth in the Premier League.

Porto, meanwhile, is seeking its first semifinal appearance since 2004.

Porto, however, has lost its last six matches with English clubs.

Dominant India takes Argentina to the cleaners



Stellar show: Harmanpreet Singh, who opened India's account on the day, celebrates with Dilpreet. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Davis Cup Finals in three cities

TENNIS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

The 2021 Davis Cup Finals will be held in three cities, with Innsbruck and Turin joining Madrid as hosts, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) announced on Monday.

The competition was reformed in 2019, with Rafael Nadal's Spain winning the 18-team competition in Madrid, but scheduling issues resulted in a number of late finishes and poor attendances at some matches.

The ITF said Madrid, Austrian city Innsbruck and Turin in Italy would host two of the six groups each, with the latter two both staging one quarterfinal.

The Spanish capital will host two last-eight ties, the

semifinals and the final. The finals will run from November 25 to Dec. 5.

"It was important to find two European cities that were well connected to Madrid, with similar playing conditions, to provide a smooth transition for players travelling from other venues," said tournament director Albert Costa.

"With confirmation of the three venues, we are already working hard to offer the best possible event in 2021."

The 2019 finals were the first in a single-city format under a deal between the ITF and Kosmos, an investment group headed by football player Gerard Pique, which is financing the event.

The 2020 tournament was called off due to complications posed by the pandemic.

Praggnanandhaa (15.5 points) scored 14 victories, drew thrice and lost twice in the four-day online rapid tournament and earned \$3,000 for his efforts. As per the points scored by members of the two teams, Team Polgar beat Team Kramnik,

Praggnanandhaa wins the Polgar Challenge

Finishes his campaign with a hard-fought draw against Abdusattarov

CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

R. Praggnanandhaa won the prestigious Polgar Challenge in style with a round to spare on Sunday and gained a berth to join the elite players in the next Meltwater Championships Chess Tour event beginning on April 24.

The 15-year-old stayed clear of the challengers by maintaining his eventual victory margin over the last two rounds of the 20-player round-robin event.

Praggnanandhaa (15.5 points) scored 14 victories, drew thrice and lost twice in the four-day online rapid tournament and earned \$3,000 for his efforts. As per the points scored by members of the two teams, Team Polgar beat Team Kramnik,

that included Praggnanandhaa, 96.5-88.

Four-way tie

D. Gukesh and second seed Nihal Sarin were part of the four-way tie at 14 points for the runner-up spot that eventually went to top seed from Uzbekistan, Nodirbek Abdusattarov.

Armed with a half-point lead on the final day when four rounds were scheduled, Praggnanandhaa scored 3.5 points after finishing his campaign with a hard-fought draw against Abdusattarov.

In the day's earlier rounds, Praggnanandhaa beat compatriot Leon Mendonca, Zhansaya Abdumalik (Kazakhstan) and Sarasadat Khademalsharieh (Iran). In fact, it was Abdusattarov's surprise defeat to China's Lei Tingjie in the 17th round that opened up a 1.5-point gap



R. Praggnanandhaa.
■ FILE PHOTO

with a good feeling of the position."

Anand hailed the young champion. "Congrats. Prag dominated and showed his class. But now we have some work, getting him ready for the big one!"

Final standings (after 19 rounds):

1. R. Praggnanandhaa (15.5 points); 2-5. Nodirbek Abdusattarov (Uzb); D. Gukesh, Nihal Sarin, Volodar Murzin (Rus) (14 each); 6. Vincent Keymer (Ger, 13.5); 7. Amoner Liang (USA, 12.5); 8-9. Christopher Yoo (USA), Leon Mendonca (12 each); 10. Jonas Bjerre (Den, 10.5); 11-12. Lei Tingjie (Chn), Zhu Jiner (Chn) (10 each); 13. Nuryul Salimova (Bul, 7); 14-15. Polina Shuvailova (Rus), Zhansaya Abdumalik (Kaz) (6.5 each); 16-17. Sarasada Khademalsharieh (Iran), Gunay Mamadzada (Aze) (5.5 each); 18. Carissa Yip (USA, 4); 19. Olga Badelka (Bel, 3); 20. Dinara Salakassova (Kaz, withdrawn).

Arsenal sends Sheffield to the edge

Atletico continues to lose steam despite moving to the top

EURO LEAGUES

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SHEFFIELD



Arsenal eased to a 3-0 win at Bramall Lane as Sheffield United's relegation from the Premier League edged ever closer on Sunday.

A wonderful team goal scored by Alexandre Lacazette gave the visitors the halftime lead before Gabriel Martinelli marked his recall with a goal in the 71st. Lacazette struck again late on for his 50th league goal for the Gunners.

It was Arsenal's first clean sheet in 14 matches in all competitions and the three points moved Mikel Arteta's team up to ninth.

Stuck at the bottom

For the Blades, it was a 25th league loss of the season and they remain stuck to the bottom of the table.

Atletico Madrid moved back to the top of LaLiga on Sunday after a 1-1 draw

against Real Betis opened a one-point lead over city rival Real.

Despite missing 19-goal striker Luis Suarez, Atletico was in front after just five minutes when Belgian international Yannick Carrasco scored into an empty net after a goal-mouth scramble.

However, Betis, which is in sixth place in the table and chasing European football next season, levelled just 15 minutes later. Cristian Tello was on hand to score

Bangladesh arrives in Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO

The Bangladesh cricket team arrived here on Monday to play a two-match Test series which was postponed from last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The visiting team will be in a bio-bubble at a resort in Negombo before playing a two-day warm up game at Katunayake.

The first match will be from April 21 to 25 at Pallekele. The second Test will also be played at the same venue from April 29. The two matches are part of the World Test Championships.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said although the matches are to be played behind closed doors, media will be allowed to cover the two Tests from Pallekele stadium under strict health guidelines.

All media personnel will be subjected to two RT-PCR tests while antigen tests would be carried out daily.

Two coaches test positive at national camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Two assistant coaches at the national camp for Indian women boxers here have tested positive for COVID-19 and are quarantined with mild symptoms.

The development was confirmed to PTI by a source close to the team, which is training at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here. "Two women coaches have tested positive so far. They have been quarantined but the camp is progressing as scheduled," the source said.

This comes after 10 members of the men's contingent in Patiala, including national head coach C.A. Kuttappa, were found positive in tests conducted a few days ago.

Prabir knocks out fifth seed Sahil

ASIAN U-14

SPORTS BUREAU
AHMEDABAD

Qualifier Prabir Chavda knocked out fifth seed Sahil Kothari 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-2 in the boys' first round of the Altevoll Asian under-14 tennis tournament on Monday.

In the girls' section, Hirva Rangani fought her way past Pratishtha Saini 6-7(2), 6-3, 6-4.

The results (first round):

Boys: Samprit Sharma bt Om Verma 6-1, 6-0; Navneet Ramesh bt Ayan Patel (US) 6-1, 6-0; Arnav Yadav bt Akash Subramanian 6-4, 7-6(5); Akshaj Subramanian bt Darsh Khedekar 6-2, 6-1.

Girls: Thaniya Sarai Gogulamanda bt Siya Chirag Patel 6-1, 6-2; Prarthana Solanki bt Ridhima Singh 6-1, 6-0; Hirva Ran-

Vraj Gohil bt Mohammed Arziz Khan 6-0, 6-0; Tanush Ghildyal bt Kanj Shah 6-4, 6-1; Daks Kapoor bt Pratham Kotak 2-6, 6-3, 6-3; Prabir Chavda bt Sahil Kothari 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-2.

Vyom Shah bt Dev Vipul Patel 6-3, 7-6(4); Vedant Bhasin bt Panshu Ubbojeja 6-2, 6-4;

Aryan Chokshi bt Kartik Jain 6-1, 7-6(4); Aarav Chawla bt Saursh Modi 6-0, 6-0; Arnav Paparkar bt Rahul Lokesh 6-1, 6-1.

The Indian team has as-

sembled in Jurmala for the

Grand Slam cham-

pion, and someone who has

been in the top-50 in the

world for a while. Just put

your head down and play

with your heart. The pres-

sure is on them, not on you.

Enjoy the moment," said the

six-time Grand Slam cham-

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