

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI MONDAY 12 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 30
Tithi: Amavasyai-Pradhamai
Star: Revathi
Rahukalam:
7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.50 am
Lunar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 3.25 pm
Maghrib: 6.21 pm
Isha: 7.33 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.09 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.26 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,56,351)	(+758)
1,35,11,816	1,70,063

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+6,618)
TN: 9,33,434 12,908

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

13,64,26,846

DEATHS
29,45,571

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 219

worldometers.info

UK's Prince Philip helped design Land Rover that will carry his coffin

London: The Land Rover that will be used to transport the Duke of Edinburgh's coffin in a ceremonial funeral procession through the grounds of Windsor Castle next week was designed with help from him, it has emerged.

In a tribute to Prince Philip, the cortege will see a purpose-built vehicle used that was specially modified to carry a coffin in a project that the duke helped with more than a decade ago.

The vehicle is believed to be a modified Defender 130 Gun Bus, which was commissioned in 2005.

In 2016, Foley Specialist Vehicles said it delivered a totally rebuilt Gun Bus to Philip for use on his estates.

It was made to his specifications in traditional deep bronze green, and built onto a galvanised chassis and handbuilt rear body.

The Land Rover will process through the grounds of the castle ahead of the duke's funeral on Saturday at St George's Chapel.

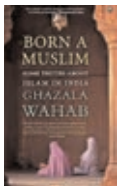
COUNTER POINT



I like polls with more phases... we are earning more money attending more election rallies!

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Jordan king, prince put up united front



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Onus on the moderate Muslim to reclaim Islam's heterodox legacy

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Dhoni wants CSK bowlers to improve



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Night curfew on cards in TN

■ High power meeting today ■ Chennai hospitals shun patients

R. MOHAN | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 11

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has called for a high-power meeting on Monday on the rampaging coronavirus crisis in the state. The meeting, to be held at the Secretariat at noon, may consider such curbs as night curfews in order to bring down the spiralling new Covid-19 cases and caseload.

The number of persons who tested positive in the state on Sunday was 6,618, taking the number of active cases in Tamil Nadu close to 42,000. There were 22 fatalities, too. The count and caseload are increasing in Chennai also with as many as 2,124 new cases being reported from the capital city besides the rising numbers in surrounding districts.

Besides the Chief Minister and the health minister, a number of ministers will be in attendance at the meeting. Top ranking bureaucrats, including the health secretary, the corporation commissioner and the director-general of police will also be attending it. The meeting may consider drastic proposals to bring down the numbers as the second coronavirus wave is threatening to pose more challenges to the health care system that seemed to contain the first wave with decisive steps of testing, tracking, treating and containment.

Steps were taken last week to try and rein in the spreading infections with the beaches shut, religious gatherings prohibited and a prohibitory order to stop people gathering and regulating Koyambedu and other markets.

With people still resisting the regulation on the wearing of masks in public places, as seen in the

Srivilliputhur Cong candidate Madhava Rao dies of Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS CHENNAI, APRIL 11

Congress candidate for Srivilliputhur Assembly constituency P.S.W. Madhava Rao died on Sunday due to Covid-19 complications, his family said.

Rao, 63, is survived by his only daughter.

He died at a private hospital in Madurai this morning where he was admitted on March 20 for treatment, his son-in-law, K Rajiv said.

Tamil Nadu chief electoral officer clarified that the counting of the ballots polled in the constituency



will be taken up on May 2 and a re-poll would need to be ordered only if the deceased candidate wins the poll.

Congress' Tamil Nadu incharge Sanjay Dutt tweeted saying he was deeply pained to learn about the demise of Rao.

“Our heartfelt condolences to his family. We stand with them in this hour of grief & pray may his soul rest in peace,” Mr Dutt said.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, AIADMK top leader O. Panneerselvam and DMK president M K Stalin expressed shock and grief over Rao's death.

Mr Stalin said Rao's death was a huge loss for the people of Srivilliputhur and the Congress.

The DMK chief urged those in public life to act with precaution and get the Covid vaccine administered.

● With people still resisting the regulation on the wearing of masks in public places, the state may have to ramp up measures to bring the situation under control.

excessive crowding at fish markets of the city on Sunday, the state may have to ramp up measures to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, major private hospitals in Chennai are filling up fast with Covid-19 patients and some patients are being turned away too due to lack of beds in special Covid-19 wards.

The Covid-19 positivity rate - count of virus tests coming back positive - has jumped more than 350 per cent in four weeks since the return of the raging pandemic.

India bans export of Remdesivir, API

New Delhi, April 11: In view of increased demand for Remdesivir due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday said the export of the antiviral injection and its active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) has been banned till the situation improves.

In addition, to ensure easy access of the drug, which is used in treatment of coronavirus, to hospitals and patients, all domestic manufacturers of remdesivir have been advised to display on their website details of their stockists and distributors, the Union health ministry said.

Drugs inspectors and

other officers have been directed to verify stocks, check malpractices and also take other effective actions to curb hoarding and black marketing. State health secretaries will review this along with drug inspectors of the respective states and UTs, it said.

“India is witnessing a recent surge in Covid cases. As on April 11, there are 11.08 lakh active cases and they are steadily increasing. This has led to a sudden spike in demand for remdesivir injection used in treatment of Covid patients,” the ministry said. There is a potential for further increase in this demand, it said. PTI

INDIA'S ACTIVE CASES CROSS 11-LAKH MARK

SANJAY KAW | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Hitting another record daily high of 1,52,879 new coronavirus infections, India's Covid-19 tally of cases on Sunday climbed to 1,33,58,805, while the active cases breached the 11-lakh mark for the first time since the pandemic broke out last year. The country has been clocking in over one lakh cases for five days. The death toll also rose to 1,69,275, with 839 new fatalities in the last 24 hours, the highest since October 18, 2020.

With 10,732 fresh infections, national capital Delhi also broke all records in the number of Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour span. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal requested the Centre to remove all age restrictions on Covid-19 vaccinations, even as his government flagged the vaccine shortage and said that stocks for just seven to 10 days were left now. ■ P3

REVIEW CBSE EXAMS: RAHUL

New Delhi, April 11: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the decision to conduct the CBSE examinations from May 4 should be reconsidered in view of the rising number of Covid-19 cases across the country. “In the light of the devastating Corona second wave, conducting CBSE exams must be reconsidered. All stakeholders must be consulted before making sweeping decisions,” he tweeted.

YUSUF ALI SAFE AS CHOPPER CRASHLANDS

Kochi, April 11: A helicopter carrying prominent NRI businessman M.A. Yusuf Ali, his wife and four others crash-landed at a marshy land near here on Sunday morning, police said.

All passengers including Mr Yusuf Ali, who is chairman of Lulu Group, have been admitted to a private hospital.

The incident occurred at Panangad area at around 9 am on Sunday.

“Yusuff Ali, currently in Kerala, was on a short trip from his home in Kochi to visit a relative at nearby hospital. Due to the sudden deterioration of weather conditions and heavy rains, the experienced pilots decided to make precautionary landing,” a company statement said. — PTI

It's Kolkata's Knight in Chennai



Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Pat Cummins (left) celebrates a Sunrisers Hyderabad wicket during an IPL game at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday. KKR got the better of Sunrisers by 10 runs to achieve the landmark of 100th IPL win. — IPL

COOCH BEHAR FIRING

Didi sees EC bid to suppress facts

Siliguri, April 11: Describing the incident of firing in Cooch Behar as a “genocide”, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said the Election Commission has restricted the entry of politicians in the district for 72 hours as it seeks to “suppress facts”.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, while addressing a press meet here, claimed that central forces “sprayed bullets aiming at the torso of the victims” in Sitalkuchi area, when the fourth phase of polling was underway in the state.

“There was genocide at Sitalkuchi. I would like to visit Sitalkuchi by April 14. The EC is trying to suppress facts by restricting entry in Cooch Behar. We have an incompetent home minister and an incompetent central government,” Ms Banerjee said.

Four persons died on Saturday when CISF personnel opened fire allegedly after coming under attack from locals, who “attempted to snatch their rifles”, the police had said.

“The CISF doesn't know how to handle situations. Since the first phase of elections, I had been saying that a section of the central forces are committing atrocities on people. I had flagged the issue in Nandigram, but none paid attention to my words,” she stated.

The feisty TMC chief also spoke to the brother of one of the deceased over a video call, in the midst of the press meet, and promised all help to the bereaved family.

The man, on his part, was heard saying that the jawans had opened fire on the voters.

“He (one of the four

MAMATA SPEECHES INCITED VIOLENCE, ALLEGES SHAH

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, APRIL 11

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday squarely held West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's recent “provocative speech” responsible for the violent mob attack on the Central paramilitary forces.

Asking the Trinamul Congress supremo to apologise to the people for her instigation, he also questioned her silence on the killing of a first-time voter, Ananda Burman of the Rajbanshi community, after linking him to the saffron party.

Rejecting Ms Banerjee's demand for his resignation over the firing, Mr Shah said: “Didi has been constantly claiming: Amit Shah must resign. Didi, I will resign when the people ask me to. But you should get ready since you will have to resign on May 2.”

killed in firing) was standing in a queue when the jawans opened fire. His wife is pregnant. They also have a three-year-old child. Our parents are shocked and devastated,” the man told the CM.

Ms Banerjee asked a local TMC leader, who made arrangements for the video chat from Sitalkuchi, to send her a copy of the FIR filed in connection with the incident. “I will be addressing election meetings today, but with a heavy heart. The episode keeps haunting me,” the Chief Minister said.

● Police said militants fired upon Khan outside his home while he was repairing electricity lines.

Srinagar, April 11: Militants shot dead a civilian outside his house in the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday while he was repairing power lines, police said.

The ultras fired on Nasir Khan in Buchipora in the Magam area of the central Kashmir district this afternoon, a police official said.

He said Khan was rushed to a hospital, where he succumbed to the injuries.

The area has been cordoned off and a manhunt launched to nab the attackers, the official said.

A police spokesman said militants fired upon Khan outside his home while he was repairing electricity lines along with Power Development Department officials.

Preliminary investigations indicate that local militants Mohammad Yousuf Dar alias Kantur alias Tymoor and Abrar Nadeem Bhat with other associates of proscribed outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) were involved the attack, the spokesman said.

He said police have registered a case and the investigation is in progress.

Senior police officers are working to establish the circumstances which lead to this terror crime, the spokesman said.

There were within two days in Bijbehara encounter,” inspector-general of police, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said.

Earlier on Sunday, two militants were killed in the operation at Hadipora area in the neighbouring Shopian district, taking the number of ultras killed in the operation to three, the police official said. One militant was killed in the gunfight

there on Saturday. The IGP said one of the slain militants in Shopian encounter was newly recruited into militant ranks and security forces made sincere efforts to make him surrender, but the other militants did not allow him to give up arms.

“Parents also made appeals, but other terrorists didn't allow him to surrender,” Mr Kumar said. — PTI

Poaching fear has BPF send candidates abroad

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 11

After the All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) shifted prospective winning candidates to Jaipur in Rajasthan, fearing poaching by the ruling BJP, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), a constituent party of the Congress-led grand alliance, has also shifted 10 of its 11 candidates in the recently-held Assembly polls in Assam to a foreign location. They are understood to be in Singapore.

It is significant that two days ago the 10-party oppo-

sition grand alliance had flown out 20 candidates - 18 from the AIUDF and two from the Congress - to Rajasthan.

The only BPF candidate left in Assam is former minister Pramila Rani Brahma, who herself confirmed this development. “Yes, they have left on Saturday but I have no idea which country exactly they are visiting. I could not contact them,” Ms Brahma told reporters.

Pointing out how one BPF candidate was lured to retire from the contest a few days before polling, a BPF party source said that their

● “Yes, they have left on Saturday but I have no idea which country exactly they are visiting. I could not contact them,” said former minister Pramila Rani Brahma, the only BPF candidate left in Assam, said.

party chief decided to send them to Singapore on a pleasure trip. Sources said 16 members of the Council Legislative Assembly

(MCLA) of the Bodoland Territorial Council also accompanied them.

Ms Brahma, however, clarified that the MCLAs had plans to go on a foreign holiday after the month-long hectic election campaign. She also feared that the possibility of horse-trading could not be ruled out.

Asserting that the ruling BJP-led alliance was not going to get a majority in the Assembly polls, she said given the past record of some BJP leaders, the opposition can't be complacent and be a silent spectator.

“We have to be cautious.

We are trying to protect our candidates from the BJP's anti-democratic activities,” Congress MLA and leader of the opposition Debabrata Saikia told reporters.

If insiders are to be believed, the Congress-led grand alliance is hopeful of getting a simple majority in the Assembly polls, for which counting of vote will take place on May 2, but they are extremely worried about the possible poaching by the ruling party, which is alleged to have already started meeting prospective winning candidates informally.

OTHER STORIES

Industrialists fear another exodus of migrant workers

Coimbatore, April 11: With the second wave of Covid-19 sweeping across various parts of Tamil Nadu, some of the industrialists in the State are apprehensive of migrant workers leaving for their hometowns considering the health conditions.

The industries recovered from the jolt of the first wave of coronavirus when over one lakh migrant workers from both Coimbatore and Tirupur industries rushed back to their home towns in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha by special trains.

Even as the business started picking up, the 30 per cent increase in the raw materials has affected the industries, sources from different industrial associations said. A few workers reportedly left for their natives early last week as they feared the availability of transport like trains to reach their towns. However, there was no major exodus from the industries as the workers working on weekly payment basis had taken their wages Saturday last, the sources said.

Coimbatore and Tirupur reported increased infection cases and a correct picture of workers returning would emerge only after another week, they said.

No worker left the city till Saturday from nearby Tirupur, a major hub of knitwear garments where 80 per cent of over three lakh workers hailed from the North, said sources in the Tirupur Exporters Association.

— PTI

State adds 6,618 new cases on Sunday

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 11

A single-day surge of Covid-19 cases in the state crossed the 6,000 mark on Sunday while 22 deaths had occurred on Saturday. In data provided by State Health department, a total of 6,618 people tested positive, which is a rise from 5,989 of Saturday. This takes the standing tally of positive cases in the State to 9,33,434 and deaths to 12,908.

Chennai, which has a total of 26,516 cases, added 2,124 new cases, and continues to retain the top position in the table. Cases in the city on Saturday were 1,977.

Chengalpattu, which had reported at least 60,792 cases so far, has emerged as second main contributor with 631, up1 from 615 cases on Saturday. Coimbatore, another major contributor, reported 617 cases rising from 501 of Saturday. The district has a total of 63,197 cases so far.

While Chennai, Coimbatore, and Chengalpattu crossed 500 mark, the district like Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Nagapattinam, Selam, Thanjavur, Thiruvallur, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Trichy, and Tiruppur district registered more than 100 cases on Saturday.

Active cases touched 41,955 on Sunday, rising from 37,673 of Saturday. Active cases started surging from mid-march with around 5,000 cases. Chennai's contribution to this table has gone up to 15,761 from 14,382 cases on Saturday.

While 12 people died in Chennai, districts like Chengalpattu, Sivagangai, Selam, Tenkasi, Madurai, Perambalur, Thiruvallur, Vellur and Virudunagar also registered deaths. Meanwhile, at least 87,767 were subjected to the RTPCR test that is a rise from 83,895 persons on Saturday taking to a total of 2,01,89,603.

'BEST ENGINEER' AWARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 11

As part of Engineer's day celebrations, the Institution of Engineers, Tiruchirappalli local centre honoured Er. A. Balasubramanian, Chief general manager (Commercial and Electrical & Instrumentation) of M/s. Tamilnadu Newsprint and Papers Ltd., Karur, for year 2020, as the 'Best Engineer' and the award presentation function was organized on Friday, in a hybrid - online and physical mode.

An IIE release here on Sunday said, Dr. N. Kumaresan, Chairman, Tiruchirappalli local centre, presented the 'Best Engineer' award to Balasubramanian.

Accepting the award, Balasubramanian thanked Tiruchirappalli local centre for honouring him and thanked the TNPL management and his team which functioned effectively resulting in best results in all fronts.



Marina Beach is closed again for public on weekends and holidays.

— DC

How dangerous the virus variants are proving to be



R. Mohan

Namma Chennai Diary

It was never rocket science to know that the world and India, as its factory, would need billions of doses of vaccines. You did not need to be an Einstein to guess that to cater to a majority of the world's 7.5 billion people in two-dose vaccines, as many as 15 billion vaccines would be required in the long run. It wouldn't have needed an Einstein either to guess that if the government was the monarch of vaccine supplies, then bottlenecks were guaranteed. Humongous as the challenge is,

trust the bureaucracy in India to make a mess of logistics. And then there is the politics of it to further sully the process.

The rich nations got busy booking vaccines long before the data from the final trials were in, which is why we have a lopsided situation in which a majority of adults in UK and USA have already received at least one dose of the vaccine while in India we are still bickering over who is right or wrong in a distribution mess. If the world's largest producer of vaccines needs \$400 million to ramp up production, offi-

cial India should have been arranging that as a national priority. Instead, what we saw was boastful vaccine diplomacy by which we were exporting more vaccines than were inoculated into Indian arms.

Who is to blame if vaccine centres have had to put up boards that they are out of vaccines at a time when much of the initial scepticism has worn out in the face of a second wave, fuelled by the rise of variants, which is threatening to submerge India in another long year of taking shelter from the Covid-19 virus, its new strains, mutants, double mutants and, soon enough, a huge number of variants to knock the hospital systems out of kilter. This is not about BJP or non-BJP states. Nor is it about stopping export of all vaccines in a new form of biological nationalism. Just get down straightway to ramp up production and postpone all arguments until we have enough doses to give all those who want to take the jab.

The row over distribution raging between the health minister and State representatives is the

worst form of politics. If the current rate of 1.50 lakh new cases a day rises, we are headed for the worst health crisis than that of 2020. The lockdown, which was the world's strictest, seemed to pay dividends as case-loads came down and the Indian mortality rate was causing jealous glances and even leading to research into whether Indians had more of those T-cells that was providing protection. Thanks to government bungling, politicians canvassing for votes in massive election rallies and the Kumbh Mela ready to explode into a festival of faith as much as a super spreader of the virus and extremely reluctant genome sequencing of new virus samples, the second wave is threatening to become the world's biggest in terms of numbers infected.

While the health minister barked at States, the PM was placatory, asking States not to be feel ashamed about the numbers in the second wave. But these numbers are going to matter: If India is going to explode at a million new cases a week, the public health care system as well as private hospitals will soon be overwhelmed. Oxygen supplies will be problem-ridden even as the logistical nightmares multiply with these night curfews popping up everywhere. We will pay the price for letting complacency come too soon after the recovery from the first wave that seemed complete at the beginning of 2021. It appears now that this year is doomed too, much like the preceding one was lost to various stages of the lockdown.

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of the Chennai and Coimbatore editions of Deccan Chronicle.)

VARIANTS OF FEAR

- **B.1.1.7 - First seen in Kent, UK in September 2020**
- **B.1.351 - First detected in South Africa**
- **P.1 - First detected in Brazil**
- **Double Mutant - First detected in India**



Sanjay Pinto

A month before elections in Tamil Nadu, the State registered a little over 500 fresh Covid19 cases a day, with 200-plus in Chennai. Just a few days after polling, these numbers have shot up to about 6,000 cases a day and Chennai now notches up close to 2,000 new positive reports daily, at the last count. You don't need to be a Sherlock Holmes to pinpoint the culprit. Whether the poll freebies see the light of day or not, can one deny that political parties have played a role in the rising corona numbers?

The WMD prescription - Washing, Masking &

Distancing - were thrown to the campaign winds. Except DMK Chief M.K. Stalin, I do not recall any other leader, subject to correction, who at least appealed to the cadre at an election rally to wear masks and get vaccinated. How many candidates, or their followers, wore masks while seeking our votes? Can one even imagine physical distancing at public meetings?

Plenary powers under Article 324 of the Constitution of India are vested in the Election Commission of India for "superintendence, direction and control" of elections. The Supreme Court in Mohinder Singh Gill Vs Chief

Election Commissioner (1978) had referred to the constitutional body's "amplitude of powers" that are "insulated from extraneous influences."



The broad sweep of 'superintendence' need not be confined to conducting surprise checks to seize cash, transferring officials, issuing notices for Model Code violations such as hate speeches covered by Sections 123 (3A) or Section 125 of the Representation of People (RP) Act, 1951. The Commission had issued a set of Covid guidelines like wearing masks, thermal scanning and social

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC WAVE II
Public yet to embrace masks, social distancing

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 11

The government has introduced curbs in order to arrest the spread of the coronavirus at a time when the state is witnessing continuous spikes, but the non-compliance of people to Covid19-appropriate behaviours including social distancing and wearing a face mask, which are key weapons in the battle against the pandemic, is still a cause for concern.

On Sunday, despite the restrictions, a large crowd appeared at the Kasimedu fish market without adhering to Covid-19 protocol that insists on masks being worn and social distancing being maintained.

Auto rickshaws, as per the new guidelines, are strictly restricted to ride with two people including the driver. However, on Sunday morning, many

On Sunday, despite the restrictions, a large crowd appeared at the Kasimedu fish market without adhering to Covid-19 protocol that insists on masks being worn and social distancing being maintained

autos were seen plying packed with riders through Thiurvallur Salai and Kamarajar Salai roads in Ramapuram of Valasaravakkam zone.

Kishore, a concerned local resident, said that it is important that the authorities make sure such incidents are not taking place as Covid-19 cases are rising up day by day. "The Thiurvallur Salai and Kamarajar Salai roads are very congested and

traffic snarls make the area even more crowded. The authorities should strictly implement the social distancing norms and standard operating procedures (SOP)", he said.

Greater Chennai Corporation administration, which has brought in restrictions for movement of people at beaches in order to avoid crowds, believes that implementing Covid-19 protocol in places like Kasimedu is a challenging task.

GCC Commissioner G.Prakash had said that they were planning to enforce the restrictions without affecting the livelihood of affected families. "Over 25,000 fishing families earning their livelihood depend on the harbour. The cooperation of the local community to adhere to the Covid19 norms is important," he said.

Meanwhile, City Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal said that so far 85,764 cases had been booked against people for not wearing masks, 117 cases for quarantine violation and 1,50,318 cases for flouting physical distancing norms.

"At this stage, social distancing and mask wearing along with the intensified vaccination programme are the only ways to avoid the risk of contracting the virus and a complete lockdown situation," said Dr. Rex Sargunam, President, Tamil Nadu Health Development Association.

According to GCC Commissioner, GCC, there are 20 wards in zones such as Anna Nagar, Teynampet, Kodambakkam, Royapuram have recorded a high number of cases. In order to contain the fresh cases in the areas, the GCC has introduced a micro-containment strategy."



Hundreds of people gathered at Kasimedu fish market, not maintaining social distance and very few people wearing face masks.

— DC

BJP nominee Annamalai tests positive

Chennai, April 11: The BJP nominee from Aravakkurichi constituency in the April 6 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, K Annamalai, has tested positive for COVID-19.

He tweeted saying he has tested positive for coronavirus and has been hospitalised and he requested those who came in contact with him recently "to watch out for any symptoms & get tested."

A former Karnataka cadre IPS officer, Annamalai had taken voluntary retirement from service in 2019 and joined the BJP last year. He was fielded from Aravakkurichi Assembly constituency in the Assembly polls.

Actor-politician Khushbu Sundar, also with the BJP, said her filmmaker husband Sundar C has tested positive for COVID-19.

"He is doing well but admitted in hospital for precautionary measures..." she tweeted.

— PTI

Mutants, sluggish vaccine drive, carelessness behind Covid surge, says top scientist

Chennai, April 11: Why are India's COVID-19 cases flaring up so sharply? There are no clear answers but top scientists say the complex interplay of mutant strains, a hugely susceptible population made more vulnerable by elections and other public events and the lowering of guard are primarily to blame.

India's COVID tally has climbed to 1,33,58,805 (1.33 crore, 13.3 million) with a record spike of 1,52,879 daily cases, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday, in what many say is a second wave that is surging more powerfully than the first.

John, professor of virology at Tamil Nadu's Christian Medical College (CMC), concurred with Jameel, saying not following COVID-19 protocols is partly to blame for the new wave. "Lowering of the guard was led by the central government and followed by all political parties, all religious groups, and the public at large. Schools and colleges were opened without vaccinating all staff.

This explains partly the second wave," John said.

"Wherever infection was rising, stricter imposition of discipline should have been taken but with the elections ahead, no leader wanted that. Elections during pandemic had to be carefully planned," the renowned virologist told PTI.

The scientist also agreed that variants are the other reason for the second wave, adding that it was too late for India to look for mutants. "The two factors came together and we were leaderless in response at the critical time. The speed of spread in the second wave is twice as fast as in the first wave. Partly due to variants and partly lowering of the guard," John explained.

Referring to a Health Ministry briefing on March 24, Jameel noted that the UK variants now show up in about 80 per cent of cases from Punjab. "A new double mutant has emerged in India and is reported in 15-20 per cent of cases analysed from

Maharashtra. If this percentage goes up further, it would be a clear indication of its role in the Maharashtra surge," said the virologist.

In India, variants first identified in the UK, South Africa and Brazil have been found. In late March, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) announced that a new variant had been identified in samples of saliva taken from people in Maharashtra, Delhi and Punjab.

According to John, the government started the drive too late and no outcome goal of vaccination was defined. "India started slow vaccine rollout in January third week, but it was first a token reward to healthcare workers who were vaccinated even when there was no need -- and we wasted a lot of vaccines," he said. "Was advance purchase order given to vaccine companies to get production accelerated during last year itself before approvals were obtained?" John asked. PTI

We didn't vote for a Covid second wave

OTHER STORIES

Duo kill 6 peacocks, flee

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC PUDUKKOTTAI, APRIL 11

Police and forest department officials are looking for two persons who allegedly killed six peacocks near Annavasal, on Saturday. A routine police vehicle check at Annavasal attempted to intercept two persons on a two-wheeler, but they fled without stopping.

On seeing the police behind them, the two threw away two gunny bag bundles and a country-made gun, and fled. On examination of the gunny bag bundles, police found six dead peacocks. Police recovered the carcasses and the gun, and informed DFO Sameer Ahamed, who along with a team took possession of the carcasses and the gun from the police, police added. Both police and forest department personnel are investigating.

IUMI chief condoles death of Cong candidate

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, APRIL 11

Prof. K.M. Kader Mohideen, national president, Indian Union Muslim League (IUMI), expressed condolences to the family of Madhava Rao, Congress candidate (Srivilliputhur assembly constituency), who died due to Covid-19. The polling process is already over and Rao could have entered the Tamil Nadu Assembly. His demise will be a big loss to the Congress party and the people of Srivilliputhur constituency, he added, and prayed to the Almighty to help the family and party men bear this irreparable loss.

NIT-T offers English Literature course

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, APRIL 11

The National Institute of Technology Tiruchirappalli (NIT-T), first among NITs in the NIRF ranking, is inviting applications for its Master of Arts (M.A.) in English Language and Literature for academic year 2021-22. An NIT-T release said here on Sunday that M.A. program is developed to provide a practical curriculum with a high degree of professional relevance, enabling students to face real-time challenges and develop critical/creative and related higher-order thinking skills. More details are provided in the information brochure available in the institute by April 30, it added.

Artificial limbs presented to diff-abled

Chennai: The Freedom Trust conducted a fitment and distribution camp at Bala Vidya Mandir School, Gandhinagar on April 10 where 30 differently-abled with lower limb amputation (who lost their lower limbs due to diabetes, cancer or accident) were given artificial limbs. The assessment for these was done earlier by Dr. Sunder and his team in Freedom Trust who took pride in seeing every beneficiary walk with pride. The Freedom Trust did the vent in association with the Rotary Clubs of Chennai Mambalam and Chennai Kilpauk and the donor Rotary Club of Windsor-Roseland, Canada.

Summer charm: Ooty horse racing to begin

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, APRIL 11

The two-month-long Ooty horse racing season, a British era legacy and summer attraction in the hills, will commence from April 14. But, it is a 'closed door' race this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. Punters and bookmakers are not allowed for the races this season.

A communique from Madras Race Club (MRC) stated that the Ooty racing season 2021 will commence on April 14 and close on June 11. Totally, there will be 18 race days this season.

This year, it will be a 'closed door racing' in Ooty. Public will not be allowed inside the race course premises and also other days in terms of the order of the Government of Tamil Nadu on account of Covid-19 pandemic. The Tote counter and bookmakers will also not operate on these days.

However, the MRC will be conducting off-course betting on Ooty races in Chennai. At MRC in Chennai, bookmakers will be in operation in the 1st and 2nd enclosures. All the Totes will be in operation at the members enclosures, 1st and 2nd enclosures. Everyone shall follow the SOP directive of the Government of Tamil Nadu, it stated.



Horse racing is set to come back to the Ooty race course from this week.

— File photo

The fixtures(datewise) for Ooty races are as follows:

In April - 14, 15, 23, 24 and 30.
In May - 1, 7, 8, 13, 14, 21, 22, 27 and 28
In June - 4, 5, 10 and 11.
In the classics events, while the Nilgiris 1,000

Guineas will be held on May 7, the Nilgiris 2,000 Guineas will be held on May 8. The Nilgiris Derby stakes and Nilgiris Gold Cup will be held on May 22. Morning races will be held on all days, stated the communique.

While the summer racing season here in 2020

could not be held due to Covid-19 crisis, horse racing has returned to the hills this summer, but with restrictions. Around 500 horses are expected to take part in this racing season.

Nabard disbursed ₹27k crore in Tamil Nadu in 2020-21

A. ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 11

The country's premier National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has disbursed loans to the tune of ₹27,104 crore in Tamil Nadu during 2020-21, said S Selvaraj, Chief General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Tamil Nadu Regional Office, Chennai. The allocation is an increase of 87 per cent compared to last year with ₹14,458 crore.

Narrating the performance of NABARD to the media in Chennai, CGM said the Bank is ready to meet the demand of the State ₹40,000 crore and above depending upon the requirement of the state during 2021-2022.

The total refinance extended to eligible financial institutions in the State under Long Term (LT) Loans for facilitating capital formation and Short Term (ST) Loans for Operations and production increased to ₹23,062 crore registering a growth of 89% over the previous year. Refinance under LT was to the tune of ₹11,698 crore and under ST, ₹11,364 crore.

The Cooperative Banks have been disbursed refinance of ₹8,761 crore, which is more than double the refinance of ₹3,737

crore availed during the previous year. NBFC-mFIs (micro finance institutes), which have over the years increased their share in the total credit dispensed by reaching the borrowers' doorstep, have also increased their share in the total refinance support from NABARD to ₹2,858 crore from ₹1,252 crore, an increase of 128 % over the previous year.

The total refinance of ₹23,062 crore, Cooperative Banks accounted for a major share at ₹8,761 crore (38%) followed by commercial banks at ₹6,602 crore (29%), RRBs at ₹4,840 lakh (21%) and NBFC/NBFC/ NBFC-mFIs at ₹2,858 crore (12%).

Stating that NABARD extends financial support to the State Government and State Government Undertakings for creation of infrastructure he said during the year an amount of ₹4,042 crore was extended as financial assistance for Infrastructure Development.

Under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), 3,313 projects with an assistance of ₹2,469 Crore have been sanctioned to Tamil Nadu. Major projects covering agriculture and allied, social and rural connectivity sectors include combined Drinking Water Project, 65 minor/medium irrigation projects, Cold Storage

Projects, Supply Chain Management, Modernisation of 5 Industrial Cooperative Tea factories, establishment of AIIRLIVAS (a veterinary research institute) etc. An amount of ₹1,971 crore was released.

During the current year, 4 new watershed development projects have been sanctioned, bringing the total number of ongoing projects to 59.

An amount of ₹8.37 crore was released for watershed development projects, post-watershed climate proofing and KFW-soil projects.

The watersheds raise the water table, creating sustainable livelihoods with improved farming practices. EShakti aims at digitisation of SHG records on a common e-platform so as to provide the SHG members access to a wider range of financial services while increasing the comfort of the bankers in credit linkage. With collaboration with Tamil Nadu State Rural Livelihood Mission (TNSRLM) 2.02 lakh SHGs across have been boarded to the EShakti portal.

Among others Baiju N Kurup, N Neerajaa, and Sreepathy S Kalkura General Managers, Nazia Nizamuddin, S Brinda, D Mitra, and S. Sudharsan, Deputy General Managers of the bank were present during the press conference.

Fourth wave in Delhi is much more dangerous, says Kejriwal

Turn P1

Mr Kejriwal said the surge in Covid-19 cases this time was "worse" than what Delhi saw during the third peak. This is the fourth wave in Delhi which is "much more dangerous", he added.

A day after announcing several new restrictions to check the spread of the deadly virus, the chief minister also said a full lockdown was not the solution to tackle the pandemic.

The Union government has, meanwhile, written to Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhattisgarh over reports by the Central health teams on Covid-19 testing and containment operations, hospital infrastructure and vaccinations to contain the virus' spread.

Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, in the letter, asked the states/UTs to take suitable corrective measures. The letter said: "The Union health ministry has been actively engaging with states in coordinating and collaborating on preparedness and the response to Covid-19."

Mr Bhushan said the Centre has also taken note of issues related to the availability of vaccines and required action to augment supplies will be taken based on the available stock. He said a brief summary of the key performance indicators related to testing, hospital infrastructure and vaccination, as reported by the teams, was shared for suitable corrective actions by the state or district administrations. He said 30 Central teams have been deployed for the most affected districts in Maharashtra.

While the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 10 crores, things are getting bad from worse in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, which cumulatively have 70.82 per cent of the total cases. Maharashtra alone has 48.57 per cent of the country's total active caseload.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases, at 55,411. It is followed by Chhattisgarh, with 14,098, while Uttar Pradesh has reported 12,748 new cases. Sixteen states -- Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Kerala -- are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases.

The Maharashtra government is to decide soon on whether to go in for another lockdown in the state. The government is said to be considering an eight-day lockdown while experts want it for a period of two weeks.

In Himachal Pradesh, the government made it mandatory for all people coming from seven states that have seen a spike in coronavirus cases to show a Covid-19 negative test report on entering the state. Chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said people coming from Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh need to carry a negative RT-PCR report not earlier than 72 hours while visiting Himachal Pradesh from April 16.

The Uttar Pradesh government has ordered the closure of all schools till April 30 and directed the imposition of a night curfew in all districts that

report 100 new infections in a day or have 500 active cases. The state government also ordered that not more than 100 people be allowed to assemble at an open space for an event, while the number was put at 50 for closed spaces. The fresh government directives have come on a day the state reported its highest single-day spike of 15,353 cases since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Asserting that the "Tika Utsav", a four-day vaccination drive, marks the beginning of the second big war on Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday made several suggestions to people on tackling the virus and urged them to focus on personal and social hygiene. In a statement, he urged people to keep four things in mind, including "each one, vaccinate one", "each one, treat one" and "each one, save one".

Mr Modi said elderly people or those who may not be well educated must be helped to get the vaccine and asked people to help those patients to get treatment who may lack resources or information.

The Prime Minister also asked families and members of society to take the lead in setting up micro containment zones in case of anyone

getting the infectious disease, saying this was a key step to fight the disease in a densely populated country like India.



Corporation Commissioner P.Kumaravel Pandian Inspects Covid-19 precautionary measures in Gandhipuram bus stand in Coimbatore on Saturday.

— DC

Compulsory retirement of IAS officers by Information Commission slammed

A. ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 11

The recommendation of compulsory retirement of nine IAS officers by the State Information Commission is illegal and unconstitutional, says Dr M. Arulpitchai Narayanan of ARMA Medical Foundation, Chennai. The officers' association must take it very seriously otherwise it will be resulting lot of humiliation to the officers' community.

For the first time, the TN Information Commission recently had recommended the government to send nine senior IAS officers on compulsory retirement alleging that they failed to discharge their duties as chairpersons of the State Teachers Recruitment Board (TRB).

Passing orders on an appeal filed by candidates of competitive exams conducted by the TRB, State Information Commissioner S Muthuraj, in an order dated March 25, recommended that the Chief

Secretary record in the annual confidential reports that these officers didn't discharge their duties with accountability and transparency, and take legal steps to send them on compulsory retirement. And one of them had already retired from the service.

The officers recommended for compulsory retirement are - Surjith K Chaudry (already retired), Vibhu Nayar, Kakarla Usha, D Jagannathan, K Srinivasan,

K Nandakumar, S Jayandhi, N Venkatesh and G Latha. They were TRB chairpersons from 2011 to 2020, and were appointed during the AIADMK regime. Though these officers had earlier recruited either through the UPSC or TNPSC, they didn't manage the affairs of the TRB with accountability and transparency. It would be difficult for them to discharge their duties in other positions, Muthuraj said.

Those who have done PhD are unable to get proper placement. But despite provision of job,

appropriate salary, vehicle, spacious office, allowances, medical facilities, telephone, etc., those working in recruitment bodies have no accountability, and hence, errors like asking wrong questions in competitive examinations, releasing faulty answer keys, delay in conducting examinations, cancelling examinations, etc., have been recurring.

Candidates sought through RTI queries details of the books based on which the answers were decided.

One of the candidates pointed out that the answers described as wrong by the TRB were indeed mentioned as correct in the books recognised by the government. But he was not given due marks, and his future was affected.

It may be noted that the service of IAS officers are governed under All India Services Act, 1951 and State government is not bound to accept the recommendation of Commission.

Scuffle in Salem bar ends in rowdy's murder

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, APRIL 11

In a scuffle that occurred in a bar here on Sunday, history-sheeter Kirubakaran was stabbed to death in a dispute at a liquor store here.

Sources said Kirubakaran (37) hailed from Anna Street, Kichipalayam, Salem. He was facing charges of assault and murder in the Salem town and

Situation turned violent, and Mohan and his friends severely attacked Kirubakaran and his friends Hussain and Srinivasan, and also stabbed Kirubakaran with a broken beer bottle. Amjad, who was trying to mediate and avoid the fight, was also injured

Kichipalayam and Attayampatti police stations.

Kirubakaran was drink-

ing with his friends, Hussain and Srinivasan, at a bar in the Ananda Bridge area. Same time, his rival Mohan and friends auto driver Gokulakrishnan and Suresh, were also drinking in the same bar.

It is alleged that Mohan earlier had an affair with the wife of one of Kirubakaran's friend Shahul, in which dispute, Kirubakaran and his friends intervened and had

separated the two.

Raising this issue in the bar, Mohan and his friends challenged Kirubakaran and his friends.

Soon, the situation turned violent, and Mohan and his friends severely attacked Kirubakaran and his friends Hussain and Srinivasan, and also stabbed Kirubakaran with a broken beer bottle. Amjad, who was trying to mediate and avoid the fight,

was also injured.

Police led by Assistant Commissioner Manikandan and Inspector Sivakumar, rushed to the spot. As Mohan's party fled, Kirubakaran and his friends Sakul and Amjad lay in a pool of blood. Hussein was rushed to the Salem Government Mohan Kumaramangalam hospital by the Tasmac liquor store staff.

Kirubakaran died on

Sunday morning without responding to treatment. Others injured are under treatment. Salem city police have taken up investigations into the murder case.

Police have also set up two teams to track down the murderers. Mohan was arrested and is being questioned. Police are also on the lookout for five others, including Mohan's accomplices Gokulakrishnan and Suresh.

SELECTION OF NCs(E) IN INDIAN AIR FORCE FOR LASCAR AND SAFAIWALA TRADE

1. Applications are invited from Eligible Civilian Candidates (MALE), born between **03 JUN 1993 to 03 JUN 2004** (Both Days Inclusive). For Selection as NC (E) in **LASCAR (01)** and **SAFAIWALA (01)** Trade in Indian Air Force (Total 02 Vacancies). Educational Qualification is Matriculation. Candidates Below 22 Years of Age Should be Unmarried at the time of Enrolment. Candidates Above 22 Years of Age May be Married. However, They will not be provided any Married Accommodation or any other allied Privileges during the Training.

2. Applications are available at AFS Tambaram (Station Orderly Room) and Completed Applications are to be submitted to Station Orderly Room **On or Before 15 APR 2021**. The Trade and Physical test will be Conducted Tentatively with effect from **16 APR 2021** onwards.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY		
Tender Notice No. 01 UBL 2021-22		
Dated : 06.04.2021		
The undersigned on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders for the following works:		
Sl.	Name of Works	Approx. Value
1.]	Dharwad-Ainavar	Rs. 1,83,41,880/-
Section: Strengthening of bank by providing standard width for a length of 7.8 km in Senior Section Engineer/Path way/ Dharwad jurisdiction.		
2.]	CTRRP(P) of exg. 52	Rs. 6,65,99,354/-
kg 90 UTS rails on 52 kg PSC sleepers of 1660 Nos. per km from 18.60 to 19.50 (0.9 km) and km 516.080 to 523.230 (7.15 km) between Hubballi - Gadag & Hubballi - Ainavar stations for a length of 8.05 km.		
3.]	Sub Work:	Rs. 4,40,212/-
Hubballi - Proposed Construction of GRP office at Hubballi - carrying out, preparation of drawings (Both working drawings and detailed structural drawings) including conducting detailed soil investigation. Sub work II: Hubballi - Construction of 18 bays for disposal of scrap at GSD-carrying out preparation and submission of drawings (Both working drawings and detailed structural drawings) including conducting detailed soil investigation.		
4.]	Dharwad:	Rs. 4,25,000/-
Augmentation of training facilities at training center-complete structural & architectural design preparation, submission & getting approval of working drawings, detailed structural drawing and completion drawing for steel / RCC structures, grantry, arrangement, foundation etc as per GAD for (Building and FOB) approved by Railway.		
5.]	Proposed	Rs. 1,05,56,304/-
construction of shed 02 Nos. of size 75.0 x 10.0 Mtr x 5 mtr height with sheet cladding and CC flooring @ Desur (one at Londa side and other at Belagavi side).		
Last date of submission of bids: Up to 11:00 hrs of 04.05.2021		
For details log on: www.reps.gov.in		
Divisional Railway Manager / Works, Hubballi		
Pub/05/ASAP-PRB-SVR/2020-21		

WB BJP chief warns of more Cooch Behar-style killings

Says those who think CAPF carry guns only for show have felt the heat

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 11

A day after four people were shot dead by the Central paramilitary forces during a violent mob attack on a polling booth at Shitalkuchi in Cooch Behar during the fourth phase of the Assembly election in West Bengal, state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh called them *dushtu chhele* (bad boys).

Blatantly defying appeals by Union home minister Amit Shah and West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to everyone to maintain peace in the remaining phases, the Midnapore BJP MP also threatened the public of a “repetition” of Shitalkuchi-style killings in the event of an “excess”.

On Sunday he told a party rally at Baranagar in north Kolkata: “Where did so many *dushtu chhele* come from? Those who were hit by the bullets at Shitalkuchi on Saturday

Gurung: Cooch Behar killings turning point in Bengal polls

Darjeeling, April 11: Asserting that Saturday’s firing by the CISF in Cooch Behar, which claimed four lives, will be a “turning point” in Bengal polls, Bimal Gurung, the chief of one of the two GJM factions, claimed that the BJP is set to face the wrath of voters in the next four phases of elections, especially in the northern part of the state.

Gurung reaffirmed that “statehood is a dream nurtured by every Gorkha” living in the hills, while also noting that the TMC’s

pitch for a “permanent political solution” and the overall development of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas sounds “very encouraging”.

Lashing out at the BJP for “deceiving the Gorkha jaati for 12 years with fake promises”, Gurung, who deserted the NDA and joined hands with the TMC in October last year, said he will teach the saffron camp a “lesson for life”, with Mamata Banerjee by his side.

The BJP had won the Darjeeling seat thrice since 2009 — with Jaswant

Singh, S.S. Ahluwalia and incumbent Raju Bista representing the seat respectively over the past 12 years.

Condemning the Cooch Behar incident, Gurung said, “Killing of innocent people — be it by the state police or the central forces — is not acceptable. What happened on the polling day is nothing short of genocide; the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would feel the heat in North Bengal. The party would be wiped out from the region.”

— PTI

forces will be posted at the booths. No one will be able to show red eyes. Otherwise, we will be there. If anyone crosses the limit, you have seen what happened in Shitalkuchi. Shitalkuchi will be repeated in places. So be careful.”

His warning came on the day Shah said at Shantipur in Nadia: “I appeal to the people to maintain peace and cast their votes for their favourite candidates in the remaining phases of the polls. I also urge leaders of all political parties for a peaceful conduct of the polls according to the EC guidelines.”

Dhankhar tweeted: “All must unitedly condemn and abjure violence that has no place in democracy. Pained and anguished at violence in Cooch Behar leading to the loss of lives. People in authority must show statesmanship & ensure respect for constitutional institutions & CAPF engaged in public duty.”

their hands, he will get a befitting reply. On April 17, cast your votes standing in a queue early in the morning. The Central

RISKY | MOVE Mega dam spanning Brahmaputra River to dwarf Three Gorges

Activists fear China’s super dam plan

Beijing, April 11: China is planning a mega dam in Tibet able to produce triple the electricity generated by the Three Gorges — the world’s largest power station — stoking fears among environmentalists and in neighbouring India. The structure will span the Brahmaputra River before the waterway leaves the Himalayas and flows into India, straddling the world’s longest and deepest canyon at an altitude of more than 1,500 metres (4,900 feet).

The project in Tibet’s

Medog County is expected to dwarf the record-breaking Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River in central China, and is billed as able to produce 300 billion kilowatts of electricity each year.

It is mentioned in China’s strategic 14th Five-Year Plan, unveiled in March at an annual rubber-stamp congress of the country’s top lawmakers.

But the plan was short on details, a timeframe or budget. The river, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibetan, is also home to two other projects far

upstream, while six others are in the pipeline or under construction.

The “super-dam” however is in a league of its own.

Last October, the Tibet local government signed a “strategic cooperation agreement” with PowerChina, a public construction company specialising in hydroelectric projects.

A month later the head of PowerChina, Yan Zhiyong, partially unveiled the project to the Communist Youth League, the youth wing of China’s ruling party. Enthusiastic about “the

world’s richest region in terms of hydroelectric resources”, Yan explained that the dam would draw its power from the huge drop of the river at this particular section.

Beijing may justify the massive project as an environmentally-friendly alternative to fossil fuels, but it risks provoking strong opposition from environmentalists in the

s a m e way as the Three Gorges Dam, built between 1994 and 2012. The Three Gorges created a reservoir and displaced 1.4 million inhabitants

upstream.

“Building a dam the size of the super-dam is likely a really bad idea for many reasons,” said Brian Eyster, energy, water and sustainability programme director at the Stimson Center, a US think tank.

Besides being known for seismic activity, the area also contains a unique biodiversity. The dam would block the migration of fish as well as sediment flow that enriches the soil during seasonal floods downstream, said Eyster.

— AFP

WORLD

IN BRIEF

Flood traps 21 Chinese miners

Beijing, April 11: Rescuers on Sunday were trying to reach 21 coal miners who were trapped by an underground flood in China’s northwest, a state news agency reported.

The mine in Hutubi County in the Xinjiang region flooded at about 6:10 pm on Saturday, the *Xinhua News Agency* said. It said eight people were rescued. China’s coal mines are among the world’s deadliest, regularly suffering explosions and gas leaks despite repeated safety crackdowns.

Nasa delays Mars copter flight

Washington, April 11: Nasa has delayed by at least several days the first flight of its mini-helicopter on Mars after a possible tech issue emerged while testing its rotors, the US space agency said Saturday.

Ingenuity’s trip, which is to be the first-ever powered, controlled flight on another planet, was set for Sunday but is now on hold until at least April 14. A high-speed test of the four-pound (1.8 kilogram) helicopter’s rotors on Friday ended earlier than expected due to an alert of a potential issue.

No power, water in Saint Vincent

St. John’s, Antigua and Barbuda, April 11: Massive power outages struck the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent before dawn on Sunday, as officials recorded more explosive activity at a long-dormant volcano that launched into a series of eruptions.

After remaining quiet for nearly 42 years, La Soufriere rumbled back into life Friday, blanketing the island in ash and permeating the air with the stench of sulphur.

The eruptions prompted thousands to flee for safety, with around 16,000 people living in areas under evacuation orders.

Blackout hits Natanz atomic site, Iran calls it ‘N-terrorism’

Raises regional tensions as world powers, Tehran negotiate tattered N-deal

Dubai, April 11: Iran on Sunday described a blackout at its underground Natanz atomic facility an act of “nuclear terrorism,” raising regional tensions as world powers and Tehran continue to negotiate over its tattered nuclear deal. Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, stopped short of directly blaming anyone for the incident. Details remained few about what happened early Sunday morning at the facility, which initially was described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding the site.

Many Israeli media outlets offered the same assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges. While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country’s military and intelligence agencies. If Israel caused the blackout, it further heightens tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. “To thwart the goals



The Natanz atomic facility in Iran.

of this terrorist movement, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to seriously improve nuclear technology on the one hand and to lift oppressive sanctions on the other hand,” Salehi said, according to state TV.

He added: “While condemning this desperate move, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the need for a confrontation by the international bodies and the (International Atomic Energy Agency) against this nuclear terrorism.” The IAEA, the United Nations’ body that monitors Tehran’s atomic

programme, earlier said it was aware of media reports about the incident at Natanz and had spoken with Iranian officials about it. The agency did not elaborate. Sunday’s developments also complicate efforts by the US, Israel’s main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran’s programme so it can’t pursue a nuclear weapon.

Power at Natanz was cut across the facility, which is comprised of above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

— AP

Israel: Will see Iran deal saves interests

Tel Aviv, April 11: Israel will work with Washington to ensure any “new agreement” on Iran’s nuclear programme will safeguard regional security, Defence Minister Benny Gantz told his US counterpart Lloyd Austin on Sunday. The comments came as Austin made the first high-level US trip to Israel since talks resumed on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, which the Jewish state fiercely opposed.

Gantz said “we will work closely with our American allies to ensure that any new agreement with Iran will secure the vital interests of the world and the United States, prevent a dangerous arms race in our region and protect the State of Israel”.

Austin, the highest-level envoy from President Joe Biden’s administration yet to visit ally Israel, said Washington would work

with Israel “to advance shared security interest and priorities”.

Stressing America’s “iron-clad” bond with Israel, Austin said the US will “continue close consultations to ensure Israel’s qualitative military edge and to strengthen Israel’s security”. Austin’s visit came just days after the US said it had offered “very serious” ideas on reviving the hobbled nuclear agreement reached between Tehran and world powers, which was abandoned by former president Donald Trump in 2018. Israel under hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been a fierce critic of the Iran nuclear deal, dating back to when it was being negotiated during Barack Obama’s administration. Netanyahu applauded when Trump withdrew from the deal and imposed sanctions on Tehran. — AFP

Despite shortage, Maha vaccinates one crore people

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 11

Despite facing acute shortage of vaccines, Maharashtra has added yet another feather to its cap by becoming the first state in the country to administer more than one crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

“We have crossed one crore doses today. Till today noon, we have administered 1,00,38,421 doses, highest in the country so far,” Dr Pradeep Vyas, the principal secretary of Maharashtra’s health department, said on Sunday.

According to data from the Union ministry of health and family welfare, Maharashtra has the highest share in vaccinations done so far in India. India had administered more than 10 crore vaccine doses till Sunday, of which eight states accounted for 60 per cent of the total doses. Of them, Maharashtra was leading with more than one crore doses, accounting for nearly 10 per cent of total doses. It was followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The Maharashtra government has been at loggerheads with the Centre over the supply of insufficient supply of Covid-19 vaccines. Maharashtra, the worst Coronavirus-affected in the country, is facing acute shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, due to which the vaccination drive has come to a halt at several places in the state. Many vaccination centres across the state have shut down and people had to

Pawar admitted for gall bladder surgery

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 11

The NCP president Sharad Pawar on Sunday has been admitted to Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai for a surgery of his gallbladder. He would be undergoing surgery on Monday morning for his gallbladder ailment.

BANGLADESH, A ROLE MODEL IN FIGHTING POVERTY: ENVOY

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Bangladesh High Commissioner Muhammad Imran has said that his country has become a role model in the world in fighting poverty.

He was speaking at a cultural event recently organised by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Bangladesh High Commission in the Capital to celebrate “Mujib Barsho” and 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh.

“Mujib Barsho” refers to the centenary birth anniversary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman popularly known as Bangabandhu who successfully led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971.

The Bangladesh High Commissioner also spoke about the close ties and connectivity projects between his country and India. He also spoke about the large number of tourists from his country visiting India every year as ties between the two neighbours gets even stronger, in what is seen as a “Shonali Adhyaya (golden chapter)” in bilateral ties. This comes even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh just last month. The cultural event comprised a dance performance by the troupe from the renowned Srishti Cultural Centre in Bangladesh.

TIBETANS CAST VOTES TO ELECT NEXT SIKYONG

Dharamshala, April 11: Tibetans living in 26 countries including India on Sunday voted for the final phase of the general election for the Dharamshala-based parliament-in-exile to elect the next Sikyong (president), an official said.

Forty-five members of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also called as Tibetan-parliament-in-exile, will also be elected by the voters, Wangdu Tsering, the chief election commissioner of the Tibetan election commission said.

There are around 1.3 lakh Tibetans living in exile in India and across the globe. The Tibetan government-in-exile will elect its head on May 14.

In the last phase of the polls to the post of the president of the CTA only two candidates — Pempa Tsering and Aukatsang Kelsang Dorjee — are in the fray, Wangdu Tsering said.

However, Pempa Tsering, the former chairman of Tibetan parliament, is the front runner.

Underground newsletters aid Myanmar youth

Yangon, April 11: Myanmar youth are fighting the junta’s internet shutdown and information suppression with an explosive underground printed newsletter they are secretly distributing across communities.

For 56 days straight there have been internet outages in coup-hit Myanmar, according to monitoring group NetBlocks.

The country has been in turmoil since democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted in a February 1 coup, triggering a mass uprising that has resulted in a brutal security crackdown and more than 700 civilian deaths.

Thirty-year-old Lynn Thant, not his real name, started the underground newsletter and gave it the edgy name Molotov to appeal to young people.

“This is our response to those who slow down the flow of information — and that’s a threat to us,” he said.

Thousands of readers

across the country are downloading the PDF version of the publication and printing out and distributing physical copies across neighbourhoods in Yangon and Mandalay and other areas.

Lynn Thant is conscious of the risks involved.

Police and soldiers have arrested more than 3,000 people since the coup, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Two hundred high profile celebrities, including actors, singers and social media influencers are on an arrest warrant list and could face three years’ jail if convicted of spreading dissent against the military.

“If we write revolutionary literature and distribute it like this, we could end up in prison for many years,” he said, his face concealed by one of the Guy Fawkes masks popularised by the dystopian movie “V for Vendetta”.

— AFP

JORDAN KING, PRINCE PUT UP UNITED FRONT

Amman, April 11: Jordan’s King Abdullah appeared in public Sunday alongside his half-brother Prince Hamzah, state TV showed, their first joint appearance since a palace crisis involving the prince rocked the kingdom. The images showed a group of Hashemite royals at a mausoleum where their ancestors are bur-

ied, on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the desert kingdom.

The palace Twitter account published a picture of the group at a cemetery with the caption “HM King Abdullah II, HRH Crown Prince Al Hussein... (and) Hamzah bin Al Hussein... visit tomb of HM the late King Abdullah I”.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49591.32 -0.31
Nifty 50	14834.90 -0.26
S&P 500*	4,128.80 0.77
Dollar (₹)	74.75 0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.40 0.11
Euro (₹)	88.89 -0.41
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,257.97 0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.18 -0.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.017 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.673 0.041

* As of Friday/Saturday

China approves third Sinopharm vaccine for trial

China has approved the third Covid-19 vaccine from Sinopharm Group Company to start clinical trials, the company said. The green light to begin testing comes after two inactivated vaccines from Sinopharm were approved and widely used both at home and in developing countries. The latest one is a recombinant vaccine that includes parts of the coronavirus's spike protein to stimulate immune response.

■ Packaging units face input shortage Global producers ignore BIS mark

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 11

The government's insistence on BIS certification on certain imported tin and steel products has led to a shortage in metal packaging materials.

The Steel and Steel Products Quality Control Order, issued on July 17, 2020 by the Ministry of Steel, has made BIS certification mandatory for imports of tinsplate and tin-free steel. Further, restrictions have been imposed on the import of various steel products like easy open ends and peel off ends used by the metal packaging industry, which has 10 per cent share of the \$50 billion packaging industry.

The restrictions have affected a large number of micro, small and medium enterprises involved in making products using tinsplate steel-sheets of steel

NOT BIG ENOUGH MARKET

- ▶ Steel ministry has made BIS certification mandatory for imports of tinsplate and tin-free steel
- ▶ Restrictions have also been imposed on various steel products like easy open ends
- ▶ But foreign suppliers have stopped shipping tin plates to India, leading to shortage

coated with a thin layer of tin that have specialised use in consumer products like cans, hairclips, pens.

"It is virtually impossible to force the international suppliers to go for BIS certifications as the procedure of BIS registration is highly cumbersome. Further, for the international suppliers of tin plates, India is a small market and hence they are not quite keen to get into lengthy bureaucratic and cost-intensive BIS certification procedures," says the Metal Container Manufacturers' Association (MCMA).

Since the order came into effect, foreign suppliers have stopped shipping tin plates to India and this has led to a shortage in the domestic market.

"There is a huge demand-supply gap for tinsplate and tin-free steel in India to the extent of 2.5 lakh tonnes per annum which is met through imports. Moreover, tin-free steel is produced only by one mill, Tin Plate Company, and that too once a quarter," said Sanjay Bhatia, president, MCMA.

The shortage has also led to rise in prices.

Term life policies could become costlier

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Life insurers, including Life Insurance Corporation, could increase the premium on term life insurance policies by up to 10 per cent this fiscal. They are confident that a higher premium would not affect the demand for this product for various reasons.

"We expect up to 10 per cent hike in term life insurance in the near future. Even in the increased premium regime, women, who comprise half of the country's population, will continue to get it at cheaper rates, thanks to their better longevity rate than their male counterparts. Besides, the home loan borrowers, who often prefer the cost-effective term life in place of home insurance, will also continue to buy the product," said an official of a public sector insurer.

A significant rise in demand for term insurance has been observed of late, regardless of the cost.

"The increase in online term market is largely attributed to increasing awareness about insurance due to increased economic uncertainty during the coronavirus-led recession as well as mortality risk," said Gopal Kumar, an economist and actuary.

IBC: Recovery rate plunges after settlement of big cases

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 11

Absence of high value companies led to a poor recovery rate for lenders from cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) during the December quarter of this fiscal. The recovery rate for Q3FY21 dipped to a low of 12.6 per cent, a steep fall from a high of 64.1 per cent reported in the March 2020 quarter.

In the past, the recovery rate in India used to be about 26 per cent. Post-IBC implementation, the overall recovery rate till date has improved to 39.8 per cent.

Of the total claims

which were settled via liquidation in Q3FY21, the realisable value was only Rs 20.3 crore, or around 21 per cent, of the total admitted claim amount of Rs 97.3 crore.

According to Sanjay Agarwal, senior director of Care Ratings, "The earlier quarters of the previous year saw resolution at a very high value for large steel accounts such as Essar Steel, Bhushan Steel, JP Infratech. Similarly, there was a high value cement account (Binani Cement) getting resolved last year. The recovery rate was high for these steel and cement companies. This year, some of the companies that have been admitted

are weaker of the cases with legacy bad debt and so the recovery rate for lenders have fallen steeply."

Suspension of fresh bankruptcy proceedings due to the pandemic defaults also led to a slowdown in the number of cases getting admitted for Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs).

For instance, the number of cases admitted slowed down in nine-month FY21 (283 cases) compared with 1,517 cases admitted in 9MFY20. The December-end quarter witnessed a drop of around 83 per cent compared with the previous year.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

CAIRN TO FOREGO \$500 MN IF INDIA PAYS PRINCIPAL



New Delhi, April 11: UK's Cairn Energy Plc has offered to forego \$500 million and invest that amount in any energy project identified by the government if New

Delhi agrees to honour an international arbitration award and returns the value of loss it incurred from being taxed retrospectively, sources said. The Scottish firm invested in the oil and gas sector in 1994 and made a huge oil discovery in Rajasthan. In 2006-07, it listed its Indian assets on the BSE. Five years later the government passed a retroactive tax law and billed Cairn Rs 10,247 crore plus interest and penalty for the reorganisation tied to the flotation. The state then expropriated and liquidated Cairn's remaining shares.

—PTI

INFOSYS PLANS SHARE BUYBACK

New Delhi, April 11: Infosys said its board will consider a buyback proposal at its meeting on April 14. "The board of the company will consider a proposal for buyback of fully paid-up equity shares of the company at its meeting to be held on April 14, 2021." The company's board is slated to meet on April 13 and 14, to approve and take on record the audited consolidated financial results for the quarter and year ended March 31, 2021. In August 2019, Infosys had bought back 11.05 crore of its shares.

—PTI

FRANKLIN 2ND TRANCHE SOON

New Delhi, April 11: SBI Funds Management (SBI MF) will distribute the next tranche of Rs 2,962 crore to unitholders of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund's six shuttered schemes this week. SBI MF has already distributed Rs 9,122 crore to investors as directed by the Supreme Court earlier. "SBI MF would be distributing the next tranche of Rs 2,962 crore to unitholders," a Franklin Templeton spokesperson said.

—PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: New contacts at professional front would bring lucrative opportunities. Avoid investing in dubious financial schemes. Be confident in your abilities.



Taurus: This is a favourable time to start new projects. Don't be overly dominating when putting across your views at home. Your wit and charm will win over everyone.



Gemini: Keep yourself cool and don't allow anybody to instigate you to loose temper on trivial issues. Try to engage yourself in some physically strenuous work.



Cancer: You are observing your love life, as it is blowing hot and cold. And a person like you tends to get very nervous in such situation. Act immediately before it's late.



Leo: You desperately need some activity to keep fit. Domestic issues come to the fore. On your part develop a harmonious relationship with all and win your opponents by love.



Virgo: Visit those who are less fortunate than yourself and help them with their personal problem. Today is favourable for attending medical check-ups. Spend time with your partner.

You share your b'day with

Bejoy Nambiar, an Indian film director, and screenwriter known for his work in Bollywood. He is best known for his movies Shaitan, David, Taish and Wazir.



Libra: You need to be careful while taking your food as chances of suffering from stomach problems are high. It is not a favourable time on the financial front.



Scorpio: Some of you will need to keep your temper under control, even under grave provocation. Those lagging behind in studies need to catch up before it's late.



Sagittarius: Visitors can upset your schedule by thronging your home, so be prepared and keep your sour mood under control. Your efforts at work get recognised.



Capricorn: Speculative activities should be avoided. Trade cautiously in all ventures. Those burdened with work will have to do something about finding a way to get rest. Travelling is on the cards.

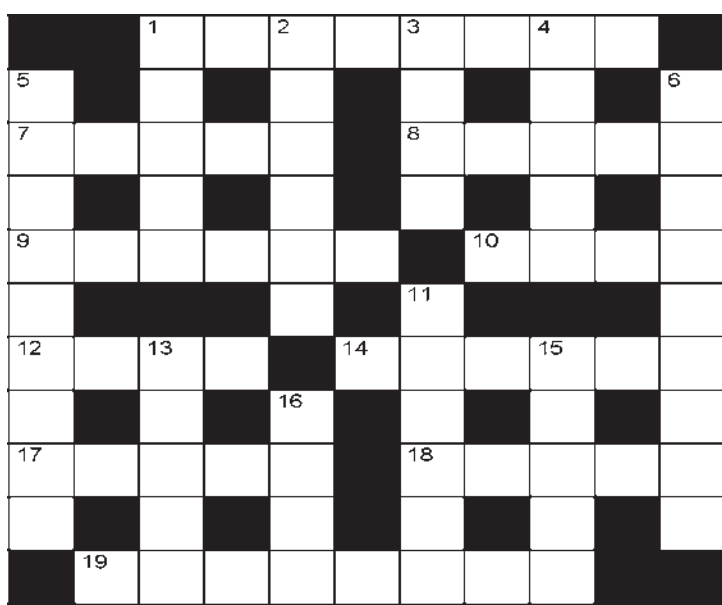


Aquarius: Think wisely before loaning money to a friend as early return of the same is not foreseen. Health needs attention. An old ailment may resurface, bringing in a lot of stress.



Pisces: You can find everything topsy-turvy on the professional front. Those in private companies can face a salary cut or cancellation of increment. Domestic tiffs may be resolved by letting go of ego.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Souvenir (8)
- Religious pictures (5)
- Booth (5)
- Trigonometric function (6)
- Blueprint (4)
- US state (4)
- What follows (6)
- Competitor (5)
- Of birds (5)
- Disperse (anag) (8)

Down

- Round handles (5)
- Alleviating (6)
- Japanese beverage (4)
- Small hill (5)
- Wiring design (9)
- Miser (9)
- Slow the development or progress of (6)
- Fluctuate (5)
- Modules (5)
- Added bonus (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
Across: 1. Ungainly, 6. Shun, 7. Acetic, 9. Inter, 11. Odour, 12. Larva, 13. Adieu, 16. Demote, 18. Save, 19. Schubert.

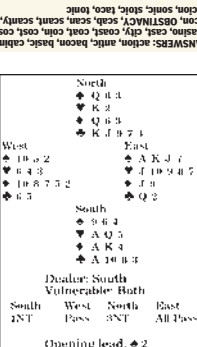
Down: 1. Unskilled, 2. Gaunt, 3. Neat, 4. Yielded, 5. Ski, 8. Corrupt, 10. Envious, 14. Inane, 15. Mesh, 17. Err.

Word Mine

C
I
S
O
N
Y
B
A
T

TODAY'S RATINGS: 22 AVERAGE; 24 GOOD; 27 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used only once. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



jumble

CNRIE
GAMIE
TNARSD
GRIEHH

Now arrange the jumbled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumbles: CLOWN FUDGE MUMBLE ZIGZAG
Answer: After helping her dad install the floor joists, she was — BEAMING



THE ROCKER HAD BEEN IN THEIR FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS, AND THEY WOULD —

(Answers tomorrow)

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began with three spades, at least three hearts and five diamonds. Therefore, West has at most two clubs. Declarer will play a club to dummy's king and return a club, claiming when the queen appears from East. Seems straightforward, but now imagine that East takes only three spade tricks, keeping the seven in his pocket, before shifting to the heart jack. What would South make of that? He would assume that

West had led from 10-fourth of spades. Then the contract would be safe if declarer cashed his club ace and led a second club, finessing dummy's jack when West played low. However, disaster strikes. The nefarious East produces both the club queen and spade seven to defeat the contract.

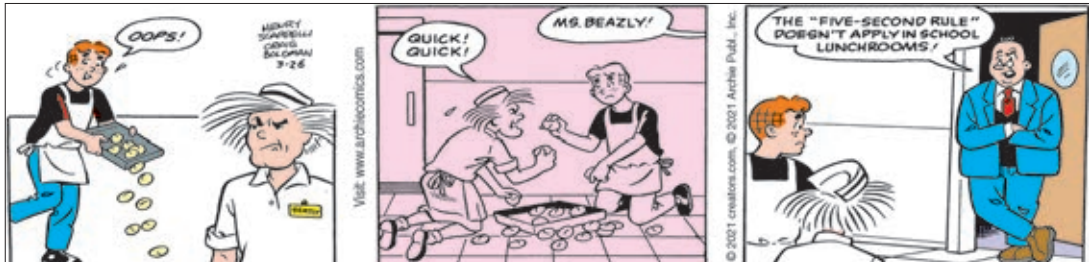
CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



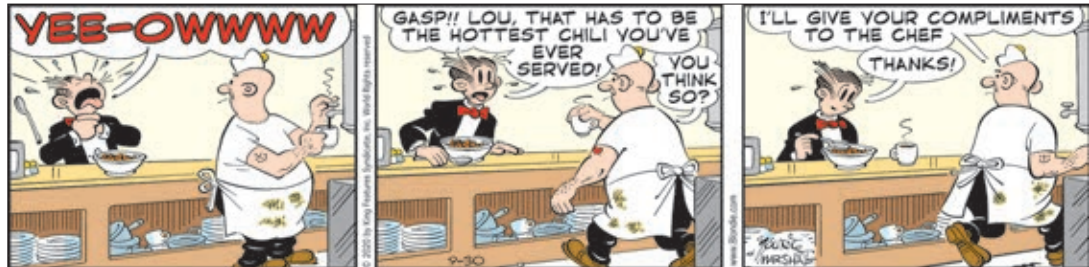
THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



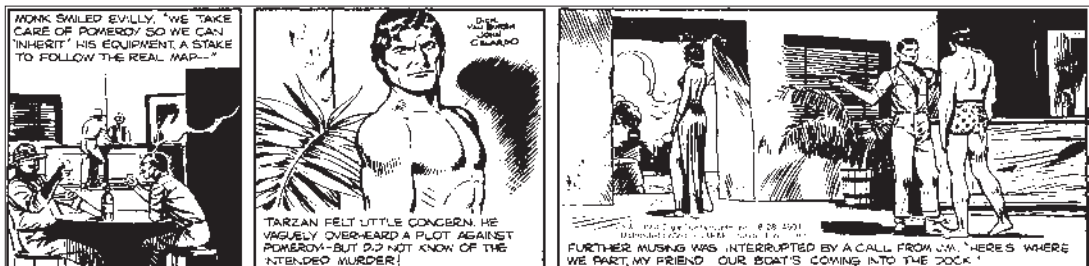
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

KEEP
THE
TRICK
IN YOUR
POCKET

In Don Quixote you can find, "A little in one's own pocket is better than much in another man's purse." When playing bridge for money, the more tricks in your pocket, the less likely you will have to add to an opponent's purse.

Sometimes, though, the moment when you take one of your tricks can be critical. How should East defend against three no-trump after his partner leads a low spade?

At first glance, that was an inspired lead by West. However, it was logical as North had not investigated a major-suit fit, and because West had such a weak hand, it was reasonable to attack in one of the majors, hoping to find partner's long suit.

Almost anyone who is sitting East will take the first four tricks before exiting with the heart jack. How would declarer continue? He should cash his red-suit winners, learning that West

DECCAN Chronicle

12 APRIL 2021

Disquieting signals in forces firing on voters

The death of four persons in firing by the personnel of Central Industrial Security Force in a booth in Sitalkuchi Assembly constituency in West Bengal, and the death of a fifth person in violence in another booth in the same constituency, give out far too many disquieting signals. A clear picture of the two events is yet to emerge but a preliminary assessment leaves one in no doubt that the central armed police forces that were entrusted with the task of facilitating free and fair elections failed to meet the challenge.

The claim of the security forces that they fired at the people in self-defence prima facie defies logic. There have been no reports of widespread violence or of security personnel suffering injuries. It is natural that minor issues could crop up during elections but there will mechanisms to deal with them. It looks like there was no effort to take the local political leadership into confidence and calm the mob which the security forces allege gheraoed them. They forgot the fact that they were called in to help the polling process, and not to quell a local mutiny. It is deeply disturbing that the protectors, who have been trained to do a professional job, became responsible for the death of those they are to protect. A thorough investigation must be conducted to unearth the facts that led to the loss of so many lives in an otherwise eventless and protracted election process.

The claim of the security forces that they fired at the people in self-defence prima facie defies logic. There have been no reports of widespread violence or of security personnel suffering injuries.

Politicians joined issue no sooner had the news of the mishap reached them. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has been inimical to the central forces from the very beginning, and the latest incidents will fuel her charge against them. Her series of statements against the central forces would have made the local population suspicious of their intentions. It is an irony that Ms Banerjee had betted on the presence of the same central forces to ensure a fair election in the state 10 years ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was campaigning in West Bengal at the time when the unfortunate incidents happened, lost no time in blaming the chief minister for the violence. This is unfortunate. The Prime Minister should have counselled peace and calm instead of targeting his political opponent. The very fact that it was the forces under the Union government that shot the people down should have tempered the Prime Minister's response but it did not work that way.

The Election Commission has a lot to learn from the Cooch Behar incidents. It practically takes over local governance once the election process is set in motion. We do not know what instructions it had passed on to the security forces when it despatched them to the states; clearly they used the force not to the optimum but to the maximum. It is also evident that there is no local command and control system to address issues even though the West Bengal elections are conducted in eight phases with only two or three districts going to the polls at a time. The EC must ensure that it uses its powers to act in an efficient and non-partisan manner; grand statements alone are not enough.

A modernising royalist

Considering the circumstances the world finds itself in now, only 30 members of the British royal family will attend the service for Prince Philip on Saturday. If not for Covid-protocol restrictions, half of Britain would have liked to turn up at the royal consort's funeral when he will be wheeled in a Land Rover hearse. So beloved a royal was he for his nation that an outpouring of grief over his passing, when just short of a century, is understandable. His ceremonial presence was a feature of over 22,000 public events besides any number of occasions on which he willingly walked two steps behind his wife, the long reigning monarch Queen Elizabeth II. He symbolised selfless public service while also making 5,496 speeches and undertaking 637 solo trips abroad.

To paraphrase his enormous contribution to a largely dysfunctional family that was beset with more than a fair share of scandals, induced mostly by extramarital love and marriage trouble, he modernised the British royal family while shepherding it into the modern age. And then, in the face of the latest public outrage over charges of racism made by one of their own — Prince Harry and his wife Meghan in an interview with Oprah Winfrey — the prince was busy trying to help keep together the anachronism that is royalty. A royal consort who knelt and swore to be his wife's "liege man of life and limb" at her coronation in 1952, was more than true to his word in holding steadfast to his own marriage for a good 73 years.

The time of his passing lends itself easily to hagiographical references. The unsentimental would, however, also see him as the gadfly that he was who often shocked the world as the prince of gaffes with his often slanderous, extempore remarks. To Indians he seemed racist for the extent to which he could be dismissive of them — "Some Indian must have put it there" was his snooty reference to a shoddily patched-up electrical connection. Just as Britain needed in war time a Winston Churchill, with all his faults, its royalty sorely needed Prince Philip to deal with peace time turbulence.

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A.G. Noorani



Vestige of colonial repression, J&K surety bonds blow against democracy

Is there any country in the free world that compels its politicians in the Opposition to sign a bond for "good behaviour" before a magistrate with sureties and a named amount, and guarantees of good behaviour — threatening them with prison if they don't comply?

Developing countries have turned the imitation of repressive laws of their colonial masters into something of an art. Inevitably, on their independence, the old laws continued to be in force; subject to new fundamental rights. Our new rulers grabbed the old laws and began (mis)using them against their new "masters" — the people who voted them to power. The judiciary was not very assertive. Preventive detention laws are a good instance. But the last instance is the Criminal Procedure Code. Several codes were enacted. The Code of 1898 was in force till independence and beyond. India amended it in 1973 but ensured that the repressive elements endured — the sanction of the govern-

ment to prosecute its own minister or official in authority sitting as judge in its own case.

The code enables banning of books. There is Chapter VIII. It provides for "Security for Keeping the Peace and Good Behaviour". Even in olden times the language clearly pertained to persons of ill repute or "history sheeters" as they are called; in short, goondas. The chapter extends from Section 106 to Section 124.

Consider the scheme as a whole and you will find it has no application to political opponents. The British abused it for political ends sparingly. Restraint does not come easily to New Delhi.

The only change after Independence was the separation of the executive from the judiciary. The magistracy was divided into executive magistrates and judicial magistrates. Proper understanding is vital. To begin with, Section 106 provides for "security for keeping the peace" on conviction of an offence like criminal intimidation and

assault, in sum, plain goondagiri. Judicial magistrates make such an order. But Section 107 empowers executive magistrates to order execution of a bond if he "receives information that any person is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity or do any wrongful act" that may be disruptive. The suspect is made to sign a bond for good behaviour. This, the courts have held, is a judicial proceeding. The section applies to persons distributing material which is likely to disturb the peace because it is seditious or communal. Section 109 applies to suspects who go into hiding. Section 110 applies to habitual offenders. The entire scheme of the chapter reveals that its object is not to control the politicians.

However, a complaint was filed in Pune against Bal Gangadhar Tilak under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code for disseminating "seditious matter". Tilak was defended throughout from the magistrate's court in Poona (August 1916) to the

high court (November 1916), by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He won in the high court and did an unusual thing for him after judgment was pronounced. He turned around and shook hands with his close friend, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The full text of his entire proceedings verbatim are reproduced in this writer's book, *Jinnah and Tilak*.

In 2019, the Government of India invoked these archaic, repressive provisions of a colonial law and put an entire people in bondage by forcing their leaders to sign bonds. Not content with the massive presence of its army and paramilitary in Kashmir since 1989, in 2019, New Delhi made a bonanza of bondage. It knew that the people would revolt if it scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution and what little was left of Kashmir's autonomy. Knowing full well that the people would protest, New Delhi got the leaders to sign bonds under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code as if they were criminals. The leaders were

imprisoned. By Sept 19, 2019, 36 politicians were confined.

On November 5, 2020, the People's Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti, said that 19 party leaders were asked to sign an affidavit after being detained and released later for taking out a protest rally. "India is the world's largest democracy only on paper now," she said.

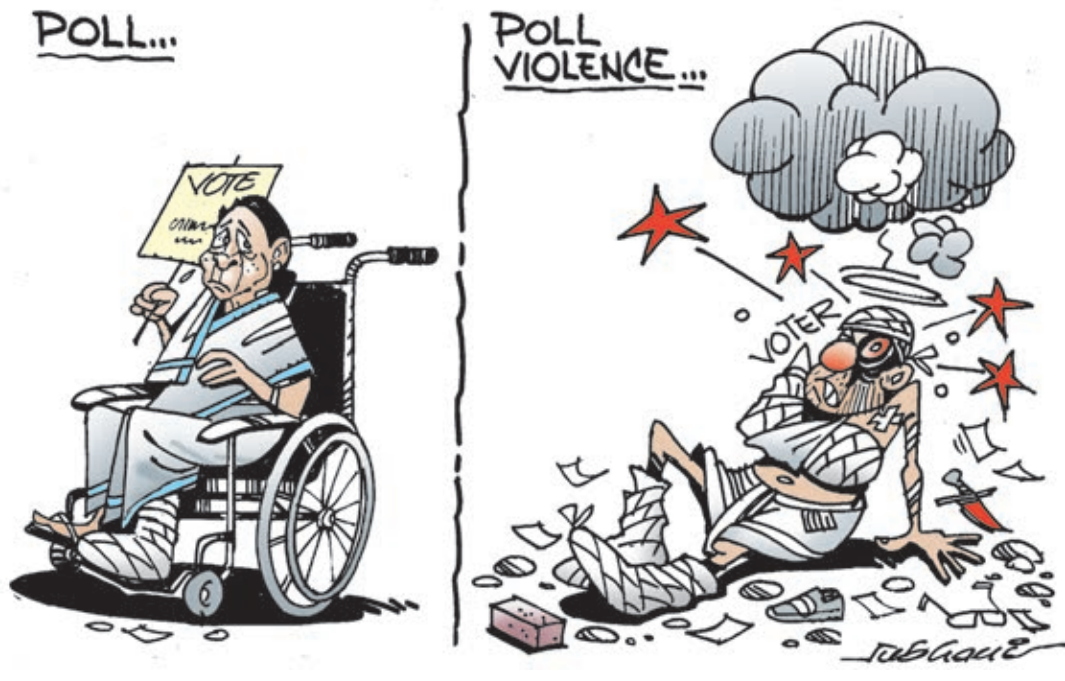
A PDP spokesman said the affidavit was "unacceptable in a democracy". He said the 19 leaders "refused to sign surety bonds which asked them to refrain from taking part in unlawful, anti-national activities".

The surety bond stated: "That we are permanent residents of the J&K U.T. That a case under section 107/151 stands against us.... That we will not indulge... in any unlawful, anti-national activities..."

There is no law in the statute books which defines what is "anti-national". This is sheer barbarism.

By arrangement with Dawn

Subhani



Despite Modi's push, BJP yet to reach tipping point

Shikha Mukerjee

An eight-phase Assembly election, even for West Bengal where violence is intrinsic to the process and every government has been accused of rigging the outcome, seemed excessive when the Election Commission announced the dates. On second thoughts, it is just what the BJP needed to build up a wave in its favour, however hard that may be.

After four phases and 135 constituencies that have already made their choices, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda are still hard at it, because another four phases and 159 constituencies have yet to decide. The BJP's top brass is doing some heavy lifting with Mr Modi in the lead to get that wave going. The process seems as fraught and dependent on a force of nature, meaning the wave, as were the tense days before the mega container ship blocking the Suez Canal, *Ever Given*, finally budged. The difference is the wave was not the only push that the container needed; there were dredgers and tugs pulling at the hulk to get it to move.

The staggered polling dates give the BJP the time it needs to campaign for its conquest of West Bengal. If it needs so much time to campaign when the elections are underway to build voter support, the question that must be asked is, what was the party doing between 2019 when it zoomed to winning 18 Lok Sabha seats and 40.64 per cent of the votes from a mere 10.16 per cent votes in 2016? One conclusion would be that as the West Bengal election grew closer, the BJP realised it needed time to deploy its mightiest weapon,

Mr Modi, in multiple locations to drum up the support and swing undecided voters to the safe side.

The need for a saturation campaign by Mr Modi is one way of acknowledging that Mamata Banerjee is a far stronger opponent than the BJP anticipated. It also means that the Trinamul Congress is not on its deathbed as a party and organisation, despite 30-odd recent defections, including the BJP's star acquisition Suwendu Adhikari, who seems to have dropped out of sight after the Nandigram voting.

A list of what makes the TMC and Ms Banerjee a far tougher challenge for the challenger, meaning BJP, is perhaps necessary to assess why the party is deploying Mr Modi in key constituencies to drum up the momentum it needs to get to the point where it can unseat the incumbent. In other words, the BJP has not as yet reached the tipping point.

Quite apart from usual comparisons, Ms Banerjee's popularity vis-a-vis Mr Modi's popularity, anti-incumbency at the state level, the attraction of the BJP as a new untested party in West Bengal, what will matter most is which party is best at holding the middle ground, meaning which party is most appealing to the median voter, the average woman/man in rural, urban and peri-urban West Bengal.

The BJP has shifted so far to the right, especially in terms of its Hindutva politics, and economic and divisive social engineering policies, that it is entirely dependent on the Hindu majority to give it the percentage of votes it needs to win an election,

especially in West Bengal. It boils down to being confident of getting at least 60 per cent of the total 70 per cent Hindu votes in the state, given that the overwhelming majority of 27 per cent Muslim voters are unlikely to choose the lotus symbol on EVM machines. Its leaders are quite candid that the party has no expectations of attracting Muslim votes; state party chief Dilip Ghosh as well as Amit Shah are on record about this.

Is it realistic that the BJP will get 60 per cent of the 70 per cent Hindu votes in West Bengal? It would appear, as yet, difficult. Bengal is split between conservatives, who uphold religious and social orthodoxy, and Bengal who reject it and embrace socially

progressive values. Till this election is over,

there is no knowing how the Bengali voter will react to state-sponsored religious orthodoxy that is divisive in its intent and destabilising of the uneasy equilibrium between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

It is instructive to note that in 2019, the BJP's surge to 40.64 per cent of votes was a switch that hitherto Left voters made, sending its vote-share plummeting to 6.34 per cent in 2019 from 19.75 per cent in 2016. Congress votes declined by over 50 per cent in 2019 to 5.6 per cent; the Trinamul Congress suffered a marginal erosion of votes in 2019 compared to 2016, even though it lost in 12 seats

to the BJP.

The Trinamul Congress, with over 43 per cent votes in 2019, obviously enjoys the support of a substantial section of Hindu voters. It is only if significant numbers of these voters shift away from Ms Banerjee that the BJP can muster the numbers it needs to oust India's only woman chief minister.

While the BJP campaign has focused almost exclusively on the evils of the Mamata Banerjee government, focusing on polarising the vote on religious identity lines by putting Muslim appeasement at the cost of the Hindu majority at the top of the list, it has ignored the quieter revival of the Left, led by the CPI(M), and the Samyukta Morcha as a new political combination that was created for this election. The Samyukta Morcha is contesting in all 294 seats; the Left is contesting in 177 seats, the Congress in 91 and the Indian Secular Front in 26 seats. The Left is fighting for its very survival, and in this election it is working to achieve a revival. Its pitch as the alternative is politically necessary but unrealistic. Any increase in the Left and Congress voteshare will take off votes that the BJP has been counting on to reach the tipping point. This can be offset if the Trinamul Congress loses its voters and loses the elections.

Whichever party makes it across the finishing line needs to occupy the middle ground in West Bengal in social and religious identity terms.

The BJP's promise to deliver better development and integrate West Bengal with the mainstream, which it believes it controls, comes with a promise to polarise the state on communal lines. Will that appeal to the run-of-the-mill Bengali, who as poet Shakti Chattopadhyay famously said, are into religion and into giraffes?

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

NEED STRICT NORMS

This is in reference to your report that the Chennai Metro Rail would impose a `200 spot fine from commuters who do not wear a mask inside the stations and in the trains from Sunday. While we welcome the railway's initiative, such steps should be taken by the state government against the violators of corona norms. The fine should be a minimum of `1,000 for politicians, who violate the norms. If we go through the TV news channels, we could spot the leaders and their followers, who fail to wear the mask and maintain social distancing. The leader of that party should foot all the penalties. To be frank, the present spike in the virus is mainly due to the violation of corona norms, by these political leaders, during their election meetings during the past month. Can someone bell these leaders, at least from now?

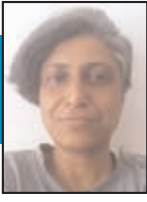
N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

SCINTILLATING WIN

When Chennai Super Kings scored 188 against Delhi Capitals in the allotted 20 overs in this edition of the IPL league, which started in Mumbai on Saturday, one felt that CSK was back to its winning ways. But Prithvi Shaw and Shikhar Dhawan of Delhi Capitals made mincemeat of CSK's bowling attack and paved the way for their team's incredible victory. They scaled up the target with seven wickets in hand and two balls to spare! Scintillating indeed! Rishabh Pant, the skipper of DC, seems to send an important message that he means business, be it batting or leading the team or whatever. Be that as it may, CSK, which has been at its low ebb since last year, needs to do a lot of homework to be a force to reckon with in the rest of the matches in the coveted tournament.

Syed Abdul Monim
Navi Mumbai

Onus on the moderate Muslim to reclaim Islam's heterodox legacy



Sucheta Dasgupta

review

Had it not been for the bitterly-wrought Partition, Sufism, which had its origins in the Arabian peninsula during the Prophet's lifetime but flourished in India in the 13th and 14th centuries, would have emerged as the signature model of inclusive and, as it happens, syncretic Islam. It would have acted as the counterweight to the Saudi-born fundamentalist Wahhabism. And it would have been, largely, an Indian contribution. This is the thesis of Ghazala Wahab's timely book that is simultaneously a ready-reckoner for Islam as well as an appeal to moderate Muslims to reclaim their faith.

Wahab's urgent intervention pertains to the current moral crisis afflicting Muslims who number over 1.9 billion and form about 25 per cent of the globe. Written in crisp prose filtered through a lens of empathy and humour, her quest to examine Islam draws equally on scripture, memoir and reportage. She interviews the who's who of Muslim India from politicians and bureaucrats to seminary heads and theologians. But she also has her ear to the ground, and is careful to catch every dilemma and strand of opinion of the common man and woman, be they a humble tradesman, the "new Muslim" or the successful professional, a dadi at Shaheen Bagh or a young student at the madrassa.

So far, the discourse on the Islamic question has been chiefly contained in the West, conducted as it has been by the likes of Susan Okin ("Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some

Tensions"), Ayaan Hirsi Ali (maker of *Submission*, belonging to the alt-right camp), Irshad Manji (founder of the Muslim refusenik movement), Ameena Wadud and "ex-Muslim" Sarah Haider. Barring Hasan Suroor's important 2019 work, however, this is the first book coming out of India capturing this discourse as it plays out in this country. The last fact makes it all the more accessible to the lay reader.

The reader, for instance, may be aware that much of the problems of the moderate Indian Muslim stems from their religious obligation to follow the Muslim orthodoxy, the ulema. But did they know that, as a phenomenon, the overarching influence of the mullahs is fairly recent? It began only after the collapse of the Mughal empire, before which the influence of the Sufis who were championed by the emperor was more widespread.

The predominant view about Sufism is that it exists outside Islam as a cult born out of the admixture of Hinduism with the Prophet's faith. But this is self-serving propaganda spread by two sources, the prejudiced West which failed to reconcile the sophistication of Sufi writings with what, in its view, was a "desert religion", and the Islamic orthodoxy itself. The origin of Sufism much predated its presence in India. Hazrat Rabia of Basra died in AD 801.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (AD 1058-1111) was the first scholar to lend theological heft to Sufi mysticism, marrying it with Sharia. While Golden Age (Abbasid) philosophers like Averroes and Avicenna were

among the first Muslim rationalists, it was Ghazali who arguably laid the foundation of Islamic heterodoxy. He said that as long as one believed in Allah and Muhammad, Islam could be practised in different ways. Nevertheless, this ruled out the philosophy of atheism. Neither of the Abrahamic religions is known to accommodate it.

Until a generation ago, there were two kinds of Muslims in India, the Communists and the conformists, Wahab says. The conformists were the regular moderate Muslims. If sceptic, they were careful to hide their worldview from the ulema. For them, the personal was not political. The Communists, on the other hand, identified as agnostic. They were, at best, cultural Muslims. While they had been drawn to this ideology because it resonated with the Islamic ideals of equality and justice, since they did not identify as true-blue Musلمان, within their community, their voices went unheard. Nor did they themselves find it important to address the dogma and bigotry from within by, say, reforming the clergy. Thus Wahab illustrates the failure of Left politics to address the fundamental reality of identity as well as

the Islamic problem.

Now, if Wahab is critical of Hindutva and Saudi preponderance on the clergy, she is equally irked by the Congress governments' minority politics. Citing Wajahat Habibullah's 2016 article, she mentions M.J. Akbar's role in the passage of the Rajiv Gandhi government's infamous 1986 Muslim women's bill. It was Akbar who had prevailed on Rajiv Gandhi to contest the Shah Bano judgment, saying that if he did not, it would appear that the Prime Minister did not regard the Muslim community as his own. Akbar was subsequently seen expanding this point in a Doordarshan debate against Arif Mohammad Khan.

The Hadith is contextual, writes the author, as is the Quran. The custodians of the faith need to move with the times in order to prevent the religion from atrophying. But what if one differs from the holy book in one's analysis of context? Is it not bowing to stereotype to regard the status of women as subhuman in tribal Arabia before the arrival of the Prophet? If so, what of the example of Khadija, the Prophet's first wife? Should have the Prophet's wives and honest, thereby more capable, women, rather than the already less powerful slave women, been robbed of their agency to operate in the cause of good via physical encumbrance only so as to distinguish one group from the other? Is covering up also either a moral or an ultimately effective way to combat sexist aggression? There are no easy answers. These are some areas that the book does not go into.

Elsewhere, the author does write that the opportunity for freethinking is limited when exercised from within the Islamic faith. Liberal Islam may indeed be an oxymoron, by that token. All the same, it is interesting to note how key definitions from other faiths sit perfectly inside it. The author's own liberal rational-

ism is the Buddhist way of the instinct- and deed-driven mahayana, while the orthodoxy's essentialism would be the intellect-driven hinayana way. Quite startlingly, the Hindu dichotomy of *dvaita-advaita* (dual and singular manifestations of God) also exists within Islam because the Naqshbandiyah order of Sufism rejects the Chishti and other silsila on the ground that the identification of the self with Allah is subjective and does not produce any objective manifestation, hence leading to idolatry.

The author's caveat is that the moderate Muslim even today has no voice or traction within the larger Muslim society. They are caught between the Hindu right wing that regards them as exceptional and thus invisibilises them and the Muslim right wing which disparages them for their apologetism. She exhorts these people to give up their conformism and take responsibility for their beliefs. Simultaneously, she notes a rise of Muslim exceptionalism and reverse identity politics among community members in reaction to Hindutva, as evidenced in the *La illah ila allah* sloganeering during the 2019 CAA protests.

"Young working professionals are overnight discovering headscarves. The more one points to the headscarf as a symbol of Islamic patriarchy or women's oppression, the more professional women turn up in one to register their protest." (p. 367)

Such an assertion of identity leads to the closedness of the mind in a way that runs contrary to freedom and modernism, she surmises.

Clearly, a gap exists between expressions of Muslim identity and its spirit of fearless large-heartedness. It is this gap that the book strives to fill. And in so doing it perhaps becomes the vehicle through which the writer bears her own shahadah to her Muslim heritage.

Urgent, cogent, matter-of-fact ready-reckoner on the C-virus



Ranjona Banerji

review

If you had to read just one book to explain the coronavirus pandemic that stopped the world in 2020, Anirban Mahapatra's Covid-19 should be it.

Written by a scientist for the lay reader, Covid-19 charts a fascinating course, from the life of a virus to its growth and spread, and animal and human responses to viruses. Mahapatra is a microbiologist who writes on science. I came across him on Twitter (@bhalomanush) as someone who explains fascinating inside stories of science without talking down or pontificating. That same easy tone makes this book easy to read even as it is filled with fact and explanation.

Covid-19 however does not just tackle the coronavirus pandemic from only the scientific perspective. Rather, it looks at historic, social and psychological angles as well. Earlier pandemics, how they affected humanity and the natural world, the way we responded and continue to respond to this "new normal" all come under consideration.

But it is the science that is the most gripping. What a virus actually is, how it expands its own lifecycle and propagation, how it jumps from life form to life form: in clear language and perspective we learn about the possible "RNA World" of almost billion years ago, the way evolution left the virus behind and yet how it continues to have such a devastating effect. We are fascinated with dinosaurs

because of their size and ferocity. But down here at the micro level, one coronavirus can be far more dangerous than a few *Tyrannosaurus rexes*!

One of the biggest achievements of this book is the lucid, non-judgmental manner in which Mahapatra debunks all the various swirls of misinformation around Covid-19 and its spread. For instance,

Published in 2021, barring the impact of large-scale vaccination, this is a very up-to-date book. It ends however with the large implications of this pandemic. Scientists have long warned us that one was overdue, but we did not take those warnings seriously enough. This bizarre year should at least teach us that we need to be ready. Mahapatra says over and again that this virus is going nowhere. Humanity has to be prepared, socially, culturally, politically and medically to deal with it.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

terms like "herd immunity" which are thrown about with that peculiar conviction that is born from incomplete understanding. He uses science and reason rather than anger, sarcasm and frustration to zap all the WhatsApp wisdom people are still fed with. How viruses spread, how they adapt themselves, how the human body fights them, why science finds it easy to find vaccines for some viruses and not others, most notably HIV-AIDs. We also learn how doctors



COVID-19: SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION
By ANIRBAN MAHAPATRA
Penguin, ₹599

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

India pip Argentina in Pro League tie

Buenos Aires: The Indian men's hockey team snatched a dramatic penalty shoot-out win over Olympic champions Argentina after Harmanpreet Singh kept the side afloat in regulation time with his two goals in the action-packed first game of their FIH Pro League tie here.

The draw guaranteed a point for each team, but it was the tourists who walked away with the bonus point, thanks largely to some brilliant goalkeeping by P.R. Sreejesh. As per the event's rules, the team winning the shoot-out also walks away with the bonus point. — PTI

Wrestlers return empty-handed

Almaty, Kazakhstan: National champion Sandeep Singh Mann (74kg) failed to qualify for the Olympic Games at the Asian Qualifiers here on Sunday, keeping veteran Sushil Kumar's Tokyo hopes alive in the weight category. Also missing out on qualification was Satyawart Kadiyan (97kg) and Sumit Malik (125kg) in the three-day competition that concluded here on Sunday. All those who missed out have one last chance to make the cut for the Tokyo Games at the World Olympic Qualifiers, scheduled to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 6-9. Sonam Malik and Anshu Malik were the only ones to qualify for the Games in Almaty. — PTI

Two Indian fencers test +ve in Cairo

New Delhi: Two Indian fencers participating in the World Junior and Cadet Championships in Cairo have tested positive for Covid-19, leading to them being quarantined there. Fencing Association of India (FAI) president Rajiv Mehta said that the infected fencers were doing fine and being looked after by the team doctor. "Yes, two fencers have tested positive and they are undergoing quarantine in Cairo," Mehta said. "Both the fencers are doing fine and they are being looked after by the doctor there," he added. India had fielded 24 fencers in all the three disciplines — sabre, foil and epee — in the tournament which ends on Sunday. — PTI

Real edge Barca in wild Clasico Benzema, Kroos score as Madrid go level on points with Atletico at top

Madrid, April 11: Real Madrid climbed to the top of La Liga on Saturday after Karim Benzema's flicked finish helped them claim a thrilling 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a wild *Clasico* at Valdebebas.

Benzema's superb piece of skill and a deflected Toni Kroos free-kick put Madrid in charge and while Oscar Mingueza pulled one back for Barca, they fell to defeat in what could be Lionel Messi's final appearance in this fixture. Victory means Real Madrid go level on points with Atletico, with the top three now separated by a single point.

Atletico, without the injured Luis Suarez, face Real Betis on Sunday.

But Real Madrid now own the better head-to-head against both of their rivals while Barcelona and Atletico still have to play each other at Camp Nou in the run-in.

With Atletico stumbling and both Barca and Real Madrid hitting their stride, this game looked set to define, if not the title, then who would become favourites to be



Real Madrid's Toni Kroos (second from left) celebrates with teammates after scoring against Barcelona during their *El Clasico* match at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium in Valdebebas, near Madrid on Saturday.

— AFP

crowned champions in May.

The result was a riveting contest at a rain-soaked Alfredo di Stefano stadium — certainly one of the most exciting *Clasicos* in years — that saw both

teams squander numerous chances, several efforts come back off the woodwork and Casemiro sent off in extra time.

With the last play of the game, Barcelona substitute Ilaix Moriba rattled

Real Madrid's crossbar.

"We're still in it," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman.

"We've lost a game against a team who is also fighting for the league but we have eight game left

THE RESULTS

Getafe	0
Cadiz	1
<i>(Timor 64-og)</i>	
Athletic Bilbao	0
Alaves	0
Eibar	0
Levante	1
<i>(de Frutos 45+2)</i>	
Real Madrid	2
<i>(Benzema 13, Kroos 28)</i>	
Barcelona	1
<i>(Mingueza 60)</i>	

and we will fight to the end."

Casemiro's red card had also given Messi a free-kick and the chance for a dramatic equaliser but instead the Argentinian made it seven games now without a goal against Real Madrid, with many wondering if his 45th *Clasico* will be his last.

Messi might yet turn the tide in the eight games still remaining but there is no doubt Madrid are in the groove after backing up beating Liverpool 3-1 on Tuesday with another crucial victory. — AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC SEES RED BUT AC MILAN WARD OFF PARMA

Milan, April 11: Zlatan Ibrahimovic set up two first-half goals before being sent off after an hour as 10-man AC Milan beat Parma 3-1 on Saturday to boost their Champions League hopes.

The 39-year-old Swede was given a straight red card for arguing with the referee when his team were two goals ahead.

Riccardo Gagliolo pulled one back for 19th-placed Parma minutes after Ibrahimovic's sending off, but Milan held on despite some late scares, with substitute Rafael Leao scoring a third in injury time.

Second-placed Milan closed the gap to leaders Inter, who host 18th-placed Cagliari on Sunday, to eight points. Stefano Pioli's Milan are pushing

for a return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

Struggling defending champions Juventus are four points behind Milan in third before hosting Genoa on Sunday, when fourth-placed Atalanta, who are a further point adrift, play at Fiorentina.

"It was important to win," said Pioli. "Ibra told me he didn't insult the referee."

"He told me he had a discussion which lasted some time, but he hadn't shown a lack of respect and absolutely did not insult him."

"He told me the last thing he said to (referee Fabio) Maresca was: 'So you don't care what I say?'"

— AFP

Havertz, Pulisic shine as Chelsea climb to 4th spot

London, April 11: Chelsea boosted their bid to finish in the Premier League's top four as Kai Havertz and Christian Pulisic starred in a 4-1 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Thomas Tuchel's side blew Palace away with a swaggering first half display inspired by Germany forward Havertz.

Chelsea are up to fourth place and sit two points clear of fifth placed Liverpool.

West Ham, also two points behind the Blues, would reclaim fourth if they beat Leicester on Sunday.

Havertz has endured a difficult time since his close-season move from

● **Thomas Tuchel's side blew Crystal Palace away with a swaggering first half display inspired by Germany forward Havertz.**

Bayer Leverkusen, but he gave a rare glimpse of his quality with the opening goal in south London.

The 21-year-old turned provider to set up Pulisic for the second goal before Kurt Zouma put Chelsea three up after 30 minutes.

Christian Benteke got one back for Palace in the second half, but Pulisic netted again as Chelsea cruised to their first win in three league games.

"Kai will never be our emotional leader, we don't expect him to be, but we expect to see his quality," Tuchel said.

"Honestly he needed to show he could do better, that was the challenge personally for him. He got a second chance to show up after Porto."

"There is still room to improve in his finishing, he should have been more ruthless and could have scored more but it was a good step."

Tuchel suffered his first defeat in 15 matches since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard when West Bromwich Albion claimed a 5-2 win at Stamford Bridge last weekend. — AFP

AUGUSTA | MASTERS GOLF

'Stunning' Hideki takes 4-stroke lead

Augusta (United States), April 11: Hideki Matsuyama unleashed an incredible back-nine shot-making display to seize a four-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the Masters, putting the Japanese star on the brink of a historic triumph at Augusta National.

Matsuyama, trying to become the first Japanese man to win a major title, fired a seven-under par 65, his career-low 18-hole Masters total and the first bogey-free round of the week, to stand on 11-under 205 after 54 holes.

"It will be a new experience for me being a leader going into the final round of a major," Matsuyama said. "I guess I'll relax as best I can and do my best tomorrow."

England's Justin Rose, Australian Marc Leishman and Americans Xander Schauffele and Will Zalatoris shared second on 209.

Rose, the 2013 US Open champion and a two-time Masters runner-up who led by one when the day began, needed a long par putt at 18 to salvage a second consecutive level par 72.

"I didn't play well enough today, simple as that," Rose said. "Of course I would have liked to have stayed with it a little better. To have a shot tomorrow, I'm delighted."

Matsuyama adapted as lightning-fast Augusta



Hideki Matsuyama reacts during the third round of the Masters golf tournament on Saturday. — AP

National was softened by rain, taking full advantage by going six-under in a seven-hole stretch of the back nine.

After a 78-minute storm delay, swirling winds vanished and the wet course was receptive. However, slowed greens became tricky to read — except by Matsuyama.

— AFP

CITY CLIPS

Dinesh wins tenpin title

Dinesh Kumar defeated Anand Raghav (2-1) in the final of the Tamil Nadu state-ranking tenpin bowling tournament at DU Bowl, Chennai.

Results: Final: Dinesh Kumar 2 bt Anand Raghav 1. **Special prizes: Highest average in 6 game block:** Mahipal Singh (209), **Highest average after 18 games:** Yusuf Shabbir (192.33).

Cricket coaching camp in Pondy

Christ Cricket Centre will conduct its first summer coaching camp for boys and girls above 6 years of age from April 14 at the Christ College of Engineering and Technology, Moolakulam (Puducherry). For details contact: 9841296056/9841811012.

"However, Rishabh Pant is very smart. He is fearless and enjoys the game. He's very entertaining on the field and is very cool and calm as a captain. He's doing a fantastic job for the team." —PTI