

IN BRIEF

BJP starts 'Modi Kitchens' in Delhi

NEW DELHI The Delhi BJP on Sunday started 'Modi Kitchens' across the Capital to provide food and ration to the poor and marginalised people suffering due to the lockdown. The party said that it has started the initiative as the Delhi government allegedly failed to provide any kind of assistance to the ones who are affected most by the continued shutdown in the Capital due to the pandemic.

Health Minister's father dies due to COVID

NEW DELHI Health Minister Satyendar Jain has lost his father to COVID-19, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a tweet on Sunday. "Satyendra himself has been working tirelessly round the clock for the people of Delhi. God bless his [father's] soul and my heartfelt condolences to the family [sic]," Mr. Kejriwal added in his tweet. Mr. Jain had tested positive last year. PTI

Haryana government announces 7-day lockdown starting today

State had earlier imposed weekend lockdown in nine districts owing to COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM The Haryana government on Sunday announced a seven-day lockdown in the State from May 3. Earlier, a weekend shutdown was imposed in nine districts of the State on April 30.

"Seven days complete lockdown announced in entire Haryana from May 3 [sic]," said a tweet from Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij, informing about the government's decision.

Earlier, the government had imposed a weekend lockdown in nine districts - Gurugram, Faridabad, Rohtak, Sonipat, Karnal, Panchkula, Hisar, Sirsa and Fatehabad - from 10 p.m. on April 30 to 5 a.m. on May 3.

Haryana has 1,02,516 active COVID-19 cases and



Golf Course Road wears a deserted look during the weekend lockdown in Gurugram. ■PTI

4,341 patients, including 1,506 women, have died so far due to the infection. The State has a positivity rate of 6.76% and fatality rate of 0.87%. The recovery rate is 78.70%.

Earlier in the day, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal, in a meeting with doctors and officials in Sonipat,

said that the State's oxygen quota was increased to 257 MT and the number of oxygen beds would now be augmented. The Chief Minister said an oxygen plant would be set up at Karnal, Panchkula, Hisar, Sirsa and Faridabad and the equipment required for these were received. Mr. Lal said that

100 doctors were ready for a degree internship at Bhagat Phool Singh Government Medical College in Khanpur and they would be sent to different districts as per requirement.

He said daily auditing of liquid medical oxygen should be done in all hospitals of the State so that there was no shortage of oxygen for any COVID-19 patient.

He called upon the voluntary organisations to come forward to deliver essential items to the patients in home isolation.

The Chief Minister directed the officials that there should be no disruptions in the movement of food items due to the lockdown and the rate list of commodities be displayed outside food shops to prevent black marketing.

Make all-out efforts to lift oxygen allocated for Delhi

Cabinet Secretary tells Delhi govt. to ensure rational and transparent distribution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI At a review meeting on the COVID-19 situation in the Capital, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Sunday asked the Delhi government to make all-out efforts to lift their allocated oxygen using all the means at their disposal. He also told the government to ensure that the available oxygen is distributed rationally and in a transparent manner so that there is no diversion or leakage.

The Cabinet Secretary expressed his anguish at recent instances, where people had suffered due to lack of adequate and timely availability of oxygen and em-

phasised the need to ramp up the city's medical infrastructure at the earliest, to cater to the increasing demand for COVID beds, ICUs and ventilators.

'Single helpline' He also stressed the need to make available all relevant information on COVID beds and other facilities and medicine availability to the public through dedicated websites and apps, on the basis of which people in need can approach the right place.

"A single helpline should be created at the front end to provide relevant clinical information to the needy people and should be popularised. The helpline can be

serviced through a dedicated and well-staffed call centre," Mr. Gauba said. He also asked for further augmentation of testing facilities and timely availability of test results.

The meeting was attended by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul, the Delhi Chief Secretary and other senior officials of the GNCTD.

Mr. Paul emphasised the seriousness of the present situation and recommended to rope in small nursing homes and hospitals for augmenting the medical infrastructure of the Capital. He asked for COVID care centres to be opened in ho-

tels and similar places, as per protocol.

In order to supplement the 24x7 helpline of the Delhi government, Mr. Paul recommended that the Delhi Medical Association be requested to offer around 50 doctors, who can voluntarily provide medical consultation to COVID-19 patients.

"The helpline/medical professional can provide guidance on use of medicines, oxygen concentrators and other medical facilities," he said.

The Additional Secretary, Health, emphasised the need for setting up oxygen audit committees in various hospitals and medical facilities.

Nod for sale of Remdesivir in domestic market sought

PRESS TRUST INDIA

NEW DELHI

A PIL in Delhi High Court has urged it to direct the Centre to permit sale of Remdesivir, used in COVID-19 treatment, by pharmaceutical companies

which manufacture it solely for the purpose of export so that the drug is easily available in the market.

The PIL said there are more than 25 companies in India which manufacture the medicine, but only six to eight are permitted to sell it in the domestic market and the rest were producing it for exports alone.

In search of a lifeline



Two men travelling to an oxygen plant to refill their cylinders in Delhi on Sunday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Delhi records 407 deaths and 20,394 new virus cases

49,633 get vaccinated; no. of active cases stand at 92,290

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

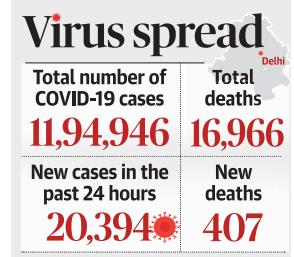
NEW DELHI

The Capital on Sunday recorded 407 deaths and 20,394 COVID-19 cases, along with 24,444 recoveries. A health bulletin released by the Delhi government stated that 71,997 tests were conducted and a positivity rate of 28.33% was recorded.

Currently, there are 92,290 active cases in the city, out of which 50,742 people are under home isolation.

The cumulative figures now stand at 11,94,946 cases with 16,966 deaths and 40,85,690 recoveries.

As many as 49,633 beneficiaries were vaccinated in the past 24 hours, out of which 28,775 received their first dose. The bulletin added that 33,02,559 beneficiaries had been vaccinated so



far with 7,10,672 having received both doses.

L-G takes stock

Taking stock of the situation, the Lieutenant-Governor sought further advice from departments and agencies concerned regarding the availability of medicines, beds, medical oxygen and augmentation of capacities at crematoriums and ghatyards, with the aim of addressing the ongoing pro-

blems being faced by people.

A statement from his office said that he has asked for the submission of a "quantifiable action plan" with "monitorable timeline" in this regard.

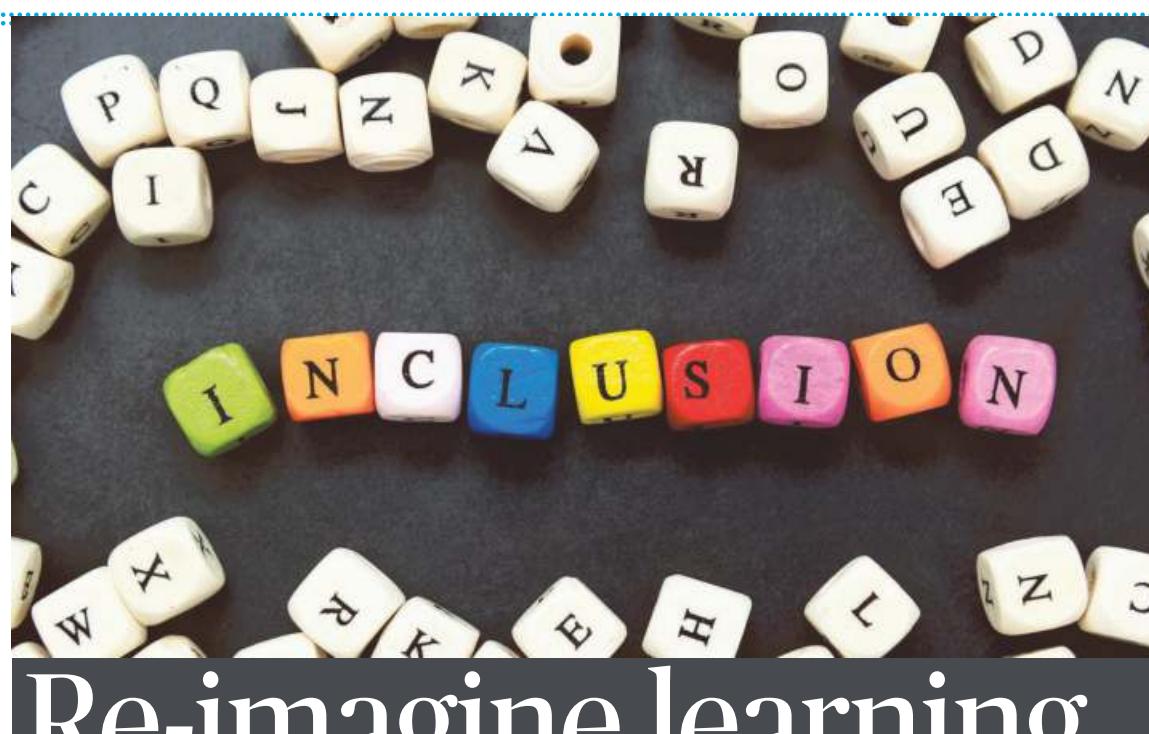
The L-G has also suggested the possibility of re-employing recently retired doctors and other paramedical staffers, wherever required to address shortages, the statement added.

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Re-imagine learning

How the Indian higher education system can be made more inclusive for students with disabilities

REENA GUPTA

This, we require a coordinated approach that makes universal accessibility norms an integral part of pedagogy and teaching methodology in universities. Inter-ministerial coordination would be required for an all-encompassing standardised guidelines for digital education infrastructure. These guidelines will ensure that digital education being imparted in schools and universities is being made available to learners with disabilities.

Support system On ground, a learning support system needs to be established in each university – both public and private. This may be managed by a dedicated office

or centre that would ensure a smooth transition for students with disabilities, their integration into the social environment of the campus, access to course material and technologies for improved academic experience, avail academic accommodations, and other pedagogical provisions.

A diligent effort in awareness and sensitisation towards people with disabilities is paramount. Stigma attached to looking or thinking differently than the "accepted" norm needs to be eradicated and educating people is the first step.

While there are visible disabilities that need an accessible physical and academic infrastructure in HEIs, the invisible ones such as Autism Spectrum, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dys-

calculia, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) need to be understood and seen as learning and thinking differences. The unique perspectives all these students bring in to the learning and teaching experiences of the higher education landscape make it an enriching environment for all, including neurotypical students, the teaching faculty and the overall community.

While a systemic change in the higher education ecosystem may take time, breaking from the past and re-imagining the world of education, especially post pandemic, will be a welcome step for all, including people with disabilities.

The writer is an Educational Therapist and Director, Office of Learning Support, Ashoka University, Chh

VIEWPOINT

The ongoing pandemic is an opportunity to develop multiple evaluation designs for different levels

K. ELANGO

Exams are often equated with appearing at high-stakes competitions. Students burn the midnight oil and sacrifice even simple pleasures to meet the goal of scoring well. In India, exams are also a family affair, with parents chaperoning children to coaching classes, keeping them company, ensuring they eat well and even taking time off from work. The Indian psyche conceives of exams as an endorsement of students' cognitive prowess, an actualisation of dreams (often the parents'), and a gateway to landing a 'good' job. Exams have, therefore, been a critical component of our curricular system that have been religiously practised and handed down.

Fault lines

However, the pandemic has exposed certain fault lines. While malpractices such as hiding bits of paper, torn pages from textbooks and formulae on palms, and mass copying, exchanging of answer sheets, dictation of answers by proctors themselves, and the latest, being equipped with tiny gadgets to outsource answers, and impersonation within the hall have been stopped, it has also wrought havoc on the system.

A flurry of announcements called for reduction in the portions, indefinite postponements, cancellations, and automatic promotions.

Bursting the exam bubble



When the exams were conducted, questions were sent online and students were mandated to submit their answers by post or hand them over personally to their respective colleges. In some instances, when required to upload the answers, students deliberately blurred their scripts to make deciphering impossible for the examiners. Exams also became group work, and students skilfully employed messaging services to exchange answers.

Mobile apps

Some institutions developed mobile apps for those taking exams, but the smart ones switched their window tabs, hoodwinking auto and other forms of proctoring. To minimise the administrative burden, the duration was reduced to an hour, with objective-type questions.

Research studies have established beyond doubt even those who score 100% in these may not be capable of stringing a few coherent sentences, owing to their lack of descriptive and organisational skills. Eventually, when the results were announced, virtually everyone was declared 'Passed', barring a few. Thus, exams became a mockery.

Missed opportunity An unforeseen opportunity to innovate was lost.

At the macro-level, exams could have paved way for a localised evaluation process; the stereotypical question paper model could have generated alternative patterns; the one summative exam could have been replaced with multi-modes for accurate assessments; and, at a time when learner-centric curriculum is finding its way in, self-assessment could have been given some space for developing students' critical awareness to become independent learners.

All is not lost, though. As we experience another wave of the pandemic, genuine attempts must be made to develop multiple evaluation designs for different levels of education – primary, secondary, and tertiary.

The writer is National Secretary, ELTAI, and Former Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Anna University, Chennai

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A second wave of the virus and another exodus

Several migrant labourers are packing their bags home due to job loss, uncertain future, and fear of getting infected

SHINJINI GHOSH

NEW DELHI

Amid the sustained surge in COVID-19 cases, migrant workers in the city, who had come back to the Capital a few months ago, are forced to return to their villages, yet again due to the pandemic-induced lockdown.

For most, the second phase of restrictions has meant a loss of livelihood for the second time within a year. When the Delhi government announced a one-week lockdown, many had hoped it would not get extended. But that was not to be.

Loss of work

With the national capital reeling under a shortage of beds, oxygen, medicines and the positivity rate continuing to be high, several migrant workers said they wanted to return to their hometowns while the trains were still running. Referring to last year's exodus, the workers said they did not want to endure the same experience if there was a complete shutdown.



Migrant workers waiting for transport to return to their hometowns in Bihar following the lockdown in Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Sheikh Ariful Ali, an embroider in Shahpur Jat, said: "Last year we were stuck in Delhi for the longest time without work. Ultimately, we had to pay around ₹3,200 per ticket for the special trains and return to our village in West Bengal. We do not want a repeat of the same situation. We are planning to leave by the first week of May. Just when

the work was picking up, we have to return again."

With a reduced workload and source of income, negotiating with landlords had also become difficult, said Mr. Ali. "Four of us stay in a room that costs ₹8,000. With no income currently, how are we supposed to sustain ourselves over here? The landlord has clearly

mentioned that we cannot keep the room if we do not pay. So for us, it is a better option to return at the moment," said Mr. Ali who is from the West Medinipur district.

S.K. Riyazul Hussain, another embroiderer from the same district, said around 800 people had already returned even as others are planning to do the same. "We stayed back in the first two weeks as there were some orders left. Now we are completely out of work. Because of restrictions on international flights, our products, which usually get exported, have also stopped. Wedding seasons were another big source of income for us. Now with the curtailed arrangement, we do not have work from there as well," said Mr. Hussain.

Stating that workers were at a loss, Mr. Hussain added, "Last year, with a complete shutdown, the situation was worse. Now, if it happens again, we will not have any options left with us. So it is best we leave now."

Pervading uncertainty

Waiting at the Sarai Kale Khan terminal with his family of four, Akhilesh Kumar, a migrant worker from Bihar, said that two weeks of lockdown and the prevailing uncertainty had forced him to take the decision to return. "First we thought this lockdown will be for a week and then it got extended to another week. Now we do not know for how much longer it will continue. So it is best that we return to our village. Remaining here endlessly without work does not make sense. We have faced enough miseries last year and cannot afford it once again," said Mr. Kumar, who used to work as a daily wager at construction sites.

However, for some like Raju Yadav, a juice seller from Bihar's Danapur district, arriving at the decision has not been easy. "Last year, I had gone home after much distress. But this time I am in a fix as things are not really in great shape back home. It is not like the situation is better out there. Here, at least, I am somehow managing to scrape through the days. Additionally, if we go home, I will have to continue paying the rent. What is the point then? I am really in a fix and not sure what to do apart from hoping that restrictions will be lifted soon," said Mr. Yadav.

"Lots of my friends working in automotive units and staying within a radius of around 200-250 km have decided to go to their homes during the shutdown. But those from far-off areas such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, said they would continue to stay in Gurugram during the shutdown. It is not viable to go back and then return in a week's time. Also, they are hopeful that the shutdown will not prolong and production will resume," said Sompal Vats, working at Sunbeam Lightweighting Solutions Pvt Ltd in Gurugram's Narsinghpur. From Haryana's Panipat, Vats has been working at the automotive company for more than 15 years and is now settled in Gurugram.

Automotive units suspend work in Gurugram, but hopes afloat

Despite temporary shutdown, most labourers are living on a prayer that the lockdown would not be extended

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

The large migrant workforce employed in hundreds of automotive units across Gurugram-Dharuhera-Bhiwadi industrial belt is in a dilemma, whether to return home or stay back after the three Original Equipment Manufacturers - Maruti Suzuki, Hero Motocorp, and Honda Motorcycles & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd (HMSI) - announced a temporary halt of 10-15 days amid a surge in COVID-19 cases and multiple lockdowns across the cities. However, the overwhelming sentiment seems to be "wait and watch".

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The company, a vendor of Maruti Suzuki and Hero Motocorp, might run during the shutdown as well. "The company also ex-



Workers from Gurugram returning home during last year's lockdown. ■ FILE PHOTO

ports auto parts. So it may continue to run despite both OEMs being shut," said Mr. Vats.

Scary situation

His colleague, Gopi Chand, a resident of neighbouring Palwal, said the situation arising out of the infection was "very scary" and most of the workers wanted their companies to shut down for 10-15 days.

"More than 30 workers in our company are infected. Most of the workers commute by autorickshaws and buses and are at the risk of contracting the infection. They are scared for their lives. But they need to come for work if the company is running," said Mr. Jhangar.

Many automotive companies have advised their workers not to leave the station during the shutdown.

"We have advised the workers not to travel in the present situation as it is not safe. Since the shutdown is only for nine days, we hope they do not leave for their homes. Even if a fraction of the workforce decides to go, it won't impact the production much," said a senior Human Resource official at an automobile company in Manesar, unwilling to be named.

He added that the possibility of national lockdown was bleak this time and they had tried to convey this to the workers.

Overwhelmed with bodies, small city crematoriums face meltdown

Staffers find it difficult to control the barrage of victims' relatives who are COVID positive

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

While most cremation grounds in the city are already overwhelmed with bodies, the smaller ones dedicated to COVID victims are seeing additional problems.

In the lesser-known cremation grounds, the staffers are finding it difficult to control the barrage of COVID positive relatives of victims.

Varsha Mehta, a Dwarka resident, who went to the Subhash Nagar ground to cremate her husband Sandeep Mehta said she and her son Tushar were both COVID positive. "There is no one to help us with cremation. My husband died in a hospital and his body had to be moved," she said.

While the hospital told the family that there was a tie-up with the cremation ground and therefore the body was released, the crematorium was full in the afternoon. "We have been waiting for an hour and they are saying the ground is full. The body has been in the ambulance for over two hours," she said.

BP Rawat, president of Janshakti NGO, which runs the cremation ground, said people should be aware enough to not visit public



The Subhash Nagar crematorium in west Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

places if they are infected. "We have a staff of about 30 people managing cremations, wood and coordination. It is impossible to keep a track of people coming in and so many of them are COVID positive," he said.

Dr. Rawat added that the ground can accommodate 40 cremations on wooden pyres and about 16 a day at the CNG crematorium inside. "Unfortunately, we have to refuse after we reach our limit. What to do?" he said, as a staffer turned away a man. "Thank God, we didn't get the body released from the hospital," the man said.

Dr. Rawat added, "Even if it's a lesser-known cremation ground, we have to stop

taking bodies around 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. because we are full by then. Every day, our staff can leave only by 1 a.m.," he said.

Sitting in an e-rickshaw, waiting to cremate her father's body, was 18-year-old Sukanya and her mother. "My father was killed by the healthcare system and not COVID. I remember going to arrange oxygen for him at 3 a.m. and have it delivered in the hospital, but his pneumonia was diagnosed much later," she said.

A 'non-COVID' cremation ground in Tilak Vihar wore a deserted look on the outside. But inside, all the 25 wooden pyres were burning at the Shamshan Bhumi Sudha Samiti.

About 10 days ago, we were getting one or two bodies, said head priest Ashok Kumar Sharma. "Since then, we have been getting many bodies on a daily basis. People start queuing up at 5.30 a.m. and by 7 a.m., there is a crowd. As soon as we have 25 people, we stop. This usually happens around 11 p.m.," he said.

Denying COVID

Mr. Sharma said the surge in the number of bodies makes him wonder that these could be COVID positive people dying at home. "We ask people if the person died of COVID, but they deny because they know we wouldn't accept otherwise. We then have our own ways to ascertain whether the person is lying. We ask ambulance drivers, see if anyone is wearing PPE kits or if they are maintaining distance from the body," he said.

But the fear always hovers, said another staffer Balbir Singh. "We don't touch the bodies at all. Family members themselves have to place the body on the pyre. That is our way of taking precautions because we are sure some COVID positive bodies are coming in," he said.

All quiet



2 held for black marketing of oxygen concentrators

'Machine was not in working condition'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An ambulance driver has been arrested for allegedly charging ₹14,000 to ferry the body of a COVID-19 victim from the hospital to the crematorium, the police said on Sunday.

Kandhi Lal was charging the exorbitant amount to ferry the patient for a distance of 6 km, they said.

On Saturday after receiving a tip-off about the driver, the police laid a trap. "Con-

stable Mahesh called the driver and asked him to ferry the body of a COVID patient to Nigam Bodh Ghat from NuLife Hospital. The ambulance driver said it would cost him ₹14,000 and sent a slip to give the money," said Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West) Gurqbal Singh Sidhu. Next, the driver was held, the police added.

On Saturday, Bharat Juneja from Kalkaji Extension, called the Ashok Vihar police station, saying his wife and mother were COVID positive and in a critical condition when he purchased an oxygen concentrator from Minda at ₹1.45 lakh. However, the machine was not in a working

condition, he told the police. When Mr. Juneja contacted Minda to tell him that the machine was not working, the accused refused to change the machine and did not give any refund, they said.

The police said they received information at Jamia Nagar police station about the incident. Next, on Saturday, a tip-off was laid following which Gahlot, the owner of Advanced Medical Home care, was arrested.

Three oxygen flow meters, two water nozzles and 18 oxygen pumps were seized, the police said, adding that he was previously involved in five cases of cheating.

Medical store owner held for fleecing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 39-year-old medical store owner was arrested for allegedly selling COVID-19 related equipment four times higher than the maximum retail price, the police said on Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Sudhir Gahlot, a resident of Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, they said.

The police said they received information at Jamia Nagar police station about the incident. Next, on Saturday, a tip-off was laid following which Gahlot, the owner of Advanced Medical Home care, was arrested.

Three oxygen flow meters, two water nozzles and 18 oxygen pumps were seized, the police said, adding that he was previously involved in five cases of cheating.

Three arrested for killing man during robbery bid

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three men were arrested for allegedly killing a person during a robbery bid in south Delhi's Sangam Vihar, the police said on Sunday.

The accused have been identified as Sunny (21), Ritik (20) and Mohammad Izaz (18) – both residents of Sangam Vihar, they said.

A man named Azad was

assaulted, robbed of his phone and ₹1,000 cash at 11.15 p.m. on April 18 while he was returning home from his brother's house, an officer said.

A case was registered under relevant sections of the IPC on April 19. Later, he died during treatment on April 25 and Section 302 (murder) was also added in the case. On April 26, the

police analysed CCTV foot-

age in which the accused men were seen.

'Accused were intoxicated' "In the evening, one of them was identified as Sunny. A trap was laid near his house, and he was nabbed. On his instance, his associates Ritik and Izaz were also arrested," said DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur.

The mobile phone has been recovered. The accused, who were intoxicated at the time of the incident, were going to purchase cigarettes when the victim's deceased motorcycle brushed past them. Next, a verbal altercation ensued between them. The accused then started assaulting Azad following which they robbed him, the police added.

CM YK

IN BRIEF



Special train with oxygen reaches Hyderabad

HYDERABAD
The South Central Railway's Oxygen Express, loaded with five tankers of 124.26 tonnes of liquid oxygen, arrived at Sananagar goods line here in Telangana on Sunday. The special train started from Angul in Odisha to Secunderabad, a distance of 1,334 km, on Saturday night. Earlier, the State sent empty tankers for the oxygen.

DRDO sends cylinders to Gandhi Hospital

HYDERABAD
Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy handed over 50 oxygen cylinders that were supplied by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) to Gandhi Hospital Superintendent M. Raja Rao here on Sunday. Another 50 cylinders would reach on Monday, he said. Dr. Rao thanked the Minister.

Karnataka gets district in-charge Ministers

BENGALURU
The Karnataka government on Sunday appointed new district in-charge Ministers by making a few fresh appointments and enacting reshuffle for six districts, including Belagavi, Kolar, and Chikkamagaluru, which did not have in-charge Ministers.

A.P. postpones Intermediate exams

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Education Minister A. Suresh on Sunday announced the postponement of Intermediate examinations, which was scheduled to commence on May 5, owing to the recent spurt in the COVID-19 infections in the State. "It has been decided to put the Intermediate examinations on hold as advised by the High Court", the Minister said.

Narrow win for BJP in Belagavi LS bypoll

The ruling party wrests Basavakalyana Assembly seat, while Congress retains Maski constituency

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The byelections to the three seats in Karnataka have thrown up a mixed result, with the BJP winning the Belagavi Lok Sabha seat by a narrow margin and wresting the Basavakalyana Assembly seat, while the Congress retained the Maski Assembly seat.

In a closely fought contest in Belagavi, Mangala Angadi, the wife of the late Union Minister Suresh Angadi, won with a wafer-thin margin of 5,240 votes, defeating KPCC working president Satish Jarkiholi. It was a nail-biting finish as the margins kept fluctuating through the counting. The contest had threatened to upset the BJP prospects with the MES putting up a strong performance



Returning officer K. Harish Kumar handing over the victory certificate to Mangala Angadi, the BJP candidate who won from Belagavi, on Sunday. ■ P.K. BADIGER

and polling over one lakh votes.

Another victory for the BJP came from Basavakalyana, which it snatched from the Congress. The BJP nominee Sharunu Salagar defeated his Congress opponent Mala Narayana Rao, wife of

the late Narayana Rao, Congress legislator, by a margin of 20,629 votes. This was the only seat in which the Janata Dal (S) contested, but came a cropper with its candidate polling 11,402 votes.

The BJP's setback came at Maski where B.Y. Vijayendra,

son of Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, had actively campaigned for Prathapgouda Patil, a Congress legislator who was disqualified. Mr. Patil was among the 17 legislators, who resigned to bring down the H.D. Kumaraswamy led JD (S)-Congress coalition in July 2019.

Mr. Patil lost to Basanagouda Turuvihal by a margin of 30,606 votes. It was a role reversal of sorts in Maski as Mr. Turuvihal, contesting on a BJP ticket, had lost to Mr. Patil in 2018 by a wafer-thin margin.

Since coming to power in July 2019, the BJP has done well in the byelections by winning 12 out of 15 Assembly seats in December 2019 and winning two Assembly seats in December 2020.

While the bypoll results are not of numerical significance to the BJP in power, it was seen as a poll that gauges the mood of the electorate towards the government amidst the pandemic and speculation of possible leadership change in Karnataka.

Ruling TRS retains Nagarjunasagar

Nomula Bhagat wins by 18,000 votes

M. RAJEEV

HYDERABAD

The ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) wrested the Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency with its candidate, Nomula Bhagat, winning the byelection with a comfortable majority of over 18,000 votes.

The TRS nominee maintained his lead in all the 25 rounds, barring one round in which he trailed by a slender margin during the counting on Sunday.

MLA's death

The bypoll was necessitated following the death of sitting TRS MLA Nomula Narsimhaiah in December last.



Nomula Bhagat
While the TRS fielded Mr. Bhagat as its nominee, veteran leader K. Jana Reddy represented the Congress and P. Ravi Kumar was the BJP's candidate. The TRS secured 89,804 votes and the Congress 70,932 votes while the BJP got only 7,676 votes.

Samadani wins bypoll in Malappuram

STAFF REPORTER

MALAPPURAM

Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) candidate M.P. Abdussamad Samadani defeated the Left Democratic Front (LDF)'s V.P. Samu by 1,14,615 votes in the byelection to the Malappuram Lok Sabha constituency.

When Mr. Samadani polled 5,38,248 votes, Mr. Samu got 4,23,633 votes. BJP candidate A.P. Abdulla-kutty put up an abysmal show by polling only 68,935 (6.27%) votes. The fall in the number of BJP votes for Mr. Abdulla-kutty is a matter of discussion for the BJP watchers.

SDPI candidate Thasleem Rahmani polled 46,758 votes (4.25%).

YSRCP retains Tirupati LS seat

Party wins by margin of 2,71,500 votes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NELLORE

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) retained the prestigious Tirupati Lok Sabha (SC) seat as its candidate M. Gurumoorthy, a political novice, logged an impressive margin of over 2,71,500 votes at the counting on Sunday for the April 17 by-election.

Dr. Gurumoorthy, making his electoral debut following the demise of YSRCP MP B. Durgaprasad, polled more than 6.26 lakh votes to improve the victory margin of the party by 1.64%. Durgaprasad had won by a margin of 55.03% in 2019.

Former Union Minister and TDP candidate Panabaka Lakshmi was the lone contestant to put up a semblance of fight as she polled 3,54,500 votes (32.09%). Ms. Lakshmi, who had unsuccessfully contested against Durgaprasad in 2019 after switching over from the Congress to the TDP ahead of the elections, polled 4.75% less number of votes this time.

Dr. Gurumoorthy established a lead in the first round itself, and increased the margin in every round to poll 6,26,108 votes in 25 rounds of counting held amid tight security and strict adherence to COVID norms.

NORTH & EAST

More curbs in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Monday announced that not more than two persons can travel in a car, 50% staff strength at government offices and a negative COVID-19 test report must for those entering the State as part of added curbs amid rising COVID-19 cases and fatalities.

As many as 270 beneficiaries turned up for vaccination at two government session sites in Gurugram – Sector 10 Civil Hospital and Polyclinic in Sector 31.

In Gurugram, Fortis Memorial Research Institute also launched the vaccination drive for 18-45 age group.

"Fortis Memorial is the first private hospital in Gurgaon to start the vaccination for 18 plus age group. We are ecstatic that the vaccination drive has now been extended to the younger age group. This step will by and large help the society as a whole. With more people getting vaccinated, we are hopeful that it will help break the current cycle and this in turn will help in curbing the rate of positive cases," said Ritu Garg, Zonal Director, FMRI.

Max Hospital in Gurugram will launch the vaccination drive for the 18-45 age group on Monday.

These restrictions, in addition to the earlier ones, will remain in effect till May 15, according to the Punjab Home Department's directive to all Deputy Commissioners and district police chiefs.

Punjab is among the worst-hit States in the second wave of the pandemic. On Saturday, it registered 7,041 fresh COVID-19 cases.

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, MAY. 03	RISE 05:40 SET 18:58
	RISE 00:46 SET 11:20
TUESDAY, MAY. 04	RISE 05:39 SET 18:59
	RISE 01:34 SET 12:21
WEDNESDAY, MAY. 05	RISE 05:38 SET 18:59
	RISE 02:14 SET 13:21

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	40 25
Safdarjung	40 25
Palam	40 27

Delhi Palam Today
38°C Easy morning and hot day with light surface winds thunderclouds development may be a chance at few places.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
39°C A hot day with partly cloudy sky. Chances of thunderstorm with gusty winds at few places.

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PERSONAL

MISSING

MISSING PERSON



DEVENDER JAIN, s/o Sh. Rehlu Lal Jain, age around 60 years, height 163 cm, fair complexion, round face, well-built physique has been missing from his home at C-7/112, Yamuna Vihar, Delhi since 03/08/2010 at around 3-5 AM. The missing person was wearing spectacles and was dressed in a white shirt and black trousers. He resides in P.S. Bajajnagar, Delhi. Anyone giving clue about him shall be suitably rewarded. Finder please contact at the mobile no. 9818239749 or contact Police Station-Bajajnagar, Delhi or your nearest police station.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Monday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Sikkim and West Bengal. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Telangana, Konkan & Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.2...	37.4...	22.6	Kozhikode	...	35.4...	26.0
Ahmedabad	...	40.8...	26.0	Kurnool	...	38.5...	25.4
Aizawl	...	26.8...	14.9	Lucknow	...	35.5...	26.4
Allahabad	...	37.2...	27.8	Madurai	0.2...	37.6...	26.5
Bengaluru	...	33.0...	23.4	Mangaluru	...	35.6...	22.9
Bhopal	...	38.6...	26.2	Mumbai	...	34.5...	27.4
Bhubaneswar	...	39.6...	21.6	Mysuru	...	34.0...	21.6
Chandigarh	...	38.6...	24.9	New Delhi	...	39.5...	24.8
Chennai	...	35.0...	24.9	Patna	...	34.8...	22.8
Coimbatore	...	36.6...	26.1	Port Blair	...	32.8...	26.2
Dehradun	...	35.2...	21.7	Puducherry	...	34.5...	26.2
Gangtok	...	34.0...	13.7	Pune	...	37.9...	22.8
Goa	1.6...	34.3...	24.0	Raipur	...	41.0...	25.5
Guwahati	1.9...	33.0...	20.9	Ranchi	...	35.0...	20.1
Hubballi	...	34.0...	24.0	Shillong	45.9...	21.8...	15.1
Hyderabad	...	36.0...	25.7	Shimla	5.3...	23.5...	10.5
Imphal	0.5...	29.8...	16.1	Srinagar			



Clear and distinct

The verdicts in the Assembly elections hold different lessons for different parties

Elections present an opportunity for political change, but voters at times prefer the familiar comfort of continuity and reward performance over promise. Assam, West Bengal and Kerala have voted for the incumbents, while Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have voted for change. There is no one theme that can explain how the voters responded to the myriad political choices before them. Parties with strong and visible leadership might have the same appeal as leaders that show empathy for their daily struggles. While Hindutva nationalism won Assam for the BJP, in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, its limits became apparent. In fact, M.K. Stalin in Tamil Nadu, and Pinarayi Vijayan in Kerala, both known critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, offered an ideological alternative to the politics of the BJP although it was not a direct contender for power directly in either State. In contrast, the Congress's efforts to arrest its slide and gather its wits did not yield much. The results have exposed more chinks in its armour, while regional parties offered robust resistance to the BJP.

In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee mobilised Bengali sub-nationalism that stopped the rampaging march of Hindutva at the borders, at least for now. This was the first serious bid of the BJP for power in Bengal. Though it fell far short of its boasts, the BJP's rise is remarkable – from three seats in 2016 to 81 now. With the Left and the Congress nearly obliterated, the BJP is now a force to reckon with in the State. But what got it so far may not necessarily take it any further. In fact, the popular reaction against the BJP's crude communalism and deployment of its workers from other States was so intense that people left aside all their complaints against the incumbent Trinamool Congress government. The BJP's strategy for West Bengal has been costly in terms of public health, institutional credibility, social harmony and even bilateral ties with a friendly neighbouring country, Bangladesh. Though the BJP lost, the damage caused by its maximalist campaign cannot be easily undone. The State is staring at an explosion in COVID-19 infections, and Ms. Banerjee has her task cut out, entering into her third term as Chief Minister. She must take serious note of the public resentment against her party rather than read this victory as public approval of its high-handedness and corruption. The style and substance of the Trinamool's politics and governance must change for the better. In Assam, the BJP reaped the benefits of its government's proactive measures to provide relief to people badly impacted by the lockdown last year, and of a slew of welfare schemes. While the Congress-AIUDF partnership failed to live up to its promise, the BJP inflamed communal passions by suggesting that AIUDF leader Badruddin Ajmal could become Chief Minister if the alliance won. As the party's key strategist in the victory, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will likely make a claim for the top post, and the BJP will have an internal power tussle to handle.

Mr. Stalin led the DMK to power in Tamil Nadu after a hiatus of 10 years. With his son also now an MLA, Mr. Stalin has taken full control of the DMK. His victory is not aided by any strident public resentment against the AIADMK government, and therefore can be considered a positive verdict in his favour. Moreover, the results also prove the resilience of Dravidian politics, modified to new challenges. Now in the Opposition, and its leadership still in a flux, the AIADMK will have to adapt to survive. There are other aspirants at play, and outgoing Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami might have to again beat off challenges from within the party to his leadership. In Kerala, the second consecutive victory of the Left Democratic Front led by the CPI(M) marks a departure from the anti-incumbency verdicts since the 1980s. For Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Congress, rendered aimless by its antediluvian leaders, was easy prey. But Mr. Vijayan also retained his support base through a mixture of political acumen and administrative measures. Having managed two floods and the pandemic with considerable efficiency, he also made some daring moves in social engineering that will continue to ripple. All that paid rich dividends for him, but the path ahead is going to be tougher as Kerala faces a fresh surge in COVID-19 infections. Finances are also challenging for the State. Mr. Vijayan's complete command over the party has eclipsed other leaders, a situation that can turn out to be a crisis in the future.

These results also hold some messages for national politics. For the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, this is a grim reminder that they have no viable politics at the moment. Mr. Gandhi spent a disproportionate amount of time and energy in Kerala. That turned out to be a counterproductive strategy. The party lost Kerala and Assam, the two States it had a chance to win. Mr. Gandhi has to rethink his freelancing, footloose politics. For the BJP and its leaders, Mr. Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, these results must be sobering. In Kerala, the party scored nil, losing the lone seat it won in 2016; in Tamil Nadu, it might even have damaged the prospects of ally AIADMK. The notion that there can be a nationalist straitjacket into which the diversity of India will fit is irresponsible. They must consider a softer pursuit of power. The Left tasted historic victory in Kerala but faces extinction in Bengal. Experiments in exclusive Muslim politics are not worthwhile, the results show. The Indian Secular Front, founded by a cleric in West Bengal hardly had any impact; in Assam, the AIUDF and Congress appear to have failed to aggregate their individual tallies of 2016. The BJP might have lost more than it won, but Sunday's verdicts are no indication that a national-level alternative to it is in the making. That is still some distance away in time and effort.

A mirror to the future of Tamil Nadu and India

The DMK must use its win to sustain pluralism at the national level and also guard the State's trajectory of development

KALAIYARASAN A.,
VIGNESH KARTHIK K.R. &
M. VIJAYABASKAR

Having been in power for two terms, it was clear that it was not going to be easy for the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) to win again. Further, given that the AIADMK was always seen to be held together by strong personalities, many anticipated an implosion following the passing away of former Chief Minister and party leader Jayalalithaa. Nevertheless, the Tamil Nadu Assembly election was closely fought. Under these circumstances, what does the victory of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) mean for the future of the State and for the pan-Indian polity?

The narratives and campaign
The election can be seen as a referendum on both Tamil Nadu's as well as India's future. At the State level, the election foregrounded three fundamentalisms; the religious fundamentalism of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the language fundamentalism of the fringe Tamil nationalists exemplified by the Naam Tamizhar Katchi (NTK) and the caste fundamentalism of sections of intermediate caste groups that are anxious about Dalit mobility. In a sense, all three have come together in this election to challenge the Dravidian-Tamil identity that enabled the State to forge a relatively inclusive developmental trajectory as well as a composite electoral bloc. The DMK's campaign sought to not only counter the three narratives, but it also revolved against the erosion of State autonomy, a core ideal of Dravidian politics.

Despite its electoral insignificance, the BJP emerged as an ideological opponent to Dravidian mobilisation in this election. Unlike in

the past, the BJP targeted DMK's role in the Sri Lankan Tamil issue, and conducted the 'Vel Yatra' to promote Murugan, a popular Tamil deity, to exploit the politics of Tamil nationalism. 'Tamil' can now be imagined as a constituent of a glorious Hindu past, with the Dravidian identity being merely a colonial construct.

The BJP was aided in this project by NTK which again sought to pit the Dravidian parties against the Tamil identity and hence opened up the possibility of constituting a Hinduised Tamilness. They sought to foreground a 'pure Tamil' identity through caste lineage. To them, the Dravidian parties, the DMK in particular, have denied 'Tamils' their rights because of the 'non-Tamil' origin of some of their leaders. This attack helped the BJP to push the narrative of a 'Hindu-Tamil' identity at the expense of 'Dravidian-Tamil'.

Issue of caste

The third factor that this election brings to the forefront is caste. For the AIADMK, apart from its leader (and Chief Minister) Edappadi K. Palaniswami projecting himself subtly as a leader from the numerically large Kongu Vellai Gounder caste, it also passed a Bill just before the election to provide the most backward Vanniyars a 10.5% internal reservation within the 20% Most Backward Community quota to assuage the anxiety of this caste group over Dalit mobility. It may have led to the AIADMK alliance winning a few seats but at the cost of a caste-based polarised polity. The DMK's victory suggests that despite such mobilisations, the ideological basis of Dravidian commonsense continues to resonate with large sections of its traditional bloc of voters and which may have in fact been strengthened in response to what are seen as attempts by the central go-



vernment to undermine the State's autonomy. State autonomy thus constituted another crucial line of battle. The DMK highlighted the AIADMK's surrender of the State's rights through its inability to act against a centralising New Education Policy, imposition of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test, and its support for the Farm Bills and Goods and Services Tax implementation. The DMK spotlighted such incursions as an attack on the State's political and cultural autonomy.

Results and the idea of India

The DMK's victory, along with that of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC)'s in West Bengal and the Left Front's in Kerala, therefore, have a lot to offer to the pan-Indian polity. To begin with, it has a key role in preserving the idea of a pluralistic India. It is ironic that a party which was perceived to be anti-national is now leading the battle for the protection of the core ideals that define India's Constitution, its secularism and its federalism. Given that constitutional powers including fiscal relations are heavily biased towards the Centre, the limits and possibilities of federalism are largely a function of two variables; the nature of political coalitions at the Centre and the role of States in such coalitions, and sustaining regional diversity. Tamil Nadu's political history offers lessons for re-imagining

India as a substantive federal entity by locating the political in the aspiration for autonomy of self-governing States. There is a clear need for struggles around federal autonomy to be fought collectively with other States that calls for credible political coalitions to strengthen federalism. The Indian variety of federalism – which is very flexible – can be sustained only by such political coalitions. With its strong legacy of fighting for the rights of States, it is imperative that the DMK uses this win to sustain that legacy for pluralism at the national level, and also to guard the unique trajectory of the development of the State which is under attack now.

Obstacles to navigate

Internally, the victory notwithstanding, the DMK faces several challenges as it assumes power. In the domain of development, the huge fiscal burden compounded by the decline in transfers from the Union government and limited avenues for autonomous resource mobilisation make the task of identifying resources for investments daunting. Clearly, the need for economic governance cannot be overstated.

The key, therefore, would be to leverage existing resources effectively, educational institutions and resources being probably the most important. In terms of school education, a shift towards privatisation and poor learning outcomes poses challenges for deepening social justice. A social segmentation in the school education is likely to feed into the uneven quality of higher educational institutions, and what seems to be potential segmentation of access in terms of caste, class and gender. If broad-basing of education and resultant opportunities in the modern sectors was the core pillar of social justice, effective governance of

education needs to address such emerging imbalances.

Focus on welfare

The DMK's election manifesto has been hailed for its emphasis on welfare. However, the manifesto and the 10-year vision document put forth by the DMK promises a lot on the governance of development. The promise of a Right to Services Act, emphasis on learning outcomes and university-industry linkages, and efforts to revive State public sector enterprises all augur well on this front. The manifesto also emphasises sustaining agriculture through exploring the possibility of providing a minimum support price for all agricultural products, the promotion of organic farming as well as water resource conservation and management.

Politically, the continued electoral dominance of the AIADMK in western Tamil Nadu and the fact that the Pattali Makkal Katchi in alliance has managed to win a few seats in northern Tamil Nadu suggest a partial victory for caste-based mobilisation. The DMK must genuinely renew its anti-caste agenda if its legacy of social justice is to survive in the future. Hence, the party will be tested strongly on whether it can live up to the faith posed in it by the people and their mandate. A series of youth initiatives in the domain of civil society seeking to secure the ideals of social justice that informs the Dravidian movement offers hope.

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Bengal's mandate, a turning point in national politics

It was hardly a cliffhanger, with the TMC tapping into the distress caused by the Narendra Modi regime



PRASENJIT BOSE

The people's mandate in West Bengal has been decisively against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and in favour of the incumbent Trinamool Congress (TMC), led by Mamata Banerjee. Together with the mandates in favour of the Left Democratic Front in Kerala and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led coalition in Tamil Nadu, this may well become a turning point in national politics, as far as the Narendra Modi regime is concerned.

For BJP, a rise and then fall

Two years ago, the BJP had witnessed a phenomenal rise in Bengal, with its vote share rising from around 10% in 2016 to 40% in 2019, enabling it to win 18 out of the 42 Lok Sabha seats from the State. Preliminary data suggest a slight reversal of that trend in 2021, with the BJP finishing with a State-wide vote share of around 38%. The TMC, on the other hand, has significantly improved its vote share from 43% in 2019 to around 48% in 2021.

An almost 10% lead in vote share has translated into a clean sweep, with the TMC registering a two-third plus majority, belying

the projections of most opinion and exit polls that it will be a cliffhanger of a contest. The BJP has finished way below the double digit threshold, publicly earmarked by the TMC's key poll strategist, Prashant Kishor.

What went wrong for the BJP? How did the TMC turn things around between 2019 and 2021?

While anti-incumbency against the State government was a major factor behind the BJP's rise in 2019, it is anti-incumbency against the Narendra Modi regime which has kicked in by 2021, leading to a fall in the BJP's vote share. This is a clear indication of rising discontent against the intense social and economic distress caused by the Modi regime's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past one year. A sizeable proportion of migrant workers who had to journey through hell during last year's lockdown were from West Bengal. So are those getting infected in the second wave of COVID-19. People have emphatically held the Centre and not the State government to be more responsible for plunging the country into avoidable crises, repeatedly.

The farmers' movement against the farm laws, rising fuel prices, across-the-board privatisation of public assets, from banks, insurance companies and coal mines to railways – all of it became ammunition against the Centre. Additionally, there was the threat to the citizenship of millions of East Bengal refugees, Dalits and minorities,

posed by the NRC-NPR-CAA – or the National Register of Citizens, the National Population Register, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

While anger has mounted against the Centre, Ms. Banerjee has managed to win back public support through a combination of grievance redressal, outreach programmes and welfare schemes, which have yielded discernible electoral dividends, mainly among the deprived and marginalised sections.

Polarisation plan backfired

The BJP's attempts to brazenly polarise the elections on communal lines have clearly backfired. So has its strategy to capture power in the State by engineering large-scale defections from the TMC. While the TMC may have many skeletons in its cupboard, the BJP's desperate attempts to grab power in the State by manipulating the central agencies and misusing the pending corruption cases appeared as acts of "invasion". The fact that the BJP does not have a single Bengali leader who can pose a credi-

ble challenge to Ms. Banerjee, added to that perception of "outsiders".

Therefore, what happened as a reaction to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led propaganda overkill in West Bengal, aided by a needlessly prolonged eight-phase election campaign and partisan, often violent interventions by the central forces, was an unprecedented consolidation of the Muslim votes, totalling over one-fourth of the electorate, behind the strongest anti-BJP alternative. The TMC's convincing victories in hitherto unconquered territories of the Muslim-majority districts of Murshidabad and Malda are pointers.

The Hindu vote, in contrast, did not consolidate behind the BJP. Rather, a section of the BJP voters appear to have switched from the BJP to the TMC between 2019 and 2021. The dynamics behind such anti-BJP consolidation needs further examination and analysis.

The Left's decline

The emergence of the TMC as the only credible platform for anti-BJP votes to consolidate was also facilitated by the sheer political vacuity underlying the dubious coalition stitched together by the CPI(M) titled "Samyukta Morcha". It has achieved little besides launching the political career of an Islamic cleric, whose violent remarks against a woman MP of the TMC and the public endorsement of the Paris beheading of 2020, available in the public domain, has

only confused the electorate over why the Left Front had to join hands with his ilk. If the erroneous line of allying with the Congress in the 2016 Assembly election dragged the CPI(M) and the Left Front down to the third position in Bengal, it was the extension of that opportunistic, non-programmatic alliance to include non-secular elements such as Abbas Siddiqui, which has decimated the CPI(M)/LF in 2021. The West Bengal Assembly will not have a single Left MLA, for the first time since Independence.

While the Kerala leadership of the CPI(M) has delivered and has therefore been rewarded by the people, the Bengal leadership at Alimuddin Street needs to be held to account for this sad outcome, both within the party and outside. It is the persistent lack of accountability at the top, combined with political opportunism and programmatic incoherence of the CPI(M) leadership which has led to this fiasco of the Left in West Bengal.

The BJP, while defeated in the State, has still captured the Opposition space. In order to relegate the BJP to the margins, where it once belonged in West Bengal, the revival of the Left is essential. That revival, however, is contingent on the much-awaited overhaul within the Left, both within and outside the CPI(M).

Prasenjit Bose is an economist and activist based in Kolkata

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Now, the results

The exit poll predictions for Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and Assam have proven to be more or less correct. But it is the West Bengal results that are full of surprises. Surprise because the Trinamool Congress has pulled ahead despite the BJP's high-profile campaigning. The AIADMK's debacle in Tamil Nadu can be largely explained due to its alliance with the BJP whose ideological policies are different. It is an irrefutable fact that the AIADMK has blindly supported the ruling dispensation at the Centre on vital issues such as New Education Policy, the CAA, the NPR and agriculture reforms. Coming back to West

Bengal, the results are indeed a rude shock for the BJP which must be viewed in light of the extended election phases and the aggressive campaigning by the Prime Minister and other top Union Ministers. Ms. Mamata Banerjee is the tigress of Bengal.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

■ The people of Tamil Nadu appear to have voted wisely even in expressing their desire for change. The AIADMK has not fared badly either which shows that the results have been largely dictated by region-related factors and the performance of sitting MLAs in the constituency. Now, the DMK has to govern the state well given the strong Opposition

in the State assembly and a not-so-friendly central government.

M. RAVINDRAN,
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu

■ In Tamil Nadu, the overall results have not supported the predictions of a clean, across-the-board sweep. While it is but natural for the DMK to be euphoric about its victory in the Assembly elections, it should not allow itself to be carried away by any sense of triumphalism. First, the State looks up to the party leader for a fair, transparent and responsive administration. There should be no place for favouritism, cronyism and nepotism. Second, he should enable space for dissent and he and his compatriots should ensure that their

interventions and responses are always decent and democratic. Third, he should strive to improve the economy of the state. Fourth, his government should be very cautious that development should not be at the cost of the environment.

S. BALU,
Madurai

■ While the election results in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam are on expected lines, it is West Bengal that has been an eye-opener. But the TMC should not be complacent. It needs to learn its lessons and deliver on promises made to the people. As for the BJP, given its strong performance in the parliamentary elections, its engineering a phenomenal

number of defections from the TMC and the no holds-barred campaign, its gains are marginal. The results in all the elections show that people are more clever and discriminating than what politicians expect them to be.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ The West Bengal results are where all eyes are focused. But in the end, what people want is peaceful development and socio-economic growth for every section of society. The TMC needs to work on this as soon as possible.

KIRTI WADHWAN,
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

■ With every passing election, what is worrying is

the reluctance of the Indian National Congress to see the writing on the wall and continue to be in denial mood. It seems to be content applauding the success of other Opposition parties rather than consolidating a vote bank on its own. A country sans a viable, pan-India Opposition would prove to

Towards a new type of government

An open letter to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister-elect, M.K. Stalin



GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

Dear Chief Minister-elect,
I send to you my felicitations on your victory in the elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly and my confidence that you will not only inaugurate a new government but what N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Publishing Group, at the recent launch of the book, *The Dravidian Model – Interpreting the Political Economy*, said he would want to see: 'a new type of government'.

Before I suggest what that 'newness' might be, I want to say something which does not need saying for it stares us in the face. Please do not think of this as 'an old man's lecture'. It is not. It is a fellow citizen's ardent appeal.

Tackling the pandemic

You are assuming office, like Joe Biden did in Washington a few months ago, in the jaws of a pandemic the like of which India has not seen in recent memory. Death stalks us at every breath. You are inheriting a monstrous crisis in the shape of the virus' surge. We, the people, have brought the second wave upon ourselves by our utterly callous response to the challenge.

We have gifted to you a victory. And a virus. You saw how, despite your entreaties, as your victory's details were coming in, your joyous supporters converged in large numbers, wearing no masks, milling and mixing, to celebrate. I understand – and share – their happiness but where is the *ganniyam*? Periyar taught us? You will have to admonish us. You will have to do unpopular things. You will have to be brutally frank with us.

But if you have inherited a monumental problem, you have also inherited a superb administrative tradition and a machine in the State that is among the best, most earnest and hard-working in our country. Test it with optimism and trust it with confidence, for there is a crisis at hand. Your officers are a great instrument at your disposal. They will give your



vision and your inspiration shape.

Your calling for an across-the-board vaccination of all 'above 18', when the norm was 'above 45', showed your concern and we may expect you to bring vigour and momentum into the vaccination drive, with fairness at the heart of the drive. Please ask the Centre, as CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury has done, for vaccines to be made available free to the State, as to all States, so that they can vaccinate us for free. But if that gesture does not come, please go ahead regardless of the cost to the State.

There is another 'cost' that I want to place before you. I say this not as a teetotaller or as prohibitionist. I say this as one who sees the virus finding an unwitting ally in TASMAC shops supplying liquor, mainly to those who should not be wasting their hard-earned money on alcohol. Please have these outlets shut at once, as a COVID-19 move.

Those in charge of implementing COVID-19 ameliorative and preventive measures in the State, and our amazing healthcare providers, have, over the last many months, been working with a zeal amounting to a passion. But a powerful, consistent and committed message from the political class did not come. The elections, which were all about massing people together, contradicted the requirement for distancing. Our estimable Governor made important interventions but then in our polity, the law has to come from the leader.

And you are now that leader. The situation now has reached a stage for brutal frankness. You must tell both your officers and us, the people, that if this second wave is to be tamed and a third and fourth wave

Ten tangible steps

I will end now with how you can give the State the gift of a 'new type of government' through 10 tangible steps. One, you are a child of the Dravidian movement, which is the bedrock of your party. Give a dramatically new contemporary dimension to that movement by making it the voice, not just of Tamil aspirations, but the voice of the voiceless, the marginalised and the immiserated. Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court, Menaka Guruswamy, has described India

are to be averted, it is imperative that we the people of your State be motivated and helped actively to get vaccinated and, equally important, mask up. And have oxygen supplies going. If this does not happen, Tamil Nadu will most definitely slide into the situation that Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka face. Thomas Abraham in *The Hindu* of April 30, 2021 has given telling statistics to show how the community can be turned from being suicidally mask-negligent to being sensibly mask-diligent. Tamil Nadu can be a game changer if it takes up mass mobilisation for vaccination, masking up and maintaining a steady line of oxygen supplies.

There is no escape from one or another form of lockdown. Uddhav Thackeray, the amazing Chief Minister of Maharashtra, like you, a first-time Chief Minister, has taken tough decisions. Please seek his advice. Maharashtra has been a distinct gainer in recent weeks because of its lockdowns. We know the deleterious effect of a shutdown, particularly on migrant labour, the informal sector and artisans. But if a total lockdown is wrong, free rein given to dangerous 'openness' is no less so.

as 'the majority of minorities'. These minorities include ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities but go further to include all those who are vulnerable because of their numbers or situation. Make your government, in other words, a sanctuary for the culturally, economically and socially endangered.

Two, give the Opposition, which too has been returned to the Assembly in sizeable numbers, the unconditional respect that you wish had been given to you.

Three, make freedom of speech valued by your government as a democratic principle, a desideratum of Dravidian self-expression.

Four, make known your intolerance of corruption by exemplary action, sparing no one howsoever high or close.

Five, women and Dalits remain under-represented in the political pantheon. Please constitute two empowered panels of advisers on gender and Dalits and give them – and us, who observe them – a sense of their worth.

Six, give our farmers (including our fisherfolk) what the Swaminathan Commission has recommended.

Seven, make the protection of the natural and physical environment a priority, with polluters, exploiters and looters shown their place, with 'developers' told to leave commons and water bodies alone so as to prevent Chennai from the man-made flooding of a few years ago.

Eight, take a hard and urgent look at the condition of our prisons and of undertrials in them, most of who are likely to be innocent. They should not be where and how they are.

Nine, give the Right to Information Act the power it deserves. It will empower you in doing right.

Ten, reflect on each matter before you decide on it, with the Preamble to our Constitution as your guide.

May Tamil Nadu get, under your helmsmanship, a new type of government which Rajaji, Periyar, Kamraj and Anna would acclaim, no less than your father, the late Kalaignar. And which, if I may add, a part of MGR's un-resentful heart would also respond to.

Your fellow citizen,

Gopalkrishna Gandhi

Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator, diplomat and governor

A mandate for compassionate governance

Why the LDF regime has come back to power



RESMITHA R. CHANDRAN

Many surmise that the reason why Kerala is a developed State is that there is regime change following every election, from the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) to the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) or vice versa. This time, though, the LDF has broken the decades-old trend of the incumbent government being ousted from power (the last time this happened was in 1977). Its emphatic win coincided with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) losing the only seat it held (Nemom) in the State.

Tackling calamities, disease outbreaks

Pre-poll surveys showed that the LDF might return to power and there were large turnouts at Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's election rallies despite the COVID-19 threat. Mr. Vijayan spearheaded the State through the turbulent years of two catastrophic floods, Cyclone Ockhi, the Nipah outbreak and more than a year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The LDF's effective tackling of these calamities and outbreaks not just reinforced the confidence of the people in the regime, but also helped voters re-imagine the notion of 'development'. The citizens took note of the government's timely efforts in organising relief during the natural calamities.

Last year, the government was able to significantly minimise the death rate and human suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is pertinent to note that in India, at least in the initial stages of the pandemic, suffering and deaths were not due to financial, medicinal or foodgrains shortages or even COVID-19 itself, but poor governance and wrong prioritisation of options.

Having already dealt with the experience of preventing the spread of Nipah, Kerala had started taking effective containment and prevention measures against COVID-19 by the end of January 2020. COVID-19 desks were set up in all the four airports in Kerala by early February 2020. The details of those who landed from foreign countries were collected. These travellers were sent to quarantine facilities. Gatherings were banned by the second week of March and educational institutions were closed. The 'Break the Chain' campaign and sanitation campaigns

reached large sections of the public within a short span of time. Contact-tracing of those who had tested positive was done and the details were published. The State ensured free and high-quality treatment to all those who tested positive. There was strict screening at the State border and at railway stations with every team comprising one paramedical staff member, a police officer and a local volunteer. In this election, the Health Minister, K.K. Shailaja, has won her constituency (Mattannur) with the highest margin ever seen in the State, an emphatic reaffirmation of her efforts during these times.

A multidimensional approach

The LDF's success lies in the Pinarayi government's tackling of the disease with a multidimensional approach. Kerala also has a well-established public healthcare system. The State adopted a compassionate and sustainable model. Free foodgrain kits were provided, irrespective of the family's income, to prevent hunger. Community kitchens were opened for those who were not able to cook. Mr. Vijayan and Ms. Shailaja addressed the people every day via mass media, to alleviate the agonies related to the pandemic. In addition, the government made arrangements to take care of the emotional needs of schoolchildren and Mr. Vijayan appealed to men to 'help' women in household work.

Migrant workers were termed 'guest workers' and camps were set up for them. They were provided with the food of their choice. Each camp had a multilingual guard besides health and recreational facilities. The State also provided for the safe return of those guest workers who wanted to join their families in their respective native places. Social security pensions were not stalled and elderly and vulnerable individuals were given special care. Even stray animals and birds were provided with food and water.

Gradually and systematically, the government changed the development paradigm and promoted a compassionate, reliable and sustainable development plan to the public. The gradual opening up of the State after the lockdown resulted in an increase in the number of cases, but despite having the highest proportion of elderly people (12.6%), with a significant number of them affected by comorbidities, the case fatality rate in Kerala was the lowest among major States in November 2020. It is no wonder that the LDF regime has been rewarded for its idea of compassionate governance.

Resmitha R. Chandran is Advocate-On-Record, Supreme Court of India

Second decisive shift

The NDA's emphatic victory in Assam shows protests and poll preferences can coexist

ABDUS SALAM

On paper in Assam, the Congress had identified the electorate's pain points well enough. Its manifesto promised non-implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), three million jobs in a State historically struggling with unemployment numbers, raising the daily wage of tea garden workers, free electricity up to 200 units per household and ₹2,000 monthly income support to all homeowners. An emphatic no to the CAA was meant to win back the ethnic Assamese vote that had decisively shifted to the BJP over the course of the 2014 general election and the State poll two years later. The wage sop intended to court what was once an assured party vote bank that years of silent work by the RSS and its affiliates had chipped away. A tie-up with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) of Badruddin Ajmal, a prospect which the party had officially shied away from all these years, was aimed at ensuring non-fragmentation of the 'Muslim vote'. And yet, the whole isn't the same as the sum of its parts. The 10-party 'Grand Alliance' is only projected to win around 40 seats as the BJP-led NDA seems set to romp home a second time with a victory margin slightly lower than in its debut triumph in the State in 2016. So, what gives?

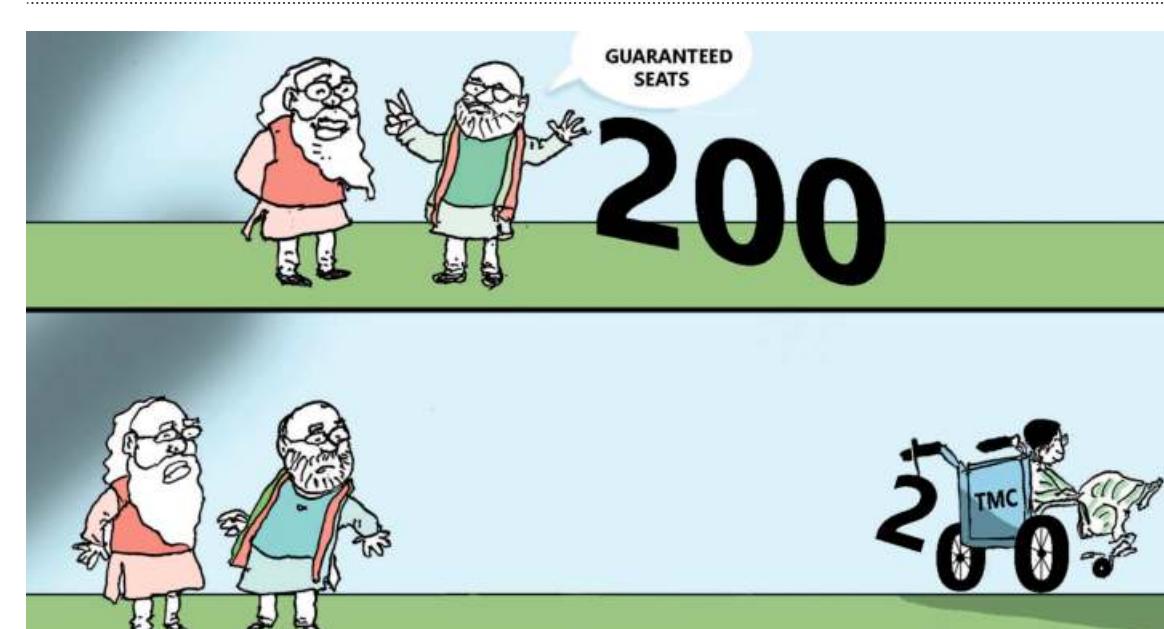
A stable ship

As it is, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma were seen as piloting a more stable ship than a Taran Gogoi-less Congress that fanned out campaign verticals to his son, the State unit chief and the Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly. The government has lasted a full term devoid of major scams, and synergy with the BJP-led Central government has enabled a more focused delivery of development schemes. Cash doles targeting the tea tribes and beneficiary schemes such as 'Oruondoit', through which the State extends financial aid to women, have been regarded as generating goodwill for the Sonowal government.

Ironic as it may sound, the pandemic also helped the ruling dispensation claw its way back in Assam. COVID-19 snuffed out both the anti-CAA stir in Assam and the anti-National Register of Citizens (NRC) movement in the rest of the country (most anti-CAA votaries in the State support the NRC). The lockdowns and curfews defused the pent-up anger in the aftermath of the December 2019 protests in which five persons were killed in police firing in Guwahati. They presented a beleaguered government the opportunity to seize back the narrative with proactive (and well-publicised) steps to safeguard the State... and, as the results bear out, itself.

No longer a hot-button issue
The results show that the cataclysm of the street protests in several parts of Assam in 2019 notwithstanding, the CAA has lost salience as a hot-button issue in an environment where the ruling party has constantly endeavoured to fuse Hindu nationalism with Assamese sub-nationalism. The secular lens on the post-1971 immigrant into Assam has electorally lost to a differential approach that advocates the rehabilitation of some and expulsion of the rest. The BJP's junior partner, the Assam Ganjam Parishad (AGP), the torch-bearer of regionalism since the days of the Assam Agitation, read this shifting ground right, pulling several stunts of quitting the government but ultimately betting that the 'new' Assamese nationalism increasingly aligns with the BJP's.

Assam Jatiya Parishad and Rajor



DATA POINT

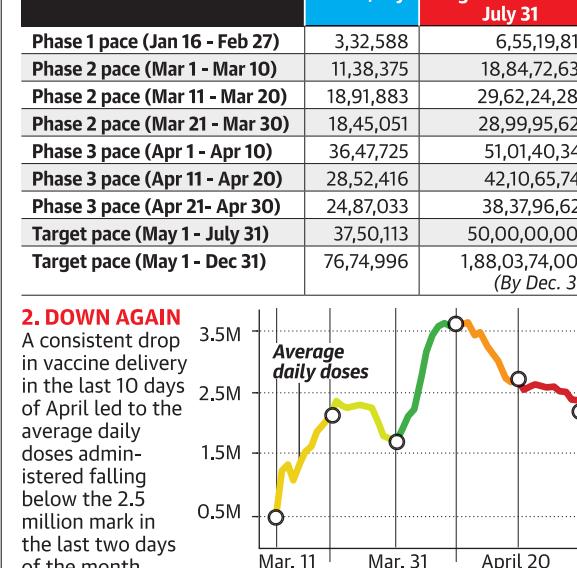
Vaccination pace drops again

The pace of COVID-19 vaccinations in India dropped further in the last 10 days of April compared to the previous 10 days. Between April 11 and 20, 2.8 million average daily doses were administered, but over the next 10 days, the number dropped to 2.4 million on average. If the latest vaccination rate is to continue, the number of doses will not even exceed the lower bound target of 400-500 million doses set for July 31. If India is aiming to vaccinate all adults (940 million people*2 doses) by the end of 2021, the average daily dose has to increase to at least 7.6 million, three times the current rate. The steep fall in the number of daily average doses administered in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were responsible for the drop in India's pace. By Suman Sen and Vignesh R.

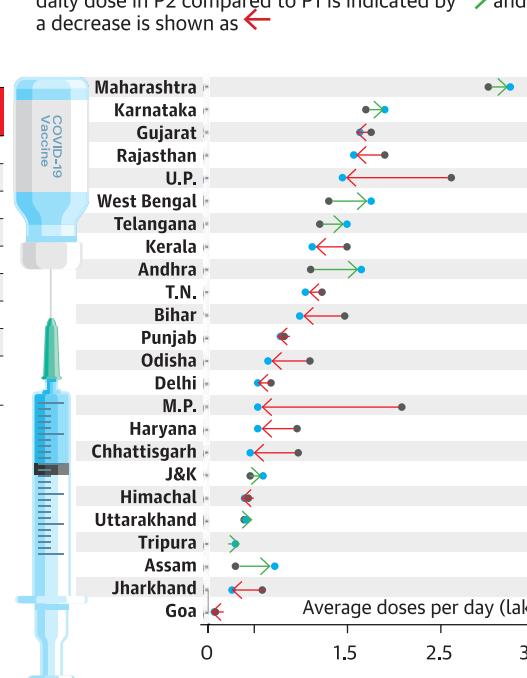
1. DEGREE OF DROP | From April 21 to 30, 2.48 million doses were administered daily on average in India compared to 2.85 million between April 11 to 20. At the current pace, India will be able to administer 383 million doses by July 31, around 27 million doses lower than the target (lower bound) of 400 million. In order to vaccinate all adults by 2021, India needs to increase the daily rate to 7.6 million.

2. DOWN AGAIN

A consistent drop in vaccine delivery in the last 10 days of April led to the average daily doses administered falling below the 2.5 million mark in the last two days of the month.



3. STATE OF PLAY | The chart shows average daily doses administered in April 1-10 (P1 ●) and April 11-20 (P2 ●) in major States. An increase in the average daily dose in P2 compared to P1 is indicated by → and a decrease is shown as ←



A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 4, 1921 THERE BEING NO ARCHIVES AVAILABLE FOR MAY 3, 1921

Madras hotel keepers

At the Soundarya Mahal, George Town, a public meeting of the Hotel and Restaurant keepers of Madras was held yesterday evening to protest against the cutting off of the free allowance of water to their premises, by the Corporation. There was a large gathering of the Hotel-keepers, and of sympathisers, including Messrs G. Guruswami Chetti, Abdul Majid Sharaf, and Dr. Rama Kamath. Mr. Rangaswami Iyengar who presided protested in emphatic terms against the new proposal of the Corporation in cutting off free water supply to hotels in spite of the fact that they were paying taxes and rates under various heads, both directly and indirectly. He said the proposal would seriously jeopardise public health and sanitation, and it was gross injustice also to single out the Coffee Hotels

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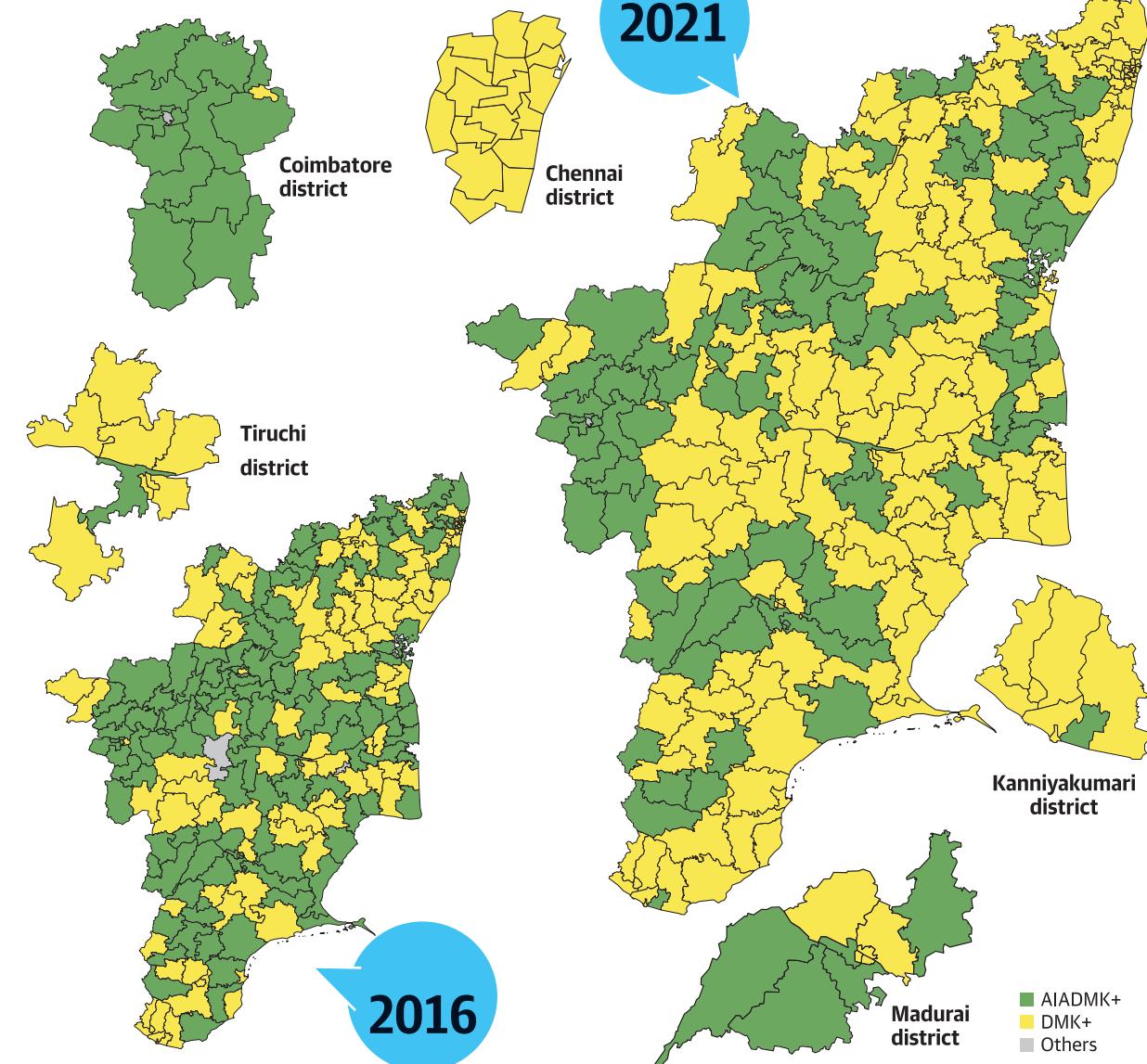
Top and bottom three wins in Tamil Nadu and Kerala

Tamil Nadu: Lowest margin	Tamil Nadu: Highest margin	Kerala: Lowest margin	Kerala: Highest margin
Party, seat	Margin	Party, seat	Margin
ADMK, Manamadurai	0.1	DMK, Athoor	58.59
INC, Tenkasi	0.11	DMK, Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni	52.79
DMK, Rajapalayam	0.18	INC, Killiyoor	48.74
CPI(M), Kuttadi	0.19	CPI(M), Mattanur	39.3
IUML, Manjeshwar	0.44	CPI(M), Payannur	37.89
C(S), Kannur	0.51	CPI(M), Dharmadam	31.28

DMK reclaims T.N., LDF keeps Kerala

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan broke a longstanding jinx that prevented any incumbent from retaining power beyond one term in Kerala, while the strong performance of the DMK-led coalition allows M.K. Stalin to become the Chief Minister for the first time

Tamil Nadu



Emphatic win for the DMK

With leads/wins in at least 147 of the 234 Assembly constituencies, the DMK-led coalition managed a strong victory over the AIADMK-led coalition. The AIADMK improved significantly on its poor performance over the 2019 election, by regaining its strongholds in the West and was bolstered by its allies' performance in the north-central region. But the DMK's alliance was more coherent than in 2016. The DMK did well across the State while its ally, the Congress, also managed to improve its strike rate compared to 2016. The DMK-led coalition managed to trounce its opponents across the rural/urban divide and also did well in seats where farming is intensive. In the AIADMK-led coalition, the PMK fared much better compared to its performance in 2016 and '19 garnering a strong vote share in seats it contested, very close to the AIADMK's 38.2%. The BJP managed the lowest vote share among the parties in both the coalitions. Among parties outside the two coalitions, Seeman's Naam Tamilar Katchi got a 6.5% vote share, trumping T.T.V. Dhinakaran's AMMK (3.4%) and Kamal Haasan's MNM (2.9%). These parties, however, didn't win a seat.

Assembly segments won/led*

Party	Assembly segments won/led*			Strike rate %^		
	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)
DMK	133	+44	-5	71	+21	-27
INC	16	+8	-33	64	+44	-27
Left	4	+4	-20	33	+33	-49
VCK	4	+4	+2	67	+67	33
IUML	-				-20	-83
AIADMK	69	-65	+57	36	-22	+27
BJP	4	+4	+3	20	+20	+17
PMK	4	+4	+1	17	+17	+10
MNM+	-			0	0	
NTK+	-			0	0	

^wins/contested seats *leads in 2019 | c = Change (increase or decrease)

Vote share %

Party	Vote share %			Contested vote (% , % points)		
	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)
DMK	37.5	+5.9	+4.2	46.3	+5.2	-8.5
INC	4.0	-2.4	-8.8	41.3	+4.8	-11.5
Left	2.1	+0.6	-2.8	39.3	+32.3	+1.6
VCK	1.1	+0.3	-0.1	42.0	+35.1	-1.3
IUML	0.5	-0.2	-0.6	38.9	+5.8	-5.1
AIADMK	33.3	-7.4	+14.2	40.8	+0.1	+6.9
BJP	2.7	-0.2	-0.8	34.1	+30.6	+5.6
PMK	4.0	-1.4	-1.5	37.8	+32.4	+8.8
MNM+	2.4	+2.4	-1.3	3.3	+3.3	-0.7
NTK+	6.6	+5.6	+2.8	6.6	+5.6	+2.6
AMMK+	2.4	+2.4	+2.4	3.4	+3.4	+3.4

Rural/urban vote %

The AIADMK combine increased its vote share across rural/urban segments, but still fell short of the DMK

Rural/urban	DMK+		AIADMK+	
	2021	2019 (c)	2021	2019 (c)
Rural	46.0	-7.7	41.5	+9.7
Semi-rural	44.0	-8.3	40.6	+7.3
Semi-urban	44.2	-8.4	39.9	+9.1
Urban	46.3	-8.4	36.6	+10.2

Edappadi K Palaniswami
Edappadi
Winning

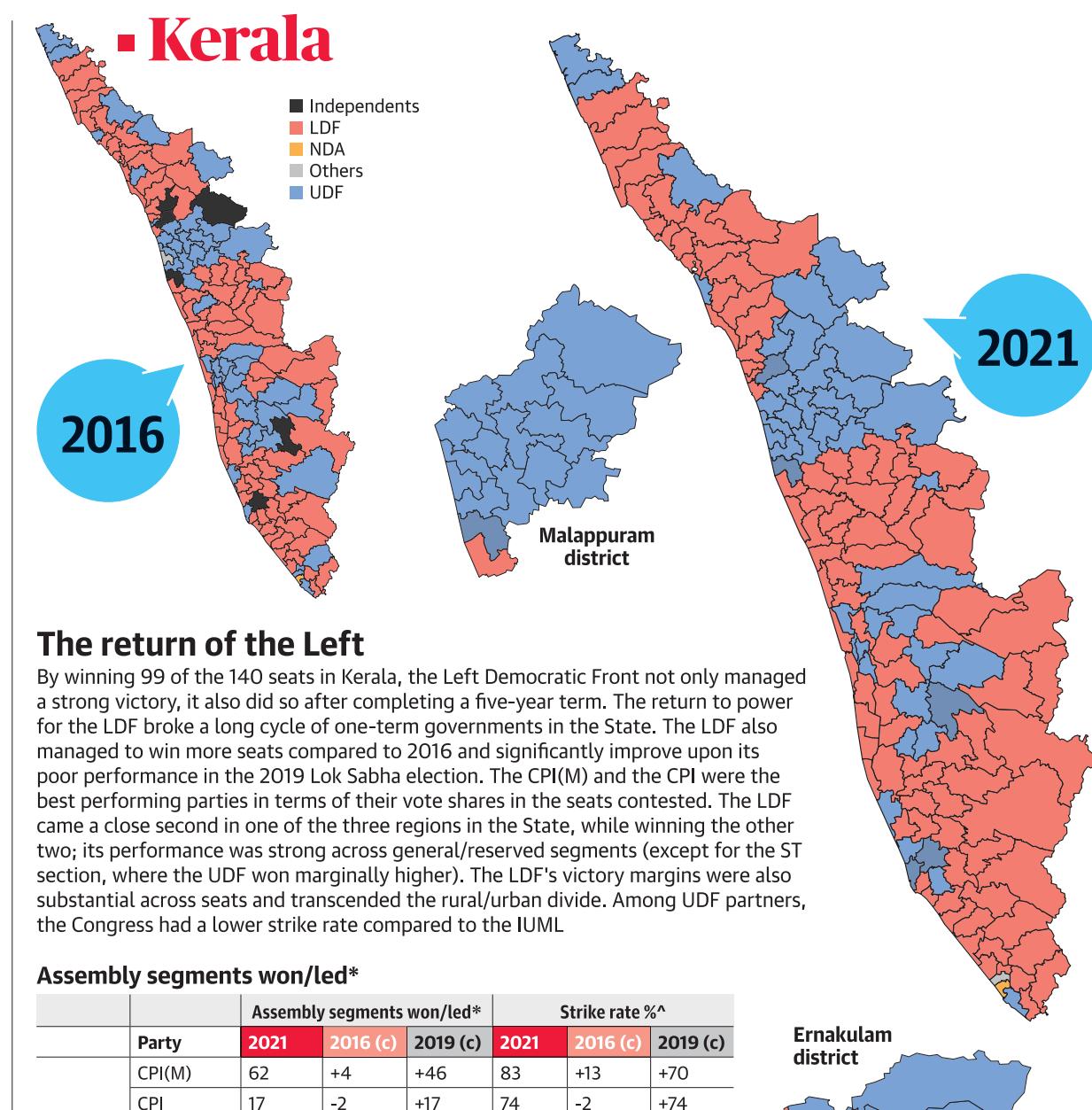
M.K. Stalin
Kolathur
Winning

Kamal Haasan
Coimbatore South
Losing

T.T.V. Dhinakaran
Kovilpatti
Losing

Seeman
Thiruvottiyur
Losing

Kerala



The return of the Left

By winning 99 of the 140 seats in Kerala, the Left Democratic Front not only managed a strong victory, it also did so after completing a five-year term. The return to power for the LDF broke a long cycle of one-term governments in the State. The LDF also managed to win more seats compared to 2016 and significantly improve upon its poor performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The CPI(M) and the CPI were the best performing parties in terms of their vote shares in the seats contested. The LDF came a close second in one of the three regions in the State, while winning the other two; its performance was strong across general/reserved segments (except for the ST section, where the UDF won marginally higher). The LDF's victory margins were also substantial across seats and transcended the rural/urban divide. Among UDF partners, the Congress had a lower strike rate compared to the IUML.

Assembly segments won/led*

Party	Assembly segments won/led*			Strike rate %^		
	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)
CPI(M)	62	+4	+46	83	+13	+70
CPI	17	-2	+17	74	-2	+74
KEC(M)	5	-1	-1	42	+2	-44
JD(S)	2	-1	+2	50	-25	+50
INC	21	-1	-75	23	-3	-63
IUML	15	-3	+1	60	-18	-40
Kerala Congress	2	+2	+2	20	+20	+20
UDF	RSP	0	0	-7	0	0
AIADMK	0	-1	-1	0	-1	-1
BDJS	0	0	0	0	0	0

^wins/contested seats *leads in 2019 c = Change (increase or decrease)

Vote share %

Party	Vote share %			Contested vote (% , % points)		
	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2019 (c)
CPI(M)	25.4	-1.4	-0.6	47.0	+2.7	+18.5
CPI	7.6	-0.7	+1.5	45.5	+0.7	+15.5
KEC(M)	3.3	-0.8	+1.2	41.1	+2.3	-5.2
JD(S)	1.3	+0.1	+1.3	45.1	+3.3	+45.1
INC	25.1	+1.7	-12.4	37.9	0.0	-8.3
IUML	8.3	+0.7	+2.8	45.2	-0.3	-9.0
Kerala Congress	2.7	+2.5	+1.9	40.5	+31.4	+23.4
UDF	RSP	1.2	+0.1	-1.3	33.3	+2.3
BJP	11.3	+1.1	-1.7	13.6	-1.3	-3.4
AIADMK	0.0	-0.1	0.0	6.8	+3.4	+6.8
NDA	BDJS	1.1	-2.8	-0.8	7.6	-7.4

Region-wise vote %

The LDF was triumphant in both the Cochin and Travancore regions but came a bit short in the Malabar region

Region	LDF		NDA		UDF	
2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	

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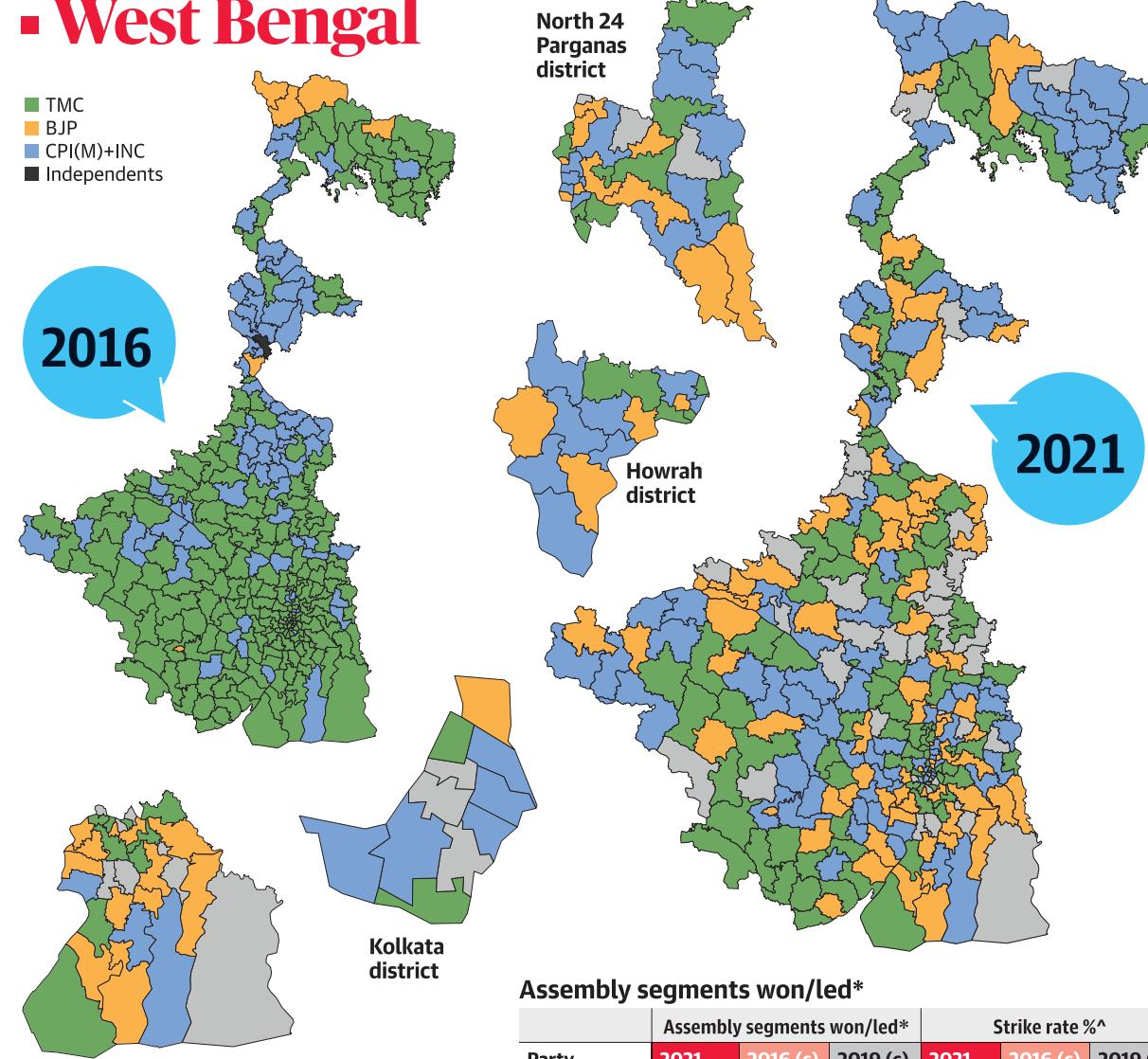
Top and bottom three wins in West Bengal and Assam

West Bengal: Lowest margin		West Bengal: Highest margin		Assam: Lowest margin		Assam: Highest margin	
Party, seat	Margin	Party, seat	Margin	Party, seat	Margin	Party, seat	Margin
BJP, Bandwan	0.1	AITC, Ballygunge	79.49	INC, Lakhipur	0.07	INC, Salma South	75.52
BJP, Pursurah	0.11	AITC, Entally	71.85	INC, Barhampur	0.11	INC, Chaygaon	69.01
BJP, Raghunathpur	0.16	AITC, Metiaburuz	60.85	INC, Katigora	0.47	INC, Rupohihat	68.22

BJP retains Assam, but loses Bengal

Mamata Banerjee lost a close battle to former lieutenant Suvendu Adhikari in Nandigram, but went on to emphatically win the war in West Bengal by winning 211 of the 294 seats in the State. The BJP, however, managed to retain Assam despite a decent show by the Congress-led Grand Alliance

■ West Bengal



South 24 Parganas district

A triumphant Trinamool

Contrary to what opinion and exit polls claimed, the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) not only won nearly 3/4ths of all the Assembly seats, it did so by improving upon its vote share in both the 2019 Lok Sabha and the 2016 Assembly elections. The BJP's vote share compared to 2019 fell by around 3% points while the Left-Congress combine's vote share and seat tallies crumbled even more compared to 2016 and 2019. The TMC was particularly dominant in the Greater Kolkata region and did well in the urban areas with a vote share more than 50%. The BJP managed to win substantially among seats reserved for STs and also did well in seats which had a substantial chunk of voters deriving income from farming. The Left-Congress combine's low vote share (7.6%) suggests that some of its traditional voters had shifted their votes to the TMC

Region-wise vote %

The Trinamool Congress' best performance was in the Greater Kolkata region, while the BJP came closest to the TMC only in the northern region

Region	TMC		BJP		CPI(M)+INC	
	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
Greater Kolkata	52.6	5.7	32.1	20.5	12.4	-17.2
North	44.6	7.5	42.1	27.6	6.9	-20.9
South East	49.5	5.3	33.2	25.2	13.7	-24.8
South West	47.1	-1.2	41.6	32.4	8.1	-22.1

Phase-wise vote % | TMC upped its vote share substantially in phases 7 and 8 that were held in late April (during the COVID19 2nd wave). Polls during these phases were held in the Greater Kolkata region

Phases	TMC		BJP		CPI(M)+INC	
	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
Phase 1	45.7	-4.7	42.8	34.2	7.4	-17.7
Phase 2	46.9	-1.0	44.3	37.0	6.3	-24.3
Phase 3	50.2	0.0	36.4	29.4	10.3	-21.9
Phase 4	47.7	1.7	38.0	25.9	11.2	-15.2
Phase 5	43.3	-1.3	39.9	30.0	10.5	-22.8
Phase 6	47.8	2.9	38.4	27.7	9.8	-23.7
Phase 7	52.0	15.2	32.8	19.7	11.2	-27.9
Phase 8	52.2	13.5	32.2	20.8	12.3	-24.1

Farmer intensive seats vote %

In seats with a large chunk of farmers, TMC's vote share was only ahead of that of the BJP's

	TMC		BJP		CPI(M)+INC	
	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
<15%	49.7	4.8	35.3	23.7	11.3	-20.3
15-25%	47.0	1.9	40.0	31.3	9.4	-24.1
25-35%	46.0	0.4	41.3	31.9	7.6	-20.8
>35%	46.4	-1.5	44.3	34.1	6.1	-19.7

Win margins

With nearly half of the seats won by the TMC having a victory margin of more than 15%, the contest was clearly not close with the BJP

Margin	TMC		BJP		CPI(M)+INC	
	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
<1%	3	-3	10	10	10	2
1-5%	34	7	22	20	22	4
5-15%	84	18	41	41	41	25
>15%	92	-20	4	3	4	-24

Vote share ranges

The TMC secured more than 50% vote share in more than half of the seats it won, suggesting the emphatic nature of its victory

Range	TMC		BJP		CPI(M)+INC	
	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
<30%	1	-18	55	-229	297	273
30-40%	23	-21	94	88	3	-104
40-50%	154	0	123	122	2	-85
>50%	110	34	20	20		-22

■ DESIGN TEAM: KANNAN SUNDAR, B. SRINIVASAN, J.A. PREMKUMAR, JOSEPH SATISH, ALBERT FRANCIS, KARTHICK S.T., L. BALAMURUGAN

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15-25%	47.0	1.9	40.0	31.3	9.4	-24.1
25-35%	46.0	0.4	41.3	31.9	7.6	-20.8
>35%	46.4	-1.5	44.3	34.1	6.1	-19.7

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	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)	2021	2016 (c)
<15%	49.7	4.8	35.3	23.7	11.3	-20.3
15-25%	47.0					

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DELHI THE HINDU | MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021

P10



I thank the people of Assam... I appreciate the hard work of the NDA karyakartas

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

Gratitude to the wisdom of Bengal voters. It is a win against the BJP's misuse of State power and a blatantly partisan ECI

ANAND SHARMA
Congress leader

Winner takes all: (clockwise from above) UDF candidate Shafi Parambil savouring his win over 'Metroman' E. Sreedharan in Palakkad; Trinamool supporters make it a memorable moment with a conch and posters; AGP candidate Ramendra Narayan celebrating his win in Guwahati West; a victorious Sarbananda Sonowal; Mamata Banerjee basking in the Bengal win with her nephew's daughter; and residents of a colony in Ernakulam paint it red. ■ MUSTAFAH K.K., SUBHAM DUTTA, THULASI KAKKAT, RITU RAJ KONWAR & PTI

POLL POURRI

A mixed bag for MPs in Assembly polls

Of the 7 BJP parliamentarians who contested, only two won

SOBHA NAIR
NEW DELHI

It has been a bad run for nearly a dozen MPs who tried their luck in the Assembly election in four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry. Out of the seven BJP MPs who contested this election, only two won.



In West Bengal, along with Union Minister Babul Supriyo who stood from Tollygunge, the BJP fielded two more Lok Sabha members – Locket Chatterjee from Chunchura and Nitish Pramanik from Dinhata. All three lost, with Mr. Supriyo losing by the largest margin of over 30,000 votes. Swapan Dasgupta, who contested on BJP ticket from the Tarkeshwar Assembly constituency, was forced to resign from the Raja Sabha after the Trinamool Congress threatened to take legal recourse. He lost to his Trinamool opponent in the election.

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee President Ripun Bora lost his seat of Gohpur in Assam. There was a widespread call to replace him ahead of the election from Congress cadres in the State, but it went unheeded. The BJP though can draw solace from Assam. Raja Sabha member Biswajit Daimary, who quit just months before the Assembly election and switched from the Bodoland Front Party to join the BJP, had an emphatic victory in the Panery Assembly constituency.

In Kerala, where the BJP drew a blank, losing even their sitting seat of Nemom, Raja Sabha members K.J. Alphonse contesting from Kanjirapally and actor Suresh Gopi from Thrissur are third on the final tally.

In Nemom, Congress MP K. Muraleedharan, who took on the challenge after many senior leaders balked at the idea of fighting from a sitting BJP seat, lost, trailing behind the CPI(M)'s Sivankutty and the BJP's Kummanam Rajasekharan. The CPI(M) won the seat.

In Tamil Nadu, two Raja Sabha members from the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) – R. Vaithilingam and K.P. Munusamy – won with good margins in their respective seats of Orathanadu and Veppanahalli.

Cong. wins two Assembly bypoll seats in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The ruling Congress won the byelections for the Sujangarh and Sahara seats in the Rajasthan Assembly on Sunday, while the BJP retained Rajsamand with a narrow margin. A total of 60.71% of the voters had exercised their franchise in the polling held on April 17.

Congress candidate Gayatri Devi won from Sahara in Bhilwara district with the biggest margin of 42,200 votes, defeating the BJP's Ratanlal Jat, while her party colleague Manoj Meghwal defeated the BJP's Khemaram Meghwal in the Sujangarh constituency. However, the BJP's new entrant, Deepti Maheshwari, defeated her Congress rival Tansukh Bohra in Rajsamand.

The byelections were necessitated after the death of MLAs Bhanwar Lal Meghwal (Sujangarh), Kailash Trivedi (Sahara) and Kiran Maheshwari (Rajsamand).

NEWS ANALYSIS

BJP's electoral machine loses its bite in Bengal

Leadership question throws a challenge in Assam; COVID-19 surge makes it harder for party to plan for U.P. and Gujarat polls

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The BJP's failure to breach the fortress of Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and win a seat in Kerala was in contrast to its return to power with a good majority in Assam and the victory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Puducherry.

Challenges for the BJP are, however, both organisational and existential.

Who will be Assam CM?

In Assam, for example, the BJP's victory has thrown up the interesting conundrum of just who should be the new Chief Minister – sitting Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal or Health and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is the BJP's powerhouse in Northeast India holding its alliances in several States together. He also managed to steer the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests away from politically



Slim winnings: BJP supporters celebrating in Guwahati, Assam, on Sunday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

harming the BJP in the State.

Senior party leaders have been saying that the party's parliamentary board will be taking a view on the matter.

West Bengal lessons

In West Bengal, it has become clear that the constituency that rose to give the BJP 18

seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha election has somewhat shifted back to the Trinamool Congress. A consolidation of women and minority votes also seems to have helped Mamata Banerjee.

As BJP general secretary in charge of West Bengal Kailash Vijayvargiya said, "It seems

Bengal wants Mamata Banerjee as Chief Minister." He also added that the fear of contracting COVID-19 may have kept BJP voters at home.

In the major reasons for its failure to win, BJP leaders point out that the lack of a local face as a chief ministerial candidate hurt the party, but

most important, an overdependence on Trinamool Congress defectors for both organisational heft and as candidates did not go down well with the electorate. Many of the high-profile turncoats, including former Ministers in the Mamata Banerjee government, lost the poll.

Existential issue

The big issue, however, is more deep, and has to do with the gigantic second wave of COVID-19 that is battering India. The BJP, which always sought the "party of governance" badge for itself, is now floundering on that score.

The BJP has always pointed out that the old Congress slogan against the Jan Sangh (BJP's earlier avatar), "Shasan karna koi khel nahin, Jan Sangh ke diyon main tel nahin" (governance is not a game, these lamps of Jan Sangh have no oil – lamp be-

ing the Jan Sangh symbol)," no longer applied to them as governments led by the party have been re-elected for multiple terms in the States and at the Centre.

While the jury is still out on whether the second wave and the long-drawn-out polling schedule had a bearing on the Trinamool victory and the BJP's loss, next year's electoral calendar is looming large.

Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, two States that are being battered by the pandemic with health and governance infrastructure failing, are scheduled to go to the polls next year. Both are ruled by BJP governments, and the party's own fortresses will be under siege. While the BJP has become a party of meticulous electoral planning and execution, the performance of its governments in these two States will be under the scanner, as of that of the Central government.

Samyukta Morcha reduced to also-ran in Bengal battle

Vote share of constituents of alliance did not even touch 8%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Muted celebrations: Trinamool Congress supporters celebrating the party's win in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ AFP

BJP nominee.

For the Congress, the 2021 Assembly election in West Bengal ended its political clout over the districts of Murshidabad and Malda.

Most of the candidates of the Left parties and the Congress lost their deposits. Even the young candidates of the CPI(M), who created a lot of media attention, failed to make a significant mark.

The West Bengal Assembly election for 2021 was bipolar from the beginning. The Left and the Congress, which were the main Opposition till 2016, suffered a huge political setback in the 2019 Lok Sabha

polls, where the Left Front vote share dropped to 7% and the Congress to 5.61%. In the 2016 Assembly election, the Left Front had secured 25.69% of votes and the Congress 12.3% votes. The alliance had won 76 seats with the Congress winning 44 seats and the Left Front 32 seats.

The Muslim voters, instead of putting their faith in the Samyukta Morcha, voted *en masse* for the Trinamool Congress. One of the major emphasis of the Samyukta Morcha campaign was reaching out to Muslims, but voters from the minority community backed the Trinamool Congress to keep the BJP away from the State.

"I have never seen a more partial Election Commission... It did everything to help the BJP... From allowing the use of religion to scheduling the poll and bending the rules, the ECI did everything to help the BJP," he said, calling the poll panel an "extension of the saffron party."

Quitting this space, says Prashant Kishor

ECI an extension of BJP, says strategist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Election strategist Prashant Kishor, who had claimed back in December that the BJP will struggle to cross double digits in the West Bengal Assembly election and he will quit if it did, announced on Sunday that he is "quitting this space".

He also came down hard on the Election Commission of India (ECI), accusing it of being an "extension of the BJP".

"I am quitting this space," he told *India Today TV* after trends showed a landslide victory for the Trinamool Congress, whose election strategy for the Assembly poll he helped craft.

"I have never seen a more partial Election Commission... It did everything to help the BJP... From allowing the use of religion to scheduling the poll and bending the rules, the ECI did everything to help the BJP," he said, calling the poll panel an "extension of the saffron party."

Formidable force
Talking to *NDTV*, Mr. Kishor stuck to his stand that the BJP was a formidable force in West Bengal.

He said he was confident about the Trinamool's victory

ry despite the BJP's attempt to "build a massive propaganda" that it was winning.

"The result may look one-sided, but it was a tough fight. The BJP is a formidable force and will be," he said.

Will struggle
"...In reality BJP will struggle to cross double digits in #WestBengal," he had tweeted as early as December last year, and his words proved prophetic.

"If BJP does any better, I must quit this space!" he had said.

'Pay heed to mandate, repeal laws'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a joint coalition of farmers' unions, on Sunday welcomed the mandate against the BJP in the West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala Assembly elections. The Morcha leaders said the results proved that the people had rejected the divisive communal politics of the BJP.

In a press statement, they said the BJP tried to project its communal polarisation agenda as the main issue confronting voters, when the country was facing a severe crisis in terms of the healthcare infrastructure crumbling due to the lack of planning.

The protesting farmers have already proven convincingly that the BJP's communal polarisation agenda is unacceptable; this is a unified struggle of citizens to protect their livelihoods but also the secular fabric of the country.

Our campaign with the voters against the BJP stands vindicated," the SKM leaders said in a joint statement.

The BJP should listen to the mandate of the people and should immediately repeal the farm laws, it added.

Cong. wins two Assembly bypoll seats in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

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The byelections were necessitated after the death of MLAs Bhanwar Lal Meghwal (Sujangarh), Kailash Trivedi (Sahara) and Kiran Maheshwari (Rajsamand).

Heartiest congratulations to Mamata didi and everyone at the TMC for the remarkable victory in West Bengal. The BJP and a thoroughly partisan Election Commission threw everything including the kitchen sink at you and you prevailed

OMAR ABDULLAH
NATIONAL CONFERENCE VICE-PRESIDENT

The TMC won because of Mamata Banerjee. It seems people have chosen Didi. We will introspect what went wrong, whether it was organisational issues, lack of face, insider-outsider debate... We will see what went wrong

KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA
BJP NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

Mamata Banerjee was fighting a lone battle to uphold the pride of the people of Bengal. All forces converged to ensure her defeat, yet, she emerged victorious. I congratulate her & the people of WB

UDDHAV THACKERAY
MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER & SHIV SENA PRESIDENT

Congratulations to Mamata Banerjee, the Trinamool Congress, MP Derek O'Brien on their splendid victory today. Kudos to the people of West Bengal for rejecting disruptive and divisive forces

MEHBOOBA MUFTI
PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRESIDENT

CM YK

A ND-NDE

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Stalin's long and patient wait for top seat ends

DMK leader set to become T.N. Chief Minister after a step-by-step elevation, in which he proved himself over four decades

B. KOLAPPAN
CHENNAI

It has been a long haul for Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin. Indira Gandhi's Emergency had catapulted him into active politics. It was baptism by fire, when, in his early twenties, the newly married Stalin was dragged away and jailed. His father, the late M. Karunanidhi, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) patriarch, once remarked that Mr. Stalin was arrested only because he was his father's son.

The son, however, has had to wait for over four decades to occupy his father's seat, first in the party, and, now, in government.

Karunanidhi had poignantly portrayed Mr. Stalin's arrest and subsequent torture in prison. One of the imprisoned DMK leaders, Chittibabu, a former Chennai Mayor and former MP, tried to intervene when jail officials were thrashing him. Chittibabu was also severely beaten.

"We met Stalin in prison. Surrounded by prison officials, he was wearing full sleeves, obviously, to cover up the wounds on his body. I asked whether he was beaten. Though he shook his head to



Man of the moment: DMK president M.K. Stalin campaigning in Chennai on April 4, 2021. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

say 'no', his eyes gave it away. If he revealed that he had been beaten, he would have been subjected to another round of beatings." Karunanidhi recalled in his autobiography, *Nenjukku Needhi*.

After Murasoli Maran, nephew of Karunanidhi, it was Mr. Stalin who showed keen interest in politics. Long before the party's youth wing was launched, he mobilised the youth in Gopalapuram and requested then Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai to participate in their function. But

Anna could not make it. Though he rose from being youth wing leader to legislator, Chennai Mayor, Minister and Deputy Chief Minister over the years, Mr. Stalin had to constantly prove his mettle. He was often compared adversely with his redoubtable father.

Afraid of a backlash against being seen as promoting him in the party and government, Karunanidhi allowed him only a step-by-step elevation, lest his rise be seen as meteoric.

Karunanidhi named him after Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Communist leader, who had died around the time of his birth. The name did not exactly help him in early life. The famous Presentation Convent in Chennai, the school attended by former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, denied admission to him because he had a Communist name.

"Even my sister was not given an admission because of me," Mr. Stalin would say.

Though the youth wing headed by him became one of the strongest units of the DMK, and he himself tasted electoral victory as early as in 1989 and entered the Assembly, he was not inducted into the Cabinet when the DMK returned to power that year after 13 years.

Major break

Even in 1996, after the DMK swept the polls, he remained just a party MLA. His major break came soon enough, when he became the first elected Mayor of the Chennai Corporation.

The flyovers constructed in various parts of the city as part of his "Singhamara Chennai" scheme won

him accolades. It was during this period that he started gaining importance and some level of control in the party.

He decided the alliance partners for the 2001 Assembly election, which were mostly caste-based parties, a move that led to a difference of opinion with Murasoli Maran, who announced that he was quitting active politics.

Mr. Stalin's tenure as mayor gave him a foundation in administration. He was made Minister of Rural Development and Municipal Administration after the party was elected to power in 2006.

He strengthened women self-help groups in the State and his growing influence in the administration and party led to his promotion as the State's first Deputy Chief Minister in 2009.

Meanwhile, he also became the DMK's treasurer. Subsequent years witnessed his growing control over the party.

He cut to size the powerful district secretaries of the party by bifurcating and trifurcating the district units they

controlled as their fiefdoms. As the 2G scam gradually strained the relationship between the DMK and the Congress, Mr. Stalin finally persuaded his father to come out of the United Progressive Alliance government at the Centre.

Though he started replacing his father, who could not travel due to old age, as the party's star campaigner in the 2016 Assembly polls, he was not projected as the chief ministerial candidate. Mr. Stalin himself said in the campaign, "Kalaigar would be the Chief Minister."

The DMK's failure to win the 2016 Assembly polls provided Mr. Stalin an opportunity to lead his party in the Assembly as his wheel-chair bound father could not attend Assembly on regular basis.

The way he conducted himself, and the legal battle through which he secured a place on Chennai's Marina beach for the burial of his father in 2018, saw the emergence of a leader who is going to occupy the seat of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Sinha said there had been instances of political party supporters congregating and trying to take out victory processions, which the EC had banned due to the second wave of COVID-19. During the day, the EC had directed the Chief Secretaries to take action against those involved. In Tamil Nadu, an FIR had been filed in connection with an incident of supporters bursting firecrackers outside a party's headquarters in Chennai. An inspector of the local police station had also been suspended, he said.

Mr. Sinha said these elections had been one of the largest electoral exercises to have been conducted during the pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the number of polling booths, postal ballots and counting halls had increased.

Postal ballots were offered to all above 80 years of age, persons with disabilities, those affected by COVID-19 and essential service workers, leading to an increase from 2.97 lakh postal ballots cast in the 2016 elections to 13.16 lakh this time.

Violations of COVID protocols during the campaign led to 60 FIRs and 180 show-cause notices, he said.

The game is on



Making merry: Trinamool Congress supporters celebrating at Bolpur in Birbhum district of West Bengal on Sunday. ■ PTI

Between emphatic win and total loss

The Left parties are caught between the victory in Kerala and the annihilation in West Bengal

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The Left's electoral fortunes on Sunday swung between the euphoria of the victory in Kerala, where after a gap of nearly 40 years an incumbent government returned, and total annihilation in West Bengal, drawing a blank for the first time in Independent India.

The Left is drawing solace from the BJP's defeat in West Bengal. "The BJP suffered a severe setback despite its money power and manipulations in West Bengal. The people of Bengal have very clearly rejected the ideology of communal polarisation," the CPI(M) Polit Bureau statement said.

People's urge to defeat the BJP led to a sharp polarisation squeezing out the Sanjukta Morcha, the party said. Explaining this further, CPI

(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury told *The Hindu*, "In a first past the post system, if there is a polarisation then the third force often gets elbowed out."

CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, who was critical of the Left front's political line in the election, said the Left was never a factor in this election. "This election was all about the BJP trying to capture Bengal and Bengal trying to stop the BJP. The Left, in fact, should celebrate the BJP's defeat. This in many ways is a vindication of the Left's inclusive legacy in Bengal," he said.

But this historic low is deeply worrying for many. Even in 2011, when Mamata Banerjee first routed the Left government after its 34-year spell in power, the Left Front had got nearly 35% of the vote share, just three per-

Left should celebrate BJP's defeat which is a vindication of its inclusive legacy in Bengal

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

centage points behind the Trinamool. In 10 years, the combined strength of the Left parties together does not cross 2%.

Mr. Bhattacharya said that the Left had been callous and would need to "re-orient and rebuild" itself.

"The Left will have to do a serious review of its political line and assessment of its situation. How did we lose the grip? And how did the BJP gain a firm foothold in West Bengal, needs a serious review," CPI general secretary D. Raja said.

The CPI(M), meanwhile, is

staring at the question whether these bipolar results will disrupt its internal balance and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan overshadow the party itself. Just when, at the end of a long and tiring tussle on the question of allying with the Con-

gress between the Kerala and West Bengal units was settled, the question itself became irrelevant.

However, party general secretary Sitaram Yechury, said only those unaware of working of the CPI(M) would pose such a question.

The bypoll had been necessitated after Mr. Bhalke's father, Bharat Bhalke – a three-time NCP MLA from Solapur – had passed away in November last year.

Mr. Awatade won by a margin of 3,733 votes having secured a total 1,09,450 votes.

The bypoll had been held on May 1, 2021, and the results were declared on May 2, 2021. The BJP candidate lost the election by a narrow margin of 1,09,450 votes. The results were declared on May 2, 2021.

BJP said that after winning Bengal they will start 'Operation Lotus' in Maharashtra. They must keep this in mind. Those who lost the Battle of Plassey cannot dream of conquering the Sahyadris'

NAWAB MALIK
NCP SPOKESPERSON & MAHARASHTRA MINISTER

What a great victory for TMC. Next is UP and finally Delhi. The fakes have been exposed

YASHWANT SINHA, TRINAMOL CONGRESS VICE-PRESIDENT

The voters of Bengal have demonstrated where their hearts lie. The BJP has met its match in Bengal, and lost

SHASHI THAROOR, CONGRESS MP

Mamata Banerjee's triumphant win will herald the process of transformative political realignments. Its repercussion will be felt beyond Bengal

ASHWANI KUMAR, FORMER UNION LAW MINISTER & CONGRESS LEADER



We are happy to see the BJP with its money, misuse of agencies and manipulation pushed back in T.N., W.B. and Kerala

SITARAM YECHURY, CPI(M) general secretary



We humbly accept the people's mandate. Sincere gratitude to our workers & the millions of people who supported us on the ground

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress MP

P11

POLL PROTOCOL

EC orders action on those violating norms



Celebrating the win: A group bursting firecrackers at Thirupulai in Madurai. ■ G. MOORTHY

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Sunday ordered action against those gathering outside party offices and celebrating the results of the elections to five Assemblies in violation of the COVID-19 related protocols.

EC secretary-general Umesh Sinha told presspersons that the counting process was smooth, however, it was taking longer to update the results on the EC's website due to the server being overloaded. He said the EC had allowed the Returning Officers of the constituencies to declare the results with the consent of the observers as long as counting had been smooth.

Mr. Sinha said there had been instances of political party supporters congregating and trying to take out victory processions, which the EC had banned due to the second wave of COVID-19. During the day, the EC had directed the Chief Secretaries to take action against those involved. In Tamil Nadu, an FIR had been filed in connection with an incident of supporters bursting firecrackers outside a party's headquarters in Chennai. An inspector of the local police station had also been suspended, he said.

Mr. Sinha said these elections had been one of the largest electoral exercises to have been conducted during the pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the number of polling booths, postal ballots and counting halls had increased. Postal ballots were offered to all above 80 years of age, persons with disabilities, those affected by COVID-19 and essential service workers, leading to an increase from 2.97 lakh postal ballots cast in the 2016 elections to 13.16 lakh this time.

Violations of COVID protocols during the campaign led to 60 FIRs and 180 show-cause notices, he said.



Diehard fans: A crowd of supporters at a counting centre in Varanasi on Sunday. ■ PTI

Social distancing goes for a toss in U.P.

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Social distancing norms to curb the COVID-19 infection appeared to go for a toss in Uttar Pradesh's centres where votes for the panchayat polls were being counted on Sunday.

Visitors from various districts such as Azamgarh, Siddharthnagar, Jaunpur, Sultanpur, Amethi, Jalana, Fatehpur, Gonda and Sitapur showed a large number of people gathering outside or lining up at the gates of the counting centres in close physical proximity to each other.

In some districts, supporters of the candidates also assembled near the centres in large numbers despite warnings by the State Election Commission (SEC). The State Election Commission said results for the UP Panchayat polls are expected late on Monday. Till Sunday evening, over 1.12 lakh gram panchayat members, 16510 panchayats, 35812 members of kshetra panchayats had been elected.

Police resorted to use of lathis at some places to manage the crowd. In Firozabad, police resorted to lathi charge after polling agents gathered in large numbers.

The Uttar Pradesh Shikshak Mahasangh, a federation of teacher unions, on Saturday evening had called off its decision to boycott the counting process after assurances by the State government and the SEC that COVID-19 safety norms would be followed strictly.

The federation had said that 700 teachers on polling duty during the panchayat elections had died after testing positive for COVID-19.

People of West Bengal have taught a lesson to BJP and have clearly rejected the divisive and communal agenda of the party. It was a very tough battle, fighting collective central forces. Every tactic was used by BJP

ASHOK GEHLOT
RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

BJP said that after winning Bengal they will start 'Operation Lotus' in Maharashtra. They must keep this in mind. Those who lost the Battle of Plassey cannot dream of conquering the Sahyadris'

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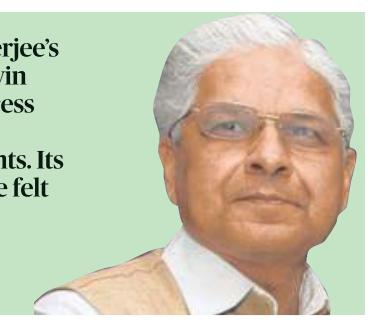
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A ND-NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

Stalin wins absolute majority in close fight

All candidates fielded by the alliances led by Makkal Needhi Maiaam of actor Kamal Haasan; Naam Tamil Katchi, led by Seeman; and Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, founded by T.V. Dhinakaran, were headed for defeat. This is a repeat of 2016 when only candidates of the AIADMK and DMK fronts won.

The Congress, which is part of the DMK alliance, performed well, and as per trends is touted to increase its presence in the Assembly to 17 from a mere eight seats in 2016. It also won the Kanjiyakumari Lok Sabha seat, where a bypoll was held.

What has, however, added to the strength of the DMK is the four seats that are likely to be won by the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), led by Vaiko, that contested

on the DMK's 'Rising Sun' symbol.

The Viduthalai Chiruthai Katchi emerged victorious in two seats and was leading in an equal number. The CPI and CPI (M) had both won one seat each and were leading in one constituency each. Other alliance partners, including the Manithaneya Makkal Katchi (MMK), which also contested on the DMK's symbol, were likely to win in four seats.

The BJP, which went to the polls in league with the AIADMK, is entering the Assembly after 20 years. In 2001 the party won in four seats in the company of the DMK, which was part of the A.B. Vajapayee-led BJP government at the Centre. Now it won/established leads in four out of the 20 constituencies allotted to it.

Second term for Pinarayi

The adverse electoral verdict is expected to have serious implications for the UDF, especially for the Congress leadership. The verdict is also seen as a determinant of the outcome of pressure mounting within the Congress for Rahul Gandhi's return as party president and the rebellion launched by the 'G-23' leaders within the party.

The electoral outcome was a major embarrassment for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance too as it drew a blank, despite the

considerable money and manpower it marshalled for the sustained and visibly high profile campaign, including rallies addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Not only did it lose the Nemom seat it won in 2016, it also failed to secure Manjeswaram, Konni, Palakkad, Thrissur and Kazhakkutam where it fielded heavyweights such as party State president K. Surendran, 'Metroman' E. Sreedharan, Suresh Gopi and Shobha Surendran.

Mamata wins Bengal

The Trinamool Congress was also leading in a majority of seats of South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly. It was also leading or had emerged victorious in all the 11 seats in Kolkata.

Speaking to mediapersons in the evening, Ms. Banerjee described the victory as a "landslide", and said it had saved the country. She thanked the people of the State, particularly women, and said her first task would be to tackle the pandemic. She demanded free vaccination for all in the country

and threatened to launch a *dharma* if the Centre did not concede to the demand.

On her defeat in Nandigram, Ms. Banerjee said she had accepted the verdict but asked how in just one constituency the vote was against the trend prevalent across the State.

As the results came in, it also became clear that most of the defectors from Trinamool did not do well. West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh admitted that people may not have taken the defections well. "It is a lesson for us," he said.

Rangasamy returns

Two defectors from Congress – K.S.P. Ramesh and V. Aroumougame – won the Kadirkamam and Indira Nagar constituencies respectively for the AINRC.

While Mr. Ramesh defeated his Congress rival P. Selvanathan by a margin of 12,246 votes, Mr. Aroumougame defeated M. Kannan of Congress by a margin of 18,531 votes.

AINRC also retained Karaikal North and reserved constituency of Nedungadu in Karaikal region. P.R.N Thirumurugan, contesting from Karaikal North defeated PCC chief A.V. Subramanian by a slender margin of 135 votes while Chandrapriya Yang defeated Congress nominee A. Marimuthu by a margin of 2214 votes in Nedungadu.

BJP, allies retain Assam

To make it worse, State Congress president Ripun Bora lost the Gohpur seat. The vote share of the BJP and the Congress this time was almost the same as in 2016 but the combinations and alliances seemed to have made the difference for

both. While the BJP ditched BPF for UPPL for seats across the Bodoland Territorial Council, the Congress-AIUDF alliance seemed to have damaged the Mahajot's prospects in eastern, northern and parts of central Assam.

End oxygen deficit: SC

"The Central and State governments shall notify all Chief Secretaries/ Directors General of Police/ Commissioners of Police that any clampdown on information on social media or harassment caused to individuals seeking/ delivering help on any platform will attract a coercive exercise of jurisdiction by this Court. The Registrar (Judicial) is also directed to place a copy of this order before all District Magistrates in the country," the Bench, also comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat, said in a 64-page order dated April 30, but published on May 2.

It directed against any gag on the use of social media to voice grievances about short supply of life-saving oxygen, drugs and hospitalisation.

The court gave the Centre 14 days to formulate a national policy on admissions to hospitals which shall be followed by all States. "Till the formulation of such a policy, no patient shall be denied hospitalisation or essential drugs in any State/ UT for lack of local residential proof of that State/UT or even in the absence of identity proof," the order said.

"Isolation coaches are presently utilised in Delhi, Maharashtra [Ajni ICD, Nandurbar], Madhya Pradesh [Tihia near Indore]. The latest demand came from Nagaland...the Railways has deployed 10 isolation coaches in Dimapur," the Railways said.

"A pilot for five such facilities had already been initiated and there is good progress on this. This is be-

Several foreign embassies in Delhi face COVID-19 onslaught

War of words between Jaishankar and Jairam over oxygen supply to two missions

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

A significant number of foreign diplomats in the national capital has been hit by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The situation was brought to light on Saturday evening, with the Philippines Embassy seeking oxygen cylinders from the volunteers of the Indian Youth Congress (IYC). The health crisis in the capital's diplomatic enclave has spread to several foreign missions, including the New Zealand High Commission which sought help from the IYC publicly on Sunday morning, triggering an online exchange between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Congress Rajya Sabha member Jairam Ramesh.

"Could you please help with oxygen cylinder urgently at the New Zealand High Commission," the mission asked B.V. Srinivas, national president of the IYC. *The Hindu* has learnt that the High Commission has several cases of COVID-19, out of which two are serious and required oxygen support immediately.

The mission deleted the tweet soon after it was noticed. However, the volunteers of the IYC delivered several oxygen cylinders to



Pitching in: Youth Congress workers delivering oxygen cylinders to the New Zealand High Commission. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the mission within an hour of the public appeal. "New Zealand High Commission opened gates of the Embassy and accepted cylinders," Mr. Srinivas tweeted.

Some time later, Mr. Jaishankar took to social media to claim that the IYC had supplied oxygen in an "unsolicited" manner and that the mission had "no COVID cases". "Clearly for cheap publicity by you know who. Giving away cylinders like this when there are people in desperate need of oxygen is simply appalling," Mr. Jaishankar tweeted.

Earlier Mr. Ramesh had asked if the Ministry of External Affairs was "sleeping" while the Indian Youth Congress was attending to "SOS

calls from foreign embassies". The High Commission ostensibly went public after waiting for oxygen cylinders for many hours. The mission has set up a healthcare unit on the premises for ailing individuals and the support staff but the increasing number of cases has made it impossible for the unit to function without additional oxygen support, it has been learnt.

Many missions hit

A bulk of the foreign missions are located in the Chanakyapuri area, where many diplomats also have their residences. Other than the Philippines, several South East Asian nations have also been

impacted by COVID-19, it has been learnt. Several staff members of the Royal Thai Embassy have been affected by COVID-19, and with critical shortage of oxygen and intensive care units in the national capital, the Embassy arranged an air ambulance two days ago to repatriate their nationals. The Embassies of Singapore and Vietnam also have several cases. Some embassies have resorted to helping themselves with oxygen from whoever can give them, one diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. Embassy has also come out with a public statement saying they are unable to share information about the COVID-19 situation inside the mission because of "privacy concerns" but maintained that the health and safety of U.S. government personnel and their dependents is among the Department's highest priorities. The spokesperson of the U.S. Embassy said the mission would take "all necessary measures to safeguard health and well-being" of the employees.

A diplomat from the Palestinian Embassy informed that both he and his wife had tested positive and are currently under medication. He said there were others too who might require help.

The court recognised the work of healthcare professionals. "We hope their welfare is considered seriously by the Central and State governments. Further, we would wish to use this order to place on record our sincerest appreciation for all the public healthcare professionals – not just limited to the doctors, but also nurses, hospital staff, ambulance drivers, sanitation workers and crematorium workers. It is through their dedicated efforts that the effect of COVID-19 pandemic is being currently tackled in India," the court said.

Create incentive
The Bench noted that "infected healthcare personnel are left to fend for themselves without adequate availability of beds, oxygen or essential drugs. Further, some of them have also often been asked to report back to duty within 10 days of first testing positive (provided they are asymptomatic), even though a longer recuperation period is often recommended."

"There must be an effective policy to ensure that the nation truly acknowledges their effort and creates incentives for them. We hope it will be remedied soon by the Central and State governments through the introduction of appropriate guidelines and measures."

Centre faces questions over how it plans to use foreign aid

France sends eight oxygen generators for specific hospitals, third U.S. shipment containing 1,000 oxygen cylinders lands

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

France delivered eight oxygen plants on Sunday, four of which, government sources said, would be used at hospitals in Delhi, as questions were put to the Centre on the use of foreign aid.

The consignment of about 28 tonnes of equipment sent by the French government to India was delivered to the Indian Red Cross Society at the Delhi airport and then transferred to the Centre.

The sources said each of the eight "hospital level" oxygen generators would provide oxygen for about 250 beds each. "Each of these oxygen generator plants will make an Indian hospital fully oxygen *Aatmanirbhar* for more than 10 years. I believe healthcare can be a new field to develop our strategic partnership, building on our respective strengths," said

France's Ambassador Emma-nuel Lenain in a statement.

The French Embassy also confirmed that the oxygen generators had been earmarked for eight specific hospitals, and that six would go to the Delhi/NCR area, and one each to Telengana and Haryana. The statement is a major departure from the government's policy of not accepting aid that is "tied" to specific donees, and comes in the wake of a number of calls for the government to be more transparent about how it plans to route the massive shipments of aid coming in from about 40 countries.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) officials told *The Hindu* that the process on how to route the funding, which is handed over by the foreign governments through the Indian Red Cross to the Ministry of Health, is



Helping hand: A flight carrying a consignment of medical supplies from France arriving in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ ANI

being coordinated by an Empowered Group of Ministers and officials, which is fielding the requests from the various State governments.

"Whatever is coming in from abroad is going to the Ministry of Health and then, depending on need, will be processed. Only some of the countries who have offered aid have delivered so far; we are monitoring them on the

basis of logistics and the time frame they are being sent". Principal Deputy Spokesperson Jalina Porter replied that the U.S. had no response at the time, adding, "Rest assured that the United States is committed to making sure that our partners in India are taken care of in this crisis."

The spokesperson of the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi said the U.S. was providing more than \$100 million in assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and that four of six plane loads of equipment and relief supplies had already been delivered, and the remainder was "on its way". "We refer you to the Government of India for information about the deployment and use of these materials subsequent to their transfer," the spokesperson said in a statement to *The Hindu*.

On Sunday, the third U.S. shipment, containing 1,000 oxygen cylinders, was delivered at the Delhi airport. Overnight, Germany sent a shipment, including 120 ventilators, and plans to send one mobile oxygen production and filling plant along with 13 German technical personnel later this week. Uzbekistan also delivered 100 oxygen concentrators, while Belgium delivered 1,000 vials of the medicine remdesivir late on Saturday.

Officials said as several countries, including the U.S., Germany and France, were sending military and technical personnel to run some of the equipment, the next logistical challenge would also involve ensuring that the foreign personnel were assisted locally at the areas where the aid is sent to within the country.

(With inputs from Vijaya Singh)

Field hospitals to come up near industrial units: govt.

They can make use of gaseous oxygen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways on Sunday said Delhi had received its second "Oxygen Express" with 120 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), while a third one, carrying 30.86 tonnes of oxygen, had left Angul in Odisha.

The Railways said they had so far delivered 1,094 tonnes of LMO in 74 tankers across the country, including Maharashtra (174 tonnes), Uttar Pradesh (430.51 tonnes), Madhya Pradesh (156.96 tonnes), Delhi (190 tonnes) and Haryana (79 tonnes).

"Nineteen Oxygen Express

press have already completed their journey and two more loaded ones are on the run carrying about 61.46 tonnes of LMO in four tankers," the Railways said.

The Railways said they had so far delivered 1,094 tonnes of LMO in 74 tankers across the country, including Maharashtra (174 tonnes), Uttar Pradesh (430.51 tonnes), Madhya Pradesh (156.96 tonnes), Delhi (190 tonnes) and Haryana (79 tonnes).

"Isolation coaches are

presently utilised in Delhi, Maharashtra [Ajni ICD, Nandurbar], Madhya Pradesh [Tihia near Indore]. The latest demand came from Nagaland...the Railways has deployed 10 isolation coaches in Dimapur," the Railways said.

"A pilot for five such facil-

ties had already been ini-

tiated and there is good

progress on this. This is be-

ing accomplished through

PSUs or private industries

operating the plant and co-

ordination of Centre and

state governments. It is ex-

pected that around 10,000

oxygenated beds can be

made available in a short pe-

riod of time by making tem-

porary hospitals near such

plants," the statement said.

The State governments

were being encouraged to

set up such facilities with

beds to deal with the pan-

demic, it said.

The Prime Minister also

reviewed the project to set

up around 1,500 PSA (pres-

sure swing adsorption) oxy-

gen plants.

stronghold, where the alliance with Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) had been intensely debated within the party.

People have final word

"The Congress will definitely study the results and all the reasons diligently and we are committed to correct our mistakes and do course correction.

People's mandate is the final word in democracy... We recognise that the election results are not as per our expectations, particularly those of Assam and Kerala," chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala told reporters.

Former party chief Rahul Gandhi, while congratulating Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and DMK's M.K. Stalin, tweeted,

"We humbly accept the people's mandate. Sincere gratitude to our workers & the millions of people who supported us."

The party's decimation in Bengal will also be debated since senior G-23 leader Anand Sharma had objected to the party's alliance with the Indian Secular Front, founded by Furfura Sharif cleric Abbas Siddiqui, saying that it went against the Congress' ideology.

<p

'Ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply'

Opposition parties call for free and mass vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Top Opposition leaders on Sunday, in a joint statement, asked the Central government to focus all its attention on ensuring uninterrupted oxygen supply to hospitals across the country and undertake a mass, free vaccination programme against COVID-19.

The statement comes a day after at least 12 critical patients, including a doctor, died at Batra Hospital, a leading private hospital in Delhi, because of a shortage of medical oxygen.

Signatories to the statement include former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Maharashtra Chief Minister



A long wait: People queuing up to refill oxygen cylinders outside a plant in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Uddhav Thackeray, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar, Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam chief M.K. Stalin and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Other signatories include National Conference's Farooq Abdullah, CPI-M general secretary Sitaram Yechury, Communist Party of India's D. Raja, and Tejaswi Yadav of Rashtriya Janata Dal.

In the wake of "uncontrollable" surge of the pandemic across the country, the statement said, "We call upon the Central government to immediately launch a free mass vaccination programme across the country. The budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crore for the vaccination programme must be utilised for this," the

gen supplies to all hospitals and health centres across the country."

"We call upon the Central government to immediately launch a free mass vaccination programme across the country. The budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crore for the vaccination programme must be utilised for this," the

joint statement added.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting on augmenting oxygen supply from industrial units and adding more oxygen beds to meet the surge in demand.

Apart from the deaths in the Batra Hospital on Saturday because of a shortage in oxygen supply, less than a fortnight ago, 20 COVID-19 patients at the Jaipur Golden Hospital and 25 at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in the national capital had died due to lack of oxygen.

So severe has been the oxygen crisis in the capital that many hospitals have had to approach the High Court to ensure uninterrupted supply.

The government had, however, denied that there was any deficit and put it down to a logistics issue in transporting oxygen to places that have seen increased demand for oxygen.

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Image can't be better than reality

On World Press Freedom Day, it is important to acknowledge the plight of journalists covering the pandemic in India



A. S. PANNEERSELVAN

For the last two decades, I have been an ardent advocate of May 3 celebrations. I endorse the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) affirmation that this day acts as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom; it is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. The website of UNESCO on World Press Freedom Day points out how this day is an important symbol of support for media who are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom. One of the key acts on this day is to remember and honour journalists who lost their lives to bring us stories.

From Gabriel Garcia Marquez's famous declaration that journalism is the best job in the world to broadcaster Edward R. Murrow's observation, "It is well to remember that freedom through the press is the thing that comes first. Most of us probably feel we couldn't be free without newspapers, and that is the real reason we want the newspapers to be free", I have cited several instances to support my advocacy for a free press.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and altered our lives in more ways than one, I was reminded of Amartya Sen's words. In his essay, 'Speaking of freedom: Why media is important for economic development', he dealt with how a set of interrelated components of press freedom – its intrinsic value, its informational role, its protective role and its constructive contributions – become a bedrock for equitable development.

In an interview to *The Times*, Mr. Poonawalla had alleged that he had been receiving threats in India and that he and his family had left the country for London after unprecedented "pressure and aggression" over the demand of COVID-19 vaccines.

India leads the world in the average daily reported infections and recorded deaths. It currently accounts for one in every 2 global cases each day. The country's number of daily average deaths is 1.3 times that of Brazil, which recorded the second highest number of new fatalities – nearly 2,300.

He, however, did not give a timeline for his return to India.

hundred journalists who have lost their lives in India over the past year. Apart from the anger and grief in the statement, I also noticed that fear was an inescapable emotion that ran through it.

The NWMI statement read, "Journalists are the unacknowledged and unsung messengers who have been bringing to light the reprehensible disintegration of basic healthcare facilities in the midst of a pandemic, often reporting from the field, standing outside hospitals, morgues and cremation grounds alongside scores of desperate patients and relatives." While this seems to be a simple truth to realise, I am truly at a loss to understand why governments – both at the Centre and in States – are not extending all the facilities provided to frontline workers to these professionals.

'One-sided narrative'

Instead of providing the necessary infrastructural support, the government of India is busy attacking international media. Major news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde* and *The Straits Times*, and most TV channels, blamed the Modi government for ignoring warning signs, holding an extended election in West Bengal, and not cancelling the Kumbh Mela. Irked by the truth of these reports, instead of improving the delivery systems, the government wanted all its diplomatic stations to counter the "one-sided narrative".

It is time for news media to remind the government of an important recollection recorded by the scholar-diplomat and former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon. He recently said on Twitter, "A former Foreign Secretary Venkateswaran used to tell us that it is a law of optics that image cannot be better than reality. Best concentrate on dealing with the crisis. The world has a stake in our success. Image will follow deeds and success."

We must realise that misogyny is the first indicator for the shrinking of democratic spaces. *Al Jazeera* carried an extensive report on how there was, and is, a sharp surge in online abuse of women during the pandemic. Human Rights organisation Amnesty International published a detailed study, titled 'Toxic Twitter', which documented the traumatic experiences of many women on digital platforms.

If journalism has to thrive as a public good, then it is important that journalists are alive to do their job.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

India sees over 3.69 lakh new cases

Country reports 3,455 deaths due to COVID-19; pace of vaccination dips

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India reported 3,69,957 new COVID-19 cases and 3,455 deaths as of 11:30 p.m. on Sunday. The country has so far reported a total of 1,99,19,900 cases and 2,18,909 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 56,647 infections, accounting for more than 16% of the new cases, followed by Karnataka (37,773) and Kerala (31,959). Maharashtra also recorded the most number of casualties (669) on Saturday, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 288 new deaths, and Karnataka with 217 casualties.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Ladakh. The data are sourced from covid19india.org, an in-



In distress: A patient on oxygen support being taken in an auto rickshaw to a hospital in Ajmer on Sunday. ■ PTI

dependent aggregator of daily COVID-19 figures.

As many as 18,04,954 samples were tested in the country on Saturday, a reduction from the over 19 lakh samples that were tested on the previous day. A total of 29.01 crore samples have been tested in the country since the beginning of the

administered as of 7 a.m. on Sunday.

The pace of COVID-19 vaccinations in India has reduced significantly in the last 15 days. By April 15, around 32.69 lakh doses were administered in the country daily on an average. However, as of April 30, only around 23.72 lakh doses were given in the country daily on an average.

India leads the world in the average daily reported infections and recorded deaths. It currently accounts for one in every 2 global cases each day. The country's number of daily average deaths is 1.3 times that of Brazil, which recorded the second highest number of new fatalities – nearly 2,300.

GST return deadlines extended; late fee waived

Concessions given for a limited period

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre has extended the deadlines for routine Goods and Services Tax (GST) compliances, reduced the interest charged on delayed tax payments and offered late fee waiver for taxpayers, granting these concessions for a limited time window of a fortnight to a month, effective May 1.

The Finance Ministry has said this is being done in view of the challenges faced by taxpayers in meeting the statutory and regulatory GST compliances due to the outbreak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of levying an 18% penal interest for delayed payments, the Ministry has lowered the rate to zero or 9% for different categories of taxpayers. Traders registered under the Composi-

tion Scheme will not have to pay interest for 15 days after the normal due dates for tax payments, 9% for the next 15 days and 18% thereafter.

Similarly, late fee has been waived for 15 days for submitting returns in Form GSTR-3B for the months of March and April for firms with a turnover of more than ₹5 crore, and 30 days for those with a turnover of less than ₹5 crore.

Submission dates
Tax returns due this month for transactions undertaken in April have also been granted 15 more days and returns for the full financial year 2020-21 can now be submitted till May 31, instead of April 30.

In April, several deadlines under the Income Tax Act of 1961 had also been extended due to the pandemic's resurgence.

Holding the line



Mounting crisis: Health workers attending to COVID-19 patients at the Commonwealth Games village, which has temporarily been converted into a COVID Care facility, in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ AFP

Merchandise exports touch \$30.21 billion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in April 2021 were \$30.21 billion, 197% higher than a year ago, when exports had collapsed to \$10.17 billion in the middle of the national lockdown.

April's exports, however, constituted a 16% rise over April 2019. Merchandise imports rose 166% in April to \$45.45 billion from a year ago, reflecting a 7.22% rise over the same month in 2019. Exporters' bodies, however, said despite the rise, concerns remain about logistics and workers' availability amidst the second wave.

Report Remdesivir output to State govt., HC tells pharma units

Nagpur Bench flags shortage of supplies to districts

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court on Sunday directed pharmaceutical companies to send their figures of Remdesivir production to the State nodal officer and Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and upload the same on their website, warning of criminal prosecution if this was not followed.

A division bench of justices S.B. Shukre and A.G. Rathore was hearing *suo motu* a public interest litigation petition on the shortage of medicines, oxygen, beds



needed to ensure a steady supply and remarked that there is some issue at the level of pharma companies.

The Bench directed pharma companies to supply Remdesivir to the State government and district authorities before providing it to private companies. It also noted that vials sent to different districts in the State were lower than the demand. The Bench directed the State FDA to upload the weekly production, distribution and supply of Remdesivir received from companies on their website along with the backlog on a daily basis.

State nodal officer Vijay Waghmare told the court that Nagpur had received 20,000 vials of Remdesivir after the court's direction. The court, however, said it

CPC social media account mocks deaths in India

The post, which was later deleted, came in for criticism from Chinese citizens

ANANTH KRISHNAN

A social media account linked to the Communist Party of China's (CPC) top law enforcement body came under fire in China over the weekend for mocking India's COVID-19 deaths in a social media post.

The post was shared on Weibo, China's Twitter-equivalent, by an account maintained by the CPC's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, the powerful body that controls the courts and police.

The account, which has 15 million followers, in a message on Saturday shared two images side-by-side of a rocket launch in China and a crea-

mation ground in India, adding a message, "China lighting a fire, India lighting a fire".

Unusual step

While the message initially went viral, it prompted widespread outrage on Chinese social media, leading the Party-linked account to take the unusual step of deleting the post.

Dong Mengyu, a researcher, said on Twitter one blogger wrote an article in response saying, "I apologise to Indian people on my own behalf. The post by the [Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission's] Weibo account doesn't represent me. We live on the same pla-

net ... We feel your sufferings." That essay, Mr. Dong said, was later deleted.

The original post, reported Manya Koetse of What's on Weibo, a website that tracks social media trends in China, was shared 9,000 times before it was deleted. It was not the only such post from an official organ mocking India's pandemic situation – another Weibo account linked to the Ministry of Public Security, the top police authority, shared a similar message.

Inappropriate

Both posts prompted widespread derision, at a time when several Chinese social organisations have begun

fundraising efforts to channel assistance towards India, including some prominent Buddhist organisations.

One widely followed social media account maintained by lawyer Wang Peng, Ms. Koetse reported, posted a response describing the message as "such an inappropriate comparison". "Every country encounters disasters! Not to mention that in times of the pandemic, every country is involved," he was quoted as saying.

"From the propaganda point of view this is a classic case of propaganda failure," added another. "This is so inappropriate for an official account, it does not represent the people of China."

Our body on oxygen

"Oxygen fuels our living processes. It contracts our muscles, helps our cells work, grow and regenerate, feeds our brains, calms our nerves, helps the heart pump, cleanses the body of toxins, fights infection and boosts immunity," says Dr Narendra Nath Jena, Director, Institute of Emergency Medicine, Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai.

Lungs

Once air enters the nose or mouth, it gets humidified and reaches the alveoli, tiny air sacs that help pull in oxygen and transfer it into the blood stream and also pull out carbon dioxide and push it out of the lungs and back up to breathe out.

COVID-19 destroys these alveoli by thickening the walls so gas exchange becomes difficult. Liquid (mostly inflamed cells and protein) then fills up between the alveoli, further hindering breathing.

Blood

Oxygen gets a piggy-back ride on red blood cells (RBCs) by binding to the haemoglobin (Hb), the protein in each cell, and flows through the body to reach the vital organs, tissues and cells. If you are anaemic, that is, your Hb count is low, chances are your organs might receive less oxygen due to the decreased affinity of haemoglobin for it.

Heart

The left side of your heart receives oxygen-rich blood from your lungs and pumps it through your arteries to the rest of your body. The right side of your heart receives oxygen-poor blood from your veins and pumps it to your lungs, where it gets rid of the carbon dioxide and picks up oxygen. In COVID-19, an increase in oxygen demand occurs because of compromised lungs and fear (that excites the body). This may lead to heart damage, especially if the arteries are already clogged.

**Improve your oxygenation through proning**

It is part of pulmonary rehabilitation but not a solution. Lie on your tummy with a pillow under your pelvis. Take deep breaths till medical help reaches you.

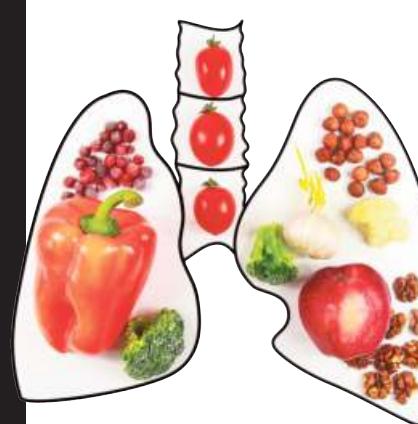
- Dr Pinto

A breath of life

Everything that you need to know about oxygen: what it does to the body, how to increase its circulation, and devices to monitor its levels

SOMA BASU

Last year's COVID-19 wave was all about *roti, kapda, makaan* (food, clothes, shelter) – the basics, we thought then. This year's intense second wave is making us gasp for breath with a shortage in medical oxygen to treat the critical COVID-19 infected. Doctors tell us everything we need to know about oxygen – the *pranavaayu*, that keeps us up and about from the baby gasp (the first breath of a new born within 10 seconds of birth) to the agonized gasp (the last breath before death).

**The ideal diet**

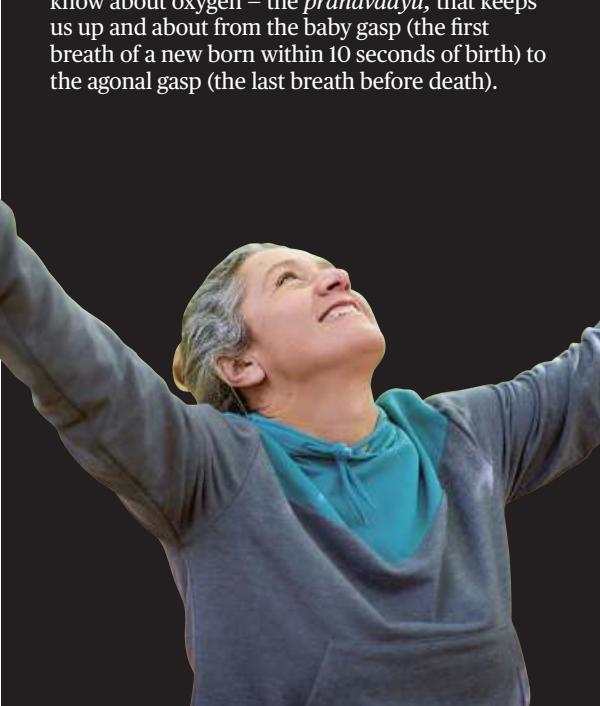
A diet rich in iron and vitamins helps keep our immune system strong. Foods such as broccoli, soy beans, red kidney beans, chicken, walnuts, citrus fruits, green beans, carrots help push the iron content and our haemoglobin levels and in turn uptake of oxygen. Dietary nitrates from spinach and other leafy greens, beetroot and berries help the blood vessels relax and lead to better circulation of blood and oxygen in the body, says Dr Anam Golandaz, Mumbai-based clinical dietician and consultant, Masina Hospital.

21%
The amount of oxygen in the atmosphere

90%
The percentage of energy our body derives from oxygen; only 10% comes from food and fluid

2,000 litres
The amount of oxygen that goes into the body of a healthy person every 24 hours.

- Dr Sundeep Salvi, Director Pulmocare Research & Education Foundation, Pune

**Quick recall****Pulse oximeter**

The non-invasive device enables easy reading of SpO₂. Rest your hand on a flat surface and clip the stapler-like gadget onto the right middle finger (or forefinger or thumb in that order). Using light sensors, the device records the percentage of oxygen in blood. The percentage is displayed on the screen and a reading between 94% and 100% for all age groups is safe. The reading can be taken anytime of the day.

Even one low reading below 94% requires a doctor's intervention. To be sure rub and warm your hands before the second reading or measure your SpO₂ level with two different pulse oximeters successively. Always check on clean nail bed. Readings with artificial nails or any nail paint or colour on the surface could show error readings. Smart wearables like the Fitbit or Apple watch, doctors remind, are fitness devices and the readings recorded by these devices may not be reliable.

Oxygen cylinder

These contain pure oxygen and require refilling because finite amount of oxygen is compressed in the cylinder and is inhaled by the user as long as it lasts. The cylinders, in different sizes, can be purchased against a medical prescription only and are used as first aid resuscitation for emergencies and life support. A doctor's approval is needed because caregivers should know how much oxygen flow is required per minute, based on the dip in O₂ levels, the type of infection, the extent of damage to the lungs and other co-morbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma. Do remember: supplemental oxygen is a prescription drug.

**Oxygen concentrator**

A device that captures and filters the ambient air and instantly generates medical grade oxygen at an infinite supply so long as the battery that powers it is charged. Concentrators can be



used only on a doctor's approval and are suitable for moderately affected people, with O₂ saturation levels of 85%. These devices come in sizes to supply one to 10 litres of oxygen per hour and are not advisable for ICU patients who require more. Medical advice is necessary to know whether oxygen is to be given 24 hours or only on exertion, as there is a risk of hypoxemia (oxygen levels below 90%) causing further damage to the already incapacitated lungs. An overdose may cause harm (even death) to those with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

Ventilators

Used for critical care, they are computerised microprocessor-controlled machines that come in invasive and non-invasive variants. Used mainly in intensive care units and emergency wards, non-invasive ventilation is required when a patient is sleeping. It employs a simple hand-operated bag valve nasal mask. Invasive methods are required for long-term dependence, with either nasal or trachea intubation (insertion of a tube through the nose or mouth to the airway). The machine pumps air with oxygen into the patient's airways when they are unable to breathe on their own.

- Dr Sundeep Salvi

Terms you should know**SpO₂**

The oxygen saturation level (also known as SpO₂) stands for serum (S) pressure (P) and oxygen (O₂). In most people, the body needs a minimum of 95% of oxygen in the blood to function ably. When oxygen deprived, it goes into emergency: the heart's rhythm escalates, increasing the risk of acute pulmonary cardiac arrest, there's brain-to-body dysfunction causing restlessness, disorientation, confusion and dizziness. A doctor needs to take a call on whether you should get started on supplemental oxygen, what duration it should be given for, and at what saturation level.

Happy Hypoxemia

A healthy body is naturally capable of adapting to varying saturation levels. For instance, when mountaineers go scaling peaks, their bodies get acclimated to the low oxygen level at high altitudes. The threshold is different in each person. Somebody with SpO₂ between 88-94 may not show any breathing problems while somebody with a reading of 93 can be gasping for breath. Low oxygen saturation in the blood without any visible manifestation of distress is called happy hypoxemia.

Respiratory distress

When there is any physiological stress ranging from short-term infection (like the flu) or long-term disease (like diabetes), or life changes like menopause or poor nutrition, the body's demand for oxygen increases because there is a drop in the count of RBCs that are otherwise required to carry enough oxygen.

With COVID being a disease of the lungs, things are complicated. The Coronavirus invades the body when we breathe it in (from another infected person nearby) and infects the cells lining the throat, airways and lungs. So, if your lungs are not in a great condition, say if you smoke, you are standing on the edge.

Even as our internal warriors, the white blood cells naturally try to fight respiratory tract infection, disease manifests in swelling and inflammation of the lungs and constriction of the airways. The air sacs get filled with mucus and make it harder for the body to take in oxygen. This leads to an abnormal rate of breathing – either too fast or too slow, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing.

- Dr Lancelot Pinto, Consultant Pulmonologist, PD Hindu Hospital, Mumbai

WELLNESS ON SHELF**Oil up**

Medy365.com has added three Herbal Navel Oils to its collection. According to the company, the Cure Eye oil helps to cure dry eyes, improves eye health and reduces dark circles. The Glow Up version repairs damaged skin, reduce acne, dark spots and scars. Joint Care oil helps with knee pain and improves digestion. Price starts at ₹325 at www.medy365.com

A healthy bite

Yoga Bar, the all-natural brand has introduced a new category of Super Oats to its product line. The range consists of Yoga Bar Dark Chocolate Oats, Veggie Masala Oats, Super Oats with Nuts and Seeds, Cheesy Masala Oats, Dal Khichdi Oats and 100% Rolled Oats. The products do not have any preservatives, artificial flavours and additives. It is also free from trans fat and added saturated fats. The product will retail for ₹199 at www.yogabars.in

Keep your chill

Cool off on this summer with Karma Kettle's new selection of Iced Teas. Available in flavours - Aam Salaam which is a blend of green tea, mango and cumin, Passionately made of black tea and passion fruit, Blue Lagoon which has butterfly pea flower, lemongrass and kaffir lime, Savanna, a spiced apple rooibos tea, Tahiti, a floral mix of strawberries, cockcombe and hibiscus, Pina Colada Tea, a blend of black tea, pineapple and coconut; and Very Berry Tea, a fruity amalgamation of raspberry, strawberry, apple, and hibiscus. Each flavour of the iced tea is available in boxes of 20 teabags. Priced between ₹240 to ₹350 at www.karmakettle.com

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

A house is marked for victims. Officials carry out searches, isolating infected people. Authorities attempt to disinfect a man by spraying a chemical from a hose. Beds in hospitals are well distanced from each other. A mass of people depart the city on foot with their belongings. A man lies on the graveyard, hugging a tombstone.

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar's sprawling interactive drawing – showcased at Science Gallery Bengaluru's online exhibition, Contagion, from April 30 onwards – shows a city disrupted by a disease.

Despite the painful familiarity the scenes evoke, they have nothing to do with the ongoing pandemic. The artwork, completed in 2017, is a depiction of events from the Bombay plague in the 1890s.

Drawing the Bombay Plague has scattered markers which, if clicked on, open texts, photographs and drawings about the city during the outbreak. Ranjit, who lives in Mumbai, is interested in urban landscapes. His projects, such as cityinflux, Gentrification, build/browse and Stories of Philanthropic Trusts, map vulnerabilities within the redevelopment strategies of urbanisation.

As part of his work, he has been studying pandemics for about six years now.

History repeats itself

"There is a series of things from the plague that was repeated during this pandemic, almost uncannily," he says over a phone call, from Mumbai. One of the examples he elaborates is migration. At the onset of the plague, there were around 8,00,000 people in Bombay – many of them migrants.

According to Aditya Sarker's *The Tie That Snapped: Bubonic Plague and Mill Labour in Bombay, 1896-1898* (published by Cambridge University Press), within a year, almost half the population fled to a countryside which itself was ravaged by famine. This was, the author notes, in response to the administration's attempts to survey, control, and attack congested neighbourhoods of the city's working poor.



Science Gallery Bengaluru's online exhibition, Contagion, attempts to explore the transmission of diseases, behaviours, and emotions



Art meets science
(Clockwise from left) A photograph of the Bombay Plague; glass phial of British Standard Penicillin; and Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Plagues, pandemics and parallels

The migrant labour crisis that unfolded during the nationwide lockdown last year, Ranjit says, bears an eerie resemblance to this. "I saw on a friend's Instagram page that doctors in Varanasi, which now seems like ground zero, are leaving the city in fear. It's interesting to me because, in one of the *Hindi Punch* [an English political magazine that ran between 1878-1930] drawings of the Bombay plague, a mechanic pulls out a man's tooth using a pair of pliers because all the dentists have fled the city."

There is another parallel he makes: between fears regarding the fax machine in the Surat plague of 1994, and the recent claims that 5G

phone signals transmit COVID. "Traditionally, people messaged each other on the phone warning against sending faxes, as the 90s saw the fax machine as a new technology," he says.

Human behaviour is universal

Though there are plenty of other changes, human behaviour hasn't changed. This is one of the points that Contagion attempts to underscore, according to Jahnavi Phalkey, founding director, Science Gallery Bengaluru. The 45-day exhibition, she says, will help visitors explore the transmission of diseases, behaviours and emotions to make sense of our uncertain times.

"Whether visuals speak to you, stories speak to you, phone signals transmit COVID. 'Traditionally, people messaged each other on the phone warning against sending faxes, as the 90s saw the fax machine as a new technology,' he says.

research speaks to you, mathematics or a playlist on Spotify or games – whatever be your starting point, we are offering resources through those points to arrive at the same place, which is to understand how diseases, ideas and behaviours are spread," says Jahnavi, a science historian.

Contagion features 16 interactive exhibits and more than 40 live programmes. It will also have a public lecture series with tutorials, film screenings, discussions, masterclasses, workshops, and a live research project.

The exhibition is developed in partnership with the Robert Koch Institute, the German national public health institution.

Lothar H Wieler, the president of Robert Koch Institute, says, "I think that the world can profit a lot from what we have learnt during this pandemic. Not only for this pandemic, but also for resilience against many other challenges [in the future]."

COVID-19 is not the first major pandemic the world has faced; it is unlikely to be the last. Experts have already rung the warning bells.

Ranjit recalls a quote by the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Ranjit knows this all too well. In his note four years ago, he wondered, "If connectivity by ships and mercantile routes could cause global pandemics spanning years and that kind of death toll (although of course medicine has made advances as well and myths have been dispelled), then what are the consequences of the hyper-globalised model where connectivity isn't an issue? What is the outcome of that scenario?"

Three years later, we are all in the midst of that scenario.

Contagion can be accessed at ben-galuru.sciencegallery.com/contagion for free until June 13

Summer drink goes hip

From election booths to sunlit village homes, the age-old buttermilk still remains one of the most popular summer drinks across the country today

PRIYADESHINI S

"We served 700 glasses of buttermilk. One person who loved it drank six glasses," laughs Deepak Pujara, who along with his wife Jasmin was offering glasses of this refreshing drink to voters exiting a polling booth in Kochi, Kerala, on April 6.

Their counter was called – Cast Your Vote and Quench Your Thirst. This has nothing to do with politics, says Deepak, who has been serving buttermilk to the public on various occasions. "It is home-made, and since it is not spicy it is good for children too," he adds. Deepak uses 20 litres of curd and five litres of mineral water to make the drink.

Reliable drink

Come summer, and this traditional fermented drink comes to the fore in one form or the other. Known as *chaas* in the North, *moru* in Tamil Nadu, *sambharanam* in Kerala, and *majjiga* in Andhra Pradesh, it is known for its probiotic qualities. During the pandemic, a turmeric and mint version of the *sambharanam* has been in vogue as an immunity drink.

Whenever he drives from Bengaluru airport to his factory, a three-hour drive, businessman Abraham J Tharakan relies on buttermilk. His driver has standing instructions to purchase the ₹5 pouches. Abraham says they are refreshing, tasty and a succour in the summer heat. He also carries a pair of scissors with him to cut open the pouch.

There are two common methods of making buttermilk. Traditionally, this was the milky liquid that separated when cream was churned during the making of butter. In unpasteurised milk, naturally-occurring bacteria ferments some of the milk sugars and gives buttermilk its distinctive sour

taste. The modern, and quicker, method to make buttermilk is by diluting curd.

Mrutyunjaya Kulkarni, Director-Marketing, Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited (KMF), speaks of retailing eight to nine lakh

pouches (200ml) at ₹7 daily during summer. "By packaging it in pouches, we keep the price low so that the common man can afford it. Our brand Nandini is a household name in Karnataka," he says, adding that consistency and taste has to be maintained. "It's made using fresh pure milk curd and is mildly spiced."

Common fixture

Varinderjeet Sidhu recalls the traditional method practised in her village Ramnagar in Patiala district, and across Punjab. "In most Punjabi households, the *hara* was a kind of furnace outside the kitchen. Cow dung cakes were used as fuel. Milk in a clay pot was left to thicken on a very slow fire through the day. It would turn pinkish by evening and set as curd," she recalls.

The next morning, women would pour the curd in a *matka* or churning pot, and using a rope tied to a wooden stick

would move the churner in a to-and-fro motion till the butter separated. This would rise to the top in clumps, leaving a low-fat protein-rich watery liquid behind. "This is the buttermilk in Punjab. It's different from *lassi* which is made from diluting curd," says Varinderjeet, adding that the process of churning butter "is meditative".

"Most women said the Japji Sahib (a Sikh prayer) during the process. Every household drank buttermilk with, or after, lunch," she says.

Nutritionist Gayathri Asokan says that the probiotic qualities of buttermilk are significant, and it is what makes it a nutritious drink too. "It has a cooling effect on the body," says Gayathri,

as she recalls her grandmother's cows, the kitchen with earthen pots and the process of making butter and buttermilk. "That tasted very different from today's drink, which is made from packeted milk," she adds.

In Kerala, *sambharanam* is made from sour curd and is seasoned with ginger, curry leaves, green chillies and shallots. Thrissur-based cheese maker Anu Joseph uses buttermilk to make her waffles and pancakes fluffy. It is also her secret ingredient in batter-fried chicken, okra and calamari. She sometimes sweetens the buttermilk, and during the mango season flavours it with the king of fruits.

Now available in new versions, as brands and stylishly packaged in different flavours, the good old buttermilk remains a summer favourite.



ON A GROWTH CURVE

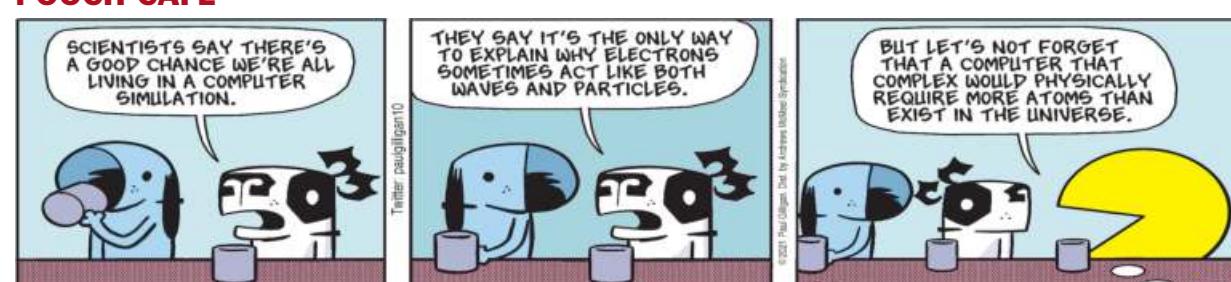
Per a Research and Markets forecast report on Buttermilk Market in India: "...the Indian buttermilk market exhibited strong growth during 2015-2020. Looking forward, the buttermilk market in India is expected to grow at a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 22.4% during the forecast period (2021-2026)."



Under the sun
Buttermilk or *chaas* is a popular roadside refreshment for those who have to travel long distances in the summer heat. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



POOCH CAFE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



Just the way you are (Clockwise from bottom) Dr Gayathri S with her son Harinandan; 12-year-old Joel with his baby sibling held by his father Varghese; Sulekha AK with her daughter Ruwayda; Rajeev Kamath with his daughter Pratibha ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Let's talk about autism

Short videos uploaded by CADRRE in Thiruvananthapuram are aimed at raising awareness about autism

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

"The next time we talk to parents who are raising children with autism, let us be more kind in our use of words, and remember to encourage, motivate and validate their efforts," says Sulekha AK, mother of 17-year-old Ruywada.

"If a child has a problem, let us accept that and stop keeping it a secret from others. Instead of worrying about how they will live after us, let us teach them to be capable of handling themselves," says Sabitha, mother of five-year-old Neeru.

"She is autistic and talks, many people are unable to believe [that]. This shows an inclusive ambience can make a difference in our children," says Rajeev Kamath, father of 33-year-old Pratibha.

Coming from different walks of life, these parents of children on the autism spectrum spoke about the journey with their child in short videos uploaded by the Center for Autism and other Disabilities Rehabilitation Research and Education (CADRRE), Thiruvananthapuram, to mark Autism Awareness Month in April.

Embrace acceptance
Candid and pragmatic, the 29 uploaded videos touch upon different aspects of bringing up an autistic child.

They are aimed at supporting parents with special children and raising awareness. "Every year we observe Autism Awareness Day on April 2. From April 2 to 30, there is an activity or session to create awareness about autism," says G Vijayaraghavan, honorary director of CADRRE.

For 2021, Radhika SB, executive, communications at CADRRE, suggested short videos of parents talking about bringing up a child on the autism spectrum – the challenges, parenting hacks, training, societal acceptance, schooling, and so on.

"I have learnt that there is more acceptance when parents of a special child themselves talk about how they help their child. For instance, my daughters are hearing-challenged, and parents listen to me when I talk about opening up opportunities for these children," explains Vijayaraghavan.

So Lekshmi and Malini G Unnithan, centre coordinator at CADRRE, chose parents with children in different age groups and with various levels of abilities.

"Some are parents of students at CADRRE, some have children who are role models for others on the

spectrum, while some have gone on to become guiding lights by forming organisations, Facebook pages and support networks," says Malini.

Empathy, not sympathy

The highlight of every video is the parents' candour. One of them, Reena Babu, recalls feeling heartbroken when her daughter was diagnosed with autism at the age of two. She touches on the financial, emotional and social toll it takes to bring up a special child, and how she decided to see every step as an adventure and refused to be overwhelmed by it.

In the case of Hari Gopal NS, a resident of Thiruvananthapuram, he recalls the difficulties he and his wife face when taking their son Srihari to public places and gatherings. "Extremely sensitive to certain sounds, he gets easily irritated by some noises. He would start making noises to drown out that sound. We had to make our relatives and friends understand things from Srihari's perspective," he says.

Hari hopes the videos will help viewers better understand the world of children with autism, adding that the inspirational videos give hope to parents. "Parents talk about children who are holding jobs, pursuing the arts and earning an income. A lot of patience is needed when taking care of a child with autism, and we want empathy – not sympathy – from society at large," he says.

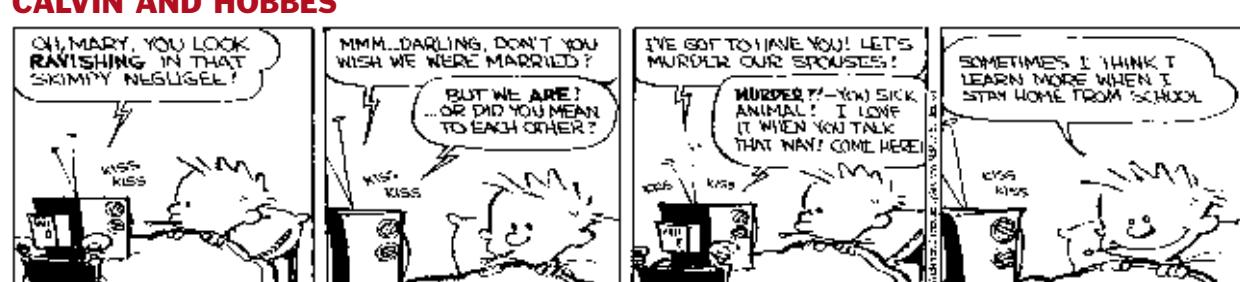
Rajeev shares with viewers how peer acceptance helped his non-verbal daughter Pratibha turn into a chatterbox. "Each child is unique. Their challenges and abilities are different. There can't be one formula for all," he says.

The lockdown has been a period of great challenges for caregivers of young children on the autism spectrum, as many of them take time to get used to new routines. "Earlier, trainers used to teach our children. Now, since it is all online, trainers include parents in the therapy sessions and we have to teach the child. We are coping well now," Hari adds.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



North Korea says Biden has a 'hostile policy', warns of response

U.S. had indicated it would use 'diplomacy as well as stern deterrence'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

North Korea on Sunday accused U.S. President Joe Biden of pursuing a hostile policy, dismissing "spurious" American diplomacy and warning of a response.

Mr. Biden had said on Wednesday that his administration would deal with the threat posed by Pyongyang's nuclear programme "through diplomacy as well as stern deterrence".

The White House said on Friday that Mr. Biden was open to negotiations with North Korea on denuclearisation following the completion of a policy review, but Pyongyang said Mr. Biden had made a "big blunder".

"His statement clearly reflects his intent to keep enforcing the hostile policy toward the DPRK as it had been done by the U.S. for over half a century," Kwon Jung-goo, a Foreign Ministry official, said in a statement released by the official KCNA news agency.



Tough talk: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party in Pyongyang on April 9. ■ REUTERS

The U.S.-claimed 'diplomacy' is a spurious signboard for covering up its hostile acts, and 'deterrence' touted by it is just a means for posing nuclear threats to the DPRK," Mr. Kwon added.

"Now that what the keynote of the U.S. new DPRK policy has become clear, we will be compelled to press for corresponding measures."

The White House said Friday that its goal remains "the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula".

Mr. Biden's press secretary Jen Psaki gave little indication of what kind of diplomatic initiative this could entail, but suggested that the President had learned from the experience of his predecessors, who struggled to deal with North Korea's leadership and its nuclear weapons programme.

In a separate statement through KCNA, North Korea

also accused the U.S. of insulting its leadership and its anti-coronavirus measures, referring to a State Department press release on April 28.

State Department spokesman Ned Price had issued a statement that day criticising North Korea's human rights abuses and draconian COVID-19 curbs, describing it as "one of the most repressive and totalitarian states in the world".

A political trick'

"The 'human rights issue' touted by the U.S. is a political trick designed to destroy the ideology and social system in the DPRK," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said.

And in a third statement issued on Sunday, Mr. Kim Jong-un's powerful sister Kim Yo-jong lashed out at South Korea over a recent anti-Pyongyang leaflet campaign by a defector group.

ELSEWHERE



SpaceX capsule brings astronauts back to Earth

WASHINGTON
A SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts back to Earth splashed down off Florida on Sunday in NASA's first nighttime ocean landing in more than 50 years. The crew reported they were feeling well after their arrival back on Earth following a nearly six-month mission aboard the International Space Station, NASA said. ■ REUTERS

Oscar-winning actor Olympia Dukakis is dead

NEW YORK
Olympia Dukakis, who won an Oscar for her performance as a sardonic, middle-aged mother who advises her headstrong daughter on matters of love in the 1987 romantic film comedy *Moonstruck*, died on Saturday at age 89. Ms. Dukakis worked for decades as a stage, TV and film actor before rocketing to fame at age 56 playing a mother in *Moonstruck*. ■ REUTERS

Somali President reopens talks of fresh elections

MOGADISHU
Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed on Saturday relaunched talks over the holding of fresh elections, in a move welcomed by the Opposition. He effectively abandoned a policy voted through last month that would have extended his term in office by two years. ■ AFP

Johnson faces more questions over personal expenditure

REUTERS
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced more allegations on Sunday about his expenditure on the refurbishment of his apartment and on childcare for his young son, which his Foreign Minister dismissed as baseless gossip.

Mr. Johnson has repeatedly weathered crises over Brexit and disclosures of his adultery, but the revelation that he and his fiancee, Car-

rie Symonds, spent lavishly to redecorate their house with a designer feted by royalists has touched a nerve.

Mr. Johnson has denied paying for the refurbishment of his Downing Street apartment, but the Electoral Commission says it has grounds to suspect an offence has been committed in the funding of the work.

The *Sunday Times* said the total cost of the work was around 200,000 pounds (\$276,000) and that

one invoice was settled by a Conservative Party donor directly – a benefit-in-kind that would need to be declared to tax authorities.

The newspaper also reported that a Conservative Party donor had been asked to pay for a nanny for Mr. Johnson's son, Wilfred.

"I don't mind paying for leaflets but I resent being asked to pay to literally wipe the PM's baby's bottom," the unidentified donor was quoted as saying.

Myanmar rebel group calls for united fight against junta

Thousands rally against military, calling for 'spring revolution'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

A prominent rebel group in eastern Myanmar appealed on Sunday to other ethnic armies to unite against the military, as the country enters its fourth month under a junta regime.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was deposed in a February 1 coup, triggering a mass uprising across the country.

As security forces have deployed deadly violence against civilians to suppress a persistent anti-junta movement, some of Myanmar's myriad ethnic armies have spoken out against the military.

Among the most prominent opponents is the Karen National Union (KNU), which has admitted offering shelter to fleeing dissidents in the territory they control along Myanmar's eastern border.

Clashes have escalated in Karen state between the KNU's fighters and the military.

Last week the rebels attacked and razed a military base. The junta retaliated with airstrikes and rocket launchers aimed at rebel-held territory.

On Sunday – after five days of air raids – the vice chief of staff for the KNU's armed wing wrote an open letter calling for all ethnic Karen fighters to unite, regardless of their loyalties.

"Never has there been such a great opportunity during the 70-plus years of revolution. Take advantage of this and fight against the Burmese military dictatorship," said Lieutenant General Baw Kyaw Heh.

"In our generation, let us



Huge march: Protesters hit the streets to denounce the military coup at Kyaukme in Shan State on Sunday. ■ AFP

stand united... to escape the military dictatorship."

His letter was addressed to two other rebel groups in Karen state – the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and the KNU/KNLA Peace Council.

Mr. Baw Kyaw Heh also called for unity among ethnic Karen fighters in the Border Guards Forces (BGF) – a subdivision of Myanmar's military made up of former ethnic insurgents.

Clashes have escalated in Karen state between the KNU's fighters and the military.

"So BGF, as you are Karen, you need to think carefully about it and make the right decision," he said. "Karen people should not be killing each other."

Myanmar has more than 20 ethnic rebel groups, many of whom hold territories in the country's border regions.

"Meanwhile, thousands of anti-coup protesters marched in Myanmar on Sunday, calling for a 'spring revolution' in its fourth month under a military regime.

Demonstrations kicked off early in commercial hub Yangon as activists called for a show of force and a "spring revolution".

Bomb blasts also went off across different parts of Yangon on Sunday. Explosions have been happening with increasing frequency in the former capital, and authorities have blamed it on "investigators".

Youths gathered on a street corner before marching swiftly down the streets in a flash mob – dispersing soon after to avoid clashing with authorities.

"To bring down the military dictatorship is our cause!" they chanted, waving a three-finger salute of resistance.

Violence continues

Violence erupted again on Sunday by 10 a.m. in Shan state's Hsipaw township, when security forces opened fire on protesters, killing at least one.

"He was shot in the head and died immediately," said one protester, who said he rushed to hide his friend's body in case authorities tried to take it away.

In northern Kachin state, security forces also fired on protesters, even flinging grenades into the crowd.

A 33-year-old man was shot in the head, a fellow demonstrator told AFP, adding that many others were wounded in the attack.

U.S. agrees to prisoner swap: Iran state TV

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN

Iran will free prisoners with Western ties in Iran in exchange for billions of dollars from the U.S. and the U.K., state television reported on Sunday.

The official quoted by Iranian state TV said a deal made between the U.S. and Tehran involved a prisoner swap in exchange for the release of \$7 billion in frozen Iranian funds.

"The Americans accepted to pay \$7 billion and swap four Iranians who were active in bypassing sanctions for four Americans who have served part of their sentences," state TV said, quoting the official. State TV did not identify the Iranians that Tehran sought to be freed.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price denied the report. "Reports that a prisoner swap deal has been reached are not true," he said. "As we have said, we always raise the cases of Americans detained or missing in Iran. We will not stop until we are able to reunite them with their families."

It wasn't clear if there had been any ongoing negotiations with the West over frozen funds and prisoner exchanges, both of which accompanied the 2015 atomic accord.

Even after an initial American denial, the television channel kept repeating the announcement.

State TV also quoted the official as saying a deal had been reached for the U.K. to pay £400 million to see the release of British-Iranian Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

The U.K. government downplayed the report, saying talks were still continuing.

India receives aid from Taiwan

It places commercial orders with China for medical supplies

ANANTH KRISHNAN

India on Sunday received assistance from Taiwan, including oxygen concentrators and cylinders, with more batches of medical equipment set to follow from Taipei.

"We're working hard to send more," said Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu on Twitter.

"We're closely monitoring developments and holding in-depth discussions aimed at providing requisite support to our Indian friends at a time of great need."

India, meanwhile, has not yet accepted Beijing's offers of aid and assistance that were conveyed again on Friday both in a message from President Xi Jinping to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and



An aircraft of China Airlines, the official carrier of Taiwan, delivering supplies in New Delhi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in a phone call between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

India has preferred to source medical supplies from China on a commercial basis. A large number of such orders have been placed by Indian companies with Chinese firms, with the production "of at least 40,000 oxygen generators"

currently under way, China's Ambassador to India Sun Weidong told the Communist Party-run *Global Times*.

"As far as I know, Chinese companies have been accelerating production of at least 40,000 oxygen generators – orders placed by the Indian side, and they are working around the clock to deliver them as soon as possible. Many Chinese firms and private organisations are also using their own channels to provide various forms of help to India," he said.

Mr. Sun said on Twitter the past two weeks "witnessed 61 freight flights from China to India in operation" and China had, since April, supplied "more than 5,000 ventilators, 21,569 oxygen generators, over 21 million masks and around 3,800 tons of medicine to India".

The Taliban and government forces clashed across several provinces, including in the former insurgent bastion of Kandahar where the U.S. military carried out a "precision strike" on Saturday as it formally began the final troop pullout.

Afghan fighting leaves scores of Taliban fighters dead: Ministry

'Clashes across provinces have killed over 100 insurgents'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Fighting between Afghan government forces and the Taliban has left more than 100 insurgents dead in the past 24 hours, the Defence Ministry said on Sunday, as the U.S. military pressed on with its withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Taliban and government forces clashed across several provinces, including in the former insurgent bastion of Kandahar where the U.S. military carried out a "precision strike" on Saturday as it formally began the final troop pullout.

Another 52 Taliban fighters were wounded in the clashes, the ministry said in a statement, without giving details of any casualties suffered by government forces.

The Taliban did not offer any comment on the fight-



An Afghan soldier stationed at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Kabul. ■ REUTERS

ers were wounded in the clashes, the ministry said in a statement, without giving details of any casualties suffered by government forces.

The pullout of all U.S. forces will now be completed by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, as announced by President Biden.

Faith

Hurdles to dharma

In the Bala Kanda, the arrival of Vishwamitra in Ayodhya heralds many auspicious happenings that are to lead the story in its long and arduous course. Vishwamitra's antecedents are well known. Though born in the Kshatriya race, he attains the status of a Brahman Rishi through severe and austere penance. He now comes to Dasaratha with a request to send Rama with him to the forest to protect the yagna he has begun. The rakshasas Subhahu and Maricha keep disrupting the yagna and they are prompted by none other than Ravana.

In a discourse, Sri R. Krishnamurthy Sastrigal drew attention to the fact that generally when any good work is undertaken with good intentions, there will be hurdles, tangible or subtle, to be faced. But one should learn to continue with the good effort and not be disillusioned. At a deeper level, the rakshasas are only symbolic of the evil forces within us that prevent and dissuade us from cultivating good tendencies and pursuing the path of dharma. That these can be overcome only with God's intervention, grace and help is illustrated in this context when the sage takes Rama's help.

So, when Dasaratha, who had just welcomed the sage and promised to fulfil his requests, now goes back on his word, Vasishtha, aware that Dasaratha is unable to recognise Rama as the Lord incarnate, explains certain truths to the king in subtle terms. He says that the king need not fear for Rama's safety, though it is natural to feel so as a father and a king. Moreover, the sage can easily curse the rakshasas, but that sages practise patience and try not to give in to anger. He also indicates that Vishwamitra now asks for Rama not for any personal good but for the good of Rama and for all the people and he counsels the king to send Rama with the sage.

TH CROSSWORD + 13237

(set by Hypatia)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9							
10				11			
12	13				14	15	16
17			18	19	20		
21			22	23	24		
25	26			27		28	29
30							

ACROSS

9 Do this to let Chinese speak on taboo subject (5,3,7)
10 Oddly, soul rap albums provide something extra (7)
11 Electronic record featuring, say poet (7)
12 Entertainment venue in essence, having horrible glitch (5-4)
14 Tropical coasts contain green fish (5)
17 No longer existing – dead etc., in other words without pleasure (7)
19 Quote from additional court (7)

DOWN

1 Bird surrounded by hibiscus (4)
2 Anxiety of French auditor? (4)
3 What every body has seen with no body? (8)
4 Cheat's tool (6)
5 Gather blood type in measles rash (8)
6 Though abstinent initially, engineer drunk bottles (6)
7 Against accepting new thought / idea, basically (4)
8 First defeat (4)
12 Revolutionary fled pinching princess' bottom (5)
13 Spotted animal leaving Island's river by mistake (5)<br

DC's collective effort overshadows Mayank's individual brilliance

Shaw and Dhawan lead the chase after Rabada and Axar restrict the Punjab side to 166; PBKS skipper's unbeaten 99 not enough as Capitals go top with sixth win

IPL 2021

RAKESH RAO

Delhi Capitals' chase-and-win plan worked well for the sixth time this season and lifted it to the top of the table following a seven-wicket victory against Punjab Kings at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Shikhar Dhawan, who regained the Orange Cap with an unbeaten 69 (47b, 6x4, 2x6), led the charge as DC won with 14 balls to spare.

PBKS, playing under a new captain Mayank Agarwal after K.L. Rahul was ruled out following an acute appendicitis that required immediate surgery, reached 166 for six. Mayank propelled the Punjab side with an unbeaten 99 (58b, 8x4, 4x6), the second highest for a debutant captain behind Sanju Samson's 119 in Rajasthan Royals' campaign-opener against PBKS this season.

Given DC's in-form openers, the target of 167 appeared sub-par and once Prithvi Shaw and Dhawan smashed 63 in the PowerPlay, PBKS was never really in the match.

Shaw, briefly in discom-



Openers' day out: After skipper Mayank powered Punjab Kings' innings, Dhawan guided Delhi Capitals home with plenty to spare. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL



fort after being hit on the abdomen guard by a 140kmph delivery from Riley Meredith, scored a brisk 22-ball 39, including three sixes and three fours. But Shaw fell to left-arm spinner Harpreet

Brar – the man who dramatically turned it around against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the previous outing – in the seventh over, the bowler's first. Steve Smith joined Dhawan to add

48 steady runs off 41 deliveries. After Smith's dismissal, Rishabh Pant and Dhawan combined for a 36-run stand before the former's attempt to rush to the finish-line cost him his wicket. It was left to

Shimron Hetmyer to smash two sixes and a four and hasten the end.

Earlier, Mayank made up for the slow start with timely acceleration. After being 90 for four in 14 overs, PBKS

rode on Mayank's shoulders as 76 came off the last six. The icing on the cake was the final over from Avesh Khan that fetched 23 runs, Mayank scoring 15 of them but missing a well-deserved century.

SCOREBOARD

PUNJAB KINGS

Prabhsimran Singh c Smith b Rabada 12 (76b, 1x6), Mayank Agarwal (not out) 99 (58b, 8x4, 4x6), Chris Gayle b Rabada 13 (9b, 1x4, 1x6), David Malan b Axar 26 (26b, 1x4, 1x6), Deepak Hooda run out 1 (1b), Shahrukh Khan c Hetmyer b Avesh 4 (5b), Chris Jordan c Lalit b Rabada 2 (3b), Harpreet Brar (not out) 4 (2b, 1x4); Extras (lb-2, w-3): 5; Total (for six wkts, in 20 overs): 166.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-17 (Prabhsimran, 3.3 overs), 2-35 (Gayle, 5.2), 3-87 (Malan, 13.1), 4-88 (Hooda, 13.3), 5-129 (Shahrukh, 17.2), 6-143 (Jordan, 18.6).

CAPITALS BOWLING

Ishant 4-1-37-0, Stoinis 1-0-6-0, Rabada 4-0-36-3, Avesh 4-0-39-1, Lalit 3-0-25-0, Axar 4-0-21-1.

DELHI CAPITALS

Prithvi Shaw b Harpreet 39 (22b, 3x4, 3x6), Shikhar Dhawan (not out) 69 (47b, 6x4, 2x6), Steve Smith c Malan b Meredith 25 (22b, 1x4), Rishabh Pant c Mayank b Jordan 14 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), Shimron Hetmyer (not out) 16.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-17 (Prabhsimran, 3.3 overs), 2-35 (Gayle, 5.2), 3-87 (Malan, 13.1), 4-88 (Hooda, 13.3), 5-129 (Shahrukh, 17.2), 6-143 (Jordan, 18.6).

INNINGS SCAN

PBKS	Dots	DC
36	31	
11	12	
7	8	
39/2	63/0	
8.30	9.45	

Next assignment

PBKS: May 6 vs. **RCB,** Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.

DC: May 8 vs. **KKR,** Ahmedabad, 3.30 p.m.

Buttler serves up a royal feast as RR coasts to victory

His first T20 hundred earns the Rajasthan side a 55-run win; SRH slips to its sixth loss in seven games

AYAN ACHARYA

Jos Buttler's maiden T20 hundred (124, 64b, 8x4, 8x6) powered Rajasthan Royals to a convincing 55-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi on Sunday.

RR posted 220, its highest-ever total batting first. Chasing the stiff target, Jonny Bairstow and Manish Pandey – opening in place of David Warner who was benched – got SRH off to a flying start, adding 57 off 36 balls.

Major breakthrough
But both batsmen fell in the two overs after the PowerPlay – Pandey was bowled by Mustafizur Rahman and Bairstow was caught at long-on off Rahul Tewatia. And new skipper Kane Williamson's dismissal in the 13th over put RR firmly in control.

Mustafizur (3/20) and Chris Morris (3/29) combined to hand SRH its third consecutive loss, and sixth overall.

RR lost Yashasvi Jaiswal early. Rashid Khan, introduced in the PowerPlay for the first time this season, trapped Jaiswal in front with a slider.

Rashid could have nailed Buttler too, but Vijay Shankar misjudged a catch at long-on.



Superman! Buttler's 64-ball 124, studded with 11 fours and eight sixes, put the contest beyond SRH's reach. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

Buttler and Sanju Samson (48, 33b, 4x4, 2x6) exploded in the seventh over, carting Vijay Shankar for a six each.

Samson was dropped on 23 by Pandey at long-off, a costly miss as the Buttler-

Samson duo eventually put on 150 runs. Buttler reached his fifty with a six, before following it up with a flat-batted four over extra-cover, taking 17 off seamer Sandeep Sharma's third over.

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Jos Buttler b Sandeep Sharma (not out) 8 (6b, 1x4); Extras (lb-1, w-7): 8; Total (for eight wkts, in 20 overs): 165.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-57 (Pandey, 6.1), 2-70 (Bairstow, 7.6), 3-85 (Vijay Shankar, 10.4), 4-105 (Williamson, 12.5), 5-127 (Nabi, 14.2), 6-142 (Samad, 16.3), 7-142 (Jadhav, 16.6), 8-143 (Rashid, 17.2).

ROYALS BOWLING

Tyagi 4-0-32-1, Mustafizur 4-0-20-3, Sakariya 4-0-38-0, Morris 4-0-29-3, Tewatia 4-0-45-1.

Toss: SRH; MoM: Buttler.

RR won by 55 runs.

INNINGS SCAN

RR	SRH
37	42
17	13
12	7
42/1	57/0
11.00	8.25

Next assignment

SRH: May 4 vs. **MI,** Delhi, 7.30 p.m.

RR: May 5 vs. **CSK,** Delhi, 7.30 p.m.

fours and two sixes.

Buttler brought up his first IPL century, off 56 balls, before clobbering 22 in the 19th over bowled by Sandeep to take RR past 200, a total that proved beyond SRH.

Knight Riders eye desperate win

Kohli-led RCB will hope to recover from crushing loss to PBKS

ASHWIN ACHAL

TODAY'S MATCH



HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 27

KKR	14		RCB	13	
FORM GUIDE	L	W	L	W	
KKR	1	1	RCB	1	1

STAR SPORTS 1 & STAR SELECT 1 (SD & HD)

Narine as a pinch-hitting opener. If McCullum is serious about changing the playing eleven, the likes of Venkatesh Iyer, Sheldon Jackson, Karun Nair and Gurkeerat Singh are available to do his bidding.

RCB, meanwhile, will look to bounce back from a 34-run loss to Punjab Kings on

Friday. The match was an example of the side's reliance on batting stars Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Glenn Maxwell and A.B. de Villiers, and how things can go south if they don't perform.

Stepping up

The support cast of Rajat Patidar, Daniel Sams and Shahbaz Ahmed needs to step up.

The Narendra Modi Stadium pitch has offered turn, evidenced by PBKS left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar's match-winning three-wicket haul against RCB. In Narine and Varun Chakarvarthy, KKR has two quality slow bowlers who can exploit these conditions.

The form of RCB leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, however, has been a worry, as he has just four wickets at an average of 47.5.

POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Delhi Capitals	8	6	2	12	0.547
Chennai Super Kings	7	5	2	10	1.263
Royal Challengers	7	5	2	10	-0.171
Mumbai Indians	7	4	3	8	0.062
Rajasthan Royals	7	3	4	6	-0.190
Punjab Kings	8	3	5	6	-0.368
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	2	5	4	-0.494
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	1	6	2	-0.623

After the PBKS-DC match on May 2

Pollard delighted to do well in 'Clasico' of the IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Kieron Pollard single-handedly carried MI past the finish line in a last-ball thriller against CSK. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

the post-match conference.

"You know you want to be able to come and perform in these sort of matches. These things stand out when people speak about the individuals," he said.

Pollard revealed that it was about playing to his strengths and doing what the team required. "You know what we have done over the years. For me, it is not about the ratings, it is more about doing the job and winning the game for your team. That is what I did," he said.

"There are world-class players in CSK. We billed this match-up as the Clasico of the IPL. They have international guys with so much experience... Faf du Plessis and Suresh Raina... guys that have done it time

Kishan Rungta succumbs to COVID-19



Kishan Rungta.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI
Former BCCI selector and Rajasthan captain Kishan Rungta died of COVID-19 at a hospital in Jaipur. He was 88.

The veteran administrator tested positive for the virus last week and died on Saturday.

"Kishan Rungta has died of COVID-19," a BCCI source confirmed to PTI.

Rungta served as a national selector from Central Zone in 1998.

He played 59 First Class games between 1953 to 1970, scoring 2,717 runs.

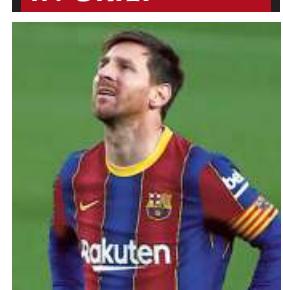
TV PICKS

Sri Lanka vs Bangladesh: 2nd Test: Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.45 a.m.

IPL: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m. & 12.45 a.m. (Tuesday).

IN BRIEF



Messi calls for action against online abuse

BARCELONA
Lionel Messi used his social media platform with 200 million followers to call for action against online abuse. The Barcelona forward's message on Saturday coincides with a four-day boycott of social media by football leagues, clubs and players in England to protest against online racial abuse and discrimination. AP

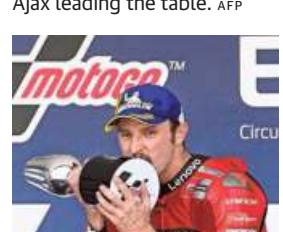
Riya & Ce fall short
OERIAS (PORTUGAL)
Riya Bhatia and Gabriela Ce of Brazil lost 6-4, 6-0 to Adrienn Nagy and Sohyun Park in the doubles final of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here.

Hindustan FC owner Dilip Kumar Bose passes away

NEW DELHI
Veteran football administrator and Hindustan FC owner Dilip Kumar Bose passed away here on Saturday, after battling COVID-19. He was in his early 70s. Bose was part of the Executive Committee of the then Delhi Soccer Association for many years. He was also a member of the organising committees whenever Delhi organised any international or national competitions. Football Delhi mourned Bose's death and offered condolences to his family. PTI

Ajax Amsterdam wins 35th Eredivisie crown

THE HAGUE
Ajax Amsterdam clinched its 35th Eredivisie (Dutch league) title on Sunday to complete a double two weeks after winning the cup final. No champion was crowned last season, which was halted in early March by the COVID-19 pandemic, with Ajax leading the table. AFP



Jack Miller wins Spanish MotoGP
JEREZ (SPAIN)
Australian Jack Miller rode to only his second MotoGP victory in Jerez on Sunday as Ducati teammate Francesco Bagnaia finished second to take the overall championship lead. Franco Morbidelli was third on a Yamaha. AFP



On top, again: Lewis Hamilton, left, got the better of Max Verstappen to rack up his second success of the season. ■ AFP



Hamilton notches up 97th win

Mercedes driver trumps Red Bull's Verstappen to extend lead to eight points

PORTUGUESE GP

REUTERS
PORTIMAO

Seven-time World champion Lewis Hamilton won the Portuguese Grand Prix for Mercedes on Sunday to stretch his Formula One lead over Red Bull's Max Verstappen to eight points after three races.

Verstappen finished second on lap two after the Alfa Romeo of Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi made contact, with debris left on the track and the field streaming through the pitlane.

The victory was a record-extending 97th of Hamilton's career, second of the year and repeated his win at the same circuit last season.

"That was such a tough race, physically and mentally, just keeping everything

together. It was very windy out there so it was very easy to put a foot wrong," said Hamilton, who started on the front row with Bottas.

"I just didn't quite get as good a start as Valtteri and then lost out on the re-start, which was not good. I was not happy about that."

Early crash

The safety car was deployed on lap two after the Alfa Romeo of Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi made contact, with debris left on the track and the field streaming through the pitlane.

When racing resumed, Verstappen pounced to pass Hamilton for second place but the Briton seized back the position five laps later. He then swept past Bottas on track on lap 20 of 66 and took the chequered flag 29.148 seconds clear of Verstappen after the Dutch driv-

er pitted in a bid for fastest lap on fresh, soft tyres.

"I had to make the move early on before the tyres were destroyed and managed to just get him in Turn One," said Hamilton of the key overtake before his pit-stop. "Right on the limit, but

THE RESULTS

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1:34.31.421s, 2. Max Verstappen (Red Bull) +29.148s, 3. Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes) +33.530, 4. Sergio Perez (Red Bull) +39.735, 5. Lando Norris (McLaren) +51.369, 6. Charles Leclerc (Ferrari) +55.781, 7. Esteban Ocon (Alpine) +63.749, 8. Fernando Alonso (Alpine) +64.808, 9. Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren) +75.369, 10. Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri) +76.463; 11. Carlos Sainz Jr (Ferrari) +78.955.

1 lap: 12. Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), 13. Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin), 14. Lance Stroll (Aston Martin), 15. Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri), 16. George Russell (Williams).
2 laps: 17. Mick Schumacher (Haas), 18. Nicholas Latifi (Williams), 19. Nikita Mazepin (Haas).
DNF: Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo).
Standings: Drivers: 1. Hamilton 69 pts, 2. Verstappen 61, 3. Norris 37, 4. Bottas 32, 5. Leclerc 28, 6. Perez 22, 7. Ricciardo 16, 8. Sainz Jr. 14, 9. Ocon 8, 10. Gasly 7, 11. Stroll 5, 12. Alonso 5, 13. Tsunoda 2.
Constructors: 1. Mercedes 101 pts, 2. Red Bull 83, 3. McLaren 53, 4. Ferrari 42, 5. Alpine 13, 6. AlphaTauri 9, 7. Aston Martin 5.

great race."

Perez and Bottas both pitted in the closing laps to try and bag the bonus point. Verstappen thought he had it but his lap time was deleted for going wide. The only consolation was that it did not go to Hamilton.

Shakib and Mustafizur named in preliminary one-day squad

Lanka takes the upper hand

Bangladesh batsmen troubled by the spinners

BANGLADESH IN SL

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
PALKELE

Sri Lanka was five wickets away from a series win after Bangladesh was restricted to 175 for five at stumps on day four of the second Test here on Sunday.

Chasing a daunting 437, the Bangladeshi batsmen were troubled by Sri Lanka spinners Praveen Jaywickrama and Ramesh Mendis who took the five wickets on a crumbling wicket.

Sri Lanka set Bangladesh 437 by declaring its second innings on 194 for nine. No team has reached such a large target in Test history.

The greatest run chase is the 418 made by the West Indies against Australia in 2003 in Antigua. The most successful run chase here is 382 by Pakistan in 2015.

Should Bangladesh succeed in forcing a draw with 150 overs left in the game, Sri Lanka risks falling to its lowest world ranking. Bangladesh, which is



Ramesh Mendis. ■ AFP

down to its last recognised pair, needs another 260 to win with one full day's play left.

Sri Lanka declared its second innings after lunch on 194 for nine and Bangladesh finished on 111 for three at tea.

Big wicket
Mendis claimed the big wicket of Tamim Iqbal when he was caught behind by Niroshan Dickwella for 24. Mendis 3/86.

Debutante Jaywickrama, who took six in the first innings, accounted for Saif Hassan and Najmul Shanto.

The delivery that dismissed Shanto pitched outside off stump, spun sharply, went through bat and pad and hit the top of leg-stump.

After tea, Bangladesh lost captain Mominul Haque, who chopped a Mendis delivery onto his stumps to leave his side struggling at 134 for four.

Earlier, Dimuth Karunaratne top-scored with 66 as Sri Lanka declared on 194 for nine. The Sri Lankan captain finished the series with 428 runs in three innings, having scored a double hundred, a hundred and a half-century.

Bangladesh left-arm spinner Taijul Islam bagged his eighth five-wicket haul, for 72.

The scores: Sri Lanka 493/7 decl. and 194/9 decl. (Dimuth Karunaratne 66, Dhananjaya de Silva 41, Taijul Islam 5/72) vs Bangladesh 251 and 177/5 (Mushfiqur Rahim 40, Ramesh Mendis 3/86).

Shakib and Mustafizur named in preliminary one-day squad



Shakib. ■ FILE PHOTO



Mustafizur. ■ FILE PHOTO

Lanka is likely to start on May 23.

The preliminary ODI squad: Tamim Iqbal, Naim Sheikh, Imrul Kayes, Liton Kumer Das, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam and Shohidul Islam.

Pochettino 'optimistic' about Mbappe

Expects him to be fit to face City

FOOTBALL

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain coach Mauricio Pochettino is confident Kylian Mbappe will be fit to face Manchester City on Tuesday after the France striker was forced to watch from the stands as Neymar scored one goal and set up the other in a vital 2-1 win over Lens in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

Neymar netted in the 33rd minute and his corner was headed home by Marquinhos just prior to the hour mark at the Parc des Princes, with Cameroonian forward Ignatius Ganago pulling a goal back for Lens.

It was a huge three points for PSG in its attempt to retain the Ligue 1 title.

Mbappe was reduced to the role of spectator because of a calf problem, while Angel Di Maria was also left out of the starting XI as Pochettino made six changes to his team from Wednesday's 2-1 home defeat against City in the first leg of the Champions League semifinal.

"I am always optimistic and I still am," Pochettino told Canal Plus when asked if he expected Mbappe to play. "We think he will be there, but we will make a decision before the game."

PSG is looking to win its eighth Ligue 1 title in nine years.

Carlsen inches closer to title

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

World champion Magnus Carlsen won the last two games of the day to take the first match 3-1 against Hikaru Nakamura in the final of the New in Chess Classic rapid online tournament on Saturday. He now only needs a draw in the second match to claim his first title on the Champions Tour this season.

For the third place, Levon Aronian and Shakhrayev Mamedyarov won with black for a 2-2 deadlock after all four games were decisive.

Asian gold medallist Khan no more

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

The 1982 Asian Games gold medallist rider Colonel Gulam Mohammad Khan (retired) died on Saturday in Pune. The renowned rider, 74, had joined the Indian Military Academy in 1973.

From 1980 to 1990 he captained the ASC team, during which time his team won the National title six times and he became individual National Champion (Eventing) four times.

As a member of the team which won the gold medal in Eventing at the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi, Col. Khan gained the individual silver riding Goodwill.

At the next Asian Games in Seoul he was a member of the Dressage and Eventing teams, winning bronze medals on both teams and gaining the highest place of any Indian rider – fourth in the Dressage, ninth in the Eventing and ninth in the Dressage.



No clarity: Recovering from COVID-19, Johnson says he cannot say much about his Olympic preparations now. ■ FILE PHOTO

All the hard work has now gone waste, says Jinson Johnson

Laments on how COVID-19 has affected his preparations and life

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

Three years ago, Jinson Johnson was the toast of the camp, he did not go out anywhere and it came with all the symptoms. I had severe headache, body-ache, fever and breathlessness. The first 10 days of quarantine were okay but the last four were difficult. I completed my isolation period some five days ago but my body has not fully recovered yet," said the Asiad 1500m champion in a chat with The Hindu from Bengaluru on Sunday.

"I feel very tired, my muscles feel weak, I still have

problems breathing. I just do some walking these days."

The Olympic Games are less than three months away but for the country's best middle-distance runner they look very far.

"I can't say anything about my Olympic preparations now. I will need about two weeks in May to gain full recovery. And if I'm fit, I'll do the Grand Prix in June," said the 30-year-old.

"Just before I got COVID, everything was going well. All the hard work has now gone waste, it has affected my life in a big way too."

To train in Ooty

Johnson will be leaving the national camp soon. "The

camp is only for athletes who have qualified for the Olympics and who are likely to qualify. I will be going to Ooty shortly and train there, following coach Amrit Singh's schedule."

He has a word of advice for fellow athletes.

"Not just athletes but everybody. The experience before getting COVID and after getting it is very different. Once you catch it, it affects you badly."

"Now is the time to be careful, wear a mask even when relatives, friends or neighbours come home. Sometimes, we tend to remove our mask when they visit us...that should not be the case. Be alert always."