

SHORT TAKES

EDMC inked pact with blacklisted company: AAP

New Delhi: The BJP-ruled East Delhi Municipal Corporation has signed a contract amounting to crores of rupees with a company blacklisted in 2010, the AAP claimed on Monday. No immediate reaction was available from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Addressing a press conference, AAP spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj claimed the private security agency had dealings with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in the past. However, after an investigation in 2010, it was found that the payments being made to the company in return for providing security was not being passed on to the security guards, he said. Several other manipulations too were found and the company was removed from the tender procedure and then blacklisted in 2010, he added. "East Delhi Municipal Corporation has signed a contract amounting to crores of rupees with a company which was blacklisted in the year 2010," Bhardwaj said. "BJP Delhi chief Adesh Gupta should answer: why is a blacklisted company being roped in for contracts," he added.

BHEL organises communication fortnight

New Delhi: Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has organised its first ever Communication Fortnight - 'Abhivyaakti', which was inaugurated by Dr. Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, through a virtual platform. The programme, which is aimed at improving communication for bringing about better employee engagement, is being organised across all the units of BHEL around the country. Addressing a pan-India cross-section of employees, Dr. Shinghal stressed on the role of timely, truthful and complete communication in developing faith, confidence & commitment amongst employees and that communication needs to be a two-way effort. "We need to go beyond the fortnight. The program should lay the foundation, and communication across the organisation should be made much more effective and on a sustained basis, so that we all have complete clarity about our roles & objectives. We know what we want to achieve and we march purposefully toward our objectives and targets", he said.

Court reserves bail plea of actor-activist

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday reserved its order on the bail application of actor-activist Deep Sidhu, arrested in connection with the Red Fort violence on the Republic Day. Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen said the order on Sidhu's bail plea will be pronounced on April 15. Sidhu's counsel told the court that mere presence did not make him part of unlawful assembly and that he was an honest citizen who was part of a protest. The public prosecutor representing the Delhi police claimed that Sidhu participated in the protest with the intention to create violence and disregard the national flag and that he was the main instigator of unlawful assembly. Sidhu was arrested on February 9 in connection with the Red Fort violence on the Republic Day during farmers' tractor parade against the Centre's three new agri laws. — PTI

DU issues fresh guidelines, online classes to continue

New Delhi: The Delhi University (DU) issued a set of guidelines with immediate effect on Monday in the wake of the rising number of coronavirus cases in the national capital. In a notice, the university said the classes for the undergraduate and postgraduate students will continue in the "online mode only", while the research scholars may continue their academic work with the consent of their supervisors. "Teaching/learning for undergraduate and postgraduate students will continue in the online mode only," it said. — PTI

■ Positivity rate rises to 12.44% from 9.43%; fatality rate highest since Dec. 5 when 77 deaths were recorded

Delhi records 11,491 Covid cases, 72 deaths

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

Delhi recorded 11,491 Covid-19 cases on Monday, the highest single-day surge in the national capital till date, while 72 more people died due to the disease, according to data shared by the health department.

The positivity rate rose to 12.44 per cent from 9.43 per cent a day ago. The 72 deaths are the highest since December 5 when 77 deaths were recorded.

The city had recorded 131 Covid-19 deaths on November 19, the highest single-day fatality count till date. The cumulative coronavirus case count stands at 7,36,688, and the death toll is now 11,355, according to the latest health bulletin.

The fresh cases came out of the over 92,397 lakh tests conducted the previous day.

On Sunday, the city had reported 10,772 cases and 48 deaths. Delhi recorded 7,897 Covid-19 cases and 39 deaths on Saturday. The positivity rate had also mounted to 10.21 per cent, breaching the 10-per cent mark for the first time this year.

The positivity rate was above 15 per cent in mid-November last year.

On Friday, 8,521 Covid-19 cases and 39 deaths were recorded in the national capital. This was also the first time that more than 8,000 cases were recorded in a day this year amid a massive spike in cases over the last few weeks.

On Thursday, the city recorded 7,437 cases. On the two preceding days, the number of cases stood above 5,000. The number of active cases rose to 38,095 from 34,341 a day before. The number of people under home isolation increased to 19,354 from 17,093 on Sunday while the number of containment zones increased to 6,175 from 5,705, the bulletin said.



Workers, wearing PPE, prepare beds inside an isolation ward for Covid-19 patients at Jawaharlal Nehru Marg in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

14 pvt hospitals declared 'full Covid-19' facilities

New Delhi, April 12: The Delhi government on Monday declared 14 private hospitals in the city as "full Covid-19" hospitals and directed them not to admit any non-Covid patients till further orders.

These included Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Sarita Vihar, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, Max SS Hospital and Fortis Hospital in Shalimar Bagh.

Nineteen private hospitals have been directed to reserve at least 80 per cent of their ICU beds for Covid-related treatment.

Eighty-two private hospitals have been asked to set aside at least 60 per cent of their ICU beds for coronavirus patients, according to the order issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Offices, Metro, bus services operate with 50% capacity

New Delhi, April 12: Offices, Metro and bus services in Delhi operated with 50-per cent capacity on Monday following the restrictions imposed by the AAP dispensation in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases in the national capital. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) had on Saturday night ordered the prohibition of all types of gatherings, a reduced number of people at weddings and

"Furthermore, 101 private hospitals are directed to reserve at least 60 per cent of their ward bed capacity for Covid-related treatment," the order read.

The health department, in another order, said the

funerals, running of public transport at half of their seating capacity and a scaled down presence in government offices.

"Reports of a few passengers in many buses have been received, although some people have to wait at the bus shelters due to the restriction on the seating capacity. Buses are running with a few passengers or vacant, barring some routes," a DTC official said. — PTI

number of ICU beds without ventilator in six Delhi government-run hospitals has been increased to 487.

There are now 1,913 non-ICU Covid beds in these hospitals as against 1,320 earlier.

— PTI

Restricted 'darshan' for devotees during Navratri

New Delhi, April 12: Amid a rising number of Covid-19 cases, major temples in Delhi have decided on restricted "darshan" facilities for devotees with some of the shrines offering e-passes during the Navratri that begins on Tuesday.

During the nine-day festival, temples in Delhi, including the ones at Chattarpur, Kalkaji and Jhandewalan, are flooded with fasting devotees.

This year, however, will be different with the temples either allowing a "carefully-controlled"

process of "darshan" (a glimpse of the deity) for the devotees, or remaining shut during the nine days.

The government prohibited all religious gatherings last week in view of the current situation. To make it to the Kalkaji temple located opposite the Nehru Place business centre, the devotees will be required to download e-passes from the temple website.

This, a temple spokesperson said, would help the authorities manage the crowd. "We will be following the social-distancing



Devotees offer prayers at Jhandewalan temple in New Delhi on Monday. The temple will be closed for devotees in the view of a surge in Covid-19 cases. — PTI

norm and all other measures in accordance with the government guidelines

to ensure the safety of the visitors.

"We have requested the

devotees to get Covid-19 tests done before coming to the temple and insisted that those above 60 years of age should not come. Every devotee visiting the temple also needs to carry an e-pass. All of this put together will help us control the crowd," Surendranath Avadhoot, the mahout at the temple, said.

To ensure the safety of the visitors through proper social distancing, he said people would be allowed within the temple premises only in groups of 25. — PTI

SC refuses to entertain plea seeking uniform retirement age for judges

New Delhi, April 12: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking uniform retirement age for judges of the apex court and the high courts.

At present, the retirement age for the Supreme Court judges is 65 years whereas for the high court judges, it is 62 years.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S. A. Bobde and Justices A. S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian observed that the petitioner can make a representa-

tion to the government on the issue. Petitioner Ashwini Upadhyay, an advocate and BJP leader, argued that different age of retirements for judges of the high courts and the top court is irrational.

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, the bench observed, We are dismissing it. You can make a representation."

When Upadhyay told the court that having different retirement age for judges in high courts and the apex

court is irrational, the bench asked, How it is irrational? The petitioner said that he has some friends who are finest of lawyers but they do not want to become judges of the high court because the retirement age there is 62.

The bench was not impressed with his submission and also did not agree with him to tag the plea with the pending petition in which the issue of appointment of ad-hoc judges for high courts is being considered. The peti-

tioner later sought permission to withdraw the petition. Counsel appearing for the petitioner prays for withdrawal of this petition. Prayer is allowed. Accordingly, the writ petition is dismissed as withdrawn, the bench said in its order.

The plea had stated that if there is uniformity in retirement age, the judges of the high court will discharge judicial work more independently and without any expectation to move to the Supreme Court. — PTI

Doc held for forging wife's signature, documents to procure NBFC loans

New Delhi, April 12: A 58-year-old doctor was arrested for allegedly procuring loans by forging the signature and documents of his wife, police said on Monday.

The accused, Sudhakar Arya, is a resident of Sector 5, Vaishali in Uttar Pradesh, they said.

According to the police, a case was lodged on the basis of a complaint from a woman, who alleged that when she applied for a loan for her daughter's higher studies, it was rejected by a national bank on the

ground that she had already taken a heavy loan and was a defaulter.

When the woman checked, she came to know that her husband had taken two loans of ₹1,03,97,767 and ₹1,85,50,000 from a non-banking financial company (NBFC), citing her as a co-applicant, the police said.

She filed a case in the Delhi High Court's mediation centre and four notices were issued to Arya, but he never came to attend the proceedings, they added. During investigation, it

came to light that the signatures of the complainant on both the loan applications were forged. Further verifications from the authorities concerned confirmed that the copies of the PAN and voter identity cards of the complainant were also forged, a senior police officer said.

The accused used forged KYC documents while filing the loan applications with the NBFC. He also forged the signature of the co-applicant on the loan applications, the officer said. He mortgaged the joint

property as a collateral security without the consent and knowledge of the second partner for procuring the loans, the police said.

"During further investigation, police apprehended Arya. The investigation regarding the forgeries, utilisation of funds and the roles of other associates, if any, is in progress," Additional Commissioner of Police (EOW) R.K. Singh said. The couple was living separately since 2006, the police said. — PTI

6th round of sero survey gets underway in Delhi

New Delhi, April 12: Amid an alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in Delhi, the sixth round of the serological survey, which seeks to find the prevalence of antibodies against coronavirus in people, got underway in the national capital on Monday.

Sources said around 28,000 samples, about 100 from each of the 272 wards, will be collected as part of the exercise.

Delhi has a population of over 2 crore spread across 11 districts. In the sixth

round of the sero survey, the vaccination history of participants will also be taken, the sources said.

The first sero survey was conducted by the Delhi government in association with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) from June 27 to July 10 last year. As part of the exercise, 21,387 samples were collected and it was found that around 23 per cent of the participants had been exposed to coronavirus.

The outcome of the fifth

round of sero survey had found the prevalence of antibodies against coronavirus among over 50 per cent population of the city.

As part of the survey that ended in January, samples were collected from over 25,000 people from various districts of the city.

The exercise was undertaken for a comprehensive assessment of the Covid-19 situation in Delhi and to formulate strategies based on their findings. — PTI

Non-adherence to Covid norms could be behind surge: AIIMS chief

New Delhi, April 12: People not adhering to Covid-appropriate behaviour and the circulation of highly infectious strains of SARS-CoV-2 could be the primary reasons behind the surge in coronavirus infections in India, AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria said on Monday.

He also warned that if the situation is not reversed, then the galloping infection rate will eventually cause a huge strain on the country's healthcare system. He sought stricter enforcement of Covid-appropriate behaviour on the ground level by the administration and authorities.

"Around February, when cases started to decrease, people became lax towards following Covid-appropriate behaviour as they thought the virus had become ineffective. "People are taking the

disease lightly now. If you go out, you see that marketplaces, restaurants and shopping malls are crowded and full of people and these all are super-spreader events," Guleria said.

Earlier, if one sick person was able to infect around 30 per cent of their contacts, this time those getting the disease are infecting a larger number of people, he said.

"So, the rate of spread of the infection is fast possibly due to the highly infectious and transmissible strains circulating," he added.

Various strains of SARS-CoV-2, including the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants, are circulating in India and have been termed as highly transmissible by experts. "We may lose the gains we have made so far if we do not pay heed now," he said. — PTI

Covid-19 surge in Delhi hits SC

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With 44 Supreme Court staffers out of over 3,000 testing positive for the coronavirus infection in the past one week, the Judges on Monday decided to hold the court through video-conferencing from their residences — a setback for hybrid hearing that the top court had started in March after a gap of nearly one year.

As a consequence the hearing today was rescheduled with courts that were to assemble at 10.30 A.M. assembled at 11.30 A.M. and the courts that were to assemble at 11.00 A.M. assembled at 12.00 noon.

The physical mentioning of the matters before the mentioning registrar too has been suspended. However, the mentioning of the matters for urgent hearing or listing through video-conferencing will continue. The entire court premises including the court rooms were sanitized.

While everything appeared to be in retreat, the top court officials said that the situation was not alarming.

Three judges of the

■ THE DELHI high court, which had resumed full-fledged physical hearing from March 15, decided to again adopted the virtual mode of proceedings from April 9 to April 23, in view of alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in Delhi

Delhi high court have tested Covid-19 positive and are isolating at their residences, according to court sources.

The three judges, who were having mild symptoms, received their test reports on Sunday, sources said, adding that they did not conduct the court on Monday.

They said another judge is also suffering from fever, but the test report is yet to come out.

Meanwhile, the Delhi high court bar association has decided to close its office at the high court premises keeping in view the rising number of Covid-19 cases.

The Delhi high court, which had resumed full-fledged physical hearing from March 15, decided to again adopted the virtual mode of proceedings from April 9 to April 23, in view of alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in the national capital.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Dy. GSTE/TW, Divisional Railway Manager Office, 2nd Floor, Room No. 203, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055 for & on behalf of President of India invites online OPEN E-tender in single packet system from the experienced & established contractors having sufficient experience in similar work and satisfying minimum eligibility criteria on the prescribed form for the under noted work:

1	Name of Work	"Provision of OFC & associated equipments Pilluar-Lohian Khas Sections of FZR Division."
2	Approximate Cost of the work	Rs. 2,59,69,360.32/- (Two Crore Fifty Nine Lakh Sixty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Sixty and paise Thirty two only)
3	Tender No.	172-Sig/TW/NRT-06
4	Cost of tender form	Nil
5	Address from where tender document can be downloaded	Indian Railways website www.reps.gov.in from 13.04.2021 from 11.30 hrs.
6	Earnest money	Nil
7	Completion period	06 (Six) months
8	Date and time of submission of tender and opening of tender	Tender to be submitted online on Indian Railways website www.reps.gov.in from 23.04.2021 upto 11.30 hrs. of 07.05.2021. Date of tender Opening : 07.05.2021 at 11.30 hrs.
9	Detailed Tender Notice	Available at Indian Railways website www.reps.gov.in
E-Tender No.: 172-Sig/TW/NRT-06 Dated: 12.04.2021		829/2021
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

SHORT TAKES

Sushil Chandra is appointed next CEC

New Delhi: Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra was on Monday appointed as the next Chief Election Commissioner, the law ministry said. According to a statement issued by the legislative department of the ministry, Mr Chandra will assume charge on April 13.

Incumbent Sunil Arora demits office on Monday. Mr Chandra was appointed as an election commissioner on February 14, 2019, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. He would demit office on May 14, 2022. Under him, the Election Commission would hold Assembly polls in Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The term of the assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Punjab ends on various dates in March next year. The term of the Uttar Pradesh assembly ends on May 14 next year. New assemblies have to be constituted before their five year term ends. — PTI

Rainfall likely to hit many parts of India

New Delhi: Several parts of the country are likely to receive rainfall in the next five days due to different cyclonic circulations, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday. According to the IMD, under the influence of trough and cyclonic circulations over the south peninsula, scattered to fairly widespread rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kilometres per hour are very likely over southwest peninsular India in the next five days. The IMD said isolated heavy rainfall is also likely over south and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe, coastal and south interior Karnataka during April 14-16. Another cyclonic circulation lies over southwest MP and neighbouring areas. Under its influence, isolated rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) is very likely over MP, Vidarbha, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh. — PTI

BJP leader shot at, seriously hurt in UP

Kannauj: A BJP leader was shot at and seriously injured by unidentified assailants in Chandapur area of the district, the police said on Monday. The 48-year-old BJP leader Neeraj Pandey was shot at on Sunday night while he was returning home after seeking votes for a panchayat poll candidate. Superintendent of police, Prashant Verma, said a case has been registered. Mr Pandey was initially admitted to the district hospital, and later referred to a Kanpur hospital. Four-phase panchayat polls in UP will start on April 15. — PTI

SC NO TO PLEA AGAINST VIRAAAT DISMANTLING

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a plea of a private firm seeking preservation of India's decommissioned aircraft carrier *Viraat* and its conversion into a museum. A bench of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian took note of the fact that the ministry of defence has refused to accept the representation of private firm Envitech Marine Consultants Pvt Ltd that the decommissioned aircraft carrier be preserved. "You cannot do this. The (Bombay) HC had allowed you to give representation to the government. You did it. The government (ministry of defence) dismissed it. You did not challenge it," the bench said. In the proceedings conducted through video conferencing, the bench refused to accept submissions of Rupali Sharma, representative of Envitech Marine, that this is a "national treasury" and needed to be saved. Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan appeared for Shree Ram Group which had purchased the ship and said, "they had approached the ministry of defence. Ministry says no. The matter ends. The petition has to be disposed of." Earlier on April 5, the apex court had asked the petitioner firm to file its response on the report of status of dismantling of the warship. *INS Viraat* was in service with the Navy for 29 years before being decommissioned. — PTI

'Undeclared' Prez Rule in Bengal: Didi

Trinamul chief says she'll quit politics if BJP can match her work, vows to probe CISF firing

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, APRIL 12

Accusing the Election Commission of imposing an "undeclared" Article 356 for the President's Rule during the Assembly elections in West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday dared to quit politics if the BJP could show her even a single instance of its welfare work in comparison to her achievements of governance in the state.

"My request to the Election Commission is: Please do not listen to the BJP only. Listen to all. If you are an impartial body, you will have to be impartial also... An undeclared Article 356, which is the President's Rule, has been imposed here for the polls. Though it is not publicly spoken about anywhere, it has been put in place. I can challenge them every moment and at every point. Constitutionally you are wrong. My point is constitutionally, factually and legally is correct," the Trinamul Congress supremo told the EC at a party rally in Dum Dum of North Kolkata.

She claimed, "We have



So many scams happened in defence. How long will you keep the Rafale scam a secret? One day it will be out in the open. It has already started to come.

— Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal CM

undertaken a lot of development work. We will complete 10 years in power in the next two months. The tenure includes four elections out of which two were about Parliament while the two others were about Assembly. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic is under-way. So we actually got only five-six years for work. If the BJP can show me a single instance of its work against our volume of work in these years, I will then quit politics." Hitting out at the BJP over scams while in power at the Centre, Ms Banerjee alleged, "So many scams happened in defence. How long will you keep the Rafale scam a secret? One day it will be caught and will be out in the open. It has already started to unfold."

The Trinamul Congress chief also indicted the BJP of killing its young

worker — Ananda Burman — the first-time voter from the Rajbanshi community, at Shitalkuchi Assembly constituency in Cooch Behar of North Bengal during the fourth phase of polls so that it could later play the divisive politics of communalism in the next phases.

"Where is the justice in the killings of the four persons in firing? I also have documents. I also know planning. The superintendent of police (of Cooch Behar) was appointed by the BJP, not by us."

"He held a meeting with the BJP. I will ensure the firing be probed to find out who met where. A girl was seen running. She was sent to spread a rumour about her induction. Later the firing was conducted in a pre-planned way," Ms Banerjee argued.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district on Monday. — PTI

Cong ally shift candidates to C'garh

Move amid poaching fears by BPF ■ 9 out of 11 candidates in resort near Raipur

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
RAIPUR, APRIL 12

Bodoland People's Front (BPF), an electoral ally of Congress in Assam, has shifted its candidates to Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh fearing horse-trading.

Sources said nine out of 11 candidates of the party landed in Raipur on Monday and were taken to a private resort on the outskirts of the state capital.

"Nine candidates of BPF along with half-a-dozen senior leaders of the party arrived here. They were taken to a resort on the outskirts of Raipur. They are scheduled to spend their 'vacation' in

Chhattisgarh till May 2 when the results of the Assam Assembly polls are scheduled to be announced", a senior Congress leader told this newspaper here requesting not to be quoted.

Sources said Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was appointed poll observer by the Congress for the Assembly elections in Assam, greeted the BPF candidates after they arrived in Raipur.

When contacted by this newspaper, media cell chief of Congress in Chhattisgarh Sailesh Nitin Trivedy, however, said he was not aware of the development.

"Let me verify it", he

■ WHEN CONTACTED by this newspaper, media cell chief of Congress in Chhattisgarh Sailesh Nitin Trivedy, however, said he was not aware of the development

said. The three-phase Assembly polls in Assam, which ended on April 6, promises to throw up a nail-biting verdict with the ruling BJP locked in a keen contest with 10-party Opposition grand alliance led by the Congress.

On Sunday, Pramila Rani Verma, the only BPF candidate who stayed put in Assam, told the local media in Guwahati that other party candidates left Assam on Saturday.

Assam's minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), another constituent of Congress-led grand alliance, sent all its candidates to Congress-ruled Rajasthan in a chartered plane to thwart any bid by the BJP to poach them.

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Ghelot has sponsored their stay in Rajasthan.

Mr Baghel's Chhattisgarh model of poll strategy which returned the Congress to power in the state after a gap of 15 years was said to have been implemented in the Assembly polls in Assam to bring the Congress back to power in the Northeast state.

■ Scores of people still living in shanties, sheds

'Fani' aftermath likely to influence bypoll outcome

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 12

Nearly two years have passed since the cyclonic storm Fani ravaged Odisha's coastal Puri district. However, the wounds and injuries it inflicted are still explicitly visible on the landscape of the area. Many trees in villages still lie uprooted blocking walkways while other battered plants are yet to regain their green cover.

The degree of destruction the cyclone wrought can be seen in the pastoral villages. People are living in huts and shanties built with bits and pieces collected from the collapsed houses. The Union government had provided ₹95,000 ex-gratia for the affected people to rebuild their houses. However, discrepancy in identification of the affected persons and nepotism in selection of the beneficiaries has deprived many people of the ex-gratia.

deserving people of the ex-gratia. Scores of people are seen living perilously in shanties and sheds covered with torn and tattered polythene sheets and coconut leaves. And this "deliberate" deprivation is going to immensely influence the outcome of the Pipili Assembly bypolls.

"On April 26, 2019, my house was razed to the ground in the 250-km per hour gusty wind of Fani. We are promised a lot many compensations, including ₹95,000 ex-gratia for

ODISHA

■ The Centre had provided ₹95,000 ex-gratia for the affected people to rebuild their houses. However, discrepancy in identification of the affected persons and nepotism in selection of the beneficiaries has deprived many people of the ex-gratia.

rebuilding our houses and ₹5,000 for livelihood support. However, I have not received any support. I doubt some influential people deliberately omitted my name suspecting that I do not support them politically," says Mir Sabir, a mini-truck driver, hailing from Nuagudi village.

Mr Sabir along with his wife and two grown-up children lives in a single-room hut along with his pet dog and goats. Mr Sabir's wife Sanjida, while cooking lunch under a shed made of coconut-leaves, says with regret that her family did not receive a toilet as promised post the cyclone.

"Rich people of our village, including those who live in two-storey and three-storey buildings, have received both the house rebuilding assistance and grants for construction of toilets. However, our names did not figure in the list," says Sanjida.

'TMC SPREADING LIES, NRC TO HAVE NO IMPACT ON GORKHAS'

Kalimpong/Dhupguri (West Bengal), April 12: Seeking to allay fears created among the people of the hills by TMC's "lies", Union home minister Amit Shah asserted on Monday that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will have no impact on the Gorkhas.

Mr Shah, during an address after a roadshow in Kalimpong, said as long as the Narendra Modi-led BJP government is there at the Centre, no Gorkha will be harmed. "NRC has not yet been implemented, but whenever it is done, not a single Gorkha will be asked to leave," the senior BJP leader said.

"The Trinamul Congress is lying about the possible fallout of



NRC on the Gorkhas in order to create fear among them," he said.

Noting that Darjeeling and Kalimpong have suffered atrocities for long, Mr Shah claimed in 1986, over 1,200 Gorkhas lost their lives, but they did not get justice.

"The home minister also alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-government has also been responsible for the death of many Gorkhas in recent times."

"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 Gorkha". — PTI

India, EU hold talks, vow to strengthen human rights

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

India and the European Union (EU) held their ninth bilateral Human Rights Dialogue on Monday in the capital during which both sides "exchanged views on strengthening human rights, including in social, economic and cultural spheres" and "discussed civil and political rights, freedom of religion or belief, women empowerment, children's rights, rights of minorities and vulnerable groups".

The same official statement released separately by both sides said they "recognised the importance of strengthening the human rights mechanisms for the promotion of human rights and the role of national human rights institutions, civil society actors and journalists in this regard".

There was no official word in the statement on whether the situation in Kashmir or the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was discussed specifically during the Dialogue although it may have come up, given the concerns expressed by the European Union in the recent past on both counts.

Significantly, the "Indian delegation proposed to hold regular exchanges between their respective Permanent Missions to the UN based in Geneva and to explore cooperation at the UNHRC."

SC rejects plea to scrap Quran verses

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a petition by former UP Shia Central Waqf Board chairman Syed Wasim Rizvi for seeking the deletion of 26 verses from the Holy Quran on the ground that these allegedly preach violence. While dismissing Mr Rizvi's plea, the court fined him ₹50,000, describing his plea as frivolous.

"This is an absolutely frivolous writ petition," said Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman heading a bench also comprising Justices B.R. Gavi and Hrishikesh Roy.

At the outset of the hearing, Justice Nariman asked the lawyer appearing for Rizvi "Are you pressing for the petition? Are you serious about it?" Justice Nariman asked.

Senior advocate Ravindra Kumar Raizada, appearing for

Mr Rizvi, said he was confining the prayer to the regulation of madrasa education. He pleaded that children should not be "indoctrinated" at madrasas with certain verses of the Quran that preach violence against the non-believers and hence these should be removed. In his petition Mr Rizvi had sought removal of 26 Quranic verses, claiming that they are used as a "justification" by the Islamic terrorist groups for targeting the non-believer civilians and these were not part of the original holy book but they were inserted later.

"On account of the verus of Holy Quran, (more particularly described in the writ petition), the religion of Islam is drifting away from its basic tenets with a fast pace and nowadays is identified with violent behaviour, militancy, fundamentalism and terrorism," the plea noted.

■ Ongoing China threat likely to be discussed at 3-day conference

IAF top brass to hold summit April 15

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

Indian Air Force (IAF) top commanders will be meeting for three day conference on Thursday even as it continues to maintain high alert at LAC with China, ready to meet any contingency.

The ongoing threat from China is likely to be discussed during the conference.

It will address the issues of IAF's operational capabilities amid tensions with China and future threat perceptions.

"A series of discussions would be conducted over a period of three days to address strategies and policies related to capabilities that would give the IAF a significant edge over its adversaries," said IAF officials. New emerging threats in the form of drones is also likely to be discussed. Defence minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate the first bi-annual IAF Commanders' Conference for the year 2021 on April 15 at the Air Headquarters (Vayu Bhavan). The conference is a bi-

annual conference held at Subroto Hall, Vayu Bhavan. The conference provides a forum to the senior leadership of the IAF to discuss critical issues pertaining to operations, maintenance and administration. The conference is attended by the Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief of all commands of the IAF, all principal staff officers and all director generals posted at the Air HQ.

Various welfare and human resource measures to improve HR and administrative efficiency

will also be discussed. As per reports, the number of fighter aircraft by China at its Hotan and Kashgar airfields have been reduced, but the numbers keep fluctuating from time to time there. While troops from two countries have disengaged from the Pangong lake area, the deployments by both sides continue.

India is also keeping a close watch on the Chinese surface-to-air missile batteries which continue to remain deployed close to the LAC near eastern Ladakh.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely **Yograj, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, was found at 31.03.2021 in Truck No. NL 01N-9772 in Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar Badli Delhi.** Dead Body was taken to BJRM-Hospital Vide MLC-173472/2021 Date 31.03.2021. To be Cleaner in trucks in SGT Nagar Badli Delhi and

used to tell his native place as Himachal Pradesh. In this regard **VIDE No. 17A Dated 31.03.2021** has been lodged at Police Station, Samaipur Badli, Delhi. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: 45 Years, Height: 5'6", Face: Round, Complexion: Shallow, Hairs: Long Black and White, ID Mark: A Tattoo Mark "J R" on right Hand, Wearing: Black Pant

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Samaipur Badli, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27854757, 7065036326
DPI/963/ON/2021

SHORT TAKES

5-yr-old raped, killed in Budaun district

Budaun (UP): A five-year-old girl was allegedly raped and killed in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Budaun district, police said on Monday. The incident occurred in the Civil Lines police station area on Sunday night when the girl went to the fields with her family to collect wheat, they said. The accused, who was hiding in the fields, raped the girl and then killed her when she tried to scream, they added. The accused, in his mid-twenties, is a resident of Uttarakhand's Udham Singh Nagar district. His family had brought him to a religious place here for some kind of treatment but he ran away, according to the police. Meanwhile, upon realising that the girl is missing her family started looking for her. During their search, they stumbled upon the youth along with the girl's body following which they thrashed him, the police added. — PTI

Youth dies while dousing forest fire

Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand): A youth died while dousing a wildfire in his village in the Didihat forest range in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, officials said on Monday. The incident occurred on Saturday when a fire broke out in Athkhawli and Sarpanch Puran Singh Mehta called youths from the village to extinguish the blaze, divisional forest Officer (DFO) Vinay Bhargava said. The victim, Pankaj Singh Deopa (19), fell into a 500-metre-deep, fire-filled gorge, the officer said, adding he was pulled out of it and rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead. Deopa had lost his job during the coronavirus-induced lockdown and was staying with his family in the village. His death took the toll in forest fire in Uttarakhand this year to seven. Two deaths were reported in Almora in January and two each in Bageshwar and Pauri districts in February. — PTI

Stones hurled at TDP chief's poll rally

Amaravati: Unidentified miscreants hurled stones at an election rally being conducted by Telugu Desam Party chief N Chandrababu Naidu in Tirupati late Monday. The former Chief Minister termed the incident as a political conspiracy and staged a sit-in protest at the scene, decrying lack of security even for a Z-plus protectee like him. He said two of his party workers suffered injuries in the stone-hurling. "The Election Commission should take a serious view of the incident. If a person like me doesn't have adequate security, what is the fate of the common people," he said. Senior police officials spoke to Naidu and sought to placate him. — PTI

RAISINA DIALOGUE BEGINS TODAY, TO BE HELD DIGITALLY

New Delhi: The Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship global conference on geopolitics, will begin on Tuesday with a video message by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The sixth edition of the dialogue, from April 13 to 16, is being held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will have a total of 50 sessions with participation of 150 speakers from 50 countries and multilateral organisations, according to the organisers. Several world leaders and dignitaries are participating in the dialogue which is being jointly organised by the ministry of external affairs (MEA) and the Observer Research Foundation. "Prime Minister of India will inaugurate the dialogue through a video message on April 13. President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame and Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen will also join the inaugural session as chief guests," the MEA said. It said the Prime Minister of Australia, Scott Morrison, will also participate in the conference, in one of the subsequent sessions. The MEA, in a statement, said the event will also see the presence of Carl Bildt, former prime minister of Sweden; Anthony Abbott, former prime minister of Australia; and Helen Clark, former prime minister of New Zealand. — PTI

SC relief to Andhra HC ex-judge V. Eswaraiah

SC rules out need for probe into his phone chat

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

In a relief to retired former acting chief justice of Andhra Pradesh high court Justice V. Eswaraiah, the Supreme Court, on Monday, said that there was no need to continue with the inquiry to ascertain the genuineness and authenticity of the conversation between him and the suspended judicial officer, S. Ramakrishna, contained in a pen drive. Justice Eswaraiah retired in 2013 and is at present the chairman of the state's higher education regulatory and monitoring commission. "The object and purpose of directing the enquiry was, thus, to find out the authenticity/genuineness of the conversation contained in the pen drive. The petitioner (Justice Eswaraiah), having filed an affidavit and admitted the conversation dated 20.07.2020 and having also filed the corrected tran-



► **JUSTICE ESWARAIAH** retired in 2013 and is at present the chairman of the state's higher education regulatory and monitoring commission

► **WHILE ORDERING** an inquiry, the high court had described it as a 'serious conspiracy' to denigrate and destabilise the judiciary.

script of the English translation of the audiotape, we see no reason to allow to continue the enquiry by Justice R.V. Raveendran as directed by the high court by the impugned judgment," said Justice Ashok Bhushan heading a bench also comprising Justice R. Subhash Reddy in a judgment. The top court order came on an appeal by Justice Eswaraiah, who had challenged the Andhra Pradesh high court order asking former top court judge Justice R.V. Raveendran to inquire into the authenticity/genuineness of the conversation contained in the pen drive and the third party interest behind the plot.

While ordering an inquiry into the phone conversation between Justice Eswaraiah and Mr Ramakrishna, the high court had described it as a "serious conspiracy" to denigrate and destabilise the judiciary.

Justice Eswaraiah, in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court while confirming that he had received a call from the suspended district Munsif magistrate S. Ramakrishna and had a conversation about the senior judge of the top court and then with the Chief Justice of the state high court, had said that the conversation that has been brought out may be distorted.

Judge who gave Babri case ruling is 'Up-lokayukta' in UP

Lucknow, April 12: Retired judge Surendra Kumar Yadav, who gave the verdict in the high-profile Babri mosque demolition case last year, took oath as an 'up-lokayukta' in Uttar Pradesh on Monday. As a judge of special CBI court, Yadav had on September 30, 2020 acquitted all the 32 accused, including BJP veterans LK Advani, M.M. Joshi, Uma Bharti and Kalyan Singh, in the case of demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. "Yadav was appointed as third 'up-lokayukta' by the Governor on April 6. On Monday, Mr Yadav was administered oath by Lokayukta Sanjay Mishra in the presence of other senior officers," an official



S.K. Yadav comprises the

Lokayukta and three 'up-lokayuktas'. The other two up-lokayuktas are Shambu Singh Yadav, who was appointed on August 4, 2016, and Dinesh Kumar Singh, who was appointed on June 6, 2020.

The tenure of an 'up-lokayukta' is eight years. The Lokayukta is from a non-political background and functions as a statutory authority probing cases primarily related to corruption, government mismanagement, or abuse of power by public servants or ministers. — PTI

Notorious Odisha gangster gives a slip to police

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 12

The image of Odisha police seems to have sunk low after its lapses allowed notorious gangster Sheikh Hyder to stage a dramatic escape from his guarded ward in SCB Medical College and Hospital on Saturday.

Hyder, who has several murder & extortion cases pending against him fled from his hospital bed by administering sedatives to the security personnel deployed in the hospital.

The DGP, Shree Abhay, on Monday reviewed the efforts made by six special squads to trace out the gangster.

Maharashtra, MP postpone Class 10, 12 board exams

BHAGWAN PARAB and
RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

Following the postponement of MPSC exams, Maharashtra government has also postponed the state board examinations for the 10th and 12th classes in the state. The decision has come in the wake of soaring Covid cases across the state.

"Given the current Covid situation in Maharashtra, we've postponed state board exams for class 10th & 12th. The present circumstances are not conducive for holding exams. Your health is our priority," state school education minister Varsha Gaikwad tweeted on Monday. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh government on Monday announced fresh curbs to tackle Covid pandemic amid a surge in coronavirus cases in the state.

Accordingly, the 10th and 12th board exams in the state have also been deferred to June while total lockdown has been enforced in Bhopal for six days till April 19.

"The 10th and 12th board examinations, scheduled to commence from April 30 and May one respectively, have been deferred to June," state education minister Inder Singh Parmar said.

Mumbai cop dies of coronavirus

Mumbai, April 12: A sub-inspector died due to Covid here on Monday, becoming the first victim from the Mumbai Police of the second wave of the viral infection, an official said on Monday. SI Mohan Dagade (52), posted at the Vakola police station, was admitted to a jumbo Covid centre in the Bandra-Kurla Complex here for treatment on April 3 after he tested positive for the Covid. — PTI



Sikh devotees chant religious slogans as they leave for Pakistan to take part in Baisakhi festival in Amritsar on Monday.

— PTI

Patna hospital declares alive Covid patient dead

NAYYAR AZAD
PATNA, APRIL 12

In a shocking incident reported from Patna, a man, who had been admitted to Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) with Covid-19 complications, was mistakenly declared dead by the hospital authorities.

The dead body, in sealed condition, was handed over to the family members along with a death certificate on Sunday. The issue snowballed into a controversy when the wife of the man wanted to have his last glimpse before cremation. When the cloth covering was removed from the face, the body turned out to be of a person other than her husband. The dead body was taken back to the hospital and after much hue and cry the wife found her husband to be alive. The PMCH authorities later dismissed health manager Anjali Kumari on charges

of "negligence." Sources said that the hospital authority is also trying to find out whether other doctors or officials were involved in the incident.

"The health manager was dismissed by the hospital authorities immediately after the matter surfaced. The hospital is also trying to find others who were involved in the incident. Stern action will be initiated against all those who were involved in declaring a man dead who is alive and being treated at the hospital," he said.

Sources at the hospital said that one Raj Kumar

Bhagat from Purnia had died of Covid complications on Sunday. The hospital authorities sealed his body as per the Covid protocols but mistakenly handed it to the family of Chunnun Kumar of Barh, who was admitted to the hospital on April 9 after having suffered a brain haemorrhage.

Concerned over the incident, the district administration has asked the PMCH superintendent to launch a probe into the matter and initiate stern action against all those involved in the case.

The case has been reported at a time when the state is dealing with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to reports, the Covid-19 cases in the state have surged four times in one week.

As per the Bihar health department data, the active Covid cases in the state has surged to 14,695 and around 1,610 persons have died.

Now, BMC to turn star hotels into Covid centres

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

On the backdrop of a sharp rise in coronavirus cases, Mumbai's civic body the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) – has decided to requisition some of the four-star and five-star hotels in the city with immediate effect to create Covid Care Centres (CCC2) for positive patients. The centres would be run by professionals from major hospitals and will help expand the treatment facilities in the city.

"The decision has been taken to make more beds available to needy patients by shifting those who have recovered substantially to the CCC2 facilities, which will be

managed by professional doctors," said the BMC chief Iqbal Singh Chahal.

In addition to this, the BMC has also decided to set up three jumbo filed hospitals in Mumbai in the next five-six weeks. To be set up at three different locations in the city, each of these hospitals will have a capacity of 2,000 beds, including 200 ICU beds and 70 per cent oxygen beds.

Mumbai has witnessed an alarming growth in the number of coronavirus cases in recent days. Monday recorded 6,905 new cases along with 43 deaths, which took the city's caseload to 5,27,119 and death toll to 1,20,60. At present, there are 90,267 active covid-19 cases in Mumbai.

Give everyone Covid vaccine, demands Rahul

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

The Congress on Monday demanded vaccine for all for the ongoing Covid. It also launched its online campaign a i g n , #SpeakUpForVaccinesForAll, which urges Indians to demand Covid vaccine for everyone.

Mr. Rahul Gandhi shared a video about the campaign on Twitter. The minute-long video said the exponential rise in Covid-19 cases had led to an atmosphere of uncertainty within the country.

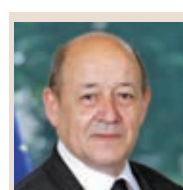
He said, "On behalf of all the Indians, the Congress demands vaccination of all the Indian nationals within a specific time."

French minister arrives in India today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely visit to France next month, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian will begin an official three-day visit to New Delhi starting Tuesday.

In a statement, the MEA said, "Jean-Yves Le Drian, minister for Europe and foreign affairs of France will pay an official visit to India from April 13-15, 2021. During his stay in New Delhi, Mr Le Drian will hold talks with the minister of external affairs S.



Jean-Yves Le Drian

► **JEAN-YVES** Le Drian, minister for Europe and foreign affairs of France will pay an official visit to India from April 13-15, 2021

► **MR DRIAN** will hold talks with the MEA S. Jaishankar on April 13, on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest

Jaishankar on April 13, 2021, on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. He will also meet the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar at a panel discussion on Climate Change. He will also participate in the Raisina

Dialogue."

The minister of external affairs added, "India and France enjoy a strategic partnership since 1998 which has been marked by regular high-level exchanges and growing cooperation in diverse areas. Mr Le Drian's visit will pave the way for further strengthening of the

partnership across trade, defence, climate, migration and mobility, education and health sectors in the post-Covid context."

India is a major strategic partner of France and has close defence ties with it. India is also currently in the midst of the process of acquiring 36 state-of-the-art Rafale fighter aircraft from France, with several of these aircraft already inducted into the Indian Air Force. Both countries had also held their annual strategic dialogue in January in New Delhi.

The French foreign minister will also visit Bengaluru on Thursday.

EC bans Didi for 24 hrs; PM claims BJP 'century'

► **Continued from Page 1** sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti, Kolkata, from 12 noon."

The poll panel's move came hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that the BJP had "scored a century" by winning seats in the first four phases of the ongoing Assembly polls. He alleged that the saffron party's lead had left Ms Banerjee in despair as she had thought to hand over her captaincy of her rule on the state to her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee if she would have won again.

"I am taken aback to see where she gets so much bitterness. The anger, bitterness, and frustration of Didi have been increasing. This is because the people have cleaned the TMC in the last four phases. The people of Bengal have hit so many fours and sixes in these phases that the BJP has already scored a century," he said in Burdwan.

The PM added: "Those who wanted to play 'khela' with you, the people have now played 'khela' with

► **PM MODI** alleged that the saffron party's lead had left Ms Banerjee in despair as she had thought to hand over her captaincy of her rule on the state to her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee if she would have won again

them. Didi has been clean bowled by the people of Nandigram and Bengal. The people of Bengal foiled the plan of Didi. She was preparing to hand over the captaincy of the party to Bhaipo (nephew), but the public caught her 'khela' in time."

Coming down heavily on Ms Banerjee over her stand against the Central paramilitary forces' firing which took four lives at Shitalkuchi in Cooch Behar, Mr Modi, who addressed two more rallies during the day, also pointed out her silence on the killing of a policeman from Bihar during a raid to catch an accused of a crime in North Bengal.

He also tried to woo Matuas by showering lav-

ish praise on the pioneers of their community, Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur. The PM recalled how blessed he was in visiting the native place of the Matuas in Orakandi of Bangladesh, though Ms Banerjee was unhappy about it.

At Kalyani in Nadia, Mr Modi said: "Didi did not like my visit to Orakandi, where the founder of the Matua sect and social reformer Harichand Thakur was born. She questioned my visit. I assure you today that all the refugees will get all facilities due to them, they will get justice. It also an emotional commitment for the BJP to provide justice to all the migrants – Matua and Namasudras."

The PM also attacked Ms Banerjee over TMC candidate Sujata Mondal Khan's controversial remarks about "beggars", in relation to Scheduled Castes. Union home minister Amit Shah, who campaigned in the state all through Monday too, also tore into Ms Banerjee.

Hunt for top Naxal in Andhra jungles

► **Continued from Page 1** have concrete information that immediately after the CRPF attack, Hidma left the Bastar region and moved to the dense forest areas close to the Chhattisgarh-Andhra-Telangana borders. The problem that the security forces are now facing is that due to thick growth in the forest neither drones nor helicopters can be used for "hot pursuit" of Hidma and some of this close associates.

"We have a fairly good idea of where Hidma could be hiding. But we are waiting for some more concrete information to confirm this through our human intelligence network. This is to ensure our security personnel don't fall into a false information trap. Once more concrete information and intelligence is received from our ground sources, an unprecedented operation will be launched," a top CRPF official told this newspaper from Raipur.

BJP warns Bengal cops: 'We'll send you to Bihar'

► **Continued from Page 1** Pradesh police, so that no more Central paramilitary forces will be needed to combat law and order situations during elections."

In the evening Mr Ghosh, however, swung into damage control mode on his threat to repeat the Shitalkuchi-style killings. He said: "We do not want a repetition of the Shitalkuchi incident, where TMC miscreants tried to loot EVMs and the guns of Central forces, instigated by chief minister Mamata Banerjee. We

demand that she be punished." At another BJP rally at Farakka, Mr Ghosh tried hard to woo Muslims, saying: "The Congress always won here. Though the situation is changing now, there is no change in the condition of poor Muslims. Murshidabad is one of the most backward districts in India. Muslims were used as a vote bank here. While 70 per cent of Muslims remained backward, the youth of the community are either implicated in illegal activities like terrorism or are forced to work as migrant workers in other states. In comparison, Muslims are safe and living better in UP and Gujarat under the BJP."

State Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said at Bhagabangola: "Bengal is not the land of the fathers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. It is our Bengal. It is the land of Hindus and Muslims. We are safe under the constitutional rights of India. We won't allow the CAA, NRC."

State Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said at Bhagabangola: "Bengal is not the land of the fathers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. It is our Bengal. It is the land of Hindus and Muslims. We are safe under the constitutional rights of India. We won't allow the CAA, NRC."

Nod to Sputnik vaccine

► **Continued from Page 1** than two hours and use only disposable cutlery.

The Maharashtra government, meanwhile, announced postponement of exams for Classes 10 and 12, while the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education has decided to promote students of Class 6 and 7. "Given the current Covid-19 situation in Maharashtra, we have

postponed state board exams for Class 10 and 12. The Class 12 exams will be held by end of May, while the Class 10 exams will be held in June. Fresh dates will be announced accordingly. We will also be writing to the CBSE, ICSE, IB and Cambridge boards, requesting them to reconsider the exams dates," said Maharashtra education minister Varsha

Gaikwad. The state is planning a stricter lockdown to contain the rising cases. Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray held a meeting with the task force to discuss the issue. The task force has suggested that patients with less severe infections should be kept in home isolation to reduce the burden on hospitals.

THE ASIAN AGE

13 APRIL 2021

US Navy foray: Will Delhi stand up to Washington?

When the US Seventh Fleet entered the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 to boost Pakistan's morale and threaten India's security as the birth of Bangladesh was being midwifed, New Delhi used the counterweight offered by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in August that year to call out Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. The Americans withdrew, cursing. Not so now.

This time the around Americans are hectoring and Indians are praying they will emerge from this with their prestige unscathed. It does really boil down to the vision of the leadership which sees the United States as the reliable heavyweight partner. The US is of course quite clear about one thing: with no country does it have a relationship that is "taller than the mountains and deeper than the seas" – China's description of its ties with Pakistan.

As part of its "freedom of navigation operations" (FONOP), a warship of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet, *USS John Paul Jones*, passed through India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) some 240 nautical km off Lakshadweep. An official Seventh Fleet communication said two things: that its action was to repudiate India's "excessive maritime claims"; and two, its action was consistent with international law and therefore the US wilfully disregarded the Indian condition of prior permission.

About the first, it's evident the US doesn't doubt the legitimacy of the extent of India's EEZ in that area. What it's saying is that it has no regard for India's domestic law which does not permit the passage of a warship of any country without permission. As for international law, the US has not endorsed the UN Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). Furthermore, the US privileges its domestic laws over any international law but may not give the same consideration to other countries.

When New Delhi pointed out through diplomatic channels that the terse, even brazen, communication of the Seventh Fleet was unwarranted in respect of a friendly country that had participated in a summit of the Quad, hosted by the US President, only three weeks earlier, Washington sought to convey that its FONOP aren't country-specific. The government here seems to have fed the media the speculation that President Joe Biden is trying to signal China that its naval movements in the South China Sea should not be misunderstood by Beijing since India is getting the same treatment.

This is the overlord's show of neutrality which India is entitled to call out. But will it, or will it make excuses for the US? Surrounded by a peppy China and a hostile Pakistan, with Russia now adopting a somewhat cool stance in view of evolving zonal and international alignments, New Delhi gives the impression of standing before Washington, cap in hand.

The latter is seeking to exploit the situation to the hilt. The US and India both know the Americans had carried out FONOP in the same area in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. India was happy to lump it so long as no one made a song and dance about it, but this time the Americans are announcing the story aloud for all to hear. This is Mr Biden's America seeking to re-assert the doctrine of US superiority. If India doesn't make its disapprobation plain, who knows, we may have the Chinese or the Pakistani Navy follow in America's footsteps in India's EEZs.

Fresh Israeli adventurism?

Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was struck by a suspected cyberattack on Sunday, just a day after Tehran had unveiled new centrifuges on the site that can enrich uranium for use as reactor fuel in generating power or make deadly nuclear weapons. The world knows that Israel is the only power in the region with the capability to carry out such a brazen attack through cyber means that may have been launched in combination with a physical intrusion into a heavily fortified site to knock out the power source with an explosion. Far from denying the intrusion, the Israeli intelligence agency has fed the news to the world's media that its operation may have set the Iranian nuclear programme back by more than a few months.

The reason for this dangerous hit on a nuclear facility is not far to seek. Only last week Iran and the EU started negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal struck in 2015 under the leadership of US President Barack Obama, which his successor Donald Trump revoked in 2018 as one that gave away far too much to Iran. The negotiations in Vienna, with all parties to the nuclear deal except United States, were also to do with having about 6,000 US sanctions lifted but Iran's leverage in the talks may have been hit hard by what is typically Israeli adventurism, aimed particularly at Iran's nuclear programme, based purely on its own strategic interests.

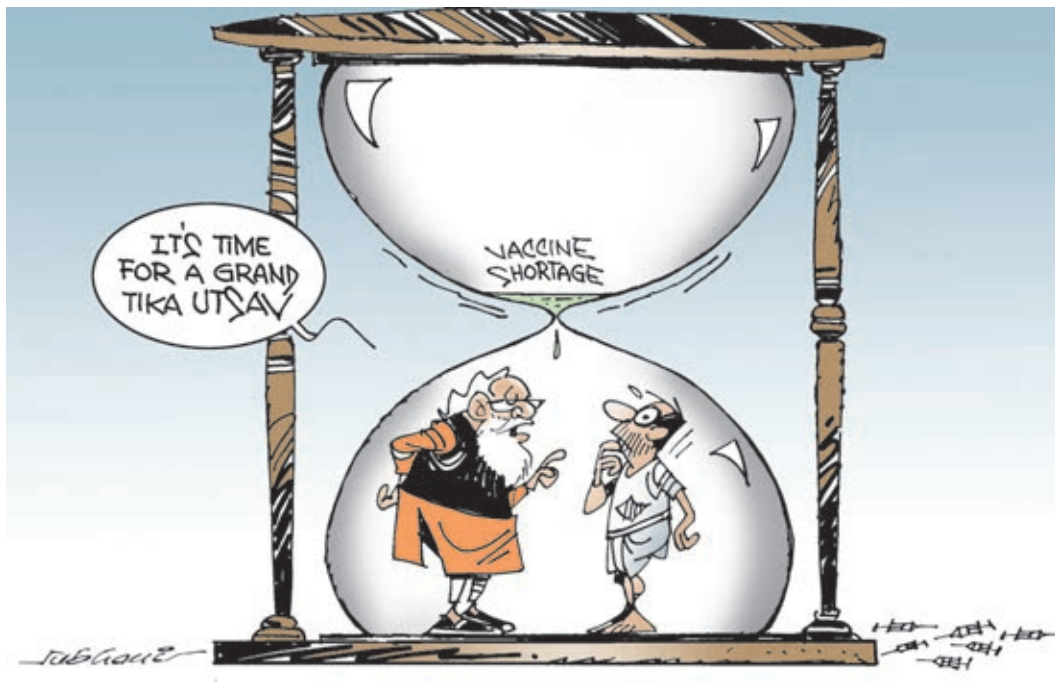
Far from rebuking Israel, its action will probably be applauded by its friends in the United States as well as in the Middle East, where Israel has new friends like the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Joe Biden's eagerness to roll the clock back on many of Mr Trump's brash actions may have received a rude jolt from the Israeli strike, but he can do little against a powerful Jewish lobby in his own country. Ironically, US defence secretary Lloyd J. Austin was in Israel over the weekend stressing the strong ties binding the two countries. Iran stresses its nuclear ambitions are peaceful but, with its enriched uranium, can't convince the world, and there is no reining in Israel either.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



Why world can't afford to take a chance with China



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

The white paper titled "Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution" that Beijing issued earlier this month to mark the Communist Party of China's 100th anniversary hardly helps to explain the contradictions of a China that is as much "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma" as the old Soviet Union was in Winston Churchill's famous words.

Is China rich or poor? The evidence suggests both. Travellers in China certainly see none of South Asia's grinding poverty. But then, it's a vast land, and movement is strictly regulated. Bursting with billionaires, China holds \$3,399.90 billion in the US Treasury's foreign exchange reserves. Yet, intermediaries and snakeheads (secret society gangs) exploit illegal Chinese workers from Angola to England and Malaysia to Saipan in the Pacific.

In a year of many records, China led the pack of billionaires who bounced back according to *Forbes'* 35th annual World's Billionaires List. The one-time Middle Kingdom is now home to 626 billionaires — against 388 last year — and this is second only to the United States, which has 724. China's roaring stock market and quick recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic (for which Americans blame China) led to 205 new billionaires and the return of another 53 who had dropped out of the list. That excludes the ones based in Hong Kong and Macao, which are listed separately by *Forbes* magazine.

These crazy rich Asian Chinese seem to be getting even richer in the aftermath of the pandemic. A Chinese billionaire's \$4 billion average net worth represents a 33 per cent jump from last year. Collectively, the 626 billionaires own \$2.5 trillion, which is more than double last year's total. The top ten's \$447 billion is also nearly double last year's figure.

At the other end of the scale, India leads the world in expatriate remittances because millions of desperately poor Indians fan out across the world, and particularly so all across the Middle East, to toil in ports and plantations, on building sites and in private homes. They can't find jobs in India's sluggish economy. But why does apparently buoyant China come second in the remittance stakes? Chinese expatriate workers send back an impressive \$68 billion annually, against the spectacular \$83 billion that Indians repatriate.

That can mean two things. One, even China's economy cannot absorb the skills of all its able-bodied men (and some women).

Two, China might be flowing with milk and honey, but this is only for the privileged like the *taizidang*, or princelings, as the sons of party veterans are called.

Like the former Soviet Union, China, too, might qualify for a British journalist's dismissal as "Upper Volta with rock-ets".

Is China a land of peace contented with its status? Or is it arrogantly determined to be the next superpower? The UK's recent 100-page "Integrated Review of Security, Defence,

Development and Foreign Policy" suggested both. It called China a "systemic challenge to our security, prosperity and values". It also promised to "adapt to China's growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes more powerful in the world".

Besides preface and conclusion, the document had five sections — "The Solemn Commitment of the CPC", "Final Victory in the Fight against Extreme Poverty", "The Strategy of Targeted Poverty Alleviation", "Exploring a New Path of Poverty Alleviation" and "A Global Community of Shared Future Free from Poverty" — that predictably applauded the Chinese people's fight in eliminating extreme poverty. They also indicated that China's novel approach would benefit the world.

However, three reported tragedies hardly bear out these lofty maxims. First, 58 illegal immigrants suffocated to death in a container in Dover. Second, 39 were similarly killed in a tractor trailer in Essex. In the third and most poignant instance, 23 labourers were drowned while picking cockles off the Lancashire coast when the tide swept in. One of them managed to dial 999, but it was too late. He could only repeat in his broken English: "Sinking water, many many, sinking water... Sinking water, sinking water."

An old saying claims that the Chinese will go wherever there is land and water. Nowadays, they will go wherever there are jobs, even though the cockle pickers received a miserable pound for a gruelling

nine-hour day. But as a Chinese immigrant told the *Financial Times*: "By working abroad for a few months, you can live a year in China."

These economic refugees are the Han Chinese, not Uighurs or Tibetans. They are victims of what Britain's former Labour prime minister Tony Blair called a harrowing "evil trade in people". The snakeheads that can extort as much as \$70,000 to smuggle them out move people from country to country until they reach the wealthier nations of Europe, North America, Australia, or perhaps Taiwan and Japan.

A veteran Chinese Singaporean journalist bemoans in an impassioned defence of China in *The Straits Times* that "anyone without scales over his eyes and who has not succumbed to cerebral shampooing by the West will have realised by now that large parts of its media are biased, if not outright antagonistic, in their reporting of China." Bias probably, but China does not make it easier for foreigners to understand itself by presenting so many contrary faces.

Perhaps the Chinese enjoy taking the world for a ride. There was the well recorded case of an unknown Chinese man turning up at the coronation of Queen Victoria — or was it her jubilee? — in mandarin robes and a pillbox hat perched above his pigtail, without being able to say a word of English. Unsure of whether he was an envoy from the Son of Heaven, the British seated him between a marquis and an archbishop at the ceremony at Westminster Abbey. Only next day did the police discover that he was the owner of a small junk moored in the Thames.

The moral: The world can't afford to take chances with China.

An old saying claims that the Chinese will go wherever there is land and water. Nowadays, they will go wherever there are jobs

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

VACCINE POLITICS

Amid a surge in Covid cases, several districts in the worst-affected state of Maharashtra are complaining of a huge vaccine shortage. This despite that by mid-March India had exported twice the number of doses it administered at home. The vaccine exports, sources say, has since been halted. Maharashtra's health minister Rajesh Tope had said if the Centre didn't provide enough vaccines, the government would be forced to shut down vaccination centres. Punjab and Rajasthan have also red-flagged low stocks.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

CROCODILE TEARS

THIS REFERS to the editorial, "Disquieting signals in forces firing on voters" (March 12). In hindsight, it is easy to blame the Election Commission for the killings of voters in West Bengal. But BJP and Trinamul Congress leaders have been behaving like demagogues. Both parties are shedding crocodile tears over the unfortunate deaths and milking the tragedy. Hopefully, it is a one-off event, and the next four phases in West Bengal will be held peacefully. But for that to happen, political leaders ought to eschew rabble-rousing speeches.

Deepak Singh
Noida

WHOSE FAULT?

IS IT not rather late in the day for the EC to fret about non-compliance of Covid norms by political leaders and star campaigners? Surely, the EC had enough powers to stop this kind of careless behaviour. In response to a question about why he was seen campaigning in closed, crowded spaces, home minister Amit Shah put the ball right back in the EC's court, saying he trusted its arrangements. On the huge crowds, he said every citizen is responsible for his/her own coronavirus safety.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Anthony Henriques (April 2). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Aakar Patel



It's wrong to say Indians have right to choose faith

Last weekend the newspapers carried the headline: "People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court".

The report was about a public interest litigation petition which sought to stop Indians from converting out of the faith they were born into.

The judges were angry. They said: "What kind of writ petition is this? Why should a person above 18 not choose his religion?"

The petitioner was the BJP's Ashwini Upadhyaya.

The Indian judiciary has had a long history with the freedom of religion. It might be appropriate to revisit it. First, let readers understand this. You have no freedom of religion. You have no right to convert out of the faith you were born into. I do not know if our judges know this or have actually read the law. But it is a fact.

Article 25 of our Constitution reads: "All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion".

This is apparently a fundamental right, meaning one which enjoys a high degree of protection from State encroachment. The fundamental right was drafted after a debate in which

India's Christians had specifically asked for the right to propagate (to convert other people) because it was an article of their faith. In India, Muslims do not do mass propagation; even the Tablighi Jamaat only seeks to make Muslims better Muslims. It is the Christians who believe their religion requires them to spread the good word of Jesus Christ and to invite people into their faith. They asked for this right and were given it specifically by our Constitution's makers, including arch Hindu fundamentalists like K.M. Munshi, who agreed with the Christians. Only one Hindu in the Constituent Assembly opposed the right to propagate and that was a 26-year-old Brahmin man from Odisha, Loknath Misra, whose brother Ranganath Misra and nephew Dipak Misra would both become Chief Justices of India.

Loknath Misra said that by making India secular, Hindus had done a favour to other communities and that propagation should be allowed but not be made a fundamental right. He need not have worried because this right was taken away by subterfuge as has been the case for many rights in India under the approving eye of the Supreme Court. Let us see how by

looking at one just state, my own.

In 2003, under Narendra Modi, Gujarat passed a law that essentially removed all freedom of religion for Gujaratis. It requires individuals changing their faith to take the permission of the government. They had to fill out a form explaining to the district magistrate the reasons they were choosing to convert; their occupation and monthly income; how long they had been in the religion they were converting out of; to reveal whether they were Dalit or Adivasi; the date and time of their conversion; the names, addresses and ages of themselves and all in their family; the names and addresses of all guests attending the ceremony. If they did not do so within 10 days of their conversion, they faced one year in jail.

The person who is converting them has to fill out another form with all of the details referred to above and must submit, one month before the conversion, an application to the district magistrate seeking permission. The bureaucrat has one month in which to approve or deny permission. This denial of propagation obviously also affects the right of the person who wants to change their faith. One had to remain in the faith they were born

into unless the government approved.

The district magistrate must also maintain a register that has the number of applications received, approved, denied or pending which he must report every quarter. The coercion can be imagined.

Gujarat's Assembly was told in January 2020 that in the previous five years a total of 1,895 "applications" for conversion had been filed in the state. Gujarat had denied permission to convert to 889 individuals.

The government "gave permission" to 1,006 applicants, almost all of whom were Dalits in Surat converting to Buddhism. The number of Dalit applicants to convert to Buddhism had swelled because in 2014, they had been denied permission to convert in a mass ceremony. The Narendra Modi government attempted to modify the law to exclude conversions from Buddhism and Jainism to Hinduism and vice versa from the state's regulation. Meaning that Jains and Buddhists would be seen legally as Hindus and therefore would not really be "converting". But this was objected to by Gujarat's Jains, who resisted being clubbed with Hindus, and the modification was withdrawn.

I have used the example of Gujarat,

but almost all of India's states have these laws criminalising what is supposed to be a fundamental right.

The Gujarat law's punishment for propagation is three years (four if the convert was a woman, Dalit or Adivasi). But how the district magistrate's denial of permission would work at the level of faith was unclear. One priest I spoke to said India's religion laws made no sense because of the nature of belief. He said: "Suppose I stopped believing in Christ today. This would be a conversion from being a believer to a non-believer. I am supposed to take permission from the State for this change, but I have already stopped believing."

In recent months, BJP-ruled states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and others have passed the "love jihad" laws, which tighten the State's grip on religious freedoms further. It is totally and demonstrably false to say Indians have freedom of religion.

This is the background to which the newspapers have brought us the headline: "People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court".

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

IN BRIEF

34 migrants die as boat capsizes

Djibouti: Thirty-four migrants drowned on Monday after their boat capsized off the coast of Djibouti, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said, the second such accident in just over a month. Survivors reported that the boat capsized in rough seas at around 4.00 am (0100 GMT) after leaving Yemen with around 60 passengers on board, an IOM official in Djibouti said, asking not to be named.

Huthis claim attack on Saudi

Dubai: Yemen's Huthis claimed on Monday to have launched drone strikes against Saudi energy giant Aramco's facilities, amid an upsurge in fighting between the insurgents and the Riyadh-backed government in northern Yemen. Neither Aramco or Saudi authorities immediately reported any attack. Huthi spokesman Yahya Saree said in a statement that the strikes took place overnight, in retaliation for the six-year military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

Five new species found in Tibet

Beijing: Five new animal species have been discovered in Tibet, including three kinds of frogs, one old-world monkey and a bushmaster snake, challenging the long-held view that the Himalayan mountains are a desolate and lifeless region. The discovery of the five new species was the result of an eight-year investigation of the terrestrial wildlife in the Tibet Autonomous region carried out by the regional forestry bureau, state-run Global Times reported on Monday. The discovered species are: a type of macaque (a genus of gregarious Old World monkeys), bushmaster snake (venomous), and three kinds of frogs.

Activist on trial for pornography

Moscow: A Russian court on Monday opened the trial of a feminist activist and artist charged with disseminating pornography after she shared artwork depicting female anatomy online — a case in line with the Kremlin's conservative stance promoting "traditional family values" that has been widely seen as controversial and elicited international outrage. Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, from the far-eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, faces up to six years in prison on charges reportedly related to her group on the popular social network VKontakte where colourful, stylised drawings of vaginas were posted. Tsvetkova is not allowed to give details of accusations against her.

HUAWEI, HSBC AGREE ON PAPERS FOR EXTRADITION

Hong Kong, April 12: Chinese telecommunications equipment firm Huawei said on Monday that it has reached an agreement with HSBC in Hong Kong to obtain documents that its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou hopes will help prevent her extradition to the US. Meng, who was detained in Canada in 2018 at the behest of US authorities, has been fighting a legal battle over the last two years as the US seeks to extradite her over allegations of bank fraud and violations of sanctions against Iran. The US accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company called Skycom to sell equipment to Iran in violation of US sanctions. It says Meng committed fraud by misleading HSBC about the company's business dealings in Iran.

An earlier request by Meng's legal team for documents from HSBC was rejected by a court in Britain. In a court hearing on Monday, Hong Kong High Court judge Linda Chan approved the document-sharing agreement between Huawei and HSBC. "An agreement has been reached with HSBC in relation to the Hong Kong legal proceedings for document production and an order has been approved by the court," Huawei said in a statement on Monday. It is not clear which documents Huawei has obtained or what the scope of the agreement covers.

Report: Syria used chemical weapons

2018 Saraqib attack involved chlorine: OPCW

The Hague, April 12: The Syrian regime's air force used the chemical weapon chlorine in an attack on the town of Saraqib in 2018, the global toxic arms watchdog said on Monday after an investigation. The report is the second by an investigations team set up by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has the new power to apportion blame for attacks.

The OPCW said in a statement that the Investigations and Identification Team (IIT) "concludes that units of the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Saraqib on 4 February 2018".

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that, at approximately 21.22 on 4 February 2018, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the

● **THE TEAM** issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks.

control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder," the OPCW report said.

"The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals," OPCW investigators interviewed 30 witnesses, analysed samples collected at the scene, reviewed symptoms reported by victims and medical staff and examined satellite imagery to reach their conclusions, the Hague-based organisation said.

"Symptoms... included shortness of breath, skin

irritation, chest pain, and coughing," the report said.

However, it said it "regrets" that the Syrian regime refused to grant access to the site, some 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Aleppo, despite repeated requests.

The team issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks on the village of Lataminah in March 2017.

Despite strong objections by Damascus and its ally Moscow, OPCW member states voted in 2018 to set up the team to attribute blame for attacks. Previously the watchdog could only say if chemical attacks had happened or not.

— AFP

EU tries to save Iran N-talks

Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz site

Brussels, April 12: The

European Union on Monday warned against attempts to derail talks aimed at returning the United States to the Iran nuclear deal, after Tehran accused Israel of an attack on its main Natanz site.

EU spokesman Peter Stano said the reported incident "could have been an act of sabotage" but insisted that there had been no official attribution over who was responsible.

"We still need to clarify the facts in detail as quickly as possible," he said, adding: "We reject any attempts to undermine or weaken diplomatic efforts on the nuclear agreement."

The Natanz site near Tehran was hit by a power outage on Sunday that Iran labelled "terrorism", a day after officials announced the country had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.

Negotiators in Vienna are trying to find a way to return the United States to the 2015 pact with world

● **THE ATTACK** also further strains relations between the US, which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord.

country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused a blackout at the nuclear facility. While the nature of the attack and 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

powers aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, after former president Donald Trump withdrew.

The EU's mediator on Friday described the talks

as "constructive", as those involved look to persuade Washington to drop sanctions reimposed by Trump and for Tehran to roll back breaches of the deal. New US President Joe

explosion."

The attack also further strains relations between the US, 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. Netanyahu met on Monday with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, whose arrival in Israel coincided with the first word of the attack. The two spoke briefly to journalists but took no questions.

— AP

Russia threatens to force-feed Navalny

Moscow, April 12: Russian prison officials are threatening to start force-feeding jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, his team said on Monday, after he lost eight kilograms (18 pounds) since starting a hunger strike.

"Seeing the seriousness of the hunger strike, the administration is threatening every day to start force-feeding," Navalny's team said in a post on his Twitter account.

It said Navalny, who last week said he had a cough and fever, had been transferred back to the prison barracks from his infirmary.

"They are still not allowing a doctor to see him," it said.

The 44-year-old opposition politician now weighed 77 kilograms (169

pounds), it said, down from 85 kilograms (187 pounds) when he started the hunger strike on March 31.

Navalny, who barely survived a poisoning with nerve agent Novichok last August, began refusing food in protest at what he said was a lack of proper medical treatment in prison for severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's best-known opponent, was arrested in mid-January when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been treated for the poisoning, and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on old embezzlement charges in February.

— AFP

Second Ramzan amid Covid



Ahead of the holy month of Ramzan, an Iraqi man sells food at the Shorja market in central Baghdad on Monday after the curfew imposed by authorities was eased amid Covid pandemic.

— AFP

BIDEN WALKS TIGHTROPE \$2T INFRA BILL

Washington, April 12: President Joe Biden holds a rare meeting on Monday with opposition Republican lawmakers, as well as Democratic allies, to push his more than \$2 trillion infrastructure bill — a daring bid to rebuild the United States and cement his place in history.

The White House meeting between Biden and eight members of Congress is being stage managed to show that the new president has made good on his promise to end the divisiveness that turned Washington into a permanent dog fight under Donald Trump.

Four senators and four members of the House of Representatives were invited — half of them from each party.

— AFP

● **FOUR SENATORS,** four members of the House of Representatives were invited.

Astra's diabetes drug suffers setback

London, April 12: British pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca on Monday said that following a trial, its diabetes drug Farxiga was not successful in treating Covid patients at risk of severe complications.

AstraZeneca, whose separate Covid vaccine roll-out has been hampered by health concerns, said its trial "assessing the potential of Farxiga to treat patients hospitalised with Covid-19 who are at risk of developing serious complications... did not achieve statistical significance".

The trial was carried out alongside Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute and looked at potential complications including diabetes and heart failure.

"While the trial did not achieve statistical significance, the findings are very interesting and valuable, and will inform future clinical science," Saint Luke's cardiologist Mikhail Kosiborod said in a joint statement.

Public confidence in AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine has meanwhile

Virus may give rise to crimes: Europol

The Hague, April 12: The Coronavirus pandemic could fuel organised crime for years to come in Europe, a continent already at "breaking point" from an unprecedented flood of cocaine, the EU's policing agency warned Monday.

In its flagship four-yearly report, Europol said increasingly violent criminal gangs are likely to muscle in on legitimate businesses left vulnerable by the economic damage caused by Covid-19.

Criminals are also offering fake Coronavirus vaccines and home-testing kits as they seek to capitalise on global efforts to recover from the virus, the Hague-based agency said.

been badly shaken by reports linking it to rare, but potentially fatal, blood

"We are at the breaking point," Europol's director Catherine De Bolle said.

"The impact on the lives of citizens, on the economy, on the rule of law is too big. That's what we see from this... report." The "Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment" is an in-depth report issued every four years which will be used by EU member states to set crime-fighting priorities until 2025.

"A prolonged pandemic will put heavy strain on European and global economies" and a predicted economic recession "may shape serious and organised crime for years to come," the report said.

— AFP

clots, and by conflicting recommendations over its use.

— AFP

BORIS REQUESTS PUBLIC TO 'BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY'

United Kingdom, April 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged people to "behave responsibly" as the country that has had Europe's deadliest Coronavirus outbreak took a big step on its roadmap toward a resumption of normal life.

Monday brought the easing of restrictions that have been in place in England since early January to suppress a surge in infections linked to a more transmissible new virus variant first identified in the southeast of the country.

Long lines formed outside some stores, including a branch of Nike Town on London's busy Oxford Street, and pubs and restaurants with outdoor space reported a flood of bookings.

— AP

TOKYO ADOPTS STRICT RULES TO FIGHT COVID-19

Tokyo, April 12: Tokyo adopted tougher measures against the Coronavirus on Monday as it struggles to curb the rapid spread of a more contagious variant ahead of the Olympics in a country where less than 1 per cent of people have been vaccinated.

Japan started its vaccination drive with medical workers and expanded on Monday to older residents, with the first shots being given in about 120 selected places around the country. The tougher Covid-19 rules, just three weeks after a state of emergency ended in the capital, allow Tokyo's governor to mandate shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants, punish violators and compensate those who comply. The measures remain through May 11.

— AP

HISTORIC | FEAT Quiet composure under pressure made him first human in space

Gagarin almost died on first space odyssey

Moscow, April 12: Crushed into the pilot's seat by heavy G-forces, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin saw flames outside his spacecraft and prepared to die. His voice broke the tense silence at ground control: "I'm burning. Goodbye, comrades." Gagarin didn't know that the blazing inferno he observed through a porthole was a cloud of plasma engulfing Vostok 1 during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, and he was still on track to return

safely.

It was his quiet composure under pressure that helped make him the first human in space 60 years ago. Gagarin's steely self-control was a key factor behind the success of his pioneering 108-minute flight. The April 12, 1961, mission encountered glitches and emergencies — from a capsule hatch failing to shut properly just before blastoff to parachute problems in the final moments before touchdown. From the time

● **GAGARIN'S PIONEERING,** single-orbit flight made him a hero in the Soviet Union and an international celebrity.

20 Soviet air force pilots were selected to train for the first crewed spaceflight, Gagarin's calm demeanor, quick learning skills and beaming smile made him an early favorite.

Two days before blastoff, the 27-year-old Gagarin wrote a farewell letter to his wife, Valentina, shar-

ing his pride in being chosen to ride in Vostok 1 but also trying to console her in the event of his death. "I fully trust the equipment, it mustn't let me down. But if something happens, I ask you Valyusha not to become broken by grief," he wrote, using a nickname for her. Authorities held onto the letter and eventually gave it to Gagarin's widow seven years later after he died in an airplane crash.

She never remarried. Gagarin's pioneering, sin-

gle-orbit flight made him a hero in the Soviet Union and an international celebrity. After putting the world's first satellite into orbit with the successful launch of Sputnik in October 1957, the Soviet space program, rushed to secure its dominance over the US by putting a man into space.

"The task was set, and people were sleeping in their offices and factory shops, like at wartime," Fyodor Yurchikhin, a Russian cosmonaut, recalled.

— AP

Ukraine FM to visit NATO for Russia talks

Brussels, April 12: Ukraine's foreign minister will visit NATO headquarters for talks on Tuesday as tensions rise over intensified clashes with Moscow-backed separatists and signs of a Russian troop build-up, the alliance said.

Concern is growing that the long-simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine could erupt into widespread fighting following a sharp increase in violence along the front line. Kiev's top diplomat

Dmytro Kuleba will meet NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also heads to Brussels for talks. Ukraine has accused its giant neighbour Russia of amassing thousands of military personnel on its eastern border as well as on the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Reports of the build-up have swirled as deadly clashes flared with Russia-backed separatists in the east of the country.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	47883.38	-3.44
Nifty 50	14310.80	-3.53
S&P 500*	4,129.44	0.002
Dollar (₹)	75.06	-0.40
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.11	-0.69
Euro (₹)	89.33	-0.50
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,070	✓57 0.12
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.19	0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.011	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.676	0.010

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Over five lakh download 'Mera Ration' app

The government's 'Mera Ration' mobile app has been downloaded by more than 5 lakh people within a month of its launch, a senior government official said. The app, launched on March 12, is helpful to ration card holders, particularly migrants, for identifying the nearest fair price shop and checking details of their entitlement and recent transactions. The Android-based app is currently available in Hindi and English.

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Market falls 3.5%, investors lose ₹8.77 L cr Panic wave in mkt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Sensex and Nifty-50 fell close to 3.5 per cent on prolonged lockdown fears, as the second Covid wave became more severe with 1.69 lakh people affected in a single day.

Investors suffered a notional loss of over Rs 8.77 lakh crore, as BSE's market capitalisation dipped to Rs 200,85,806 crore from Rs 209,63,241 crore last Friday.

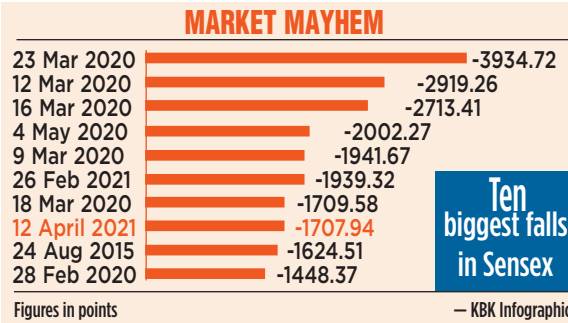
The Sensex fell 1898 points intra-day to 47693.44 with the weekend spike in cases making investors jittery, who resorted to profit taking in stocks and sectors that had run up sharply in recent weeks.

The Sensex closed below the 48000-mark, down by 1707.94 points at 47883.38 while the Nifty-50 closed 524.03 points down at 14310.80, after touching an intra-day low of 14248.70.

Foreign portfolio investors net sold stocks worth Rs 1,746.43 crore and there was little support coming from the domestic institutions as they were net buyers by just Rs 232.76 crore.

"The rising cases of Covid-19 and a fear of probable lockdown in some parts of the country led to a sell-off in our markets which resulted in a huge under performance compared to the global peers," said Ruchit Jain, analyst-technical and derivatives, Angel Broking.

NSE's India VIX index, an indicator of market volatility in coming days, climbed up 16.22 per cent to 23. Among the sectoral indices the top losers were Nifty Metal (-6.07 per cent), Realty (-7.50 per cent), Bank (-5.10 per cent).



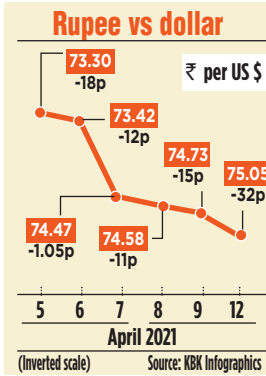
Choppy times ahead for rupee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

The rupee plunged below 75 against the dollar for the first time in eight months on Monday as investors worried over the likely economic fallout of several states considering lockdown restrictions and a strong dollar globally. Analysts believe volatility is ahead for the rupee, with more states joining localised lockdown to contain the Covid-19 second wave. This was the sixth straight session of loss for the rupee, during which it has depreciated by 193 paise.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee closed at 75.05 against the dollar after trading in the 74.78-75.14 range, down 32 paise.

Adding to the panic was the Reserve Bank's policy of providing more and more liquidity to the system through the government securities acquisition programme, under which it will purchase Rs 1 lakh crore worth bonds from the market. GSAP, though positive for the bond market (where yields have softened by 5-8 basis points) is not so for the cur-



rency. There is now excess liquidity of Rs 7 lakh crore in the reverse repo basket and there will be an infusion of Rs 25,000 crore on the 15th of this month. Such high liquidity means interest rates will remain low. The problem is, the US 10-year yield is now at 1.66 per cent, while Indian bonds are being driven down. This makes India less attractive for investors.

"Choppy times are ahead for the rupee, which was definitely not expected as the liquidity dimension added by the RBI and the commentary provided has spooked the market," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings.

TCS Q4 NET RISES 15% TO ₹9,246 CRORE

FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday ushered in the March quarter earnings season, reporting a 14.9 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 9,246 crore.

The country's largest software services firm had posted a net profit of Rs 8,049 crore in the year-ago period.

In a regulatory filing, TCS said its revenue grew 9.4 per cent in the March 2021 quarter to Rs 43,705 crore from Rs 39,946 crore a year ago.

"Our investments over the last decade in building newer capabilities, and in research and innovation, position us well for the multi-year technology services opportunity ahead. While we continue to dominate in our traditional areas of strength, we are making good progress in gaining share in the growth and transformation opportunity," Rajesh Gopinathan, chief executive officer and managing director, TCS, said.

The company's net profit for the financial year ended March 2021 was up at Rs 33,388 crore (excluding legal claim provisions) against Rs 32,340 crore in the previous financial year. Its net profit on a reported basis stood at Rs 32,430 crore for FY21.

The board has proposed a final dividend of Rs 15 per equity share.

SMEs to get ₹250 cr of ₹10,900-cr PLI

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Micro, small and medium enterprises, which account for the majority share of the food processing industry, will receive incentives valued at a mere Rs 250 crore in six years under the recently announced Rs 10,900-crore Performance Linked Incentive Scheme for the segment.

The draft PLI scheme says Rs 9,040 crore has been allocated for companies producing ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat foods, processed fruit and vegetables, marine products and mozzarella cheese. But only 2 per cent, or Rs 250 crore, of this amount will go into the

kitty of SMEs, that too, to those who produce organic and innovative products.

"This includes Rs 250 crore or approximately 2 per cent of the outlay, which has been earmarked for innovative/organic products in the SME sector..." said the draft. The remaining will be allocated to select large manufacturers of food products.

"The allocation for SMEs is less and is only for those who produce organic and innovative products. We will reach out to the government on this," said Piruz Khambatta, CMD of Rasna.

He says some 30,000 to 40,000 FSSAI-registered SMEs are there in the food processing industry.

INFLATION RISES, IIP CONTRACTS

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With a sharp spike in food inflation, retail inflation jumped to 5.52 per cent in March, the highest in three months, while the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) contracted by 3.6 per cent in February, data from the statistics ministry showed.

Food inflation saw a steep rise of 4.94 per cent in March from 3.87 per cent in February, but vegetable prices fell to 4.83 per cent last month from 6.27 per cent in February.

The IIP also showed a worrisome trend by contracting 3.6 per cent against an expansion of 4.5 per cent in February 2020. The IIP had contracted 1.6 per cent in January 2021 as well.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

PASSENGER VEHICLE SALES DROP 2.24% IN FY21: SIAM

Pune, April 12: Passenger vehicles sales fell 2.24 per cent to 27.11 lakh units in financial year 2020-21, down from 27.73 lakh units sold in FY20, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Monday. The two-wheeler industry has been badly hit, with a significant 13.19 per cent contraction in year-on-year sales at 151.19 lakh units. Commercial vehicle sales dropped 20.77 per cent at 5.69 lakh units and three-wheeler sales saw a 66 per cent decline at 2.16 lakh units. This dip in sales has largely been a fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, when sales came to a complete halt in April 2020. While monthly passenger vehicles sales in the last few months have set new records, the surge fuelled by more discretionary spending on cars and an affinity towards personal mobility has not compensated for the subdued months during last year's lockdown. — *Michael Gonsalves*

KALPANA SAMPAT TO HEAD PRAMERICA



Kalpana Sampat

Mumbai, April 12: Pramerica Life Insurance on Monday announced the appointment of Kalpana Sampat as its MD & CEO, from April 9. Prior to this, she was the chief operating officer at the firm. Before joining Pramerica Life, Sampat was the CEO for Swiss Reinsurance Co, India branch, and was instrumental in its launch in 2015. — *PTI*

FLIPKART PARTNERS ADANI GROUP

Chennai, April 12: Flipkart has entered a strategic and commercial partnership with the Adani group. In this two-pronged partnership, Flipkart will work with Adani Logistics to strengthen its supply chain infrastructure. Flipkart will also set up its third data centre at Adaniconnex's Chennai-based facility. Adani Logistics, on its part, will construct and lease a 534,000 sq. ft. fulfilment centre in Mumbai to Flipkart. At the AdaniConneX unit, Flipkart will be able to design its data centre. — *FC Bureau*

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Man Utd hit back to sink Tottenham

London: Manchester United staged a superb fightback to shatter Tottenham's top-four bid with a 3-1 win, while West Ham climbed to fourth place in the Premier League as the revitalised Jesse Lingard inspired a 3-2 victory against Leicester on Sunday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side trailed to Son Heung-min's first half strike, but United scored three times after the break through Fred, Edinson Cavani and Mason Greenwood. Second-placed United's fourth successive league win avenged their embarrassing 6-1 home defeat against Tottenham in October. — *AFP*

Son racially abused on social media

London: Tottenham Hotspur are to take action after Korean star Son Heung-min was subjected to "abhorrent racist abuse" on social media following Sunday's 3-1 defeat by Manchester United. Son is the second Spurs player in as many matches to suffer such abuse following Davinson Sanchez after the 2-2 draw with Newcastle United on April 4. Son scored Spurs' goal but was involved in a controversial incident when he went down clutching his face after contact with Scott McTominay. "Another matchday and more abhorrent racial abuse suffered by one of our players," said a Spurs statement. — *AFP*

Darmian wins it for Inter Milan

Milan: Antonio Conte's Inter Milan tightened their grip on the Serie A title on Sunday with Matteo Darmian scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win over Cagliari to stretch their winning streak to 11 games. Champions Juventus consolidated third place with a 3-1 win over Genoa as Atlanta battled to a 3-2 victory over Fiorentina to stay fourth ahead of Napoli who won 2-0 at Sampdoria. "We're starting to see the finish line," said Conte after Inter restored their 11-point lead on second-placed AC Milan who won 3-1 at Parma on Saturday. Achraf Hakimi came off the bench and set up Darmian to grab the winner with 13 minutes to go at the San Siro. — *AFP*

Hideki goes green at Augusta Matsuyama holds off Schauffele to become first Japanese to win Masters

Augusta (United States), April 12: Hideki Matsuyama became the first Japanese man to win a major golf championship on Sunday, holding his nerve down the stretch to capture the 85th Masters after a dramatic final round.

Carrying the hopes of a nation on his shoulders, Matsuyama calmly ground out clutch pars and struck for crucial birdies in a pressure-packed march at Augusta National, hanging on over the final holes for a historic one-stroke victory.

Matsuyama took the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy, a top prize of \$2.07 million and a place for the ages in Japanese sports history.

After seeing his seven-stroke lead with seven holes remaining shaved to two shots with three to go, Matsuyama watched Xander Schauffele find water off the 16th tee on the way to a triple-bogey disaster. Matsuyama settled for bogey but closed with par at 17 and a bogey at 18 to fire a one-over-par 73 and finish 72 holes on 10-under 278.

American Will Zalatoris was second in his Masters debut on 279 after a closing 70 with US three-time major winner Jordan Spieth and American Schauffele sharing third on 281.

"It was a fun week," Zalatoris said. "I know I can play with the best players in the world."

Matsuyama became only the second Asian man to win a major title after South Korea's Yang Yong-eun at the 2009 PGA Championship.

Matsuyama, ranked 25th, hadn't won since the 2017 WGC Akron tournament, but 87 starts later, he matched the victory from his only other 54-hole outright PGA lead, at the 2016 WGC Shanghai tournament.

The best prior majors by Japanese men were Isao Aoki's runner-up effort at the 1980 US Open and Matsuyama's share of second at the 2017 US Open. — *AFP*



Hideki Matsuyama of Japan celebrates after being awarded the Green Jacket by 2020 Masters champion Dustin Johnson (left) of the United States after he won the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday. — *AP*

Tears, cheers and shares rise as Hideki win thrills Japan

Tokyo, April 12: Thrilled Japanese golf fans welcomed Hideki Matsuyama's historic Masters victory on Monday, with broadcasters close to tears and the prime minister hailing the win as a bright spot during the pandemic.

"Matsuyama Masters" trended on Twitter and golf-related shares rose on the Tokyo stock market after the 29-year-old became the first Japanese man to capture a major golf title.

"Matsuyama opens the door of history," declared the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

In Japan, the one-stroke victory was sealed just after 8.00 am Monday morning, with some broadcasters carrying live footage of his final-round 73 that saw him finish on

● **TV networks ran breaking news flashes announcing the victory and several newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.**

10-under par. On the TBS station, broadcasters and commentators choked up as Matsuyama sank the final putt to claim the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy.

"Congratulations. Thank you," a presenter said as two golf commentators next to him struggled to hold back tears.

TV networks ran breaking news flashes announcing the victory and sever-

al newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.

As Tokyo's stock market opened, shares in Value Golf, which provides services linked to the sport, jumped 14 percent, while golf club maker Graphite Design rose 16 percent.

Fans flooded to congratulate the country's new sporting hero as social media lit up.

"I can't see through my tears," one fan tweeted. Japan's prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, told reporters Matsuyama's performance had been "really wonderful".

"I think it encouraged and excited people across Japan at a time when the impact from coronavirus is lingering," he said.

"It is a great achievement." — *AFP*

HIDEKI FACTFILE

- **Age:** 29
- **Born:** February 25, 1992
- **Birthplace:** Ehime, Japan
- **Home:** Sendai, Japan
- **Height:** 5ft 11in/1.80m
- **Weight:** 200 pounds/90.7kg
- **Turned Professional:** 2013
- **Highest World ranking:** 2
- **Current World Ranking:** 25
- **Career US PGA Tour titles:** 6
- **Career major titles:** 1 (Masters: 2021)

I'm really happy. Hopefully I'll be a pioneer in this and many other Japanese will follow. I'm happy to open the floodgate and many more will follow me.

● **Maybe a lot of younger golfers thought, 'That's an impossibility,' but with me doing it they will realise it is possible and if they set their minds to it they can do it.**

— **HIDEKI MATSUYAMA** after winning the 85th Masters crown

PAST FIVE WINNERS

- **2021 — Hideki Matsuyama (Japan)**
- **2020 — Dustin Johnson (USA)**
- **2019 — Tiger Woods (USA)**
- **2018 — Patrick Reed (USA)**
- **2017 — Sergio Garcia (Spain)**

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Dominant India crush Argentina

Buenos Aires, April 12: The Indian men's hockey team registered a comprehensive 3-0 win over reigning Olympic champions Argentina in the second match of the FIH Pro League here to jump to the fourth spot in the points table.

Goals from Harmanpreet Singh (11th minute), Lalit Upadhyay (25th) and Mandeep Singh (58th) on Sunday gave the visitors a deserved triumph over Los Leones, adding three more points to the two they had claimed against the hosts in Saturday's shoot-out, which earned them a bonus point.

By virtue of this win, India, with 15 points from eight games, climbed up to fourth place in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, moving one point ahead of Australia having played the same number of games.

India, Argentina and Australia will play against each other at the forthcoming Olympic Games, where they have been drawn in Pool A alongside Spain, New Zealand and home favourites Japan.

● **Goals from Harmanpreet Singh (11th minute), Lalit Upadhyay (25th) and Mandeep Singh (58th) on Sunday gave the visitors a deserved triumph over Los Leones.**

Argentina sit sixth in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, with 11 points from 12 games.

Argentina started brightly and would have been ahead had it not been for some excellent saves from India goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who twice denied Martin Ferreiro.

Harmanpreet then converted India's first penalty corner of the game in the 11th minute.

Lalit doubled India's lead when he showed lightning quick reactions in the second quarter, pouncing on a save from Argentina custodian Juan Vivaldi to slot home. The strike gave the visitors a deserved reward after a lengthy period of probing possession. — *PTI*

COACHES TEST POSITIVE AT NATIONAL BOXING CAMP

New Delhi, April 12: Two assistant coaches at the national camp for Indian women boxers here have tested positive for Covid-19 and quarantined with mild symptoms.

The development was confirmed 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.

It is also learnt that following the positive reports of the two coaches, who are down with fever, other members of the camp were also tested on Monday.

"Some of the boxers have also been unwell but none of them are from the Olympic-bound group. The results of the tests conducted at the camp on Monday are still awaited," the source said. — *PTI*

ORANGE

Sanju Samson, RR

119

KL Rahul, PBKS

91

Shikhar Dhawan, DC

85

PURPLE

Harshal Patel, RCB

5

Chetan Sakariya, RR

3

Arshdeep Singh, PBKS

3

Off the field



RCB cricketers play chess during a promotional shoot. — Twitter

Women's Challenge not to be expanded

The BCCI is likely to stick to three teams for the Women's T20 Challenge tournament, usually held during the IPL play-offs. The Board had planned to increase the exhibition event to four teams last year but it will continue to be a three-team affair due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the delayed IPL was held in the September-November window last year, the Women's Challenge clashed with the WBBL, making the Australian players unavailable. "There is a good chance that it will be held in Delhi. Talks are on with the leading Australian and England players," a BCCI official said.

Parag 'underarm' raises eyebrows

Riyan Parag went as low as illegally allowed in cricket to release a ball when bowling to Chris Gayle during the Punjab Kings innings against Rajasthan Royals in the IPL on Monday. The umpire was seen having a word with the bowler after the delivery, as the commentary box exploded in surprise. "How low is a legal sidearm delivery?" was the question raised by Harsha Bhogle. "Underarm deliveries are not allowed any more, as the Australians know well," he said.

Avesh cherishes Dhoni's wicket

Delhi Capitals' pacer Avesh Khan said he fulfilled a long-cherished dream when he got former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's prized wicket in their IPL opener against Chennai Super Kings. "Three years ago, I had a chance to take Mahi bhai's wicket, but somebody had dropped the catch. But now my dream of taking Mahi bhai's wicket is fulfilled, so I am very happy about it," Avesh said. "Since he has not played competitive matches for some time, we had planned to put pressure on him and because of that pressure I could take his wicket," he added.

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ROYAL FUMBLE!

Samson's hundred in vain as Rajasthan falter at finish line

Mumbai, April 12: Sanju Samson's magnificent 119 went in vain as Punjab Kings beat Rajasthan Royals by four runs in their IPL match here on Monday.

Rajasthan needed 13 off the last over and five off the last ball. Samson who denied a single to partner Chris Morris in the penultimate ball was caught at sweeper cover.

"I don't have words to explain my feelings. Would have loved to finish it off for my team. I don't think I could have done better than that. I thought I timed it well for a six but somehow. Catches go down and good catches were also taken. It's part of the game," said Samson who became the first player to hit a century on captaincy debut.

Earlier, KL Rahul and Deepak Hooda pummelled the Rajasthan Royals bowlers into submission with their sensational stroke play, propelling Punjab Kings to an imposing 221 for six in the IPL here on Monday.

While Rahul smashed seven fours and five sixes in his 50-ball 91, Hooda, playing his first game since the last IPL, plundered six maximums and four boundaries as he blazed his way to 64 off just 28 balls.

Put into bat, Punjab lost opener Mayank Agarwal (14) early, who edged it back to Royals captain and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson for IPL debutant Chetan Sakariya's first wicket.

He ended being the pick of the bowlers, conceding only five runs in the 20th over.

Rahul, who got his first four with a glance to the fine-leg fence, and Chris Gayle (40 off 28) gave the team a good start with their 67-run stand.

Rahul got a 'life' after Ben Stokes dropped him at the fence in the seventh over even as Gayle, looked in his elements.

The duo then took on Stokes, as Gayle hit his

SCORECARD

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul c Tewatia b Sakariya 91, Mayank Agarwal c Samson b Sakariya 14, Chris Gayle c Stokes b Parag 40, Deepak Hooda c Parag b Morris 64, Nicholas Pooran c Sakariya b Morris 0, Shahrukh Khan (not out) 6, Jhye Richardson c Morris b Sakariya 0. Extras (nb 2, w 4) 6. Total (in 20 overs) 221/6. FoW: 1-22, 2-89, 3-194, 4-201, 5-220, 6-221. Bowling: Chetan Sakariya 4-0-31-3, Mustafizur Rahman 4-0-45-0, Chris Morris 4-0-41-2, Shreyas Gopal 3-0-40-0, Ben Stokes 1-0-12-0, Rahul Tewatia 2-0-25-0, Riyan Parag 1-0-7-1, Shivam Dube 1-0-20-0.

Rajasthan Royals: Ben Stokes c & b Mohammed Shami 0, Manan Vohra c & b Arshdeep Singh 12, Sanju Samson c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 119, Jos Buttler b Richardson 25, Shivam Dube c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 23, Riyan Parag c Rahul b Mohammed Shami 25, Rahul Tewatia c Rahul b Meredith 2, Chris Morris (not out) 2. Extras (lb 2, nb 1, w 6) 9. Total (in 20 overs) 217/7. FoW: 1-0, 2-25, 3-70, 4-123, 5-175, 6-201, 7-217. Bowling: Mohammed Shami 4-0-33-2, Jhye Richardson 4-0-55-1, Arshdeep Singh 4-0-35-3, Riley Meredith 4-0-49-1, Murugan Ashwin 4-0-43-0.

Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson en route to his hundred against Punjab Kings on Monday.

350th IPL six, a pull over deep square in the 8th over with Punjab racing to 70 for one. Gayle was dropped by leggie Rahul Tewatia (0/25) off his own bowling and the very next ball, the left-hander smashed a six. However, in the 10th over, Riyan Parag (1/7) removed Gayle, who was

Punjab went ballistic. It was Rahul and Hooda's show at the Wankhede that made the difference to their total as the duo tore into the opposition attack on way to their 105-run stand. Courtesy their monstrous hitting, Punjab added 111 runs in the final eight overs.

— IPL

We have destructive batting unit: Morgan

AGE CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Knight Riders skipper Eoin Morgan said the Kolkata franchise have one of the most destructive batting line-ups in the IPL. He warned rivals that they would soon be firing on all cylinders.

"One of the many strengths we have within our squad is two of the most talented guys in the country opening the batting for us," Morgan said after beating Sunrisers Hyderabad by 10 runs on Sunday.

"It was quite magnificent the way the guys at the top of the order batted.

Tripathi today at No. 3 played beautifully and the middle-order we have is extremely versatile. When Dinesh plays like that or Andre plays the game he can play, you're going to see a very destructive batting unit that has potential to win you matches," Morgan added. Morgan also hailed his bowling unit. "Certainly the bowling, we couldn't have asked for a better start. Chopped and changed a bit in the power-play. Huge amount of structure that goes into the decisions on the field. We have got a fantastic head coach in (Brendon) McCullum," said Morgan.



KKR coach Brendon McCullum (left) and captain Eoin Morgan.

— IPL

KANE NEEDS MORE TIME TO GET FIT: BAYLISS

Chennai, April 12: Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Trevor Bayliss said New Zealand batsman Kane Williamson was left out of their opening IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders as he needs more time to be match fit. Batting at number four, Williamson had scored 317 runs in 11 innings for SRH last season, while Bairstow was equally impressive with 345 runs after opening the innings in the previous edition in the UAE.

"We just felt that Kane needed a little bit of extra time to get match fit and a little bit more time in the nets," Bayliss said after SRH lost to KKR by 10 runs on Sunday night.

"He would have played in place of Jonny Bairstow obviously if that had occurred. But we aren't too perturbed about that. Jonny has been in form recently in white-ball cricket here in India. Kane will obviously come into calculations as the tournament unfolds."

Bairstow made 55 batting at number four but Wriddhiman Saha, who opened the innings, was dismissed cheaply for seven runs. "At the moment what we wanted to do is reward the guys who finished the tournament last year," Bayliss said.

"We got off to a slow start last year but came back well. Someone like Saha opening and batting so well in that tournament we felt we should reward the guys who finished it so well for us last year."

— PTI

POINTS TABLE

Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
DC	1	1	0	0	2	+0.779
KKR	1	1	0	0	2	+0.500
PBKS	1	1	0	0	2	+0.200
RCB	1	1	0	0	2	+0.050
MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.050
RR	1	0	1	0	0	-0.200
SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.779

Knights run into nemesis Mumbai

AGE CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 12

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	27
MI	21
KKR	6

FOR THE RECORD

- Shubman Gill who has scored 954 runs at an average of 32.89 in 39 innings needs 44 more to become the 11th batsman to make 1,000+ runs for KKR.
- Krunal Pandya who has taken 47 wickets at an average of 21.32 in 70 innings needs three more to become the sixth bowler to achieve the 50-wicket landmark for Mumbai.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Mumbai beat KKR by 49 runs at Abu Dhabi.
- Mumbai beat KKR by 8 wickets at Abu Dhabi.

STATS: S. PERVEZ KAISER

Two uncapped Indians — Rahul Tripathi and Nitish Rana — were the main architects in KKR's win. The contribution of Dinesh Karthik who scored an unbeaten 22 off 9 balls proved to be vital in the final analysis. Pacer Prasidh Krishna who recently made his India debut has evolved in Kolkata colours. Andre Russell who failed to fire as a batsman made amends with the ball. It was his superb final over which carried KKR past the finish line. Eoin Morgan is unlikely to change KKR's combination of overseas players as Aussie Pat Cummins and Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan had provided vital breakthroughs.



Mumbai Indians pacer Marco Jansen during a training session in Chennai.

— Mumbai Indians

HARDIK'S SHOULDER NIGGLE A HEADACHE FOR MUMBAI

AGE CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 12

All-rounder Hardik Pandya's shoulder niggle and workload management are creating a headache for Mumbai Indians as they struggle to find a bowling option who can play the role of a back-up with one of the frontline bowlers going for runs.

MI's director of cricket operations Zaheer Khan admitted that Hardik's workload management is creating an imbalance.

In the first match against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Friday, they used only five bowlers and with their fifth bowler Rahul Chahar going for runs, MI were left without any

option to step in for him and stem the flow of runs.

"It was a workload-related thing in the previous game. He (Hardik) bowled the whole series against England, in the last ODI he bowled about nine overs and that's why in consultation with the physios we had to take that approach," said Zaheer. Zaheer admitted that there was concern over Hardik's shoulder as he was throwing under-arm while fielding. "Hardik as a whole package is of great value, everyone knows. There was a little bit of a concern over his shoulder," added the former India pacer.

Zaheer, however, said that the injury is not of great concern or worry.