



## Three held for stabbing man

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Three people were arrested for allegedly stabbing a 22-year-old man to death and injuring his friend over a petty issue in east Delhi's Kalyanpur on Tuesday, the police said.

The police received information regarding a quarrel from the area around 2 a.m.

On reaching the spot, they found Abhimanyu of Khichdipur and Abhishek with stab wounds. They were attacked with knives by a group of men, a senior police officer said.

They were rushed to the Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, where Abhimanyu succumbed to injuries, the officer added. A case has been registered.

The victims had thrashed one of the accused over a petty issue. To take revenge, he along with two others attacked the victims.

## 2 firefighting robots to be inducted into DFS

Fire Service Week begins today

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

drones, concrete cutters among other things," Mr. Garg said.

In another first, the DFS has also deputed 500 fire operators on outsourced basis as the proposal for filling 706 such posts has been sent to the DSSSB. "The recruitment process has started, physical examination have been conducted and written test is likely to be conducted soon," Mr. Garg said.

He said that the government has allotted Gram Sabha land measuring 14.5 acres in north-west Delhi where a fire-training institute will be established. "This will be set up on the lines of Fire Service College Moreton in Marsh London. I am sure in the time to come, this will not only meet the needs of the department but will also serve entire northern region," he said.

**Improve efficiency**

"The department has procured equipment to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of response. The equipment includes cameras,

## Master plan-2041 draft gets DDA approval

It will be placed in public domain for inviting suggestions

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Tuesday gave preliminary approval for the Draft Master Plan for Delhi-2041 (MPD-2041). The draft will now be placed in public domain for inviting objections/suggestions.

The DDA said that the MPD-2041 has been divided into two volumes and nine sections which contain 22 chapters with the vision to "Foster a Sustainable, Liveable and Vibrant Delhi by 2041". The master plan, the DDA said will facilitate Delhi's development by assessing the present condition and guiding how to achieve the desired development. It is also upon the lessons learnt from the implementation of the previous plans

and based on learnings from across the country with respect to implementation of various projects and schemes, the DDA said.

### Future-ready city

Some of the salient features of the plan, the DDA said, is to make Delhi an environmentally responsible, future-ready city focusing on ease of living, good quality, affordable, clean and safe living environments and efficient mobility options to all. It also seeks to make Delhi a vibrant economic, creative and cultural hub that attracts talent and facilitates livelihood opportunities for everyone.

Other features of the plan, the DDA said, is to make it a more people-friendly document that is easy to read and

understand by the general public apart from professionals. It has provisions for green-blue areas for active/passive recreation and leisure and enhances Delhi's preparedness for climate change impacts and in tackling pollution.

The plan also has special provisions for preservation and redevelopment within identified heritage and cultural precincts with regeneration in the old and dilapidated areas by providing incentives for planned redevelopment.

The first master plan was promulgated in 1962 under the Delhi Development Act 1957, followed by the plans of 2001 and 2021, each of which is an extensive modification of the respective previous plan document.

## Will start mass movement to fight pollution, says Rai

Remark comes after 2-day conference

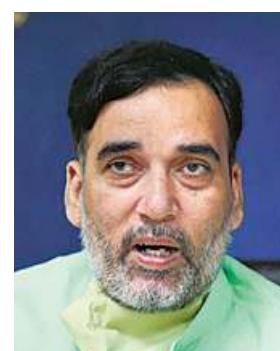
STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday said that the Delhi government will emphasise on public participation to reduce air pollution and will fight it as a "mass movement".

The Minister made the comment after a two-day long conference on measures to be taken to reduce air pollution in the city before the onset of winter.

"The Delhi government will fight against air pollution as a mass movement for which we will explore every possibility. The government will focus on changing the mindset and behaviour of people," Mr. Rai said.

Also, six units engaged in illegal vehicle cutting and dismantling have been sealed in Mundka, Tekri, Chanchal Park, and Nilothi of west district, officials of



Gopal Rai

the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) said.

"They were operating without DPCC consent and a large number of vehicles were being cut, causing damage to public health and environment. The team has sealed the premises and electricity has been disconnected. FIRs have also been launched at Mundka police station against the violators," an official said.

## TV journalist accused of rape joins investigation

He was granted HC relief from arrest

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old Mumbai-based television journalist who was accused of rape joined the investigation in the national capital on Tuesday, more than one-and-a-half months after he was booked, the police said.

A senior police officer said Varun Hiriyath was questioned for around seven hours on Sunday when he appeared before the police following High Court orders.

Among other things, he was asked about his whereabouts following the registration of the case, the police said.

## Civic bodies should extend help to vendors, says AAP

Over 200 shops gutted in Shastri Park'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday alleged that a fire gutted around 272 municipal corporation stalls at Shastri Park furniture market. It further said that despite a court order, the BJP-ruled civic body failed to spend ₹60 lakh to develop stalls at the market.

"A few days ago, a massive fire gutted around 272 municipal stalls at Shastri Park furniture market. However, not a single councillor or Mayor or even a Standing Committee member of the BJP-ruled civic body has visited the affected

area. Following a court order, 743 stalls were supposed to be put up for vendors evicted from Jama Masjid and Meena Bazar, which was the result of a long-drawn and hard-won battle. The municipal body was to spend ₹60 lakh to develop these stalls," AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said.

"We also request the BJP-ruled civic bodies to extend help to vendors who lost their shops. When the Aam Aadmi Party councillors went to the area on Monday, shopkeepers complained of lack of roads and toilets," Mr. Bharadwaj added.

## 'Upset with God' for no rain, man defiles statues, gets arrested

Bajrang Dal men halt traffic at Dwarka Mor in protest

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 50-year-old man, allegedly upset with God, has been arrested for allegedly defiling statues at three spots in Dwarka's Kakrola village on Tuesdays.

"We received a call at 7:45 a.m. regarding defiling statues at three spots in Kakrola," Mr. Meena said.

A group of people, including residents and local leaders of the area and those associated with the Bajrang Dal gathered at Dwarka Mor and stopped traffic. They were, however, pacified and the traffic movement was regulated, the police said.

During probe, the accused was identified with the help of human and technical surveillance and subsequently arrested.

### Case registered

During interrogation, the accused told the police that he was angry and upset with the God as there has been no rain this year and the weather is getting hotter day by day.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) S.K. Meena said that the accused has been identified as Mahesh, a resident of Bharat Vihar, JJ colony and is a cobbler.

The police said that on Tuesday morning, the man

allegedly defiled statues of lord Hanuman that were placed on a platform at three adjacent spots in Kakrola. The matter was reported to the police. The priest is said to have seen it first.

### Case registered

During interrogation, the accused told the police that he was angry and upset with the God as there has been no rain this year and the weather is getting hotter day by day.

A few persons associated with the Bajrang Dal staged a protest at Dwarka Mor following the incident.

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A group of people, including residents and local leaders of the area and those associated with the Bajrang Dal gathered at Dwarka Mor and stopped traffic. They were, however, pacified and the traffic movement was regulated, the police said.

"We have registered a case under the Indian Penal Code," said Mr. Meena.



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WEDNESDAY, APR. 14
RISE 05:57 SET 18:47
RISE 07:16 SET 20:49
THURSDAY, APR. 15
RISE 05:56 SET 18:47
RISE 07:50 SET 21:43
FRIDAY, APR. 16
RISE 05:55 SET 18:48
RISE 08:27 SET 22:38

<b>Delhi Weather</b>	max	min
Delhi City	40	19
Safdarjung	40	19
Palam	41	22

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# 'Youth getting infected as they are going out for work, parties'

Doctors say those under 45 more vulnerable now, new strains more infectious

**NIKHIL M BABU**  
NEW DELHI

A higher proportion of people below 45 years of age are getting infected with COVID-19 this year than in 2020 as they are stepping out for work, pleasure trips and parties, said doctors at multiple hospitals across the city. However, they claimed that most of the ICU admissions are still elderly.

They also said the virus may be now more infectious than before due to mutations, but there is no data to establish it at this point.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday reiterated that 65% of patients were below 45 years of age as per data of the last 10-15 days. Head of Department of Internal Medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital S.P. Byotra said this year more children are getting infected with the

**Earlier, in a family of five, two might test positive and the rest negative. But now, in most cases all members of a family are testing positive**

**SUMIT RAY**  
Head of Department of Critical Care at Holy Family Hospital

virus than last year.

"They develop fever, cough, cold, but it is not severe in most cases. For elderly people, the severity is more as they have comorbidities. Last year, people were scared to go outside, which is not the case now. This month, we have seen dozens of people in their 20s and 30s, college students and married couples, who said they had gone for a trip or a party and got infected after it," said Dr. Byotra. Epidemiologist and presi-

dent of Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Delhi, K. Srinath Reddy, said more young people getting infected is a trend in other parts of the country too.

"Even in the United Kingdom, more young people are getting infected," he said. Head of Department of Critical Care at Holy Family Hospital Sumit Ray said there are three reasons why more people below 45 years of age are testing positive.

**Three reasons**

"One, they are more mobile. Two, older people are more cautious and many of them have taken the vaccine. Three, the virus has definitely become more infectious. Earlier in a family of five, two might test positive and later on, two-three might test negative. But now, in most cases all members of a

family are testing positive," he said.

Dr. Ray said one-fifth of the ICU patients in the hospital are below 45 years of age and one-third in general wards are below 45 years.

Medical Director of Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital Suresh Kumar said that even the young people are developing severe illnesses. "Many people below the age of 45 are also getting admitted in ICUs," he said.

Senior Consultant at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital Suranjit Chatterjee said many of the younger people are not following COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"They are working and going out. Last year, there was a lockdown, but everything is open now. Clinically, there is a suspicion that the virus is more infectious now," he added.

# Putting in place more efficient hospital planning system: CM

Kejriwal appeals to Centre to cancel CBSE board exams

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said the government was putting in place a more efficient hospital planning system.

To ensure only severe COVID-19 patients get access to beds, doctors will now be monitoring each and every patient within the hospital to see if any of them can be cured at home, he said.

**Donate plasma, says CM**  
He requested people to postpone planned surgeries and asked those who have recovered recently from the virus to donate plasma as there was a shortage of the same in the city.

Speaking at a digital briefing, Mr. Kejriwal said: "If doctors feel that a particular patient can be cured at home, they will be requested to go back home. This is



**ARVIND KEJRIWAL**  
Chief Minister

cooperate with the doctors. "I request everyone to have faith and let the hospital management function smoothly. Please understand, we are shouldering the responsibility of the whole of Delhi and their well-being. For us, each life matters," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He added that some banquet halls and hotels have been attached to nearby hospitals to place COVID patients who do not need intensive care, thereby making it easier to transfer them to the hospitals immediately if required.

Mr. Kejriwal appealed to the Central government to cancel the CBSE board exams – scheduled to begin on May 7. He requested the CBSE to find an alternative method like online examinations or passing students with the help of internal assessment.

## Celebratory mood



Artists perform Gatka, an Indian martial art associated with the Sikhs, to mark Baisakhi at the farmers' protest site in Ghazipur on Tuesday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

## Gurugram sets aside 70% ICU beds for virus patients

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GURUGRAM

At least 40% beds in general category and 70% in Intensive Care Unit/ventilator category in all public and private hospitals in Gurugram district would be reserved for the COVID-19 patients in view of sudden surge in cases of the infection, said an order by district administration on Tuesday.

In a two-page order, District Magistrate Yash Garg directed that "at least 40% of total beds capacity of ICU/ventilator category of all public/private hospitals" were to be dedicated for the COVID-19 patients with adequate availability of human resource and logistics. The order further said the details about the number of beds available be updated on the web portal <https://onemapgpm.gmda.gov.in> for "cogent, empirical planning and establishing systematic surveillance at the district level".

The order said the district administration was in need of more dedicated COVID ICU and ventilator beds since the number of cases in a single day had crossed the 1,100-mark and there were 6,000 active cases.

## BJP, Cong. lash out at govt. over health infrastructure

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The State units of the BJP and the Congress on Tuesday lashed out at the Delhi government for "failing to strengthen" State-run hospitals to deal with the fourth wave of COVID-19.

Delhi BJP resident Adesh Gupta said: "The fourth COVID wave is on the upswing since the past 10 days but till date the Kejriwal government has not declared any of its bigger hospitals, including LNJP as COVID dedicated but had converted 14 private hospitals into COVID only hospitals."

He added that treatment in these hospitals is very costly and beyond reach of lower and middle-class people.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said alleged that there were only 26 ventilators available for new patients in Delhi government hospitals.



The Nizamuddin centre has been locked since March 31, 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO

The HC said it was "unfortunate" that such a statement was made when the issue was yet to be decided.

It will hear the case again on April 15.

Senior advocate Ramesh Gupta, appearing for the Board, questioned how gatherings are being permitted outside temples in the Capital when the same was prohibited by the DDMA.

The direction came while the court was hearing a plea by the Delhi Waqf Board to reopen the Nizamuddin centre where the Tablighi Jamaat congregation are held. It has been locked since March 31 last year.

The HC expressed displeasure over a statement given to the media by the Board's chairperson, Amanullah Khan, who said that the court has allowed the mosque to be made operational.

On November 24, it had recorded three deaths. There were 229 new cases and the tally rose to 27,957. The number of active cases climbed to 1,602, the Health Department said. Fifty-five more patients recuperated, taking the recoveries to 26,258, it said.

## Is the ban on gatherings being enforced across the board, HC asks govt.

It was hearing a plea by waqf board



The Nizamuddin centre has been locked since March 31, 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO

The HC said it was "unfortunate" that such a statement was made when the issue was yet to be decided.

It will hear the case again on April 15.

Senior advocate Ramesh Gupta, appearing for the Board, questioned how gatherings are being permitted outside temples in the Capital when the same was prohibited by the DDMA.

He asked whether the DDMA order was applicable only to a particular religious community.

## COVID deaths in Noida hit 4-month high

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded four COVID deaths on Tuesday, taking the district's toll to 97, official data showed. This is the first time in over four months that the district witnessed more than a single death due to COVID in a day.

On November 24, it had recorded three deaths.

The recovery rate reached 93.92 per cent, the statistics showed. The number of active cases in the State reached 95,980 from 81,576 the previous day, while the recoveries climbed to 6.18 lakh and the toll to 9,309, the department said.

Gautam Buddha Nagar

has a toll of 97 with a mortality rate of 0.34 per cent.

The recovery rate reached 93.92 per cent, the statistics showed. The number of active cases in the State reached 95,980 from 81,576 the previous day, while the recoveries climbed to 6.18 lakh and the toll to 9,309, the department said.

Gautam Buddha Nagar

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## ENTERPRISE CONNECT

PNB commemorates 127 years of service to the nation: Launches PNB@Ease outlet

Celebrating its illustrious legacy of 127 years of service to the nation, Punjab National Bank launched a unique pilot project PNB@Ease outlet. The model offers "Banking-on-the-Go" service where every transaction undertaken by a bank branch will be initiated and authorized by the customers themselves. The service can range from savings accounts opening to availing various loans and more, without visiting a branch or help from the bank employees. Going forward, the Bank would roll out PNB@Ease across 165 identified locations across India. With an option to get assisted by bank staff, PNB@Ease outlets will be loaded with five Kiosks i.e. ATM, Bunch Note Accepter, Account Opening Kiosk, Card Issuance Kiosk and internet-enabled Kiosk. This facility will enable the customers to avail all banking services under one roof. Additionally, PNB@Ease outlets would boost the Bank's distribution capability and lower the cost of customer acquisition. First such multi-functional outlet was inaugurated by Sh. Debasish Panda, IAS, Secretary and Sh. Pankaj Jain, IAS, Additional Secretary, Department of Financial Services at the Central Secretariat Metro Station. On its 127th foundation day, PNB announced various digital initiatives such as instant opening of online saving account via video-KYC, insta pre-approved loan, insta demat account and insurance facility through internet and mobile banking services. Thanking customers, employees and other stakeholders for their selfless contribution and support during the challenging times, Shri C.H. S. Mallikarjuna Rao - MD and CEO of PNB, said, "127th Foundation day of PNB is a momentous occasion for us in line with our legacy. Despite the challenges put forward by the pandemic, we have seamlessly amalgamated two banks with us. The integration of technology, people and business, was completed in record time enabling us to tap the growth opportunities. Customer service is paramount to us and to continue to serve the customers better, we have taken a few initiatives in the area of digitalization. These include PNB@Ease outlet, Online Savings account opening with Video KYC, Online Pre-approved personal loan, Online Insta-Demat account and more."

GAIL launches a video on Healthy Lifestyle on World Health Day

GAIL (India) Limited, through its clean air initiative Hawa Badlo, launched a video on World Health Day highlighting health hazards due to increasing pollution levels which causes respiratory problems and providing health tips. The video urges peoples to practice healthy practices like Pranayam, Yoga, Meditation walking, cycling and exercises. These help in building immunity, managing stress, creating mindfulness, improving cognitive performance and sleep and will also improve health, strength, balance & flexibility for the body. An engagement contest "#PledgeForHealthyLife" has been initiated through this video for larger participation of people who are enthused to share their stories, poems, and slogans in both photo as well as video showing their positive inclination towards health and happiness. Hawa Badlo attempts to mobilize collective societal efforts to improve the deteriorating air quality by encouraging sustainable and environment friendly lifestyle habits such as planting trees, cycling, walking, carpooling, using public transport, conserving energy and using cleaner energy options. The Hawa Badlo movement has been actively working towards educating the masses against air pollution through digital initiatives, events, short films, contests, raahgiri, pledges, etc.

BHEL Organises Communication Fortnight

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has organised its first ever Communication Fortnight - 'Abhyakti', which was inaugurated by Dr. Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, through a virtual platform. The program, which is aimed at improving

communication for bringing about better employee engagement, is being organised across all the units of BHEL around the country. Addressing a pan-India cross-section of employees, Dr. Shinghal stressed on the role of timely, truthful and complete communication in developing faith, confidence & commitment amongst employees and that communication needs to be a two-way effort. "We need to go beyond the fortnight. The program should lay the foundation, and communication across the organisation should be made much more effective and on a sustained basis, so that we all have complete clarity about our roles & objectives. We know what we want to achieve and we march purposefully toward our objectives and targets", he said. The fortnight includes talks and interactive sessions of employees and the management, function heads, professionals and domain experts, in addition to contests, competitions and knowledge sharing across the company.

**Nabard Inaugurates College annex building in Andhra Pradesh built by NBCC**

On 19th March 2021, Dr. G.R. Chintala, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) inaugurated the College Annex Building in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh built by NBCC. Shri Kurusala Kanna Baba, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture and Cooperation, Govt. of A.P.; Dr. A. Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, ANGRAU and dignitaries from various Govt. bodies along with Shri A.K. Bhardwaj, SBG Head (AP & Telangana), NBCC and senior officials from NBCC were present during the event. The landmark project consists of 140 Rooms approximately that boasts of smart Classrooms, Laboratories, Staff offices, etc. in a total built-up area of about 15,915 Sq.m. The company being a major implementing agency of the Govt. of India currently executing various iconic projects such as academic buildings of Central/State Universities, IITs and IIIMs across the nation.

**Punjab Govt. releases Rs 10106 crores subsidy for FY 2020-21**

In order to help all the farmers, weaker sections of the society and promote industry in the state Punjab government has released Rs.10106 crore subsidy to Punjab state power corporation limited for financial year 2020-21. This was stated by Shri A.Venu Prasad CMD PSPCL in a press note here today. He said that PSPCL is providing subsidy to 36.27 lacs consumers of various categories in the state. CMD said that out of Rs.10621 crore, Rs.7180 crore subsidy has been earmarked for 13.87 lacs consumers of agriculture sector, Rs. 1513 crore subsidy for 21 lacs domestic consumers having sanctioned load upto 1 kilowatt, 200 units per month to SC/BPL/BC consumers and 300 units per month to freedom fighter consumers. For Industrial consumers of Punjab for SP category Power is supplied at the rate Rs 5 per kWh including fixed charges and for LS/MS category at the rate Rs 5 per kWhVA as variable charges. In addition to subsidy payment, punjab government has also taken over UDAY loan of Rs.15628 crore on 31.03.2020 and paid interest on UDAY bonds of Rs.1307 crore during the year 2020-21. He added that punjab government has also paid Rs.579 crore to punjab state power corporation limited for loss funding during the year 2020-21 under UDAY scheme. He further added that in addition to this there is a balance of subsidy of Rs.5779 crore upto 31.03.2020.

**NFL achieves Highest-ever Fertilizer Sale of 59.36 Lakh MT**  
NFL has, once again, recorded highest-ever total Fertilizer Sale of 59.36 Lakh MT in 2020-21 beating its previous best of 57.04 Lakh MT achieved during 2019-20. This includes sale of company's own Urea, imported Urea and other P&K fertilizers. On the production front, the company produced 37.99 Lakh MT of urea in its plants recording a capacity utilisation of 117.6% despite severe restrictions of

## A Business Initiative

Covid19 and other despatch related challenges due to farmers' agitation in Punjab. In the plants, Panipat unit has set a new production record of urea and Bentonite Sulphur and Vijaipur unit produced Highest ever volume of biofertilizers. Other than fertilizers, the company registered steep growth in sale of Seeds and Agrochemicals. While sale of seeds grew by 35% than CPLY at 1,85,550 Quintals, the agrochemicals segment indicated a growth of 95% than the previous year. Even the sale of Bentonite Sulphur, produced at NFL's Panipat plant, has recorded huge growth of 150% at 19958 MT against 7974 MT in CPLY. Also the Industrial Products segment performed exceedingly well during the year.

**IRCTC restarts "Hunar Se Rozgar Tak" Programme**

The Indian Railways, under the leadership of Hon'ble Minister for Railways, Commerce and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Distribution have been undergoing massive technological revolution in pursuance of Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of "Startup India", "Stand up India" & "Atmanirbhar Bharat" to ensure that the world looks upon India as a self-reliant country and as an Human Resource Capital of the world. IRCTC has already conducted skill development programme for approx 2500 Nos. of trainees & also restarted short term skill development programme namely "Hunar Se Rozgar tak" under 'CBSP' Capacity Building for Service Providers scheme sponsored by Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. The programme is aimed at targeting persons in need to acquire skills facilitative to employment in the field of Hospitality, Catering & Tourism. The program is being conducted at IRCTC Base Kitchen Complex, New Delhi Railway Station, Ajmeri Gate Side, and New Delhi for the year 2020-21. The skill development Employability certificates offered under this program are Multi Cuisine Cook (3 Months) Food & Beverage Service (Steward) (2 1/2 Months) & Home Delivery Boys (2 Months). To apply for Cooks & Home Delivery Boys courses, candidates must be minimum 8th class pass and for Food & Beverage Service course candidates must be 10th pass. Candidates should be of minimum 18 years of age for both courses.

**Concor organizes webinar on ' Indigenous Manufacturing of Containers '**

India's leading multimodal logistics company Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR) is a Navratna Public Undertaking of Ministry of Railways, Government of India with pan India footprints. Inspired by the Atma Nirbhar Bharat vision CONCOR organized a Webinar on "Indigenous Manufacturing of Containers" on 05-03-2021, against the backdrop of container shortage in the country. Hon'ble Minister for Railways Shri Piyush Goyal delivered the Keynote address in Webinar. CONCOR involved all Stakeholders related to container manufacture, maintenance and operation in the Webinar. Indigenous manufacturing of containers shall be a big boost for Indian industries and generate employment for the youth. Cutting down dependence on import of containers shall also save India precious foreign exchange. Further to the above Webinar organised by CONCOR for Manufacturing of Containers in India under the direction of H'ble Minister of Railways, CONCOR has floated an Expression Of Interest (EOI) on 06.04.2021 with the aim of preparing and showing the way forward for prospective Indigenous Container Manufacturers for the forthcoming Competitive Bidding Process. As per this EOI, CONCOR plans to place developmental orders of a minimum of 1000 Containers each on a maximum of six (6) vendors. Container Manufacturers meeting the norms of Public Procurement (Preference to Make-in-India) Order, 2017 of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Public procurement Section dated 16.09.2020 shall be categorized as Indigenous Container Manufacturers.

**North Eastern Railway**

Tender Notice No. 01 of Year 2021-22 Sealed open tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (S&T), N.E. Railway, Itzatnagar for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works:

**Description of Works :** 1. Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of IPS-HBL make over Izzatnagar Division for Three Years. Approx. Value : ₹ 20,33,640.00, Completion Period : 36 Months, Technical Condition : RDSO approved manufacturing firm or authorized by RDSO approved firm. Description of Works :

2. Annual Maintenance Contract for three years of GG Tronics make Single Section Digital Axle Counter installed over different sections of Izzatnagar Division. Approx. Value : ₹ 42,71,948.22, Completion Period : 36 Months, Technical Condition :

RDSO approved manufacturing firm or authorized by RDSO approved firm. Description of Works :

3. Miscellaneous Outdoor Signalling works along with part supply of S&T Items in connection with commissioning of sliding barrier and ELB at different sections of Izzatnagar Division. Approx. Value : ₹ 75,35,896.91, Completion Period : 6 Months, Technical Condition : -----.

**Description of Works :** 4. Miscellaneous Signalling works in connection with construction of LHS in place of 6 manned LC gates in Izzatnagar Division. Approx. Value : ₹ 50,37,030.90, Completion Period : 6 Months, Technical Condition : -----.

**Date & Time of Closing of e-tender :** 17.05.2021 at 11:00 Hrs. • Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. • The tender can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> • The tender bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must have register on IREPS portal. • All relevant papers must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering.

• Div. Signal & Telecom, Engineer, CPRO/Sig-01 N.E. Railway/Izzatnagar

About any Passenger Amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955

Do not smoke Bid/Cigarette in train

## 1947, 1984... 2021 last battle for me: 92-yr-old protester

He was found semi-conscious at Singhu border 10 days ago

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

tant for him. One of his family members – who was found to be in Kuwait – was contacted and his photographs and videos were also sent but the relative allegedly didn't respond.

Sitting in a hall, Mr. Singh said he spent two months at a protest site in Gurdaspur and then came here with a group in February.

Mr. Singh claims he was 18 years old during the 1947 Partition.

## 'Won't die till I win'

"I have witnessed it all and have fought all the fights. Be it 1947 or 1984. We will always be in optimism and joy. This is my last battle, and I will not die till it is won," said Mr. Singh.

On Baisakhi (Tuesday), Nihang Sikhs at Singhu border protest had put up a show using their weapons and at Tikri border too, there were events lined up. Many at the protest site said the festival won't mean anything till they have won.

## APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



## SEARCH FOR MISSING BOY

General public is hereby informed that one Boy Name: Piyush S/o Sh. Satveer R/H No. 158, Near MCD Park, Village Bakoli, Delhi, Age: 17 Years, Height: 5'4", Built: Strong, Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: White Shirt, Black Lower and Slipper in Feet has been missing since 23.03.2021 from the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 124/21, dated 23.03.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

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

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

SHO

A stylized, colorful portrait of Biju Patnaik, an Indian politician. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing dark-rimmed glasses and a blue suit jacket over a white shirt. The background is filled with dense, repeating text in Hindi, which appears to be a collage of various political statements or news snippets. The overall style is graphic and modern.

राज्य  
सभी ने  
जाता है।  
  
प्रत्येक से  
दर्पण होता है। वह  
एवं आकांक्षाओं पर आधारित रहता है।

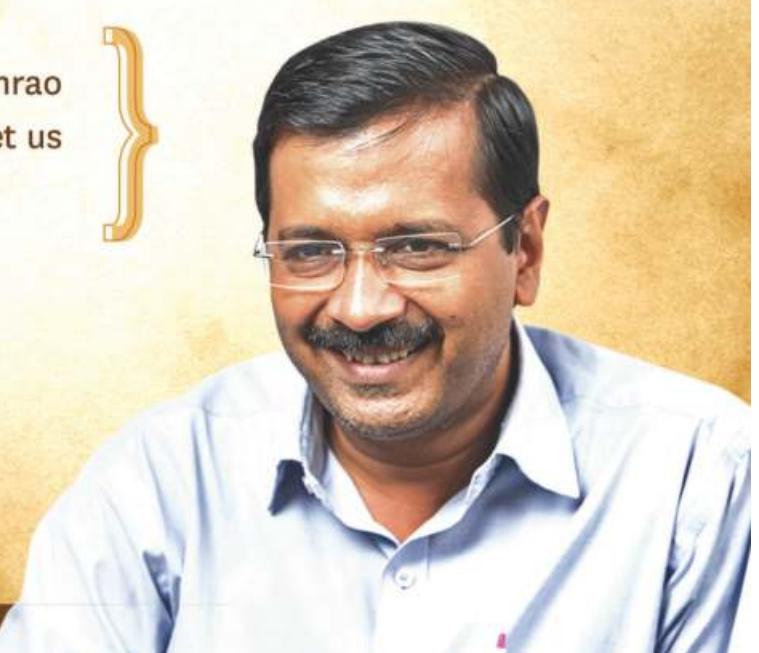
संविधान को एक जड़ दस्तावेज़ भाव में होना चाहिए औ यह गोपनीय संविधान के बहुत अलग नहीं है, जो संविधान के भूलभाऊ में लिखित है। संविधान सक्रिय संस्थानों का एक उद्दीपक सद्बुद्ध है; यह विरतर प्रनपता रहता है, पल्लवित डोल रखता है। हर संविधान इसी

# Heartfelt Tribute to Bharat Ratna **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** on his birth anniversary



"We pay our tribute to the father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, who fought a long battle for justice and equality. Come, let us follow in his footsteps and create the India of his dreams."

- Arvind Kejriwal,  
Chief Minister, Delhi



## Punjab CM rejects officer's resignation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday refused to accept the resignation of an IPS officer after the High Court reportedly quashed the probe led by him in two cases of police firing.

Inspector General Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh headed the Special Investigation Team of the Punjab police, probing the 2015 police action in Kotkapura and Belbal Kalan in Faridkot district against people protesting over the alleged desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib. Two people were killed.

The officer sought premature retirement days after the High Court reportedly quashed the SIT inquiry. The copy of the court order, however, is yet to come out.

According to reports, the HC on Friday also asked the State govt. to reconstitute the SIT without Singh.

# Vote against those who made you sit on the roads: BKU to farmers

The message has already reached the ground, says outfit leader Yudhvir Singh

**ANUJ KUMAR**  
GHAZIABAD

Describing the report in a national newspaper misleading, Bhartiya Kisan Union national general secretary Yudhvir Singh said on Tuesday that he didn't say BKU is not against BJP.

Mr. Singh's alleged statement led to chatter in social media groups about whether the BKU had been able to sustain farmers' anger against the BJP and whether the Ti-kait brothers would put their weight behind those who could spoil BJP's prospects in the upcoming panchayat polls in the State.

"What I meant was BKU is not a political organisation and we don't tell people where to vote in a panchayat election. But I also said farmers could cast their vote for any candidate except for the BJP supported ones," said Mr.



Farmers at the protest site at the Singhu border on Tuesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Singh.

"All along, our protest is against the anti-farmer policies of the BJP-led government and Samyukt Morcha of which BKU is a part have been repeatedly appealing to farmers to punish those who have made them sit on the road," Mr. Singh added.

In an official release, he also reminded how BKU leaders had travelled to States

where Assembly elections were being held. However, sources in BKU said the organisation didn't want to take on the BJP directly before the Assembly elections, which are still almost a year away. "The message has already reached the ground and there is no need to underline it in panchayat elections as they are fought by individuals and not party."

Another factor in panchayat elections is that there is no unity among the Opposition as well. While Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal are putting on a united front for Assembly elections, in zila panchayat president elections, they are supporting ar-chivials in many districts.

Sunil Rohata, RLD spokesperson said panchayat election was an opportunity to strengthen the cadre and no party would let go of it. "In

West U.P., farmers are behind the RLD," he asserted.

"So, the subtle message is to support whomever you find strongest against the BJP-supported candidate," said Dharmendra Malik, media in-charge of BKU.

However, State vice president Rajvir Singh said the message should be clearly defined so that nobody could distort it. "When you can speak against the BJP clearly in Bengal, what is stopping you to say it in west U.P.?" asked a senior leader, re-questing anonymity.

### Simmering anger

Emphasising that there is anger against the ruling party, Mr. Singh said BJP could not find candidates to support in all the 14 zila panchayat seats in Ghaziabad. "It shows which way the wind is blowing."

## Beginning with a prayer



A crowded market near the Jama Masjid in Delhi on the eve of the beginning of the month of Ramzan on Tuesday. ■ PTI

## ED raids four locations in Tripura, seizes Bangladeshi, Indian cash

Taka worth ₹30 lakh and ₹22 lakh currency recovered

**SYED SAJJAD ALI**  
AGARTALA

Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted simultaneous raids at four different places in Tripura on Tuesday and recovered huge cash of unaccounted Indian and Bangladeshi currencies. The ED booked the offenders under the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 in connection with the raids conducted jointly with the State police.

Superbijalha District Superintendent of Police Krishnendu Chakraborty informed that huge amounts of Bangladeshi and Indian

**C** The second raid at Boxanagar on the Bangladesh border yielded nothing. Joint teams of the ED and police also conducted raids at two locations in Agartala. They seized cash amounting ₹5 lakh from a foreign currency exchange centre at Rammagar locality.

Mr. Chakraborty, however, said the second raid at Boxanagar on the Bangladesh border yielded nothing. Joint teams of the ED and police also conducted raids at two locations in Agartala. They seized cash amounting ₹5 lakh from a foreign currency exchange centre at Rammagar locality.

Sources said two senior officials and some ED staffers arrived here from Kolkata on Monday and planned raids in consultation with senior police officials. They said the ED was secretly probing offences of money laundering against several businessmen of the State.

**KRISHNENDU CHAKRABORTY**  
District Superintendent of Police

currencies were recovered from the house of Gour Saha at Durgapur village in Sonamura sub-division. "ED and our team seized Bangladeshi currency worth ₹30 lakh and Indian currency amounting ₹22 lakh", he told *The Hindu*.

## Udaipur institution gets global aid for prosthetics and orthotics

₹1.34 crore received for starting central fabrication unit

**MOHAMMED IQBAL**  
JAIPUR

An Udaipur-based charitable institution has received a global grant worth ₹1.34 crore for starting a central fabrication unit to manufacture and supply prosthetics and orthotics with computer-aided design technology for differently abled persons. The artificial limbs will be distributed free of cost through camps to be organised at remote places all over the country.

The Narayan Seva Sanshodhan (NSS), engaged in corrective surgeries and manufacture of artificial limbs at its workshop, will use the integrated computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) platform for fabrication of prosthetics with precision. The new unit will



Artificial limbs being fabricated at a workshop in Udaipur. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Children sold sodas, tea, samosas, popcorn and explained about the project by giving "hugs for free".

### Fund raising

Before the Rotary International offered the grant to NSS, the Seva Project launched for raising funds accumulated \$40,000 by connecting Indian-American singer and inspirational speaker Sparsh Shah with the drive to support the institution. Seventeen-year-old Sparsh, a resident of New Jersey, has a rare brittle bone disorder.

Mr. Agarwal said the new central fabrication unit would enable the differently abled to be a part of the mainstream society and create new opportunities for them in the near future.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Named:** Suman **D/o** Late Raj Kumar **R/o** House of Manjeet, Gali No. 2, Vijay Colony, Bawana, Delhi has been missing from her house since 14.03.2021. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 148/21 u/s 363 IPC dated 22.03.2021 has been registered at Police Station Bawana, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

**Age:** 16 Years, **Height:** 4'8", **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Black colour salwar and green colour suit.

Any person having any information/Clue about this Missing girl, may inform SHO, Bawana, Delhi at E-mail Id - [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

**Phone:** 011-24368638, 24368641 **SHO:** P.S. Bawana, Delhi  
**Fax No.** 011-24368639 **Outer North Distt., Delhi:** Ph. No. 011-27752534, 7065036321

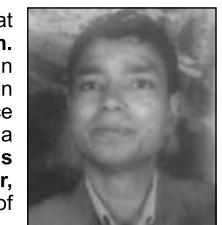
## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one person namely **Firoz S/o Lt. Sh. Abdul Rajak R/o H.No. J3/132, Kishan Kunj, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from her residence area since 15.02.2021. In this regard, a case DD NO. 67A Dated 17.02.2021 has been registered at P.S. Laxmi Nagar, East District, Delhi. The description of the missing person as under.

**Age:** 35 Years, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 5' 2", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Hair & Eyes:** Black & Medium, **Wearing:** Black jacket and off-white pant and formal sleepers in feet.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/ kidnapped person then please inform P.S. Laxmi Nagar, East District, Delhi at following Tel. No./e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

**Phone:** 011-24368638, 24368641 **Sd/- S.H.O.** P.S: Laxmi Nagar, East District, Delhi  
**Fax No.** 011-24368639 **DP/462/ED/2021** **Ph:** 011-22342441



**FIROZ**

## Allahabad HC mints total lockdown in affected districts

It calls for curbs on all gatherings amid public health crisis

**OMAR RASHID**

LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court has asked the Uttar Pradesh government to consider the viability of a complete lockdown for at least two or three weeks in districts where COVID-19 infection has increased alarmingly.

**JUDGES**  
The situation is so alarming that if it is not handled carefully and cautiously we may lead to stage of complete collapse of public health system

been informed that COVID hospitals were "over-flooded" with patients and there was a shortage of both manpower and facilities in the hospitals.

### Complete collapse

"The situation is so alarming that if it is not handled carefully and cautiously we may lead to stage of complete collapse of public health system," the judges said.

"What we need to ensure is that there is no unnecessary public movement even during the day," the court observed. "We need to restrict public movement at least for a week or 10 days to break the chain. If life survives one would regain wealth and improve his economy. After all every development is for people and if there are no men there will be no use of any development activity," the court said.

The court also stated that "We must give priority to public health over elections" and hoped that the government would streamline every department of public health and public care in the light of directions issued by it to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Night curfew or COVID curfew imposed on many districts on instructions from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is a small step and could only curb night parties and large religious congregation in the coming month of Ramzan and Navratri, the court said.

A Division Bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar said the court had

## Spike in virus cases dampens Bihu spirit

Meghalaya imposes night curfew while Mizoram shuts schools up to Class 8

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GUWAHATI

A spike in COVID-19 cases and strict guidelines issued by the Assam government has dampened the festive spirit ahead of Rongali or Bohag Bihu beginning Wednesday.

Officials of the Health and Family Welfare Department said 583 out of 1,02,182 people tested positive on Monday, taking the active cases count to 2,387. The positivity rate of 0.75% was "manageable", but the spread of the cases has been a cause for concern.

More than 33% of the cases were detected in Kamrup (Metro) district, which mostly comprises Guwahati, where the major Bihu functions are organised.

The Bihu organisers are

**KAILASH NATH SARMA**  
Advisor to Brihatter Guwahati Bihu Sammilani Sanammay Raksha Samiti

miffed with the standard operating procedures issued by the district authorities on April 9, asking them to obtain prior permission for the programmes, sanitise the venues twice and winding up the programmes by 11 p.m. Each member of a Bihu organising committee was also asked to undergo tests for COVID-19.

"A lot of investment goes into organising Bihu functions that have traditionally carried on well past midnight

carried on well past midnight. After 2020 was lost to COVID-19 lockdown, people have been looking forward to enjoying Bihu this time, but the strict regulations have come in the way," said Kailash Nath Sarma, advisor to the Brihatter Guwahati Bihu Sammilani Sanammay Raksha Samiti, a coordination body of Bihu committees in the city.

### Relaxation demands

He said that the festival organisers have protested demanding relaxation of the restrictions as well as assignment of volunteers by the district administration at Bihu sites for testing and sanitising.

Assam's neighbours in the northeast too have geared up

to prevent the spread of the new strain of the novel coronavirus. Meghalaya imposed night curfew from Sunday but has resisted deferring the high school and higher secondary school, leaving exams under the State Board from April 16.

D.P. Wahlang, the State's Principal Secretary for Education, admitted many parents were wary of sending their wards to the examination centres. "But we need to take decisions that are locally relevant," he said.

Mizoram, on the other hand, has not taken any chances although the number of active cases there is among the lowest. The State government has closed down schools for students in Classes up to 8.

## Mukhyamantri Laghu Evam Kutir Udyam Vikas Board (Government of Jharkhand Undertaking)

4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ratn Road, Ranchi 834001

**Ref. No.:297**

**Corrigendum**

Date: 13.04.2021

Certain amendments in E-Tender Advt. PR No: 244880 dated 01.04.2021, for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of wood working/processing machines and equipment for Annadat Woodcraft Producer Company Limited, Chas, Bokaro, Jharkhand are as follows:

- Last date and time of bid submission-03-May-2021, 03:00 PM
- Bid opening date and time-05-May-2021, 11:30 AM
- Tender Fees and Earnest Money Deposit – Demand Draft must be submitted in original before opening of the bid, i.e., on or before 04-May-2021
- Section 5 (Terms & Conditions) Serial no. (a) is amended as follows:  
The tenderer should quote separately for each item notified in the BOQ. Detailed list of machinery and equipment to be supplied, transporting, installed and commissioned along with technical specifications for machinery and equipment are available in Annexure-1. Bidders are directed to quote for all items as per the list of items in the BOQ. Non-quoting of any item or partial quoting will result in disqualification of the bid. The consolidated rate of all items will be considered for deciding L-1 bidder.
- Pre-bid meeting to be held as scheduled on 19.04.2021 at 3:00 PM. Interested bidders unable to attend the meeting physically may join online through the following link:  
<https://meet.google.com/fog-xktk-vpm>
- Rest of the terms and conditions of the E-tender will remain unchanged.

PR 245620 Mukhyamantri Laghu And Kutir Udyam Vikas Board(21-22).D Chief Executive Officer

## Mukhyamantri Laghu Evam Kutir Udyam Vikas Board (Government of Jharkhand Undertaking)

4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Udyog Bhawan, Ratn Road, Ranchi 834001

**Ref. No:** 296

**Date:** 13.04.2021

Certain amendments in E - Tender Advt. PR No: 244872 dated 01.04.2021, for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of Lac processing machinery and equipment to produce Iso-Ambretolide, Aleuritic Acid and Lac dye for M/s. Vedic Lah Foundation, Bundu, Ranchi, Jharkhand are as follows:

- Last date and time of bid submission-03-May-2021, 03:0

# Jaleel resigns after Lok Ayukta rap

The Kerala Higher Education Minister was found guilty of nepotism

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Minister for Higher Education and Minority Welfare K.T. Jaleel on Tuesday resigned after the Lok Ayukta found him guilty of nepotism.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan accepted Dr. Jaleel's resignation which was forwarded to him by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

In a damning pronouncement last week, the forum said Dr. Jaleel had lobbied the Kerala State Minority Welfare Corporation (KSMWC) to appoint his relative general manager.

Dr. Jaleel had tailored the top job specifications to suit his relative's academic credentials and ensured none else applied for the job by concealing the opening, the



K. T. Jaleel

Lok Ayukta said.

It had decreed that Dr. Jaleel should not continue in the Cabinet. Dr. Jaleel had displayed a marked "lack of integrity" as Minister. His action amounted to "abuse of power, favouritism, nepotism and violation of oath of office," the Lok Ayukta had said.

The forum conveyed its finding to Mr. Vijayan, the competent authority, for appropriate action, on Monday. The Congress and the BJP had clamoured for Dr. Jaleel's exit.

In a Facebook post, Dr. Jaleel said he was the victim of a "right wing" media witch-hunt. Political opponents had prompted the persecution. Dr. Jaleel's post appeared to primarily target Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) leaders by obliquely referring to charges against them.

## CPI(M) stand

CPI(M) acting State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan said Dr. Jaleel had upheld political decorum. In contrast, former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and former Excise Minister K. Babu had clung

to power despite drawing adverse verdicts from the judiciary.

Earlier, Dr. Jaleel met CPI (M) leaders. They reportedly backed his right to move the High Court. However, the party reminded Dr. Jaleel that political propriety demanded he relinquish his post without waiting for relief from the court.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said Dr. Jaleel had no recourse but to resign. There was nothing ethical or sacrificial in his quitting office. The Minister's exit smacked of desperation and helplessness, he said.

Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan said Mr. Vijayan, who had endorsed Dr. Jaleel's move to appoint his relative, should also quit.

# Police want to question Swapna

Probe into case against ED officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

The Crime Branch (CB) police have moved the Principal Sessions Court, Ernakulam, seeking permission for interrogating Swapna Suresh on a case booked against Enforcement Directorate officials for allegedly forcing her to name Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and others in the gold smuggling case. Swapna is now housed at a women's prison in Thiruvananthapuram.

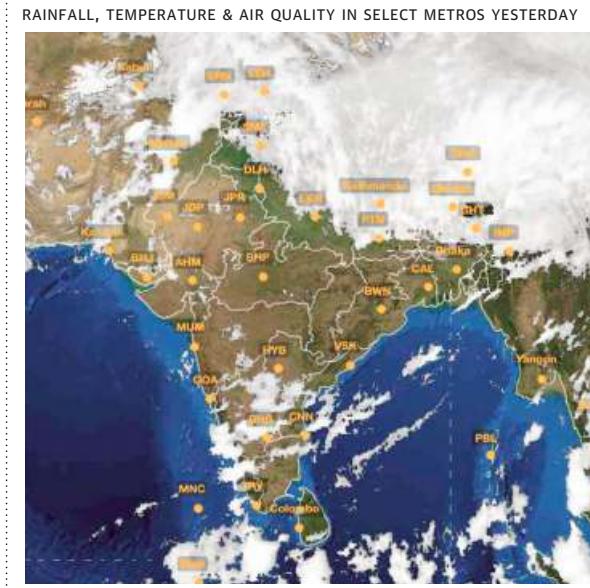
The CB submitted on Tuesday that it wanted to interrogate Swapna in connection with an audio clip in which she reportedly stated that the ED officials had forced her to give state-

ments implicating the Chief Minister and others in the gold smuggling case.

The agency had also booked a case to probe the statement of Sandeep Nair, another accused in the gold smuggling case, that P. Radhakrishnan, Deputy Director of the ED, had allegedly forced him to give statements against the Chief Minister and other prominent persons in the case.

However, the ED contended that the Principal Sessions Court shall consider the case only after April 16, the day on which the Kerala HC is expected to pass an order on its application to quash the FIR booked by the CB against its official.

## WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Wednesday:** Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Odisha, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Thunderstorms with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, coastal Karnataka, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-37.2...	25.7	13.8	Kozhikode	...-33.0...	24.6	11.2
Ahmedabad	...-40.6...	25.0	15.0	Kurnool	...-38.7...	26.8	14.2
Aizawl	...-29.2...	15.6	10.0	Lucknow	...-40.8...	22.1	11.2
Allahabad	...-42.1...	21.4	10.0	Madurai	0.4...	34.3...	25.1
Bengaluru	...-33.4...	22.8	11.0	Mangalore	...-31.7...	22.0	11.0
Bhopal	...-40.1...	21.9	10.0	Mumbai	...-35.4...	26.2	14.0
Bhubaneswar	...-39.6...	26.0	14.0	Mysuru	...-36.5...	21.0	11.0
Chandigarh	...-37.8...	19.8	10.0	New Delhi	...-40.2...	19.4	10.0
Chennai	...-35.5...	26.9	14.0	Patna	...-41.2...	21.4	11.0
Coimbatore	1.6...	36.1...	24.7	Port Blair	...-32.7...	26.7	11.0
Dehradun	...-21.2...	17.7	10.0	Puducherry	...-34.1...	25.0	14.0
Gangtok	...-21.2...	12.8	10.0	Pune	21.9...	35.3...	19.2
Goa	...-34.1...	25.4	14.0	Raipur	...-39.8...	25.0	14.0
Guwahati	...-34.2...	21.8	10.0	Ranchi	...-35.3...	20.6	10.0
Hubballi	...-34.0...	24.0	14.0	Shillong	...-26.5...	16.0	10.0
Hyderabad	12.8...	35.2...	24.0	Shimla	...-27.6...	14.8	10.0
Imphal	...-32.1...	16.1	10.0	Srinagar	...-16.3...	6.8	10.0
Jaipur	...-40.6...	23.4	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram	63...	32.6...	23.4
Kochi	16.4...	32.4...	22.4	Tiruchi	0.2...	36.7...	25.2
Kohima	...-29.2...	13.2	10.0	Vijayawada	...-39.2...	25.2	14.0
Kolkata	...-38.8...	26.8	14.0	Visakhapatnam	...-33.8...	27.4	14.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)  
**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

Yesterday

CITIES	SO	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	31	62	52	77.7	138	...
Bengaluru	11	16	35	55	54	...
Chennai	.5	15	47	35	39	...
Delhi	40	51	84	242	310	...
Hyderabad	.4	66	39	68	102	...
Kolkata	21	20	96	116	112	...
Lucknow	19	48	56	267	206	...
Mumbai	.6	54	29	160	149	...
Pune	.6	50	59	26.5	95	...
Visakhapatnam	17	41	28	49	82	...

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Bangalore, Utter Pradesh recorded an overexposure to Sulphur Dioxide (SO) score of 37 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 35

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

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

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

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

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

# Yediyurappa rules out lockdown as cases cross 8,700

Karnataka records 67 deaths; Kerala incidence exceeds 7,500; A.P. daily tally jumps to 4,228; Telangana adds 3,000 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Four southern States added 23,573 fresh COVID-19 cases in a single day, led by Karnataka with 8,778.

Ruling out the possibility of a lockdown in Karnataka, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Tuesday said he had convened an all-party meeting on April 18 to decide the future course of action.

Kerala added 7,515 cases

## COVID-19

on Tuesday registering a slightly lower test positivity rate (TPR) of 10.23%, and the State case tally stood at 11,80,397.

In the past 17 days, Kerala added 27,901 new cases. The



Steps of caution: A worker disinfecting the premises of a testing centre in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ■ V RAJU

active cases now stood at 52,132.

A total of 1,75,007 persons were in home or institutional quarantine. There were 20 new deaths from the past few days, and the cumulative toll was 4,814 deaths.

Among districts, cases were highest in Ernakulam at 1,162, followed by Kozhikode with 867 and Thrissur with 690.

Karnataka's death toll crossed 13,000 on Tuesday with 67 more fatalities and the overall tally of infections was 10,83,647. So far 13,008 deaths were recorded. There were 78,617 active cases.

Bengaluru Urban district contributed 5,500 fresh infections and 55 deaths on Tuesday.

Mysuru emerged as another

hotspot with 492 cases and two deaths.

Cumulatively, 60.77 lakh vaccinations were done since the inoculation drive started on January 16.

Andhra Pradesh reported

4,228 new infections, the highest single-day figure in six months, on Tuesday morning, and 10 more persons died. The cumulative tally rose to 9,32,892 and the toll was 7,321. Active cases stood at 25,850, and 21,949 of these were reported in the past week.

Chittoor, a hotspot, recorded four fatalities. In Nellore, two persons died. Guntur, Krishna, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam reported one death each.

Andhra Pradesh was set to conduct a vaccination drive on Wednesday as part of Tika Utsav as it had received 6.4 lakh doses of Covishield and Covaxin. Amidst low turnout on Ugadi, only 4,483 beneficiaries were administered vaccines on Tuesday.

Eighteen persons died of the infection in the past several hours. In Chennai district, 2,482 persons tested positive.

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## Another beginning

Pharmacovigilance is vital as more vaccines become available and new side-effects seen

**A**s India grapples with a vaccine shortage, the Drug Controller General of India has formally approved another vaccine candidate – Sputnik V – under emergency use authorisation. Since January, India's vaccination strategy has hinged almost entirely on Covishield – the AstraZeneca vaccine – and to a very limited extent, Covaxin. Another significant move by the government is in allowing foreign-made vaccines approved by regulatory agencies in the U.S., the U.K., Europe, Japan or those that find mention in the World Health Organization's list of approved emergency use vaccines which can avoid conducting a local clinical trial but opt for a parallel bridging trial post-approval. Last year, Pfizer had approached Indian regulators for permission but a sticking point was over this question of the conduct of local trials. It is important to note that bridging trials are critical. A vaccine that is approved in a different country may have untoward effects in another population. Past learnings from the history of drug and vaccine effects across geographies were what necessitated such rules in the first place.

However, India is in a crisis. When it had the opportunity to conduct clinical trials in the right way, in the case of Covaxin and even Covishield, India rushed through its regulatory process. This contributed to the hesitancy surrounding these vaccines. It is still a mystery why India did not plan for enough stocks like the U.K. and the U.S. did. Now, it seems India is taking a cue from these countries by conceding that no country can be entirely 'atmanirbhav' in vaccinating its population. While there are several vaccine candidates at various stages of approval that India can choose from, it must not repeat the same mistake of assuming that choice translates into immediate availability. All of the Indian companies that have tied up with foreign vaccine companies are private players. That is, while they may promise vaccines in the millions, it will always be the case that priority will be accorded to the highest global bidders. India must compete to ensure that these doses are available to a large fraction of its adult population in quick time. The pandemic wave seems to have ebbed in the U.S., to some extent, because at least 30% of its adults have got one dose. For India, this job of scaling up was always going to be uphill. Scenes from last year – paucity of hospital beds, ventilators, black marketing of drugs – are now being replayed in worrying proportions. With more vaccines come inevitably more complications associated with adverse events and rare side-effects. This is where India's pharmacovigilance programme must step up. The easing up on conditions for facilitating more vaccines must be seen as a new beginning.

## A small step

Medical termination of pregnancy laws should recognise the primacy of women's agency

**E**mancipation is seldom a linear progression to the finish; the hurdles are many, some entrenched in the mind. The passing of amendments to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in India recently is a step forward in recognising the rights of women, but is no giant leap. It does push the envelope way past how far the now antediluvian MTP Act of 1971 went, primarily by allowing the termination of pregnancy beyond 24 weeks if there are foetal anomalies. However, it also sets the decision on the shoulders of a medical board formed by State governments for this specific purpose. The amended Act also allows the termination of pregnancy until 20 weeks based on the opinion of one qualified doctor, an improvement from the consensus between the two doctors clause that was previously required. As per the amendment, unmarried women can also terminate their pregnancy, and by replacing the word 'husband' with the word 'partner', it, for the first time, takes the dialogue outside the confines of marital relationships that it was trapped in, legally. In a country where statistics put the number of unsafe and illegal abortions done every year at about 800,000, any extension of legal and safe provisions for termination of pregnancy is clearly welcome. Admittedly, in India where sex-selective abortions are performed, the state needs to keep a watchful eye on anything that might allow the sex ratio to nosedive further.

But this law stops short of reimagining an issue at the heart of any debate on abortions – a woman's agency over reproduction. The key dramatic personae in a decision to keep or abort a foetus are essentially the woman and her gynaecologist; instead, the law envisages the decision to be made by a board of specialists if an abortion is required after 24 weeks. Among the reasons why the amendments were pushed was the laborious process a woman had to undergo in order to get an abortion, sometimes resolved by courts, but often frustrating and leading them to seek solutions surreptitiously, risking their life. This is retrograde, even positioned against a global trend – the laws in over 60 countries allow women to get an abortion on request at any point in the gestation. While old laws sought to protect the life of a woman on the grounds that medical procedures would be unsafe for the mother after a certain gestational limit – usually 12 weeks – medical capability is no longer a limit. Experts swear medical technology has advanced sufficiently to allow safe abortions in secure health-care settings at very advanced stages of the pregnancy too. The amended Act, then, scarcely recognises women's agency at the centre of it all, and until it does so, through a fundamental change in mindset, measures such as these will count as but small progress on a jagged line.

## Bengal needs no Radcliffe Line of hatred

In the elections, much violence is being done to the mind of Bengal, to its thinking wires, its feeling nerves, its very soul



GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

**E**lection time in West Bengal has, for decades now, meant violent time.

There is violence during the campaigning, violence during the polling, violence during and after the counting of votes. The level of election-related violence and its duration vary but it is there.

So what does that fact show? What does it establish?

That Bengal is a violent state and Bengalis are a violent people? Certainly not.

### Not just Bengal-centric

They are no more violent than any other part of India or section of Indian society when provoked, instigated, manipulated to think, speak and act violently. One has to only refer to the speeches made on the eve of Direct Action Day in 1946 at the Maidan, in Calcutta, to understand what I mean. Within hours of those incendiary speeches the city was bleeding. An estimated 4,000 people were killed. Very shortly thereafter, incitement and instigation doing their worst, the Noakhali region of East Pakistan saw appalling violence perpetrated on the Hindu minority there, with an estimated 5,000 killed.

Bihar responded with matching fury, killing, according to information given to the British Parliament an equal number of its Muslim minority and, according to *The Statesman*, twice as many. A peace-cherishing province was leveraged thus into peace-shattering violence.

Battered as it was, Bengal was 'bettered' by other areas. The worst instance of Partition-time violence among all regions, took place in Punjab. "Virtually," says Wikipedia, "no Muslim survived in East Punjab (except in Malerkotla) and virtually no Hindu or Sikh survived in West Punjab." All this was around the partitioning of India. Much later, in the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 an estimated 2,800 were killed in Delhi, and another 3,350 nationwide. These are official figures, the actual numbers are likely to have been much bigger. In the Gujarat riots of 2002, official estimates put the toll at 1,044. The actual numbers, again, are perhaps much bigger.

So, let no one tar Bengal and Bengalis with the sweeping description of 'violent'. They are only as violent or non-violent as any other part of India or its people, not a whit more. Maoist violence, the other ogre that has menaced life in Bengal, is not by any means confined to the State where Naxalbari lies, but is spread across over 200 districts across nine States.

### Spreading hate

The violence that marred phase four of the eight phase elections now being held in the State is most unfortunate and to be bemoaned. But our distress over it misses another far more important, much more serious and infinitely more dangerous form of violence that is accompanying the elections in West Bengal.

That violence is being done to the mind of Bengal, to its thinking wires, its feeling nerves, to its very soul. It is being done by the unrelenting spread of the virus of communal hate, of sectarian animosity of the 'line' that Hindus and Muslims are different breeds of human species. Whichever side of the



GETTY IMAGES

communal divide it comes from, hatred as an idea and a strategy is no less violent than 'plain' violence. Once planted, it incubates in the minds and hearts of people, like a virus, and then erupts with an uncontrollable febrile frenzy.

### The Partition years

The then Muslim League Premier of undivided Bengal, H.S. Suhrawardy, had much to explain for the violence that disfigured Bengal in 1946 and 1947. On Suhrawardy's last day in that office, August 14, 1947, he had on his hands a challenging 'guest' – Gandhi, who was staying in Hydari Manzil, at the Muslim quarter of Beliaghata in Calcutta. At his prayer meeting that evening, over 10,000 people gathered in the grounds around that house to hear him. It was the month of Ramzan. Pyarelal records in his iconic biography (*Mahatma Gandhi - The Last Phase*, Navajivan, pp. 368-9), that some in the congregation shouted, "Where is Suhrawardy?" Suhrawardy was inside that house at the time, engaged in *namaz*. Gandhi told them that. After the prayer meeting gave over and Gandhi returned to the house, there was an uproar. Many had surrounded the house, which at Gandhi's behest was un-policed, and demanded that Suhrawardy

appear. Gandhi opened a window and got Suhrawardy to stand beside him, resting one hand on the outgoing Premier's shoulder.

One of the crowd to the Premier: "Are you not responsible for the Great Calcutta Killing?"

Suhrawardy: "Yes, we all are."

"Will you answer my question, please?"

"Yes, it was my responsibility".

Pyarelal writes: "This unequivocal, straight and candid answer by one who had made arrogance and haughtiness his badge and never known humility had a profound effect on the crowd." But the incubating virus was working still. Riots broke out within days in Calcutta, viciously. Two young men, Sachindranath Mitra, 37, and Smritish Banerjee, 38, interposing between rioting mobs, were killed on the spot. On hearing that a truck carrying Muslim labourers had a bomb thrown on it in the same area – Beliaghata – killing two of them, Gandhi went to the scene. A four-*anna* piece was lying near one of them that had rolled out of the daily wager's waist band. Gandhi started a defining fast. It was in complete and exact harmony with the mind and soul of Ramakrishna's, Vivekananda's and Tagore's Bengal. And equally, with the stoic Bengal of the two simple, humble but absolutely true Bengalis, Sachindranath and Smritish.

"There should no longer be any more Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta..." the fasting Gandhi told Bengal's leaders who implored him not to fast. "I shall terminate my fast if all of you accept this responsibility." Seventy or so hours after his fast had begun, a group of leaders came to him to report that the innate good sense of the majority of the people of the city had prevailed over the furies let loose

by the rioters. The mob that killed and burnt was not Bengal. The majority that stilled the mayhem, was.

"We the undersigned," the leaders said in a paper they gave to him, "promise to Gandhiji that peace and quiet have been restored in Calcutta once again. We shall never again allow communal strife in the city. And shall strive unto death to prevent it." Among the signatories were Suhrawardy and N.C. Chatterjee, the Hindu Mahasabha leader. Netaji's elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, was a third.

### Bengal then and now

That was and is Bengal. Its antibodies against the virus are strong. Its immune system is active. But if the load of the viral inoculum is huge, the balance can get affected. It can collapse.

Beliaghata 1947, representing Bengal's immune system, checked the virus. It has, by and large, remained in check. In 1971, 50 years ago, the virus all but disappeared, with the State halting the return of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman to Dhaka and the birth of Bangladesh, even as another Tagore composition – "Amar Sonar Bangla" – became the national anthem of the new nation.

Bengal's immune system should be spared the challenge of an overload of the communal virus. It is one thing to go through an election that seeks to win its favour; quite another to have a Radcliffe Line of hatred cut through its mind and torment its soul.

Beliaghata 1947, Bangladesh 1971 and the ballot for Bengal 2021 bear witness to its covenants with life unto death.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

## In climate change noise, India's role as conductor

New Delhi needs to introduce equity, differentiation and justice in the 'net-zero' debate



VAIBHAV CHATURVEDI & ARUNABHA GHOSH

**T**he recent visit to India by United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry gave an opportunity for both sides to discuss cooperation on climate change and the balance between near-term priorities and long-term targets. U.S. President Joe Biden's 'Leaders' Summit on Climate' scheduled for April 22-23 will also set the stage for major countries to outline their plans. One thing is clear: Climate action and climate leadership are being increasingly measured against a planetary imperative of emissions reducing to net-zero by 2050. This presents a conundrum for fast-growing developing countries such as India. They need the carbon space to develop but they are also among the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Is there an equitable way to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for the planet?

Recent debates on whether India should declare a net-zero year or withstand mounting pressure have centred around two alternative strategies. The first is to delegitimise long-term targets. This

view proposes focusing on measurable near-term progress, and paints the long-term (the year 2050 and beyond) as too far to be meaningful in terms of progress towards a deeply decarbonised world. The alternative approach argues that without long-term targets, the path to decarbonisation has little certainty.

### Fine points

This polarised debate needs some nuance. Consider the analogy of a retirement plan. It is a must for everyone. However young, we need to start saving now to meet the goals of a financially secure retirement. It would be foolish to not have a retirement plan on the grounds that it is in the distant future, that medical sciences might advance, or that we could consider retirement properly when we are richer in middle age. To only focus on smaller savings in our youth would ignore the compounding effect that actions today have in the long run. Planning for emissions mitigation is similar: The short- and the long-term cannot be delinked.

Ambitious renewable energy targets, improvements in energy efficiency and fast penetration of electric vehicles are among India's critical low-carbon objectives in the next decade. Yet, rapid advances in these do not substitute for the need to set a clear direction of travel with the aim to reduce emissions to net-zero. Avoiding



this choice makes India look like a climate laggard when its actions actually speak louder than the words of many developed countries.

### India needs to replan

India should, instead, reframe the net-zero debate from the perspective of the planet and for the prosperity of its people. India had ensured that "climate justice" was inserted in the preamble to the Paris Agreement. As the climate crisis unfolds, climate justice should imply that humanity respects the planetary boundary of permissible greenhouse gases but also ensures that countries assume equitable responsibility based on their past and future emissions. This approach would be different from merely blaming developed countries for historical emissions and, instead, would establish the criteria by which economic advancement and climate responsibility could go hand-in-hand.

We propose a formulation that combines per capita income and aggregate emissions. The World Bank classifies a high-income economy as one with gross national per capita income of \$12,536 or more in 2019 prices. Any high-income country should not get more than 15-20 years to achieve net-zero emissions from 2020 onwards. This would imply that the European Union or the United States reach net-zero no later than 2035-40, rather than 2050 as they currently propose. China will enter this income category after 2025, so it should achieve net-zero by 2045, rather than 2060 as it proposes. India is expected to become a high-income economy around 2050, and it should target net-zero close to 2070. As a recent Council on Energy, Environment and Water report (<https://bit.ly/2Qm7scN>) shows, today's high-income countries would still have a much longer transition period between peaking emissions and net-zero than India would get.

**Issue of aggregate emissions** However, per capita income cannot be an excuse for inaction in correcting emissions-intensive development pathways. Aggregate emissions also matter. The historical (past century) and future (this century) aggregate emissions of each country not yet in the high-income category should aim to be progressively smaller than those which have achieved high-income

status. This approach acknowledges the potential to tap into technological advances and cost reductions and reinforces the need to give a long-term net-zero signal. (This is how India benefited from falling solar costs over the past decade and was able to aim higher for its renewable energy ambitions.) This approach would trigger a rethink about each country's sustainable development priorities and sectoral pathways – and create the conditions for further innovation and investment in climate-friendly infrastructure, technologies, business models, and lifestyle and behavioural changes. As the suite of mitigation technologies becomes more widely available and cheaper, all countries could achieve net-zero much earlier.

The debate between prioritising only near-term actions versus announcing long-term net-zero goals presents a false binary. Both are needed to establish certainty of action, credibility of promises and create incentives for markets to respond. The real debate should be about climate justice for people and the planet. India would do well to propose alternative formulations that establish equity, differentiate the pace of desired action, and yet be progressive in its ambitions.

Vaibhav Chaturvedi is Fellow and Arunabha Ghosh is CEO, Council on Energy, Environment and Water

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teachers. At least when it comes to education, all political parties need to find a common solution. It is politics that is helping many a State abdicate its responsibility of ensuring proper education.

N. NAGARAJAN,  
Secunderabad

### Examination dates

The Humanities and Social Sciences Entrance Examination or HSEE which is the national level entrance test conducted by IIT Madras, falls on June 13, 2021, the same day as the Common Law Admission Test, another national level entrance examination conducted for admission into the National Law Universities. Could one of the exam dates be shifted?

ARULRAJ,  
Coimbatore

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lettters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

**Fighting on**  
It is pertinent to remember that vaccination prevents severe reinfection and hospitalisation in most instances (Page 1, "As cases surge, panel approves Russia's Sputnik V vaccine", April 13). Therefore, it is our only hope to prevent overburdened health systems which are suffering from COVID-19 fatigue, from collapsing when cases are surging again. The emergence of new variants from time to time and the declining neutralising antibody levels as some studies show, might contribute to the lack of protection against reinfection. But this should not deter people from getting vaccinated. The Sputnik V vaccine will be another arrow in the quiver in the war against the pandemic. Booster doses may be required or the

vaccine may have to be tweaked against the newer variants. We also have to step up genomic surveillance and research for second generation vaccines which will be effective against the variants. Vaccination and COVID-19 appropriate behaviour are our only tools against this raging pandemic.

Dr. THOMAS PALOCAREN,  
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

N. ARULMOZHIDEVAN,  
Chennai

ANTHONY HENRIQUES,  
Mumbai

four – with the materials used as a sandwich of spunbond, meltblown and spunbond materials. Each plays a part in blocking aerosols and micro-respiratory particles and key to COVID-19 prevention. In most cases, I have found the meltblown fabric missing. COVID-19 infection is spreading like wildfire and the government is asking everyone to wear a mask. If people are wearing defective masks, are we not increasing the risks?

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

ANTHONY HENRIQUES,  
Mumbai

ANTHONY HENRIQUES,  
Mumbai

ANTHONY HENRIQUES,  
Mumbai

# BIMSTEC needs to reinvent itself

The grouping, a work in progress, has several obstacles to overcome



RAJIV BHATIA

The foreign ministers of BIMSTEC (the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) met virtually on April 1. That they made time to hold their 17th meeting is good news. They advanced the agenda, which had been arrested by the pandemic, since the last ministerial meeting held in August 2018. Their major task was to pave the way for the next summit, the grouping's fifth, due to be held in Sri Lanka in the "next few months".

While most multilateral groupings from G20 to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) held their deliberations at the highest political level in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, BIMSTEC leaders failed to do so. In contrast to a meeting of even SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) leaders held at India's initiative a year ago, BIMSTEC could not arrange its ministerial meeting until April 2021. This is due as much to contextual factors as the diplomatic environment prevailing today.

#### Unfolding rejuvenation

Established as a grouping of four nations – India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – through the Bangkok Declaration of 1997 to promote rapid economic development, BIMSTEC was expanded later to include three more countries – Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. It moved at a leisurely pace during its first 20 years with only three summits held and a record of modest achievements. But it suddenly received special attention as New Delhi chose to treat it as a more practical instrument for regional cooperation over a faltering SAARC. The BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat, followed by their Outreach Summit with the BRICS leaders in Goa in October 2016, drew considerable international limelight to the low-profile regional grouping. This also opened up the path for its rejuvenation.

The fourth leaders' summit, held



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar delivers a statement at the 17th BIMSTEC ministerial meeting that was held virtually on April 1. ■ PTI

in Kathmandu in August 2018, devised an ambitious plan for institutional reform and renewal that would encompass economic and security cooperation. It took the important decision to craft a charter to provide BIMSTEC with a more formal and stronger foundation. The shared goal now is to head towards "a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region". At the second swearing-in of the Modi government in May 2019, the leaders of BIMSTEC, not SAARC, were invited as honoured guests. Soon thereafter, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar observed that India saw a mix of "energy, mindset and possibility" in BIMSTEC.

#### Recent decisions

Two and a half years after the Kathmandu Summit, the grouping stands ready to move forward. The foreign ministers cleared the draft for the BIMSTEC charter, recommending its early adoption. They endorsed the rationalisation of sectors and sub-sectors of activity, with each member-state serving as a lead for the assigned areas of special interest. The ministers also conveyed their support for the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, which will be adopted at the next summit. Preparations have been completed for the signing of three agreements relating to mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, cooperation between diplomatic academies, and the establish-

ment of a technology transfer facility in Colombo.

What has been missing from recent deliberations is a reference to the lack of progress on the trade and economic dossier. A January 2018 study by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry had suggested that BIMSTEC urgently needed a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement to be a real game changer. Ideally it should cover trade in goods, services and investment; promote regulatory harmonisation; adopt policies that develop regional value chains; and eliminate non-tariff barriers. Also lacking was an effort to enthuse and engage the vibrant business communities of these seven countries, and expand their dialogue, interactions and transactions. On this score, BIMSTEC remains a work in progress. Over 20 rounds of negotiations to operationalise the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Framework Agreement, signed in 2004, are yet to bear fruit.

In contrast, much has been achieved in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief and security, including counterterrorism, cyber security, and coastal security cooperation. India has led through constant focus and follow-up – to the extent that some member-states have complained about the 'over-securitisation' of BIMSTEC. The trick to ensure balance is not to go slow on security but to accelerate the pace of forging solid arrangements for economic

cooperation. Similarly, while national business chambers are yet to be optimally engaged with the BIMSTEC project, the academic and strategic community has shown ample enthusiasm through the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks and other fora.

#### Hurdles

The goal now should be to overcome the obstacles leading to BIMSTEC's success. First, a strong BIMSTEC presupposes cordial and tension-free bilateral relations among all its member-states. This has not been the case, given the trajectory of India-Nepal, India-Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh-Myanmar ties in recent years. Second, uncertainties over SAARC hovers, complicating matters. Both Kathmandu and Colombo want the SAARC summit revived, even as they cooperate within BIMSTEC, with diluted zeal. Third, China's decisive intrusion in the South-Southeast Asian space has cast dark shadows. A renowned Bangladeshi scholar argued at a recent conference that BIMSTEC would make progress if China is accepted as its principal interlocutor and partner. This perspective has hardly any takers in India and its friendly partners in the grouping. Finally, the military coup in Myanmar, brutal crackdown of protesters and continuation of popular resistance resulting in a protracted impasse have produced a new set of challenges. Despite them, the BIMSTEC foreign ministers could meet virtually – but will it be as easy for the summit to be held, with the much-maligned Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing in attendance at Colombo?

As BIMSTEC readies itself to celebrate the silver jubilee of its formation next year, it faces a serious challenge: to effect "a paradigm-shift in raising the level of our cooperation and regional integration", as Mr. Jaishankar said on April 1. The grouping needs to reinvent itself, possibly even rename itself as 'The Bay of Bengal Community'. It should consider holding regular annual summits. Only then will its leaders convince the region about their strong commitment to the new vision they have for this unique platform linking South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House and a former Ambassador to Myanmar

# Immediate vaccination a must in Indian universities

In some universities that have commenced physical classes, there has been a spike in COVID-19 cases



C. RAJ KUMAR

As universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) across India prepare to bring students and faculty back on campus, COVID-19 cases are suddenly surging across the nation. More people are being infected and at a faster rate than before. Vaccination rollout strategies targeting selected groups must be rapidly expanded along with public health efforts to bring normalcy.

In a recent letter to the Prime Minister, the Indian Medical Association has suggested that vaccination be allowed for all people above the age of 18 years. India has one of the highest proportion of young people with co-morbidities, including cancer, diabetes and tuberculosis, in the world. With a large part of COVID-19 deaths in India occurring due to co-morbidities, there is a compelling case for young people in universities and HEIs to be given priority in vaccination.

#### Critical disparity

The case for mass vaccination involving students, faculty and staff in HEIs is not without precedent. Cornell University in the U.S. intends to have a requirement of vaccination for students returning to certain campuses, which not only has a direct positive impact on restoring academic continuity, but also curtails high-risk asymptomatic transmission. On-campus learning transcends conventional didactic approaches by offering experiential learning and co/extra-curricular activities that are impossible to replicate virtually. Some of these will have to be redesigned to follow COVID-19 protocols.

In 2020, while some HEIs initiated digital reforms to ensure academic continuity, many institutions faced impending challenges broadly around two key constraints. Privileged public and private HEIs were able to build the governance and infrastructural capacity for digital transformation to ensure academic continuity, supported by the Ministry of Education through several initiatives. SWAYAM deserves a special mention here. However, low Internet penetration and limited power and technology infrastructure impacted universities and students, particularly in rural India.

Multiple institutions have replicated the

physical experience of campuses in the virtual world through pedagogical innovations and using technology to drive social engagement. However, all universities in India may not have the resources required to do so in the online space. In order to meet these challenges, close gaps and give a reasonable holistic academic experience, our public health efforts and vaccination strategies may have to reflect this very critical disparity.

#### Two concerns

At this stage, one may consider the possibility of resuming university campuses with upgraded infrastructure and COVID-19 protocols, but one must keep in mind two concerns of high-risk exposure and logistical complexities. First, universities host a large number of students, faculty and staff members representing diverse demographic groups. Since the essence of most campuses is to promote social interactions, their 'normal' functioning can increase the risk of infection. While the magnitude of risk varies, this is true for campuses with day scholars and fully residential campuses. With such high exposure and cumulatively rising risk of transmissibility, a vaccination strategy that involves them can help curtail the spread and revitalise their learning experience.

Second, reopening campuses will entail complex logistical implementation to ensure health and safety on campus. However, only a handful of institutions have been fortunate to make infrastructure enhancements in the past year. Also, while norms of social distancing and masks can be deployed, sustaining the rigour of adhering to all protocols will be strenuous for some. Compared to corporate organisations where it is easier to deploy such norms and protocols, we must be mindful of the challenges of doing the same for and in universities.

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases upon commencement of physical classes among certain renowned Indian universities reinforces the importance of vaccination prior to reopening. More than 37 million students enrolled in higher education, along with the university faculty and staff, is a number that is feasible for a special vaccination drive to be planned and executed. Since at least three months are needed for two doses and to ensure an effective immune response, the implementation of such a programme for all HEIs must begin by May for timely commencement of on-campus learning this year.

C. Raj Kumar is Vice Chancellor of O.P.Jindal Global University

## Lessons from COVID-19

What we have learnt about treatment so far

A.V. RAMANAN & M. SHANKAR-HARI

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. The SARS-CoV-2 infection causes COVID-19. Doctors initially did not know how best to treat patients with COVID-19. Thus, in the first few months, clinical care was dominated by opinion, anecdotes and dogma. An example is the hype surrounding hydroxychloroquine as a potential cure for COVID-19. It took a huge global effort to prove that hydroxychloroquine does not benefit COVID-19 patients. One year on, there is still rampant misinformation on cures for COVID-19, with steam inhalation, multivitamins, mineral supplements, and drugs such as ivermectin, and chloroquine, all of which have not been demonstrated to treat COVID-19, still being prescribed.

#### Clinical trials

High-quality evidence that informs best practice for treatments comes from randomised clinical trials. Until these trials produced results, what doctors did was treat symptoms and provide life support. Treatments include oxygen, breathing support in the form of mechanical ventilation in severely ill patients, and supporting other vital organs such as kidneys with dialysis and heart with blood pressure medications. Many COVID-19 patients developed blood clots and were therefore treated with blood thinning medications.

COVID-19 was a clarion call for generating such high-quality evidence at pace, in particular designing trials to test multiple treatments simultaneously with innovative designs such as platform trials and adaptive trials. The RECOVERY trial network in the U.K., the REMAP-CAP trial globally focusing on critically ill patients, and the WHO-led SOLIDARITY trial globally are examples of this approach. RECOVERY demonstrated the lack of benefit with hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, lopinavir-ritonavir, colchicine and convalescent plasma. REMAP-CAP highlighted harm with use of hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir-ritonavir and demonstrated that there is no benefit with convalescent plasma. SOLIDARITY also highlighted the lack of bene-

fit from many of these drugs, including Remdesivir, an antiviral drug that perhaps shortens the illness duration. It is important that lack of benefit of these drugs reported in well-conducted clinical trials should be translated into clinical practice by healthcare professionals managing COVID-19 patients.

#### Drugs that work

Let us also consider the drugs that have been proven to benefit COVID-19 patients. We have learnt that corticosteroids (dexamethasone) is effective in COVID-19 patients who need oxygen and in critically ill patients (hydrocortisone). These cheap and universally available drugs have saved thousands of lives. More recently, we have emerging evidence that two interleukin-6 receptor blocking drugs (tocilizumab and sarilumab) benefit COVID-19 patients, including enhanced benefit when used in combination with corticosteroids, particularly in patients with moderate and severe COVID-19. It is important to note the emerging evidence with heparin (a blood thinning medication). Heparin possibly harms critically ill COVID-19 patients whilst potentially benefiting non-critically ill COVID-19 patients. Therefore translating these high-quality evidence into clinical practice by healthcare professionals would involve administering corticosteroids and interleukin-6 receptor blocking drugs when treating COVID-19 patients who are moderate to severely ill as per the WHO clinical criteria. Indiscriminate use of steroids and blood thinners in mildly ill patients with COVID-19 who do not need oxygen or any other organ support must be avoided.

The pandemic continues to exert pressure on healthcare systems. It is important that apart from supportive care (oxygen, ventilatory support), the only drugs shown to reduce mortality are steroids and interleukin-6 receptor blocking drugs. Do not prescribe ineffective treatments to patients with COVID-19.

A.V. Ramanan is Professor of Paediatric Rheumatology, University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, and M. Shankar-Hari is Professor of Critical Care Medicine, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London

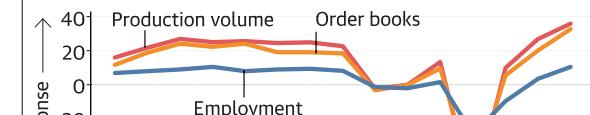


#### DATA POINT

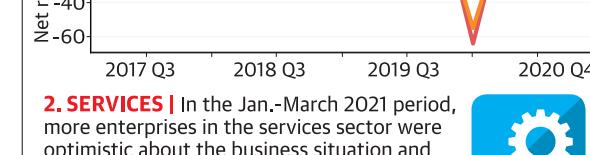
## Economy improves but pessimism persists

Before the second COVID-19 wave intensified, during the January-March 2021 quarter, more Indian manufacturing and service sector firms reported expansion/optimism than those that recorded contraction/pessimism. Banks reported a significant uptick in demand for loans. However, pessimism among consumers about the economy, which had surged following the lockdown, has not come down much. The first three graphs depict 'net response', the difference between the % of respondents reporting expansion/optimism and those reporting contraction/pessimism. It ranges between -100 and 100. A positive value indicates expansion/optimism and a negative value indicates contraction/pessimism

**1. MANUFACTURING** | In the January-March 2021 period, more Indian manufacturing companies reported expansion in production volumes, order books and employment than those that reported contraction. The net response in the latest quarter was the highest in the pandemic period



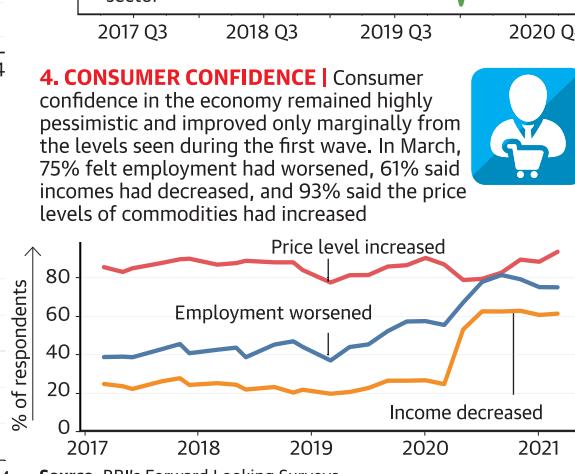
**2. SERVICES** | In the Jan.-March 2021 period, more enterprises in the services sector were optimistic about the business situation and finance availability than those that were pessimistic. However, more firms reported a contraction in profit margin than those that reported an expansion



**3. LOANS** | Loan demand strengthened across all sectors for the third successive quarter during the January-March 2021 period. More banks reported an increase in loan demand than a decrease in the period across sectors



**4. CONSUMER CONFIDENCE** | Consumer confidence in the economy remained highly pessimistic and improved only marginally from the levels seen during the first wave. In March, 75% felt employment had worsened, 61% said incomes had decreased, and 93% said the price levels of commodities had increased



Source: RBI's Forward Looking Surveys

Lucknow, April 13: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi to-day warned that India would not remain a silent spectator to the happenings in Bangla Desh and declared that China's 'open support' to West Pakistan's military regime against Bangla Desh would not affect the country's stand on the issue. Mrs. Gandhi's statements came at a news conference in Rae Bareli during her one-day visit to her constituency, and also at Congress (R) legislators' meeting at Lucknow, before she left for Dhaka to-night. Mrs. Gandhi said at both places that her Government's attitude did not depend on that of other countries and added, "we take actions independently". Addressing the Congress (R) legislators' meeting the Prime Minister warned that India would not like to remain a silent spectator to what was happening in Bangla Desh. Mrs. Gandhi said that although they should not interfere in the internal matters of other countries, what was happening in East Bengal could not be described as purely the internal affairs of Pakistan. Mrs. Gandhi felt that the developments in East Bengal might have their effect in other parts of the country. The people residing in East Bengal and India had blood relations and it was but natural to Indians to have their sympathies with the people of East Bengal.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 14, 1921

Decrease in jail population

Vigorous attempts are being made in all civilised countries to reduce the supply of fresh recruits to the army of criminals. In England and the United States the law prohibits the committal of children to prisons while the provision of special institutions for the segregation of juvenile offenders has been widely adopted. The establishment of "Borstal institutions" in Great Britain, it is stated, has tended to bring about a decrease in the jail population. The beneficial influence of the Borstal system on young prisoners, sentenced to imprisonment under the Act providing detention in such an institution, is being appreciated in an increasing measure. In England it is found that 73 per cent of the young fellows sentenced to detention in a Borstal institution and released on licence are permanently reformed. In recent years steps have been taken in this Presidency to collect adolescent offenders in the specially selected jail at Tanjore where they are detained and trained to learn good conduct; and a profession.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Govt. speeds up approval for more vaccines

But before the mass roll-out of the vaccines that are developed and tested abroad can happen, the vaccines will be first given to 100 beneficiaries and these individuals will be assessed for seven days for safety outcomes.

"The decision will facilitate quicker access to such foreign vaccines by India and would encourage imports including import of bulk drug material, optimal utilisation of domestic fill and finish capacity etc., which will in turn provide a fillip to vaccine manufacturing capacity and total vaccine availability for domestic [use]," a government release said.

"This is a welcome decision by the government to expand the basket of vaccines and overcome any shortage of vaccines," said Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University. At least half-dozen States had reported vaccine shortage a few days ago.

Professor of Microbiology at CMC Vellore Dr. Gagandeep Kang said: "The decision finally complies with the WHO's recommendation of regulatory reliance."

While so far there have been no tie-ups with Pfizer and Moderna by any vaccine manufacturer in India, Hyderabad-based Biological

E (Bio E) has tied up with Johnson and Johnson to test and manufacture the vaccine locally.

Since the decision also allows imports of bulk drug material and fill and finish locally, it is likely that India will have access to Johnson and Johnson vaccine at the earliest.

Pfizer had earlier filed for a restricted use approval with the Indian regulator but withdrew its application after a short while.

Though the reason why Pfizer withdrew its application is not known, the policy then required Pfizer to carry out bridging studies in India before the vaccine could be taken up for approval.

On Tuesday, the U.S. FDA said in a tweet that along with CDC, it is recommending a pause in the use of Johnson and Johnson vaccine "out of an abundance of caution".

It is unclear at this point if the vaccines developed, tested and approved outside India will be made available through the government at a subsidised rate or will vaccine manufacturers be able to import them and sell them in the private market.

"So far, I am not aware of any vaccine being made available through private players. It is governments that are purchasing vaccines for citizens," Dr. Kang said.

## Russian shot gets DCGI nod for imports

Announcing receipt of the EUA, Dr. Reddy's on Tuesday said the development paves the way for import of the vaccine. Sputnik V has been developed by Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

Within weeks of Sputnik V becoming the first COVID-19 vaccine to be registered globally, by Russia in August, the Russian Direct Investment Fund announced a partnership with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories for clinical trials as well as distribution of the first 100 million doses in India.

"Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has received permission from the Drugs Controller General of India to import the Sputnik V vaccine into India for restricted use in emergency situations as per the provisions of the New Drug and Clinical Trials rules, 2019 under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act," a statement from the Hyderabad-based drugmaker said.

Co-chairman and managing director G.V. Prasad said "We are very pleased to obtain the emergency use authorisation for Sputnik V

in India... This will enable us to contribute to our nation's effort of vaccinating a significant proportion of our population."

Since announcing its partnership with Dr. Reddy's in September, the sovereign wealth fund of Russia went ahead and forged manufacturing pacts with five companies to produce an estimated 850 million doses of vaccine based on the human adenoviral vector platform. While Hetero Biopharma, Gland Pharma, Stelis Biopharma, Virchow Biotech and Panacea Biotech are firms with whom it has announced production partnerships, sources say a few more may get added to the list in coming days.

On Sputnik V production process in the country, sources said the process involves the technology transfer, production of batches for approval and on getting the go ahead from the central laboratory seeking manufacturing licence from DCGI. It could take at least a couple of months, with the first Sputnik V produced in India likely to be made available in June.

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## 3 fishers dead in mid-sea collision

Two of the dead have been identified as Alexander Syrang and Manik Das, from West Bengal. The two rescued crew members have been identified as Sunil Das, 34, of West Bengal and Velmurukan, 37, of Kalirajapuram, Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. A statement from the ICG said: "Two crew mem-

bers reported safe. The coast guard ship recovered three bodies. Search for the other crew in progress."

Chethan R, Superintendent of Police, Karnataka Coastal Security Police, Udupi said the three bodies and the rescued crew are being brought to Mangaluru-Udupi.

## Mamata holds silent protest against ECI ban

"In the fifth phase of polling on April 17, the silence period is 72 hours, and I could not campaign for 24 hours. So I cannot campaign for 96 hours. The BJP can campaign, and I am not allowed to campaign. I will not say anything, the people of Bengal will take a call on it. They are watching everything," she said while addressing a rally at Barasat.

The Trinamool chief was

scheduled to address four rallies in the day – two in Nadia and two in North 24 Parganas – which had to be cancelled because of the EC order. On Wednesday Ms. Banerjee will visit Mathabanga in Cooch Behar where five persons died in two separate incidents of firing on April 10. Ms. Banerjee will later hold public meetings in north Bengal. (With PTI inputs)

# India has walked the talk: Modi

Despite constraints, we have supplied vaccine to over 80 countries: PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



Narendra Modi speaking at the Raisina Dialogue. ■PTI

India has "walked the talk" on helping the world counter the coronavirus pandemic despite its "limited resources," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, pointing to the supply of millions of doses of Indian-made COVID-19 vaccines, and said the world's mistaken priorities were the reason for the global struggle to defeat the virus.

"We understand fully that mankind will not defeat the pandemic unless all of us, everywhere, regardless of the colour of our passports, come out of it. That is why, this year, despite many constraints, we have supplied vaccine to over 80 countries," Mr. Modi said at the inaugural session of the annual Raisina Dialogue conference co-hosted by the External Affairs Ministry and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

Despite rising numbers

and a "second wave" of cases in India, the government has decided not to ban the export of Indian-made vaccines, most of which have been committed as commercial consignments, or as part of the COVAX global alliance.

Since January 21, the government has allowed the supply of 6.51 crore doses of the two Indian-made vaccines, of which about 1.05 crore are donations or grants from the government to 90 countries worldwide.

Mr. Modi said the world was "under-prepared" for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pointing to the post-Second World War order, the United Nations and other multilateral structures that he said had been created only in order to prevent "the Third World War", Mr. Modi said the world should have instead focused on hunger, poverty and humanitarian issues.

All the steps taken were to prevent the last war not the next one. While the humanity has not faced the Third World War, the threat of violence has not reduced in people's lives. With a number of proxy wars and unending terror attacks, the

prospect of violence is ever present," he said, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented an opportunity to reshape the world order now.

### 'Watershed moment'

In his taped speech that was shared over a virtual platform, Mr. Modi thanked participants of the Raisina Dialogue, especially the other leaders speaking at the four-day conference, including Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the President of the European Council Charles Michel, for attending in a year he called a "watershed moment in human history".

Mr. Morrison, whose earlier plans to address the Raisina Dialogue in 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Australia forest fire crisis as well, will address the conference virtually later this week.

He argued that as a result of international partnership and research India was able to increase manufacturing of vaccines "developed elsewhere" while also developing indigenous vaccines in the country.

He highlighted that during the lockdown and the aftermath, the Government of India transferred cash to 400 million citizens and at the same time 800 million people received food from the government.

Mr. Jaishankar credited the Narendra Modi government on being the first responder on a number of crisis situations in the neighbourhood and beyond and the response to the pandemic, he said, was part of that same chain of initiatives.

"If you look in terms of humanitarian assistance, whether it was an earthquake in Nepal, or a civil war in Yemen, or a cyclone in Mozambique, or a typhoon in Fiji, or a mudslide in Sri Lanka, or whether it is

# 'Global cooperation benefits India, world'

Jaishankar lists initiatives on vaccines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



There are very practical ways by which we have demonstrated our belief in the world as a family

S. JAISHANKAR  
External Affairs Minister

taking the Paris agenda forward through initiatives like the international Solar Alliance, or how to respond collectively towards disaster resilience. So there are very practical ways by which we have demonstrated our belief in the world as a family,"

He argued that the success of India's domestic battle with COVID-19 had not received sufficient global attention.

He highlighted that during the lockdown and the aftermath, the Government of India transferred cash to 400 million citizens and at the same time 800 million people received food from the government.

"Now, if you go anywhere in the world and say, listen guys, I just paid out 400 million people, and I've fed 800 million people, you should make waves," Mr. Jaishankar said, asking for global attention on the work of the Indian government to counter the pandemic and its economic effects.

## S-400 delivery to begin by November

Officials say efforts were made to speed up deal; dismiss CAATSA concerns

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

The delivery schedule for the S-400 long-range air-defence systems was on track for the end of 2021 despite the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior defence official said.

"The deal is on track, and deliveries are expected to begin by November," the official said.

Two officials independently stated that efforts were made to speed up the

deal but the Russian side had conveyed this was not possible.

Two official sources, also speaking independently, dismissed concerns over possible U.S. sanctions on the deal under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), stating this deal met national security considerations. In October 2018, India had signed a \$5.43-billion deal with Russia for five

S-400 regiments despite objections from the U.S., with deliveries scheduled to begin by 2021-end.

U.S. officials on several occasions raised concerns over the deal as India deepened its defence cooperation with the U.S. and acquired several frontline military platforms such as transport aircraft, helicopters, artillery and drones. Indian officials had reiterated that all payment-related issues had been re-

solved and the deal was well under way.

Responding to questions on the issue at a press conference during his visit to India in February, U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin had said that there had been no delivery of an S-400 system, and "the issues of sanctions is not one that's been discussed". He also stated, "But we did address with the Minister of Defence the issue of the S-400."

## WhatsApp policy: CCI defends nod for probe

It cites antitrust concerns in Delhi HC

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Tuesday defended before the Delhi High Court its decision calling for an investigation into the new privacy policy of WhatsApp.

The competition watchdog, represented by Additional Solicitor-General Arman Lekhi, said the probe order was made to gauge whether access to data would lead to the abuse of dominant position.

The commission said it was dealing with the instant messaging app's new privacy policy that could lead to "excessive data collection" of consumers, the use and sharing of the data in anti-competitive context.

Mr. Lekhi said the commission was not concerned with privacy aspect of the issue as the Supreme Court was already seized of it.

The CCI's submission came while hearing two separate petitions filed by Facebook and WhatsApp challenging its March 24 direction ordering for a probe into WhatsApp's new priva-



WhatsApp said it was not a competition issue.

cy policy. The CCI had ordered that the investigation be completed within 60 days.

Mr. Lekhi said it was too early for the High Court to hear the petitions as the CCI had only ordered for an investigation, the report for which was yet to come.

WhatsApp, represented by senior advocate Harish Salve, said the CCI had jumped the gun and started the probe when this was not a competition issue. WhatsApp said the issue with respect to personal data of users, and sharing of personalised data was already before the Supreme Court, hence the CCI ought not to have intervened.

After hearing all the parties, Justice Navin Chawla reserved the judgment.

## Congress slams Centre on economy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress leaders on Tuesday targeted the Narendra Modi government over the country's economic indices, with former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram accusing the government of "colossal mismanagement" since the 2016 note ban.

The leaders stepped up their attack on the government a day after the latest numbers for industrial output and retail inflation came out.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram said the Prime Minister neither heeded well-meant advice of distinguished economists nor tolerated criticism. Quoting the classic Tamil text *Tirukkural*, Mr. Chidambaram said, "Remember Kural 448: The king, without the guard of men who will rebuke him, will perish though there is no destroy him."

"What a way to end the 7th year of the Modi-led NDA government: surging inflation, falling industrial output, declining rupee and plunging stock market," he tweeted.

## Nagaland's version of NRC triggers concern

Tribal body asks govt. not to be hasty

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

An apex body of Naga tribes has asked the Nagaland government not to be hasty with the exercise to prepare the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), seen as a variant of Assam's National Register of Citizens.

The Nagaland government has reportedly been trying to revive the RIIN exercise that was launched in July 2019 with the stated objective of preventing outsiders from obtaining fake indigenous certificates for seeking jobs and benefits of government schemes.

### Three-member panel

The State government had formed a three-member panel headed by retired bureaucrat Banu Z. Jamir for "examining and advising" on the implementation of RIIN. But the exercise was suspended following protests from community-based and extremist organisations.

The Naga Hoho, the apex tribal body that had objected to the RIIN in 2019, has reacted to the State government's alleged bid to implement RIIN with a tentative timetable.

The Naga Hoho, the apex tribal body that had objected to the RIIN in 2019, has reacted to the State government's alleged bid to implement RIIN with a tentative timetable.

According to the Naga Hoho, Naga tribes living in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in India and in Myanmar have a legitimate claim to their ancestral homelands.

The ATS has provided the documents to the Mumbai Police, he said. The Special Branch had also sought similar information from the NIA, the official said.

## Mumbai police start process to dismiss Vaze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have initiated the process of dismissing from service, suspended cop Sachin Vaze, arrested by the NIA in the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hirani, sources said on Tuesday.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Assistant Police Inspector (API) Vaze on March 13.

The city police's Special Branch recently wrote to the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and sought documents pertaining to the case.

It had also a copy of the FIR registered in connection with Hirani's murder and the statement of the businessman's wife in which she raised suspicion over Mr. Vaze's role in his death, a police official said.

The ATS has provided the documents to the Mumbai Police, he said. The Special Branch had also sought similar information from the NIA, the official said.

## CWC to meet on COVID crisis

Sonia has written to PM on expanding vaccination coverage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) will virtually meet on Saturday to discuss the second wave of COVID-19, party sources confirmed on

INTERVIEW | AMIT SHAH

# 'People of Bengal have been convinced by Modi's track record'

This election is also about CAA of people who have been here for 70 years without being considered citizens, and living as refugees, says Union Home Minister

NISTULA HEBBAR

**Union Home Minister Amit Shah**, on his campaign trail in West Bengal, speaks on the Assembly polls in the State, framing rules for the Citizenship Amendment Act and vaccine shortage...

We are now exactly halfway through the polls, and the upcoming seats include those of the Kolkata Presidency, considered the strong areas of the Trinamool Congress. How do you expect to deal with that?

■ When I spoke of the BJP getting more than 200 seats, it was including the seats of the "Presidency". I believe that in the 109 seats considered part of the Presidency, the BJP will take a lead.

On what basis are you making these claims?

■ At the time of the 2019 polls, voters still had a bit of hesitancy on whether the BJP could defeat Trinamool

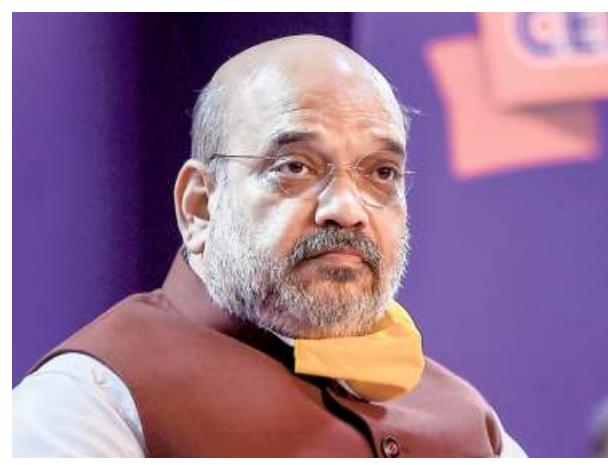
been convinced by Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi's track record.

The violence in Cooch Behar during the polls has been tragic, and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been open about her accusations that the fact that you are the Home Minister is somehow connected to the Central paramilitary forces opening fire on voters. How do you respond?

■ I would first like to enlighten Mamata Didi on some basic general knowledge that during polls, the Central paramilitary forces deployed are not under the control of the Home Ministry but of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Also, in the same Sitalkuchi seat, Ms. Banerjee had made a provocative speech on surrounding the paramilitary forces, putting them under pressure, etc.

Thirdly, if you look at the



■ I believe the whole election is about Bengali pride and how it was undermined, minority appeasement and lack of development

we have done this, then I must say that she highly estimates our influence, because this means that we are setting the narrative of the polls.

But I believe the whole election is about Bengali pride and how it was undermined by first the Left and the Trinamool, minority appeasement and lack of development by the Mamata Banerjee-led government.

This election is also about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of people who have been here for 70 years without being considered citizens, and living as refugees. We are going to implement the CAA very soon here.

a thought process will be endorsed by the people of Bengal.

It has been said that with the entry of the BJP, communal and casteist politics has made an entry into West Bengal. That is the destruction of what is termed 'Bengali exceptionalism'.

■ If Mamata Didi feels that

of legislature ends, there is no alternative offered by the Constitution. Maybe, if all parties come together, we can come or should have suggested some alternatives to postpone polls or extend the life of elected Assemblies, but currently even the ECI has no alternatives, and as political parties we have even less space, as we have to prepare for polls when the ECI sets the date.

Much has been said on shortage of vaccines. Would you like to comment on the issue?

■ There is no shortage of vaccine, and we have had the fastest rate of vaccination in the world. I concede that the speed must increase, and there are many vaccine candidates in the pipeline for approval and in the next month or so we will see more vaccines in play, that will increase the spread of our vaccination programme.

## ECI lets off Suvendu Adhikari with warning

Says his speech violated poll code

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday issued notice to West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh for violating provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and the Indian Penal Code by making an "inflammatory statement" threatening the people of Bengal during a public rally at Barangar in North 24 Parganas.

The ECI said it had received a complaint from Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien about the speech that was "an open threat" to Bengal and its people. Referring to the Central forces fir-

ed the code's provisions against use of communal appeals and unverified allegations to seek votes.

In his reply to the notice on April 9, the ECI said he had submitted that he believed in free and fair elections and that he had no malafide intention to criticise anyone personally or make offensive remarks.

Mr. Adhikari argued that he had not violated the code. However, he said he would be more careful in the future.

The ECI advised him not to make such statements in public speeches.



## Sushil Chandra takes over as CEC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra took over the post of Chief Election Commissioner on Tuesday, after outgoing CEC Sunil Arora demitted office on Monday.

Mr. Chandra has been an Election Commissioner since February 15, 2019 and a member of the Delimitation Commission for delimitation of Jammu and Kashmir since February 18, 2020, the ECI said in a statement. As an Indian Revenue Service officer, Mr. Chandra held several posts in the Income Tax department for nearly 39 years, according to the ECI.

He had been the chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes from November 1, 2016 to February 14, 2019.

He spent considerable time as Director of Investigation and Director General of Investigation, Mumbai and Gujarat, respectively.



Dilip Ghosh near his damaged vehicle after he was allegedly attacked at an election meeting in Sitalkuchi on April 7. ■ PTI

ing on a mob on polling day on April 10 in Sitalkuchi, in which four people were killed, Mr. Ghosh said the in-

cident would be the start. "Where did so many naughty boys come from? Those naughty boys were

shot at yesterday in Sitalkuchi. These naughty boys will not be there in Bengal. This is just the beginning. Those who thought that the Central forces' rifles were meant to be just for show have well understood now the power of cartridges. And this will be carried on throughout Bengal," Mr. Ghosh was quoted as saying in the ECI notice.

Mr. Ghosh said: "Those who will take the law in their own hands will be given a befitting answer. I hope that you all will cast your votes on April 17. Central forces will be there in the booths. No one can show you an angry eye. Because we are here.

And if someone crosses his limits then you have seen what happened in Sitalkuchi. There will be Sitalkuchi in several places. So be careful."

The ECI asked Mr. Ghosh to explain his stand by 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

In another notice to BJP West Bengal leader Rahul Sinha, the ECI said his speech on Monday saying that the Central forces

should have killed eight people, not four, during the Sitalkuchi incident was a violation of the Model Code of Conduct, the Representation of the People Act and the Indian Penal Code.

## Prashant Kishor has no role in finalising candidates'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday ruled out any role for Prashant Kishor in the finalisation of Congress candidates in the 2022 Assembly election.

Mr. Kishor, a poll-strategist, recently joined Captain Singh as his principal adviser.

"There is no question of it. Kishor has no say in the matter," the Chief Minister said.

"There are set norms and patterns for ticket allocation in the Congress, which are followed in all elections in all States," he said. There is a State election committee set up by the high command ahead of any Assembly poll, which considers all the names and decides on the final candidates. The shortlisted names are then sent for scrutiny to the screening committee of the top party leadership, including the Congress president. The fi-

nal decision is taken by the Central Election Committee, with no individual having any role to play, he added.

"In the process of ticket finalisation, inputs are always taken by this committee from various internal and external parties, including independent agencies as well as the State party unit. This is the process that was followed in 2017 and will be adopted again this time. So where does Kishor come into the picture," he asked.

## Leaked content of meet triggers debate in Cong.

On safety of outsourcing political work

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

The leaked contents of a virtual meeting between election strategist Prashant Kishor and senior journalists have triggered a debate within a section of the Congress on the question of how far a political party could go in engaging with external agencies while fighting elections.

The internal debate is also prompted by the party's experience in Tamil Nadu, where Mr. Kishor's organisation, the Indian Political Action Committee or IPAC, advised the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which heads an alliance in which the Congress is a junior partner.

Congress insiders claim they were witnesses to a "sense of disquiet" among senior DMK leaders as "core political activities" were decided by the external agency.

The Congress's Data Analytics chief, Praveen Chakravarty, who makes sense of the numbers for the party, devised strategy, ques-

tioned the commitment of "external" agencies in terms of ideology.

"If a political party outsources its election fighting to a commercial external vendor, then it leads to the eventual destruction of the very idea of a political party, [which is] building a cadre based on ideology. These vendors' main objective is profits and they circulate strategic information, data, and knowledge of one party to another," said Mr. Chakravarty.

A political party outsourcing election management to an external commercial vendor is like the Finance Minister outsourcing the Budget preparation to an external consultant. It is penny wise, pound foolish," he added.

The question is important as, recently, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh re-engaged Mr. Kishor as his advisor.

The debate is also important as it could decide the party's strategy with regard to Uttar Pradesh elections scheduled next year.

## Modi is mocking me, says Mamata

Repeated use of 'Didi-o-Didi' sparks row

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

A lot is at stake for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the West Bengal election as is evident from the manner in which he has been repeatedly attacking Trinamool Congress president and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The mocking tone which Mr. Modi uses to address the Chief Minister, repeatedly saying "Didi-o-Didi", has evoked a strong response not only from the Trinamool Congress but from the Chief Minister also.

"He is mocking me (amake bhengache). There should be a standard. I will not speak to him in this language," Ms. Banerjee said on Monday at Basirhat.

The Chief Minister alleged that the "language brings shame even to youth chatting informally in a neighbourhood", and said she cannot use the language which the Prime Minister has brought into West Bengal.

The first time people took



Mamata Banerjee

note of the Prime Minister addressing the Chief Minister with the sing-song "Didi-O-Didi" was at the BJP's rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds on March 7. Thereafter at almost a dozen public rallies, Mr. Modi has used the mocking phrase to address the Trinamool chief. While these utterances drew a cheer for the Prime Minister, they also raised many eyebrows.

The Trinamool Congress leadership on April 4 held a press conference accusing the Prime Minister of "insulting women" of the State by addressing the Chief Minister in a "mocking tone".

### KERALA UNIVERSITY OF FISHERIES & OCEAN STUDIES (KUFOS)

Panangad P.O., Kochi-682 506, Kerala, India.

No. Acad(1)282/2021 Date: 09.04.2021

NOTIFICATION Applications are invited from eligible candidates for the following PG/Ph.D programmes for the academic year 2021-22.

1. M.F.Sc. (a) M F Sc. Aquaculture (b) M F Sc. Aquatic Animal Health Management (c) M F Sc. Aquatic Environmental Management (d) M F Sc. Fish Nutrition & Feed Technology (e) M F Sc. Fishery Engineering & Technology (f) M F Sc. Fisheries Extension (h) M F Sc. Fisheries Resource Management.
2. M.Sc. (a) M Sc. Applied Geology (b) M Sc. Biotechnology (c) M Sc. Climate Science (d) M Sc. Disaster Management (e) M Sc. Environmental Science (f) M Sc. Food Science & Technology (g) M Sc. Marine Biology (h) M Sc. Marine Chemistry (i) M Sc. Marine Microbiology (j) M Sc. Physical Oceanography (k) M Sc. Remote Sensing & GIS (l) M Sc. Statistics
3. M.B.A (a) MBA (b) MSc (c) M.Phil (d) M.Ph.D (e) M.Tech (f) M.Tech (g) M.Tech (h) M.Tech (i) M.Tech (j) M.Tech (k) M.Tech (l) M.Tech (m) M.Tech (n) M.Tech (o) M.Tech (p) M.Tech (q) M.Tech (r) M.Tech (s) M.Tech (t) M.Tech (u) M.Tech (v) M.Tech (w) M.Tech (x) M.Tech (y) M.Tech (z)
4. M.Tech. (a) M.Tech. Coastal & Harbour Engineering (b) M.Tech. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (c) M.Tech. Ocean & Coastal Safety Engineering.
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FINAL YEAR DEGREE STUDENTS CAN ALSO APPLY

LAST DATE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION: 07.05.2021

Applications shall be submitted online through "admission.kufos.ac.in". For more details please visit the website "www.kufos.ac.in". Contact details: Ph: 0484-2701085, 2703782, Email: admissions@kufos.ac.in

REGISTRAR i/c

### KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice

Tender No: 2 & 3 / 2021-22/SE/PHC/PKD Jal Jeevan Mission-2020-21-Supplying, laying, testing, commissioning and maintenance of distribution system and providing FHTCs (6719 Nos) in Mannur Panchayath, distribution system and providing FHTCs (4140 Nos) in Keraberry Panchayath and providing FHTCs (8298 Nos) in Ongallur panchayath EMD : Rs. 50000/- Each Tender fee : Rs. 16800/- Each Last Date for submitting Tender : 30-04-2021 03:00 pm:

Phone : 04912544922 Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in www.etenders.kerala.gov.in KWA-JB-GL-6-1170-2020-21

Superintending Engineer

PH Circle

Palakkad

Last date & time of submission of bid through e-tendering is May 06, 2021 up to 03:00 pm.

The Bid forms and other details can be seen and downloaded from the e-wizard Portal website : <https://mhred.euniwizard.com> OR from IIM Indore website : <http://www.iimindr.ac.in>

Director, IIM Indore

No Offline Applications / Documents will be accepted.

### ARMY WELFARE EDUCATION SOCIETY (AWES) ADMISSION NOTICE : B Sc (NURSING) DEGREE COURSE

Online Applications invited for Admission Test to B Sc (Nursing) Degree Course at Army Institute of Nursing (AIN), Guwahati and Army College of Nursing (ACN), Jalandhar Cantt. Both colleges recognised by Indian Nursing Council, New Delhi.

Army Institute of Nursing (AIN), Guwahati, Affiliated to Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences, Assam. Address : C/O 151 Base Hospital, Basistha, Guwahati, Pin- 781029, Assam. Tele / Fax : 0361-2307101, Mobile No. 96912-99910. Website : [www.ainguwahati.org](http://www.ainguwahati.org) E-mail : [ainguwahati@yahoo.co.in](mailto:ainguwahati@yahoo.co.in)

No of Seats : 50. Qualification : Candidates must have passed 10+2 in the first attempt with minimum 50% marks each in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and English.

Eligibility Criteria : 90% seats exclusively reserved for daughters of Serving and Retired Army Personnel and 10% seats reserved for civilian female Candidates of North East (NE) States.

Army College of Nursing (ACN), Jalandhar Cantt. Affiliated to Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. Address : Deep Nagar, Jalandhar Cantt, Pin-1414005. Tele / Fax : 0181-2266167, 2660080 Website : [www.acn.co.in](http://www.acn.co.in) E-mail : [acn\\_mh@yahoo.co.in](mailto:acn_mh@yahoo.co.in) No of Seats : 60 Qualification : 10+2 with Physics, Chemistry and Biology with minimum 45% aggregate marks.

Eligibility Criteria : Admission Exclusively for daughters of serving and retired Army Personnel.

Date of Online Admission Test (AIN & ACN) : 27 June 2021

## Bihar MLAs booked for flouting norms

**AMARNATH TEWARY**

PATNA

An FIR has been lodged against three Opposition Bihar legislators and hundreds of others in Rohtas district for violation of COVID-19 guidelines during a public function on April 11.

The government also deputed three administrative officers in three government hospitals on Tuesday to monitor the situation following a rush of patients.

The MLAs Anita Devi from Nokha and Vijay Kumar Mandal from Dina are from the Rashtriya Janata Dal, while Arun Kumar Singh of the CPI(Marxist-Leninist) is MLA of Karat.

Mr. Mandal told *The Hindu*, "If I've done wrong, an FIR must be lodged against me but it should not be selective. Recently, Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey had come to Dina and after returning from here his staff members tested positive. Why was an FIR not lodged against him and his staff? The law is for everyone, not only for the Opposition party members."

## Labour Minister tests positive

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar on Tuesday said he had tested positive for COVID-19.

In a tweet, Mr. Gangwar said his COVID-19 test had come back positive.

He said he had no symptoms and asked those who had been in contact with him recently to get tested as well.

## New cases surge past 1.85 lakh

979 deaths recorded across the country — highest in 6 months

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

With 1,85,190 new COVID-19 cases reported as of 11.15 p.m. on Tuesday, India registered its highest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic.

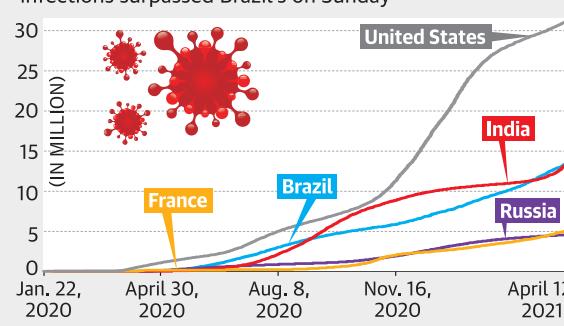
As many as 979 deaths were also recorded on the day, the highest in nearly six months.

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

Maharashtra reported 60,212 infections (accounting for about 33% of the new cases), followed by Uttar Pradesh with 18,021 cases and Chhattisgarh with 15,121. Maharashtra recorded the highest number of casualties

### Second most cases

The graph shows the cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for high-burden countries. India's infections surpassed Brazil's on Sunday



(281) on Tuesday. Chhattisgarh followed with 109 deaths, while Uttar Pradesh registered 85 new casualties.

As many as 14,00,122 samples were tested across the country on Monday (results of which were made available on Tuesday). A total of 25,92,07,108 samples have been tested in the country as of April 12 since the beginning of the pandemic.

The country has so far reported a total of 1,38,71,407 cases and 1,72,068 deaths.

On Tuesday, Chhattisgarh followed with 109 deaths, while Uttar Pradesh registered 85 new casualties.

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The country has so far reported a total of 1,38,71,407 cases and 1,72,068 deaths.

## Can revive economy if we survive: Uddhav

Maharashtra CM announces 15-day lockdown to curb COVID-19 spread

**ALOK DESHPANDE**

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday announced strict restrictions in the State to curb the spread of COVID-19.

"I am not happy while announcing these restrictions. I have been warning for the past one month and now is the time to take actions to break the chain. The only aim is to save lives. We can revive the economy if we survive," Mr. Thackeray said in his address on Tuesday.

Mr. Thackeray said that he was aware of the hardships to the poor due to such restrictions and that the State government had decided to take steps to provide relief.

"Seven crore beneficiaries under the food security scheme will get 3 kg of wheat and 2 kg of rice each free for one month. The Shiv Bhojan Thalai will be provided free.



**Fighting the wave:** The newly inaugurated COVID-19 hospital at the Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

Around 35 lakh beneficiaries in a total of five welfare schemes will get ₹1,000 a person every month for the next two months," he said.

The government will also provide ₹1,500 to each of the 12 lakh registered construction workers and 5 lakh registered hawkers. Tribal families will be paid ₹2,000 each under the Khavti scheme. Also, ₹3,300 crore

is being provided for district-level schemes in the fight against the pandemic.

Highlighting the State's need of oxygen for patients, Mr. Thackeray said he had requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow transportation of oxygen by the Air Force to ensure its speedy delivery to Maharashtra from far-off places. "Considering the financial burden,

On Sunday, India surpassed Brazil in the cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Brazil, with 13.52 million cumulative cases, is currently recording over 72,000 infections daily on an average. Also, Brazil is recording more than 3,100 fatalities daily on an average. As of Monday, Brazil had recorded 3,54,617 deaths cumulatively, twice those of India's.

Cumulatively, 11,10,33,925 vaccine doses have been administered in India as of 8 p.m. on Tuesday, according to the Union Health Ministry.

On April 13, the 88th day of the vaccination drive, 25,00,883 doses had been given. An average of 33.4 lakh doses have been administered daily between April 1 and 13.

I have also sought exemption from State GST contribution for three months," he said.

Services that will not be affected are: healthcare, veterinary care, groceries and vegetables shops, fruit vendors, dairies, bakeries, confectioneries, cold storage facilities, offices of diplomats of various countries, banks and financial services, agriculture-related activities, export-import activities, e-commerce, accredited media, IT services, ATMs, gas supply, port activities and customs-related activities.

Mr. Thackeray said there would be no restrictions on public transport.

Buses will run on seating capacity only.

Work is to be allowed in the exempted category from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays. Private vehicles can run on roads only for emergency services.

## No shortage of vaccines, but better planning must: Ministry

IMA appeals for judicious use of Remdesivir injection

**BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN**  
NEW DELHI

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Tuesday that the COVID-19 vaccine shortage reported by some States was more about the need for better planning rather than an actual shortage.

A total of 2,01,22,960 doses, he added, were in the supply pipeline to the States and the Union Territories.

"Doses received by the States and the Union Territories stand at 13,10,90,370, while total consumption, including wastage, is 11,43,69,677 and balance availability with the States and the Union Territories is 1,67,20,693 as on April 13, 11 a.m. Issue is about better planning and not shortage.

On the one hand, we have States like Kerala where there is zero wastage and on the other hand, we have several other States where there still is 8-9% of wastage," Mr. Bhushan said at a Health Ministry press conference.

**Vaccine efficacy**

To a question on the effectiveness of the available vaccines, Balram Bhargava, Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said they were disease-modifying vaccines.

"After both doses are administered, antibodies develop and severity of infection and chances of death are lowered. There is a 85% reduction in chances of hospitalisation after vaccination," he said.

V.K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, said the drug Remdesivir repurposed for COVID-19 treatment should not be administered at home.

Buses will run on seating capacity only.

Work is to be allowed in the exempted category from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays. Private vehicles can run on roads only for emergency services.



**Reducing risks:** A man getting vaccinated for COVID-19 at a centre in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## BJP defends supply of Remdesivir in Surat

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

SURAT

Gujarat BJP president C.R. Paatil lashed out at the Congress on Tuesday and said the Opposition party should stop threatening him over the free distribution of 5,000 doses of Remdesivir in Surat.

Mr. Paatil stirred a controversy last week after he announced free distribution of the key COVID-19 drug in his hometown Surat, amid a

shortage of the medicine.

The State Congress on Monday demanded Mr. Paatil's arrest for alleged illegal procurement and storage of the medicine.

Talking to presspersons Tuesday, Mr. Paatil said the entire lot of injections was procured through legal channels. "We procured the injections as they are needed to save people. If they can't appreciate our efforts, the Congress should stop threatening us."

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday said the second wave of the pandemic had created an unprecedented demand for the Remdesivir injection, resulting in a demand-and-supply mismatch and artificial panic. There was non-judicious use of this drug in many places beyond the scope of its evidence-based benefits.

"The public as well as the medical community must be aware of the absolute indication of the drug and the need to use it judiciously so that the drug is used for those patients who will be benefited," the IMA said.

The Federation of All India Medical Association has written to the Prime Minister seeking help to counter the "prevalence of VIP culture in government hospitals".

In its letter, the association said that while doctors at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 were risking their lives every day – if infected they have no separate counter, priority

and poaching wiped the animal out of Manas and Laohwa Wildlife Sanctuary.

The lesser-known Laohwa slipped under the radar of international watchdogs. Manas, in focus for the near-extinction of the pygmy hog, lost the World Heritage Site tag it received in 1985 along with Kaziranga from the UNESCO.

"The translocated rhinos helped Manas National Park get back its World Heritage Site status in 2011. It can be expected that the translocation programme will set up a healthy, breeding population for the future of the species," Mr. Sharma said.

## No decision yet on postponing CBSE examinations: Centre

Various State Boards announce plans to change dates

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

NEW DELHI

As the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) dithers over demands to postpone or cancel Board examinations, at least four State Boards, whose exams were originally supposed to begin this month, have already announced plans to reschedule in light of the surge in COVID-19 cases.

However, the Education Ministry seems to be taking a wait-and-watch stance on the CBSE's examinations, which are scheduled to begin on May 4. Officials at the

Ministry and the CBSE have been having discussions on the issue, given the rising demand for cancellation from a large section of students, but were tight-lipped about any decision. "We cannot say anything at this stage," said a senior School Education Department official.

Chhattisgarh Education Secretary Alok Shukla pointed out that uncertainty over the course of the pandemic made decision-making a challenge. The State has indefinitely postponed Class 10 exams, which were scheduled to begin on April 15.

Mr. Shukla said that the State government had decided to postpone the exams due to the ongoing pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the elections.

Other State Boards have also announced plans to change their examination dates. The Bihar Board has decided to postpone the Class 12 examinations by a week, while the Madhya Pradesh Board has postponed the Class 10 examinations by a week.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has also announced plans to postpone the Class 12 examinations by a week.

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## Last two rhinos translocated under IRV 2020

Target of attaining a population of 3,000 rhinos in Assam almost achieved as project closes

**RAHUL KARMAKAR**

GUWAHATI

The ambitious Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020) came to a close on Tuesday morning with the release of two rhinos – an adult male and a female – in Assam's Manas National Park transported from Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary about 185 km east.

Designed in 2005, the IRV 2020 is believed to have achieved its target of attaining a population of 3,000 rhinos in Assam. But the plan to spread the *Rhinoceros unicornis* across four protected areas beyond Kaziranga National Park, Orang National Park and Pobitora could not materialise.

The eighth round of rhino translocation under IRV2020 ended at 7 a.m. today [April 13] with the release of the two rhinos in the central part of the Bansbari range of Manas, which has received a total of 22 rhinos from other protected areas under the translocation programme," Amal Chandra Sharma, field director of Ma-

nas Tiger Reserve, said.

"The ears of the translocated rhinos have been notched according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission and Asian Rhino Specialist Group's guidelines for identification and monitoring. A special team has been tasked with monitoring the rhinos as per the translocation protocols for Assam," he said.

**Saviour of Manas**

Assam had at least five rhino-bearing areas till the 1980s. Better conservation efforts helped maintain the population of the one-horned herbivore in Kaziranga, Orang and

Pobitora, but encroachment and poaching wiped the animal out of Manas and Laohwa Wildlife Sanctuary.

The lesser-known Laohwa slipped under the radar of international watchdogs. Manas, in focus for the near-extinction of the pygmy hog, lost the World Heritage Site tag it received in 1985 along with Kaziranga from the UNESCO.

"The translocated rhinos helped Manas National Park get back its World Heritage Site status in 2011. It can be expected that the translocation programme will set up a healthy, breeding population for the future of the species," Mr. Sharma said.

## Faith



# Street smart, road savvy

An unchanged powertrain, comfortable suspension and unflinching road grip makes the Audi's S5 Sportback rather easy to pilot

GAVIN D'SOUZA

It was back in 2012 when Audi first introduced Indian buyers to the concept of a mid-range performance car with the old S4. That was replaced by the first-gen S5 Sportback with the second-gen model arriving on our shores in 2017. Now the S5 Sportback is back in its facelifted guise. So what is it like?

It is amazing how a few small, relatively inexpensive additions to the exterior have transformed the visual character of the S5 Sportback.

This Turbo Blue paint shade is certainly a big contributor, but what also helps are the new LED headlamps and tail-lamps, the pointier bumpers with swollen brushed silver accents, and a grille that is now accented with silver 'studs' rather than traditional horizontal slats. Furthering this sporty cause are the aggressive five-spoke, 19-inch alloys which fill out the wheel arches nicely, and the S models' trademark silver wing mirrors and quad taillights.

Moreover, since this is a CBU



import, the ride height has not been raised for India, and what you get is a nice wide stance with enough ground clearance for our roads.

#### Flush with features

Moving to the cabin, the biggest change is to the infotainment display – a large free-standing 10.1-inch display with a touchscreen interface. Though overall dash design is still shared with the A4, there is no denying its clean so-

phistication. Another highlight of the S5 is the upholstery with a mix of leather and Alcantara adding to the 'S' ambience.

Quality, ever an Audi highlight, is near impossible to fault. There is, as before, a flat-bottom 'S' steering wheel and Audi Virtual Cockpit digital dials, but this screen-based instrumentation is

#### AUDI S5 SPORTBACK SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH	4765mm
WIDTH	1845mm
HEIGHT	1390mm
WHEELBASE	2825mm
BOOT CAPACITY	465 litres
ENGINE	2994cc, V6, turbo-petrol
POWER	354hp at 5400-6400rpm
TORQUE	500Nm at 1370-4500rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed automatic

of the new generation and much crisper looking.

On the features front, you are well covered and there is also an optional kit available that provides a heads-up display, a Bang & Olufsen sound system and a parking assistant.

#### Ruthless efficiency

The one thing that has not changed at all is the powertrain. The 354hp, 3.0-litre turbocharged V6 and eight-speed torque-converter automatic are well met, and there is Quattro AWD with a 40:60 front-to-rear split for the 500Nm

**Do a double take** The S5 Sportback is certain to draw a second glance ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of torque. In Dynamic mode, the S5 deploys its performance with a ruthless efficiency we expect from sporty Audis. While there is no launch control, it shoots off the line ferociously enough to achieve the claimed 4.8sec 0-100kph time.

It roars through its rev band with your right foot pressed down. What is interesting is that though the shifts are quick, they are not the aggressive headbutts you get in an RS5, which makes sense in this car. However, the S5 also shines when you knock it down to Comfort mode; it is refined, smooth and very easy to pilot. It even rides surprisingly well; the base suspension is just that comf, although you might hear a thud in protest from those 19-inch wheels if you hit a bump too fast.

Handling is classic Audi, with the Quattro system giving it an unflinching grip on the road no matter how hard you push around corners. There is quite a lot of understeer too, but this is understandable in something that is not a full-on sportscar. The steering is quick enough to elicit agile direction changes.

The S5 is accessible, even for first-time performance car buyers. And when you are not tearing up the tarmac, it is a serene luxury experience.

The CBU imported S5's price of ₹79,06 lakh (ex-showroom) is not easy to overlook. But it packs in plenty of performance and errs more on the side of usability. Perhaps its biggest standout quality is its stunning looks, and because it does not have a lesser counterpart in the range, it won't be mistaken for anything else.



#### AUTO SNIPPETS



#### Royal Enfield hikes prices of Bullet 350, Classic 350 and Meteor 350

Royal Enfield has hiked prices of its 350 range including the Meteor 350. The Bullet 350 is now dearer by around ₹7,000-13,000 depending on the variant. The popular Classic 350 now costs around ₹10,000 more than it did a few months ago, with prices starting from ₹1.81 lakh. As for the new Meteor 350, prices now start from ₹1.84 lakh (all prices ex-showroom, Delhi). Royal Enfield recently updated the Interceptor 650, Continental GT 650 and the Himalayan with price hikes for 2021.



#### Hyundai Alcazar revealed

Hyundai has revealed the production-ready Alcazar SUV ahead of its launch. The Alcazar sits on a 2,760mm wheelbase – up 150mm from the Creta – and a longer rear overhang in order to open up more room in the cabin and accommodate the extra row of seats. The SUV also gets a revised grille and bumpers, a prominent rear quarter glass, and a more upright tailgate with new wrap-around tail-lamps.

Under the hood, the Alcazar will be available in both petrol and diesel engine options.



#### Citroen C5 Aircross launched in India

Citroen has launched the C5 Aircross SUV in India with prices starting from ₹29.90 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi), which is available in a choice of two variants – Feel and Shine. The former is available in single tone (₹29.90 lakh) and dual-tone (₹30.40 lakh) form, while the higher-spec Shine is priced at ₹31.90 lakh for both single and dual-tone versions. The entry level C5 Aircross Feel packs in plenty of standard kit and is available with a sole 2.0-litre diesel engine. The unit puts out 177hp and a notable 400Nm of torque, and is paired with an 8-speed automatic gearbox.

#### Q AND A WITH HORMAZD



#### Gloster vs Carnival

I have test driven the MG Gloster and Kia Carnival – the Carnival goes up in terms of driving than the Gloster, which feels sluggish at low speed; its gear and engine tuning too is not that good. But the Gloster's cabin feels luxurious and has a panoramic sunroof that adds to its charm. I am inclined towards buying the Gloster but I have heard of reliability issues with MG. Please advise as I want peace of mind after the buying experience and for after sales service as well.

Pratik Thakkar, Mumbai

One of the weaknesses of the Gloster is the sluggish response at low revs, but your other concerns are unfounded. Apart from the odd software glitch, the Gloster is pretty reliable and in fact, MG's service is one of the best today, courtesy the company's focus on the aftersales experience. So if your heart is set on the Gloster, you should go ahead.

#### Eye of the beholder

I'm planning to buy a Maruti Suzuki S-Cross as I really like its design, but I am unsure about a few things. Is the crossover worth buying in this era of mini-SUVs? Would Maruti Suzuki phase out the S-cross in a year? Would the Venue or Sonet be a better choice as they come under the same price range? I drive 30-40km everyday and go on weekend getaways and long trips. I want good interiors and space, and the car should also have a good resale value.

Manav Agarwal, Jaipur

The general view is that the S-Cross looks more like a crossover than a proper SUV. However, as that is not the case with you, you should go right ahead and buy the car as the concerns you have are not really an issue. Firstly, Maruti Suzuki won't phase out the S-Cross in a hurry and there is a chance they will re-introduce a diesel engine in it sometime next year.

The Venue and Sonet are better equipped, have more features and are sportier to drive too. But compared to the S-Cross, both the Korean cars are very cramped in the rear and the luggage space is nowhere near as good. The S-cross is a bigger car and in a segment higher. So if you are impressed with the space the S-cross offers, it is the better choice.

# Make way for the Duke

The updated version of KTM's Duke 125 goes beyond mere styling tweaks

FIROZE IRANI

KTM has finally gone ahead and unified the styling on its entire Duke range in India. With this update, KTM has brought the 390's styling to the 125. However, this revision for the 125 is not purely cosmetic.

Its sharp tank extensions and rear end contribute to the aggressive stance. While the 125 Duke misses out on the split-LED headlight found on higher-capacity Dukes, the halogen unit is in a similar shape. Another change this update brings is a new fuel tank that is styled to work with the more aggressive design.

As with body panels, the tank is also shared with the higher-capacity Dukes, which means it can now hold 2.5 litres of additional fuel (13.5 litres). Another big change the new 125 Duke gets is the updated trellis frame that features a bolt-on subframe. This allows for only part of the subframe to be replaced if it gets damaged in an accident, significantly lowering repair costs.

The updated subframe also allows for a more spacious seating



setup than before. This is the same setup as the higher-capacity Dukes, and it is proven to be noticeably more comfortable. While there are a lot more similarities to the 390 Duke, the 125 variant misses out on adjustable levers and bar-end weights. Like the 200 and 250, the 125 also carries forward the LCD dash.

What also remains the same as before are the power and torque numbers. It meets the stricter emission standards while putting out 14.5hp and 12Nm of torque. This might make it the most powerful 125cc bike on sale in the country, but it is also the heaviest. At 159kg, it weighs a substantial 11kg more than the previous-gen model, reducing the power-to-weight ratio from 97.9hp/tonne to 91.2hp/tonne.

#### Ride to the limit

That has an effect on the performance and – with a 0-100kph time of 21.3sec – the new 125's acceleration is noticeably slower than the bike it replaces. Despite this, it still feels decently peppy and fun in the city and it is only when the roads open up that you notice the deficit. The bike energetically revs through each of its six gears, but the speedo climbs significantly slower than the tacho. The little engine on this Duke has to be worked hard and there are times it will refuse to build

speed without a downshift or two. As a result, carrying momentum is vital and, luckily, that is something this chassis is more than qualified to do. The 125 Duke also gets the 43mm USD fork and monoshock, 150-section rear tyre, and a 300mm disc brake up front. What this means is that you can literally ride the 125 Duke to its limit with absolutely no stress.

Like the other Dukes, the suspension is quite firm but not uncomfortable and it offers impressive feedback. The wide MRFs are more than adequate on this motorcycle and are nothing but confidence inspiring. There is more than enough braking power on tap, and you do get single-channel ABS, but at this price you would expect a dual-channel system.

To conclude, it looks much better and is slightly better equipped, but it is also significantly heavier and more expensive. At ₹1.50 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi), it costs around ₹8,000 more than the previous-gen model – a hike that is justified given the major changes and switch to BS6.

However, it is not always value that buyers are after; for someone who simply wants to own a KTM, the 125 remains a good choice.

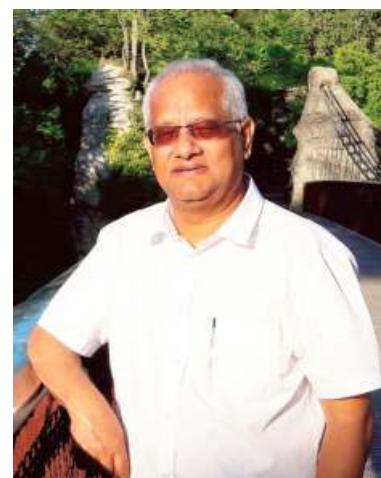
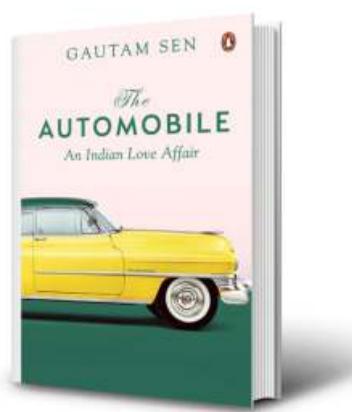


**Change for the better:** The Duke 125 is nothing short of confidence inspiring ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

#### 2021 KTM 125 DUKE SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	124.7cc, single-cylinder, liquid-cooled
MAX POWER	14.5hp at 9250rpm
MAX TORQUE	12Nm at 8000rpm
WEIGHT (KG)	159kg
WHEEL BASE (MM)	1357mm
SEAT HEIGHT(MM)	822mm
FRONT BRAKE	300mm disc
REAR BRAKE	230mm disc
FRONT SUSPENSION	USD fork
REAR SUSPENSION	Monoshock
FRONT WHEEL (INCH)	17
FRONT TYRE	110/70
REAR WHEEL (INCH)	17
REAR TYRE	150/60

**From a bygone era** (Clockwise from right) the 1938 Talbot Lago; the book cover; Gautam Sen; a renovated Lancia Astura; (inset) the Farman A6B ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



6:45 p.m.

8:15 a.m.

**Passage of time** (Above) Some of the screenshots on display; (below) Rema ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Screen grabs frozen in time

A unique gallery display shows a photographer's journey through 2020's lockdown months in the form of screenshots from video calls

GOWRI S

# Everlasting LOVE

In *The Automobile*, author Gautam Sen chronicles the history of motor cars in India and how a passion for cars fuelled the industry even before Independence



RUTH DHANARAJ

Glitz and glamour, a need for speed and an unquenchable thirst to succeed in the field of four wheelers has paved the foundation for the automobile industry in India. Ever since 1897, when the British and Indian royalty paraded these 'horseless wonders', the rest of the population has viewed cars as status symbols.

In *The Automobile*, author Gautam Sen follows the route of the first car to make tracks on Indian shores, going down the years post Independence when a need to mass produce four wheelers took shape, culminating in the country's offering in the sports car sector as recent as 2020.

"Though this book has been in the writing for the past four years, some of the research that has gone into the book goes back almost 15-20 years," says Gautam, over phone from Paris.

Gautam, who founded India's first news-stand auto magazine in 1986, adds, "I was always interested in knowing about the past and having been in the field of motor-centered magazines since the '80s, I would come across specific models or certain collectors. Researching them led to unearthing a lot of historic detail."

war, who was paralysed from the waist down, had a special hand-controlled Rolls Royce he could use by himself as far back as 1923.

Even as they kept up with the British, Indian rajas and members of the princely families, took to modifying the basic structure of the car to suit their personal tastes. Often bordering on the ostentatious or simply garish – zenana cars, hunting vehicles complete with a sunroof as a turret and others customised with cocktail cabinets and detachable spittoons – were just a few of the many specimens they flaunted.

### Collector items

It was not long before wealthy professionals of the day began to acquire cars, and it is partly due to their efforts and passion that many vintage cars disposed off by royalty found second

homes. Many rare cars such as the 1939 Delahaye 135MS, Rolls Royce Phantom II Continental, SS100 Jaguar, Lancia Astura and the likes, have been restored and housed by many across the country with a penchant for four-wheeled beauties.

While many of these vehicles are part private collections, some collectors have opened museums, giving laymen the opportunity to view these marvels – the Vintage Car Museum in Ahmedabad, the Heritage Transport Museum in Haryana and the Gedee

Car Museum in Coimbatore are prime examples.

### Screen presence

As passionate as he is about vehicles, Gautam says the portion of the book he most enjoyed penning was the part where he explores the role of automobiles in art, literature and cinema.

He recounts watching the

Hindi movie *Apradh* as a child, back in 1972. Starring Feroz Khan and Mumtaz, the film began with its opening credits rolling over a racing sequence. "That was really disappointing, but I would wait for another amazing car race that would conclude by the 57th minute of the movie and then leave the theatre," he says. "What is extraordinary is that the racing sequence was shot with actual rally racers of the day. I was able to trace Rene Herzog, one of the racers from that movie, and talked to him at length."

Herzog, now 73, was a professional rallyist who raced with legends such as Niki Lauda. He remembers the Indian movie sequence shot at the Nürburgring F1 track in Germany, and being captivated by the beautiful

Gautam includes anecdotes from other members of the film fraternity passionate about their cars. From yesterday movie stars such as Salim Khan and Raj Kapoor, to actors Mehmood and Jackie Shroff, a dazzling range of historic vehicles have been (and still are) in their possession.

### An Indian love story

With his brand of barbed humour, Gautam has not shirked from calling a spade a spade, while recounting the debacles of the colonial rulers of our past or the despotic 'desi' ones post-Independence. From Sanjay Gandhi's botched handling of the Maruti project and the all-encompassing misma of red tape in India, to the unprecedented success of the Nano abroad and India's infamous track record with hosting international rallying events, Gautam tells it as it is. "The fact is that whatever I have said has been supported by documented evidence. These are hard facts, and I have been as balanced and objective as possible, he says, adding, "One needs to have opinions; you need to be able to say that look, this is where we went wrong and where things didn't go right," says Gautam.

The once-ubiquitous Ambassador, Fiats, Mahindra jeeps and Premier Padminis all find a place in *The Automobile*. And since it is a book on the history of vehicles in India, there is also a chapter on bikes and the fascination they hold for many Indian women – not just docile two wheelers but assertive, aggressive motorcycles.

The *Automobile* is available in bookstores and online

put them up on my wall. Sahil [Aroora of Method Art Gallery] had come over and said it would actually look good when displayed in the same way," says Rema, of the inception of *Alone, Together* as a photographic series that is currently on display at Method, Bandra.

The narrative starts with Taha's morning and Rema's evening since there was a twelve-and-a-half hour time difference between the two. It travels through 24 hours of each of their days. Instead of page numbers, the passage of the narrative is marked by time stamps.

For many introverts, the first few months were almost a relief, a happy deviation from unavoidable social interactions. But as time passed, everyone scrambled for pockets of comfort and familiarity within their own homes. And, devoid of human presence, warm hugs and pointless yet comforting background noise, lonely days followed.

+

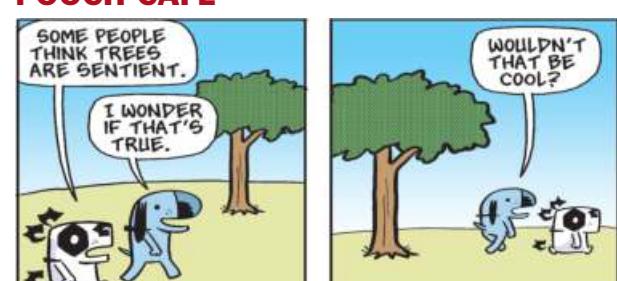
After the initial months of isolation, Rema too went in search of a happy bubble of memories, which is what led her to reconnect with an ex-partner, Taha, who resides in Toronto, over video calls. In the beginning, checking in on each other was the norm. But as days similar to the previous ones went by, each other's presence mattered more than conversations. As mundane day-to-day activities carried on, lit screens provided solace. Soon, to document this experience, Rema started taking screenshots of these video calls: most frames show one of them engaged in a mundane activity like folding laundry or doing dishes, while the other looks on. The result was 300-odd frames captured from May 2020 to September 2020, the peak lockdown months. In August, Rema identified a narrative that could perhaps make this collection a book.

"It was just going to be a book. I realised that we had a whole archive and I wanted to do something with it. And, I decided to print them and

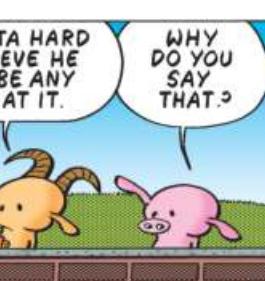
More than it being work, the series has helped Rema introspect through the lockdowns. "This has been a great exercise in taking control and putting myself out there. I have sort of overcome many inhibitions about myself through this work," says Rema. A presence in the house, even though virtual, had helped her with simple things like taking a break or even seeking advice. "It's like having a voice in the next room for you to scream out to," she says.

*Alone, Together* will be on display till April 15 at Method, Bandra. The photo book can be viewed at Method's website.

### POOCH CAFE



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



### PEANUTS



### TIGER



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



# U.S. to withdraw troops from Afghanistan

Washington plans to pull all remaining troops out of the country before the 20th anniversary of 9/11

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**

WASHINGTON

The U.S. will begin its draw-down of troops in Afghanistan before May 1 and complete the process before September 11, according to a senior U.S. administration official. There are between 2,500 and 3,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan at present.

"We will begin an orderly draw-down of the remaining forces before May 1st and plan to have all U.S. troops out of the country before the 20th anniversary of 9/11," the official told reporters on a briefing call on Tuesday. The process could be completed "well in advance" of the September deadline, the official said.

U.S. President Joe Biden, who had earlier said the May 1 deadline set by the Trump administration was unrealistic, will formally announce the withdrawal on Wednesday.

The U.S. and its NATO allies had signed a deal with the Taliban in February last



A file photo of U.S. marines as they clear improvised explosive devices from a main route in Trikh Nawar. ■ AFP

year to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan if the Taliban met certain pre-conditions, including a cessation of violence (the Taliban has repeatedly attacked civilians and Afghan security forces since) and not turning the country into a haven for terrorist groups, particularly al-Qaeda.

On Tuesday, the administration official warned that there would be consequenc-

## 10 security personnel killed in Afghanistan

KABUL

A suicide car bombing killed at least three civilians in western Afghanistan on Tuesday, Tariq Arian, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, told reporters. Meanwhile in Baghlan, at least five police officers were killed on Tuesday when their checkpoint came under attack by insurgents. Separately, in Balkh province late on Monday, Taliban insurgents attacked an Army checkpoint, killing five soldiers. AP

es for the Taliban if it attacked U.S. or allied forces during the drawdown.

"We have communicated to the Taliban in no uncertain terms that if they do conduct attacks against U.S. or allied forces as we carry out this draw-down... that we will hit back hard and that we will hold them accountable for that," the official said.

The U.S. considers the re-

emergence of al-Qaeda in the region after the draw-down of troops a "genuine threat" according to the official, who said the threat will be dealt with "directly" and by holding the Taliban accountable.

**U.S. to focus on talks**  
Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts to arrive at an intra-Afghan settlement are underway. Istanbul will host talks between the Taliban and the

Afghan government between April 24 and May 4, joined by Qatar and the United Nations. The U.S., via Secretary of State Antony Blinken, had proposed a peace plan that included an interim government – a plan that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has resisted, backing elections instead.

India has said it would back a negotiated peace settlement via a regional process convened by the UN.

The U.S. would continue its push for a diplomatic solution, the official confirmed on Tuesday, saying the administration had "long known" that there was no "military solution" to Afghanistan's problems.

"... We will focus our efforts on supporting the ongoing peace process. And that means putting the full weight of our government behind diplomatic efforts to reach a peace agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government," the official said.

# WHO urges halt on sale of live wild mammals in markets

Animals source of over 70% of emerging infectious diseases'

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**

GENEVA

The World Health Organization called on Tuesday for a halt to the sale of live wild mammals in food markets to prevent the emergence of new diseases such as COVID-19.

The WHO said because traditional markets play a central role in providing food and livelihoods for large populations, banning the sale of live wild mammals could protect the health of market workers and customers alike.

The U.S. would continue its push for a diplomatic solution, the official confirmed on Tuesday, saying the administration had "long known" that there was no "military solution" to Afghanistan's problems.

"... We will focus our efforts on supporting the ongoing peace process. And that means putting the full weight of our government behind diplomatic efforts to reach a peace agreement between the Taliban and the Afghan government," the official said.



Risk factor: Health officials inspecting bats to be confiscated and culled at a live animal market in Solo, Indonesia ■ AP/FILE

to suspend the trade in live caught wild animals of mammalian species for food or breeding and close sections of food markets selling live caught wild animals of mammalian species as an emergency measure unless demonstrable effective regulations and adequate risk assessment are in place," the agencies said.

"Animals, particularly wild animals, are the source of more than 70% of all emerging infectious diseases in humans, many of which are caused by novel viruses. Wild mammals, in particular, pose a risk for the emergence of new diseases," the guidance said.

The agencies recalled that some of the earliest known cases of COVID-19 had links to a wholesale food market in Wuhan, with many of the initial patients stall owners.

# Biden proposes summit meeting with Putin

He reiterated 'unwavering commitment' of U.S. to Ukraine's sovereignty, according to White House

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden has asked his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for a summit level meeting in a third country, in the next few months, according to the White House.

The proposal to "pursue a strategic stability dialogue", made during a phone call on Tuesday between the two Presidents, comes weeks after Mr. Biden agreed during an interview last month to the characterisation of Mr.



Initiating talks: Joe Biden at the White House. ■ REUTERS

Putin as a "killer." Mr. Biden had also said Mr. Putin would "pay a price" for alleged meddling in U.S. elections – leading to Russia recalling its envoy to

Washington. The Biden-Putin call also comes days before Mr. Biden's April 22-23 Leaders Summit on Climate, to which Mr. Putin has also been invited.

**Troops build-up**  
"President Biden also made clear that the United States will act firmly in defence of its national interests in res-

ponse to Russia's actions, such as cyber intrusions and election interference," the White House said.

Mr. Biden reiterated the U.S.'s "unwavering commitment" to Ukraine's sovereignty, according to the White House.

"The President [Mr. Biden] voiced our concerns over the sudden Russian military build-up in occupied Crimea and on Ukraine's borders, and called on Russia to de-escalate tensions," the call readout said.

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J&J had committed to deli-

vering 20 million doses of its vaccine to the U.S. by the end of March and a further 80 million doses by the end of May.

The White House released a statement from the head of its COVID-19 response team Jeff Zients, saying the pause will not impact the U.S.'s vaccination plans.

"This announcement will not have a significant impact on our vaccination plan: Johnson & Johnson vaccine makes up less than 5% of the recorded shots in arms in the U.S. to date..." Mr. Zients said.

# U.S. pauses J&J vaccine rollout

Six women under 50 affected by 'rare and severe' blood clots

**SRIRAM LAKSHMAN**

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) called for a "pause" on Tuesday of J&J's single dose vaccine after six individuals, all women between the ages of 18 and 48, developed blood clots. Nearly seven million people have been administered the vaccine.

The "rare and severe" clot, a cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST), was seen along with thrombocytopenia (low levels of blood

platelets), according to the CDC and FDA. The authorities said they were consequently pausing the vaccine's use out of an "abundance of caution."

"Right now, these adverse events appear to be extremely rare," Peter Marks of the FDA and Anne Shuchat of the CDC said in a joint statement, asking vaccine recipients who develop a "severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain, or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination," to contact their healthcare providers.

J&J had committed to deli-

# Hong Kong to amend poll laws in 'favour' of pro-Beijing camp

It will be illegal to encourage others to boycott polls, cast blank votes

**REUTERS**

HONG KONG

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam announced amendments to voting laws on Tuesday that critics say favour pro-Beijing candidates by redrawing constituency boundaries, creating more electoral districts, and criminalising calls for voters to leave ballots blank.

Legislative Council, known as LegCo, elections are set for December 19, while the Chief Executive elections are set for March 27, 2022. The proposals will be discussed on Wednesday in the Council.

## Patriots' rule

The amendments, detailed over 600 pages, are meant to facilitate and complement Beijing's move last month to overhaul the

city's electoral system by significantly curbing democratic representation in its institutions to ensure that only "patriots" can rule.

The changes announced by China in March reduce the number of directly elected representatives and increase the number of Beijing-approved officials in an expanded legislature. A new vetting committee will monitor candidates for public office and work with new national security authorities in Hong Kong to ensure they are loyal to Beijing.

But China's Parliament left some of the smaller details, such as the poll dates or the drawing of new constituencies, to be legislated by Hong Kong authorities.

On Tuesday, Ms. Lam said the government will increase the

number of electoral districts from which vetted candidates can be elected to 10, with two winners from each region. Previously, 35 seats were split between five electoral districts.

The redrawing of constituencies could result in stronger showings for pro-Beijing candidates in rural regions bordering mainland China and the east of the Hong Kong island, where they usually fare better, analysts say. "Manipulating" the election by advocating for blank or invalid protest votes or obstructing other people from voting will also constitute a crime, according to the amendments.

Critics fear voters would feel robbed of a choice if candidates are vetted for their loyalty to Beijing, while most opposition figures are either in jail or in exile.

The policeman was killed in overnight clashes with the supporters of Saad Rizvi, the head of the Tehreek-e-Labiak Pakistan who was arrested on Monday, police said. Ten policemen were also wounded in these clashes in the town of Shahdara near Lahore.

Two Islamists were reportedly killed in the eastern Punjab province. The violence began on Monday after police arrested Rizvi for threatening

# 3 killed in Pakistan clashes between police, Islamists

Violence began after Saad Rizvi's arrest

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

LAHORE

Two demonstrators and a policeman were killed on Tuesday in violent clashes between Islamists and police in Pakistan, a day after authorities arrested the head of an Islamist party in the eastern city of Lahore, a senior police official and local media reported.

The policeman was killed in overnight clashes with the supporters of Saad Rizvi, the head of the Tehreek-e-Labiak Pakistan who was arrested on Monday, police said. Ten policemen were also wounded in these clashes in the town of Shahdara near Lahore.

Two Islamists were reportedly killed in the eastern Punjab province. The violence began on Monday after police arrested Rizvi for threatening

protests if the government did not expel France's Ambassador over depictions of Prophet Mohammed.

According to the police, the arrest was aimed at maintaining order. But Rizvi's detention quickly sparked violent protests by Islamists in cities around the country. The protesters blocked highways and roads in several cities.

The deadly clashes come two days after Rizvi in a statement asked the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan to honour what he said was a commitment it made in February to his party to expel the French envoy before April 20 over the publication in France of depictions of the Prophet. However, the government has said it only committed to discussing the matter in Parliament.

Further details can be seen from e-procurement portal "www.tendersodisha.gov.in."

(Er.Prasanna Kumar Pan) Chief Construction Engineer, Kanupur Irrigation Project AT/PO : BASUDEVPUR, DIST : KEONJHAR, ODISHA, PIN : 758047. E-Mail : ccekibpbur@gmail.com

"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE Bid Identification No. NCB1/ORDRIP KNJ-I/2021-22 (Online) NOTICE INVITING BIDS (NIB)

1 Name of the Work : Periodical maintenance of five year completed PMGSY works in the District of Kalahandi and Nuapada.

2 No. of Works : 35 Nos.

3 Location details : Kalahandi & Nuapada District

4 Estimated Cost : As per NIT

5 Period of Completion : As per NIT.

6 Cost of tender paper : Rs.10,000/- per set

7 Other details :

Availability of tender for online bidding Last date & time for seeking tender clarification Date and time of opening of technical bid

From To 28.04.2021 11.00 A.M. 29.04.2021 5.00 P.M. 30.04.2021 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the web site "www.tendersodisha.gov.in."

O-29: Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Bhawanipatna OPR-25102/11/0001/2122

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, KANUPUR IRRIGATION PROJECT AT/PO : BASUDEVPUR, DIST : KEONJHAR, ODISHA, PIN : 758047. E-Mail : ccekibpbur@gmail.com

"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE Bid Identification No. NCB1/ORDRIP KNJ-I/2021-22 (Online) NOTICE INVITING BIDS (NIB)

1 Name of the Work : Rehabilitation, Improvement and Basic Facility of Kanupur Dam in KEONJHAR District of Odisha under DRIP-II.

2 Estimated Cost : Rs.126.00 Lakh

3 Period of Completion : 18 (Eighteen) Calendar Months including rainy season

4 Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : Dt.15.04.2021 from 10.00 Hours to Dt.29.04.2021 upto 17.00 Hours.

5 Last date/time of receipt of bid in the portal : Dt.29.04.2021 up to 17.00 Hours

6 Name & Address of the Officer inviting Bid : Er. Prasanna Kumar Pan, Chief Construction Engineer, Kanupur Irrigation Project, At/PO:Basudevpur, Dist- Keonjhar, Odisha-758047

Further details can be seen from e-procurement portal "www.tendersodisha.gov.in."

(Er.Prasanna Kumar Pan) Chief Construction Engineer, Kanupur Irrigation Project, Basudevpur, Keonjhar, Odisha CIPR-32376/11/0001/2122

ODISHA JOINT ENTRANCE EXAMINATION-2021 (OJEE-2021)

No.: OJEE / 155 DATE: 12-04-2021

NOTICE FOR ONLINE APPLICATION FOR OJEE - 2021

Odisha Joint Entrance Examination (OJEE) – 2021 will be conducted during 17th – 24th of June, 2021 (tentative)

for admission to B.Pharm/ M.B.A / M.C.A / M.Tech/ M.Tech (Part Time)/ M.Arch/ M Plan/M.Pharm/ Int. MBA and Lateral Entry to B.Tech/ B.Pharm Courses in Government and Private Universities and Colleges of Odisha

The Entrance Examination will be conducted in

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	48544	-1.38
Gold	46093	0.04
Brent oil	63.67	-0.31

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	731.05	-13.60
Asian Paints	2570.70	-51.50
Axis Bank	661.00	+25.40
Bajaj Auto	3602.45	61.45
Bajaj Finance	9806.70	643.55
Bharti Airtel	4728.75	217.75
BPCL	536.15	13.70
Britannia Ind	409.40	5.45
Cipla	3746.00	-66.75
Coal India	885.20	-17.20
Divis Lab	127.95	3.25
DLF	3718.45	-61.20
Dr Reddy's Lab	4777.30	-219.65
Eicher Motors	2493.85	66.65
Grafix Ind	1392.20	15.60
HCL Tech	983.40	-26.00
HDIL	2512.95	93.10
HDFC Bank	1400.35	33.30
HDFC Life	706.10	18.80
Hero MotoCorp	2865.35	79.25
Hindalco	348.70	12.50
Hind Unilever	2454.40	-7.60
ICICI Bank	560.60	22.05
IndusInd Bank	877.40	33.00
Infosys	1397.15	-28.60
Indian Oil Corp	88.80	1.80
ITC	208.70	3.40
JSW Steel	630.35	26.20
Kotak Bank	1775.85	33.35
L&T	1373.70	28.55
M&M	811.25	59.75
Maruti Suzuki	6815.80	295.20
Nestle India Ltd.	17168.85	-32.85
NTPC	100.60	1.55
ONGC	102.05	4.00
PowerGrid Corp	208.75	7.60
Reliance Ind	1931.80	20.65
SBI Life	897.80	25.35
State Bank	341.00	12.15
Shree Cement	30356.05	475.00
Sun Pharma	627.35	8.00
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	663.95	8.35
Tata Motors	302.85	16.30
Tata Steel	879.05	27.45
TCS	3104.05	-142.50
Tech Mahindra	1001.85	-38.00
Titan	1530.60	20.15
UltraTech Cement	6604.45	95.05
UPL	604.60	15.05
Wipro	418.95	-13.65

## IN BRIEF



## Faulty airbags replaced in 12,000 Cruze units

NEW DELHI Automaker Chevrolet India on April 13 said it has replaced faulty Takata airbags in about 12,000 Cruze units in the country while appealing to leftover customers to get their vehicles inspected at the earliest. PTI

## TCS shares fall more than 4% after Q4 earnings

NEW DELHI Shares of TCS declined more than 4% on Tuesday as the company's March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The stock tumbled 4.21% to ₹3,105 on the BSE. On Monday, the company reported a 14.9% jump in consolidated net profit to ₹9,246 crore for the quarter ended March. PTI

## Capri Global unveils affordable-housing loans

MUMBAI Capri Global Capital Ltd., a non-banking financial company offering MSME and housing finance, said it had unveiled affordable housing loans with interest rates starting from 7.99% for both urban and rural customers. All salaried employees employed can avail of the loans. Women applicants will receive an additional 0.10% discount.

# Customs, excise fuel indirect tax surge in COVID-hit year

Overall net revenue grows 12.3%; excise and service tax revenue jumps 59%

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

A jump in excise revenue helped lift net indirect tax collections by 12.3% in FY21 to ₹10.71 lakh crore, surpassing the Centre's recently revised estimates, provisional data from the Finance Ministry showed on Tuesday.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections for the full year fell 8% from ₹5.99 lakh crore in FY20 to ₹5.48 lakh crore, but the overall kitty was bolstered by a sharp spike in excise collections.

"Net tax collections on account of Central Excise and Service Tax (Arrears) during financial year 2020-21 stood at ₹3.91 lakh crore as compared to ₹2.45 lakh crore in



**Revenue rebound:** GST collections exceeded ₹1 lakh cr. in each of the last 6 months of FY21, the Ministry said. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

the previous financial year, thereby registering a growth of more than 59%," the Ministry said in a statement. Customs duty collections also grew 21% to ₹1.32 lakh crore, helping swell the exchequer's coffers.

"The 59% growth in net central excise and service tax (arrears) collections is largely on account of the Sabka Vishwas scheme for resolving legacy disputes," said Saket Patawari, executive director at financial con-

sultancy Nexdigm. "In addition, there has been a rise in customs duty collection," he added. Net direct tax collections for the pandemic-hit FY21 grew almost 5% to ₹9.45 lakh crore, provisional data showed last week.

**Subject to reconciliation**  
Both the direct and indirect tax numbers are subject to reconciliation.

"GST collections were severely affected in the first half of the financial year on account of COVID," the Ministry said. "However, in the second half, GST collections registered a good growth and collections exceeded ₹1 lakh crore in each of the last six months," it added.

## Sensex climbs 1.38% as autos, banks shine

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Stock markets regained their footing on Tuesday after the previous session's massive sell-off, tracking renewed buying interest in financial, bank and auto counters amid firm global cues.

Participants also cheered the government's decision to grant emergency use authorisation for Russia's Sputnik V vaccine for India.

The BSE Sensex rose 660.68 points, or 1.38%, to 48,544.06. The NSE Nifty surged 1.36% to 14,504.80.

Mahindra & Mahindra was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 8%, followed by Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, ONGC and Axis Bank.



**In small doses:** Micro-containment zones may impact the economy less than the lockdown did last year. ■ M. SRINATH

## 'Virus surge, vaccination pace threaten recovery'

Moody's still sees double-digit growth

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The resurgence of COVID-19 infections in India, combined with partial lockdowns and the slow pace of vaccinations poses a big risk to a strong economic rebound, although the country may still register double-digit growth in 2021, Moody's Investors Service said on Tuesday.

In a note on India's sovereign rating, the global agency said the second wave of infections presented a risk to its 2021-22 GDP forecast of 13.7% growth, "as the reimposition of virus management measures will curb economic activity and could dampen market and consumer sentiment."

**Retail activity drops**  
"Retail and recreation activity across India had dropped by 25% as of 7 April compared with 24 February, according to Google mobility data," Moody's noted. "This was mirrored in the Reserve Bank of India's March consumer confidence survey which showed a deterioration in perceptions of the economic situation."

tion and expectations of decreased spending on non-essential items," it said.

India had recorded its highest daily surge in new COVID-19 infections since the start of the pandemic on April 11, pushing its active case load further past 1 million, the agency pointed out, stressing that the vaccination roll-out will be critical in managing the second wave in a manner that balances 'virus management against maintaining economic activity'.

Despite the fresh risks, the rating agency said India's GDP is still likely to grow in the double digits in 2021 given the low level of activity in 2020. "Given the focus on 'micro-containment zones' to deal with the current wave of infections, as opposed to a nationwide lockdown, we expect that the impact on economic activity will be less severe than that seen in 2020."

"India's very low coronavirus death count (about 1,70,179 deaths have been recorded as of 12 April) and relatively very young population also help mitigate risks," it said.

## Survey shows 59% firms are eyeing raises

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

As the economy moves to a recovery path after a sharp decline last year, a study has shown that 59% of companies in India intend to give salary increments to employees in 2021.

According to Genius Consultants' '10th Hiring, Attrition and Compensation Trend 2021-22', the increment scenario seems "welcoming with 59% of companies saying that increment is on the cards, which will range between 5-10% whereas 20% think increment will be less than 5%." The study was done online among 1,200 firms in February and March across sectors.

Stating that APSEZ would be removed from the indices prior to market opening on April 15, S&P Dow Jones Indices observed that the decision had followed a "Media and Stakeholder Analysis triggered by recent news events pointing to heightened risks to the company regarding their commercial

relationship with Myanmar's military, who are alleged to have committed serious human rights abuses under international law".

The Myanmar military has been accused of widespread

human rights violations after a coup and has been slapped with sanctions by the United States.

The group, led by billionaire Gautam Adani, is building a port in Yangon on land leased from the military-controlled Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), which is among the entities that have been sanctioned by the U.S.

Last month, the Adani group said it would consult all stakeholders and authorities on the project after human rights groups alleged that the ports unit had an agreement to pay millions of dollars in rent to MEC.

## Sops will help raise vaccine output: FICCI

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

There is a need to roll out incentives for COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers to help them ramp up production in a bid to cater to the rising demand across the country, industry body FICCI said on Tuesday.

The government also needs to give provisions for immediate and sufficient grants and subsidies through its COVID-19 funds, for those manufacturers that are already developing or manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines in the country, it noted. In a statement, the association recommended financing under a PLI-type plan to aid makers of vaccines.

## All gold jewellery must bear hallmark from June

No further extension sought: Nandan

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The Centre will go ahead with its plan to mandate hallmarking of gold jewellery from June 1. The plan had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, the then Union Minister for Consumer Affairs Ram Vilas Paswan had announced January 2021 as the deadline, but jewellers had been given an extension.

No further extension has been sought, Consumer Affairs Secretary Leena Nandan said at a virtual press conference. Gold hallmarking is a purity certification and is voluntary at present.



About 40% of gold jewellery is sold with a hallmark.

As per the new rules, if jewellery or an artefact made of 14-, 18- or 22-carat gold is sold without the BIS hallmark, the jeweller could be penalised five times the cost of the object or imprisoned for up to one year.

## Lockdowns to shave \$1.25 bn a week: report

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

Amid surging pandemic cases forcing many States to curb mobility and businesses, a British brokerage's report has said that these localised lockdowns in key economic hubs can cost the economy an average of \$1.25 billion each week and may shave off 140 bps from the Q1 nominal GDP.

If the current restrictions remain in place until May-end, the cumulative loss of economic and commercial activity could be approximately \$10.5 billion, or about 34 bps of nominal GDP, British brokerage Barclays said.

**Confident of surpassing 2019 sales in India: Lamborghini**

Orders coming back in past 4-5 months, says country head



Sharad Agarwal

more positivity in the market... the economic activity, the forecast for GDP, the stock market," he said, on the factors driving growth.

"If you look at all the ma-

## Pine Labs acquires Fave in \$45-mn deal

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Merchant commerce solutions provider Pine Labs on Tuesday said it has acquired consumer fintech platform Fave in a deal valued at more than \$45 million, as part of its expansion plans.

Fave's investors will receive an all-cash payout, while founders and key Fave employees will receive both cash and Pine Labs shares, Pine Labs said in a statement. Fave will be hiring more than 100 new employees in Southeast Asia and India to accelerate cashless payments and smart savings across the region, the company added.

## SPORT

## FC Goa, India set for group stage debut

A once in a lifetime opportunity says coach Ferrando

## AFC CL

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MARGAO

The AFC Champions League will be played in India for the first time here from Wednesday with FC Goa becoming the only team from the country to feature in the group stage of the continent's top-tier competition in club football.

The G

# MI coaxes KKR to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory

Rohit's side collapses from 86 for one to 152 but suffocates Kolkata's chase in the back-10, thanks to Chahar, Krunal, Bumrah and Boult

IPL 2021

WRIDDHAAYAN BHATTACHARYYA

Kolkatta Knight Riders left no stone unturned in preparing for its nemesis, Mumbai Indians.

Eoin Morgan started with spin to keep Rohit Sharma & Co. quiet in the PowerPlay. He saved the express pace of Pat Cummins and Prasidh Krishna for Kieron Pollard and Hardik Pandya in the middle overs. The plans worked, with his side dismissing the five-time champion for 152.

But in the end, pressure got the better of KKR, as it lost by 10 runs at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Tuesday.

KKR started on a positive note, led by Nitish Rana (57, 47b, 6x4, 2x6), who found solid support in Shubman Gill (33). The opening partnership of 72 in 8.4 overs set the ball rolling for the men in purple before Rahul Chahar's magic run began.

The leg-spinner picked up four wickets at a crucial juncture to turn the tide. Gill found Pollard at long-off while trying to clear the fence. Rahul Tripathi edged one to Quinton de Kock, Eoin Morgan failed to execute the hook and was caught at deep mid-wicket, and finally, the in-form Rana was stumped.

KKR needed to score 30 off the last four overs with five wickets in hand when left-arm spinner Krunal Pan-



**Flexing their muscles:** After Suryakumar Yadav's 36-ball 56 helped Mumbai Indians post 152, Rahul Chahar bowled a telling spell that overshadowed Andre Russell's five-wicket haul. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI



## SCOREBOARD

### MUMBAI INDIANS

Rohit Sharma b Cummins 43 (32b, 3x4, 1x6), Quinton de Kock c Tripathi b Varun 2 (6b), Suryakumar Yadav c Gill b Shakib 56 (36b, 7x4, 2x6), Ishan Kishan c Prasidh b Cummins 1 (3b), Hardik Pandya c Russell b Prasidh 15 (7b, 2x4), Kieron Pollard c Karthik b Russell 5 (8b, 1x4), Krunal Pandya c Prasidh b Russell 15 (9b, 3x4), Marco Jansen c Cummins b Russell 0 (1b), Rahul Chahar c Gill b Russell 8 (7b), Jasprit Bumrah c Shakib b Russell 0 (7b), Trent Boult (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-4, w-3); Total (in 20 overs): 152.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (de Kock, 1.6 overs), 2-86 (Suryakumar, 10.3), 3-88 (Ishan, 11.1), 4-115 (Rohit, 15.2), 5-123 (Hardik, 16.2), 6-125 (Pollard, 17.2), 7-126 (Jansen, 17.3), 8-150 (Krunal, 19.3), 9-150 (Bumrah, 19.4).

### MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Boult 4-0-27-2, Jansen 2-0-17-0, Bumrah 4-0-28-0, Krunal 4-0-13-1, Pollard 1-0-12-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-27-4, Rohit 1-0-9-0.

### Toss:

Kolkata Knight Riders. **Man-of-the-Match:** Rahul Chahar.

*MI won by 10 runs.*

Stokes out of IPL with broken finger

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

In what is yet another body blow to Rajasthan Royals, all-rounder Ben Stokes has been ruled out of the rest of the IPL.

According to a statement from Royals, Stokes injured a finger on his left hand while fielding against Punjab Kings in Mumbai on Monday. He seemed to be in trouble after taking a diving catch to dismiss Chris Gayle.

The world's premier all-rounder was expected to play a major role in the Royals campaign.

The Jaipur-based franchise had suffered a blow even before the first ball was bowled. Its bowling spearhead Jofra Archer was ruled out of the initial phase as he had to undergo a surgery to remove a fragment of glass from his hand.

The England speedster has, however, been allowed to resume training. That could be some solace to Royals.



*Stokes. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI*

## Next assignment

**MI:** April 17 vs. SRH, Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

**KKR:** April 18 vs. RCB, Chennai, 3.30 p.m.

## Sangakkara sees encouraging signs in Samson's knock



**Well done!** Kumar Sangakkara, right, was mighty pleased with skipper Sanju Samson's innings. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

How captaincy would impact Sanju Samson's batting was one of the questions asked ahead of the IPL. On Monday night at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, the new skipper of Rajasthan Royals provided the answer in a most emphatic style.

**Short by a few yards**  
He played one of the great knocks in a lost cause at the IPL. His 119 off 63 balls fell short by a few yards – quite literally – of what would have been an astonishing victory against Punjab Kings, chasing 222. No other Royals batsman managed more than 25.

Kumar Sangakkara,

Rajoyls' director of cricket, was all praise for Samson's extraordinary innings. "It was encouraging to see him take the responsibility," he said. "He was just five or six yards short of hitting the last ball for a six. The next time I believe he will hit ten yards further to win us a game."

Sangakkara also was impressed with the efforts from youngsters Ryan Parag, whose 52-run stand with Samson for the fifth wicket kept Royals in the game, and Chetan Sakariya, the 23-year-old left-arm seamer who made a sparkling debut.

"Ryan is a special player and has got amazing hand-speed and great composure," he said.

Against MI, he sent down just one over and made an impact by dismissing a rampant Chris Lynn.

RCB has bowling depth, and seamer Harshal Patel bowled with clever variations against MI to scalp five.

When your domestic uncapped players do well, it augurs well for your team.

SRH has a problem. It

cannot afford to bench someone with the temperament and stroke-making ability of Kane Williamson.

Without him, the team appears lesser outfit. It's not just about his high-quality batting. Given his cricketing nous, his inputs to David Warner will be invaluable.

SRH can bench Mohammad Nabi and ask Vijay Shankar and Abdul Samad to share four overs between them.

This will be a game full of mini-battles.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar versus the influential de Villiers will be intriguing. And Rashid Khan vs. Kohli and Maxwell are mouthwatering match-ups.

Curbing the heavy-hitting Warner will be a challenge for RCB.

The surface might be sluggish, but this will be a high-octane clash.

## TODAY'S MATCH



CHENNAI, 7.30 P.M.

### HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 17

SRH 10 | RCB 7

In 2020

Played 3 | SRH 2 | RCB 1

STAR SPORTS 1 & SELECT 1 (SD & HD)



**Intriguing battle:** It should be a mouthwatering clash between Rashid and Kohli. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

## Indian women to play one-off Test at Bristol in June

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON

The Indian women's cricket team will play a historic one-off Test against England in Bristol as part of a multi-format series that will also feature three ODIs and as many T20Is across June-July.

The Test will be played at the Bristol County Ground from June 16-19, kicking off the England team's summer. The match was first confirmed by BCCI secretary Jay Shah earlier this year but the exact date and venue were unveiled by the host board

on Tuesday. While the Indian women's team will take part in a Test for the first time since 2014, England last played a red-ball game during the 2019 Ashes.

The one-off Test will be followed by three ODIs and T20Is each with the tour concluding on July 15 in Chelmsford.

After announcing its home fixtures, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) chief executive officer Tom Harrison, said: "We're really looking forward to a busy

**The fixtures:** One-off Test: June 16-19; ODIs: June 27, 30 & July 3. T20Is: July 9, 11 & 15.

## Bhuvi is ICC player of the month



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DUBAI

Experienced India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar on Tuesday won the ICC Player-of-the Month award for his superlative show in the recent limited-over series against England in March.

The 31-year-old took six wickets at an economy rate of 4.65 in the three ODIs, while picking up four wickets with a fantastic economy of 6.38 in the five T20Is to emerge as the stand-out bowler on either side in the white ball series.

"After what seemed like a really long and painful gap, I was delighted to be playing

for India again. I used the time away to work on my fitness and skill and I am happy to be back taking wickets for my country," Bhuvneshwar said in an ICC release.

"I would like to thank each and every person who helped me in this journey starting from my family and friends and my teammates.

"Also, a special thank you to the ICC voting academy and all the fans who voted for me and made me the ICC Men's player of the month for March."

Besides Bhuvneshwar, Rashid Khan of Afghanistan and Zimbabwe's Sean Williams were also nominated.

## India-A's summer tour of England postponed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON

India-A's tour of England this summer has been postponed and the senior team will now have an integrated jumbo squad for the five-match Test series in England later this year, the ECB and the BCCI agreed on Tuesday.

The senior team, which is to play five Tests against England in August-September, will now have only two intra-squad practice games instead of the First Class fixture between the India seniors and In-

dia-A teams planned earlier.

It is believed that the decision has been taken to ensure the safest possible environment for a high quality international series in times of COVID-19.

### Mutual agreement

"The ECB and BCCI have agreed to postpone this summer's men's India-A tour," ECB said in a statement on Tuesday.

This means that a squad of 30 will be mixed and matched for the practice games.

## TV PICKS

**IPL:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

**South Africa v Pakistan:** 3rd T20I, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6 p.m.

**Senior Asian wrestling:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.

**UEFA Champions League:** Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)

## IN BRIEF



**COVID puts Medvedev out of Monte Carlo Masters**

**MONACO**  
Second-ranked Daniil Medvedev withdrew from the Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday following a positive COVID-19 test. The ATP said the Russian has been placed in isolation and his condition is being assessed by the tournament doctor and medical team. AP

**Seville to host Laureus World Sports Awards**

**LONDON**  
The Spanish city of Seville will host the 22nd Laureus World Sports Awards on May 6 in a virtual ceremony owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The winners are selected by a jury comprising 69 members of the Laureus World Sports Academy. PTI

**Perez back unopposed as Real Madrid president**

**MADRID**  
Florentino Perez has been re-elected unopposed as president of Real Madrid for a sixth term, the Spanish champion announced on Tuesday. AFP



**Stephen Curry betters Chamberlain's record**

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
Stephen Curry became the all-time leading scorer in Golden State Warriors' history with the ninth 50-point game of his career, exploding for 53 in a 116-107 victory over the visiting Denver Nuggets on Monday night. Curry began the game with 17,765 points in his Warriors career, needing 18 to equal Wilt Chamberlain's all-time franchise record. He got there in the first quarter, then went on to finish the night with 10 3-pointers.

**The results:** Philadelphia 113 bt Dallas 95; New York 111 bt LA Lakers 96; San Antonio 120 bt Orlando 97.

**Washington** 125 bt Utah 121; Memphis 101 bt Chicago 90; New Orleans 117 bt Sacramento 110; Golden State 116 bt Denver 107; Phoenix 126 bt Houston 120. REUTERS

**Priyanka, Jinson test positive**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Five track-and-field athletes, including Tokyo Olympics-bound 20km race walker Priyanka Goswami, and a member of the support staff have tested positive for COVID-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

Asian Games 1500m gold-medallist Jinson Johnson and steeplechaser Chinta Yadav are among the five athletes who have been infected along with race walk coach Alexander Atsybashev.

Another Tokyo Games-bound race walker K.T. Irwan has returned negative after he was tested as a primary contact of Johnson.

"My test result which came on Monday was positive and I am currently in quarantine in my room. I have fever, not very high, and headache also," said Johnson.

# Everton suffers damaging draw

West Brom dares to dream; Sevilla edges seven-goal thriller with Celta Vigo

## EURO LEAGUES

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LONDON

West Bromwich Albion improved its slender hopes of avoiding relegation from the Premier League as it survived VAR controversy to beat Southampton 3-0, while Everton's fading top four bid was damaged by a 0-0 draw at Brighton on Monday.

Albion saw Mbaye Diagne's goal questionably ruled out by VAR early in the first half at the Hawthorns.

But Sam Allardyce's side recovered from that blow to sweep into a two-goal lead by half-time thanks to Mathieu Pereira's penalty and a Matt Phillips strike.

Callum Robinson sealed West Brom's second successive win after the interval as the Baggies built on their stunning 5-2 victory at Chelsea.

At the Amex Stadium, Everton was hoping to close the gap on fourth placed West Ham in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League.

But Carlo Ancelotti's team



**On target:** Matt Phillips, foreground, scores West Brom's second past Southampton's Fraser Forster. ■ GETTY IMAGES

managed only one shot on target as its winless run extended to five games in all competitions.

Everton, in eighth place, is seven points behind West Ham with a game in hand, while Brighton moved seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Sevilla gave itself an outside chance of rejoining La

Liga's title race on Monday by winning a seven-goal thriller away at Celta Vigo.

A second-half double from Ivan Rakitic and Papu Gomez snatched a 4-3 victory for Sevilla, which twice had to come from behind at Balaidos.

The comeback puts Sevilla six points behind Atletico Madrid.

## Will Klopp inspire another Liverpool comeback?

And will Guardiola break the quarterfinal barrier with City?

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LIVERPOOL

In need of another famous Champions League fight-back, Liverpool cannot rely on a wave of passion, colour and noise from the stands at Anfield to inspire a comeback from 3-1 down against Real Madrid on Wednesday.

It will instead need its manager Jurgen Klopp to conjure the motivation and tactical masterplan to once again eliminate one of Spain's football's giants.

Liverpool's deficit is not as steep as when Barcelona visited two years ago in the semifinals in what turned out to be arguably the great-



Jurgen Klopp. ■ AFP



Pep Guardiola. ■ GETTY IMAGES

est of all the memorable European nights at Anfield.

Meanwhile, Borussia Dortmund is waiting on the fitness of Marco Reus and Mats Hummels for the home leg against Manchester City with England winner Jadon Sancho definitely ruled out.

Pep Guardiola, mean-

while, expects to be labelled a "failure" if City doesn't reach the semifinals for the fifth straight year since he joined the English club.

The Spanish coach hasn't won the competition – or even reached the final – since capturing the second of his titles with Barcelona in 2011.

## Raman to re-apply for coach's post

BCCI to bring all women's teams under one fold

## CRICKET

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Former India opener W.V. Raman is all set to re-apply for the head coach's post of the Indian women's cricket team as the BCCI is looking at empowering the incumbent with more responsibilities.

The Indian cricket board has published the advertisement on its website as per the requirements of its new constitution which states that the ending of every contractual agreement should be followed by seeking fresh applications.

It is believed that the se-



W.V. Raman. ■ FILE PHOTO

der his guidance, the women's team reached the finals of the World T20. And don't forget this series against South Africa was the first in one year. He is well within his rights to re-apply and I believe he remains a strong contender," a senior BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

**Continuity**  
With the women's ODI World Cup scheduled in New Zealand in less than a year's time and a full tour of England in June-July, it will be interesting to see if the BCCI, which has always believed in continuity, persists with the stylish former southpaw or

looks at other options.

"Whoever is the new head coach will have more say as we plan to develop a robust A and U-19 team before we can start a full-fledged six or eight-team women's IPL. And who better than the new chief coach to monitor a smooth transition from U-19 senior level for the girls," the official said.

The BCCI will also have a fresh set of junior selectors with the ICC U-19 World Cup set to be held next year. The appointments to replace the Ashish Kapoor-led committee was delayed because of the pandemic which also led to the age-group cricket being postponed.

## Rithika stuns Aarushi

Qualifier Aakruti Sonkusare beats fourth seed Mrunmayee

## TENNIS

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
AHMEDABAD

Lucky loser Rithika Kakarla-mudi knocked out third seed Aarushi Raval 4-6, 6-0, 7-6(5) in the girls' pre-quarterfinals of the Altevol Asian under-14 tennis tournament on Tuesday.

In another match, qualifier Aakruti Sonkusare beat fourth seed Mrunmayee Joshi for the loss of five games.

In the boys' section, third seed Vraj Gohil was beaten 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 by Tanush Ghildyal.

In the other matches, sev-

enth seed Vyom Shah and

## Williamson wins Hadlee Medal again

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
WELLINGTON

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson won his fourth Sir Richard Hadlee medal for excelling across formats and was also adjudged the "Test Player of the Year" in the country's annual cricket awards on Tuesday. He claimed the big prize for the fourth time in last six years. Devon Conway won the men's ODI and T20 Player of the Year award.

**Leading award-winners:** Sir Richard Hadlee Medal: Kane Williamson; Bert Sutcliffe Medal: Jeff Crowe; Test player of the year: Williamson; Women's ODI player: Amy Satterthwaite; Men's ODI player: Devon Conway; Women's T20I player: Amelia Kerr; Men's T20I player: Conway.

## WDCA enters pre-quarterfinals

Rajesh Sharma picked up four wickets and scored 84 runs while Bengal Ranji Trophy player Abhimanyu Easwaran slammed a match-winning century as West Delhi Cricket Academy thrashed Sonnet Club by 154 runs to enter the pre-quarterfinals of the 31st all-India Hitkari Om Nath Sood memorial tournament.

**Test scores:** WDCA 278/5 in 40 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 121, Rajesh Sharma 84, Akshay Saini 45) bt Sonnet Club 124 in 29.1 overs (Suraj Rathore 4/12, Rajesh Sharma 4/26).

## Unbeaten ton by Shivam

Delhi Under-23 wicketkeeper Shivam Gupta scored an unbeaten 123 as Sporting Club defeated Sapience Club by eight wickets in the fourth R.K.

## Sajan wins but falls short of A-mark

## SWIMMING

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
TASHKENT

Olympic hopeful Sajan Prakash clinched the gold in the men's 200m butterfly with a timing of 1:57.85s, but it was well short of the A-mark Olympic Qualifying Time (1:56.48s), at the Uzbekistan Open swimming championships on Tuesday.

The result, however, was a significant improvement from the timing of 1:59.31s he had clocked at the Lat-

vian Open last month. Sajan had achieved the B-mark Olympic Time (1:59.97s) at the 2019 FINA World Championships, finishing in 1:58.45s.

Also on Tuesday, Kenisha Gupta secured the gold medal in women's 100m freestyle, coming home in 57.42s, while Shivani Kataria took the bronze (59.60s).

A.S. Anand was the bronze medallist in the men's 100m freestyle with a timing of 51.95s, a personal best.



Sajan Prakash. ■ FILE PHOTO

## Balbir Singh Jr. passes away

## HOCKEY

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
CHANDIGARH

Balbir Singh Jr., who was a member of the silver medal-winning 1958 Asian Games Indian hockey team, died here at the age of 88, his daughter Mandip Samra said on Tuesday.

He is survived by his wife, daughter and son.

"My father passed away in sleep on Sunday morning due to heart failure," his daughter said.

Balbir Singh Jr. was born



on May 2, 1932, at Sansarpur in Jalandhar, also known as the nursery of hockey players in India.

He took to hockey when he was six years old. He studied at Lyallpur Khalsa College in Jalandhar and was first selected to play for the Indian hockey team in 1951.

Hockey India condoled the death of Balbir Singh Jr.

"On behalf of Hockey India, I express my deepest condolences to Balbir Singh Jr.'s family. His contribution to Indian hockey will always be remembered and the hockey fraternity mourns his demise," HI president Gyanendra Ningombam said.

## India Open to be held in-camera

BAI to go ahead with the Olympic qualification event despite pandemic fear

## BADMINTON

**RAKESH RAO**  
NEW DELHI

In spite of the alarmingly rising cases of COVID-19, the Badminton Association of India (BAI), on Tuesday, announced plans to hold the India Open badminton championship in-camera at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor hall at the Indira Gandhi Stadium here, as rescheduled from May 11 to 16.

Although medical experts on the pandemic fear that the peak of the second wave could emerge in May, the BAI will go ahead with the Olympic qualification event with 228 players from 33 countries, including China.

## Seven-day quarantine

The event, out of bounds for



**Star attraction:** Saina Nehwal and P.V. Sindhu are among the leading names in women's singles. ■ PTI

spectators and media, mandates the players and the officials to report here on May 3 and serve a seven-day quarantine period.

The BAI secretary Ajay Singhania assured that infor-

ation about the on-court action would be available on digital platforms in almost real time.

Thrice World champion and reigning Olympic gold medallist Carolina Marin, in doubles, World No. 10 Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, along with Ashwini Ponnappa and N. Sikki Reddy, present the Indian challenge. Ashwini and Satwiksairaj will also test their preparedness in mixed doubles.

## Stark image



**Sign of the times:** A Tokyo 2020 Olympic torch relay runner going around in an empty Osaka Expo '70 Commemorative Park on Tuesday. ■ REUTERS