



There is a post-CAA
Assam; people are
insecure: Gaurav Gogoi
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Engagement necessary
with an adversary, says
Satinder Lambah
page 10



Veteran Bollywood
actor Shashikala
passes away at 88
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Mary Kom clinches
Sportstar of the
Decade award
page 14

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NEARBY



Delhi reports 4,000
new cases, 21 deaths

NEW DELHI

The surge in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the Capital continued with 4,003 fresh cases and 21 deaths being reported on Sunday, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

FIR against Khan over threat to religious leader

NEW DELHI

Taking suo motu cognizance of a video and tweet, the Delhi Police on Sunday said an FIR has been registered against AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for allegedly threatening religious leader Narsinhnand. This comes a day after an FIR was filed against the religious leader on the complaint of Mr. Khan.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

13 workers injured in U.P. scaffolding collapse

LUCKNOW

Thirteen labourers were injured, five of them seriously, after a scaffolding collapsed on them during maintenance work at a privately-run power plant in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district on Sunday, the police said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

BJP MLAs continue protest in Odisha

Bhubaneswar

BJP legislators spent the night under the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on the campus of the Odisha Assembly, protesting against the suspension of three of their colleagues. BJP MLAs were handed a suspension after shoes were hurled at the Speaker on Saturday.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 5

Amid virus surge, Russian vaccine may get the nod

PM chairs meeting; daily cases cross 1 lakh for the first time

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

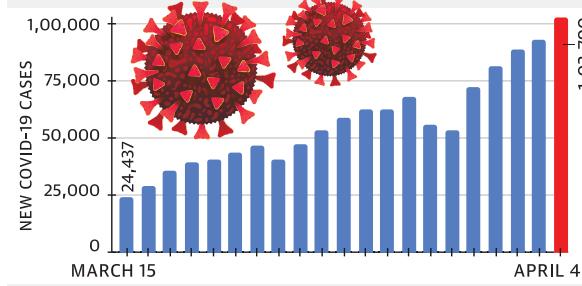
On Sunday when 1,03,790 COVID-19 cases were detected across the States – a new daily high for infections surpassing the previous peak reached in mid-September 2020 – a highly placed official confirmed to *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that the Russia-made Sputnik V vaccine may be cleared for emergency use in India within 10 days.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting during the day to review the situation and the ongoing vaccination programme.

The meeting concluded that the spike in cases was due to "severe decline in people complying with COVID-

Exponential rise | With 1,03,790 new COVID-19 cases as of 11.30 p.m. on Sunday, India recorded over 1 lakh cases for the first time in a day

The count on Sunday was the highest since September 16, 2020, when the country recorded 98,183 cases



appropriate behaviour".

On April 1, Dr. Reddy's Labs, which is conducting a trial on the Sputnik V's suitability in India, was reportedly denied authorisation because the Subject Expert

Committee of the Drug Controller General of India asked for more data on the vaccine's stability.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
MAHARASHTRA CURBS ▶ PAGE 10

The missing gap



Hidden threat: Security personnel waiting in Guwahati on Sunday to collect duty passes for the final phase of the Assam election. The campaigning for the elections in Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have drawn to a close. ■ PTI

Another batch of Rafale jets to fly in by mid-May

8-9 planes will complete first IAF squadron of the fighters



The IAF currently has 14 Rafale fighters. ■ AP

Hasimara in West Bengal later this month.

Last September, the IAF inducted the batch of five Rafales, of the 36 contracted from France under a €7.87 billion Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in September 2016 with 13 India Specific Enhancements

(ISE). The first batch of five jets, three single-seat and two twin-seater trainers, were formally inducted into the No. 17 'Golden Arrows' squadron of the IAF last September at the Ambala Air Force station. They arrived in India in July 2020 with a stopover at Al Dhafra airbase in the United Arab Emirates.

During the first leg of the flight from Mérignac airbase at Bordeaux in France to the UAE, the jets were accompanied by French Air Force mid-air refuellers. For the journey from the UAE to India, they were accompanied by IAF mid-air refuellers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Step taken due to his support to farmers, says Arvind Kejriwal

ASHOK KUMAR

JIND

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the BJP-led government at the Centre had curtailed the powers of the State government to punish him for supporting the farmers. He said he was prepared to sacrifice his life for it.

Addressing a "Kisan Ma-



Arvind Kejriwal. ■

'Centre curtailed Delhi govt's powers as a punishment'

hapanchayat" at HUDA Ground in Sector 9 here, Mr. Kejriwal said the Union government had brought the Bill in Parliament divesting the Delhi CM of all powers to "punish Kejriwal for supporting the farmers' movement". "The Delhi Chief Minister has no power. All power is with the Lieutenant-Governor. An elected government with 60+ odd MLAs has no power. Did we fight for Independence for this day?" he asked.

He said he was not scared of any 'punishment' and ready to sacrifice even his life.

He said the BJP had all the

power but had not done a single work worth mentioning in seven years. He said one doesn't need power to serve people. "The BJP has power but its intentions are bad. We don't have power but have right intentions," Mr. Kejriwal said. He vowed to support the movement till the end.

"Those who are opposed to the farmers' movement are traitors. We are ready to make any sacrifice to make this movement a success," the Chief Minister said.

He said the BJP had all the

opt for the moratorium.

According to banking sources, initially 60% of borrowers availed themselves of the moratorium and gradually the percentage came down to 40% and even less as collections improved with the easing of the lockdown. In the case of corporates, this was as low as 25% as far as public sector banks were concerned. They said banks would provide compound interest waiver for the period a borrower had availed the moratorium.

The RBI on March 27 last year announced a moratorium on payment of instalments of term loans falling due between March 1 and May 31, 2020. It was later extended to August 31.

He said it was his dream to see India as a 'developed' country in his lifetime.

Despite pressure from the Union government and the threats to curtail his power, he did not accord permission to convert stadiums in Delhi into jails for the agitating farmers, he said. "I put a noting on the file saying the farmers' movement and their demands were justified and returned it."

He also condemned the police action on the farmers in Rohtak on Saturday during Chief Minister Manohar Lal's visit.

Sukma encounter toll touches 22; Shah cuts short campaign

31 personnel injured, one commando is still missing, say Chhattisgarh police

VIJAITA SINGH

NEW DELHI

A day after the encounter between Central paramilitary forces and Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma, bodies of 22 personnel were recovered on Sunday. One commando was still missing, the Chhattisgarh police said. Thirty-one others were injured. The bodies could be retrieved only close to 24 hours after the attack at noon on Saturday. Some jawans may have died due to excessive bleeding, a police officer said.

On reports that a jawan's body may have been mutilated, the officer said, "There was intense firing from both sides and it is possible that the victim was blown up due to the impact; we can con-



Exercising caution: A jawan checking the body of a fallen colleague for explosives in Sukma. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

firm only after the postmortem is conducted."

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who were both campaigning for the Assam election, returned to Raipur and

New Delhi respectively as the toll rose.

K. Vijay Kumar, Senior Security Adviser, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), said for the past two weeks the Maoists were trying to disrupt the construction of a

Few takers for naxalism: CM

The Naxals carried out the Bijapu attack to assert their presence since the people were growing disenchanted with them and were joining the mainstream because of developmental work done by the State government, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said. ▶ PAGE 9

road near Silger-Jagargunda. "The security forces and the Maoists were engaged in a cat and mouse game for the past two weeks," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

EC rejects Mamata's complaint of rigging at Nandigram booth

It warns Trinamool chief of action for violating norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday warned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that her conduct at a polling booth in Nandigram was under its scanner and rejected her allegations of rigging and violence on April 1, the day of voting for the second phase of the State Assembly election.

Ms. Banerjee, a candidate from Nandigram, reached a polling booth at Boyal in the Assembly segment amid polling, alleging that her party agent was not allowed inside the booth and outside



Mamata Banerjee

at the Boyal Primary School for almost an hour, passions ran high among supporters of the Trinamool Congress and the BJP outside.

In a letter on April 3, ECI's Secretary General Umesh Sinha warned Ms. Banerjee that it was examining the incident for violations under Section 131 and 123(2) of the Representation of the People Act, which deal with disorderly conduct outside the booth and attempts by a candidate to exert undue influence or interfere with free exercise of electoral right.

■

ers were trying to create trouble while Central forces were protecting them under instructions from the Home Ministry.

While the Chief Minister sat inside the polling booth

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

PSU banks may have to take ₹2,000 crore hit

Fallout of SC order on interest waiver

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The public sector banks may have to bear a burden of ₹1,800 crore-₹2,000 crore arising out of a recent Supreme Court judgment on the waiver of compound interest on all loan accounts which opted for moratorium during March-August 2020, sources said.

The judgment covers loans above ₹2 crore as loans below this got blanket interest on interest waiver in November last year. The compound interest support scheme for loan moratorium cost the government ₹5,500 crore during 2020-21 and the scheme covered all borrowers, including the prompt ones who did not

opt for the moratorium. According to banking sources, initially 60% of borrowers availed themselves of the moratorium and gradually the percentage came down to 40% and even less as collections improved with the easing of the lockdown. In the case of corporates, this was as low as 25% as far as public sector banks were concerned. They said banks would provide compound interest waiver for the period a borrower had availed the moratorium.

The RBI on March 27 last year announced a moratorium on payment of instalments of term loans falling due between March 1 and May 31, 2020. It was later extended to August 31.

WINDS OF A CIVIL CHANGE

As the services receive criticism from political executives, it is important to understand the steps to help it perform better and be more accountable. Recently while speaking on the floor of the House, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was critical of the functioning of the services.

TURN TO PAGE 9 TO READ MORE



PAVAN KUMAR

Civil Services Reforms in India

Apr 06, 2021 | 7:00 PM

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With the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram unanimously deciding in its House meeting to keep all meat establishments shut on Tuesdays, shop owners at Jama Masjid market stare at losses

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Mohammad Yusuf, 69, running "New Pakija Hotel" at Jama Masjid meat market on Old Railway Road here, earns barely enough to make both ends meet. He cannot afford to shut his shop even for a single day. But, with the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram officials visiting the market every Tuesday for the past two weeks, asking the shopkeepers to shut their establishments, he is left with no choice.

The elderly said he had been running the hotel for over five decades, but it was for the first time that the authorities had imposed the order to shut it once in a week.

Adding to woes

Mr. Yusuf said that his hotel remained shut for two months during the COVID-19 lockdown, and now the civic body had come with a new ruling to shut it every Tuesday. He said that he hardly made ₹1,000-1,500 per day.

He recalled how a bunch of municipal officials came to the market, housing 20-odd shops, two weeks ago and again this past week asking the shopkeepers to shut their shops. "It is only the Muslim customers who come on Tuesdays. There are no Hindus. So what's the point in making us shut the shops," a disappointed Mr. Yusuf asked.

Just opposite the "New Pakija Hotel", Farman runs "Bilal Kureshi meat shop".



Not quite a meaty affair

He said he incurred a loss of over ₹2,000 on account of closure of his shop for a single day. The daily rent of his shop is around ₹500, besides he also needs to pay to two employees.

Mohammad Ajaz, a customer, said that his religion did not bar him from consuming non-vegetarian food on any day of the week, but he was still "fine" with the order prohibiting the sale of meat on Tuesdays.

He said that the municipal officials asked him to close his hotel, but he argued with them saying that the hotels were outside the ambit of the order. "I keep

my hotel open on Tuesdays, but with the other shops in the market remaining closed the footfall is less," said Mr. Aggarwal, running the hotel for around two decades.

Jama Masjid meat market president Tahir said that many meat shop owners had applied for licences last year, but were yet to get one. He feared that they would be impacted since the civic body had increased the fine 10 folds for running shops illegally and they ran the risk of being sealed.

ket, is more vocal in his criticism of the civic body.

Interfering move

He said that it amounted to interfering with the eating habits of the individuals. "What to eat and what not to eat is one's personal choice," said Mr. Aggarwal. He said that his business was, in fact, brisk on Tuesdays.

He said that the municipal officials asked him to close his hotel, but he argued with them saying that the hotels were outside the ambit of the order. "I keep



Shop owners at Jama Masjid meat market.
■ ASHOK KUMAR

Parveen, manager at Green Chick Chop meat shop in Sector 15 Part 2, said the sales on Tuesdays were almost one-third compared to the rest of the week and therefore, the order did not hurt them much financially. The staffers at "Sardar A Pure Meat Shop" in the market said they kept the shop closed on Tuesdays due to slow business.

Other penalties

The general meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's House on March 18 had unanimously decided to keep all meat shops shut on Tuesdays, besides imposing a fine of ₹5,000 on illegal shops and sealing them. The House also decided to increase the annual licence fee from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000. The MCG had granted licence to only 129 meat shops in 2017-18, though the number of meat shops in the city could run into several hundred.

Ashwani Sharma, Councillor for Ward No. 23, who supported the resolution, argued that the decision was taken in the interest of the shopkeepers since the business was anyway slow on Tuesdays. "Since a majority of meat consumers are Hindus and they don't usually consume meat on Tuesdays, the demand is less on Tuesdays. Had the House decided to shut the shops on the weekend, it would have caused more financial loss to the shopkeepers," said Mr. Sharma.

He, however, added that the implementation of the order was almost nil and that he would move the court to ensure its implementation, if required.

Ashish Singla, MCG Chief Medical Officer, said the civic body was within its powers to declare one day of the week as non-meat day as per the Haryana Urban Local Bodies bylaws, 2008.



Farmers raise their hands in unison at the mahapanchayat on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Farmers protest against 'attack' on Tikait's convoy

Over 100 bikers from western U.P. join the agitation

SAURABH TRIVEDI
GHAZIPUR

Farmers of western Uttar Pradesh held a mahapanchayat at Ghazipur border on Sunday after Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait's convoy was allegedly attacked in Rajasthan's Alwar district on Friday.

Naresh Tikait held the mahapanchayat as Rakesh Tikait was in Gujarat to strengthen their movement against the farms laws.

A large group of bikers from Sambhal district in Uttar Pradesh arrived at the Ghazipur border in support of farmers. More than 100 bikers wearing black bands to mark their protest against farm laws reached the border.

"We have come here for our leader Rakesh Tikait who is fighting for farmers' rights. It was a shameful act done by the BJP workers to suppress the voice of farmers. We have come to attend the mahapanchayat

to show the strength of the protesting farmers and their support for their leader [Rakesh Tikait]," said Bhoopender Singh, a farmer.

BKU media coordinator Dharmendra Malik said that they will be organising mahapanchayats to raise their voice against the farm laws. This time, however, they called to protest against the Mr. Tikait's convoy attack.

Demand action

"We demand strict action against the people behind the attack on Rakesh Tikait. The government should ensure security to farmers' leaders. During the meeting, all of the attendees have agreed upon intensifying the movement," said Mr. Malik.

Mr. Malik added that at the time when temperature is touching 40 degrees Celsius and people are preferring to stay indoors, farmers are sitting in open at Ghazipur, Tikri and Singhu borders.

On April 2, farmers had

blocked traffic at Ghazipur border after Mr. Tikait's convoy was allegedly attacked in Rajasthan. Traffic movement on the highway had remained affected for an hour.

"We have come here to support our brothers [farmers]. On the way, we met farmers in Dasna, Hapur and other places and asked them to come out in support of the farmers. We have also educated them about the hidden clauses of farms laws and why it will completely destroy grassroot farmers," said Satender Singh, a protester.

Another protester, Shiv Charan, a resident of Sambhal said that if they failed this time then the government will sell away the land to corporate houses and no one will ever be able to protest against the government.

"We are the backbone of this country. The government should call the farmers and discuss a way out by withdrawing the laws at the earliest," said Mr. Charan.

Support pours in from youth in last leg of 'Switch Delhi' campaign

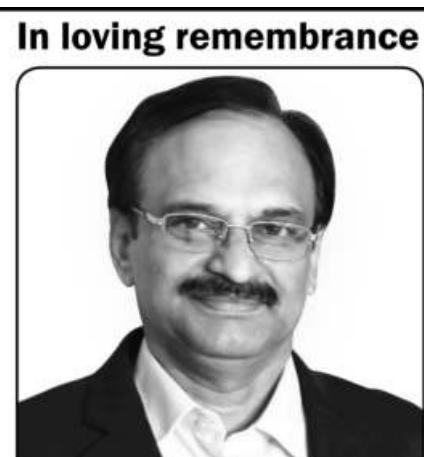
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

pledge to make their first vehicle an electric one, it is said.

Various events were organised on the eighth week of the campaign for creating awareness among youngsters about the monetary and environmental benefits of electric vehicles witnessed various events.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

HOMAGE



Mr. S. Ramesh

30.09.1959 – 30.03.2021

We came into the world by you
We saw the world through you
You didn't teach us..... daddy!
You lived and let us learn life
For someone so dearly loved by everybody
You left us a little too early
You will continue to manifest through us
And we will carry you throughout our lives
We love you daddy!

With fondest memories
Sharan, Karun

Deeply missed by
Koty

In memory of your loved ones

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Adoption authority gets HC notice on plea

Hindu couple seek no-objection certificate to adopt child born to Christian parents

jab. The biological parents of the child got the legal formalities done for completion of adoption of the child with them by preparing an adoption deed which was signed and executed between the biological and the adoptive parents of the child.

The adoption deed was duly witnessed by the village sarpanch as well as the relative - social worker and was also registered on December 18, 2014 under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice [Care and Protection of Children] Model Rules, 2016... in respect of a child born to Christian parents, as in the present case," Justice Prathiba M. Singh remarked in a March 15 order.

As per the couple, they adopted a minor child, who was born on December 11, 2014, from Ferozepur, Punjab. As per the couple, they adopted a minor child, who was born on December 11, 2014, from Ferozepur, Punjab.

The couple said they have been unable to obtain a passport for

the child till date.

Now the child herself is aged more than six and the couple claim that they are visiting her regularly, on an annual basis, and are also in touch with her through electronic platforms.

In the meantime, the couple took various steps for seeking a declaration of parenthood, including the filing of a civil suit before a Court in Ferozepur. However, the Court refused to grant the declaration on the ground that the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, does not apply to Christians.

The couple contended that in order to obtain a passport for the child, they approached CARA in October 2016 to get an NOC. However, CARA rejected the application and in addition initiated action against them, the rela-

tive who helped in the adoption, and also the grand parents of the adopted child.

They argued the mere fact that the adoption deed was registered under HAMA, ought not to be used to invalidate legality of the adoption, as the child is happily living with the grandparents and is in complete protection and care of the adoptive parents.

"The welfare of the child is paramount in such cases and the validity of the rejection of the NOC by CARA is to be examined by the Court," Justice Singh said while posting the case for further hearing on April 22.

"No coercive measures shall be taken pursuant to the letter dated March 2, 2020, against the petitioners, the child, their relatives, or any person who facilitated the adoption...," the court said.

City temperature likely to rise in coming days

Partly cloudy sky forecast for two days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The minimum temperature in Delhi rose to 14 degrees Celsius on Sunday which was five degrees below the normal after a low of 11.7 degrees Celsius, which was seven degrees below normal on Saturday.

The Met Department has forecast that cool winds that brought about the fall in the minimum temperature had abated and that the temperatures were likely to rise in the coming days. The maximum temperature on Sunday was recorded at 36.7 degrees Celsius, which was three degrees above normal for the season.

The temperature had fallen in the national capital over the week after the hottest day in March in 76 years was recorded on March 29 when the city experienced a heat wave as the temperature shot up to 40.1 degrees Celsius.

The weather forecast for Monday reads "partly cloudy sky with the maximum and minimum temperatures hovering between 37 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively". The partly cloudy sky is likely to continue for two more days with "thunder development" on Wednesday, it said.

The sky is expected to be clear on Thursday with strong surface winds. The maximum temperature is likely to stay between 35 and 38 degrees Celsius and is unlikely to reach 40 degree Celsius mark in the coming week as it did on March 29.

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the CRPF. They contended that that "as on date, they have put more than 10 years of service [2008 UPSC Notification Batch] and nine years of service [2009 UPSC notification batch] but have not earned any promotion till

date". They pointed out that going by the "current calculations/scenario made after determining number of vacancies, superannuation and promotion it comes to fore that the petitioners would not be getting promotion for next five-six years or even more".

More than 15 years
The officers contended that they "may get their first promotion only after putting more than 15 years or more of service despite working in Executive Cadre [an organised Group A Service] which is the main pillar and main workhorse on which all other auxiliary branches of the CRPF sustain".

The temperature had fallen in the national capital over the week after the hottest

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, APR. 05
RISE 06:07 SET 18:42
RISE 01:59 SET 12:26
TUESDAY, APR. 06
RISE 06:06 SET 18:42
RISE 02:50 SET 13:28
WEDNESDAY, APR. 07
RISE 06:05 SET 18:43
RISE 03:34 SET 14:27

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	37 14
Safdarjung	37 14
Palam	37 16

Delhi Pilm Today
38°C A comfortable morning and hot day with partly cloudy sky. Surface winds would be very light.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
38°C Thunderstorm activity is likely at some places over the area during evening. Uneasy hot afternoon.

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THE HINDU
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BJP hits at AAP govt. for not 'building any hospital'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday hit out at the Aam Aadmi Party-ruled government, alleging that it did not build any hospital and flyover during its rule between 2015 and 2019.

Citing replies to two RTI queries filed in 2019 by Tejal Singh, a city resident seeking information about healthcare and infrastructure initiatives by the Delhi government, the BJP's national media in-charge and chief spokesperson Anil Balaji said by making "false" claims about development works, AAP has cheated the people.

'Upgrade underground parking to decongest Connaught Place'

Police submit proposal to NDTA, NDMC after series of meetings

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

To decongest traffic and ensure no unauthorised parking at Connaught Place (CP), the Delhi Traffic Police submitted a proposal to civic authorities to upgrade the "underutilised" underground parking near Palika Bazar, said officers on Sunday.

They said traffic congestion at CP, especially during weekends, is primarily due to shortage of parking space and less room on footpaths because of encroachment by hawkers. "We want to get the underground parking as well as the multi-level parking properly utilised," a senior traffic police official said.

He also said at present, the underground parking area in Palika Bazaar is being used only 40%. "Even the multi-level parking system at Baba Kharak Singh Marg is being utilised for only about 20-30% while the surface parking is being fully used," the official added.

The Traffic Police said it has conducted a series of meetings with officials of New Delhi Traders Association (NDTA) and the NDMC over the past two months regarding a proposal to upgrade the parking facility at CP.

He said the Traffic Police suggested the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to fix slightly higher parking charges for vehicles, which are parked for more than four hours.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic-Southern Range) S.D. Mishra said: "We

Virus cases cross 4,000 mark, city records highest deaths in a day

Positivity rate at 4.64 % and active cases stand at 13,983, says Delhi government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 4,003 new COVID-19 cases and 21 deaths on Sunday, according to a health bulletin issued by the government.

The bulletin also stated that 86,899 tests were conducted in 24 hours with a positivity rate of 4.64 %. Of the total tests conducted, 54,472 were RTPCR and 32,427 were rapid antigen.

This was the highest number of deaths recorded this year with the toll same as that which was recorded on January 1. The last time the city recorded more than 4,000 cases was on December 4 – 4,067 cases.

There are 13,983 active cases in the city up from 12,647 reported on Saturday.



A beneficiary gets a COVID-19 vaccine shot at one of the centres in the city on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Out of the total cases, 7,144 are under home isolation.

The Capital has 6,131 hospital beds available for COVID-19 patients out of which 2,727 are occupied. The rest of the patients are at dedicated COVID care

centres and COVID health centres.

The city on Saturday had reported 3,567 new cases and 3,594 on Friday. The number of cases had seen a surge during the week as on March 28, the day before

Holi, 1,881 cases were reported with a positivity rate of 2.35%.

The number of active cases then was 7,545. The containment zones rose to 2,917 on Sunday from 2,618 on Saturday.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday had said the Delhi government is not planning any lockdown in the wake of the fourth wave of COVID in the Capital.

He said that if needed, his government will only do it after consulting with the public. He said the government is testing, tracing, and isolating aggressively and wherever there seems to be a need for demarcation of containment zones, it would be done to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Connaught Place, Informal Restaurant at Janpath, Classic Chicken Restaurant at Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg and Choice Chicken Corner Kalina at Gole Market for not observing COVID-appropriate behaviour. The cases were registered under IPC Sections

Market and three others for the same reason at the Ashoka Hotel in Chanakya Puri, Mr. Kumar said. In south-east district, 10 FIRs were registered, and 330 people fined for violating COVID norms.

Several night clubs, including the M House Club and Bar and Roar Night Club at Eros Hotel in Nehru Place, were fined for not maintaining social distancing and serving hookahs, said DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena. Municipal corporations and the excise department have been asked to cancel their licences, he said.

Besides the Epidemic Diseases Act, they have been also booked under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, Mr. Meena said. He said a case has also been registered against Boken Cafe for not following COVID-19 protocols.

173 eateries fined for flouting norms during two-day drive

Delhi Police intensifies drive after city sees surge in cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In the wake of surge in COVID-19 cases, the Delhi police have intensified drive against people flouting social distancing norms.

They had launched a two-day special drive (on Saturday and Sunday) to crackdown on those violating COVID norms. The officers on

Sunday said they have fined more 173 establishments for the same. Out of these, 13 were banquet halls owners, 58 restaurant owners and three night club owners, they added. The drive, in which people were also fined for not wearing masks and spitting in public areas, was conducted in places with high footfall, including markets on Friday and Saturday.

A senior officer said FIRs

were registered against the owners of Jain Chawal Wala at Khan

Market and three others for the same reason at the Ashoka Hotel in Chanakya Puri, Mr. Kumar said. In south-east district, 10 FIRs were registered, and 330 people fined for violating COVID norms.

Several night clubs, including the M House Club and Bar and Roar Night Club at Eros Hotel in Nehru Place, were fined for not maintaining social distancing and serving hookahs, said DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena. Municipal corporations and the excise department have been asked to cancel their licences, he said.

Nine fined ₹2K each

Besides them, nine persons were fined ₹2,000 each for not wearing mask in Khan

JNU lists COVID-19 norms for all on campus

Violations to be dealt with as per govt. norms'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

To deal with the rise in COVID-19 cases, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Sunday issued a circular, listing measures to be followed on campus.

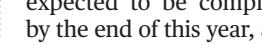
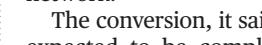
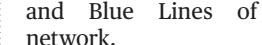
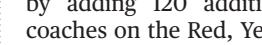
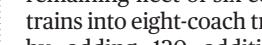
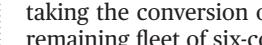
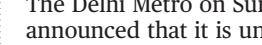
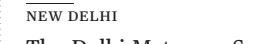
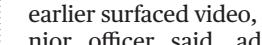
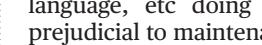
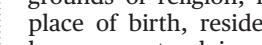
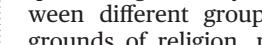
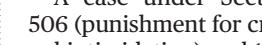
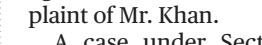
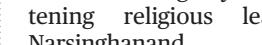
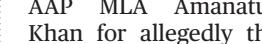
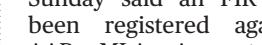
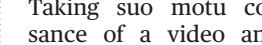
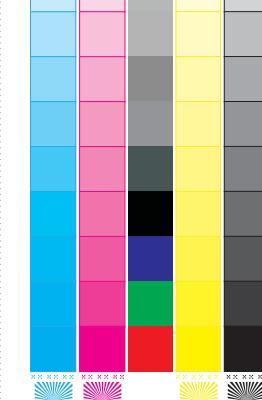
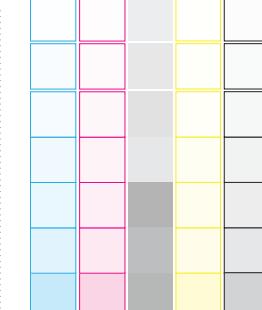
Measures include
The measures include mandatory thermal screening and wearing masks among others.

Students and employees will be allowed in hostels, administrative buildings, school buildings, Dr B.R. Ambedkar Central Library and spaces, including shopping complexes and walking on the road, only if they wear masks," the circular read.

It added that shopkeepers, canteen staff, and faculty have also been instructed to wear masks at all times.

"Any violation would attract closure of shop or canteen for two days initially. Further violation will be dealt with strictly as per guidelines and norms of the government of India, the Delhi government and the University notification, etc", the circular warned.

Hand sanitisation and thermal screening have been made mandatory at all key points, including at schools, special centres, hostels, the administration building and the central library, it added.



ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | MONDAY, APRIL 5, 2021

INTERVIEW | GAURAV GOGOI

'There is a post-CAA Assam; people are insecure'

Congress leader says the voters are happy to see politically diverse parties come together on a platform against the Act

SOBHANA K. NAIR

At his Guwahati residence on the last day of campaign in Assam, senior Congress leader and Kaliabor MP Gaurav Gogoi talks about the party's poll prospects, the angst within the ranks about the alliance with Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and the Congress's stand against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The campaign has come to a close. In your assessment, how far has the Congress come from the time the campaign initially started?

■ I am quite satisfied with the campaign for many reasons. One, we have had a unified campaign, there was coordinated messaging, and we have been supportive of each other. We did not get distracted with the BJP's campaign and focused only on issues relevant to us and people of Assam like price rise, corruption, unemployment. We have come a long way in terms of our social media. And overall, it was a very disciplined campaign. And yes, we have come a long way. This is the first election that we are fighting without the wisdom and lead-



ership of my father (Tarun Gogoi). In fact, he is the one who thought of the grand alliance early last year, especially during the Rajya Sabha election where the Congress and the AIUDF came together to send a prominent anti-CAA journalist, Ajit Bhuyan, to the Upper House. It gave us a lot of confidence that there was a pre-CAA Assam where the parties kept distance with each other, my father was at the forefront of maintaining distance from parties like the AIUDF. And there is a post-CAA Assam, where the people are insecure and anxious and therefore they are happy to see politically diverse parties come together on an anti-CAA platform.

But there is a lot of angst

gone through an extensive period of debate before reaching a conclusion in January where we announced the grand alliance agreeing on the common agenda. Cracking the seat-sharing was the easy part. Just keeping it together, ensuring some basic dos and don'ts, understanding the common principles and so on is more important.

■ Why didn't you contest from your father's constituency of Titabor?

■ My father was not planning to contest the 2021 election because of his health. He had mentioned to me that the next election from Titabor has to be fought by someone from Titabor, he insisted on having his successor from Titabor. I think as a son I fulfilled my late father's wishes. Even though the Congress party asked me repeatedly to contest, I felt I owed it to my father to respect his wishes. And we have picked a very good candidate in Bhaskarjyoti Ba-

rua, he is not a proxy candidate or the Gogoi family's nominee. And I worked in the constituency, keeping the troops together.

■ Would it have been better if the party went to the polls with a chief ministerial face?

■ After the demise of my father, it was virtually impossible for anyone to fill his shoes as the one leader who can take everyone along. The responsibility of keeping the party united and focused on putting up a strong election campaign rests equally on all our shoulders whether it is the Congress Legislature Party leader Debabrata Saikia or State president Riupun Bora, MPs and ex-MPs. No single person can fill late Tarun Gogoi's shoes, the vacuum is too big. And we all have shouldered the responsibility together.

■ Why did the Congress take so long to own up the anti-CAA narrative?

■ I think it was a bold step

for Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party to make the CAA a part of our poll plank right at the beginning and to put it right in the centre of our campaign. This step sent out a message that Assam voters need not feel disheartened and to grudgingly accept the CAA because of the Centre's whim. Seeing the Congress take up the issue, they know that if we are elected to power, we will constitutionally challenge the CAA.

And as far as delay is concerned, most of the last year was lost in the pandemic, the political activity had declined because we were more focused on COVID-19 relief. And immediately after the lockdown, the pinch of inflation coupled with unemployment was so acute, especially here in Assam, that it remained our focus. We are the only national party which mentioned opposing the CAA in the 2019 election manifesto and Rahul Gandhi is the only national leader who took a stand on it.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning, hail and gusty winds (speeds reaching 30-40 kmph) very likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttrakhand, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam and Telangana

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...34.8...	22.7	10.2	Kozhikode	...32.0...	25.4	22.7
Ahmedabad	...40.2...	24.2	14.5	Kurnool	...40.5...	27.0	20.5
Aizawl	...29.6...	12.8	10.0	Lucknow	...37.8...	16.6	10.0
Allahabad	...39.8...	16.5	10.0	Madurai	...42.0...	25.2	18.0
Bengaluru	...36.0...	23.0	14.0	Mangaluru	...35.0...	25.4	18.0
Bhopal	...38.6...	20.5	14.0	Mumbai	...32.7...	25.5	18.0
Bhubaneswar	...32.0...	25.8	14.0	Mysuru	...36.7...	21.6	14.0
Chandigarh	...36.4...	14.9	10.0	New Delhi	...36.7...	14.0	10.0
Chennai	...36.6...	28.0	14.0	Patna	...38.6...	18.0	10.0
Cochin	...36.7...	24.2	14.0	Port Blair	...25.1...	32.2...	23.7
Dehradun	...33.8...	12.5	10.0	Puducherry	...34.5...	26.3	18.0
Gangtok	...25.6...	12.4	10.0	Pune	...38.9...	20.5	14.0
Goa	...33.5...	24.0	14.0	Rajpur	...41.4...	23.5	14.0
Guwahati	...34.2...	20.6	14.0	Ranchi	...36.7...	20.2	14.0
Hubballi	...37.0...	19.0	14.0	Shillong	...25.8...	13.6	10.0
Hyderabad	...38.2...	20.6	14.0	Shimla	...27.0...	12.6	10.0
Imphal	...31.7...	12.2	10.0	Srinagar	...18.8...	5.8	10.0
Jaipur	...38.6...	25.0	14.0	Thiruvananthapuram	...34.2...	25.0	14.0
Kochi	...32.0...	25.4	14.0	Tiruchi	...41.2...	26.8	14.0
Kohima	...25.8...	11.6	10.0	Vijayawada	...38.8...	26.5	14.0
Kolkata	...36.9...	26.5	14.0	Visakhapatnam	...50.3...	33.0...	21.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	54	72	37	102	227	■
Bengaluru	.8	37	10	89	130	■
Chennai	.6	21	45	.59	.84	■
Delhi	21	49	34	225	220	■
Hyderabad	.4	92	45	.134	.147	■
Kolkata	11	20	69	.135	.136	■
Lucknow	25	69	88	.256	.199	■
Mumbai	42	44	17	.31	.145	■
Pune	.6	96	60	.115	—	■
Visakhapatnam	—	—	—	—	—	—

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Bhiwadi, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 330 indicating air unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Rupnagar, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 41.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Congress dividing people, says Amit Shah

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday accused the Congress of adopting divisive policies to rule over the people and said the grand old party lacks vision for the development of Assam.

He also called Congress leader Rahul Gandhi an occa-

sional tourist at a BJP rally in western Assam's Sorbhog before cutting short his campaign due to the Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh. Sunday was the last day of campaigning for 40 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats in the third and final phase of polling.

The Congress cannot solve any problem because it

has no vision for development and believes in keeping the people divided. Their leader Rahul Gandhi too comes as a tourist to the State," Mr. Shah said, claiming only the NDA's "double-engine government" can ensure development in Assam.

Accusing the Congress of giving a free hand to poachers

in the Kaziranga National Park, he said the rhino – Assam's pride – would have been a thing of the past had Congress continued to rule the State. He exuded confidence that the BJP and its allies "achieved" majority to form the next government" in the two phases of voting on March 27 and April 1.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

With deep sorrow we inform the sad demise of



Prof. R.V. DHANAPALAN, M.L.,
Founder & Chairman

The Central Law College, Salem, T.N
Prof. Dhanapalan College of Arts & Science
Kelambakkam, Chennai

Passed away on 04.04.2021 Funeral on 05.04.2021 at 3.00pm

Deeply mourned by

Wife. Sukumari Dhanapalan

Sons

Pugalendhi Dhanapalan (89397 53596)
Saravanian Dhanapalan (94440 54299)

Daughters

Pavaisujatha Sakthivel
Sumathi Aravindan

Grandchildren

Amirthavarshini Pugalendhi, Kanika Saravanan, Maya Saravanan,
Naveen Sakthivel, Nivedita Preetham, Namrata Aravindan

No.2/560, Sundeep East, 1st Main Road, Neelankarai, Chennai - 600 041.

Daughters in law

Sridevi Pugalendhi
Vanathi Saravanan

Sons-in-law

K.S.Sakthivel
V.Aravindan

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Think global, PROMOTE LOCAL

What can India do to promote more quality Ph.D programmes and avoid playing the "catch up" game with institutes abroad?

■ PANKAJ JALOTE

India needs to increase the quality and quantity of its research. There are many compelling reasons for this; a critical one being its necessity for the innovation ecosystem. It is clear that economies have become much more innovation-driven. And innovation uses new knowledge to generate value.

For example, algorithms created by machine-learning researchers are being used for innovation in a range of sectors and domains. Further, in the process of innovation, knowledge gaps are often found and further research is required to plug them. Therefore, a thriving innovation ecosystem requires a parallel in research and both need to thrive cohesively.

The Indian research ecosystem is relatively small and far

behind leading nations in terms of quality and capability. Perhaps the most important indicator of the health of the research ecosystem is the quality and quantity of the doctorates it produces.

In the U.S., while two million graduate from Bachelor's programmes, the corresponding number for Ph.D is 185,000; i.e. about 9% of undergraduates go on to do Ph.Ds. In India, the total number of students enrolled in undergraduate programmes is about 28 million, and the corresponding number for Ph.D programmes is around 140,000 or less than 0.5% of the graduates.

There is no doubt that there is a need to increase the number of Ph.Ds. The near-term goal must be to encourage 1-2% of graduating students to opt

for Ph.D. But there has to be an equal increase in quality. For this, we need to attract bright and talented graduates into Ph.D programmes. Currently, many students who join Ph.D programmes are those who could not get a job, or want to prepare for a competitive exam, or are teachers who need a Ph.D for promotion. In addition, we should also ensure that their output is of high quality. The institutes also need to have the systems and faculty in place to achieve this. In the U.S., the top 50 institutions account for 50% of the Ph.Ds.

Luring talent

To understand what may motivate graduates, a small survey was done a few years ago. Graduating B.Tech students in some IITs were asked what they

would require to enrol for a Ph.D programme in India. While better stipends and infrastructure were among the answers, a top sentiment was "the ability to spend a year in an overseas university".

This can be addressed by providing Overseas Research Fellowships (ORFs) to top universities to send Ph.D scholars abroad. The only condition should be that the work done during the overseas period must form part of the Ph.D thesis, preferably under a joint programme with or a co-guide from the foreign university.

This programme could be awarded only to those institutions that have a good ranking and rigorous Ph.D evaluation systems, a good past record of producing quality Ph.Ds, and the capability and research re-

cord/standing. ORFs could be awarded each year to 100 institutions, leading to a rejuvenation of the programme. If 25 ORFs worth \$20,000 each were awarded to an institution, the total would be \$50 million per year. This is not a large amount, even by Indian standards.

Collaborative efforts

In the next round, the number of ORFs given to an institution can be based on how many it was able to utilise, the universities its students went to, the number of joint publications, support provided by partner universities, and so on.

Given that ORFs can be established only with universities that are not likely to dilute their standards, a programme like this will raise the bar for Indian students. Another key advan-

tage would be that the student is enrolled in an Indian institution and will go abroad only for a year and return to India to complete the Ph.D. The genuine collaboration in such programmes can lead to other collaborative research projects.

There is no doubt that we need to attract talented students to go in for research and also ensure that the output is of good quality. Without increasing the quantity, quality and variety of research, India risks playing the "catch up game" perpetually.

The views expressed in this article are personal.

The writer is a Professor and Founding Director of IIIT-Delhi and the author of Building Research Universities in India (Sage Publications).



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

SCHOLARSHIPS

IIT-Ropar DST TIH - AWADH Junior Research Fellowship

Indian Institute of Technology-Ropar invites applications for this fellowship.

ELIGIBILITY: Open to candidates with a Bachelor's degree in Chemical/ Mechanical/ Civil/ Polymer/ Engineering/ Technology, or a Master's degree in an allied discipline with a good academic record (with a GATE/CSIR-NET qualified score) with minimum 60% marks and a valid GATE score.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: ₹31,000 per month (as per norms)

APPLICATION: Email

DEADLINE: April 10
b4s.in/edge/RTW3

NITK Surathkal Department of Biotechnology Post-Doctoral Project Associateship

National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal, invites applications for the R&D project "Social-economic-environmental trade-offs in managing the Land-River Interface".

ELIGIBILITY: Open to candidates with a doctoral degree in Science/ Engineering/ Technology from a recognised University or equivalent. They must be able to work independently and flexibly and have excellent analytical and writing skills.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹42,000, plus HRA as applicable

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: April 12
b4s.in/edge/NDP6

IIT-Bombay Research Associateship (Biochemistry)

Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay invites applications for the project "Investigation of the function of kinetochore on 3D organisation and condensation of chromosomes during mitosis and meiosis using budding yeast as a model system".

ELIGIBILITY: Open to candidates with a Ph.D/M.D./M.S./M.DS or equivalent degree. Those with three years of research, teaching and design and development experience after M.VSc/M.Pharm/M.E./M.Tech and with at least one research paper in the Science Citation Indexed (SCI) journal are also eligible.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: ₹47,000 per month plus HRA

APPLICATION: Online

DEADLINE: April 12
b4s.in/edge/RBA7

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

ENTERPRISE



Off to a fresh start

Sai Abhinay Chepuri is riding the tech wave to revolutionise farming and help farmers

■ MADHUVANTI S. KRISHNAN

At a time when farmers' issues are taking centre stage, 20-year-old Sai Abhinay Chepuri is trying to see how technology can help rejuvenate agricultural practices through his enterprise Enviropromise, which was established in December 2019.

The B.Tech CSC student at Lovely Professional University (LPU) says, "I have always been a nature lover and participated actively in science exhibitions at school. To me, agriculture means to, and from nature. Plus, I always wanted to help farmers. What's more, the faculty at my institute helped me learn about farming techniques."

Hands-on

Before setting up his company, Chepuri and his team travelled across the country and spent a lot of time with local farmers to understand the various technologies they used. "We also studied their farming practices and researched about elements such as soil and water requirements, time lapse, weather requirements, crop harvesting, crop health, and more," he explains. "Initially, the language barrier was a major problem but, with the help of local friends, we understood their perspectives."

New-age vs. traditional

Chepuri believes that traditional methods of farming are effective but time-consuming, and the yield is comparatively low. Hence, there is a need to adopt scientific methods for quicker, more efficient practices and higher yields. "We are trying to introduce them to 'Zero budget natural farming' and mixed farming techniques, ways to use technology and gather knowledge on how to make and use natural fertilizers, which I learnt through discussions with my mentors in college and with farmers and experts from other fields across the



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT & PIXABAY

country," he adds.

Through his sub-brand Freshsprouts, which has a website and phone app, he and his team help farmers learn more about organic farming and also provide a platform for them to sell their produce. Mission Bhoomiputra is yet another sub-brand through which Chepuri and his colleagues educate farmers about organic farming techniques using AI. "Through the app, each farmer will be assigned a unique ID based on the State, the soil, the crop, and so on," explains Chepuri. "Our team will then show them on how to use the app. If they face any trouble, they can upload the information, and an expert team will guide them using virtual reality on why the problem occurred, and offer solutions. In case a farmer is unable to access the app, they can call a toll-free number and they will receive help within 48 hours."

Expansion

Chepuri is already considering expansion plans. "We have ventured into recycling technology by making products such as ash bricks and tiles from plastic waste and paper, pencils and other products from waste. We are at an early stage, but we plan to tap into the recycling space on a large scale soon."

Go online or offline

Uncertain about your career choice? Low on self-confidence? This Q&A column by Nandini Raman, practising counsellor and trainer, may help.



OFF THE EDGE

NANDINI RAMAN

I am 20 years old and not sure whether to opt for an MBA or start my UPSC prep. - Ratan Kumar

Dear Ratan,

The answer depends on what you see yourself doing five years from now. Would you want to work for a private firm or start your own business or work for the Government of India? One has more money and frills and perhaps you can be your own boss one day and the other has a lot of respect, job security, and a good life. Both have their merits and demerits and require discipline, hard-work, commitment and perseverance. Work on a mind map; hopefully you will discover your calling. Best wishes.

I completed my Pharm-D (Doctor Of Pharmacy) and worked as a lecturer in a private college. However, I was dissatisfied and quit. I have been job hunting since, but the process has led to depression. Which area do you recommend? What is the scope of my degree in India? - Anjuman

Dear Anjuman,

I would like you to meet a

counsellor and get your depression evaluated and assessed first. Please address that before it spirals into something deeper. There are plenty of job opportunities for Pharm-D, such as assisting and aiding a clinic pharmacy practice, joining a governmental agency or even a pharmaceutical company and/or a large hospital pharmacy chain. Take care.

I am a teacher (BA with B.Ed.) and am eager to study further. However, I don't seem to have enough time. Please guide me. - Lobsan

Dear Lobsan,

This is a tricky situation. Prioritise tasks that are urgent and important and cut out time stealers. Take time out for meaningful things consciously. Time management, prioritisation of tasks and cutting down extra social commitments (virtually today) might help you. Good luck.

Disclaimer: This column is not a substitute for long-term therapy. It is merely a guiding voice. Some issues may need medical intervention.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. She has worked extensively with students and young adults across a range of issues. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line 'Off the edge'.

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A walk-back

Biden shows intent on reworking immigration rules by not extending H-1B visa ban

President Joe Biden allowed a ban on issuance of H-1B visas for skilled workers to lapse at the end of March 2021, a move signalling his intent – articulated as a campaign promise last year – to pull the U.S. back from harsh immigration rules imposed by his predecessor, Donald Trump. Mr. Biden's action will have a significant and favourable impact for Indian nationals seeking employment with U.S. tech firms, given that they were the largest demographic to benefit from this visa annually; they garnered approximately 70% of the 65,000 H-1B visas annually made available to private sector applicants other than students. By some estimates, H-1B visa applications of up to 219,000 workers were likely blocked as a result of Mr. Trump's proclamation last June, halting the processing and issuance of non-immigrant work visas of several types. The stated aim was to prevent foreign workers from cornering jobs in the context of the economic distress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, this raised genuine questions about whether such rules would set back the U.S.-India relationship by impacting Indian IT services exported to the U.S. These totalled approximately \$29.7 billion in 2019, 3.0% (\$864 million) more than 2018, and 143% greater than 2009 levels. Not only did the CEOs of Silicon Valley tech titans protest the clampdown on a key source of skilled labour driving their core operations, but some universities also filed lawsuits challenging a subsequent student visa ban last year, leading to a partial walk-back on the rules for the latter.

In allowing the ban on H-1B visa issuance to expire, Mr. Biden has walked a fine line between restoring the inflow of skilled workers into the U.S., a source of productivity increases for its labour force, and not being seen as aggressive in unwinding Trump-era immigration policies. On the one hand, Mr. Biden clearly recognises that there are limits to the Trumpian dogma of economic protectionism – especially during a period of economic crises such as the present – where there will be fewer jobs to reserve for Americans if the size of the pie is not increased through economic growth momentum built on a diverse and skilled workforce. Nevertheless, the Biden White House has clearly not forgotten the nearly 74 million votes for Mr. Trump in the 2020 presidential election, a fact that perhaps makes it unwise to explicitly reject the 'America First' ideology, even if that motto is no longer alluded to on Pennsylvania Avenue. It would in this regard be reasonable to expect that the Biden administration will continue to push gradual reforms that nudge the U.S. economy and global strategic position back toward an ethos of multilateral cooperation and bilateral progress with countries such as India, while however retaining a sharp emphasis on policies that further U.S. national interest in a dramatically transformed post-COVID world.

A good start

Fund support from govt. is vital for continual treatment of those with rare diseases

It is binding on a welfare state to take care of every single citizen. Securing the wellbeing of every one, particularly those unable to help themselves, irrespective of whether they constitute a critical mass or not, is important. The recent notification of the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021 after various interventions, including the court, is pegged on this principle of inclusion. A good start, it offers financial support for one-time treatment of up to ₹20 lakh, introduces a crowdfunding mechanism, creates a registry of rare diseases, and provides for early detection. In its final form, however, the policy has left the rare diseases lobby sorely disappointed on a crucial note. Rare diseases are broadly defined as diseases that infrequently occur in a population, and three markers are used – the total number of people with the disease, its prevalence, and the availability/non-availability of treatment options. WHO defines rare disease as having a frequency of less than 6.5-10 per 10,000 people. As per an estimate, there are 7,000 known rare diseases with an estimated 300 million patients in the world; 70 million are in India. According to the Organization for Rare Diseases India, these include inherited cancers, autoimmune disorders, congenital malformations, Hirschsprung's disease, Gaucher disease, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophies and Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs).

Much of the effort in the sector, from the medical side, has been to evolve formal definitions, in the hope that it would support the development of and commercialisation of drugs for treatment, and improve funding for research on rare diseases. Patient support groups have worked towards drumming up funding assistance for the treatment – one time or continual. The notification of the Policy comes as a logical conclusion to a long-fought battle, and yet, stops short of delivering the complete mandate. As per the Policy, diseases such as LSD for which definitive treatment is available, but costs are prohibitive, have been categorised as Group 3. However, no funding has been allocated for the immediate and lifelong treatment needs, for therapies already approved by the Drugs Controller General of India. Experts point out that the costs to help already-diagnosed patients might be in the range of ₹80-₹100 crore annually. If the Centre can extend the cost-sharing agreements that it has worked out with Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, with other States too, its share of the annual costs will be halved. The Centre can, however, still set aside a substantial corpus to fund life-saving treatments, even as it rolls out the policy. Doing so will not only complete a job well begun – even if not yet half done – but also cement its commitment towards the welfare of every single citizen in India.

Going beyond Tamil Nadu's 'freebies' narrative

Other important promises that could touch, and likely improve, the lives of millions rarely make headlines



REETIKA KHERA

Disparaging references to "freebies" are a popular trope of media coverage of elections in Tamil Nadu. This Assembly election is no different: free data, free tabs, free washing machines were in the news as political parties released their election manifestos. Electoral promises serve as a road map for elected governments and deserve greater scrutiny. I took a quick look at the full manifestos in English of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (<https://bit.ly/3wkSBzP>), the Indian National Congress, the Makkal Needhi Maiam (<https://bit.ly/2PQfaeS>) and the Bharatiya Janata Party. (Unfortunately, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) does not have an English version.)

The 17,000-plus word manifesto of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is the most detailed. It mentions "welfare" 55 times, followed through with frequent mentions of education/school (61 times), women/girl/female (60 times), and of food/health/nutrition (17 times). The counts of these words in the manifestos of other parties pale in comparison (see table). In the case of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress, there is little difference (e.g., education appears 23-24 times; women 14-15 times).

The Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), a new party headed by actor Kamal Haasan, made news when it announced a compensation for women's unpaid, primarily domestic, work. The party has a very lean manifesto (two docu-

ments, 2-3 pages each) that barely discusses the topics listed above.

Simple word counts can only tell us so much – filling pages is hardly the point of an election manifesto. Studying them allows us to get a sense of how substantive the promises are and how deep is the understanding of issues. For instance, in the case of the BJP, one of the welfare-related promises is merely that "Adi Dravidar Welfare will be renamed as 'Scheduled Caste Welfare Department'". In contrast, in the corresponding section, the DMK includes a promise of reservations in government jobs for Adi-Dravidars, scholarships for girls from certain subgroups, hostel accommodation and food allowance, and so on. The manifesto also clarifies which promises apply to children born of inter-caste marriages.

Interestingly, the BJP promises to transfer *panchami* land to Dalits. Dalit/land activists have questioned the promise because a BJP leader from Tamil Nadu, as Vice Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, had ignored petitions to the Commission on precisely this issue. With this promise, apart from wooing Dalit voters, the BJP is probably trying to keep alive an allegation – denied by the DMK – that the DMK's Murasoli office is on *panchami* land.

A pioneer State

As a development economist working on social policy, Tamil Nadu is of great interest. From school meals, canteens (or community kitchens) and maternity entitlements, it has pioneered some of the best welfare programmes.

Following in that tradition, the DMK has the most comprehensive, if modest, vision for a welfare state (in its manifesto): 150 days of National Rural Employment Guaranty.

Welfare and a word count

The keywords in the manifestos can offer clues about the vision of political parties

Welfare	BJP	INC	MNM
Education/school	20	24	0
Women/girl/female	15	14	4
Jobs/employment	9	14	4
Food, health and nutrition	7	4	1

tee Act (NREGA) work instead of just 100 per year per family and a fair wage (₹300 per day). Reinvention of *urad dal* in the Public Distribution System has been promised. For children's nutrition, it proposes to add milk in school meals; Tamil Nadu already serves eggs every day. Running a programme well, requires decent work conditions for staff; the DMK promises pensions and gratuity for *anganwadi* and mid-day meal workers.

For women, among the most significant promises is one to increase maternity entitlements under the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy scheme, from ₹18,000 to ₹24,000 per child. In State government jobs, the party proposes to increase paid maternity leave from nine to 12 months. Besides this, it promises to set up nursing stations with privacy. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is among the most important needs of a child. In a society where women are not to be confined to their homes because they bear the main responsibility of child rearing, the promise of nursing stations is not trivial. There is also a proposal to set up 500 new Kalaignar canteens (modelled on Amma's canteens, pioneered by former Chief Minister and AIADMK leader J. Jayalalithaa).

The Congress manifesto does not mention NREGA – an Act that was passed by its own government under the United Progressive Alliance-1; and as far as the PDS is concerned, that section in the manifesto is populated with three seemingly random points: "steps will be taken to provide free rice; along with free rice; lentils, cooking oil and other essential groceries" (emphasis added). (To be fair, the English version of the Congress manifesto is an abridged version of the Tamil manifesto; however, it does come across as a hastily "Google translated" document.)

This is not to say that all manifesto promises are laudable. Just to give one example: as in Haryana's widely criticised, possibly unconstitutional move to reserve jobs for locals, the "DMK assures to introduce legislation to reserve 75 percent of private sector jobs for locals." It is a misguided, impractical promise that could lead to corruption and red tape without any substantive gains.

Exacerbating inequality

The DMK manifesto also betrays how deeply ingrained inequality is in our society. It promises an enhanced compensation of ₹24,000 for women as maternity entitlement in the unorganised sector. This will still not bring their entitlements on par with those of women in, say, government jobs, who are entitled to 26 weeks paid leave

under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act 2017 (and who are being promised 12 months by the DMK). While the first is necessary, the second will increase inequality. Finally, there are glaring blindspots: apart from ignoring health care in a pandemic year, the insidious use of Aadhaar in welfare and beyond has not been opposed.

Need to refocus

The main reason for dwelling on the details of the manifestos is that the mainstream English media rarely goes beyond the 'freebies' narrative: free washing machines, "free data", etc. In earlier elections, free rice, fans and mixer-grinders made news. Other important promises that could touch, and likely improve, the lives of millions rarely make headlines. For instance, given the nationwide farmer protests, the proposals on agriculture in the DMK manifesto should have been debated. Among other promises, it includes the promotion of cooperatives for fairer marketing mechanisms. Similarly, it mentions jobs/employment more often (66 times) than welfare (55), but we have not heard what these promises are. An assurance to redress these problems is at least a recognition of the problem exists.

The argument here is not that merely making progressive promises will ensure their implementation, nor is the idea to create an impression that politics in Tamil Nadu is people-centred or clean. The concern is that by allowing ourselves to be drowned in the freebies narrative, we are giving political parties a free pass at a crucial juncture.

Reetika Khera is Associate Professor (Economics) at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

The Kerala Model at the crossroads

The role of planning and social oversight in the economic development of the State needs to expand further



SUBIN DENNIS

Will the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) be re-elected in the upcoming polls in Kerala, or will the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) return to lead the government? The election results will have a major bearing on the path of development that the State will take in the coming years.

While Kerala's achievements in human development are well-known, there is a widespread misconception that Kerala has not had much economic growth. The 'Kerala Model' showed that a country or a region need not wait till it becomes rich to bring about significant improvements in people's material conditions of living, and that people's movements can be the driving force of such changes by forcing governments to adopt redistributive measures and other programmes.

When growth picked up
Economic stagnation in the 1970s and 1980s led many observers to predict the collapse of the Kerala model. They argued that the slow-growing State would not have the money to continue financing its welfare programmes.

But a fundamental change occurred by the late 1980s – Kerala's economic growth picked up. Growth in agricultural incomes and in remittances provided the spur for a 'long boom' in the subsequent decades. While services grew the fastest, the secondary

sector (which includes manufacturing, construction, etc.) also experienced significant growth; the proportion of the workforce engaged in the secondary sector, which was 20% in 1987-88, grew to 32% in 2018-19.

While Kerala's per capita income was almost 10% lower than the all-India figure in 1989-90, it was 65% higher than the all-India figure in 2019-20.

During this period, Kerala's education and health indicators continued to improve, and its social security programmes continued to expand. But public schools and public hospitals often fell into disrepair, with inadequate facilities forcing many people to turn towards private service providers. The number of students enrolled in public schools fell steeply.

Investments in infrastructure
However, the last five years have seen major investments to build up infrastructure in public schools and public hospitals. More than 45,000 classrooms in 4,752 public schools have been turned 'hi-tech', while new, bigger and better buildings have been constructed for public schools. These efforts have had a major impact: the number of students in public schools began to increase from 2018-19 onwards. This was taking place for the first time in more than 25 years. Similar infrastructural upgrades have been made in the case of public hospitals too, which was an important factor that allowed Kerala to fight the novel coronavirus pandemic relatively well.

Investments that came in through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) provided the most crucial element which made these investments

possible. Apart from schools and hospitals, KIIFB funding is being used to build economic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, industrial parks, the massive public sector Internet project K-FON, or the Kerala Fibre Optic Network, and TransGrid 2.0 – a project to improve the power transmission network in the State

New funding arm
All these constitute a major change from the earlier scenario when Kerala found it difficult to fund capital expenditure that is necessary to upgrade its infrastructure. Continuous assaults on fiscal federalism, and the Centre putting harsh limits on States' borrowing have made things very difficult for State governments. The Goods and Services Tax has dealt a terrible blow to the ability of the States to tax commodities according to their own specific conditions and development priorities.

It is in this context that the KIIFB was brought in as a major funding arm of the Kerala government.

The KIIFB raised funds from the financial market and made them available to the government to finance infrastructure projects which otherwise would have taken decades to materialise. Repayment of the loans is ensured by the government legally committing to



pay a portion of its revenue from the motor vehicle tax and the petroleum cess to the KIIFB every year. The idea is that higher capital investments would help stimulate economic growth, which would in turn lead to higher tax revenues as well.

The real risks

Concerns have been raised whether Kerala is taking on unsustainable levels of debt. The KIIFB loans are not part of public debt, and even if they are included, they would make only a marginal difference to the stock of outstanding debt. Data show that there have been several years during the past three decades when the ratio of Kerala's outstanding debt to gross State domestic product (GSDP) was higher than it is today (36%). Those years followed a period in the late 1990s when there were serious setbacks to the commodity-producing sectors of the economy (prices of major cash crops had crashed).

The current period is also similar, with the State having had to endure severe floods in 2018 and 2019, and the pandemic-induced worldwide recession. These led to huge unforeseen expenses, even as economic growth and tax revenue growth suffered.

Rather than debt, therefore, the real risks are likely to be associated with shocks to the economy – such as natural disasters, job losses in the West Asian countries where a lot of Keralites work, or contractionary fiscal policy by the central government – which could adversely impact economic growth. Even then, Kerala will be better prepared to face the eventualities if it has better infrastructure, and a better-educated, more highly skilled and healthier

workforce.

Competing visions
The Left Democratic Front's ambitious vision of the future of the Kerala economy is reflected in its manifesto. It lays much emphasis on substantially raising enrolment in higher education along with improving its quality, and on fostering the systematic application of science and technology in a range of sectors. How the benefits of the growth that will occur would be distributed across different sections of society will depend, among others, on the intervention of various organised sections of the working people, particularly to support and expand the role of the public sector and cooperatives.

The United Democratic Front has also come up with its manifesto, and it has not fallen behind in promising a number of welfare measures. But a coherent strategy regarding the path that Kerala should take is yet to be articulated by the UDF. If past experience is any indication, the UDF at the helm would mean less planned intervention by the government in the sphere of the economy and less attention to the public sector. That approach, however, is likely to be inadequate to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Apart from considerations of equity, the added risk of climate change which brings with it phenomena such as more frequent extreme weather events point to the need for an even greater, not lesser, role for planning and social oversight over the process of economic development in the State.

Subin Dennis is an economist at Tricontinental Research. The views expressed are personal



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Democracy matters
It is interesting to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has not diminished voter enthusiasm. It is a tribute to democracy that voters are enthusiastic about exercising their franchise as ever. Do not be surprised if there is a higher voter turnout in the Assembly elections than usual. The Assembly elections are not just about the continuance or change of governments; they are far more significant in that democracy, secularism, social justice and constitutional values are at

stake. People should be able to identify the party or alliance that genuinely cares about them, the common people, and not just corporate behemoths and religious zealots. While the BJP is irrelevant in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, its performance in Assam and West Bengal will be keenly watched. The elections will obviously beget State administrations. But then they will be far more important for the BJP's and secular parties' shares of the popular vote and what they mean for the secular

fabric of society.

G. DAVID MILTON,
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

No teeth

Every election over the years has seen violations of various kinds being highlighted by the Election Commission of India, but nothing seems to be acted upon except for a few moves to take cognisance of the very serious nature by countermanding elections. In general, many parties and their candidates seem to get away with token punishments. Either the Election Commission does

not have the wherewithal to take the cases to their logical end or lacks the teeth to pursue these cases to next stage. This is a sorry state of affairs that needs to be remedied. The onus is on the ECI to publish a white paper on election-related cases and the action taken.

In Tamil Nadu, environment is good politics

There seems to be a shift from prioritising expressways and megaports to agriculture and forests



NITYANAND JAYARAMAN



Environmental promises have made a visible entry into Tamil Nadu's politics, along with guardedly valourisation of farmer and fisher rights over big-ticket infrastructure and industrial projects. All key parties in the 2021 Assembly polls barring the AIADMK dedicated a section for "environmental protection" in their manifestos. Setting aside the justified cynicism about fulfilment of poll promises, the appearance of environment as a political concern worth flagging signals a welcome cultural shift in Tamil politics. It would be a folly to dismiss these promises as tokenism. That would disregard the power of earlier culture-shaping projects such as the Self-Respect Movement and the depth of Tamils' linguistic identity in birthing local brands of environmentalism. Agriculture, rather than industry, as a defining identity of Tamil Nadu has found new currency.

Politics responsive to protests

However, two anxieties mar the positivity of these political developments. One is that an environmentalism rooted in healthy self-respect should not degrade into a 'blood and soil' subset of a chauvinistic Tamil nationalism. This fear, though, is mitigated by a dominant discourse that draws from inclusive traditions of Periyar, Ambedkar and even Marx. The second is an ominous certainty that the political class does not understand the urgency and magnitude of the planetary ecological crisis.

More than a new awakening within the political class, the shift is proof that politics in Tamil Nadu is populist and responsive to people's aspirations articulated primarily through the medium of protests. Protests and agitations have shaped Tamil political culture. The decade has been especially busy. If anti-Hindi agitations launched the Dravidian era in politics, it would not be an overreach to say that the anti-nuclear protests from 2011 to 2013 launched a movement with a distinctly Tamil flavour

to protect land, water and livelihoods from state-supported corporate grabs. The non-violent sit-in by fishers against the Kudankulam nuclear plants in the coastal hamlet of Idinthakarai failed to stop the project, but it forced a nationwide debate on nuclear energy and the right of people to participate in environmental decision-making in the face of obstinate, powerful and irate adversaries. The fallout of the protests left even avowedly pro-nuclear parties like the CPI(M) and agnostic pro-industrial parties like the DMK with weaker appetites for nuclear projects.

Cultures are products of intersectionalities. The genetic make-up of themes portrayed as environmental in political manifestos are drawn not merely from campaigns against power plants, expressways, ports and polluting industries, but also from the gene pool of earlier and coterminous social protests and events.

Consider the string of major protests between 2009 and now: against the Sri Lankan war and Mullivaikkal massacre; against nuclear projects; against coal-bed methane extraction in the delta; against Unilever's mercury pollution in Kodaikanal; by fishers to save Ennore Creek from industrial encroachments; pro-Jallikattu; against hydrocarbon extraction in Neduvvasal, Pudukkottai, which subsequently spread like wildfire through other delta districts; against Sterlite, crony capitalism and industrial pollution; by farmers against the Salem-Chennai expressway; by fishers and farmers against the International Container Transhipment Terminal in Kanniyanukumari; and against Adani's Kattupalli port expansion. The State and Central governments are adversaries in each of these campaigns.

The future is fearsome. A recent

article in American Geophysical Union's journal warns of sweeping heat waves. Leave alone "future consequences of continued warming, some areas in [South Asia] are already getting exposed to deadly heat stress conditions even at the current warming levels," the article reports. Even if temperature rise is kept to 1.5°C as targeted in the Paris Accord, coastal Tamil Nadu can expect lethal heat waves every two years.

At current emissions rates, the world will exceed the 1.5°C danger threshold by 2030. Averting catastrophic change by keeping to the threshold is possible only if emissions are cut by 7.6% every year for the next decade. That's difficult; emissions fell by a meagre 6.4% per cent in 2020 despite the pandemic-induced economic lockdowns, scientific journal *Nature* reports.

Modern economy is fatally coupled to planet-threatening carbon emissions and degrading land use change. In 2019, 11,258 experts from 153 countries issued a 'Warning of a Climate Emergency'. "Our goals need to shift from GDP growth and the pursuit of affluence toward sustaining ecosystems and improving human well-being by prioritising basic needs and reducing inequality," they wrote.

In prioritising agriculture, forests, fisheries and water over hydrocarbon extraction, expressways and megaports, Tamil Nadu's politics may have flagged just such a value shift. Politics, with its embedded values of people's aspirations and relationship to land, is deep. The environmentalism of parties, politicians and manifestos, however, is shallow and demands work. The same parties that condemn the Kattupalli port and the expressway contradict themselves with uncreative promises of coal-fired power plants, energy-guzzling desalination plants and a second international airport in Chennai.

Communities have their work cut out. They have to forge a path of radical departure from the ecocidal growth-obsessed economic pathway, and urge their leaders to follow. That is a gargantuan task considering that this pathway to avoiding ecological collapse would be, to put it mildly, economically inconvenient.

Nityanand Jayaraman is a Chennai-based writer and social activist

A road map for tolerance

Racism will not be overcome with mere professions of good faith but with anti-racist action

ERIC FALT

Every year on March 21, a global movement gathers to fight prejudice and intolerance by marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This provides an opportunity to explore the nuanced causes and consequences of modern racism, and renew an important commitment to combat discrimination. Racial discrimination, beyond being a breach of human rights, has harmful effects on human health and well-being, and risks wider disruptions to social cohesion. The words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan remain pertinent: "Our mission is to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will, and must be defeated."

Forms of racism

Current forms of racism and discrimination are complex and often covert. Public attitudes to anti-racism have improved, as expressions of racist ideology have become less socially acceptable. Yet, the anonymity of the Internet has allowed racist stereotypes and inaccurate information to spread online. At the onset of the pandemic, traffic to hate sites and specific posts against Asians grew by 200% in the U.S. In India and in Sri Lanka, social media groups and messaging platforms were used to call for social and economic boycotts of religious minorities, amid false information accusing them of spreading the virus. Structural forms of discrimination, including micro-aggressions and everyday indignities, remain widespread. The use of new technologies and artificial intelligence in security raise the spectre of 'techno-racism', as facial recognition programmes can misidentify and target racialised communities.

Prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory acts, whether subtle or overt, aggravate existing inequalities in societies. A study published by *The Lancet* drew attention to the social dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic and the greater vulnerability of ethnic minorities, who have been disproportionately affected. The World Health Organization has cautioned

on the dangers of profiling and stigmatising communities that can lead to fear and the subsequent concealment of cases and delays in detection. Women and girls also carry a double burden of being exposed to racial and gender-based prejudices. Racial discrimination deepens and fuels inequality in our societies.

To contribute to this important discussion and signify the need for urgent work, UNESCO's headquarters in Paris hosted a Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination on March 22, 2021, in partnership with the Republic of Korea. The Forum gathered policymakers, academics, and partners to initiate a new multi-stakeholder partnership on anti-racism. The new proposed road map to tolerance calls for a multisectoral effort to tackle the root causes of racism through anti-racist laws, policies and programmes.

The way forward

UNESCO's actions against racism through education, the sciences, culture, and communication offer an example of a way forward. UNESCO promotes the role of education in providing the space for young people to understand processes that sustain racism, to learn from the past, and to stand up for human rights. Through new approaches to inter-cultural dialogue and learning, youth and communities can be equipped with skills to eradicate harmful stereotypes and foster tolerance. UNESCO also offers master classes to empower students to become champions of anti-racism in their schools and communities. The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities provides an additional platform for city-level planning and a laboratory for good practices in the fight against racism.

Recent and new manifestations of racism and discrimination call for renewed commitments to mobilise for equality. Racism will not be overcome with mere professions of good faith but must be combatted with anti-racist action. A global culture of tolerance, equality and anti-discrimination is built first and foremost in the minds of women and men.

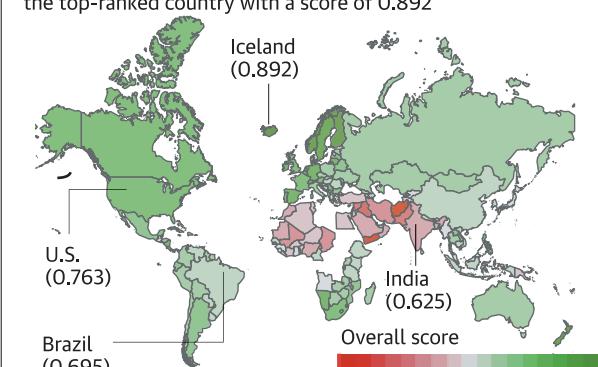
Eric Falt is the Director and Representative of the UNESCO New Delhi cluster office



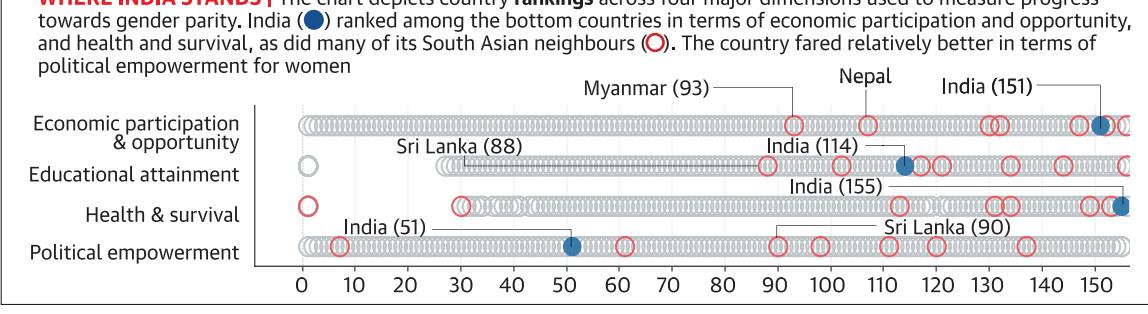
DATA POINT

Gender disparity deepens

WHERE INDIA STANDS | The map shows a country's gender gap index score, between 0 and 1, in 2021. With a score of 0.625 India was ranked 140 out of 156 countries. Iceland was the top-ranked country with a score of 0.892.



WHERE INDIA STANDS | The chart depicts country rankings across four major dimensions used to measure progress towards gender parity. India (●) ranked among the bottom countries in terms of economic participation and opportunity, and health and survival, as did many of its South Asian neighbours (○). The country fared relatively better in terms of political empowerment for women.



FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Seeing things as they are

Reporting transgressions during the election season is not enough; the media needs to scrutinise institutional failures



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

things as they are' is to call out when the emperor has no clothes. The ECI used to be seen as an institution that protects and nurtures the democratic aspirations of more than a billion people. The constant erosion of its moral standing is undermining our democracy in more ways than one. From allocating symbols to holding elections in several phases, the electorate never suspected the motives of the ECI until recently. If every move of the constitutional body is viewed with suspicion, then the time has come for journalists to say in an unambiguous manner that the ECI should not only function in a fair manner but also be seen as functioning in a fair manner.

More questions than answers

On the question of the presence of the EVMs in a BJP candidate's car in Assam, the ECI provided an explanation that begs more questions than answers. There are protocols for EVMs and they are constantly updated by the ECI. What was clearly evident is that the ECI did not follow any of its own protocols while transporting the EVMs in Assam. Instead of answering the difficult questions posed to it, it used a news agency close to the ruling party at the Centre to come up with a vague explanation. It said that the vehicle in which the EVMs were kept broke down and so the officials took a lift in a passing car which happened to be owned by a BJP candidate. Apart from the fantastic nature of the explanation, accountability was shifted from the top to the bottom tier and the ECI suspended four polling personnel.

Good journalism

It is in this context that Orwell's 'seeing things as they are' assumes significance. Instead of glossing over major failures, the media needs to scrutinise the steady decline in adhering to institutional protocols and good practices. Good journalism often takes a cue from literature and literary giants to understand our immediate reality. Citizens expect journalists to conduct an in-depth inquiry to either validate or repudiate these assertions. Salman Rushdie, on the 40th anniversary of his celebrated novel *Midnight's Children*, observed: "All of India belonged to all of us, or so I deeply believed. And still believe, even though the rise of a brutal sectarianism belies otherwise... But right now, in India, it's midnight again." It seems that Mr. Rushdie is seeing things as they are.

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The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 5, 1971

U Thant's refusal

Over 200 people of East Pakistan demonstrated in front of the United Nations yesterday, demanding U.N. intervention to stop genocide in Bangla Desh [United Nations, April 4]. The demonstrators also sought a meeting with the U.N. Secretary-General, U Thant.

Their spokesman, Dr. Alamgir said the group had had several telephonic conversations with U Thant's aides, including Mr. Robert Muller, Director of the Secretary-General's office, and that Mr. Muller had informed them that "U Thant cannot see us."

Speaking to newsmen yesterday Dr. Alamgir characterised U Thant's remarks through his spokesman on Thursday as "meaningless."

(U Thant had said on Thursday: "If the Government of Pakistan were to request the Secretary-General to assist in humanitarian efforts he would be happy to do everything in his power in this regard.")

Dr. Alamgir asked newsmen, "Have you seen anywhere in the world a butcher seeking help of others to come and help those he is butchering? What a travesty of the U.N.'s role."

The demonstrators asked for U.N. recognition for Bangla Desh, for a Security Council meeting and conferring on Bangla Desh membership of the United Nations. They also demanded that U Thant report to the Security Council under Article 99 of the U.N. Charter and arrange to despatch a U.N. team to Bangla Desh.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 5, 1921

Burma politics

The general Council of the Burmese Association have passed resolutions regretting Burma Government's repressive policy and suggesting postponement of rural self-government until the constitutional reforms become a fact. The meeting also urged the British Parliament, Secretary of State for India and Governments of India and Burma to stop all repressive measures in Burma and that if sedition and unrest follow repression the Government would be responsible for all consequences of such measures. The newspaper "New Burma" suggests that the people should prepare themselves economically and otherwise for non-cooperation when the time comes for that policy to be put into practice.

CM YK

FROM PAGE ONE

Sukma encounter toll touches 22

"The forces tactically withdrew some operations and we were waiting for them, this is where (Tarrem, site of encounter) the Maoists had mobilised on Saturday," Mr. Kumar told *The Hindu*.

The official added that Tarrem is one of the core areas of the Maoists, and the joint forces were on an area-domination exercise.

A joint team of the Chhattisgarh police, comprising the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF), along with various teams of the Central Reserve Police Force had proceeded for a combing operation in south Bastar on Friday night.

Mr. Kumar said the Maoists had used "improvised grenades" to attack the forces.

He denied that the security forces were moving in large numbers that could have exposed them to the Maoists.

"The security forces were in appropriate numbers; it is too simplistic to say [that they were in large number], there were tactical gaps between them, they had maintained appropriate offensive and defensive postures ... they were spread in four groups – around 130 each from four directions. Improvised grenades were used by the Maoists. It was a combing operation, the radius of operation was around 30

km; they were completely independent teams," Mr. Kumar said.

He added, "There were no specific inputs but these formations [of Maoists] were wanting to hit the security forces for quite some time... For two weeks, they were trying to do some mischief in Silged-Jagargunda road that was under construction. The road jeopardises their existence... It has cut away their territory," he said.

The officer denied that there was a delay in retrieving the bodies.

"By the time the haze of combat subsided, the forces waited for an opportune time... Therefore, they waited, they went again in the morning. Removal of bodies takes time, as Maoists are capable of putting bombs in bodies, they [retrieval teams] have to be doubly sure," he said.

The Chhattisgarh police said in a statement that the teams were dispatched to Tarrem as they wanted to corner People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) chief Hidma, who was said to be in the area. Hidma heads PLGA Battalion 1, one of the most lethally armed units of the Maoists active in southern Chhattisgarh. He is also said to have been involved in the 2010 attack, when 76 CRPF jawans were killed at Tadmetla in Dantewada.

Nod soon for Sputnik V rollout amid virus surge

Sputnik V, developed by Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology, is a two-dose adenovirus based vector vaccine, similar in design to AstraZeneca's Covishield.

A challenge with the vaccine is its storage. The liquid form of the vaccine requires it to be stored at -18°C or colder while the freeze-dried version can be stored in 2-8°C. The company was asked by the regulator to furnish more information on the cold storage management plan and its stability.

Last month, Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) – the main business promoters of the vaccine – announced a contract with three Indian firms for manufacturing more than 300 million doses of the vaccine. It has reported an efficacy of 91% and has so far been approved for use in 59 countries.

"The Sputnik V was dis-

cussed and it's likely to be cleared within the next 7-10 days. In phases, it is expected that vaccines will be available to all adults," the source, who declined to be identified, confirmed to *The Hindu*.

A press statement following the briefing stated that a special campaign would be organised for underlying Covid-appropriate behaviour from April 6-14 with emphasis on 100% mask usage, personal hygiene and sanitisation at public places /workplaces and health facilities.

The meeting flagged the situation in Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhattisgarh as of "serious concern."

Maharashtra has contributed 57% of total cases and 47% of deaths in the country in the last 14 days. The total number of new cases per day in the State has touched 47,913 which was twice its earlier peak.

EC rejects Mamata's complaint of rigging

The EC slammed Ms. Banerjee for her conduct and said that as a poll candidate and CM, she sought to weave a media narrative to mislead the voters. The EC said tensions outside the polling booth could have had an "adverse impact on law and order across West Bengal and may be some other States" while the voting was under way.

It added, "there could not have been a greater misdemeanour".

"There is no evidence at all to suggest that the BSF jawans who were deployed at

the polling station indulged in any inappropriate behaviour. Moreover, the complaint that they did not allow the voters to go inside the booth is far from truth," Mr. Sinha said.

The letter called the Chief Minister's allegations "factually incorrect, without any empirical evidence whatsoever and devoid of substance".

The EC stated that TMC's polling agent was assured that he would be escorted by the police and the sector officer of the booth, but he refused to come.

Another batch of Rafale jets to fly in by mid-May

The second batch of three Rafales arrived in India last November, also flying non-stop from France with three in-flight refuellings supported by French Air Force mid-air refuelling aircraft. The third batch of three Rafales arrived in India in January. The fourth batch of three jets arrived on March 31 and were refuelled in-flight by

UAE Air Force tankers. Last December, IAF Chief Air Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria said the Force would get three to four Rafales every two to three months till all 36 jets are delivered and added that the first squadron would be fully ready by the end of 2021 and the second squadron by 2023.

Stormy campaign draws to an end in Kerala

Parties pushed their case with voters, touching upon contentious issues

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The campaigning for the 2021 Kerala Assembly election ended at 7 p.m. on Sunday. The frantic last-minute electioneering marked the summing up of an arguably rancorous poll season, marred by recriminatory bickering, identity politics and provincial mawkiness.

Matters of faith and religion clashed with livelihood and development issues to take centre stage in the electoral debate.

Both the BJP and the Congress recurrently played up the Central law enforcement's "incriminating" investigative forays against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's and Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan's offices in the diplomatic baggage gold smuggling case.

The LDF also strived to draw Muslim and Christian



KERALA

The Congress and the BJP lacerated the government for "trampling" on the religious beliefs of Ayyappa devotees. Their respective campaigns persistently talked about "defending" religious custom.

LDF overtures

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) struggled to relegate the socially volatile issue of gender equity at Sabarimala to the back-burner. It strained to shift voter attention away from Sabarimala and the gold smuggling case.

The ruling front tried to focus the poll narrative on the administration's welfare measures, governance record, COVID-19 management and election manifesto.

The LDF also strived to draw Muslim and Christian



Final leg: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in an autorickshaw in Kalpetta on Sunday. ■ ANI

votes to its fold by damning the Congress as "lenient" to the Hindutva agenda. The ruling front projected itself as the sole bulwark against the rising tide of majoritarianism. The LDF calculated that consolidation of minority votes favouring the ruling front might help counterbalance the emergent BJP.

The BJP played on the Christian community's "insecurities" without seeming to relinquish its traditional emphasis on Hindutva politics. The party has promised legislation against "love jihad" and a State law for "defending" Sabarimala.

The Congress skirted the "love jihad" controversy but it made overtures to Hindu, Christian and Muslim social organisations and influencers. Its campaign banked

heavily on the presence of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to sway voters.

The slew of corruption charges raised by Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala also formed the UDF campaign's central plank.

The pandemic and the disruption it wreaked appeared to take a back seat as the open campaigning crescent

Ever optimistic

As the open campaigning reached its last gasp, the competing coalitions seemed to express unalloyed optimism about their electoral chances. However, their aura of confidence belied the hectic behind-the-scenes manoeuvring.

Political agents hastened to prop up traditional support bases, staunch possible bleeding of votes and ensure turnout on polling day on April 6.

IN BRIEF



Soota to invest ₹200 cr. in research on ageing

BENGALURU Tech industry veteran Ashok Soota on Sunday announced the creation of SKAN, a not-for-profit entity for medical research around ageing and neurological disorders, and also made a financial commitment of ₹200 crore to fund the venture. SKAN will conduct research activities in-house, and also through partners.

The Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, will be its strategic partner for neurological research. CBR is currently putting together a consortium to handle the first project on Parkinson's disease, a statement said.

Nandi idol goes missing from Chittoor temple

CHITTOOR An idol of Nandi at a 500-year-old temple of Lord Shiva at Devalampeta village in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, reportedly went missing a week ago. A few villagers approached the police on Saturday, stating that the idol had been missing since March 26. The police conducted inquiries in the village.

'Bypoll a referendum on Special Category Status'

TIRUPATI People should consider the Tirupati parliamentary by-election in Andhra Pradesh a referendum on the Special Category Status, said Rajahmundry MP Margani Bharat. Speaking to presspersons on Sunday, Mr. Bharat said the by-election had attracted the attention of the nation. To make Prime Minister Narendra Modi feel the heat of the sentiments, people should ensure that the ruling YSR Congress Party won the seat with a majority.

Telangana to see severe heatwave conditions

HYDERABAD Telangana is staring at severe heatwave conditions in the next two months as the temperature is expected to rise considerably over 47 degrees Celsius in some districts. The State, according to the Telangana State Development and Planning Society, is highly prone to hot weather conditions. The data on the 'vulnerability' analysis prepared by the society said three out of the 589 mandals were in severe conditions, 62 in critical and 187 in semi-critical conditions.

Campaign ends in T.N., Puducherry

234 Assembly seats and one Lok Sabha seat are up for grabs in the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI



Poll-ready: DMK supporters at an election campaign in Chennai on Sunday. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Campaigning for the first Assembly election to be held after the Karunandhi-layalithaa era in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry ended at 7 p.m. on Sunday, with leaders of political parties making last-minute appeals for public support in their respective hometowns and constituencies.

What was unusual this time was that electioneering began several months before the polls were notified in the midst of the pandemic.

Polling for 234 constituencies in Tamil Nadu, 30 seats in Puducherry and the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha seat will begin at 7 a.m. on April 6.

While the AIADMK, under the joint leadership of Edappadi K. Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam, is seeking a third consecutive term in office, the DMK, under M.K. Stalin, is making a pitch to see him take the Chief Minister's chair for the first time.

The Dravidian majors have formed alliances comprising national and regional parties. Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam, which has teamed up with smaller allies; Seeman's Naam Tamilar Katchi, which has fielded an equal number of women and men; and T.T.V. Dhinakaran's AMMK, which has an alliance with the DMK and others, are seeking to prove their strength.

The campaign between

the AIADMK and DMK had turned high-pitched with personal attacks. While the AIADMK-BJP sought to project the DMK as a threat to law and order and women; the latter and its allies, projected the AIADMK as an extension of the BJP asking the electorate to be wary of communally divisive politics gaining roots in Tamil Nadu.

The run-up to the polls also saw the Income Tax Department conducted search

es in the premises of Mr Stalin's daughter, former ministers and others. Besides, DMK deputy general secretary A. Raja was banned from campaigning for 48 hours for making certain remarks against the CM.

The Election Commission of India has consolidated its efforts to curb the menace of distribution of money to voters, a notorious feature that prevails across the State during every election.

Cases surge in Telangana and A.P.

Kerala records test positivity of 6.2%; Karnataka to get 15.25 lakh vaccine doses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD



Taking the shot: A man getting vaccinated for COVID-19 in Ongole on Sunday. ■ SRINIVAS KOMMURI

COVID-19 cases in Telangana rose by over 200 in a day at 1,321 on Saturday, after recording 1,078 infections a day earlier. Five more patients died.

Kerala reported 2,802 new cases and Karnataka 4,553 on Sunday.

In Telangana, 62,973 persons were tested. Of the 1,321 fresh cases, 320 were from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation region, 144 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 121 from Rangareddy and 96 from Nizamabad.

Andhra Pradesh reported five more COVID-19 deaths and 1,730 new infections on Sunday morning, the highest single-day tally in 144 days.

The test positivity rate (TPR) was increasing by the day. The State was testing around 30,000 samples per day over the past three weeks and the TPR gradually increased from 0.65% on March 15 to 5.57% on April 4.

It was the highest positivity rate in about six months.

Chittoor reported three new deaths, while Visakhapatnam and Nellore reported one each. More than 77% (1,341 cases) infections were reported from five districts.

Kerala's 2,802 new cases came from 45,171 samples, registering a TPR of 6.20%.

The addition of 10 deaths from the past few days on Sunday took the cumulative toll to 4,668.

Kozhikode district reported three deaths, Thiruvananthapuram two, while one death each was reported from Ernakulam, Thrissur, Alappuzha, 99, Pathanamthitta 74 and Wayanad 59 cases.

In Karnatak, 4,553 people tested positive, taking the total number of cases to 10.15 lakh. The Department of Health and Family Welfare said 2,787 cases were reported

from Bengaluru Urban. Active cases stood at 39,092 with as many as 331 patients admitted in ICUs. The TPR was 3.79%. Fifteen people succumbed on Saturday, taking fatalities to 12,625.

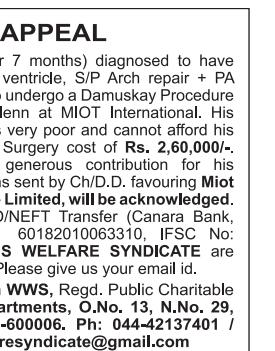
Health and Family Welfare Minister K. Sudhakar said Karnataka would receive 15.25 lakh doses on Monday. One consignment of 5.25 lakh doses would arrive at Belagavi by road and another of 10 lakh doses in Bengaluru by air.

On Tuesday, 15,106 people were vaccinated, taking the total vaccinations in Karnataka to 43.55 lakh.

The number of positive cases in Tamil Nadu inched towards nine lakh on Sunday, with 3,581 more persons being diagnosed with COVID-19. Also, 1,813 more persons recovered following treatment.

The State also recorded 14 more deaths, taking the tally to 12,778 till date.

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



Thashiv (1 year 7 months) diagnosed to have Double inlet left ventricle, S/P Atrial septal defect + PA Band is advised to undergo a Damusky Procedure + Bidirectional Glenn at MDT International. His family condition is very poor and cannot afford his hospitalisation & Surgery cost of Rs. 2,60,000/-.

He seeks your generous contribution for his surgery. Donations sent through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. GF 1, Corridor Apartments, O.No. 13, N.No. 29, Pycrofts, Garden Road, Chennai-600006. Ph: 044-42137401 / 28235324. Email ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com

WWS

Tiff over online game leads to Mangaluru boy's death

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT</

People disenchanted with Naxals, says Chhattisgarh CM

State is determined to carry out development work, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Naxals carried out the Bijapur attack to assert their presence since the people of the region were growing disenchanted with them because of steady developmental work done by the State government, said Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel.

He said the action against Naxals as well as developmental work would continue. "The security forces entered the very den of these Naxals to fight them. The Naxals have suffered heavy losses in the fight in Bijapur. As per our information, the Naxals have removed four tractors full of injured and dead from the encounter spot," Mr. Baghel said.

The CM also paid tributes to the security personnel who lost their lives on Saturday, and met injured securi-



Tragic attack: Bhupesh Baghel visiting a CRPF jawan injured in the Bijapur attack, at a hospital in Raipur on Sunday. ■ PTI

ty personnel on reaching Raipur.

"With more and more developmental work, health, education and other facilities have become accessible and people in these areas no longer want to be with the Naxals. They are now disenchanted, which is why the Naxals carried out this attack to make their presence

known," Mr. Baghel said. "The State government is determined to carry out development work in each and every village," he said.

Meanwhile, Bastar MP and Congress leader Deepak Baij said Naxal activity had increased in the past few months. "This is a failure of the Central intelligence agencies," said Mr. Baij.

Sonia Gandhi condoles with kin of jawans

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Expressing her condolences to the families of the security personnel who were killed in the naxal attack in Chhattisgarh, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Sunday expressed solidarity in the fight against Naxalism and assured the Chhattisgarh government's assistance to the Central paramilitary forces in fighting naxal outfits.

But the party's spokesperson, Randeep Surjewala, in a series of tweets, pointed fingers at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and said Mr. Shah was not interested in running his Ministry and was busy with elections.

Mr. Surjewala said on Twitter, "Sadly, PM & HM are too busy electioneering to take on the menace of Naxalism. TV proclamations ain't enough. We need to put a decisive strategy & blueprint."

BJP MP from Assam Dilip Saikia hit back by pointing out that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel continued to camp in Assam until Sunday afternoon despite the naxal attack taking place on Saturday afternoon. Former party chief Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted to express their condolences to "the families of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in combat in Chhattisgarh".

visit as well as other two rallies and returned to Delhi in view of the Naxal attack. Crowds in thousands from all sections of society thronged the jam-packed venue," said Jitendra Singh, Minister for Development of North Eastern Region and in charge of the party's campaign in Assam, on Twitter.

lukbari – on the last day of campaigning for the third and final phase of polling on April 6.

But he had to return after the first rally at Sarbhog in western Assam's Barpeta district.

"Today's first Assam rally by Home Minister at Sarbhog, before he cut short his

campaign in Assam, on Twitter.

Party leaders say the PM has been mocking Mamata

Modi insulting women of Bengal, alleges Trinamool

Shah cuts short Assam visit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday cut short his election campaign in Assam and returned to New Delhi in view of the Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh.

Mr. Shah was scheduled to attend three rallies – in Sarbhog, Bhabanipur and Ja-

lukbari – on the last day of campaigning for the third and final phase of polling on April 6.

But he had to return after the first rally at Sarbhog in western Assam's Barpeta district.

"Today's first Assam rally by Home Minister at Sarbhog, before he cut short his

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Party leaders say the PM has been mocking Mamata

Modi insulting women of Bengal, alleges Trinamool

Campaign ends for phase 3 of Bengal poll

Voting for 31 segments, concentrated in Howrah, Hooghly and South 24 Parganas, is on April 6

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Campaigning for the third phase of West Bengal election for 31 Assembly segments that will go to polls on April 6 ended on Sunday. After polling in 60 Assembly segments in the southwestern parts of the State in the first two phases, constituencies in the southern part are going to the polls in the third phase.

These 31 Assembly segments are concentrated in three districts – Howrah, Hooghly and South 24 Parganas. There are 205 candidates in the fray for the 31 seats, of which eight are located in Hooghly district, seven in Howrah and 16 in South 24 Parganas district. Twelve constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates.

About 78 lakh voters will be able to exercise their franchise across 10,871 booths. The Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party



Big battle: Mamata Banerjee leaving in a chopper after a rally in Howrah on Sunday. ■ PTI

(BJP) have fielded candidates in all the 31 seats. Under the Samyukt Morcha, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) has fielded candidates for 13 seats, the All India Forward Bloc has two

candidates, the Revolutionary Socialist Party one and the Congress nominees are contesting in seven seats. In the remaining eight seats, the Indian Secular Front has fielded its candidates mainly

in the minority-dominated areas of South 24 Parganas.

The 16 Assembly segments going to polls in South 24 Parganas are seeing an interesting contest. The seats are concentrated across

the three police districts of Baruipur, Diamond Harbour and Sunderbans. The seats going to polls in South 24 Parganas and Howrah are Trinamool Congress bastions. The party had won all of the 31 Assembly seats in the South 24 Parganas district in 2016.

The key constituencies include Tarakeswar in Hooghly, where former Rajya Sabha MP Swapan Dasgupta is testing political waters against Trinamool Congress candidate Ramendu Singh Roy. At Raidighi, former Minister and senior CPI(M) leader Kanti Ganguly is contesting from Raidighi against Trinamool candidate Alok Jalada. West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee is contesting in Baruipur Paschim, whereas prominent Trinamool youth leader Sakunt Molla is contesting from the Canning Purba Assembly segment.

The fourth phase of polling is scheduled for April 10.

Employer can reject candidate acquitted of serious crime: SC

Antecedents can be looked into, it says

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that a public employer can reject a candidate as unsuitable if he had, in the past, been acquitted of a serious crime merely on the benefit of doubt.

A Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, said an acquittal on the benefit of doubt is quite different from an honourable acquittal. "The mere fact of an acquittal would not suffice but rather it would depend on whether it is a clean acquittal based on total absence of evidence or in the criminal jurisprudence requiring the case to be proved beyond reasonable doubt, that parameter having not been met, benefit of doubt has been granted to the accused," the court said.

A person should be honourably acquitted of a heinous crime to be considered eligible for public employment.

Mode of acquittal

"An accused who is acquitted after full consideration of the prosecution evidence and prosecution has miserably failed to prove the charges levelled against the accused, it can possibly be said that the accused was honourably acquitted," the Court explained in a recent judgment.

Besides, the SC observed that "acquittal in a criminal case does not automatically entitle a candidate for appointment to the post".

The case concerned a man accused of murder after witnesses turned hostile in Rajasthan in 2009. He was part of a group of people who ran a tractor over a woman and later knifed people who tried to resist them.

13 workers injured in U.P. scaffolding collapse

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Thirteen labourers were injured, five of them seriously, after a scaffolding collapsed on them during maintenance work at a power plant in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra district on Sunday, the police said.

The incident took place at the privately-run Lanco Ampara Power Limited Project in the district, located on the eastern fringes of the State. Around 2.45 a.m., some workers were doing maintenance work in the boiler of the plant, when suddenly the shed collapsed, said the site manager, S.K. Dwivedi.

While eight injured labourers were discharged after treatment at the site, the other five, aged between 20 and 34, were admitted to a hospital, the company running the plant said. All are out of danger as per doctors, said the government.

Assam gears up for final polling round

Campaigning for the third phase, which will cover 40 seats, draws to a close

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Campaigning for the third and final phase of the Assembly election covering 40 constituencies across 12 districts of western Assam and other parts came to an end on Sunday evening.

The Congress and two of its main allies in the 10-party Mahajot (grand alliance) entered this phase with the confidence of having won more seats than the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its regional allies in 2016.

Congress's position The Congress, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and the All India United Democratic Front had together won 25 phase-three seats in the last election, while the BJP and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) won 15. The scenario was reversed in the first two phases covering 86 seats.

Migrant Muslims are likely to play a major role in this phase. A majority of them live in chars (river islands) and chaporis (flood-prone ri-

Civil Services Reforms in India

As the services receive criticism from political executives, it is important to understand the steps to help it perform better and be more accountable.



Pavan Kumar
Top Unacademy Educator



As pointed out by Sardar Vallabhai Patel, civil servants should provide unbiased, rational and meritorious suggestions to the political executive in policy formulation. It requires an impartial Civil Services Board that can look after all the aspects related to promotions, transfers, posting and suspensions.

To conclude, it must be remembered that the steel frame of the country should be strengthened by implementing necessary reforms instead of blaming them for problems.

This weekly column for civil services aspirants is brought to you by Unacademy. Send your subject specific queries to upscsepreparation@unacademy.com

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Scan code to watch the free live class on 'Civil Services Reforms in India' on April 6 at 7 PM. Use code UPSCCSE.

strongly opposed it. It was Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the then Home Minister, who was very impressed by the work of ICS officers and insisted on the continuation of the Civil Services. It was then renamed Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Apart from performing regulatory functions, the IAS was given additional responsibilities in the form of welfare and developmental functions. The IAS officers were given the responsibility of running public sector enterprises, implementing welfare schemes, bringing about socio-economic transformation. Unfortunately, they have failed to live up to the expectations of people in general and the political executive in particular. Right from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi, all the Prime Ministers have expressed their disappointment with the bureaucracy's performance.

It is high time that the country implements Civil Services reforms rather than blaming bureaucracy for all the ills facing the nation. It should start from recruitment. Civil Servants (IAS) do not possess the necessary knowledge or skills to perform specific functions. We must encourage a lateral entry into the Services.

After Independence, there were heated debates in the Constituent Assembly regarding its continuation. Most of the members

are accountable to the political executive and it has only resulted in the politicisation of the Civil Services. We must focus on external accountability mechanisms like citizen charters, social audits and encourage outcome orientation among civil servants.

Performance evaluation has always been a major issue.

Performance records are mostly prepared by superiors leaving a lot of scope for personal biases and prejudice.

As suggested by the Second

Administrative Reforms Commission, it can be made more objective. Mr. Modi has suggested a 360-degree performance evaluation.

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implements Civil Services

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the necessary knowledge or

skills to perform specific

functions. We must encourage

a lateral entry into the

Services.

The most important reform

is regarding accountability.

In parliamentary democracy,

they are not directly

accountable to citizens. They

We will leave it to the people of West Bengal to give a befitting reply to Modi and Amit Shah

SHASHI PANJA

State Minister for Women and Child Development

does the Chief Minister address PM Modi and Amit Shah at poll rallies? How had she addressed J.P. Nadda [BJP president]?" asked Agnimitra Pual, president, West Bengal BJP Mahila Morcha.

Earlier in the day, addressing a public meeting in Hooghly district, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wondered whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "god or a superhuman" to make claims about the BJP winning the West Bengal Assembly election, even when polling for six phases was still not over.

"What do you [Modi] think of yourself... are you god or superhuman," the Chief Minister asked, referring to the Prime Minister's remark that he would attend the oath-taking ceremony of the BJP government in West Bengal.

The BJP State leadership said Prime Minister referred to Ms. Banerjee as "Didi O Didi" in a mocking tone.

"This behaviour of the PM is anti-woman, akin to harassment. We will leave it to the

manner in which the Prime Minister was addressing

INTERVIEW | SATINDER LAMBHAB

'Doval-Bajwa a good combination to oversee back channel dialogue'

Special envoy to former PM Manmohan Singh welcomes current initiative on India-Pakistan ties, saying engagement is necessary, particularly with an adversary

SUHASINI HAIDAR

Details are still emerging of a reported back channel initiative between India and Pakistan that has led to a number of measures since the February 25 DGMO ceasefire agreement announcement. As the latest Pakistani move to clear and then cancel imports from India is debated, former diplomat and special envoy to PM Manmohan Singh, Satinder Lambah, who ran the back channel from 2005 to 2014, stressed that a previous deal on trade derailed in 2014 and the agreement on Jammu and Kashmir are valid even today. Excerpts:

You have been involved in India-Pakistan diplomacy for 40 years, and the back channel dialogue for more than a decade. According to you, is there a back channel in place now, and as reports suggest, facilitated by a third country like the UAE?

With regards to the current scenario, my knowledge of the specifics is limited to what I read in the newspapers. I can tell you about the

dialogue we had (2005-2014). There was no third-party involvement. Bill Burns (now the CIA chief), in his memoirs, wrote that the Indians did not share details with them and did not want any mediatory role.

If you were to ask me, even now, it is probably a bilateral dialogue, although it may be influenced by the Biden effect.

Could you share some

details of the back channel you were part of and the 2007 Kashmir agreement?

It will not be proper for me to share details as the papers were transferred from the former Prime Minister (Manmohan Singh) to the present Prime Minister (Narendra Modi).

Some top legal luminaries of the country were consulted (at the time).

Were the legal luminaries part of any political leadership?

No.

But would the agreement on Jammu and Kashmir that was negotiated still be valid more than a decade later, despite the changes in J&K in August 2019?



We did not negotiate the 2007 Kashmir deal for a specific era but by keeping the future of the two countries in mind

locutors, or to oversee the dialogue.

History shows that Pakistani Army leaders/chiefs think of improving relations with India only after stabilising themselves. General Zia suggested back channel talks after nine years in office, just before his death.

General Musharraf started his peace overtures five years after taking over; and General Bajwa, three years after becoming Army chief. Such occasions come after a gap of several years.

Given the suspension of India-Pakistan ties in the past few years, do you still think peace has a chance?

Yes, of course. Engagement is necessary particularly with an adversary, and I am glad it is being done now.

I think we must take the dialogue process slowly, begin with some people-to-people initiatives and emphasis on economic relations. At a suitable occasion, respective High Commissioners should be reinstated. Track 2 dialogues should be held. There is no need to shy away from any discussion, because our fundamentals are strong.

We expect that no help will be given to promote terrorist activities in our country. I agree there are spoilers in both the systems. However, I have observed that in the present election, there has been no real Pakistan-bashing other than a few stray comments made during the campaign, and that will also ease along the current process.

(For the full interview, log on to bit.ly/satinderlambah)

BJP continues to protest in Odisha

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators spent the night under the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on the campus of the Odisha State Assembly, protesting against the suspension of three of their colleagues.

BJP MLAs were handed a suspension after shoes were hurled at Speaker Surya Narayan Patro during the ruckus in the Assembly on Saturday.

Pramila Mallick, the State government's chief whip, alleged that BJP MLAs Bishnu Charan Sethi and Jai Narayan Mishra had thrown shoes at the Chair. Subsequently, the Speaker, after going through CCTV camera footage pronounced the verdict of a suspension.

BJP MLAs said they had not been given the opportunity to present their views. The Budget session of the Assembly was ended abruptly, five days before its scheduled conclusion.

Mr. Patro tried to convince the BJP MLAs not to sleep on the campus but they stuck to their stand.

Maharashtra tightens curbs across State

Curfew from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m., weekend lockdown imposed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Maharashtra government on Sunday tightened restrictions further by announcing a night curfew and weekend lockdown across the State in the wake of the relentless surge in COVID-19 cases.

The fresh norms, which come into effect today, include a curfew from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. (Monday to Friday), a ban on gatherings of five or more persons throughout the day, and, in a determined bid to prevent gatherings, a closure of malls, restaurants and bars.

Theatres and cinema halls are to remain shut as well, while playgrounds and gardens will also be closed.

Home delivery services will be permitted while essential services will continue unhindered.

The new rules are to last till April 30, said a government notification.

In order to keep the wheels of the economy spinning, there will be no curbs



No distancing: The crowd at a shopping hub in Dadar in Mumbai on Sunday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

57,074 cases reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Maharashtra touched a new peak of COVID-19 cases on a single day, with 57,074 fresh cases reported on Sunday. The State reported 222 deaths (123 of which were reported in the last 48 hours while the rest were from an earlier period).

On industrial operations and construction activity. Agriculture and agricultural activities, transportation of food grains and agricultural commodities will continue as usual too. Film shoots will be permitted, though in the strict absence of crowds.

Everything except essential services will be closed on weekends.

While no new restrictions are put on traffic, public transport will run at 50% capacity.

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On industrial operations and construction activity. Agriculture and agricultural activities, transportation



Suniel Shetty discusses his fitness journey as the host of BIG FM's new wellness show, '21 Din Wellness In'

This action hero gets a RADIO hit

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Suniel Shetty posted a nostalgic tweet on March 31, which marked the 21st anniversary of *Hera Pheri*'s release. Sharing a still from the film, he said, "No wonder we underestimate how quickly time flies. It seems I blinked, and 21 years went by. What a film we made." The slapstick comedy by Priyadarshan is among his finest films in a career spanning close to three decades. But the veteran actor makes an admission: "I got a break in films due to my action and not due to my acting."

Suniel was indeed typecast as an action star. In many of his earlier works, like *Mohra* and *Vinashak*, he plays a brawny guy usually out to avenge the injustice he or someone else suffered. His acting, when he began films, was deadpan, but he could land punches, and perform flying kicks and fire stunts.

The show must go on
This makes him the apt host for BIG FM's new wellness show, '21 Din Wellness In'.

In the three-week show, which began on March 22, Suniel encourages listeners to lead a healthy life. He shares his daily routine, with fitness playing a vital role, and speaks to several experts on physical, mental and emotional well-being.

"I believe that it takes seven days to form a habit; 14 days to start seeing the change it brings; and 21 days to be visible to others. So, that's the idea behind the title," he says about the show.

He is excited because this is his first radio show. "Radio... gives you that feeling of intimacy. You feel the host is directly speaking to you. Since it has tremendous reach, you can discuss well-

ness, which, in the wake of the pandemic, has become so important. For me, wellness is more than just the body. It is about mental health, nutrition, recovery from injuries, and confidence."

Cricket, karate, and yoga

Suniel's fondness for fitness started in school. "I was an athlete all along," he says. "I was into cricket at school. I wanted to play for the country, back then.

Then, to get stronger, I joined martial arts. I started with the Okinawa Gōjū-ryū style of karate." He also has a black belt in kickboxing.

It was his fitness that gave him his film break and he was quickly typecast as an action hero and fitness was no longer just an option. Yet, Suniel never



For me, wellness is more than just the body. It is about mental health, nutrition, recovery from injuries, and confidence

Fitness at heart Suniel Shetty spends two hours everyday for exercise and yoga

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

loathed his workouts. Shooting or not, he is up by 6 am. Two hours a day are spent in exercise and yoga. "You cannot build your body overnight," he says. "I think that's why I am doing a show called '21 Din Wellness In' and not 'Six packs in six days'. Fitness should be a part of your lifestyle."

Leena Mogre, one of the celebrity fitness experts Suniel interacts with on the show, agrees. Leena is among India's first female personal fitness trainers. Her clientele in the past has included some of the top film stars, like Madhuri Dixit, John Abraham among others. She has been in the fitness industry for over 25 years. "Today, everyone is confused because there are so many workouts," she says. "For instance, some people say, 'I'll start Crossfit to lose weight.' Then, they will get injured and blame the exercise. So, it's important to assess what suits you."

What has worked through life for Suniel has been yoga. Apart from keeping him in shape, it has helped him handle the mental demands of his profession as well. "For me, it's not about flexing your body or touching your toes; it's more about how you can hold your breath, how you can maintain a certain energy. When you start exploring yoga, you realise it goes deep."

At 60, Suniel is trying to do roles that demand acting more than action, not because his body is preventing him, but as a diversification of what he can do. He continues to do roles that are physically demanding as well. He played the antagonist in *Darbar*, a cop action drama starring Rajinikanth, in 2020. In the National Award-winning *Marakkal: Lion of the Arabian Sea*, set to be released in May, he plays a sword-wielding warrior named Chandroth Panicker.

"Today, I look to age gracefully," he says. "I can't avoid the process of ageing but I can delay it. So, I am trying to tell people that if I can do it at 60 you can do it any time."

21 Din Wellness In' airs on BIG FM from Monday to Friday, 5 pm to 6 pm in metro cities, 6 pm to 7 pm in Kolkata and 4 pm to 5 pm in non-metros.

MY MIND MATTERS



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Turn your face towards the sunshine

Trigger warning: This article contains material related to suicide and mental illness. Discretion is advised.

I sat in a psychiatrist's room at one of Delhi's best known mental health facilities. Surrounded with drawings by children, most happy-looking pictures, I told the doctor my 'case history'. As a health journalist I had done enough stories over the years to understand the importance of including everything, to maximise my visit and my treatment. I was determined to stay in control.

'Anorexia' she jotted down, with a few more symptoms. Even as she wrote it down, I wondered if I should reiterate that I had it in school – at 17, when I believed I was fat. I wasn't. I want to tell her that while I had always had a bad relationship with food, the anorexia had never recurred. Like most people who don't speak up because they assume *they've* got it wrong, I let it be.

On every occasion after, when she'd spend about 10 minutes with me, she'd ask how I was doing with my anorexia. Every time I would tell her it wasn't a concern at the moment. I wanted to say I still felt fat, binge ate, but from someone at their 'ideal weight' I felt I was wasting her time. There was always a crowd outside her door with people spilling in, and their concerns seemed more urgent, more serious than mine.

She prescribed me pills – SSRIs – meds that give depressed people a 'shot' of serotonin, one of the four happy hormones. I was diagnosed with dysthymia, a chronic, long-term, mild depression. Its equivalent to a physical health problem is this: Imagine if you had low grade fever every day for over two years. You learn to live with it, telling yourself you have to dress up, work hard, pack lunch, socialise.

I also had thoughts of suicide, and was told strictly to come in to the hospital if I felt the urge very strongly. I said I didn't

feel the urge strongly. It was just a recurring thought. Nothing more. A sort of mental getaway when life felt overwhelming. It often did, three years ago. Sometimes, it still does.

I was also 'handled' by a psychologist. She helped me some. So did the meds. With both, I was able to see in time that sunshine, healthy food, and exercise – and if I could combine them, exercise in the sun – helped me more than anyone talking to me about flawed thinking patterns (though an awareness of this helps).

I now also understand that we all have choices – around the way we react, the memories we hold on to, the grudges we nurse, the friends we keep. The anxiety still rises to my throat – it's a feeling I realise I have lived with through life. Imagine being in a fight or flight stage for a lot of the day, across years. This pattern is going to take time to get out of; my wounds will take time to heal. But I know I must heal. Life is long, and it's best lived with a bit of fun.

I do tell a few people that I have experienced dysthymia, but I am careful about who I tell, lest people judge me, as being an unworthy mother, an undependable colleague.

For those I can speak to, I say that there are some days I don't want to get out of bed, when I don't want to speak to anyone. On those days, I still put on a dress, some kajal, smile at myself in the mirror and step out. Because there's always the sun, and it invariably shines through the clouds.

The writer wishes to remain anonymous.

If these topics cause emotional, mental, or physical distress, please call 24 hour helplines Sneha at 044-24640059 or Aasra at 9820466726

In this column, we invite people to share their lived experiences of mental health

WELLNESS ON SHELF



Healthy and natural

Delhi based Habbit has launched with three products. Their range of ice creams, in six flavours, called Wisecream has no added sugar and is diabetic and keto friendly. The second is a Super Shake, a nutrient

dense premix available in chocolate and vanilla. They can be added to milk or water to make a smoothie. The third is Habbit protein, both whey and pea. These are free from chemicals and are available in seven flavours, the brand says.

At habbit.health, ₹799 upward

For glowing skin

The Natural Wash has introduced four new products. The Anti Ageing Face serum has retinol and hyaluronic and niacinamide acids that help to hydrate and nourish the skin. The virgin and cold pressed castor oil is suitable for scalp, hair and skin. The Vitamin C face serum contains 20% vitamin C and hyaluronic, niacinamide and glycolic acids. The brand claims that the formulation boosts moisture, helps to even out skin tone, repair damaged skin cells, and more. At *thenaturalwash.com*, ₹250 upward



Safe sip

Warrier SafeShields has launched Sippine, a drinking shield designed to sit on the rim of a glass or mug to prevent direct contact with the surface. It comes in medical grade sterilised packaging and is suitable to be used while drinking beverages at public places. It is made of food grade polymer and is dishwasher friendly. At *sippine.com*, ₹131 for a pack of two

Celebrating abilities

The digital Autism resource, Learn Autism has launched its services in India, through an app and a website (₹1,812 for yearly membership). The platform provides information about autism to support parents. It has information from pre-diagnosis to adulthood as bite-sized, on-demand video tutorials, downloadable workbooks, live webinars, community support group and more. The platform has a campaign called #MovetoInclusion to commemorate World Autism Month. Participate at *learnautism.com/autisminclusion*

How oral health impacts SLEEP

A booklet by Coimbatore-based paediatric dentistry team We Little throws light on the mouth-sleep connection

K JESHI

Dr Shifa Shamsudeen has been blogging about the connection between problems in the oral cavity and sleep for five years now. As a paediatric dentist, she has seen misaligned jaw lines and under-developed tongues (yes, it's a set of muscles that work hard). While earlier, these problems were thought to be only genetic, today, research says that a number of oral cavity problems in children are a result of poor lifestyle habits, such as bottle feeding, and infections, like recurring inflamed adenoids.

"All these can lead to narrowing of the airway. When a child is not getting enough oxygen during sleep, the tissues, including the brain are not getting enough rest. As a result the child becomes lethargic during the day," says Dr Kunal Gupta, paediatric dentist at Children's Dental Center in Gurugram. A wider airway leads to better breathing and a deeper sleep. Mouth breathing alters jaw lines causing a short chin, which leads to an asymmetrical face and issues such as speech, breathing, and gum problems.

team at We Little that works on children's teeth in Coimbatore, have brought out what they call a sleep passport – a booklet for parents and children that gives pointers on a healthy sleep routine from infancy to 18 years. It provides a pictorial description of low quality sleep, and

highlights the symptoms, causes, and effects of mouth breathing and sleep disordered breathing (SDB), an upper airway dysfunction.

Her message is that many problems with the mouth that result in poor sleep can be prevented. They can also be solved early, with myofunctional therapy.

Lifestyle choices
Malocclusion (misalignment) of teeth in children is a symptom that something is not functioning in harmony. This used to be mechanically corrected with braces when the child turned 14, but can now be tackled much earlier.

Today dentists understand that for a majority of children, narrow jaws and crowded teeth are induced by lifestyle. "Bottle feeding, the use of pacifiers and thumb sucking can make the tongue muscles weak. It narrows the nasal airway, thereby leading to mouth breathing that induces low quality of sleep," says Dr Shamsudeen. To prevent this, it is best to breastfeed, avoid the use of pacifiers and try and break your baby's thumb sucking habit. "Breast-

feeding sets the foundation for well-defined facial and jaw growth," says Dr Shamsudeen.

Timely medical attention
SDB is a result of an improper tongue position, causing difficulties while breathing, says Dr Uma Nagarajan, chief paediatric dentist at Pedro Planet Children's Dental Center in Delhi. "When a child snores or wakes up with a sudden gasping sound at night or while napping during the day, it is a symptom of SDB. The tongue at rest should be positioned in a way that the tip of the tongue rests on the roof of the mouth, even during sleep."

"SDB is caused by recurring inflamed adenoids and tonsils, an enlarged tongue, or a narrow lower jaw because of habits like thumb-sucking and mouth breathing. It can have an impact on concentration and attention in the short term and both because of lack of quality sleep," adds Dr. Gupta.

If your child is not getting good quality sleep, and psychological factors are ruled out, it's best to check whether there is a problem with the oral cavity.

To get a copy of the sleep passport, call 9786929892



Sleep away Dr Shifa Shamsudeen; the passport ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK

AND-NDE



PRIYADESHINI S

"We see this workshop as an offering in the pandemic; the gift of sleep is a blessing," says music artist Gurupriya Atreya over phone from Bengaluru. She is talking about her collaboration with Chennai-based vocalist Vedanth Bharadwaj and their virtual, weekly workshop on lullabies that began in October 2020.

In its 23rd week, the event has succeeded in creating a global community of children, parents, grandparents, singers and artists united by an oral tradition of timeless soothing melodies sung as a pre-sleep routine.

Simultaneously, Duroflex, manufacturer of mattresses that brands itself as The Sleep Company, on World Sleep Day (March 19) launched Sounds of Sleep – a digital music series that "aims to revive, celebrate, and recreate India's rich tradition of regional lullabies in a digitally convenient way."

Aimed at new-age parents who are looking to inculcate healthy pre-sleep routines for their loved ones, the six-episode series is hosted by actor and mother Kalki Koechlin. It features popular singers like Monali Thakur, Shilpa Rao,



Lullabies go digital

Two ongoing initiatives — lullaby workshop and digital music series — turn the spotlight on that elusive lockdown phenomenon: a good night's sleep

Chinmayi Sripatha, Sanah Moi-dutty, Shalmili Kholgade and Geetha Madhuri.

Based on a 2016 study by Marie-Corbel, a doctoral candidate at Université de Montréal, that proves "lullabies are the best way to calm an infant," the music series is "for new-age parents and about the importance of healthy sleep," says Smitha Muraka, VP Marketing Duroflex.

Both Gurupriya and Vedanth feel that the pandemic gave

them the time and opportunity to make their dream of collating an album of lullabies a reality.

Vedanth, who is well known for his rendition of the songs from the Bhakti and Sufi traditions, admits to being surprised by the response.

"The magic of lullabies has brought so many people on to one platform," he says.

Pick a tune

Though the duo began with around 12 songs, it was soon

flooded with songs from different cultures and languages, and have now covered Tamil, Bengali, Urdu, Spanish, Trinidadian, Assamese, Nepali, Malayalam, Sinhalese and Punjabi.

Once a month, a lullaby from a film — like *Nanhi Kali Sone Chali* (Sujata) is also featured because "it is very relatable," says Gurupriya. Vedanth and Gurupriya have also sourced lullabies from families.

Conducted over Zoom, their workshops have 100 participants; it is also live streamed on YouTube for another set of audiences. They also feature special sessions with guest artists like indie pop group The Ghosts (who performed the Christmas-related lullaby 'Silent Night'); Punjabi singer Radhika Sood Nayak; Malaysian singer Cheryl and the Nepali theatre actor Amjad Parwej.

Their recent lullaby concert at Tantrot-sav in Auroville was meant to instill calmness as a prelude to the high

MULTILINGUAL TREASURE

In 2003, Carnatic musician Bombay Jayashree released *Vatsalyam*, an album of popular lullabies from different Indian languages. The album contained songs such as 'Mannupugazh' (Tamil); 'Jasoda Hari' (Brij Bhasha); 'Omana Thinkal Kidaavo' (Malayalam); 'Ghumer Boodi' (Bengali); 'Laali Shri Hayavadana' (Kannada); 'Jo Jo Raama' (Telugu) and 'Kanne Navamaniye' (Tamil).

She also wrote the lyrics for and sang 'Pi's Lullaby' for the 2012 film *Life of Pi*. The song was nominated for the Best Original Song at the 85th Academy Awards. In her blog, the singer writes that director Ang Lee described the mood for the song in these words, "A child sleeps not because he is sleepy, but because he feels safe."

UP NEXT

Duroflex Sounds of Sleep première on World Sleep Day, helping its audience rediscover lullabies from different parts of India and understand why lullabies are good for sleep. Upcoming episodes are..

April 09 - Tamil - Chinmayi Sripatha

April 16 - Punjabi - Shilpa Rao

April 23 - Telugu - Geetha Madhuri

Episodes can be viewed on the Duroflexworld YouTube channel



energy festivities at midnight. "When we performed, the children fell asleep," says Gurupriya.

Art begets art

Auroville-based artist Osher Shanti Rozin describes the workshop as "an amazing initiative". Touched by the sweetness of the songs, she began illustrations for the lullabies.

As she started listening to and understanding the lyrics, she began to focus on bringing out the emotions from within the lullaby. "It's not about the details but about the feelings," says Osher, who uses mixed media like watercolours, pencils, crayons, black and gilt-



Blissful slumber
(Clockwise from left)
Kalki Koechlin;
illustrations by Osher
Shanti Rozin; and lullaby
concert at Auroville

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ter pens to express herself. Vedanth talks about interesting discoveries they made during this workshop series. "The beauty of a lullaby is in its simplicity," he says. "The same song has been rendered over centuries by practitioners and has evolved." He talks about how a Tamil word entered a Spanish lullaby through nomads who travelled from southern India to Andalusia in Spain.

In the context of adding words and images, storyteller and actor Janaki Sabesh has an amusing story. When on summer vacation in Thrissur, she would sing a popular Malayalam lullaby to calm her sister Rekha who missed her parents.

"I would add images that my sister could identify with," says Janaki and sings, "arara ariraro, kaathala ezhindu.... pallu thechu Horlicks kuduchi kulikum... kovil poitu varu vazhila... icecream namma chapdamanu" [We will wake up in the morning, brush our teeth, drink Horlicks, bathe... go to the temple and on our way back, we will have ice cream].

Recalling the lullabies her mother sang to her children and grandchildren, storyteller Smitha Nair, who lives in Kochi, says, "It has a soothing effect on babies. In Kerala, the most famous lullaby is 'Omana Thinkal Kidaavo' by Iriyama Thambi written in 1813 for the baby King Swati Thirunal of Travancore. It's so full of love and splendour and a beautiful wish for the infant." Another of her favourites is 'Unni aaririro' from the Malayalam film *Avalude Raavugal*.

Smitha also mentions listening to Bombay Jayashree's album *Vatsalyam* (see box) when she was expecting her children.

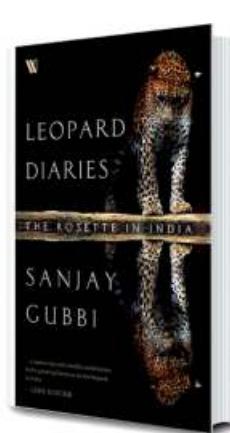
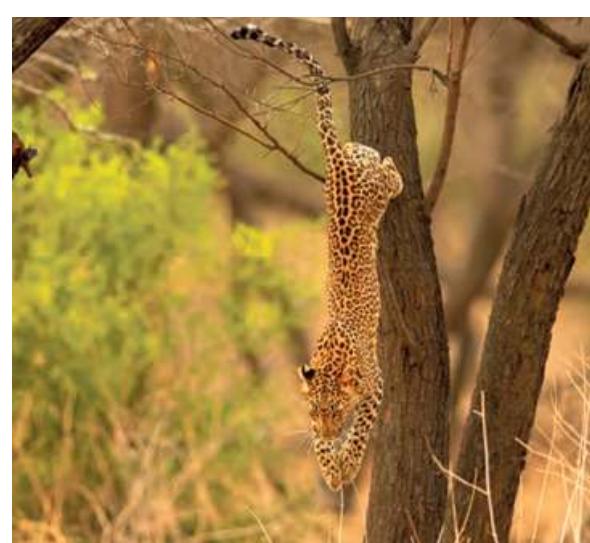
Kalki Koechlin, who hosts the Sounds of Sleep, recalls looking for soothing music "to put my baby to sleep and to create a healthy sleep routine for her. I knew India had a very rich collection of regional lullabies but found it difficult to discover these hidden gems."

Which is why she is thrilled to host this series, and hopes "to share the sense of warmth, nostalgia and bonding experience for every new parent."

the way in which and the geographical area over which the herbivores fed, affecting the food chain.

The forest-dwelling bushbuck, which avoided plains due to the risk of attack from predators, now started to expand into the treeless floodplains, adding new plant species into their diet. This started to affect a type of waterwort called *Bergia mosambicensis*, a plant species in the floodplains.

It comes down to balance, says Gubbi: "The elimination of leopards 'had created a landscape of fearlessness', where herbivores browsed freely, impacting local vegetation. However, as soon as the large predators were reintroduced, the area began to regain its vegetation, as the carnivores controlled where the herbivores browsed, bringing back a balance in the ecosystem."



Field notes (Left to right)
One of the many images
featured in the pages, the
book, Gubbi ■ PRAVEEN
SIDDAMANAVAR AND SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT

A steady admiration for the creature in question permeates each page, backed by logic and fact. Leopards have adapted to human development like few other predators could manage to co-existing around villages, sugarcane fields, areca nut plantations.

Gubbi was injured by a leopard years ago during a rescue operation in Bengaluru. Yet he's sympathetic to the animal. It springs from an understanding of them, the need to find solutions, and an admiration that comes from a place of pure scientific observation.

Take, for instance, his theory (borne out of his own studies) that large predators

also aide seed dispersal and help shape the vegetation of a given space. He also suggests that in the absence of these predators, seed dispersal could go disconcertingly amiss as herbivores frolic from habitat to habitat with nothing to keep them in check. "You don't want a woodland creature to spread forest seeds in a grassland; that is not good for the grassland," he says by way of example.

The senior scientist with the Nature Conservation Foundation, Bengaluru, elaborates, "Top predators have a role in protecting the plant world. A study conducted in

Gorongosa National Park in Mozambique has demonstrated the negative impacts on vegetation when large carnivores like leopards are wiped out." He says the phrase 'trophic cascade' describes such a phenomenon, and it demonstrates the impact meat-eating predators can have on plants.

"Large meat-eaters in Gorongosa had effectively confined herbivores like bushbuck, a forest antelope, to certain areas due to fear of predation. A 16-year-long civil war eliminated these carnivores, and thus changed

An ode to the rosette

sympathetic view at multiple perspectives — of range officers, policemen and communities who live a life of conflict with these creatures. While these observations made its way into the pages over decades of lived experience, "the book itself took about three-and-a-half years to write," says Gubbi, over a phone call.

Take, for instance, his theory (borne out of his own studies) that large predators



POOCHE CAFE



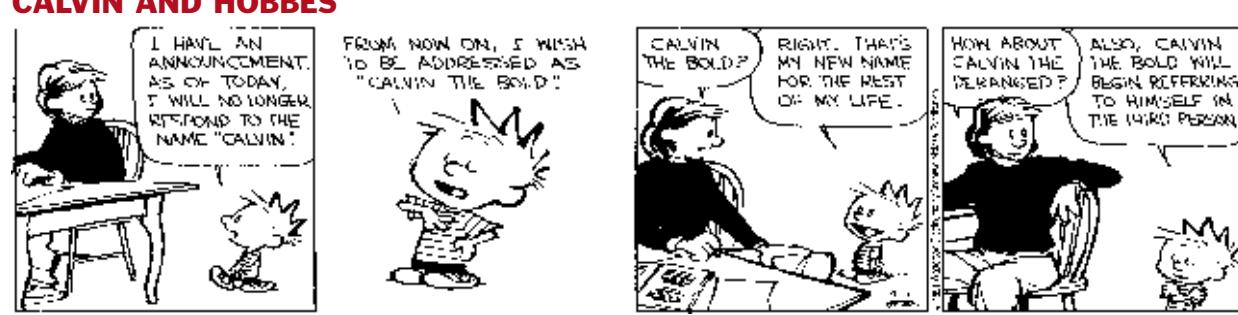
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Jordan Prince Hamzah under 'house arrest'

Deputy PM accused him of plotting with a foreign power to 'undermine the security' of the country

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

AMMAN

Jordanian authorities said on Sunday they foiled a plot to "destabilise" the kingdom involving a half-brother of King Abdullah II and arrested at least 16 suspects.

Hamzah bin Hussein – a former Crown Prince stripped of that title by the monarch in 2004 – and the others had worked with foreign parties to "undermine the security" of Jordan, Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi said.

Prince Hamzah, 41, had on Saturday released a video message via the BBC, in which he accused Jordan's rulers of nepotism and corruption and charged that he had been placed under house arrest.

Multiple arrests

In his message, sent via a satellite link from his Amman palace, the Prince lashed out



A file photo of Prince Hamza bin Hussein. ■ AFP

at Jordan's "ruling system" and said several of his friends had been arrested, his security detail removed and his Internet and phone lines cut.

He denied being part of "any conspiracy or nefarious organisation" but said the country of 10 million people had "become stymied in corruption, in nepotism and in

misrule" and that nobody was allowed to criticise the authorities.

The official newspaper Al-Rai warned on Sunday that Jordan's "security and stability" were a "red line that must not be crossed or even approached".

Washington and Gulf allies stressed their support for the pro-Western govern-

ment in Amman, seen as an anchor of stability in the West Asia.

Official news agency Petra said among those arrested for "security reasons" were former close aides to the royal family Bassem Awadallah, chief of the royal court in 2007-2008, and Sheriff Hassan bin Zaid.

Mr. Safadi said on Sunday an additional 16 suspects had been arrested.

Wicked slander: Queen

Hamzah's mother, Queen Noor, tweeted that she was "praying that truth and justice will prevail for all the innocent victims of this wicked slander. God bless and keep them safe".

Prince Hamzah is the eldest son of the late King Hussein and American-born Queen Noor. King Abdullah had appointed Prince Hamzah, a popular figure close to tribal leaders, Crown Prince

Hafiz Saeed's 5 aides jailed

They were sentenced to 9 years in terror financing case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LAHORE

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced five accomplices of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) to nine years of imprisonment each in a terror financing case.

Three of them – Umar Bahadar, Nasarullah and Samiullah – have been convicted for the first time since the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore pronounced its verdict some time ago in the terror financing cases registered by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police.

The other two – JuD spo-

kesperson Yahya Mujahid and senior leader Prof Zafar Iqbal – had already been convicted for many years in other terror financing cases.

ATC Lahore judge Ejaz Ahmad Buttar on April 3 handed down nine-year jail term to each of them. The judge also ordered a six-month jail term to Saeed's brother-in-law Hafiz Abdul Rehman Makki in the same case.

"The court found the JuD/LeT leaders guilty of offence of terrorism financing. They had been collecting funds and unlawfully financing the proscribed organisation, LeT [Lashkar-e-Taiba]. The court has also ordered con-

Pakistani judge, three kin shot dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PESHAWAR

An anti-terrorism court judge and three members of his family, including wife and a two-year-old grandson, were shot dead after unidentified gunmen attacked their vehicle while they were travelling from the Swat Valley to Islamabad, police said.

Two security guards who were part of the judge's convoy were also injured in the shootout.

The gunmen sprayed the vehicle of judge Aftab Afridi with bullets, killing him, his wife, daughter-in-law and a two-year-old grandson.

Easter eggs and a show of defiance

Myanmar demonstrators hit the streets with eggs bearing messages of protest

REUTERS

YANGON

Opponents of military rule in Myanmar inscribed messages of protest on Easter eggs on Sunday while thousands of others were back on the streets, denouncing a February 1 coup and facing off with the security forces who shot and killed two men.

In the latest in a series of impromptu shows of defiance, messages including "Spring Revolution", "We must win" and "Get out MAH" – referring to junta leader Min Aung Hlaing – were seen on eggs in photographs on social media.

"Easter is all about the future and the people of Myanmar have a great future in a federal democracy," Dr. Sasa, international envoy for the ousted civilian government, said in a statement.



New messaging: Protesters holding eggs inscribed with slogans at a demonstration in Taunggyi in Shan state. ■ AFP

disobedience campaign since the military overthrew the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, that has included creative shows of defiance promoted on social media.

Young people in Yangon handed out eggs bearing the messages of protest, pictures in posts showed.

Crowds have returned to the streets to reject the return of military rule after a decade of tentative steps towards democracy. Numerous vigils took place overnight. In Naypyitaw, two men were killed when police fired on protesters on motorbikes, the Irrawaddy news site reported.

Over 41 dead in Indonesia flash floods

They were sparked by torrential rain; relief hit by power cuts and blocked roads

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA

Landslips and flash floods from torrential rain in eastern Indonesia killed at least 41 people and displaced thousands, the country's disaster relief agency said on Sunday. More than two dozen others are still missing.

Mud tumbled down from surrounding hills onto dozens of homes in Lamenele village shortly after midnight on Adonara island in East Nusa Tenggara province. Rescuers recovered 35 bodies and at least five injured, said Lenny Ola, who heads the local disaster agency.

Flash flooding killed at least six people elsewhere, according to the National



Fatal blow: Debris left behind after flash floods swept the town of Adonara in East Flores, Indonesia, on Sunday. ■ AFP

Disaster Mitigation Agency. Relief efforts were hampered by power cuts, blocked roads covered in thick mud and debris as well as the remoteness of the area surrounded by choppy seas and

high waves, said the agency's spokesperson, Raditya Jati.

Seasonal downpours cause frequent landslides and floods, killing dozens each year in Indonesia, a chain of

The bodies of three people were recovered after being swept away by floods in Oyang Bayang village, where 40 houses were also destroyed, Ms. Ola said.

In another village, Waibarak, three people were killed and seven remained missing when overnight rain caused rivers to burst their banks, sending muddy water into large areas of East Flores district, Ms. Ola said.

Taiwan crash: truck driver offers apology

50 people were killed in the incident

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TAIPEI

A maintenance worker whose runaway truck sparked Taiwan's worst rail disaster in recent decades made a tearful apology on Sunday as investigators said the train driver had little time to react to the collision.

At least 50 people were killed and more than 200 were injured in Friday's crash, which sent a packed eight-car train hurtling into the sides of a narrow tunnel near the eastern coastal city of Hualien.

He was questioned over the weekend by prosecutors and released on bail by a court pending enquiries.

Taiwanese media reported on Sunday that he was taken back into custody.

"According to the testimonies by some passengers, they heard the horn being sounded and it is believed that the train driver had spotted an object of obstruction on the track," Hong Young, chairman of the Taiwan Transportation Safety Board, said.

On Sunday, driver Lee Yihsiang read out an emotion-

Two rockets land near Iraq airbase

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD

Two rockets landed on Sunday near an Iraqi air base just north of Baghdad where American trainers are present, causing no casualties or damage, an Iraqi official said.

Major Gen. Tahseen al-Khafaji said the rockets landed outside Balad air base after midday.

The attack was the first on an Iraqi base housing U.S. troops since an assault last month on a base in western Iraq that houses U.S. contractors and coalition troops. One contractor died after 10 rockets slammed into the base, raising concerns over a new round of escalating violence.

It followed U.S. strikes on Iran-aligned militia targets along the Iraq-Syria border in late February in retaliation for another deadly attack on a base in Iraq.

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ELSEWHERE



NASA's chopper dropped on Mars' surface

WASHINGTON

NASA's Ingenuity mini-helicopter has been dropped on the surface of Mars in preparation for its first flight, the U.S. space agency said. The ultra-light aircraft had been fixed to the belly of the Perseverance rover, which touched down on the Red Planet on February 18. A "MarsHelicopter touchdown confirmed!" NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory tweeted on Saturday. "It's 293 million mile (471 million km) journey aboard

@NASAPersevere ended with the final drop of 4 inches (10 cm) from the rover's belly to the surface of Mars today. Next milestone? Survive the night." Ingenuity had been feeding off the Perseverance's power system but will now have to use its own battery to run a vital heater to protect its electrical components. ■ AFP

Philippines accuses China of plans to occupy more areas

There are still 44 Chinese boats near the Whitsun Reef*

REUTERS

MANILA

The Philippines' Defence Secretary said on Sunday that China was looking to occupy more areas in the South China Sea, citing the continued presence of Chinese vessels

Chinese boats to leave Whitsun Reef, which Manila calls the Julian Felipe Reef, located within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone.

Chinese diplomats have said the boats anchored near the reef – numbering more than 200 based on initial intelligence gathered by Philippine patrols – were sheltering from rough seas and that no militia were aboard.

On Saturday, Mr. Lorenzana said there were still 44 Chinese vessels at Whitsun Reef, despite improved weather conditions.

No reason to stay

"I am no fool. The weather has been good so far, so they have no reason to stay there," he said.

The Chinese Embassy responded to Mr. Lorenzana's

comments, saying it was "completely normal" for Chinese vessels to fish in the area and take shelter near the reef during rough conditions.

Chinese diplomats have said the boats anchored near the reef – numbering more than 200 based on initial intelligence gathered by Philippine patrols – were sheltering from rough seas and that no militia were aboard.

An international tribunal invalidated China's claim to 90% of the South China Sea in 2016, but Beijing does not recognise the ruling and has built artificial islands in the disputed waters equipped with radar, missiles batteries and hangars for fighter jets.

"They have done this (occupy disputed areas) before at Panatag Shoal or Bajo de Masinloc and at Panganiban Reef, brazenly violating Philippine sovereignty and sovereign rights under international law," Mr. Lorenzana said in his statement.

ASK US

VIDYA BALA

Q. I am a widow, working in a state government service as a teacher. I have a decent salary. I have a son preparing for government service. I am in serious trouble as most of my money is being taken up in taxes at ₹65,000 per year. I subscribe to various savings like LIC and EPF, but the amount one can save is up to ₹1.5 lakh only. Presently I do not have any loans. I do not believe in mutual funds and other market-oriented plans. So, please suggest me how to resolve this problem.

TUSHAR SHANDILYE

A. Your problem is not a peculiar one. Everyone wants to save the maximum taxes, but the idea for any government is to encourage you to save reasonably and not just let you enjoy a tax-free status. There are a few other options, to get tax deduction, outside of Section 80C. Make sure you have adequate medical cover other than what you get at work. This will ensure you have cover post retirement (if you don't have medical cover provided by the state post retirement) and provide deduction under Section 80D of the Income Tax Act. Next, while we are not aware whether your State comes under the market-linked NPS, you can get an additional ₹50,000 by opening an NPS account. Of course, this will be market-linked, but you can skip the equity option and go for gilts and corporate bond options. This is the only other 'investment' option to earn tax deduction outside of ₹1.5 lakh under Section 80C. Needless to say, interest on any home loan will also give some relief.

Having said these, we feel it is better that you focus on building wealth than simply saving taxes. In fact, many investors believe they are 'investing' in some policies, but which often give poor returns. Even without tax savings, the benefits of other contemporary investing options far outweigh the lack of tax deduction.

Q. I am 28, work in private sector and earn ₹28,000 a month. Currently I don't have any long-time saving scheme, except for a PPF account in SBI, which is supposed to mature in 2031. I want to know which savings plan to invest in for retirement time and how much amount to save per month.

KHOKAN SUTRADHAR

A. If you are saving for the long-term start SIPs in index-based mutual funds such as the Nifty 50 or Nifty 500. You can slowly go to other index funds. This will ensure you are not sold poor products and deliver market-returns. But make sure you continue investing across market ups and downs. In addition, start a RD when rates go up. Once your income goes up and you need to pay more taxes, start NPS and go for the gilt and corporate bond options. Keep equity investing with index funds.

How much to save will depend on how much surplus you have, a goal towards which you are saving and the time frame over which you wish to save for such a goal. You can use online calculators to figure this.

Q. I am a 30-year-old, working in software industry. I have been investing 12k/year for the past 7 years in LIC and 8k/year in health insurance for the past 4 years. This year I made a 5k investment in NSC. I do invest in RD from time to time as they meet the immediate requirements. For the past one year I have been investing 3k in SIP also. I am looking for a long-term plan with sufficient returns. Should I stop my RD investments and divert them?

VIVEK

A. First check if you have a simple term life with adequate cover (roughly at least 8-10 years of income as cover) and whether your policy fits that, especially if you have dependents. Else, discontinue it and choose the right one. Continue the RD, but make sure you lock into higher rates once interest rates start rising. When your savings increases, up your investments in mutual fund SIPs. Make sure you are not taking high risk options. If you do not receive good advice, simply go with index mutual funds across Nifty 50, Nifty Next 50, and Nifty 500. That should help in your equity exposure. NSC is a good option. Continue it for tax deduction purposes.

(The author is co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneys@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"You know what? We need some big savings to achieve our financial targets through small savings!"

A family that plans together STAYS TOGETHER

Financial planning is not just about dry numbers, it is about human emotions

GAURAV MASHRUWALA

"As a family, we decide jointly our financial goals and how to achieve them," says Radhika Desai, a homemaker from Thane. "Ever since it has been made a family activity, everyone is enjoying. They feel committed and want to participate. There is much more enjoyment in the entire exercise," Ms. Desai adds.

Done jointly, there is a feeling of commitment and also empowerment. Everyone has a say in it. Take the views of children. Let them feel involved. This is a life skill.

During one of my quarterly reviews, with the permission of my clients Jahnavi and Rohit, I allowed my young daughter to join us.

How to manage money

I still remember my client's words: "Sanaa you are lucky that your father is making you participate. Managing finances is a life skill. For years, I didn't pay heed to your father's

advice and shielded my daughters from finance. My argument was, let them concentrate on their studies and career. Today both my daughters are very well-qualified and having a brilliant career. They know how to make money but they don't know how to manage money."

As a professional, I have always maintained that "nobody ever becomes wealthy by making money. Individuals only become wealthy by managing money. For making money, an individual has to be brilliant in his/her occupation, for managing money, separate skills are required."

Financial planning is not about finance. Over the years, as a practising financial planner, I have realised that financial planning is not about numbers. It is about human emotions. Financial goals are not numbers; they are events which everyone in the family look up to.

Is getting a daughter

married a financial goal, dependent on a number or amount of money needed, or is it an event full of emotions? There was an advertisement whose tagline was "Father's happiest day and saddest day in life is the same," and then pictorially daughter's marriage was shown.

As a professional, I have always maintained that "nobody ever becomes wealthy by making money. Individuals only become wealthy by managing money. For making money, an individual has to be brilliant in his/her occupation, for managing money, separate skills are required."

When these are converted into numbers, it is like describing a flower by specifications such as its weight, height, width, colour shade and number of thorns. The beauty of the flower is lost once it is converted merely into numbers.

We financial planners are guilty of converting financial goals into dry numbers. It sounds something like this conversation between a financial

planner and a client. Financial Planner: Sir, based on your requirement of planning for your daughter's marriage we have worked out three scenarios. Worst case, middle case and best case. This is based on assumed rate of return, inflation, prevailing tax.

Worst case scenario, you will accumulate enough funds up to the stage of 'Baraat' coming to your doorstep after that you won't be able to fund the function. Middle case is you will be able to fund up to the first two 'pheeras', beyond which you will run out of money.

Client: What is the best case scenario?

Financial Planner: Sir, the best case is you will have enough funds to complete the marriage, but money will not be left for your daughter's 'bindi' ceremony.

If financial goals are emotions of the entire family, then the strategy to



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK

achieve them should also be a family activity. Let everyone participate. Sit together and discuss the goal. Plan that event.

Part of the planning should include finances. If the whole family is to participate in planning a marriage in the family, then let the financial aspects be also planned jointly.

Once that is done, find out how those funds will be generated. Will it be from the income of that year or some investment maturing, will the family have to borrow? There could be a situation where a goal is likely to occur in future and hence the family decides to strategise investments well in ad-

vance. There is a possibility that the family may have to curtail some amount of expenses or indulgences. Even if that happens, their commitment to that strategy will be very high.

Priorities are clearer

"Gaurav, I really don't need to change my hand-set now, I can easily defer it by six months, let us first focus on funding Deepiti's education," says Mrs. Sharma. "I will feel re-

lieved once we have accumulated enough funds. May be later on I will purchase a high-end model," she adds.

Next time when you think of FDI, think of 'My FDI – My Family's Decision to Invest'. This has much more bearing on your life than the amount of funds flowing through Foreign Direct Investment into the economy.

(The writer is a financial planner and author of 'Yogic Wealth')

THINK INVESTOR: EARLY RETIREMENT

Are you retirement-ready?

Adjust the estimated value of your retirement portfolio at a pre-defined frequency

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

Are you nearing retirement or aiming for an early retirement? If so, are you retirement-ready? In this article, we discuss why it is important for you to address your emotional readiness in addition to your financial readiness for a comfortable retirement.

Financial readiness

Retirement planning typically refers to determining the amount you require at retirement to lead a comfortable living post-retirement. This requires you to assume a life expectancy – number of years an individual is likely to live. In addition, you have to estimate your monthly expenses to maintain your desired standard of living and the rate of inflation through your working life and into retirement.

Needless to say, any or all these variables can change adversely during your working life. And that means you could fall short of accumulating enough money at retirement to lead your desired lifestyle post-retirement. To reduce this risk, you have to adjust the estimated value of your retirement portfolio at some pre-defined frequency. Suppose you determine at age 35 that you need five



Time bound: You have to estimate your monthly expenses to maintain your desired standard of living. •GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

crore when you retire at 60. You have to revise this estimate, preferably, every three-five years till you reach age 45, and then review this number every year till age 60 for significant changes in the input variables. All this to stay on course and get yourself financially ready for your retirement. And this is the relatively easy part of retirement planning!

Emotional readiness

Your physical health is a function of your emotional well-being. And your emotional well-being depends on the quality of your retired life. You are productively engaged all through your working life. After retirement, you have no formal work and only leisure. For those who are not emotionally-ready for retirement, a typical retired

life would involve watching television and taking care of grandchildren. The issue is that routine is bad for the brain; it leads to rapid cognitive impairment or dementia not to mention other health issues. And that has severe financial consequences.

At the extreme, poor emotional well-being could lead to rising healthcare cost. What if healthcare insurance is not enough cover these rising costs? An individual may then be forced to fund healthcare cost from savings set aside for lifestyle expenses. Needless to say, that could impact the quality of retired life because of poor health and less resources for discretionary expenses. So, unless you plan carefully as to how you want to spend your retired life, just being financially-ready may not be

enough.

One way to achieve emotional well-being is to explore leisure activities that can keep you engaged during your retired life. Such activities include gardening, active volunteering and having a strong social group of like-minded people. You should engage in such activities during the last five years of working life to get a perspective on how to engage yourself during your retirement.

Your emotional well-being is even more important if you are aiming for early retirement. Remember, work is not just about earning money, but also about being productively engaged during the day. That is why it is important that you aim for early financial freedom, not early retirement.

Most individuals engage an investment advisor to become financially ready for retirement. However, not many plan for their emotional readiness. You should seek professional counselling during the last five years of your working life to become emotionally ready for retirement, if required.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

gold, too, ruled weak in March and the price achieved the target zone of ₹44,500-45,000 mentioned earlier.

The short-term outlook is positive and the price is likely to rise to the immediate target zone of ₹46,750-47,000. This would be invalidated if the price falls below the support level of ₹44,000-44,200.

The outlook for MCX silver appears relatively weak. Price may fall to the immediate support of ₹59,500-60,500. This view would be invalidated if price moves above ₹67,800.

To summarise, the outlook for precious metals is sort of mixed with gold suggesting the possibility of a short-term bounce, while silver could remain subdued. The broad outlook for precious metals is weak and any bounce would be a short-term counter-trend move within the context of a broader downturn.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst/trader. The views and opinion featured in this column are based on the analysis of short-term price movement in gold and silver futures at Comex and Multi Commodity Exchange of India. This is not meant to be a trading or investment advice)

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Strong dollar, yields sap metals

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

Precious metals have lost sheen in the first quarter of the calendar year 2021. Comex gold recorded the third straight month of loss. Strengthening U.S. dollar and hardening U.S. Treasury yields have played a key role in keeping the prices subdued.

As a result, Comex gold closed 0.76% lower in March at \$1,715.6 an ounce. The fall in Comex silver was sharper with the white metal losing 7.2% to settle at \$24.53 an ounce.

In the domestic market, MCX gold futures declined by 0.72% to close at ₹44,935 per 10 gm. MCX silver futures declined 7.23% to close at ₹63,814 per kg at the end of March.

The short-term outlook for Comex gold is slightly positive. The recent slide has pushed the price to a support level and there is a case for a short-term bounce to \$1,785-1,800 zone. A close above \$1,752 would strengthen the case for a rise to \$1,800. A move past \$1,800 could drive the Comex gold price to the cond target zone of \$1,835-1,840.

The short-term positive outlook would be under threat if the price closes below the immediate support zone of \$1,660-1,670. Until then, there would be a case for a rise to \$1,800 or higher.

Comex silver moved in line with expectations and the price achieved the target of \$24.5-\$25.1. The short-term outlook for silver is not as encouraging. Prices could slide to the immediate support of \$23.1-23.3 zone. Below \$23, the price could slide to the major target of \$21.2. This negative view would be invalidated if the price moves past \$25.5.

Mirroring the global trend, MCX

Losing sheen



PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES					
Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure - 5 years	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure - 5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)	
HDFC Bank	10.50- 21.00	10,747-13,527	2,149-2,705	Rs 1,999-25,000	
Citi Bank	9.99-16.49	10,621-12,290	2,124-2,458	Upto 3%	
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Upto 1.5% (Max Rs 15,000)	
Bank of Baroda	10.00-15.60	10,624-12,053	2,125-2,411	Rs 1,000-10,000	
Axis Bank	10.49-21.00	11,122-13,527	2,224-2,705	1.5%-2%	
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.25%	
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Upto 2.75%	
Kotak Mahindra Bank*	10.75-24.00	10,809-14,384	2,162-2		

Battle-tested SRH has most bases covered in quest for second title

The side's formidable bowling attack, abundance of international options and capability to deliver collectively under pressure make it one of the top contenders

IPL COUNTDOWN

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

Sunrisers Hyderabad stands apart from the rest of the teams thanks to a very strong leadership group and the ability to play as a unit under pressure.

The highly experienced coaching staff, comprising head coach Trevor Bayliss, who guided England to the 2019 World Cup win, mentor V.V.S. Laxman and bowling coach Muttiah Muralitharan, is capable of providing the right solution to any crisis.

These characteristics, combined with the quality to produce match-winners consistently, make the 2016 champion a strong contender once again this season.

New additions Kedar Jadhav and Mujeeb Ur Rahman enhance the balance and experience.

Batting top-heavy

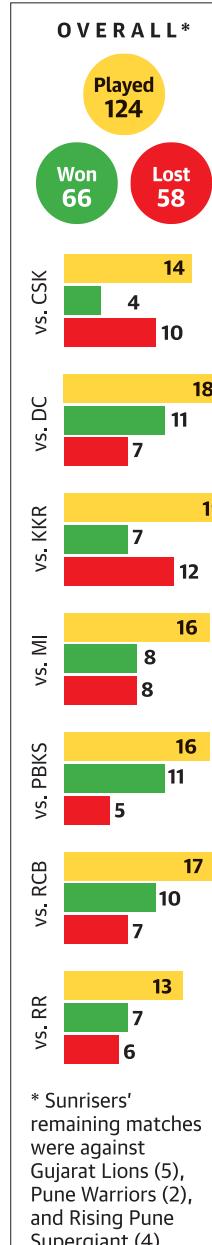
Like in the past, the batting is top-heavy and perhaps over-dependent on the brilliance of the trio of captain David Warner, Jonny Bairstow and Kane Williamson.

Explosive England opener Jason Roy has replaced Mitchell Marsh in the squad, but it is anybody's guess as to how many games he will get unless the 'big three' at the top have a dismal run.

With Afghan leg-spinner

X-factor

■ **Rashid Khan:** The brilliant Afghan leg-spinner, with his quickish action and hard-to-pick variations, can induce mistakes even from well-set batsmen. As a result, opposition teams are often forced to treat the innings as 16-over contests, with batsmen prioritising survival over scoring during his spell. That SRH has a tough time on the rare occasion he fails is proof of his influence



THE SUNRISERS HYDERABAD DUGOUT

TOP GUNS IN CURRENT SQUAD

BATSMEN	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	50s/100s
David Warner	87	87	3819	126	52.31	144.98	38/2
Kane Williamson	53	52	1619	89	39.48	134.80	15/0
Manish Pandey	43	39	1053	83 n.o.	32.90	125.05	9/0
ALL-ROUNDERS	M	Runs	HS	50s/100s	Wkts.	BBI	4W/5W
Rashid Khan	62	139 (25 inns)	34 n.o.	0/0	75 (62 inns)	3/7	0/0
Vijay Shankar	26	442 (23)	63 n.o.	2/0	5 (10)	1/11	0/0
Jason Holder	8	82 (5)	26 n.o.	0/0	15 (8)	3/25	0/0
BOWLERS	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4W/5W
Bhuvneshwar Kumar	90	90	112	5/19	22.62	7.39	2/1
Siddarth Kaul	35	35	45	4/29	25.62	8.69	1/0
Sandeep Sharma	36	36	38	3/19	27.86	7.63	0/0

THE SQUAD

BATSMEN	David Warner, Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Kane Williamson, Kedar Jadhav, Manish Pandey, Priyam Garg, Shreyas Gopal (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk).
ALL-ROUNDERS	Abhishek Sharma, Abdul Samad, Jason Holder, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Vijay Shankar, Virat Singh.
BOWLERS	Basil Thampi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, J. Suchith, Khaleel Ahmed, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Sandeep Sharma, Siddarth Kaul, Shahbaz Nadeem, T. Natarajan.

SUNRISERS' 2021 FIXTURES

April 11	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 4	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Delhi
April 14	vs. RCB	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 7	vs. CSK	7.30 p.m.	Delhi
April 17	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 9	vs. RCB	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 21	vs. PBKS	3.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 13	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 25	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 17	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 28	vs. CSK	7.30 p.m.	Delhi	May 19	vs. PBKS	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru
May 2	vs. RR	3.30 p.m.	Delhi	May 21	vs. KKR	3.30 p.m.	Bengaluru

FACTFILE 1		
MOST MATCHES AS CAPTAIN		David Warner
MOST MATCHES (OVERALL)		Bhuvneshwar Kumar
Total	61	Won 34 Lost 27
David Warner	90	Bhuvneshwar Kumar

FACTFILE 2		
MOST DISMISSELS (WICKETKEEPER) #		Jonny Bairstow
BEST ECONOMY RATE #		Rashid Khan (6.24)

Jonny Bairstow 19 Ct 16, St 3	Rashid Khan (6.24) Overs 246 Runs concd. 1537 (#CURRENT SQUAD)
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SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO | COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

Devdutt Padikkal tests positive, in quarantine

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) batsman Devdutt Padikkal has tested positive for COVID-19, RCB stated on Sunday.

The southpaw tested positive on March 22 and has been in mandatory quarantine at his residence here, a RCB media release stated.

The 20-year-old will be fit to join the RCB bio-bubble once his RT-PCR tests are negative.

The RCB medical team is in touch with Padikkal to ensure his safety and well-being.

Padikkal is not among the 11 RCB players who are part of a training



camp at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research in Chennai.

RCB opens its IPL

campaign against Mumbai Indians at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium (Chennai) on April 9.

QUICK SINGLES



We want to go all the way this season: Kaif Delhi Capitals' assistant coach Mohammad Kaif said most of his players are in good rhythm going into the IPL as they aim to go one better compared to last time when Mumbai Indians dashed their dreams of a maiden title. "We have the players to win the title," said Kaif.



Adapting to a situation the key: Shubman Gill

"Strike-rate is kind of overrated," asserted Kolkata Knight Riders' young star Shubman Gill. "It's all about how you adapt to a certain situation. If the team demands you to play with a strike rate of 200 you should be able to do it. If the team demands you to play at a strike rate of 100, you should be able to do it."

Man City and Bayern march on relentlessly

Flicker of top-four hope for Liverpool after emphatic win over Arsenal

EURO LEAGUES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Without all the injuries, perhaps Liverpool would not be surrendering the Premier League title so easily to Manchester City.

Liverpool's 3-0 victory over Arsenal on Saturday was a reminder of the quality that saw the champions still leading the standings in December before imploding. Now it is City 17 points in front of Manchester United after winning 2-0 at Leicester.

The tourists were rarely troubled by player of the match Megan Schutt taking four wickets to restrict New Zealand to 212 all out after Australia captain Meg Lanning elected to bowl first in the opening game of a three-match series.

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On the ball: Defender Benjamin Mendy gets on the scoresheet for Manchester City. • AP

After not scoring in his opening 39 league games for Manchester City, backup left back Benjamin Mendy has now scored twice in his last six as Pep Guardiola's side closes in on a third title in four seasons.

Leon Goretzka scored for Bayern Munich to take a giant step toward a record-extending ninth consecutive Bundesliga title with a 1-0 win at Leipzig on Saturday.

Goretzka's 38th-minute strike was enough for Bayern to move seven points clear of second-place Leipzig with second-place Leipzig with se

ven games of the season remaining.

The results:

Premier League: Southampton 3 (Armstrong 31, Ings 42, Redmond 66) bt Burnley 2 (Wood 12-pen, Vydra 28); Newcastle 2 (Joelinton 28, Wilcock 85) drew with Tottenham 2 (Kane 30, 34).

LaLiga: Alaves 1 (Lejeune 86) lost to Celta Vigo 3 (Nolito 8, Aspas 14, Santi Mina 20).

Saturday: Premier League: Leicester 0 lost to Manchester City 2 (Mendy 59, Jesus 74); Arsenal 0 lost to Liverpool 3 (Jota 64, 82, Salah 68).

LaLiga:

Osasuna 0 drew with Getafe 0.

Serie A: Torino 2 (Sanabria 27, 46) drew with Juventus 2 (Chiarella 13, Ronaldo 81); Bologna 0 lost to Inter Milan 1 (Lukaku 31).

Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 0 lost to Bayern Munich 1 (Goretzka 38).

SUDOKU

9			7	5	6	8		

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TV PICKS

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m. & 12.45 a.m. (Tuesday).

IN BRIEF



Lahiri jumps to fifth place

SAN ANTONIO
Anirban Lahiri fired a second successive three-under 69 in the third round to jump three places to fifth position at the Valero Texas Open here. The 33-year-old Indian was on seven-under 209. Jordan Spieth and Matt Wallace share the lead on 12-under following matching 67s, with Charley Hoffman two back in third. PTI

Aditi slips in third round; Tavatanakit in lead

RANCHO MIRAGE (USA)
A rough third round of 3-over 75 caused Aditi Ashok to slip to tied-70 at the Acura Inspiration here. Aditi, whose previous rounds were 73 and 72, is now 4-over 220. Aditi had just one birdie on the third and bogeyed the fifth, eighth, 13th and 15th on Saturday evening. Meanwhile Thailand's Patty Tavatanakit has taken a five shot lead into the final round. PTI



C.K. Nayudu's commentator-daughter Chandra passes away

INDORE
Chandra Nayudu, daughter of India's first Test captain C.K. Nayudu and a cricket commentator, passed away here on Sunday after a prolonged illness. She was 88. According to experts, Chandra had done her first commentary during a match between Ranji champion Bombay (now Mumbai) and MCC in Indore in 1977. PTI

Sociedad wins delayed 2020 Copa del Rey final

MADRID
Real Sociedad won the Copa del Rey for only the third time on Saturday by beating Basque rivals Athletic Bilbao 1-0 in an historic final postponed from last season. Mikel Oyarzabal scored the penalty that proved the winner in Seville. AFP

Milwaukee Bucks trumps Sacramento Kings

SACRAMENTO
Milwaukee Bucks beat Sacramento Kings 129-128 in the NBA on Saturday.
The results: Dallas 109 bt Washington 87; New York 125 bt Detroit 81; Miami 115 bt Cleveland 101; Philadelphia 122 bt Minnesota 113; Indiana 139 bt San Antonio 133 (OT); Utah 137 bt Orlando 91; Portland 133 bt Oklahoma City 85; Milwaukee 129 bt Sacramento 128. REUTERS

Double delight for Pramod Bhagat

DUBAI
World No.1 Pramod Bhagat won the men's singles gold in the SL4 category at the Dubai Para Badminton tournament, defeating compatriot Nitesh Kumar 21-17, 21-18 in the final, on Sunday. Bhagat then paired up with Manoj Sarkar to clinch the doubles gold in SL4-SL3 category by beating Sukant Kadam and Nitesh Kumar 21-18, 21-16. Bhagat along with Palak Kohli won a bronze in mixed doubles. World No. 5 Sukant Kadam lost in the SL3 men's singles final against Lucas Mazur of France 15-21, 6-21. PTI



Former TT international Suhas Kulkarni no more

MUMBAI
Former international table tennis player Suhas Kulkarni passed away in Thane on Sunday. He was 68 and is survived by mother, wife and daughter. According to a release, after retiring, Kulkarni became a coach and also regularly played in Masters' tournaments. PTI

Mary Kom wins Sportstar of the Decade honour

Bindra is Inspirational Giant of Indian Sport; Srikanth, Sindhu bag Racquet Sports awards; Gopi named Coach of the Decade

ACES AWARDS

SPORTS BUREAU

M.C. Mary Kom, the six-time boxing world champion, won the Sportstar of the Decade award at the 2021 Sportstar Aces - Giants of the Decade edition on Sunday.

Big, big motivation
"I am so happy, and I wish to achieve more in the upcoming tournaments. This is a big, big motivation for me," said Mary Kom. "This award is huge. I have been fighting for so long, almost 20 years. Being a woman, a girl, a mother – is not an easy task. Fight like a woman, that is



Magnificent Mary: Sportstar of the Decade, M.C. Mary Kom.

■ V.V. KRISHNAN

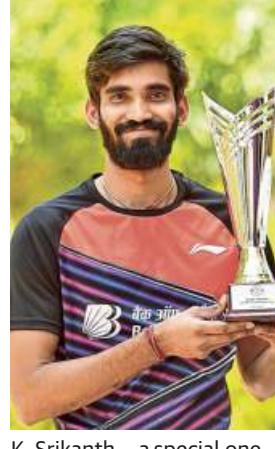
du Group for deeming me worthy of an honour such as this," Bindra said.

Former World No. 1 K. Sri-



P.V. Sindhu... doubly delighted. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

■ NAGARA GOPAL



K. Srikanth... a special one. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

■ NAGARA GOPAL



P. Gopi Chand... guiding force. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

■ NAGARA GOPAL



my biggest message to all."

Abhinav Bindra, the only Indian to win an individual Olympic gold medal, was conferred the Inspirational Giant of Indian Sport honour. "I'm extremely humbled to receive this award. My gratitude to the jury, to Sportstar and the entire Hin-

kanth and reigning badminton World champion P.V. Sindhu bagged the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Decade (Racquet Sports) titles.

"I used to read the [Sportstar] magazine [in 2005-06] because it used to cover a lot of sports news," said Sri-



What a moment! Anand gets the award from L.V. Navaneeth, CEO, The Hindu Publishing Group. ■ K. PICHUMANI

kanth. "I always dreamt of being there one day and today, to receive this award, from Sportstar is a very big achievement. I'm really happy and honoured to receive

Sindhu's 2019 World Championship victory and Viswanathan Anand's 2017 World Rapid chess championship win were adjudged Moments of the Decade.

"I must say that Sportstar



Truly inspiring: Bindra with the Inspirational Giant of Indian Sport honour. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

has been very, very encouraging and supportive of not only me but all athletes. The World Championship win in 2019 was one of the biggest moments of my career... it was my first World Cham-

pionship gold medal," Sindhu said.

Recalling his World Rapid triumph in 2017, Anand said: "I am very proud to have won the Moment of the Decade award. I remember that

IOA Ethics Commission orders Bhanot off all posts

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Bhanot had resigned from all IOA posts on Oct. 5, 2020 and that his resignation shall be treated as accepted with immediate effect.

The IOA website, however, continues to list Bhanot as member of several committees including chairman of the Tokyo Olympics Preparation Committee.

As per the order Bhanot had, in his previous reply to the commission, sought and received three weeks' time to submit documents to substantiate his submission. The original complaint had been filed by S. Ganesh Moorthi in May 2020 questioning Bhanot's continuation despite IOC's directive to not involve charge-framed individuals in sports administration. The same had been red-flagged by BJP leader and Ethics Commission member Sudhanshu Mittal in his letter to the IOC.

Interestingly, the Commission order also noted that IOA president Narinder Batra had informed its chairman Justice (Retd.) V.K. Gupta on February 17 that

Shruti too good for Renne

SPORTS BUREAU
GURUGRAM

Shruti Ahlawat was in irrepressible form as she outplayed top seed Renne Singla 6-1, 6-0 in the final of the ₹1,00,000 AITA women's tournament on Sunday.

The 14-year-old Shruti, who has won 22 of her 24 matches and clinched three titles in five tournaments on the international junior circuit, displayed her potential on the women's circuit. She dropped just eight games while winning five matches. In the final two rounds, Shruti lost just one game!

The results: Final: Shruti Ahlawat bt Renne Singla 6-1, 6-0; Semifinals: Renne bt Steisha Buddhal 6-1, 6-2; Shruti bt S. Srividhi 6-0, 6-0; Quarterfinals: Renne w.o. Radhika Yadav; Steisha bt Rishita Vyas 6-2, 4-6, 6-4; Shruti bt Tamanna Takoria 6-1, 6-1; Srividhi bt Kiran Kalikal 6-0, 6-0.

The IOA Ethics Commission, in its meeting on March 9, has ruled that Bhanot will cease to be a member of any committee of the Olympic body with immediate effect as an interim measure pending a final adjudication on charges of impropriety in his appointments. The Commission has also sought details from Bhanot on his positions in the Athletics Federation of India (AFI).

Interestingly, the Com-

mmission order also noted that IOA president Narinder Batra had informed its chairman Justice (Retd.) V.K. Gupta on February 17 that

Chinki had won the gold in the recent World Cup.

Anjum will also get to shoot in the mixed air rifle event along with Deepak Kumar.

The reserves will get to

train on par with the Olym-

pic bound athletes in the

run up to the Games.

The team (along with

reserves):

Manu Bhaker will shoot

air pistol and sports pistol

Indian squad for Olympics named

Main focus was to select strongest squad: NRAI president

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

World Championship silver medallist Anjum Moudgil has been deprived of a chance to compete in air rifle in the Tokyo Olympics, and the honour has been bestowed on World No. 1 Elavenil Varalarvan.

The National selection committee's main focus was to select the strongest squad for the Games and to ensure that the most consistent performers in each event, during the Olympic cycle, do not miss out.

"We are confident that these shooters will deliver," said the NRAI president Raninder Singh in a statement.

The reserves have been announced for each event, considering the uncertain global scenario with the pandemic.

The reserves will get to

train on par with the Olym-

pic bound athletes in the

run up to the Games.

The team (along with

reserves):

Elavenil and Divyansh

Singh Panwar have been

named as the first team for

mixed air rifle.

The reserves will get to

train on par with the Olym-

pic bound athletes in the

run up to the Games.

The team (along with

reserves):

Divyansh will shoot

air pistol and sports pistol

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Olympian Apurvi Chandela, who has had a phenomenal year in 2019 winning two World Cup gold medals, with a world record to boot, will shoot only air rifle and not the mixed event.

"The National selection committee's main focus was to select the strongest squad for the Games and to ensure that the most consistent performers in each event, during the Olympic cycle, do not miss out.

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SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Gurujeet Singh Khanura, Sheeraz Sheikh.

Women: 10m air rifle: Apurvi Chandela, Elavenil Varalarvan.

Reserves: Anjum Moudgil, Shreya Agrawal.

50m rifle 3-position: Anjum Moudgil, Tejaswini Sawant.

Reserves: Sunidhi Chauhan, Gaayathri Nilthyandam.

10m air pistol: Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma.

Reserves: Swapnil Kusale, Chain Singh.

25m sports pistol: Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker.

Reserves: Chinku Yadav, Abhidnya Patil.

10m air rifle mixed team: Divyansh Panwar, Elavenil Varalarvan, Deepak Kumar, Anjum Moudgil.

10m air pistol mixed team: Saurabh Chaudhary, Manu Bhaker