



Pages 12 | ₹ 5.00/LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

# The Statesman

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



HARYANA STOPPED  
OXYGEN SUPPLY:  
SISODIA



AFTER RAUL, WHAT'S  
NEXT FOR CUBA?

P2



PUTIN WARNS THE  
ENEMIES OF RUSSIA

P7

OF A CAPTAIN WHO  
HAS TO MAKE  
HIMSELF USEFUL



P12

## WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 34 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

### RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 73%	Min: 38%
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:48 hrs	18:51 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
13:46 hrs	03:24 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Deserted view of ghats at Har Ki Pauri on Ram Navami of Kumbh 2021 in Hardikar on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

Bengali poet Shankha Ghosh dies: Noted Bengali poet Shankha Ghosh (89), a Padma Bhushan awardee, died on Wednesday while he was in isolation at his residence after testing positive for Covid, his family said. Ghosh, 89, was found to be Covid-positive on 14 April. His condition deteriorated suddenly late on Tuesday night, following which he was given oxygen support, they said. He died around 8.30 am, they added. Considered to be having authority on Rabindranath Tagore, Ghosh is known for 'Adim Lata - Gulmomay' and 'Murkha Baro Samajik Nay', among other books.

Soccer Super League dead in the water: Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan, AC Milan and Juventus all dropped out of the Super League on Wednesday, leaving the new competition essentially extinct before it even started. Only Spanish clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona are still officially involved. The moves by Atletico, Inter, AC Milan and Juventus came a day after the six Premier League clubs involved in the project gave up on the controversial break-away competition. The project was overseen by Real Madrid president Florentino Perez, who promoted it as a way to save soccer and the clubs struggling financially.

P12

Floyd death:  
Cop Chauvin  
found guilty  
on all charges

WASHINGTON, 21 APRIL

A US grand jury has found former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty on all three charges he faced over the custodial death of African-American George Floyd last year, a chilling incident that sparked worldwide protests against racism and excessive use of force by police.

The 12 jurors found Chauvin, 45, guilty of unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in one of the most closely watched cases in recent memory in the US.

Chauvin was filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck during his arrest on 25 May after a convenience store clerk in Minneapolis alleged that Floyd had tried to pay a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. He faces up to 40 years in prison, according to US media reports.

With only his eyes visible as the rest of his face was hidden behind a surgical mask, Chauvin watched as the verdict was announced. A deputy handcuffed Chauvin and escorted him to a side room. He was later transferred to the Minnesota Correctional Facility. Judge Peter Cahill said sentencing is expected in eight weeks. The verdict prompted celebratory scenes outside the court and in Floyd's home town, where several hundred people cheered as it was announced.

## Record 2,023 fresh fatalities, 2,95,041 cases in single day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The single-day rise in new coronavirus infections inched closer to 3 lakh, pushing India's total tally of Covid-19 cases to 1,56,16,130, while the death toll reached 1,82,553 with a record 2,023 daily fatalities, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The health ministry released a slew of comparative data, showing that the severity, virulence and demography of the victims in the ongoing second wave of Covid are about the same as the first wave, although the current number of active cases has already crossed the maximum figure of active Covid-19 cases last year. According to the health min-

istry data, a total of 2,95,041 fresh infections were registered in a span of 24 hours, while the active cases crossed the 21-lakh mark, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed. Registering a steady increase for the 42nd in a row, active cases have increased to 21,57,538, comprising 13.82 per cent of the total infections, while the national recovery rate has dropped to 85.01 per cent.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said, 146 districts reported positivity rate of more than 15 per cent, while 274 districts reported case positivity between 5 and 15 per cent. Bhushan further shared data which showed that in those aged 30 and above, 67.5 per cent cases were reported in the first wave, and 69.18 per cent cases registered in the second wave.



## Oxygen crisis rages amid exploding Delhi cases

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Several Delhi hospitals treating Covid patients faced a major medical oxygen crisis with their depleting stock for the second consecutive day, prompting the Centre to increase the city's quota to 480 metric tonnes against the AAP government's 700 MT demand.

Delhi today recorded 24,638 fresh coronavirus cases and 249 deaths, according to the government's latest health bulletin. Its positivity rate was 31.28 per cent while the active cases tally stood at 85,364.

The city's Covid caseload soared to 9,30,179 while its death toll spiked to 12,887.

The national capital had yesterday recorded its highest-ever 28,395 coronavirus cases and 277 Covid-related deaths.

Uttarakhand and from 378 MT to 480 MT in Delhi.

The Centre's response came as Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra indulged in a blame game and squabbled over oxygen supply and distribution while demanding an increase in their quota.

On Wednesday, several hospitals in the national capital like Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital, St Stephen's Hospital and Holy Family Hospital in Okhla said they only had oxygen for two to five hours. Other hospitals too had been facing a depleting stock for the last few days.

**Covishield price:** Serum Institute of India's Covishield vaccine will cost private hospitals Rs 600 per dose and state governments Rs 400, a rate which will also apply to central government procurement once the existing contract for Rs 150 a dose ends, its chief executive said. SNS/PTI

## Matuas may make the difference in 6th phase of Bengal elections

SOMA MOOKHERJEE & TIRTHANKAR MITRA  
KOLKATA, 22 APRIL

sentatives.

In North Dinajpur, apart from minister Gulam Rabbanee contesting from Goalpokhar, some heavyweight leaders in the poll fray include Congress veteran Mohit Sengupta from Raiganj, Forward Bloc's Ali Imran Ramzan from Chakulia, Trinamul's Abdul Karim Chowdhury from Islampur. Raniganj seat will witness a seesaw contest between Trinamul's Kanaiyalal Agarwal, sitting MLA from Islampur and veteran Congress leader Mohit Sengupta. The contest for Itahar constituency is no less interesting after Trinamul supre-

**FOCUS**



All eyes are on Krishnanagar (North) where one of the BJP's vice-presidents, Mukul Roy, will be contesting against film actress Koushani Mukherjee of TMC

mo Mamata Banerjee denied ticket to Amal Acharya, the sitting MLA who later defected to BJP. The CPI, a part of the Sanyukta Morcha, has fielded former minister Sri Kumar Mukherjee who had earlier won from this seat. All eyes are on Krishnanagar (North) where one of the BJP's vice-presidents, Mukul Roy, will be contesting against

film actress Koushani Mukherjee of Trinamul Congress.

In Nadia, veteran Trinamul leaders like Kallol Khan from Nakasipara, Pundarkishya (Nanda) Saha from Nababipore and Rukbanur Rehman from Chapra are in the fray. Recently, the Trinamul Congress suspended block president Jaber Sheik of Chapra for anti-party activi-

ties and now he is contesting as an Independent candidate. State jail minister Ujjwal Biswas is contesting from Krishnanagar (South).

In North 24-Parganas, state food and supplies minister Jyoti Priya Mullick is contesting from Habra.

In 2019 election, Matua votes from Bongaon, Gaighata, Habra and Ashokenagar had switched over to the BJP and thereafter the Trinamul government had constituted a Matua board and set up a college in the name of PR Thakur, Harichand Gurucharan University and recognised all Matua colonies. It

remains to be seen what quantum of Matua votes TMC can wrest from the BJP in this election.

Actor and director Raj Chakraborty is contesting from Barrackpore. The sitting MLA Shilphadra Dutta of Barrackpore having defected to the saffron camp is pitted against a new Trinamul candidate, Kajal Sinha, in Kardha as the state finance minister Amit Mitra is not contesting this time. Minister of state for health, Chandrima Bhattacharya is contesting from Dum Dum (North) and veteran Trinamul Youth leader, Partha Bhowmick from Nai-

hati. Minister Swapan Debnath will contest from Purbasthal (South) and TMC candidate Rabindranath Chatterjee from Katwa. Minister Siddiqua Chowdhury, a sitting MLA of Mankalik chose to contest from Manteshwar following differences with party strongman, Anubrata Mondal. In his place, Apurba Chowdhury will contest from Mangalkot. In the wake of violence during earlier phases of the election, the Election Commission of India has decided to deploy at least 1,071 companies of Central forces in the sixth phase, an EC official said.



The Covid-19 pandemic had subsided in the country but has surged in a second wave owing to the monumental failure of the central government and negligence and total incompetence on its part

MAMATA BANERJEE  
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

**Capital**

Centre has increased Delhi's O2 quota: CM



SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

With several private and city government hospitals here running low on medical oxygen for Covid-19 patients, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today announced that the Centre has enhanced the national capital's oxygen quota.

"Central govt has increased Delhi's quota of oxygen. We're very grateful to centre for this," Kejriwal tweeted.

coronavirus patients battled for their life in these healthcare facilities.

CM Kejriwal had yesterday urged the Centre, this time with "folded hands", to provide medical oxygen to Delhi urgently, saying some hospitals in the city were going to run out of it in a few hours.

"Serious oxygen crisis persists in Delhi. I again urge Centre to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi. Some hospitals are left with just a few hours of oxygen," the CM had then tweeted. In another tweet, Kejriwal had then stated, "Urge the Central government with folded hands to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi."

**A** war of words has broken out between states - such as Delhi and Haryana or UP - as well as between the Centre and states over the acute shortage of medical oxygen for Covid patients in hospitals.

Delhi's deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia alleged that an official of the Haryana government stopped oxygen supply to Delhi from a plant in Faridabad.

Sisodia said the AAP government had been demanding that the Centre increase Delhi's quota of oxygen from 378 metric tonnes to 700 metric tonnes.

The central government,

which decides the quota of oxygen for states, is yet to take a step in this direction, Sisodia said at a press conference.

"We again demand that the Centre increase our oxygen quota to 700 MT in view of the increased consumption. Patients from several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, are admitted in city hospitals," Sisodia said.

He claimed that an official of the Haryana government stopped oxygen supply from a plant in Faridabad. A similar incident took place in

Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday. This led to a crisis in some hospitals, Sisodia said, adding the oxygen supply had been restored now.

The Delhi government demands that states should get their allotted share of oxygen without others interfering into it, he added.

Several hospitals in Delhi on Wednesday alleged that the Haryana government was not allowing vendors to supply oxygen to them and there is only limited stock left as hundreds of coronavirus patients battled for their life in these healthcare facilities.

According to an official, Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital had five hours of oxygen left

around 4.30 pm. There are 58 Covid patients, including 10 in ICU, in the hospital.

The vendor, as per its representative, is not being allowed by the Haryana government to supply oxygen cylinders and liquid oxygen to Sir Ganga Ram City Hospital, Pusa Road. Supply left is sufficient only for five hours," the official said.

He said the Centre needs to intervene as a large number of hospitals are affected due to the "stoppage of oxygen supply from Haryana".

A spokesperson of St Stephen's Hospital said they had only two hours of oxygen left around 4 pm.

"The Haryana government has not been allowing



ANIL VIJ

our vendor to supply oxygen to us. Of the 350 patients in the hospital, around 200 are on oxygen support," he alleged.

However, the Haryana government rejected such allegations, saying that no one in its administration had hampered anything.

Earlier in the day, Haryana health minister Anil Vij alleged that a tanker carrying medical oxygen for Covid patients in state hospitals, which was going from Panipat to Faridabad, was "looted" by the Delhi government and said all oxygen tankers will now move with a police escort.

"If governments indulge

in such things, then it will result in chaos," Vij said, adding that he has now ordered that all oxygen tankers will move with a police escort so that such incidents do not happen in the future.

"But to take out gas from a tanker in this manner is highly condemnable," he said. "We will write to Delhi

government officials about this incident."

The minister further claimed that pressure was being put on the state to give medical oxygen to Delhi. He said the two neighbouring states from which Haryana earlier used to get the oxygen supply have currently stopped it to meet their own demand.

"We also used to get supply from Baddi in Himachal Pradesh and Bhiwadi in Rajasthan but the governments there have stopped the supply now. In our plants in Haryana, I have deployed officials and police because we want to first meet our requirements. Pressure is being put on us that we should supply to Delhi. We have no problem in doing so if we have spare supply, but our first priority is Haryana," Vij said.

In a statement, however, the Delhi government said: "It's indeed unfortunate that states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are curtailing the supply of live-saving oxygen to Delhi."

"Just as the Haryana government, the Uttar Pradesh government has illegally captured the oxygen production plants, depriving Delhi of oxygen," the Delhi government said. "What's worse is that they're indulging in this insensitive act despite clear orders from the high court."

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF SH. HARISH DUDANI PUBLICATION NOTICE (Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure) District Judge (Commercial Court)

South West District Court No. 603, Six Floor Dwarka Court New Delhi Case No. CS (COMM): 178/2019

FDC Ltd. —Plaintiff

M/s. Janak Medicos —Defendant

To M/s. Janak Medicos Through its Partner (s), Plot No. 9-B (Basement) B-Block, Shankar Garden, New Delhi-110018.

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 8th day of July 2021, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court on this 6th day of April, 2021.

District Judge (Commercial Court)

South-West District Court No. 603, Six Floor Dwarka Court New Delhi Case No. CS (COMM): 178/2019

Fast Track Court III at Barrackpore,

Mat Suit No. 1101/19.

Priyanka Mondal, wife of Martin George, daughter of Atin Mondal of College Pally, P.O.: Sewli Telingapara, Barasat Road, P.S.: Tilingapara, W.B., Kolkata-700121;

—Petitioner

-Vs-

Martin George, son of George of C.S.B. Layout, Plot No. 28, 2nd Cross Sayapur Road, Karmalaram (P.O.),

741235, do hereby declare

Bengaluru-560035; ... Respondent Notice

Notice is hereby granted to the respondent above-named that the petitioner has filed a petition for divorce in the court of Learned Judge mentioned above. And the respondent if have any objection with regard to the said petition kindly appear self or through the Ld. Lawyer before the undersigned on 07.07.2021 otherwise the said petition will be heard as ex parte.

Malay Kumar Kundu Signature of the Serestadar The Learned Fast Track Court III at Barrackpore

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ROHIT Tulsian, father of Veni Tulsian, residing at 335, N.S. Road, Howrah-711101, declare that my son Vani Tulsian has changed his name to Veni Tulsian, vide Affidavit No. 25008 dated 13 Feb., 2015 sworn before the Notary Public at Kolkata.

C, CHANGE OF NAME

I, NANDITA Chaudhuri, w/o. Sarash Chaudhuri, D/o. Late Baidyanath Hazra, residing at 8/29, Kalyani, Nadia, WB-741235, do hereby declare that my surname was wrongly recorded as 'Choudhuri' instead of 'Chaudhuri' in my old passport. I am rectifying it in my new passport from 'Choudhuri' to 'Chaudhuri' as per affidavit dated: 16.04.2021 sworn before Asis Kumar Sen, Notary Public, Kolkata.

I, SANTOSH Chaudhuri, late Narayan Chaudhuri, residing at B-4/99, Kalyani, Nadia, W.B., 741235, do hereby declare

that my surname was 'Choudhuri' instead of 'Chaudhuri' in my old passport. I am rectifying it in my new passport from 'Choudhuri' to 'Chaudhuri' as per affidavit dated: 16.04.2021 sworn before Asis Kumar Sen, Notary Public, Kolkata.

76, Ashutosh Mukherjee Road Kolkata-700025 Ph. Nos.: 22904774/22905565

PUBLIC NOTICE — Please

take notice that a partition suit being number C.S. 75 of 2021 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court at Calcutta and the said suit inter alia includes the property located at 21B, Shakespear Sarani, Tata Road, Kolkata-700023, as such is covered under the doctrine of lis pendens. Whomsoever deals in the said property deals at his own risk and peril — Ashok Goel, Plaintiff, C.K. Saha Advocate

IN MEMORIAM

I, SEFALI, spouse of late Dhiren Chandra De, resident of Uttar Alpur (Nutanpara), P.O.: Chakdaha, Dist.: Nadia, Pin-741222 have changed my name from Sefali to Sefali Dey, vide affidavit dated 13.04.21 before Ld. Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class, Ranaghat Court, Nadia.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

I, ROHIT Tulsian, father of Veni Tulsian, residing at 335, N.S. Road, Howrah-711101, declare that my son Vani Tulsian has changed his name to Veni Tulsian, vide Affidavit No. 25008 dated 13 Feb., 2015 sworn before the Notary Public at Kolkata.

Third Death Anniversary Smt. Manjusree Sinha nee Kar (3.9.1934 - 22.4.2018) Ph.D (C.U), Ex-head, Dept. of Bengali, Muralidhar Girls College, Kolkata

Patit Paban (husband), children & grandchildren

## Keep online teaching, learning activities suspended in summer vacation: Delhi govt to pvt schools

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

June 3, has now been rescheduled from April 20 to June 9.

"It has been brought to the notice of this directorate that despite the summer vacation which has been advanced due to surge in COVID-19 cases, the regular online learning method continues to be adopted in one way or the other by some private schools. The online classes are being used as a substitute of physical classroom learning without any break," the Directorate of Education (DoE) said in an official order.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) had on Monday advanced summer vacations in view of the deteriorating COVID-19 situation. The vacation, which was scheduled from May 11 to

keeping in mind the prevailing situation due to COVID-19 and in the overall interest of all stakeholders of the management of private schools including its teaching staff, it is expedient that direction issued in respect of government schools for creativity, happiness and overall social and emotional well-being to enrich the overall growth of the students without calling them to school physically," it added.

The DoE then directed all private schools that all "online and semi-online teaching and learning activities shall remain suspended during the

aforesaid period of summer vacation in line with the government schools".

"However, the schools may conduct vacation related specific activities, remedial classes for specific set of students and other activities for creativity, happiness and overall social and emotional well-being to enrich the overall growth of the students without calling them to school physically," it added.

Schools in the national capital were closed in March last year ahead of a nationwide lockdown to contain spread of coronavirus. The government then ordered reopening of schools for classes 9 to 12 with consent of parents. However, with the COVID-19 cases rising again, the schools have been closed again.

Noting that the vacation plays a very important role in the academic cycle, both for students and their teachers, the DoE said that in the present circumstances "it is all the more important that the intent of summer vacation is realised not just in letter but in spirit too".

## Delhi govt discontinues services of guest teachers during summer break

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

government and government-aided schools in the national capital.

The Delhi government has directed its schools to discontinue the services of guest teachers during summer vacation which was recently preponed in view of rising COVID-19 cases, according to the Directorate of Education.

There are over 20,000 guest teachers engaged in

ordered suspension of all online and semi-online teaching and learning activities during the vacation.

"All heads of schools are directed to discontinue the services of all the guest teachers engaged in their school from April 20. However, during vacation period, principals are authorised to call guest teachers as per requirement for any school related work (academic, admission, examination) maintaining COVID appropriate behaviour and following SOPs issued by competent authorities," the DoE said in an order.

"The guest teachers who shall be called during the summer vacation shall be paid as per norms, rest all guest teachers shall be paid up to April 19," it said.

The move, however, was condemned as an "inhumane act during unfortunate

time" by the All India Guest Teachers Association.

"The discontinuation of the services of guest teachers is a BIG INHUMAN act at the time of COVID-19 crisis. @ArvindKejriwal @msisdoce. Kindly continue their services & u may use this work force 4 #COVID19 awareness/support. They're better than ur self-defense volunteers," the association tweeted.

## Delhi civic bodies working on monitoring system for crematoriums, burial grounds

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Civic authorities in Delhi have started working on a real-time monitoring system and a central control room for crematoriums and burial grounds amid a rise in the number of COVID-19 fatalities.

The rush at crematoriums and graveyards has intensified of late with the death toll due to the viral disease rising steadily.

The situation is "very bad", said Mashqoor Rashid, busy issuing papers to those reaching the Qabristan Ahle Islam near ITO, the biggest Muslim graveyard in Delhi, to bury their family members.

"On an average, we are performing the burials of 18-20 coronavirus victims every day for the last few

days," Rashid, a member of the graveyard's management committee, said.

According to the city government, COVID-19 claimed 240 lives on April 19, 161 on April 18, 167 on April 17 and 141 on April 16.

North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash said directions have been given to officials to set up a real-time monitoring sys-

tem and a central control room for cremation grounds and cemeteries.

"All small and big crematoriums and cemeteries in the jurisdiction of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation will be connected

to this integrated system. People will be able to know whether space is available for performing the last rites at these places," he said.

Thirty additional platforms for the cremation of COVID victims at the Rohini Sector-16 cremation ground and 50 at the Paschim Vihar cremation ground will be developed in the next two days, he added.

The number of platforms for cremation has been increased from 122 to 150 at Nigambodh Ghat, Suman Gupta, the general secretary of the Badi Panchayat Vaishya Beese Agarwal organisation that manages the crematorium, said.

"We cremated 95 COVID victims' bodies on Tuesday. The figures for Wednesday are yet to be compiled," Gupta said.



FILE PHOTO

## The Statesman



*He (Rahul Gandhi) did not have any election rally scheduled in the state anyway. He was left with no work after addressing poll meetings in two districts.*

SENIOR BJP LEADER KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA  
AFTER RAHUL GANDHI CANCELLED HIS POLL RALLIES IN WEST BENGAL

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 22 APRIL 2021

03

# Short on O2, Pb asks Centre to ensure its uninterrupted supply

CM urges the Centre to ensure at least 120 MT oxygen daily for Punjab for Covid patients

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 21 APRIL

Faced with shortage of medical oxygen supply for Covid-19 patients, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Wednesday urged the Centre to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supplies with at least 120 metric tonne (MT) daily allocation for the state.

In a letter to Union health and family welfare minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Punjab CM sought immediate consideration to his request for uninterrupted oxygen supplies from the liquid medical oxygen (LMO) suppliers as per commitment on daily basis.

He also requested that allocation to Punjab be kept at least at 120 MT daily exclud-



ing (22 MT) of Punjab quota in supply to PGIMER, Chandigarh. While the capacity for storage of medical oxygen for all healthcare facilities in the state is around 300 MT, daily requirement of medical oxygen as per the present Covid caseload in Punjab is around 105 to 110 MT, the CM

pointed out, adding that this was expected to further rise to around 150-170 MT in the next two weeks as per the projections of increase in hospital admissions due to the rising caseload.

Amarinder noted that since the main requirement of the state is fulfilled from out-

side, adherence of supply as per the allocation made by the Centre for all states, including Punjab, is critical to be able to meet the daily requirements.

The Central Control Group on Oxygen had allocated 126 MT (including 32 MT from the local ASUs) on April 15th, 2021. However, the allocation has subsequently been reduced to 82 MT from the week of 25th April, said the CM, adding this allocation would be grossly insufficient to meet the demand. Further, the Central allocation control room has clubbed allocation of Punjab with the Union Territory of Chandigarh (22MT) which further reduces the allocation for Punjab, he added.

The demand is currently fulfilled by the manufacturers, refills and pressure

swing adsorption (PSA) plants in few of the districts, both in government and private sector. He said that the biggest constraint faced by Punjab is the supply to the manufacturers and the refills for liquid oxygen is fulfilled by manufacturers from outside the state (namely Inox, Baddi, HP, Air Liquide Panipat and Roorki, and Linde, Selaqui, Dehradun) as there is no LMO plant within the state.

On the two pending Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants, which were approved by the Union government two months earlier for Government Medical College and Hospitals (GMCHs) at Patiala and Amritsar, the CM urged the Union minister to initiate the process for setting them up expeditiously in order to reduce oxygen requirement from LMO suppliers.

## Medical O2 shortage 'murder of humanity': Punjab minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 21 APRIL

Lashing out at the BJP-led Central government for failing to fight against Coronavirus and showing helplessness in delivering basic medical amenities to the states, Punjab sports, youth services and NRIs affairs minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi on Wednesday termed the medical oxygen shortage as "murder of humanity".

In a statement, Rana Sodhi said the Union government has

failed miserably to provide much needed relief to Indian citizens as hoarders are proactively busy hoarding medical oxygen.

He said that the acute shortage of Covid vaccines and other life saving drugs has led to significant public anger against the government. "Despite being fully aware of a probable vaccine shortage, the Union government had held back permissions for new vaccines. However, it relied only on the ability of two private compa-

nies to ramp up their production capacities but the efforts had gone in vain," he said.

Rana Sodhi said that the failure to supply adequate quantities of vaccines had resulted in several vaccination centres of various states suspending vaccination drives and people being turned away. The situation worsened as the entire country needed urgent health care facilities and the Union government ignored the harsh realities like Roman emperor Nero.

Demanding the resignation of Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan for showing petty politics on the advice of

world-renowned economist and former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Rana Sodhi said the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre has shown an "insult" to Indian culture and tradition besides destroying the dignity and respect of the world famous former Prime Minister, and this too at that time when Dr Vardhan should be focusing on fighting the deadly virus, but rather he was making time to create unnecessary political gains out of a note sent out of good intentions by Dr Singh.

## Punjab CM okays reward policy for drugs info under NDPS Act

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 21 APRIL

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Wednesday approved a reward policy to encourage information and inputs leading to recovery of drugs under the Narcotic Drugs And Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The CM termed it an important step towards motivating people to play a proactive role in helping the government in cracking down on drug smugglers and traffickers.

The policy will recognise government servants, informers or sources for their role in providing inputs leading to the recovery of substantial quantity of drugs and in successful implementation of various provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985 and the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in NDPS Act, 1988, according to Punjab Director General of Police (DGP), Dinkar Gupta.

The quantum of reward for successful investigation, prosecution, forfeiture of illegally acquired property, preventive detention and other significant anti-drug work shall be decided on a case-to-case basis.

The decision is in line with the suggestion mooted by the DGP for instituting such a policy during the 23 February meeting chaired by the CM to review the status of his government's war on drugs.

Persons eligible for the reward under the policy would include informers whose information leads to seizure of narcotics drugs, psychotropic substances, controlled substance and forfeiture of illegally acquired

property under Chapter V-A of NDPS Act, 1985.

Other eligible category would comprise the officers or officials of State government or Central government such as police, prosecutors, officers of enforcement agencies of Government of India, who make seizures of narcotics drugs or conduct successful investigation under the NDPS Act, 1985, or ensure successful prosecution or achieve successful forfeiture of illegally acquired property or achieve successful preventive detention or any other achievement considered fit for grant of cash reward, said Gupta.

The DGP clarified government officers would normally be eligible for 50 per cent of the maximum reward. The rewards in excess of this limit may be considered only in cases where the government employee has exposed himself or herself to a great personal hazard or displayed exemplary courage, commendable initiative or resourcefulness of an extraordinary nature or where his or her personal efforts have been mainly responsible for the detection of case of seizure.

The rates of reward (per kilogram) in respect of substances seized under the provisions of NDPS Act, 1985 would be Rs 6000 in case of opium, Rs 20,000 for morphine base and its salts, Rs 1,20,000 for heroin and its salts, Rs 2,40,000 for cocaine and its salts, Rs 2000 for hashish, Rs 10000 for hashish oil, Rs 600 for Ganja, Rs 2000 for mandrax tablets, Rs 2000 for amphetamine, its salts and preparations thereof, Rs 2000 for methamphetamine, its salts and preparations.

## HC verdict likely today on WhatsApp, FB pleas against CCI order for probe

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Delhi High Court is likely to pronounce verdict on Thursday on pleas by social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp challenging competition regulator CCI's order directing a probe into the latter's new privacy pol-

icy.

Justice Navin Chawla had on April 13 reserved judgement on the two separate petitions by Facebook and WhatsApp.

While reserving its decision, the court had observed that the order of the Competition

Commission of India (CCI) does not reflect an investigation into abuse of dominant position and rather appears to be concerned with privacy issues of consumers.

The observation came in response to CCI's stand that it was not examining the alleged violation of individuals' privacy which was being looked into by the Supreme Court.

CCI had argued before the court that the new privacy policy of WhatsApp would lead to excessive data collection and "stalking" of consumers for targeted advertising to bring in

more users and is therefore an alleged abuse of dominant position.

"There is no question of jurisdictional error," it had contended and added that WhatsApp and Facebook's pleas challenging its decision were "incompetent and misconceived".

WhatsApp and Facebook have challenged the CCI's March 24 order directing a probe into the new privacy policy. CCI had also told the court that only after the investigation can it be determined whether the data collection by WhatsApp and sharing it

with Facebook would amount to an anti-competitive practice or abuse of dominant position.

CCI had also contended that the data collected, which would include an individual's location, the kind of device used, their internet service provider and whom they are conversing with, would lead to creation of a customer profile and preference which would be monetised by way of targeted advertising and all this amounts to "stalking".

The two social media platforms, on the other hand, had contended that when

the top court and the Delhi High Court were looking into the privacy policy, then CCI ought not to have "jumped the gun" and intervened in the issue.

They had also said that CCI's decision was an abuse of the commission's suo motu jurisdiction.

They claimed that the CCI in the instant case has "drifted far away" from the competition aspect and was looking into the privacy issue which was already being looked into by the apex court and the Delhi High Court.

The two social media plat-

forms had also told the court that private conversations continued to be protected by end to end encryption and WhatsApp cannot read what people message each other.

They had also contended that the most of the data generated belonged to WhatsApp as the only data provided by customers was their phone number which is required to register on the messaging platform.

In January, the CCI on its own decided to look into WhatsApp's new privacy policy on the basis of news reports regarding the same.

## Pb Police files 130 FIRs against Covid norms violators in 24 hrs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 21 APRIL

With the Punjab government ordering fresh restrictions following the rapid surge in Covid-19 cases, the Punjab Police have registered at least 130 First Information Reports (FIRs) against the violators in the last 24 hours.

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh had on Monday clamped down with stricter curbs including extension of night curfew timings by one hour (8 pm to 5 am), closure of all bars, cinemas, gyms, spas, coaching centres, sports complexes, with restaurants and hotels to be opened only for takeaway and home delivery from Monday to Saturday besides banning the gatherings of over 20 persons including for weddings/cremations. The CM had directed the Punjab Police to ensure strict enforcement of the Covid restrictions.

Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Dinkar Gupta

on Wednesday said the joint teams of Punjab Police have booked around 189 owners of marriage palaces, malls, hotels, restaurants etc for flouting the night curfew timings and gathering limits since 18 April.

Divulging details regarding the action against prominent establishments,

spokesperson of Police Department said the Bathinda Police have registered a case under the Indian Penal Code and The Disaster Management Act against the manager of Civil Lines Club Bathinda, the caterer and the hosts for organising an engagement party having more than 20 guests. The Tarn Taran Police have booked owners of Hotel Sunstar for Covid-19 norms violations. Recently, the SAS Nagar Police had arrested nine people, including a hotel owner in Dhadoli, for organising a rooftop party at Grand Suites Hotel in the night with huge gathering and had also

booked the owner of AKM Marriage Palace for holding a function with more than 20 persons in violation of Covid guidelines.

Similarly, the owner of Palm Plaza in Barnala was fined Rs 10000, Orbit Resort in Fazilka penalised with Rs 5000 and Sangam Palace in Abohar chal-

laned Rs 10000 for violation of Covid-19 guidelines, and their owners and managers would also be booked and arrested soon.

The Patiala police have registered a maximum of 45 FIRs, including 35 against shop owners, five against restaurants, four against dhabas and one against protesters for violating Covid-19 norms in the last 24 hours followed by 17 FIRs by the Jalandhar Commissionerate Police.

The DGP said, as part of the drive to book and arrest persons found violating the safety protocols and Covid restrictions, the Punjab Police have persuaded over 2041 face mask violators to undergo RT-PCR testing and challaned as many as 2199 people found without face masks during the last 24 hours. Since the special drive was started from 19 March this year, the Punjab Police have taken over 4.1 lakh people for Covid-19 testing besides fining as many as 71422 people across the state for not wearing face masks.

## Protesting farmers reject allegations of blocking oxygen transport to Delhi

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Farmers protesting at several Delhi borders Wednesday rejected as "false propaganda" allegations that they were not letting medical oxygen carriers into Delhi, thus putting lives of several COVID-19 patients at risk.

BJP MP Parvesh Verma had Tuesday night alleged that transportation of medical use oxygen into Delhi was hampered due to the road blockade caused by protesters. The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a representative body

of several protesting farmer unions, said on Wednesday they have kept a way open for emergency services since day one of their agitation.

"Not a single ambulance or essential goods service has been stopped. It is the government that has put strong and multilayer barricades (nails), not the farmers. Farmers are fighting for human rights and they support every human's rights," the morcha said.

A false propaganda is being spread against farmers that they have blocked the roads and not letting oxygen



into Delhi. This is completely false news. Yes, we are protesting but not against COVID-19 patients, corona warriors or common citizens. We are against the government's discriminatory policy on agriculture," it added.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and several other states have been protesting on various borders of Delhi since November last year, seeking a repeal of three farm laws enacted last September.

Making the allegations, Verma had tweeted last night, "I spoke to hospitals. I was told

that only few hours of oxygen supply is left and due to road blockade by protesters at Ghazipur border, the transportation of oxygen is getting difficult. The protesters must open the road," he had tweeted. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had on Tuesday urged the Centre "with folded hands" to provide medical oxygen to Delhi. His deputy Manish Sisodia had said there will be chaos in the city if the stocks are not replenished by Wednesday morning.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain had also sent an SOS to Union minister

Piyush Goyal at 10:20 pm, saying "oxygen at GTB Hospital may not last beyond 4 hrs".

Some major government and private hospitals in Delhi received fresh stock of medical oxygen in the early hours of Wednesday, averting a crisis just in time, according to officials. A record 28,395 coronavirus cases and 277 deaths marked the aggravation of the pandemic situation in Delhi on Tuesday as the positivity rate shot up to 32.82 per cent -- meaning every third sample came out positive -- amid a "serious oxygen crisis" unfolding in the city.



An artist dressed as Lord Ram distributes face masks to public during an awareness campaign against the spread of coronavirus on 'Ram Navami' in Bengaluru on Wednesday. AGENCIES

**PM wishes people on Ram Navami:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted the nation on Ram Navami on Wednesday and asked people to follow the Covid-19 guidelines, saying the message of Lord Ram to all of us is that they should follow the appropriate behaviour. May Lord Shri Ram's boundless compassion always remain on the countrymen, he tweeted. PTI

**Chardham yatra guidelines:** The Uttarakhand High Court has asked the state government to publish the standard operating procedures for the forthcoming Chardham yatra in view of the rising Covid-19 cases, observing that the pilgrimage cannot be allowed to turn into another Kumbh. PTI

**Alcohol overdose:** Two persons died and as many were hospitalised in a suspected case of alcohol overdose after a panchayat poll candidate distributed liquor in Bulandshahr (UP). PTI

**Kerala CM:** Centre's vaccine policy affects states adversely

TIPURAM, 21 APRIL

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has on Wednesday said the union government's new Covid vaccine policy has adversely affected the states, including Kerala.

Speaking to media persons here after the Covid evaluation meeting, chief minister Vijayan urged the Centre to provide the required vaccines to the states, instead of leaving them in financial crisis. He further said there is no change in the stance of the government that all people in Kerala would be given Covid vaccine free of cost.

Meanwhile, the state government has revised the Covid-19 guidelines. As per the new guidelines, a 14-day quarantine is mandatory for high-risk primary contacts of Covid-19 patients.

Meanwhile, Kerala on Wednesday recorded the highest single day spike with 22,414 new Covid cases. With this, the total number of active Covid cases in the state rose to 1,35,631. On Wednesday, 22 deaths due to Covid-19 were reported in the state. With this, the total number of Covid deaths in the state has touched 5000. SNS

## TENDER

**Government of Jammu & Kashmir**  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B)**  
**PROJECT CIRCLE DIVISION 1ST SRINAGAR**

**CORRIGENDUM-II**

**Subject:** Construction of flyover at Nowgam Junction including its Approaches, Km 290+725 to Km 291+575 of four lane with paved shoulders of NH-44 at Srinagar in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir on Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) mode.

**Reference:** 1) This office Fresh NIT No. NIT No PCD-RnB-76 of 2020-21  
Dated: 09/03/2021 issued Vide endorsement No PCD-1st/NIT/9979-89 Dated: 09-03-2021.  
2) This office Corrigendum-I No. NIT/Corr/172-77 dated: 08/04/2021

**Critical Dates**  
Due to some unavoidable circumstances the critical Dates are hereby modified as under:-  
5. Last date of Request for Bid :- 30-04-2021 up to 04.00 PM  
6. BID Due Date :- 30-04-2021 at 04.00 PM  
7. Online Submission of Bid Securing Declaration /POA etc :- 30-04-2021 at 04.00 PM  
8. Opening of Technical BIDs at venue 2.11.4 (I) :- 03-05-2021 at 11.30 AM in the Office of the Chief Engineer PW(R&B) Department Kashmir  
9. Declaration of eligible / qualified :- Later On  
10. Opening of Financial Bid :- Later On  
11. Letter of Acceptance (LOA) :- Later On  
12. Return of signed duplicate copy of LOA :- Later On  
13. Validity of BID :- 120 days from BID Due Date  
14. Submission of Performance Security (PS) and Additional Performance Security (APS), if any :- The provision of Performance Security (PS) and Additional Performance Security (APS), will be as per Latest Office Memorandum of Ministry of Finance Department of Expenditure procurement Policy Division vide their No.F.9/4/2020-PPD dated:- 12-Nov/2020 (The bidder has to provide 3% of PS within 30 days of receipt of LOA)  
15. Signing of Agreement :- Within 10 days from the receipt of Performance Security.

Sd/- Executive Engineer  
R&B Project Circle Division 1st. Srinagar.

No.:NIT/Corr/372-80 No. DIPK-657/21  
Dated: 19-04-2021 Dated: 20.04.2021

# More farmers joining protest at Delhi borders post harvest: SKM

PTI

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Farmers in large numbers have started coming towards Delhi after the harvesting season to strengthen the protest against the Centre's new farm laws, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha said on Wednesday.

The only way for the Centre to resolve the deadlock with the protesting farmers is by repealing the contentious farm laws and coming out with a legislation to guarantee the minimum support price (MSP), it said.

Scores of farmers led by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmer unions, are camping at Delhi's border points of Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur since last 146 days with their demands for the repeal of the three new laws and a new law on MSP for crops.

On the call of the SKM, farmers in large numbers have started coming towards Delhi. The farmers are coming back after harvesting, to strengthen the protest at Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur and Shahjahanpur borders, SKM leader Darshan Pal said in a statement.

If the government is equally worried about the health of farmers, it should immediately repeal the three laws and make a new law on the MSP. This is the only solution where farm-



FILE PHOTO

ers can rollback the protest, otherwise, it will be getting stronger day by day, he said.

Pal, who also virtually participated in the International Press Conference at Press Club Geneva, claimed that the Indian government failed to consult the farmers, farmer organisations, people living in rural areas, pro-farmer economists, political scientists or political parties, while framing the controversial laws in violation of a UN declaration which grants rural dwellers a right on such issues.

We the farmers of India while protesting against these Acts have a very genuine case, and the government has violated our rights which were provided to us by the United Nations declaration of 2018. Secondly, we are not getting MSP or

remunerative price for our crops and for that also we demand that our government should make a law, Pal, who is also the president of Krantikari Kisan Union of Punjab, said.

The SKM alleged that the government instead of strengthening the farm sector is creating cheap labour in urban spaces through agrarian crisis.

There are reports of long journeys of migrant labourers from all over the country. This dangers the result of neo-liberal policies.

A big step to sponsor these policies is these three agricultural laws. The results of open market and privatisation are that today thousands of labourers are wandering in cities at cheap wages, it said.

Instead of strengthening the farming sector, the government wants to create cheap labour in the urban spaces by creating an agrarian crisis, but now the farmers and labourers will fight back against these policies at all costs, it added.

Amid exodus of migrant workers from the NCR in view of the coronavirus-induced lockdown in Delhi, Pal said farmer organisations and volunteers have now begun preparing food packets to be distributed at bus depots and railway stations in the national capital.

Food was distributed to fleeing migrant workers at the Anand Vihar bus stand, he added.

The SKM also accused the BJP's IT cell of spreading fake news regarding farmers obstructing the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by stopping trucks of oxygen and other essentials on the borders of Delhi and also spreading the infection.

The SKM condemns and opposes all these false narratives. Farmers have never intended to sleep on the streets and stay away from their homes and land. The government has inhumanly imposed these laws on the farmers, the farmers body said.

The farmers are not asking for anything new, they are only fighting to save what they have. In this battle of existence, they are fighting against both coronavirus and the government, it added.

PM should focus on fixing medical arrangements in country instead of holding poll rallies...

RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT

EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER DEATHS DUE TO A LACK OF OXYGEN AND DRUGS IN THE COUNTRY

PTI & SNS

LUCKNOW, MEERUT 21 APRIL

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday said the Uttar Pradesh government has not made proper arrangements for bringing home migrant workers, who are returning amid a massive surge in Covid-19 cases.

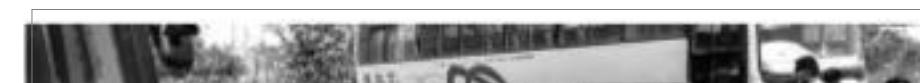
"The situation is deteriorating due to the flaws in the government's policy and intentions towards migrant workers. There is no system of testing and medicines for the people coming in large numbers," Yadav said.

The state government is unable to make proper arrangements to bring the distressed families from Delhi and other metros back to their homes, he alleged.

The state government had promised to create 1.5 crore jobs for the migrant workers but the lie has now come to the fore, he claimed while adding that the BJP has committed a massive fraud by deceiving its people.

The former chief minister said thousands of workers continue to come from Delhi's Anand Vihar bus station, Noida and other states of the country to UP while a large number of them are also coming in by train.

The truth is that the BJP government only cares about elections and does not want to save human lives, he alleged adding that the state dispensation did not learn any lesson from the situation that was witnessed last year during



Migrants board buses to leave for their native places amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, at National Highway-48 in Gurugram on Wednesday.

AGENCIES  
shahar area of Bulandshahar district post midnight on Tuesday.

They were returning to their village Karanpur Kalan of Anoopshahr from Jind district of Haryana. All the three died on spot. The bodies of the deceased - identified as Vijay, Ganpat, Jagru and Van driver Danish - have been sent to their village after the post mortem examination and were handed over to the family members.

After the announcement of a week's lockdown in Delhi and increasing cases of Corona, the labourers started migrating to their native villages from Delhi, Haryana and nearby areas.

A accident occurred when on Tuesday the three hired a van from Jind in Haryana and when they were about to reach their village the van collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction.

## FLYING FREE



SUBRATA DUTTA

Pigeons throng and fly near a deserted road on the second day of lockdown at Nizamuddin, in the Capital on Wednesday.

# Govt's failures reduced India to vaccine beggar: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that India has been reduced from being a leader in vaccine production in the world to a "vaccine beggar" due to the failures of the government.

Addressing a press conference, senior spokesperson of the Congress

Ajay Maken said with over 2.93 lakh Covid cases in a 24-hour span, the government is testing the patience of people instead of coronavirus positive patients.

Hitting out at the BJP for accusing Congress of doing politics, he claimed the ruling party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were indulging in politics instead.

States and common people were expecting relief from the

prime minister, but as always, 18 minutes of the speech disappointed everyone, Maken claimed.

The Congress leader also attacked the government over the shortage of oxygen, Remdesivir and other equipment and demanded the Centre must use NIA and ED against those leaders and traders who are encouraging the black market of life saving drugs.

On reverse migration, he said ugly scenes are being witnessed everywhere with migrant workers wanting to reach back home and the government must ensure that they return with dignity and not repeat what had happened last year when "over 3 crore workers were forced to walk back and many lost their lives".

New policy to benefit only few big industrialists:

The Congress slammed the Centre over the differential pricing for Covid vaccines, saying it was discriminatory and will benefit only a "few big industrialists" while common people will suffer. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi took to Twitter to alleged injustice on the part of the central government and compared the new vaccine policy to demonetisation.

"Disaster of the country, opportunity for friends of Modi. Injustice of the central government," he tweeted. "#VaccineDiscrimination" and shared the statement of Serum Institute announcing a price of Rs 400 per vaccine dose to states and Rs 600 to private hospitals," he added.

The baffling revelation comes in the backdrop of a Maoist ambush on 3 April which claimed the lives of 23 CRPF and DRG jawans. Given the fact that the difficult terrain has been home to several primitive tribes, the union government hitherto has been skeptical of using modern and more destructive warfare against the guerrillas such as the droning and aerial bombing in this severely Maoist-infested region.

Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee spokesperson Vikalp claimed that the central and the Chhattisgarh state government bombarded their hideouts in Bautalanka and Palagudem villages near Pame in Bijapur district.

The security forces dropped 12 bombs and bombarded their bases, however, they did not incur any damage because they had already shifted their base to safer locations, on

noticing unusual drone activities, the awed rebel claimed in a press note.

He urged all the parties active in parliamentary democracy to condemn the 'Drone-bombing' of their hideouts by the security apparatus.

Rejecting the claim as unfounded, Bastar IG Sundar Raj said that the allegation leveled by the Maoists regarding airstrike/drone attack is baseless and it's an outcome of fear

# 'Air-strike' on Maoist hideouts in Bastar?

AJAYBHAN SINGH

RAIPUR, 21 APRIL

Dejected, worn out, and cornered at a strategically crucial phase of its war against the state, the leadership of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) has appealed to all the political parties of India to protest the 'drone attacks' by security forces on their hideouts in restive Bastar region of southern Chhattisgarh.

They will exchange views on climate change, enhancing climate actions, mobilising finance towards climate mitigation and adaptation, nature-based solutions, climate security as well as technological innovations for clean energy.

They will represent countries which are members of the Major Economies Forum (India is a member), and those vulnerable to climate change, among others.

They will exchange views on climate change, enhancing climate actions, mobilising finance towards climate mitigation and adaptation, nature-based solutions, climate security as well as technological innovations for clean energy.

In view of large-scale protests going on in the state at that time against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

The annual India-Japan summit has already been postponed twice in the last two years. Suga's predecessor Shinzo Abe was to visit India towards the end of 2019 for his summit with Modi in Assam but had to cancel the trip.

Apart from India, Suga was scheduled to visit the Philippines in

April end or early May to reaffirm Japan's cooperation with the two countries in achieving a free and open Indo-Pacific, as the three nations look to counter China's military buildup and growing assertiveness in the region.

Modi and Suga have spoken to each other on phone several times and also participated in the first "Quad" summit along with US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison held virtually in March.

Japan and India have also decided to postpone their foreign and defence ministerial talks scheduled this weekend in Tokyo due to a rapid increase in coronavirus cases in India, the Japanese media said.

# HC notice to Gujarat BJP chief on 'illegal' Covid drug deal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, 21 APRIL

In a major embarrassment to the ruling BJP, the Gujarat High Court has issued notice to its president C R Paatil for his 'illegal' and 'unauthorised' procurement, distribution and administration of the crucial Covid-19 injection Remdesivir.

Gujarat BJP president C R Paatil, MP from Navsari, has courted controversy since last one week for procuring 5,000 doses of Remdesivir injection and distributing them among his supporters from the party office in Surat.

Along with the state BJP chief, the High Court issued notices also to BJP MLA Harsh Sanghvi who had assisted Paatil to procure the Remdesivir injection despite none of them having any pharmacist's license. A division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Sonia Gokani and Justice

Vaibhavi Nanavati also sought to know from the State Food & Drug Commissioner as to what action it has taken against the state BJP chief for violation of the Drug Control Act and other related laws.

The PIL against the state BJP chief was filed in the High Court by Congress leader Paresh Dhanani following inaction by the agencies despite his complaints about flouting of drug related laws.

Adhir tests Covid positive

KOLKATA, 21 APRIL

West Bengal Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Wednesday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and requested everyone who came in contact with him in the last seven days to comply with the coronavirus protocols.

Chowdhury, who is one of the key campaigners of the Congress-ISF-Left alliance in the ongoing assembly elections, said he would continue to campaign through virtual platforms. "I have been tested Covid positive, requesting all who came in contact with me for last 7 days must comply with Covid protocols, I will be continuing my campaign through virtual platform, I do suggest and request all to take utmost care to keep away COVID from your lives," the leader of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha said on Twitter.



*BJP is solely responsible for the medical catastrophe that has fallen on the country. The hopes of the nation are in the hands of the voters of W(est) Bengal*

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM  
CONDAMNING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

## THUMBNAILS



Police personnel keep vigil outside Mahavir Temple on Rama Navami, during night curfew imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19 cases, in Patna on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

## Narcotics seized in TN:

Over 300 kg of narcotics valued at around Rs 500 crore was seized by DRI officials from a container ship on its arrival at the V OC Port in Tuticorin on Wednesday, officials said. Acting on specific inputs, DRI officials examined the container, which had declared wooden logs as its cargo and seized 302 white coloured compressed bricks wrapped in packing material, concealed in nine bags placed between the logs.

PTI

**Body of man exhumed:** Forensic experts on Wednesday exhumed the remains of a 44-year-old man allegedly killed by his brother in 2018 and buried near their house near in Kollam. When Shahi reached home drunk during the Onam season of 2018, he attacked his mother and brother, and he died in the ensuing melee.

PTI

**Carcass of rhino found:** The carcass of an adult male rhino with its horn missing was found near a waterbody inside the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, officials said on Wednesday. Poachers shot the animal dead three to four days ago but the carcass was noticed on Tuesday.

PTI

**ITBP jawan injured:** A personnel of the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was injured in a blast in the Maoist-affected Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday morning, police said. As the security forces were searching the area to check if more IEDs were planted, jawan Sunil Singh stepped on a pressure-activated bomb which went off.

PTI

# Militants abduct 3 ONGC staff from Assam rig site

No demand for ransom or any other form of contact has been received so far

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

**F**ive armed militants early on Wednesday abducted three employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) from a rig site in Assam using a company vehicle driven by a driver employed by the firm.

The militants, suspected to be belonging to the banned ULFA(I) group, later abandoned the vehicle and its driver near Nimonagar jungle close to the Assam-Nagaland border.

ONGC has around 2,000 employees, officers and support staff in the Sivasagar asset.

Whereabouts of the abducted employees weren't known and the abductors haven't made any contact with family or the company so far, the ONGC official said.

They first locked the two security guards posted at the site before bundling the three young employees into the company's emergency-cum-medical vehicle stationed at the rig site to drive away.

The official said the company has filed a complaint with the local police and beefed up security at installations in Assam.

"The abducted employees were taken by the miscreants in an operational vehicle belonging to ONGC. Later, the vehicle was found abandoned near the Nimonagar jungles, close to the Assam-Nagaland border," the company said in a statement, adding it was a medical emergency response vehicle sta-

No gunshot was fired during the abduction. "We don't know how the entire episode unfolded. The police are looking into it," he said.

Local and central control rooms have been activated to coordinate with the police to get the employees released.

"A high-level review of security of employees and their families has been held and we are taking additional measures," the official said, refusing to elaborate on steps being taken. "We are also taking help from local police."

ONGC has around 2,000 employees, officers and support staff in the Sivasagar asset.

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The abducted employees were taken by the miscreants in an operational vehicle belonging to ONGC. Later, the vehicle was found abandoned near the Nimonagar jungles, close to the Assam-Nagaland border," the company said in a statement, adding it was a medical emergency response vehicle sta-

## Suspected to be belonging to banned

**ULFA(I) group, the militants later abandoned the vehicle and its driver near Nimonagar jungle close to the Assam-Nagaland border**

tioned at the site.

Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal said an investigation into the kidnapping is underway.

"Strongly condemn the abduction of ONGC employees Shri Mohini Mohan Gogoi, Shri Alakesh Saikia and Shri Ritul Saikia," he tweeted. "I have asked CS Shri Jishnu Barua and @DGPassamPolice Shri Bhaskarjiyo Mahanta to take all possible measures for their release."

A senior official of Sivasagar District Administration said suspected ULFA(I) militants are behind this kidnap and they escaped through Nagaland.

"These are very preliminary findings. We can talk about it after some investigation," he added. No demand for ran-

som or any other form of contact has been received so far from anybody.

ONGC said a complaint has already been lodged with the local police and higher officials have reached the site.

"Local administration has been informed about the incident and ONGC is in constant touch with the higher authorities," it added.

Out of the five militants, three were seen carrying sophisticated weapons as per the driver and all of them were speaking in the Assamese language, thereby creating the suspicion that they were from the ULFA(I), a senior official at the Assam Police Headquarters said.

"We have alerted the Nagaland Police and all other security agencies. The Unified Command of security forces has also been intimated. All agencies are working to find the whereabouts of the three employees," he added.

All three employees are local Assamese. They have been identified as M M Gogoi and Ritul Saikia - both junior engineer assistants (production) - and Alakesh Saikia, junior technician (production).

## TTD: 'Anjanadri' in Tirumala is Lord Hanuman's birthplace

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

TIRUPATI, 21 APRIL

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which governs the ancient shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala here, on Wednesday announced that Lord Hanuman's birthplace was Anjanadri, a hillock at Japali Theertham located about 5 km from north of the hill temple.

The announcement, on 'Ram Navami' day, was made by a TTD-constituted committee of scholars from different fields led by Prof Muralidhara Sharma, Vice-Chancellor of National Sanskrit University here, in the presence of Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

TTD executive officer K S Jawahar Reddy and Additional Executive Officer AV Dharmendra Reddy were also present.

A booklet with 'epigraphical, scientific and mythological issues', projecting Anjanadri, one of the seven hills at Tirumala, as the birthplace of Lord Hanuman was released by Muralidhara Sharma on the occasion.

Muralidhara Sharma said the panel has gathered some



"significant smitheres of evidence" based on the references in ancient literature, inscriptions, historical and astronomical calculations as well.

The TTD booklet, with 20 pages titled in Telugu as 'Sri Anjaneyaswamy Varanamastalam Tirumalaloni Anjanadri' (Tirumala's Anjanadri is Sri Hanuman's birthplace), was unveiled on the occasion.

It was distributed among media persons and other TTD officials, a TTD official said.

The booklet would also be uploaded on the TTD website for the benefit of the public, the official added.

Purohit, who came here to offer worship to Lord Venkateswara on the occasion of Rama Navami, hailed the committee's efforts and expressed satisfaction over its

report projecting Anjanadri as the birthplace of Sri Hanuman, the official said.

In December last, TTD executive officer KS Jawahar Reddy had constituted a committee of scholars from various fields to study and gather evidence to establish that Anjanadri is the place where Lord Hanuman was born.

TTD's claim has created a stir in religious, archaeological, and political circles in Karnataka because Hampi near Ballari is considered 'Kishkindha' or monkey kingdom for ages.

While some archaeology and history scholars have dismissed TTD's claim, the Karnataka unit of Vishwa Hindu Parishad has said the TTD should take some more time and hold discussions with scholars and religious heads before arriving at any conclusion.

In Hindu mythology, there are different versions of where the monkey-God was born. Some tales have Hanuman as being born in a cave in Anjan village in Gumla district of Jharkhand while some others claim his birthplace as Maharashtra's Anjaneri hills near Nashik.

## Rlys awards ₹50,000 to staff for saving child

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Ministry of Railways has announced an award of

Rs 50,000 for Mayur Shelke, a Central Railway employee who saved a six-year-old boy by risking his own life. Shelke's daredevilry in rescuing the child moments before a train streaked past was captured in a CCTV video which got viral.

Principal executive director of the Railway Board informed the Central Railway's general manager by a letter about the award for Shelke's 'act of bravery, courage and presence of mind'. "Shelke in absolute disregard of his own life rescued the child by running in front of a train and lifted the child to safety by placing him on the platform," read the letter.

The incident took place at Vangani station near Mumbai, where Shelke is posted as a pointsman. He spotted the boy who had fallen on the tracks and was in the way of an oncoming train. He jumped and hauled him onto the platform before pulling himself up. Two seconds later, the train sped past. SNS

Before the press briefing, Miss Banerjee held an election rally at Tulsihat under the Chanchal police station, Miss banerjee said she would also write to the Prime Minister over what she said was "discrimination" in the prices of vaccines given to the Union ministries, state governments and private hospitals.

Miss Banerjee also announced that the vaccination process for 18-plus citizens would commence in the state from 5 May after the elections are over.

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Addressing a Press conference at a private hotel in Narayapur under the Malda police station, Miss banerjee said she would also write to the Prime Minister over what she said was "discrimination" in the prices of vaccines given to the Union ministries, state governments and private hospitals.

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"I feel that the ECI should give a chance to willing Covid patients to cast their votes through postal ballots either from isolation or hospital beds for the remaining three phases of the Assembly elections.

There are almost 11,000 beds for Covid patients in the state now, and they will be increased by 2,000 more in two days," Miss Banerjee said.

He said the police consulted the block level animal husbandry officer in Ahmednagar over this issue.

"The official told us that it is a common phenomenon that sometimes a particular feed does not suit hens and they stop laying eggs after consuming it," said Mokashi.

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## A new ball game

The oblique reference to America was pretty obvious from Xi Jingping's presentation to a largely virtual audience at China's annual Boao Forum on Tuesday. Not that the two nations have eventually initiated an earnest essay towards mending of fences; suffice it to register that they have agreed to cooperate on the seemingly intractable issue of climate change. Maybe the compulsions of diplomacy militated against any direct reference to President Biden's America; the President of China was robust nonetheless with his caveat that the world should not allow "unilateralism pursued by certain countries to set the pace for the whole world." This was one of the warnings couched with an appeal for "cooperation and openness" to an audience of business and financial leaders. "Bossing others around or meddling in others' internal affairs will not get one any support. What we need in today's world is justice, not hegemony." The audience included American business leaders, notably Tim Cook of Apple and Elon Musk of Tesla, as well as two Wall Street financiers, Ray Dalio and Stephen Schwarzman. Traditionally a platform for China to boast its economic might and leadership, the Boao Forum is held annually on the southern Chinese island of Hainan, though the one last year was cancelled amidst the pandemic. Mr Xi has used the forum to portray himself as an advocate of free trade and globalization, calling for openness even as many in the global business community have become increasingly vocal about growing restrictions in China's own domestic market. On Tuesday, he utilised the opportunity to iterate his opposition to efforts by certain countries to weaken their economic interdependence with China. "Attempts to 'erect walls' or 'decouple' would 'hurt others' interests without benefiting oneself," President Xi said, in what appeared to be a reference to the United States and the Biden administration's plans to support domestic high-tech manufacturing in the country. The White House held a meeting with business executives last week to discuss a global chip shortage and plan for semi-conductor "supply chain resilience." Speaking to executives from Google, Intel and Samsung, Mr Biden said: "China and the rest of the world is not waiting, and there's no reason why Americans should wait." China is pursuing its own programme for self-sufficiency in manufacturing chips. Arguably, a certain conflict of interest is manifest in the trans-Atlantic messages, however indirectly conveyed by President Xi. He has also outlined the contours of China's economic growth, pre-eminently with the pledge to continue to open the Chinese economy for foreign businesses. Major Wall Street banks, notably Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, have clung to this pledge even as foreign executives complain that the broader business landscape has become more challenging. President Xi has conveyed a "yes-but" message to President Joe Biden. It can be greeted by the latter with a modified "yes". Diplomacy is a different ball-game altogether.

## Another 9/11

There is a strand that binds President Joe Biden's September 11 timeframe for the withdrawal of US troops from embattled Afghanistan and the devastation of the World Trade Center exactly 20 years earlier. It was a cataclysmic event that precipitated the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in pursuit of Osama bin Laden and then the war which toppled the Taliban's five-year rule. The militants are ever so up and about and whether the government in Kabul can be left to its own devices to rein them in remains improbable. At any rate, President Biden has signalled the initiative to end the longest war in American history. The schedule comes four months after the May 1 deadline reached in a deal between the administration of President Trump and the Taliban, who still control large swathes of the country amidst the frequent fighting with Afghan government forces. The agreement had assured that Afghan soil would not be used to undermine the security of the US and its allies in exchange for the troop pullout, while leaving the domestic future of the country, pre-eminently peace, to be largely negotiated by the Taliban and the government. Yet peace has been a scarce commodity in Afghanistan for more than two decades. Mr Biden had previously said it would be tough to meet the May 1 deadline, but he did not foresee US troops being stationed in Afghanistan till 2022. According to NATO, there are 2,500 US troops in the country but the strength can fluctuate. The Washington Post and the New York Times have reported that there are approximately 1,000 more than that, down from a 2011 high of over 100,000. Both the US and NATO officially ended combat operations in 2014. President Biden said on Wednesday that "it is time for American troops to come home", adding that "we cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result." He noted that he is the fourth US President to contend with the nearly 20-year-long war. "I will not pass this responsibility to a fifth," he asserted. The decision comes after a "rigorous policy review" and that the only remaining US forces in the country would be those needed to protect diplomats. The decision has been resented within the echo chambers of US Intelligence. On the day of Mr Biden's signal of intent, CIA director William Burns told the US Senate Intelligence Committee that the withdrawal will diminish Washington's ability to collect data and act on threats. The withdrawal goes against pressure from the Pentagon to keep US forces in the country until Afghan security forces are able to take on the Taliban. Furthermore, it is a rejection of the so-called "conditions-based" approach that previous administrations had taken, meaning that the US would only withdraw its troops if certain conditions allowed it. Biden's is not a conditions-based approach.

# Cost of Nature

Theories, however, cannot explain why some countries succeed while others fail in transforming natural resources to higher productivity and growth; the answer probably lies in the institutional environment of a country. If institutions promote transparency and incentivise productive and entrepreneurial activities and protect property and other rights of individuals, natural resources are likely to impact the economic outcomes positively

**M**odern economics and public policy will be in no man's land without the concept of GDP to measure growth, which came out of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. GDP measures the flow of products and income, both representing different measures of the same continuous flow. GDP is the sum total of private and government consumption, investment and the net of exports over imports, which gives the money value of all goods and services produced and purchased within the economy in a given period – usually a year.

Measurement is central to management, though not everything that matters is always measurable and there are dysfunctional aspects of measurement too. Thus, GDP cannot distinguish between good and bad spending for consumption or investment, neither can it reflect how the growth gets distributed among people and hence cannot capture inequality or its negative consequences upon society. But nevertheless, GDP remains essential for setting governmental priorities; governments are obsessed with its growth as reflection of their performance, despite the fact that it leaves out too many things which are crucial to policymaking.

Most importantly, GDP does not count the natural capital and ecosystems of a country. Preserving natural resources is essential for intergenerational equity and future growth of a country, but GDP assumes that natural resources are free. Its calculation reflects natural resources only when they are extracted, commoditized and sold, even if it is environmentally unsustainable. One common example is the exploration and production of fossil fuels which affect the climate adversely while supporting much of the consumer economy, thereby contributing to the GDP. But 'real' growth must be sustainable and must factor in environmental degradation like deforestation, diminishing biodiversity or deterioration of water quality. As Joseph Stiglitz had said "What you measure affects what you do," because if "you don't measure the right thing, you don't do the right thing".

The latest UN framework adopted by the UN Statistical Commission attempts to correct this deficiency by making environmental conservation an essential element of economic development so that the 'natural capital' of a country – forests, wetlands, biodiversity and ecosystems can be counted in reporting the wealth of the countries. Indeed, the overreliance on GDP as the sole measure of growth and progress often distorts priorities of governments. GDP must be considered in conjunction with metrics for poverty, inequality, erosion of the natural capital and other socio-economic indicators to reflect real progress.

Several such metrics have been developed, including the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) by the Maryland state of USA, which uses 26 economic, social and environmental indicators like pollution, depletion of natural resources, crime, etc. It divides consumption expenditure by income inequality to derive 'adjusted consumption ex-



penditure' which is used to direct the policymakers' focus on reducing inequality. The UN framework, called the Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA-EA) and adopted by the UN Statistical Commission, marks a major step forward in recognising the value of nature in human life. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "We will no longer be heedlessly allowing environmental destruction and degradation to be considered economic progress." Nature is not only an economic asset, it impacts our lives as 'individuals, societies and species'. Our prosperity depends on preserving nature and passing it undamaged to our children.

As many as 34 countries of the world are preparing some form of ecosystem accounts on an experimental basis and with adoption of SEEA-EA, many more countries are likely to follow suit. They will of course need financial and technical support from international institutions. It could indeed be a game changer for action on climate change. This will also be in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – especially Goal 8: Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, including decent work for all and Goal 13: Taking urgent action to combat climate change. The SDGs entwine the five intertwined and interdependent Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships, none of which is achievable without conserving Nature.

Resource accounting is fairly complex because of difficulties in establishing definitional boundaries, estimating natural capital, its net depletion and assigning a value to these. The World Bank reckons development as a process of building and managing a portfolio of assets. "The Changing Wealth of Nations" brought out by the Bank attempted to measure the total wealth of nations following a methodology that takes future consumption into account – spreading it among three components: 'Produced' or man-made capital which comprises machinery, equipment and structures; 'Nat-



**GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE**

The writer is a commentator, author and academic

ural' capital comprising agricultural land, areas, forests, minerals and energy and 'Intangible' capital measured as the difference between total wealth and sum of the other two capitals; it implicitly includes human, social and institutional capital. It estimates that the high-income OECD countries alone account for 82 per cent of the global wealth, while the poorest countries accounting for 10 per cent of the global population hold less than 1 per cent of global wealth. This highlights the extreme inequality that exists between the rich and the poor nations.

A February, 2021 UNEP report, "Making Peace with Nature," also highlighted that the global economy has grown fivefold over the last 50 years due to the tripling of natural-resource-extraction which boosted production and consumption, while during this period, world population has doubled to 7.8 billion, with 1.3 billion people living in poverty and 700 million going hungry. The rich world scarcely takes notice.

Most countries start out with relatively high dependence on natural capital and use these assets to build more wealth. But in the course of development, the composition of total wealth changes. The global share of natural capital fell from 34 per cent in 1995 to 25 per cent in 2005, with increases in the shares of other forms of capital. The methodology provided is used to estimate the total 'natural resources rem' – the difference between the value and the cost of production of natural resources – which was 2.5 per cent of global GDP in 2018 (2.3 per cent for India).

But for some lowest per capita income countries in the world, it has a disproportionately high share, e.g. Azerbaijan (30 per cent), Republic of Congo (55 per cent) or Mongolia (40 per cent), while some of the richest per capita-income countries like Singapore or South Korea have practically no natural resources. Economists sometimes refer to a 'Resource Curse' to imply that that resource dependence undermines long-run economic performance. There are notable exceptions too, like Australia, Botswana,

Chile, Malaysia, etc., which are both resource-rich and enjoy high per-capita income, often due to the former.

The resource curse occurs when a country begins to focus on a single industry, such as mining or oil for all its production, while neglecting other sectors in a phenomenon known as the 'Dutch Disease' as observed in Netherlands following the discovery of North Sea gas in the late 1950s. The resource windfall generated additional wealth, which raised the prices of non-tradable goods like services, which in turn led to higher wages in the services sector. But the resulting reallocation of capital and labour to services caused contraction of manufacturing, leading to de-industrialization and affecting long-run growth.

Theories, however, cannot explain why some countries succeed while others fail in transforming natural resources to higher productivity and growth; the answer probably lies in the institutional environment of a country. If institutions promote transparency and incentivise productive and entrepreneurial activities and protect property and other rights of individuals, natural resources are likely to impact the economic outcomes positively.

In the absence of such institutional support, resources may harm the cause of development by breeding corruption and cronyism, which we have seen aplenty in India – allocation of coal blocks and telecom spectrum being tell-tale examples.

There has been plenty of debate over the role of natural capital in "sustainable" economic development, and even whether natural resources are good or bad for economic development. Empirical evidence points out that poorer economies with abundant natural resources do not always develop more rapidly than economies that are relatively resource poor. Economic development necessarily depends on the irreversible depletion of natural capital. This need not necessarily imply that such development is inherently unsustainable. The critical issue is how the future generations can be compensated for the current loss of natural capital.

Environmental Kuznets Curves depict an "inverted U" shaped relationship between resource depletion and the level of per capita income implying that environmental degradation ultimately declines after rising initially. Concern for environment increases along with rising per capita income, leading to legislations for clean air and conservation of ecology. But without public policies being in place to ensure that welfare-damaging environmental externalities are corrected by reinvesting the rents generated from the depletion of natural capital in conservation initiatives, the environmental damage may become irreversible.

Across the world, governments are still pouring in US\$5 trillion in annual subsidies to fossil fuels, non-sustainable agriculture and fishing, non-renewable energy, mining, and transportation. The adoption of the latest framework, SEEAA, will definitely be a move forward towards sustainable development if it can reverse this ominous trend.

A MEMBER OF THE



ASIAN VOICES

**Journalists doing their job**

After venturing to the Ayungin Shoal to see and report on how Filipino fishermen were coping amid China's incursions into Philippine territory, ABS-CBN reporter Chiara Zambrano and her crew did not deserve the left-handed compliment initially dealt them by the spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. While expressing concern and vowing to investigate the case of missile-equipped Chinese coast guard ships blocking and chasing Zambrano's team right inside the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, AFP spokesperson Maj. Gen. Edgard Arevalo added a swipe: "While we understand the journalists' insatiable desire to be ahead in reporting, we appeal to them to exercise prudence in the course of their job."

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., who has fired off a barrage of diplomatic protests against Beijing after hundreds of Chinese maritime militia ships were monitored swarming the Julian Felipe Reef off Palawan, also branded Zambrano and her team as "thrill seekers." That was all the cue needed by the administration's troll army to peddle the script on social media that Zambrano and her team were merely doing a stunt and engaging in provocation in "disputed waters" – a description that cravenly parrots China's narrative that it owns the South China Sea, including the West Philippine Sea.

This position is puzzling, to say the least. It was no less than Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana who issued an unusually strong statement demanding that China remove its vessels from the Julian Felipe Reef, a stand that drew widespread support from a public that has long been distrustful of China's intentions. (A July 2020 survey of the Social Weather Stations showed that, despite the Duterte administration's overt policy of defer-

ence and appeasement toward Beijing, Filipinos' trust in China had sunk even lower, from "poor" to "bad," with a net trust rating of -36 which was down 9 points from -27 in December 2019). The country's largest business group, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with other business federations like the Makati Business Club, the Management Association of the Philippines, the Filipino CEO Circle, the Judicial Reform Initiative, Cebu Business Club, Iloilo Business Club Inc., and the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference for Human Development, minced no words in a statement that called on China to stop acting like a colonizer. "Julian Felipe Reef is historically and by law undisputed Philippine territory, as was most clearly established in the 2016 ruling based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea," the groups said. "Now that China is strong economically and militarily, we call on China to refrain from becoming an imperial power."

It was the unjust situation that China has foisted for years on the Philippines that Zambrano and her team sought to document when they set out to the West Philippine Sea to see the plight of Filipino fishermen who have been edged out and deprived of their livelihood in their own traditional fishing grounds.

Their vivid footage showing a Chinese Navy ship blocking their way and two Coast Guard vessels with missiles chasing them was unequivocal proof that Filipinos are not free and safe from going into their own waters – that a foreign bully is menacing Filipinos right inside their backyard. Zambrano and her team cannot and should not be faulted for doing their job, which is to show the real picture on the ground.

## SANCTIONS

**SIR**, The United States shows humanitarian sympathy in threatening sanctions on Russia for the treatment of one Russian citizen, Alexei Navalny. The entire non-white world should at once sanction the United States for its police murdering 438 non-white citizens in 2020 and 51 upto March this year. These statistics are at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585152/people-shot-to-death-by-us-police-by-race/>

Yours, etc., Krishnan Srinivasan, Kolkata, 20 April.

sus has been arrived at. The Indus script thus continues to be a prominent linguistic mystery of the world. Be that as it may, we should commemorate the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization in 1921 as it was the greatest historical find in Indian history and one of the most valuable in the history of the world. In this context we should also remember the contribution of Lord Curzon as the Viceroy of British India. He, with some special

zeal, encouraged and energized archaeological and historical research in India and took administrative steps to preserve the heritage of India's past. After partition of India number of Indus sites have gone to the part lost by India, but Indus Valley Civilization in its totality exhibits the spirit of the composite culture of Bharatavarsha.

Yours, etc., Satadal Bhattacharjee, Kolkata, 19 April.

## 100 years after a momentous discovery



SIR, An occasion of pride is passing by silently. This year ~ 2021 ~ we can celebrate the centenary of the great discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation of the Indian sub-continent. Harappa's ruins were discovered in 1921 through excavation undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India. John Marshall, the head of the Survey, had deputed Dayaram Sahni for supervising the work at Harappa in undivided Punjab. Sahni reported his wonderful findings

after the ruins of a very, very old township were unearthed at the site. This was the first time that archaeological remains of what subsequently came to be known as the Indus Valley Civilisation were discovered and evaluated. The next year Rakhal das Banerjea discovered the ruins of Mohenjodaro in Sindhu. The thrilling discovery of these two sites followed by the identification of many other sites of similar historical significance made the concept of Indus Valley

Civilisation evolve in historical research. With the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation, the history of India was pushed farther back by several millennia before the advent of the Buddha. Discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation made the world recognise India's antiquity at par with Sumerian, Egyptian and Babylonian cultures. Since the discovery of Harappan ruins in 1921, for the last 100 years historical, academic and literary circles have been teeming with endless streams of study and research on the subject. According to a large number of researchers, the population that created the very ancient urban cultures of Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Lothal, Kalibangan, etc. was a non-Aryan one. Others are of the opinion that the Indus Valley people were not really different from the Vedic Aryans. Yet others say that the Indus Valley Civilisation was the creation of the non-Vedic Aryans of India. The language of the inscriptions found in the relics collected from the Indus Valley sites is still unidentified, the script having remained undeciphered so far. Some researchers believe the language of Indus Valley Civilisation was a form of proto-Dravidian speech, yet others try to establish that the language was not different from Sanskrit. In the last ten decades many attempts have been made at explaining the specimens of the language found in the ruins. But no consensus

ATANU BISWAS

Curtains are to be drawn with-out a climax. "It is time to end America's longest war," said President Biden as he announced America's pull out from an unwon and unwinnable Afghan war. And America's allies would obviously follow the American route.

Biden's decision to withdraw all US troops from Afghanistan by September 11 has effectively upheld the spirit of the Trump-Taliban deal of February 2020, in which the Taliban assured it would not let terrorist groups operate on Afghan soil, and, in return, US troops were scheduled to pull back by this May 1. "We need to close the book on a 20-year war," this is how US officials explained the proposed departure from Afghanistan. Biden's team even called it a "moonshot" – the kind of imagining which soars beyond "blue sky" brainstorming.

Kim Barker's 2011 memoir 'The Taliban Shuffle', Tina Fey's 2016 film 'Whiskey Tango Foxtrot', and Nicolas Wild's graphic novel series 'Kabul Disco' (2009, 2013) reimagined Kabul as "Kabubble", which is a paradoxical site of transnational career building, an inflated economy zone, and as a new kind of ruin – a ruin of late neoliberalism. Today's Afghanistan is still war-weary, lawless, and post-medieval. The situation is dire, and distrust, insecurity and fear are rampant. And Afghanistan might sink into deeper trouble by descending into chaos once again.

Farewell Kabul: From Afghanistan to a More Dangerous World' (2015) is an excellent account of the Afghanistan war, written by Christina Lamb, an award-winning war correspondent for 'The Sunday Times', based on her decades of experience in the country. Lamb investigated just how the might of NATO, with 48 countries and 140,000 troops on the ground, failed to defeat a group of religious students and farmers, and how success was turned into defeat in the longest war fought by the United States in its history and by Britain since the Hundred Years War.

In her book, Lamb noted unambiguously: "Maybe we hadn't been chased out as in previous wars, but Afghanistan would always be remembered as a failure, in the same breath as Vietnam and Gallipoli." It's not that the policy-makers of Washington couldn't understand that, but they were clearly hesitant to carry the stigma of another failed war, and consequently they remained ambivalent about the departure.

How was the decision of Afghan war taken in the first place? "Rule Number 1 in politics: Never invade Afghanistan," then British prime minister Harold Macmillan declared in 1963. However, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Macmillan's wisdom was ignored by the United States and its western allies when they launched an all-out war to dismantle the Taliban and their

# As America prepares to leave, licking its wounds



Al Qaeda guests in Afghanistan. And it took twenty long years for them to relearn what Macmillan cautioned against decades ago.

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The Afghan war resulted in deaths of nearly 2,400 American troops, and cost around \$2 trillion for the US. Over years, however, Joe Biden was in favour of restricting its goal to counterterrorism missions. In fact, in 2009, then Vice-President Biden had strongly opposed expanding the US military presence in Afghanistan. The Obama administration, however, went on to increase the number of troops. Still the 'Exit Afghanistan' strategy was first aired by President Obama in 2009, which was subsequently repackaged by President Trump in 2019.

"We went to Afghanistan because of a horrific attack that happened 20 years ago," Biden said recently. "That cannot explain why we should remain there in 2021." Fair enough. But, didn't his predecessors make the situation utterly complicated by extending the US military presence in Afghanistan?

In 2001, the Afghan war was initiated with a plan to crush Al Qaeda and run the Taliban out of the country. However, President Bush quickly turned it to an utterly ambitious and impractical Marshall Plan to rebuild Afghanistan. Why didn't the US pull out of Afghanistan once they were

done with the killing of bin Laden on 1 May 2011? Why did they extend the wings of their mission beyond all practical imagination? The US and its allies certainly missed the face-saving opportunity.

War in Afghanistan certainly was a different ballgame from wars in Iraq or in Libya. Historically, the Pashtuns have never tolerated foreign occupation of their territory. Let's quote from the first chapter 'Getting In' of Lamb's book: "During the First Anglo-Afghan war in 1842, a British general asked an Afghan tribal chief, 'Why are you laughing?' The tribal chief replied, 'Because I can see how it was easy for you to get your troops in here. What I don't understand is how you plan to get them out.'" Sounds like the case of Prince Abhimanyu of the great epic Mahabharata?

The ground reality of Afghanistan, however, remains unchanged. Harold Macmillan knew that. President Obama could understand that when in May 2014, the White House released the 'Statement by the President on Afghanistan': "I think Americans have learned it's harder to end wars than it is to begin them."

Understandably, the Taliban might be reluctant to strike a peace deal with the Afghan government at the moment. Critics fear that the US pulling out from Afghanistan might even lead to a repeat of the 1975 Fall of Saigon after the US pull out. Or even worse. As the "book" on America's longest fought war is now going to be prematurely closed, the Afghan exit will also come with a moral cost.

The unread chapters of the "book" would unfold in the future. Simon Jenkins, a columnist of The Guardian, opined recently: "In a world of apologies, some mighty big ones are due in September." In the Mahabharata, Abhimanyu couldn't come out of the Chakravyuha. Will America be able to get out of the Chakravyuha of Afghanistan at all? Maybe not, at least in the near future – the moral cost is too large to pay. The world would remain anxious, and the unwon war would remain as another Vietnam – in a different form, of course. And the spectre of Afghanistan would keep on haunting the US. For decades to come, at least.

The writer is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

## After Raul, what's next for Cuba?

JOSEPH J GONZALEZ

Cuba's Castro dynasty has officially ended. On April 16, 2021, Raul Castro – younger brother of long-time Cuban leader Fidel Castro – relinquished his position as first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, the most powerful position in Cuba.

Castro, 89, became Cuba's president in 2008, after his brother's incapacitation, and took over the first secretary role from Fidel in 2011. Fidel Castro died in 2016.

Just as Fidel's death did not suddenly transform antagonistic U.S.-Cuban ties, neither does Raul Castro's departure.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz Canel, who took office in 2018 after Raul Castro stepped down as president, has resisted calls for democratic reforms and has pressing economic issues to manage, as well as a pandemic.

So does his American counterpart, President Joe Biden. The White House recently said Cuba policy is "not a top priority."

Neither leader is likely to risk his political future with bold diplomacy. But younger Cubans continue to separate themselves from the policies and priorities of their government, creating a basis for a different relationship with the U.S.

Raul Castro's retirement coincided with the 60th anniversary of Cuba's military triumph over the U.S. at the Bay of Pigs.

On 17 April 1961, Cuban nations aided by the CIA began an invasion designed to overthrow Fidel Cas-



tro. The Cuban army quickly defeated them, humiliating the Kennedy administration.

Cuba soon allied itself with the Soviet Union, then America's greatest enemy. The U.S. responded with a rigorous trade embargo.

In the six decades since, U.S.-Cuban relations have alternated between hostile and icy, with a brief thaw under President Barack Obama.

Fidel Castro's Cuba supported leftist insurgencies and Soviet allies across Latin America and the world, from Nicaragua to Angola. In 1962, Castro permitted Soviet missiles to be set up in Cuba and aimed at the U.S., about 100 miles away, leading the U.S. and Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war.

Today Cuba is still communist and it remains on the State Department's list of countries that support terrorism, alongside Iran and North Korea. But bereft of patrons like the

Soviets, it presents no danger to the U.S. mainland or its allies.

Cuba can do little more than irritate U.S. presidents by supporting Latin American leaders who resist American power, like Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro and Bolivia's ousted former leader Evo Morales.

The Cuban people have changed just as much, according to my two decades of research on and travel to the island.

Unlike their parents and grandparents, Cubans in their 20s, 30s and 40s never enjoyed a sustained, functional contract with the regime: We provide you a living, and in exchange you give us support, or at least acquiescence.

Cubans who came of age during or after the so-called "Special Period" of the 1990s – when Cuba faced economic collapse – rely on the government to deliver certain services, primarily health care and education. But they know it cannot feed, clothe and house its people in any but the most basic way. Young Cubans have to hustle to survive – or "resolver," a Spanish verb that means "to resolve" but which in Cuba refers to providing for one's family. And the Cuban hustle has a capitalist bent.

In 2008 Raul Castro's government cut public payrolls and allowed Cubans to earn private incomes, hoping Cubans would earn more money and generate more tax revenue. Previously, all jobs in Cuba were government jobs, whether you were a grocer or an architect, with government-regulated salaries.

Today, official statistics say about a third of Cubans are privately employed. But the real proportion is

almost surely higher. Almost all the adult Cubans I know have their own business – whether cutting hair or renting their home as a bed and breakfast – along with a traditional government-regulated job.

Meanwhile, the government has begun to eliminate the subsidies that long defined Cuban life. Ration books for staple foods are disappearing with them, subsidized prices.

Food and clothing costs have doubled or tripled in Cuba in the past year. Utility prices have increased by factors of four or five. Cuban state salaries have risen since economic liberalization, but not that much.

Consequently, many Cubans operate outside of the law, trading in everything from clothing to scrap metal or gasoline stolen from the state. Cubans call people with illegal businesses "bisneros."

Whether legal restaurateur or black-market bisnero, Cubans operate businesses not to become rich but to "resolver." They hope to improve their lots modestly, allowing their families to eat a wider range of fresher foods, or to save for a child's birthday party.

Cuba "forces us to be criminals just to make a living," said 26-year-old Carlo Rodriguez, a server at a Havana restaurant.

Older Cubans remain faithful to the Castros' vision of Cuba as an anti-imperialist, anti-American outpost. But revolutionary slogans like "socialismo o muerte" – "socialism or death" – do not resonate with young Cubans.

Young Cubans also want more free speech. While Cubans can and do complain privately, the Cuban government has long restricted civil lib-

erties. Journalism is mostly state sponsored, and the country's few independent newspapers run into trouble when stories criticize the regime. Social media only recently became legal and relatively widespread in Cuba.

Last year, a dissident artists movement organized via WhatsApp gained enough popular support to force the government into unprecedented negotiations about expanding freedom of expression in Cuba. A crackdown followed, with some dissidents jailed. But calls for free expression persist among younger Cubans.

Most Cubans also want closer ties to the U.S., according to a 2015 poll. Since the adoption last year of a single currency pegged to the U.S. dollar, American money is "like gold" on the island, my friend Tony, a shopkeeper, told me.

Is the U.S. embargo and former president Donald Trump's tightened restrictions on travel to the island – not the Cuban government – that prevent Americans from spending their dollars on the island.

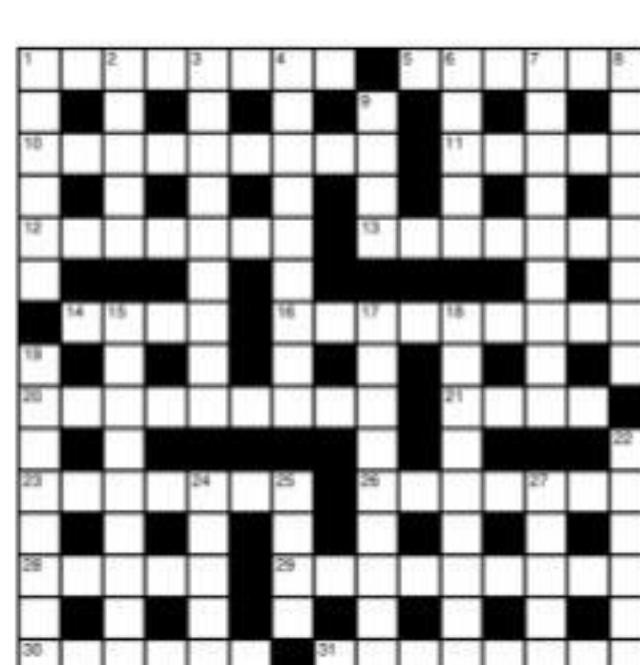
Cubans know this, and they resent the embargo for making their lives miserable. But younger Cubans recognize Cuba's ailing centrally planned economy as a problem, too.

Cuban Americans, on the other hand, largely supported Trump. Recent polling showed about 45 per cent support keeping the embargo, up 10 points from two years ago.

Such sentiments make it more difficult for Biden to initiate his own Obama-style "thaw." But they cannot stop the changes at work in Cuban society.

The writer is Associate Professor, Global Studies, Appalachian State University. This article was published on [www.conversation.com](http://www.conversation.com)

NO 28891



### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

#### ACROSS

- 1 Ill-sounding Italian's love for maple (8)
- 5 Changed the heart of every cop at the end of Earth Day (6)
- 10 Defy small wretched insect (9)
- 11 Climbers limited by heaviness (5)
- 12 Old call turns stomach: "At last, charge over the top!" (7)
- 13 Oceanic shocker (7)
- 14 Insignificant lake (4)
- 16 Visualising one mother and her ruin in Gabon (9)

#### DOWN

- 20 The gram we pulped into cereal foodstuff (9)
- 21 3 'not hard' for Rowan? (4)
- 23 Boggle at Herbie's entertaining tanned skin (7)
- 26/6 Worker under pressure 18 (4,3,5)
- 28 Regularly mined boron rocks that create pigment (5)
- 29 One that might be red after dance with singer (9)
- 30 Band has a Yankee swagger (6)
- 31 Instrument ray finds timber source (8)
- 1 Plants found by southern borders (6)
- 2 Colombia greeted traveller focused on sun (5)
- 3 French man always in exam to achieve highest level (2,7)
- 4 Myself, for example (9)
- 6 See 26 Across
- 7 Paranormal anti-green colour (9)
- 8 Criticise house then move (8)
- 9 Stuff from pharmacy sterilised liquid-filled cavity (4)
- 15 See Haley's wavy facial hair (9)
- 17 Give guns to Rashid to bag large ordinary animal (9)
- 18 Mostly surrounded by water (2,3,4)
- 19 Takes in Amazon's enemies? (8)
- 22 Sheep climbing over another for grass (6)
- 24 Scavenger's expression of contempt about money (5)
- 25 Minimally restrictive interconnected bone structures (4)
- 27 European married in Home Counties (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

Some business men in England, convinced that the present industrial unrest is due to the lack of the old personal touch between employers and employed, such as used to prevail, for example, between masters and apprentices in the days of the craft guilds, have founded an organisation known as the Industrial Welfare Society for the purpose of promoting the common interests of employer and worker by improving the personal relations of the one to the other. The policy, it is said, has been approved by many hundreds of firms in which already a better feeling has been created. At a recent conference in connection with the Society the view was expressed that as a step towards recapturing for modern industry the spirit of co-operation and fellowship of former days, there must be properly conducted research into the practical application of science to the human conditions of modern industry. The immediate result was the formation of a National Institute of Industrial Psychology, which proposes to begin at once its work of investigation along three lines, vocational guidance and selection, fatigue research, and movement study. The purpose of all these three branches is alike the elimination of human waste and friction. It is confidently anticipated that the application of scientific knowledge to the human factor in work should not only increase production at low cost but also add to the happiness and contentment of mankind.

### NEWS ITEMS

### FIRING ON MOB AT NAGPUR

All the members of the Committee inquiring into the circumstances under which firing occurred at Nagpur visited this morning several places where firing occurred and interviewed people of the locality. The three arrested men were examined but said they knew nothing of the firing. They stated that they had been arrested by the police at different places and were marched to the police kothawali no conveyance being provided. Nawazish Hussain and Gulam Rashad, sub-inspectors of police, stated that there was heavy stoning from all sides. Nawazish stated that he heard shots fired but he did not know who ordered the firing. Gulam stated that when the mob did not listen to Captain Armitage's appeal to disperse he gave the order to fire. Some police threw stones at the mob.

### INCITEMENTS TO VIOLENCE IN THE PUNJAB

The Punjab Government has with the approval of the Government of India declared the districts of Lahore, Amritsar and Sheikhpura to be proclaimed areas for a further period of six months, with effect from April 26, the date on which the former declaration of these areas under the Act ceases to be operative. The Punjab Government acknowledges the cordial cooperation of the Legislative Council during the Session now completed, and the progress towards a good understanding which that cooperation has effected. Unfortunately excitement of a dangerous kind continues in the central Punjab, and incitements to violence and disorder are frequently given at meetings held under cover of legal exemptions. The present indications are clear that this condition has not been yet fulfilled.

### DECCAN LIBERALS AND TATA PROJECT

The Executive Committee of the Deccan Liberal party strongly protests against the delay on the part of the Government in publishing the agreement between the Tata-Hydro Electric Co., and the Government regarding the Mulshipeta project, and urges upon the attention of the Government the need of making due provision for resettlement of the expropriated agriculturists. Before proceeding with the scheme, the Committee further requests the Government to see that public interests are adequately safeguarded in the proposed agreement with the Tata Co., and that the community receives a proper share in its profits. The Committee feel that the agreement should not be finally executed till full opportunity has been given to the public to criticise it.

### THEFT OF JEWELLERY IN LUCKNOW

A succession of thefts of jewellery from the house of European residents has taken place recently. Mrs. Villers was robbed of silver and jewellery to the value of Rs 7,000. Within three days of the above theft, Mr. Brown of Caning College lost a valuable collection of Indian silver and Mrs. O'Donnell, who occupies the next bungalow was also robbed of jewellery. Dr. Irene Chenton of Shah Najaf Road, was recently disturbed at night by three men trying to get into her house. She fired a revolver and the men decamped. On going outside she found that her chowkidar had been tied up.



The government's decision to waive off customs duty on antiviral drug Remdesivir would help in augmenting the supply of the medicine.

SADANAND GOWDA

CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**BookMyShow rejigs leadership team:** Online ticket booking platform BookMyShow (BMS) on Wednesday announced restructuring of its leadership team as part of its efforts to strengthen focus on key areas, including live entertainment, cinemas and technology. As part of the restructuring, Anil Makhija has been named chief operating officer (live entertainment and venues). He takes over the role from Albert Almeida, who will now head brand partnerships, according to a statement. PTI

**Tata invests in Mailit:** Veteran industrialist Ratan Tata has invested in Mailit, a technology-driven mailroom management and logistics company. While the financial details of the investment were not disclosed, Mailit said it plans to launch 500 mailrooms across India in addition to establishing fully mechanised warehouse and distribution centres in the next five years. PTI

**IGX gas trade:** The Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) on Wednesday said it has commenced gas trade from two new hubs at Dabhol and Jaigarh in Maharashtra. Currently, IGX operates three gas hubs - Dahej and Hazira in Gujarat and KC Basin in Andhra Pradesh. The introduction of the two new hubs in Maharashtra will allow the exchange to operate from five physical gas hubs. PTI

**Samsung offer:** Samsung has announced new offers and benefits on its latest flagship Galaxy S21+. Starting today, customers will be able to avail an instant cashback of Rs 5000 on Galaxy S21+. Together with an upgrade bonus of Rs 7000, Galaxy S21+ will be available to consumers at a price of Rs 69,999, the company said. SNS

**HCL Info CFO:** HCL Infosystems on Wednesday said its chief financial officer Kapil Kapur has resigned from the company. The company's board of directors has named Alok Sahu to succeed Kapur for the position of CFO with effect from 1 June 2021, a regulatory filing said. PTI

**Zoom fund:** Zoom Video Communications, Inc on Wednesday announced the Zoom Apps Fund, a new \$100-million venture fund created to stimulate growth of Zoom's ecosystem of Zoom Apps, integrations, developer platform, and hardware, according to a release. SNS

**Co-lending pact:** Indiabulls Housing Finance (IBH) and HDFC Ltd have entered into a strategic co-lending partnership to offer housing loans at competitive rates. IBH will originate retail home loans as per jointly drawn up credit policy and retain 20 per cent of the loan in its books, and 80 per cent will be on HDFC books, Indiabulls Housing said in a regulatory filing. PTI

# GDP growth forecast cut to 10.2% for FY'22

Underlying conditions have changed rapidly in last 30 days or so: Care Ratings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

**With** economic activities getting affected across the country due to curbs imposed by states amid surge in Covid-19 cases, Care Ratings has revised down its forecast for GDP growth to 10.2 per cent in financial year 2021-22 from earlier projection of 10.7-10.9 per cent.

This is the third revision by the rating agency in the last one month.

We have revised our forecast for GDP growth for FY'22 as the underlying conditions have changed rapidly in the last 30 days or so. It stands now at 10.2 per cent, Care Ratings said in a report.

On 24 March 2021, the agency had projected GDP growth between 11 and 11.2 per cent based on GVA (gross value added) growth of 10.2 per cent.

The spread of the virus in Maharashtra had led to the announcement of a "lockdown" by the state government which began in a less strin-

## 3RD REVISION WITHIN A MONTH

► On 24 March 2021, Care Ratings had projected GDP growth between 11 and 11.2 per cent.

► On 5 April, the agency lowered its GDP forecast for the current fiscal year to 10.7-10.9 per cent.

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gent manner from the first week of April, it said.

Factoring the potential loss of economic output due to the restrictions in the state, the agency, on 5 April, lowered its GDP forecast for the current fiscal year to 10.7-10.9 per cent.

But the "lockdown" was made more obtrusive to business activity by 20 April, with more stringency expected for the forthcoming fortnight, it

based on GVA (gross value added) growth of 10.2 per cent.

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But the "lockdown" was made more obtrusive to business activity by 20 April, with more stringency expected for the forthcoming fortnight, it

added.

Further, the spread of the virus to other states has caused similar actions by governments which have ranged from night curfews and weekend lockdowns to full lockdowns.

The report said two events

in the country - state elections and Kumbh Mela - have seen millions of people coming together with social distancing norms not being followed.

With a potential fall in output of Rs 1.13 lakh crore, GVA will be Rs 135.69 lakh crore and growth will be 9.3 per cent.

As tax collections too would be affected, there would be an impact on GDP growth which is now placed at 10.2 per cent.

According to the agency, the loss in GDP this year due to the lockdowns would be to the extent of 0.8-1 per cent from our earlier estimate of 11-11.2 per cent.

This has potential to spread the virus at an exponential rate throughout the country and several states have announced measures to test people returning from the pilgrimage, it said.

The agency said the post-election lockdowns in five states/UT - Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry - can be expected once polling is completed and more people are tested for Covid-19.

The rating agency had projected GVA (gross value added) to increase from Rs 124.11 lakh crore (FY'21) to Rs 136.82 lakh crore (FY'22) which was an increase of 10.2 per cent.

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"We value each other's experience and expertise to build a granular loan portfolio with patience and nuance," said Narendranath Mishra, head agri and inclusive banking, DCB Bank. DCB Bank and Techfino complement each other's strengths, and this is an opportunity for both organisations to grow the customer franchise, he said. PTI

DCB Bank buys 9% in Techfino Cap

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

DCB Bank said it has acquired 9 per cent stake in non-banking financial company Techfino Capital which is engaged in providing technology-based education and healthcare loans. DCB Bank has acquired a minority equity stake of approximately 9 per cent in Techfino Capital Private Limited (TCPL), the tender said in a release.

Techfino is a Bengaluru-based NBFC which uses its modern technology platform to provide customised consumer loans in education and healthcare sectors. It is present in key metros and tier-II cities across India, said the new generation private sector bank.

"DCB Bank and TCPL are delighted to be associated in this manner. Micro loans or granular loans as a financial solution hold much promise."

"We value each other's experience and expertise to build a granular loan portfolio with patience and nuance," said Narendranath Mishra, head agri and inclusive banking, DCB Bank. DCB Bank and Techfino complement each other's strengths, and this is an opportunity for both organisations to grow the customer franchise, he said. PTI

# Oxygen reallocation to impact small biz in some sectors: Crisil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

ings said.

"The disruption in the supply of oxygen for industrial use would temporarily impact the revenues of small and mid-sized companies into metal fabrication, automotive components, ship-breaking, paper, and engineering," its director Gautam Shahi said.

These sectors typically do not have captive oxygen plants and source their requirement through merchant suppliers for operations such as welding, cutting, cleaning and chemical processes, he added.

Setting up an air-separation plant or importing oxygen is not a viable option because it requires significant lead time and involves relatively prohibitive costs, the agency said.

Oxygen is consumed by industry in two ways - on-site and merchant sales. On-site is through captive plants for process-driven industries (including the nine sectors exempted by the government), which account for 75-80 per cent of oxygen manufactured in India, the rating agency said.

## Hero partners Taiwan firm to collaborate on electric mobility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Hero MotoCorp today said it has partnered with Taiwan-based Gogoro Inc to collaborate in the field of electric mobility. As per the partnership, the companies will establish a battery swapping joint venture to bring Gogoro's industry leading battery swapping platform to India and will collaborate on electric vehicle development to bring Hero-branded, powered by Gogoro network vehicles to market.

Today marks another major milestone in our journey, as we bring Hero's leadership in two-wheelers, our global scale and innovation powerhouse, with the leadership of Gogoro in swapping business model, as they have

demonstrated over the years in Taiwan and rest of the world," Hero MotoCorp chairman and CEO Pawan Munjal said in a statement.

This partnership will further extend the work, which the company is doing at its R&D hubs at the Centre of Innovation and Technology (CIT) in Jaipur and Tech Centre in Germany, he added.

The vision and commitment of Hero and Gogoro is perfectly aligned towards the common goal of accelerating the shift to smart, sustainable electric transportation and refuelling is vital."

The Hero-Gogoro partnership addresses these challenges and will leverage Hero's market strength and Gogoro's industry leading innovations to deliver smart vehicles and refuelling with Gogoro Network battery swapping, he added.

"With this new partnership, we commit to introducing a sustainable mobility paradigm, first in India and then in other markets around the world. This partnership

will strengthen and expedite the Indian government's electrification drive and will have a significant impact on India's energy and mobility future," he added.

Gogoro Inc founder and CEO Horace Luke said: "We are at a critical stage in the transformation of urban mobility and the evolution of smart cities. With more than 225 million gas-powered two-wheel vehicles in India, the need for smart and sustainable electric transportation and refuelling is vital."

The Hero-Gogoro partnership addresses these challenges and will leverage Hero's market strength and Gogoro's industry leading innovations to deliver smart vehicles and refuelling with Gogoro Network battery swapping, he added.

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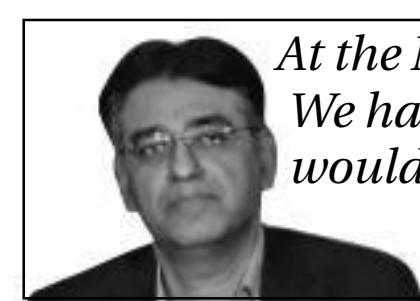
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*At the NCOC we reviewed the pandemic situation, which is bad. We have taken several decisions to impose more curbs which would be announced on Friday*

PAKISTAN'S FEDERAL MINISTER FOR PLANNING ASAD UMAR

WARNING OF MORE CURBS TO ARREST COVID SPREAD IN THE COUNTRY

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 22 APRIL 2021

09

# Myanmar refugee crisis brews as turmoil hits economy

Aid workers, activists are warning Myanmar's political upheavals can cause a regional refugee crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON, 21 APRIL

**A**id workers and activists are warning Myanmar's political upheavals risk causing a regional refugee crisis as the strife following a February coup displaces growing numbers of people who have lost their livelihoods.

Tom Andrews, the UN special rapporteur for Myanmar, said violence has left nearly 250,000 people displaced. As Myanmar's neighbors prepare for a summit this week to discuss the coup, he and other rights advocates are warning that the situation could spiral out of control.

The world must act immediately to address this humanitarian catastrophe," Andrews said in a Twitter post on Wednesday.

A mass civil disobedience movement and efforts by security forces to crush it have left many out of work. Dis-



Anti-coup protesters walk through a market with images of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon. ■ AP

ruptions of internet service by authorities are also wrecking the means many in the impoverished country rely on to make a living.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, called a meeting Saturday on the crisis that has left more than 700 civilians dead, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which

tracks the casualties since the military takeover.

ASEAN's stance of non-interference in each others' internal matters, and the relatively undemocratic nature of many of the members own governments, has left Myanmar's neighbors wary of imposing any sanctions against the regime that seized power from the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu

Kyi. She has been imprisoned along with more than 3,000 others.

The growing number of people fleeing bombings and other violence by Myanmar forces is something they (ASEAN) want to remain in control of. Refugees spilling over the borders are not internal, it becomes a regional issue," said Sally Thompson, executive director of The Border Consortium, the main provider of food, shelter and other support to refugees from Myanmar for more than three decades.

It is the ASEAN countries that can put pressure on Myanmar because they are a trading bloc, Thompson said in a briefing at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand. She estimated that about 7,000 people were camped along the Salween River on the border with Thailand, with more than 1,000 hiding in Thai forests. That is only one area along borders that stretch

from India to the west to China and Thailand to the north and east. So far, most of those displaced are still within Myanmar, adding to those already having to flee due to long-running ethnic insurgencies. But fighting has disrupted their access to food and other necessities.

People have been finding areas of solace inside Myanmar still, but if this conflict broadens into the ethnic states along the border areas, you will see refugee flows," James Rodehaver, Bangkok-based chief of the Myanmar team of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said at a recent seminar.

The mass civil disobedience movement has left many Myanmar businesses, from banks to hospitals to garment factories, shuttered. That has prompted people to flee from cities back to their home villages, burdening families that had relied on them for support.

## Submarine missing with 53 on board: Indonesian military

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, 21 APRIL

The Indonesian navy is searching for a submarine that went missing near the resort island of Bali with 53 people on board, the military said Wednesday.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the KRI Nanggala 402 was participating in a training exercise when it missed a scheduled reporting call.

The submarine is believed to have disappeared in waters about 60 miles (95 kilometers) north of Bali, he said.

Tjahjanto said the navy has deployed ships to search the

area and has asked for help from Singapore and Australia, which have submarine rescue vessels. Local media reports said the navy believes the ship sank into a trough at a depth of 700 meters (2,300 feet). There was no immediate information about why it went missing.

The German-built submarine, which has been in service since the early 1980s, was rehearsing for a missile-firing exercise that was to take place on Thursday and be attended by Tjahjanto and other military leaders. Indonesia currently has a fleet of five submarines and plans to operate at least eight by 2024. That's more than two months

ahead of the planned 11 September pullout date.

The Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul are currently considering whether to shorten the withdrawal period," said German Defense Ministry spokesman David Helmbold.

The 4th of July is now being considered as a pullout date. The ministry informed the (German parliament's)

defense committee about this today.

Still, the latest delay in getting Afghanistan's warring sides to hammer out a peace deal underscored the difficulties the Biden administration and NATO are facing in orchestrating an orderly exit from conflict-scarred Afghanistan. Both have said they would begin withdrawing their remaining troops

a total of close to 13,000 from the country on 1 May and complete the pullout by 11 September, no matter what.

The decision to delay the conference came several days after Taliban insurgents, who are key to peace efforts, dismissed the US-promoted conference in Istanbul as a political spectacle serving American interests.

No new date was given for the conference, which was to have started Saturday under the sponsorship of the United Nations, Turkey and Qatar. Turkey's foreign minister said the conference was delayed until after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which ends in mid-May.

## Seoul court rejects sexual slavery claim against Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, 21 APRIL

A South Korean court on Wednesday rejected a claim by South Korean sexual slavery victims and their relatives who sought compensation from the Japanese government over their wartime sufferings.

Activists representing sexual slavery victims denounced the decision and said the Seoul Central District Court was ignoring their struggles to restore the women's honor

and dignity.

The court ruled that the Japanese government should be exempt from civil jurisdiction under the principles of international law.

The same court in January had called for the Japanese government to give 100 million won (\$89,000) each to a separate group of 12 women who sued in 2013 over their wartime suffering as sex slaves, which was the first such ruling in South Korea.

Japanese officials had angrily rejected the January ruling,

accusing South Korea of making illegal demands and undermining international law and bilateral relations.

The ruling came as the Asian US allies struggle to repair their relations that sank to post-war lows in recent years over history, trade, and military issues.

Japan insists all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations with South Korea in which Tokyo provided \$500 million in economic assistance to Seoul.

## Chad rebels threaten to depose slain president's son

ASSOCIATED PRESS

N'DJAMENA, 21 APRIL

Rebels in Chad threatened to depose the son of the country's slain president after he was named interim leader of the central African nation, raising the specter Wednesday of a potentially violent power struggle.

Uncertainty prevailed early Wednesday over how far the rebel column was from N'Djamena, a city of 1 million people, and whether the military would remain loyal to Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno in the aftermath of his father's death

after three decades in power. The rebel group that the military blamed for President Idriss Deby Itno's death said late Tuesday that its forces were heading toward N'Djamena at this very moment.

Chad is not a monarchy,

said a statement from the group known as the Front for Change and Concord in Chad.

There can be no dynastic devolution of power in our country. The group's claim of advancing toward the capital could not be independently

verified, but it immediately created panic in N'Djamena, which another rebel group attacked back in 2008. Officials with the Transitional Military Council said the fight was not yet over for control of the country.

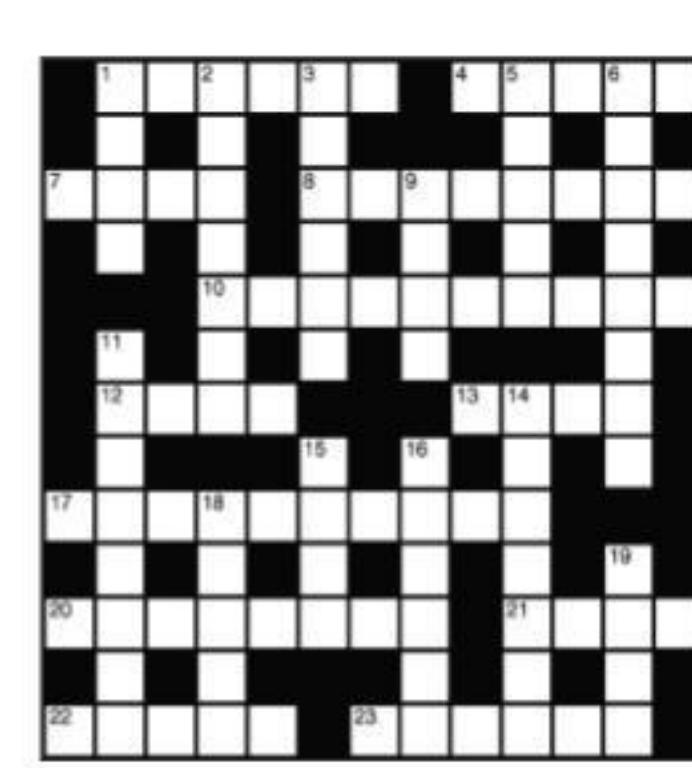
The security situation remains highly serious given the persistence and magnitude of the terrorist threat, the council's vice president, Djimadoum Tiraina, said, adding that the military must now prevent the country from sinking into chaos and anarchy. Chad's military spokesman said Tuesday that the president

died during a visit to the front lines of the battle against the rebel group. The rebels were based in neighboring Libya until earlier this month, when authorities say they crossed over into Chad on the country's 11 April Election Day.

Deby ran for a sixth term in that election and faced minimal opposition after several challengers chose not to take part, fearing the vote would be rigged. His son, Mahamat Deby Itno, 37, is best known as a top commander of the Chadian forces aiding a UN peacekeeping mission in northern Mali.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

- Make good (a loss) (6)
- Speak pompously (5)
- Just (4)
- In reality (8)
- 10 Sporting competition (10)
- 12 Uncommon (4)
- 13 Woodwind instrument (4)
- 17 Noisy and lively (10)
- 20 Household servant (8)
- 21 Defect (4)
- 22 God (5)
- 23 Refugee (6)

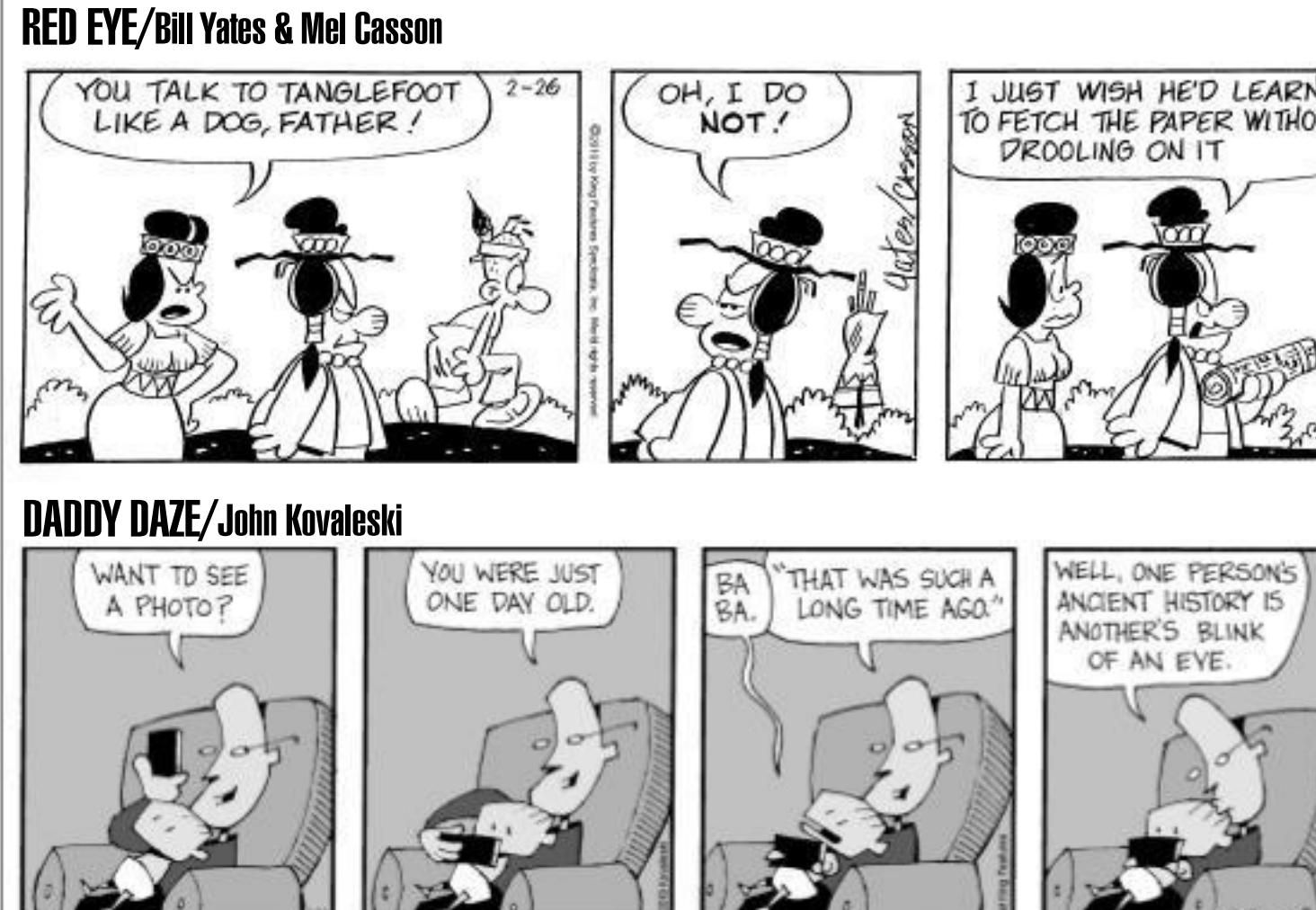
**DOWN**

- Type of horse (4)
- Head of a museum (7)
- Planet (6)
- Domain (5)
- Very small (4)
- Wood preservative (8)
- Shy (7)
- Undergarment (4)
- Dynamic influences (6)
- Perspective (5)
- Moderately hot (4)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



By arrangement with The Independent  
Figures in parentheses denote  
the number of letters in the words required

RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



1

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

- 1 Handel, ta, 12 Balti, 16 Taramasala- 13 Tractor, 19 Harvord, 14 Havoc, 15 Nausea, 17 Aroma, 20 Lot.
- 4 Basa (Handle- 18 Core, 21 Daze, 5 About, 6 Berth, 10 tête-à-tête,
- 7 Cabbage, 9 Authenticate, 11 Add to,

By arrangement with The Independent  
Figures in parentheses denote  
the number of letters in the words required

### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800112511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

Haryana Roadways: 23861262, 09910383838,

18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air-

port 011-25671580; Terminal I-23860626

Rajasthan Roadways 23671579, 18001803838

U.P. Roads 23868709

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 018001801407

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383838,

18001803838, Reservation 23466262 (City)

Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 41528181

Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

#### SCRABBLE BRAND

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

PAR SCORE 90-100

JUDD'S RACKS TO 100

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE BRAND

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

PAR SCORE 145-150

JUDD'S RACKS TO 100

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE BRAND

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

PAR SCORE 90-100

JUDD'S RACKS TO 100

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE BRAND

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

PAR SCORE 90-100

JUDD'S RACKS TO 100

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with 3x3 boxes. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.

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This bill is part of George Floyd's legacy. This work is long overdue.

UNITED STATES VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS

CALLING FOR PASSAGE OF A BILL AIMED AT REFORMING POLICING IN THE USA

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	27 H
HONG KONG	28	26 R
TOKYO	18	14 R
LONDON	12	9 R
DUBAI	37	26 S
SAN FRANCISCO	23	14 CL
NEW YORK	20	12 R
MOSCOW	17	9 R

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



Police officers struggle with demonstrators after police stopped a protest rally against the German government's policy to battle the coronavirus pandemic in Berlin. ■ AGENCIES

**EU proposes rules:** European Union officials unveiled proposals Wednesday for reining in high-risk uses of artificial intelligence such as live facial scanning that could threaten people's safety or rights. The draft regulations from the EU's executive commission include rules on the use of the rapidly expanding technology in activities such as choosing school, job or loan applicants. AP

**Chile legislature passes euthanasia bill:** Chile's Chamber of Deputies have approved a bill to allow euthanasia and assisted suicide for those over 18. It now goes to the Senate for debate. The initiative seeks to regulate euthanasia, in which a doctor administers a drug that causes death, and assisted suicide, in which a doctor gives a drug that the patients take themselves. The legislation was submitted to congress by the centre-left opposition in 2014. AP

# Chauvin found guilty of killing Floyd

Kamala Harris said black Americans and black men in particular have been treated throughout the course of history as less than human

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 21 APRIL



A crowd is seen at George Floyd Square after a guilty verdict was announced at the trial. ■ AGENCIES

**A** US grand jury has found former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty on all three charges he faced over the custodial death of African-American George Floyd last year, a chilling incident that sparked worldwide protests against racism and excessive use of force by police.

The 12 jurors found Chauvin, 45, guilty of unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in one of the most closely watched cases in recent memory in the US.

Chauvin was filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck during his arrest on May 25 after a convenience store clerk in Minneapolis Xalled that Floyd tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Chauvin pinned down Floyd, 46, with his knee on the pavement of a south Minneapolis intersection for more

than nine minutes. "I can't breathe. I can't breathe," were his last words.

Chauvin pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. He faces up to 40 years in prison, according to US media reports.

With only his eyes visible as the rest of his face was hidden behind a surgical mask, Chauvin watched as the verdict was announced. A deputy handcuffed Chauvin and escorted him to a side room.

He was later transferred to the Minnesota Correctional Facility. Judge Peter Cahill said sentencing is expected in eight weeks.

The City of Minneapolis last month settled a wrongful death lawsuit with Floyd's family for \$27 million.

The verdict prompted celebratory scenes outside the court and in Floyd's home town, where several hundred people cheered as it was

announced.

The Floyd family's lawyer, Ben Crump and George Floyd's family released a statement following the conviction of Chauvin, saying the verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world.

Painfully earned justice has arrived for George Floyd's family and the community here in Minneapolis, but today's verdict goes far beyond this city and has significant implications for the country and even the world. "Justice for Black America is justice for all of America. This case is a turning point in American history for accountability of law enforcement and sends a clear message we hope is heard clearly in every city and every state," the statement said.

President Joe Biden said it was a murder in the full light of day and it ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see the systemic racism in the country. "The systemic racism is a stain on our nation's soul," Biden said.

"I was prepared for the fact that it might not be a guilty verdict because it's happened so many times before," the Washington, D.C., resident said. She recalled the shock of the Rodney King case nearly three decades ago when four Los Angeles officers were acquitted of beat-

cure a growing number of state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles and other new weapons. Headed that development of the nuclear-armed Poseidon underwater drone and the Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile is continuing successfully.

Without singling out a specific country, the Russian leader denounced a foreign government that imposes unlawful, politically motivated economic sanctions and crude attempts to enforce its will on others.

The US last week imposed an array of new sanctions on Russia for interfering in the 2020 US presidential election and for involvement in the SolarWinds hack of federal agencies - activities Moscow has denied.

The US ordered 10 Russian diplomats expelled, targeted dozens of companies and individuals, and imposed new curbs on Russia's ability to borrow money.

**'Sliver of hope':** America absorbs verdict

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK, 21 APRIL

When the verdicts came in "Guilty, Guilty, Guilty" Lucia Edmonds let out the breath she hadn't even realized she'd been holding.

The relief that the 91-year-old Black woman felt flooding over her when white former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted for killing George Floyd was hard-earned, coming after a lifetime of seeing other cases end differently.

"I was prepared for the fact that it might not be a guilty verdict because it's happened so many times before," the Washington, D.C., resident said. She recalled the shock of the Rodney King case nearly three decades ago when four Los Angeles officers were acquitted of beat-

ing King, a Black motorist.

"I don't know how they watched the video of Rodney King being beaten and not hold those officers to account," Edmonds said. About the Chauvin verdict, she said, I hope this means there is a shift in this country, but it's too early for me to make that assumption." Still, she added: Something feels different.

The same sense of relief, of accountability served and crisis at least temporarily averted, was palpable across the United States on Tuesday after a jury found Chauvin guilty of murder and manslaughter in killing Floyd, a Black man who took his last breath pinned to the street with the officer's knee on his neck.

But when it came to what's next for America, the reac-

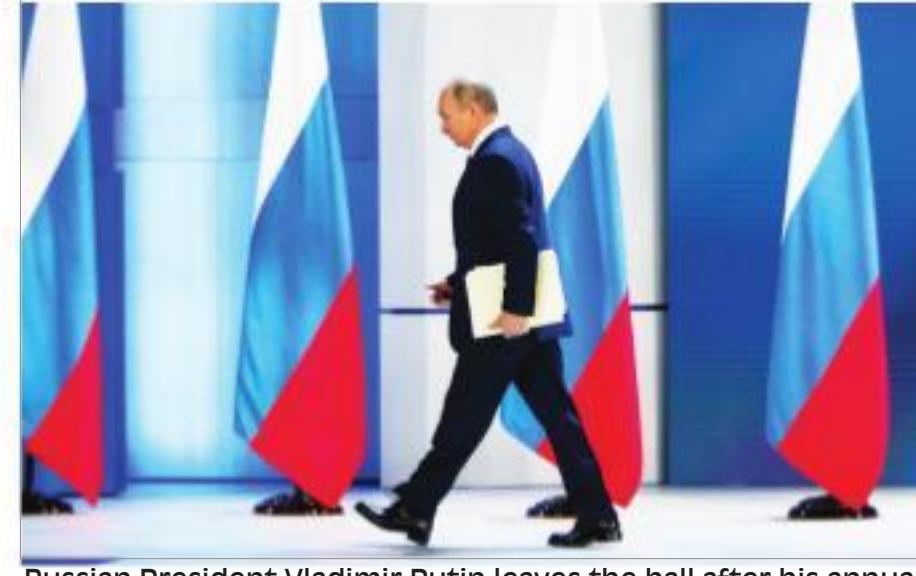
tion was more hesitant. Some were hopeful, pointing to the protests and sustained outcry over Floyd's death as signs of change to come, in policing and otherwise.

Others were more circumspect, wondering if one hopeful result really meant the start of something better in a country with a history of racial injustice.

In Columbus, Ohio, some residents had their celebrations cut short by reports that police fatally shot a teenage Black girl. "As you're getting one phone call that he was guilty, I'm getting the next phone call that this is happening in my neighborhood," Kimberly Shepherd said. Police released body-camera footage that appeared to show the officer firing just as the girl lunged at another female with a knife.

## Putin warns the enemies of Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW, 21 APRIL



Russian President Vladimir Putin leaves the hall after his annual state of the nation address in Moscow. ■ AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday sternly warned the West against further encroachment on Russia's security interests, saying Moscow's response will be quick and tough. Putin's warning during his annual state-of-the-nation address came amid a massive Russian military buildup near Ukraine, where cease-fire violations in the seven-year conflict between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces have escalated in recent weeks.

The United States and its allies have urged the Kremlin to pull the troops back.

"I hope that no one dares to cross the red line in respect to Russia, and we will determine where it is in each specific case," Putin said.

"Those who organise any provocations threatening the core security interests of Russia will feel sorry for their

deeds as never before. Moscow has rejected Ukrainian and Western concerns about the troop buildup, saying it doesn't threaten anyone and Russia is free to deploy its forces on its territory. But the Kremlin also has warned Ukrainian authorities against trying to use force to retake control of the rebel-held east, saying that Russia could be forced to intervene to protect civilians

in the region."

"We really don't want to burn the bridges, Putin said. But if some mistake our good intentions for indifference or weakness and intend to burn or even blow up those bridges themselves, Russia's response will be asymmetrical, quick and tough," Putin pointed to Russia's moves to modernise its nuclear arsenals and said the military would continue to pro-

Russia retaliated by ordering 10 US diplomats to leave, blacklisting eight current and former U.S. officials, and tightening requirements for U.S. Embassy operations.

"Russia has its own interests, which we will defend in line with the international law," Putin said during Wednesday's address.

"If somebody refuses to understand this obvious thing, is reluctant to conduct a dialogue and chooses a selfish and arrogant tone, Russia will always find a way to defend its position."

He harshly criticised the West for failing to condemn what he described as a botched coup attempt and failed plot to assassinate Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko, allegedly involving a blockade of the country's capital, power cuts and cyberattacks. Belarusian and Russian security agencies arrested the alleged coup plotters in Moscow earlier this month.

**German lawmakers approve 'emergency brake' virus rules**

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BERLIN, 21 APRIL

German lawmakers on Wednesday approved a proposal by Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to mandate uniform restrictions in areas where the coronavirus is spreading too quickly, among them closures and a night curfew.

As parliament's lower house debated the plan, thousands of protesters gathered on a nearby street. Police ended the demonstration after participants ignored coronavirus restrictions.

The legislation to apply an emergency brake consistently in areas with high infection rates is intended to end the patchwork of measures that has often characterized the pandemic response across highly decentralised Germany's 16 states.

Lawmakers in the lower house voted 342-250 for the

plan, with 64 abstentions. The upper house, where state governments are represented, is due to consider the legislation Thursday. It would apply until the end of June.

The measures would kick in for areas where there are more than 100 weekly new cases per 100,000 residents. Schools would have to switch to distance learning at a higher rate of 15%.

Opposition lawmakers advanced a variety of arguments against the bill. Alexander Gauland of the far-right Alternative for Germany, which opposes lockdown measures in general, called it an attack on rights of freedom, federalism and common sense.

"The Greens had different objections. This emergency brake remains too half-hearted, too ineffective, too inconsistent and too disproportionate," lawmaker Maria Klein-Schmeink said.

## FLYING HIGH



The Royal Standard flies above Windsor Castle in Windsor, England. ■ AGENCIES

## Greece & Libya to discuss boundaries

ATHENS, 14 APRIL

Greece and Libya are to discuss delineating maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean, the Greek prime minister's office said Wednesday after a meeting between the prime minister and the head of Libya's Presidential Council.

The talks in Athens with Mohamed al-Menfi, who previously served as an ambassador to Greece, came a week after Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visited Tripoli to meet with the new interim Libyan government. The interim government took office last month, replacing two rival administrations that had governed the eastern and western parts of a country torn apart by war.

Leaders from Britain's aviation industry joined forces Wednesday to urge the British government to ensure that popular European destinations face the least onerous coronavirus travel restrictions when holidays are allowed again.

The Resolution Foundation also said that households in the UK are also more likely to have run up more debt in response to the financial shockwaves emanating from the pandemic.

In a report, which was entitled "After Shocks" and was supported by US investment bank JPMorgan Chase, researchers said typical household incomes in the UK, France and Germany were broadly similar in the year before the pandemic but that higher levels of inequality and a weaker safety net meant

## PM Johnson denies allegations of sleaze within govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON, 21 APRIL



would not have to pay extra taxes if they came to Britain to work on the project.

I make absolutely no apology at all for shifting heaven and earth and doing everything I possibly could, as I think any Prime Minister would in those circumstances, to secure ventilators for the people of this country," Johnson told the members of parliament.

He also expressed his will-

iness to share all the details of the messages with Parliament. But the Opposition Labour Party dubbed the revelations as jaw-dropping and something that was emerging as a pattern for the government, amid recent allegations around lobbying of ministers.

"Every day there are new allegations about this Conservative government: dodgy PPE (personal protection equipment) deals; tax breaks for their mates; the health secretary owns shares in a company delivering NHS services. Sleaze, sleaze, sleaze, and it's all on his watch, said Labour leader Keir Starmer.

In the text exchanges covered by the BBC, Johnson messaged Dyson saying: "(UK Chancellor) Rishi (Sunak) says it is fixed!! We need you here."

When the businessman sought further reassurance for

## Irish opens Facebook probe over data dump case

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, 14 APRIL

Ireland's privacy regulator said Wednesday it has opened an investigation into Facebook after reports that data on more than 500 million of its users was found dumped online, in a suspected violation of strict European Union privacy rules.

The Data Protection Commission said it decided to start investigating following multiple international media reports "about the data dump."

News reports earlier this month said the data was found on a website for hackers and contained information on 533 million users from more than 100 countries, including names, Facebook IDs, phone numbers, locations, birthdates and email addresses.

The watchdog said it launched the investigation after it engaged with Facebook

## Pandemic 'exposed' UK households' finances, report finds

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON, 21 APRIL

Households in Britain, especially poorer ones, are far more likely to have suffered a severe income shock during the coronavirus pandemic over the past year than their counterparts in France and Germany, a well-respected British-based think tank said Wednesday.

These holes in UK households' financial resilience have been exposed during the Covid-19 crisis," said Maja Gustafsson, an economist at the Resolution Foundation.

The report found that among households in which at least one person had fallen out of work, 41 per cent of British households had suf-

fered a severe income fall of at least 25 per cent, substantially more than the 20 per cent recorded in France and 28 per cent in Germany. It also found that 33 per cent of British households have cut back their spending, more than the 23 per cent recorded in France and 21 per cent in Germany.

By several measures, the British economy suffered one of the deepest and most protracted recessions in the developed world in the wake of the pandemic, with the economy shrinking around 10 per cent in 2020.

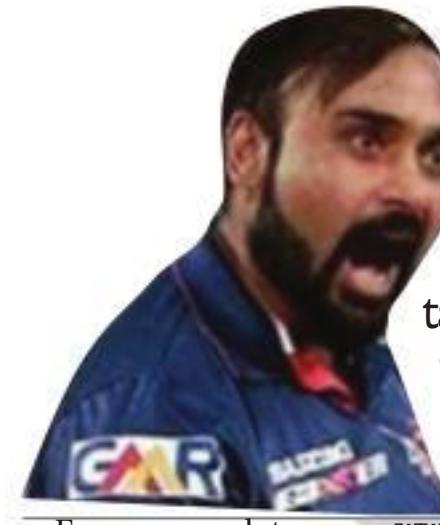
Many blame that on the Conservative government's repeated failures to back lockdown restrictions early enough, delays that have contributed

to the UK recording more than 127,000 coronavirus-related deaths, Europe's highest.

There are hopes that the rapid rollout of coronavirus vaccines in the UK and the gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions will see the economy make up some of that lost output this year.

Though the underlying safety net in the UK is relatively less generous than those in France and Germany, the British government has been credited with swiftly enacting financial support measures to help offset the impact of the pandemic, notably its job retention program that has helped keep a lid on unemployment. Under the program, which is due to expire later this year, the government has been paying the lion's share of the incomes of those workers retained by firms during the series of lockdown



For more updates [www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

## THUMBNAILS

**India evasive:** The Pakistan Cricket Board and the International Cricket Council have yet to receive written assurances from the Board of Control for Cricket in India on visas for the Pakistan team to participate in the Twenty20 World Cup in October this year.

**Sharma fined:** Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma was fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over rate during the franchise's Indian Premier League game against Delhi Capitals. Mumbai Indians were restricted to 137/9 and Delhi won with five balls to spare.

**Coloured caps:** Royal Challengers Bangalore fast bowler Harshal Patel has retained the Purple cap. Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dhawan got back the Orange cap after scoring 45 in his team's six-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League.

**Selector removed:** The national selector of England's men's cricket team was removed as part of a restructuring that made the role redundant after more than a century. Ed Smith is leaving at the end of April after about three years in the position, it was said.

**Proteas v Proteas:** Cricket South Africa's members' council has criticised CSA's interim board for "not allowing it time to go through and discuss the final draft of a memorandum of incorporation," saying the adoption of it would have upset the government officials.

**Schalke relegated:** Schalke were finally relegated from the Bundesliga after a dismal season with a 1-0 loss at Arminia Bielefeld, when Bayern Munich closed in on another title. Bayern are one win away from a record-extending ninth consecutive championship.

**French Cup:** Mathieu Guillaud led fourth-tier Rumilly-Valires into the semi-finals of the French Cup with a 2-0 upset win over second-division Toulouse. Toulouse, on track for promotion to the top division, were let down by their defence, including the goalie.

**Florentina win:** Fiorentina won 2-1 at Hellas Verona in Serie A to boost their chances of avoiding relegation. A first-half Duan Vlahovic penalty and a Martn Cceres goal against his former team secured the win although Eddie Salcedo pulled one back.

**Fan decision:** Tokyo Olympics organisers may put off an announcement on how many fans can attend until June, the media reported on Wednesday as surging coronavirus infections played havoc with preparations. Organisers have already banned overseas fans.

**ICC bans Qadeer Khan:** The ICC on Wednesday banned United Arab Emirates (UAE) player Qadeer Ahmed Khan for five years from all cricket after he admitted breaching the anti-corruption code and also charged Mehardeep Chahaykar on six counts for corruption.

**Selvaraj alleges manipulation:** Indian swimmer Likhit Selvaraj on Wednesday alleged that the timings were "manipulated" during the recent Uzbekistan Open Championships to ensure Olympics qualification of local participants and called for a probe into the matter by world body FINA.

**Bangladesh v Sri Lanka:** Bangladesh batsman Nazmul Shanto posted his first test hundred Wednesday and helped his team reach 302-2 at stumps on the first day of the first test against Sri Lanka. Shanto finished the day unbeaten at 126 after Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bat first at Pallekele International Stadium.

## CAPITAL SHOW

Amit Mishra (in photo, left), having made an impressive comeback to the Indian Premier League by taking 4/24 against Mumbai Indians, said his wicket-taking strategy had worked. "I always think of wickets. If you take wickets, you put the opposition under pressure," the leg-spinner, whose 2020 IPL season had been curtailed by an injury, said.

For more updates [www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

# The Statesman Sport

Postal Reg. No. DL (ND)-II/6088/2018-19-20

## Khaleel, Bairstow shine as SRH outclass Punjab Kings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHENNAI, 21 APRIL

**Fast bowler Khaleel Ahmed** led an impressive bowling effort before Jonny Bairstow (in photo) smashed an unbeaten fifty as Sunrisers Hyderabad snapped their three-match losing streak with a convincing nine-wicket win over Punjab Kings in an IPL game here on Wednesday. Asked to bowl first, Sunrisers Hyderabad's pace-spin duo of Khaleel (3/21) and Abhishek Sharma (2/24) did bulk of the damage to bundle out Punjab Kings for a below-par 120 in 19.4 overs.

Senior pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/16), star Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan (1/17) and Siddarth Kaul (1/27) also picked up a wicket each as Punjab never gained momentum. Chasing the total, SRH openers Jonny Bairstow (63) and David Warner (37) pummelled Punjab into submission, adding 73 runs off 60 balls to set the foundation. Bairstow and Kane Williamson (16) then knocked off the remaining runs as SRH romped home with 8 balls to spare.

Bairstow and Warner smashed five boundaries and two sixes during their 50-run stand in the powerplay, while Punjab had managed nine fours and two maximums in their

entire innings. Warner picked up the first boundary when he sent Mohammed Shami across point in the third ball of the innings. Bairstow then welcomed Fabian Allen with a four and a six in the next over. A low full toss by Shami then sent across the midwicket by Bairstow before Warner hit the Indian through backward point. Bairstow also pulled

Moises Henriques over long leg while Warner swatted Arshdeep Singh over the backward square leg. Warner sent Deepak Hooda sailing over extra cover for a six but in the next over he holed out to Mayank of Allen, who bowled a wicket maiden, as SRH were 73 for 1.

Bairstow found an able ally in Williamson, who was playing his first match of the sea-

son, as they added an unbeaten 48 runs to help SRH log their first win of the season.

Earlier, Shahrukh Khan (22) and Mayank Agarwal (22) were the top scorers for Punjab Kings, who came into the match after two losses.

In an innings when clearing the boundary seemed to be a tall task, Khan managed two sixes, while Agarwal, who was dropped on 0 in the very first over by Rashid, hit two fours.

Opting to bat in their first game at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Punjab lost their inform skipper KL Rahul (4) early on. Agarwal and Chris Gayle (15) stitched a 24-run partnership. However, at the end of the seventh over, Khaleel got rid of the Indian with Rashid making no mistakes this time at midwicket.

West Indian Nicholas Pooran

## SCOREBOARD

**Punjab Kings Innings:**  
KL Rahul c Jadhav b Bhuvneshwar 4  
M Agarwal c R Khan b K Ahmed 22  
C Gayle lbw b Khan 15  
N Pooran run out (Warner) 0  
D Hooda lbw b Sharma 13  
S Khan c Sharma b K Ahmed 22  
M Henriques st Bairstow b A Sharma 14  
F Allen c Warner b K Ahmed 6  
M Ashwin c Bairstow b S Kaul 9  
M Shami run out (Vijay  
Shankar/Bairstow) 3  
A Singh not out 1  
**Extras:** (B-9, W-1, NB-1) 11  
**Total:** (10 wkt, 18.4 Overs) 120  
**Fall of Wickets:** 15-3, 39-2, 39-3, 47-4,

**Sunrisers Hyderabad Innings:**  
D Warner c M Agarwal b Allen 37  
Jonny Bairstow not out 63  
Kane Williamson not out 16  
**Extras:** (LB-1, W-4) 5  
**Total:** (1 wkt, 18.4 Overs) 121  
**Fall of Wickets:** 73-1  
**Bowler:** M Shami 2-0-16, F Allen 4-1-  
22-3, A Singh 3-4-31-0, M Henriques 1-  
0-7-0, M Ashwin 4-0-22-0, D Hooda 4-0-  
22-0.

## Das &amp; Kumari doing well

GUATEMALA CITY, 21 APRIL



## Batsmen power CSK to 220/3 against KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

Faf du Plessis (in photo) blazed his way to a masterclass 95 not out after his opening partner Ruturaj Gaikwad's impressive 64 as Chennai Super Kings posted a big total of 220 for 3 against Kolkata Knight Riders in their IPL match here on Wednesday.

First, it was Gaikwad who returned to form after a string of poor outings in his first three matches with a composed 42-ball knock that set up for CSK after KKR opted to field.

Gaikwad played the role of aggressor, smashing four sixes and four boundaries, while his senior South African partner du Plessis gave the youngster the backup as the duo produced CSK's best start of the season with an opening stand of 115. Du Plessis came on his own after Gaikwad's departure in the 13th over as he added 50 runs with Moeen Ali (25 off 12 balls) off just 26 balls.

CSK scored 76 runs in the final five overs with the South African at his attacking best in the final five overs.

He smashed Andre Russell for three successive boundaries and raced to 90s with a six off Pat Cummins in the final over in his 60-ball knock which was studded with four sixes and nine fours. CSK finished it off in style with Ravindra Jadeja hitting Cummins for a six as Nitish Rana

paled it over the midwicket boundary that summed up the plight of KKR. MS Dhoni promoted himself to No. 4 and finally broke his jinx against Sunil Narine, hitting his first boundary after 50 balls against the mystery spinner en route to a eight-ball 17. Gaikwad made his intention clear in the very first over bowled by Cummins when he pulled him over the rope for

a maximum. There was no looking back for the 24-year-old as he also took on Russell and then stepped down the track off Nagarkoti for another maximum en route to his fifth IPL fifty in 33 balls. Du Plessis joined the party, hammering Nagarkoti for another six in the same over as KKR had no answer to the opening assault by CSK.

The duo will take on

France in the mixed team quarter-finals, while the top-seeded women's team will face hosts Guatemala in the round of the last eight.

The men's team confront the winners of the Spain-Guatemala encounter in their last-eight clash. India were playing on the World Cup circuit for the first time after their appearance in Stage 4 in Berlin in July 2019.

AGENCIES

**Chennai Super Kings Innings:**  
R Gaikwad c Cummins b Chakravarthy 64  
Faf du Plessis not out 95  
Moeen Ali st Karthik b Narine 25  
MS Dhoni c Morgan b Russell 17  
Ravindra Jadeja not out 6  
**Extras:** 13 (B 0, LB 0, W 10, NB 3, P 0)

**Fall of Wickets:** 115-1, 165-2, 201-3  
**Bowler:** V Chakravarthy 4-0-27-1,  
Cummins 4-0-58-0, Narine 4-0-34-1,  
Krishna 4-0-49-0, Russell 2-0-27-1,  
Nagarkoti 2-0-25-0

AGENCIES

## It's time Kohli played a big knock to clinch victory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

win against Delhi Capitals. Against CSK, opener Jos Buttler looked dangerous but the other batsmen failed to make any valuable contributions. For the former champions to do well, the side must click as a batting unit. The Royals' bowling unit has been underwhelming, to say the least, aside from the game against Delhi Capitals. Pacer Jaydev Unadkat took of 3/15 against them while young

Chetan Sakariya showed promise.

In the absence of Jofra Archer, more will be expected of Chris Morris and Bangladesh speedster Mustafizur Rahman. For RCB, AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell have been the standout players with the willow. While the South African continues to deliver season after season, the Australian all-rounder is proving a valuable addition to the middle order.

Captain Virat Kohli (in photo) has got decent starts in a couple of games but the talismanic skipper will be targeting a big innings. Devdutt Padikkal, who impressed last season, has yet to perform to his full potential.

After two failures, Rajat Patidar will, too, look to make amends. The RCB bowling department has been impressive with quick bowlers Harshal Patel and Mohammad Siraj boasting economy rates of 5.75 and 5.81, respectively. The former had a five-wicket haul against MI while left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed (3/7) changed the complexion of the match in just one over against Sun Risers Hyderabad.

RCB played only three for-

igners - instead of four - in the game against KKR. It will be interesting to see if they employ a similar playing XI or get in leg- spinner Adam Zampa, pace bowler Kane Richardson or all-rounder Daniel Christian.

Match starts at 7.30 pm

## Why Pant is all praise for Delhi batsmen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHENNAI, 21 APRIL

Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant (in photo) said it had been good to see his batsmen getting quickly used to the Chepauk track after playing the team's first three games on a more batting-friendly Wankhede stadium pitch. Delhi defeated Mumbai Indians by six wickets in the Indian Premier League last night, their first win over the five-time champions in five meetings.

"It (the travelling) is slightly challenging because of Covid-19. But I think, as a team, we are not focussing on this too much, because the cricket board has done really well to give us a good bubble. So we are focussing more on cricket and it is good to see people adjusting to the pitch like this, especially when you are coming from the Wankhede," Pant said at the post-match Press conference.

Delhi had promoted all

other option and I had to go for my shots because we were chasing, so I think you need to focus on the scenarios much more rather than match-ups."

Asked about leadership, Pant, who had replaced an injured Shreyas Iyer as Delhi Capitals skipper, said: "As a wicketkeeper I keep reading the game and it has helped me a lot, but with the seniors around and Ricky Ponting in our management, I think it is going great."

He defended rival skipper Rohit Sharma's decision to bat first, saying he would have done the same had he won the toss. Mumbai off-spinner Jayant Yadav conceded his team had been 10 or 15 runs short of the par score.

"At the end of the day, in bowling, there was dew, but we showed a lot of character in dragging the match to its last over," Jayant said. His previous IPL game was the final of the 2020 edition.

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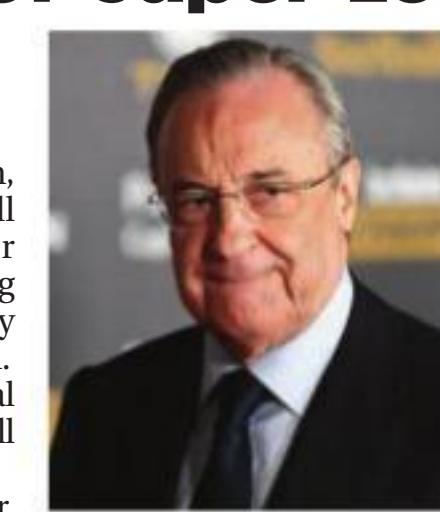
Company and the entire football industry.

Atltico Madrid, Inter Milan, AC Milan and Juventus all dropped out of the Super League on Wednesday, leaving the new competition essentially extinct before it even started. Only Spanish clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona are still officially involved.

The moves by Atltico, Inter, AC Milan and Juventus came a day after the six Premier League clubs involved in the project gave up on the controversial breakaway competition. English clubs Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City and Tottenham deserted the plans for the largely-closed competition amid an escalating backlash from their supporters and warnings from the government that legislation could be introduced to thwart them.

The Super League project was overseen by Real Madrid president Florentino Prez (in photo), who promoted it as a way to save soccer and the clubs struggling financially amid the coronavirus pandemic.

UEFA, FIFA and its members from acting against the creation of the new league.



ACMilan signaled it was leaving a few hours after Atltico and Inter Milan made their announcements.

The voices and the concerns of fans around the world have clearly been expressed about the Super League, and AC Milan must be sensitive to the voice of those who love this wonderful sport, the Italian club said. Juventus followed moments later, but didn't completely abandon plans for a future Super League.

Our commitment with all stakeholders to improve the football industry will never change, the Italian club said.

"I believe that football, like any sector of activity, must have an interest in constantly improving its competitions in order to continue to excite fans of all ages all over the world, within a framework of financial sustainability."

The Super League project was overseen by Real Madrid president Florentino Prez (in photo), who promoted it as a way to save soccer and the clubs struggling financially amid the coronavirus pandemic.

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