



Speculation after former Minister Natwar Singh meets Modi  
page 8



Monsoon likely to be normal this year, says Meteorological dept.  
page 8



Rohit's MI takes on Warner's SRH in Chennai today  
page 15

## NEARBY



Pandits in Valley feeling alienated, says report

NEW DELHI  
A report prepared by the Concerned Citizens' Group, led by former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha, has said Kashmiri Pandits, who did not migrate from the Kashmir Valley even at the peak of militancy, "were being ignored in the plans of the government for the economic rehabilitation of the community".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

## Uttar Pradesh to shut down on Sundays

LUCKNOW  
With mounting cases of COVID-19, the Uttar Pradesh government on Friday announced that it would have a weekly shutdown in the State on Sundays. Patients in Lucknow, meanwhile, continued to struggle to find beds in hospitals. The city was filled with testimonies of how patients were finding it difficult to get admitted in hospitals or secure oxygen supply smoothly in time.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

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# Centre promises more oxygen, ventilators for U.P., Chhattisgarh

Allow inter-State movement of medical oxygen'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Union Health Secretary Rakesh Bhushan has informed Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh that their demand for 10 litre and 45 litre jumbo oxygen cylinders and additional ventilators having high flow nasal canula will be met very soon, a statement from the Union Health Ministry said.

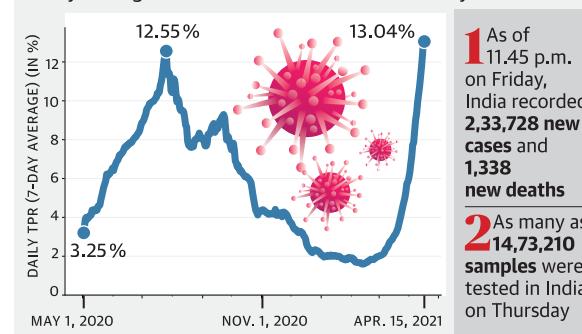
Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has also written to all the States to ensure that no restriction is imposed on the movement of medical oxygen between the States and Union Territories. In the letter, he asked the States not to limit supply only to hospitals run in a particular State.

"There shall be free movement of vehicles carrying oxygen in cities without any time limit or inter-city restriction," the letter stated.

Mr. Bhalla and Mr. Bhushan chaired high-level meetings on Friday to review the status of COVID-19 in Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh.

The meeting was attended Dr. V.R. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog; Dr. Balram Bhargava, Director General, ICMR; Dr. (Prof.) Sunil Kumar, DGHS; Chief Secretaries, Directors General of

**A new high** As on April 15, India's average daily COVID-19 test positivity rate (TPR) (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) was 13.04% and surpassed the peak daily average TPR of 12.5% recorded in late July 2020



## CICSE defers exams for Classes 10, 12

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) on Friday deferred the Board exams of Classes 10 and 12 in view of the COVID-19 surge. The exams were to be held from May 4. ▶ PAGE 10

Police and Health Secretaries of both States.

Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are the only States that have more than 1 lakh active COVID-19 cases.

Both Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh are reporting a very high number of new cases and deaths. The Ministry said.

## Poonawalla appeals to U.S. President

Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer, Serum Institute of India, has tweeted an appeal to U.S. President Joe Biden, seeking lifting of the embargo on U.S. export of raw materials for vaccine. ▶ PAGE 10

try said Chhattisgarh had reported a nearly 6.2% increase in weekly new cases based on 7-day moving average. "In last two weeks, the State has seen almost 13% increase in weekly new cases," the Ministry said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 5 & 10

No guidelines on mutations: Maharashtra

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Friday said the State has witnessed double mutation of the virus without any doubt and awaits the Centre's instructions on how to deal with it.

"As per the oral information that I have received, Maharashtra has witnessed double mutation. Centre should tell us the remedy or NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) is expected to guide us. We have not yet received any communication from Friday."

He said the State government had also written to the NCDC and was waiting for a response. "We await their reply even today."

The Minister's statement comes days after reports that double mutations had been detected in 61% of 361 samples collected between January to March. Interestingly, no official report has yet been submitted, with Mr. Tope also saying he had only oral information on the double mutation.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGES 5 & 10

# U.K. nod for extradition of Nirav Modi in PNB case

He can appeal decision in U.K. High Court within 14 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The U.K.'s Home Department has approved the extradition of diamond merchant Nirav Modi to India in connection with the ₹13,758 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud, about two months after the Westminster Magistrates' Court in London ruled that a *prima facie* case was made out against him.

"The Secretary of State for the U.K.'s Home Department, Priti Patel, has cleared Mr. Nirav Modi's extradition trial commences

In a corner | A look at the events after Nirav Modi left the country in January 2018

JAN. 31, 2018: CBI registers first case against him and others for allegedly cheating PNB of ₹6,498 crore.

JUNE 2, 2018: Interpol issues Red Notice on ED's request

AUG. 3, 2018: India sends request to the U.K. for his extradition

MARCH 19, 2019: U.K. police arrest Nirav Modi in London

MAY 11, 2020: Extradition trial commences

FEB. 25, 2021: Court allows extradition; order is sent to the Secretary of State of the U.K.'s Home Department

APRIL 15, 2021: The Secretary signs the order

and the Enforcement Directorate, alleging that he had conspired to destroy the proof against him and intimidate witnesses.

**Employees confined**  
The agencies alleged that he kept his employees, some of whom were dummy directors in the firms floated by him, in illegal confinement in Cairo.

He also disposed of their mobile phones in Dubai. A Dubai-based server, in which information on the electronic communications between the accused persons was stored, was also destroyed.

The U.K. court did not

find any merit in Mr. Nirav Modi's submissions on the state of his mental health and the condition of barrack 12 in Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail, where he would be kept after extradition. Based on a video inspection, the court observed that the prison was spacious enough and had sufficient security. The court was also convinced that he would get a fair trial in India.

The businessman had fled the country on January 1, 2018. On India's request, he was arrested in London on March 19, 2019, and he has since then been in judicial custody there.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## + Record COVID cases, deaths in Capital

MAHESH LANGA

AHMEDABAD

Hospitals in Gujarat are facing an acute shortage of oxygen as COVID-19 cases and deaths soar in the State. There have been several instances of patients dying in hospitals or ambulances without supply of oxygen, including five patients at a private hospital in Navsari.

"There is a massive shortage of medical-grade oxygen in hospitals. The government has ramped up capacity but it isn't enough," said a top hospital manager.

The government has directed that 70% of the total oxygen produced in the State be reserved for medical and healthcare purposes. Though the supply is being streamlined in major cities, the situation is worsening in smaller towns as the virus penetrates the hinterland. Sources said it will take 2-3 more days to streamline supply in smaller towns.

The State hit its highest single-day toll of 8,920 new

## Gujarat hospitals gasp for oxygen

Situation worse in smaller towns as virus spreads to rural areas



cases and 94 deaths on Friday. The actual number of cases and deaths is likely to be substantially higher than the official numbers if the long queues outside crematoria in all major cities are anything to go by.

In one crematorium in Surat, as many as five bodies were cremated on one pyre.

In Rajkot, local media reports said 52 persons died of COVID-19 on Friday.

DON'T CONCEAL COVID-19 DATA, HC DIRECTS GUJARAT ▶ PAGE 10

“There is no respite from the surge in cases and deaths. We are likely to cross the 10,000 cases per day mark in the next few days, while the active cases are likely to reach around 1 lakh by the end of this month,” a medical expert said. As of Friday, the State's total active cases stood at 49,737.

“There is no respite from the surge in cases and deaths. We are likely to cross the 10,000 cases per day mark in the next few days, while the active cases are likely to reach around 1 lakh by the end of this month,” a medical expert said. As of Friday, the State's total active cases stood at 49,737.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Bharat Biotech to make 6 cr. doses by July

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The production of indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine will be doubled by May-June and then increased nearly 6-7 fold by July-August 2021. Currently, Bharat Biotech makes one crore vaccine doses a month. Production may reach nearly 10 crore doses a month by September, the Department of Biotechnology said on Friday.

The DBT has funded three other state-run facilities – the Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation Ltd, Mumbai; Indian Immunologicals Limited, Hyderabad and Biologicals Limited, Bijnor – to make vaccines. Haffkine has been given ₹65 crore but it will take 6-12 months to be able to produce the vaccine. The other facilities are expected to begin producing 10-15 million doses a month by August.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Cash, other freebies worth ₹1,000 crore seized by EC in ongoing Assembly polls

T.N. tops with material worth ₹446.28 crore recovered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India on Friday said it had seized cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals and other freebies worth ₹1,001.43 crore meant for distribution to voters in the ongoing Assembly elections.

“Seizures crossed ₹1,000 crore for the first time in any Assembly electoral process,” the EC said in a statement.

Of the total seizures as on Thursday in Assam, Pudu-

cheri, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and the States where by-elections are being conducted, Tamil Nadu topped the tally with seizures of ₹446.28 crore.

It was followed by ₹300.11 crore in West Bengal, ₹12.34 crore in Assam, ₹84.91 crore in Kerala and ₹36.95 crore in Puducherry. A total of ₹10.84 crore was seized in connection with the various bypolls.

In 2016 for the five Assembly elections, the total seizures were only ₹225.77 crore.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Among the biggest challenges was the inability to attend online school.

nearly 80% respondents reporting an increase in household chores, which meant that 64% of girls and young women felt they did not have the space or get the

time to study online.

Lack of access to resources and technology was also a challenge – nearly 28% of those surveyed didn't have the tools such as mobile phones or Internet access to learn online.

With households from marginalised communities facing financial stress due to the economic impact of COVID-19, girls believed that the pressure to get married had increased, with nearly 42% reporting this.

Almost 90% of girls reported experiencing mental distress and despair without any access to information about coping

mechanisms.

Their mental distress was exacerbated because of barriers in communicating with friends and teachers.

Up to 26% respondents believe there was an increase in gender-based violence and felt that fears and threats of violence intensified restrictions on their freedom.

On concluding the field research, seven girl leaders finalised a list of priority recommendations which include establishing girl-friendly spaces within the community such as skills training centres and violence-free spaces.

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## Night e-pass valid for weekend curfew: govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Those who have a valid night curfew e-pass are not required to take a separate pass for the weekend curfew, the Delhi government said on Friday.

Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday had announced a curfew this weekend and the closure of malls, gyms, auditoriums till April 30 as part of sweeping restrictions to break the chain of the infection. The Delhi government had on April 6 announced a seven-hour night curfew.

## Increase oxygen beds, CM tells officials

Kejriwal orders multiple assistance numbers in hospitals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday directed the officials to develop more COVID-19 facilities, increase oxygen beds across the Capital and ensure real-time information about hospital beds on the Delhi Corona app.

### Review meeting

Mr. Kejriwal convened a review meeting on the COVID situation in Delhi where discussions were held on the steps taken by the government to improve the health infrastructure and other infrastructural requirements.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Health Minister Satyendar Jain, and other senior Delhi govern-

  
Health teams must reach out to every COVID-19 patient in home isolation and provide oximeters. Delhi's home isolation system is the best in the country and we must continue to set an example

ARVIND KEJRIWAL  
Chief Minister

ment officials were present at the meeting. He added that the health teams must reach out to every COVID-19 patient in home isolation and provide oximeters.

Mr. Kejriwal, the government stated, said the focus is on increasing bed capaci-

ty, which will ensure adequate treatment for the people who require urgent assistance.

"There should be multiple assistance numbers in the hospitals and nodal persons should be appointed at every helpline number. No urgent calls should be missed and turned down," Mr. Kejriwal said.

"Delhi's home isolation system is the best in the country and we must continue to set an example," he added.

Mr. Kejriwal, at the meeting, said that citizens should receive all help and assistance since the government has told patients to prefer home isolation if they had mild or no symptoms.

## Set up help desks in all hospitals, L-G directs officials at meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal on Friday issued directions to the authorities concerned to strictly enforce COVID-appropriate behaviour in crowded places, appealing to the people to cooperate with government officials in this regard.

Mr. Baijal also directed that help desks to assist patients and their attendants at all city hospitals be set up as COVID cases continue to soar across the Capital.

The L-G issued these directions at a meeting to review the enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour and preparedness for implementing guidelines in this regard along with the Chief Secretary, the Delhi Police Commissioner, the Divisional Commissioner, MCD Commissioners and other senior officers concerned.

According to Raj Nivas, Mr. Baijal advised "targeted and aggressive" deployment and enforcement in areas where crowding occurs and asked that a temporal graph of outcomes be prepared in relation to peak hours.

He also asked the Chief Secretary to ensure the setting up of helplines that inform about the availability of beds in hospitals apart from displaying this information on government portals.

Concerted and coordinated efforts were required from all agencies and stakeholders to contain the existing surge in COVID cases, he added.

### IN BRIEF

#### Traffic Police suspend process to collect dues for pending challans

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police has suspended the process to collect dues for pending challans in cash in view of a surge in COVID-19 cases here, officials said on Friday.

## Curb your enthusiasm



Delhi police personnel put up barricades during weekend night curfew at Rajouri Garden in west Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

## Delhi BJP MPs to assist those in home isolation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Friday convened a meeting where it was decided that the party's seven MPs would join the fray in assisting COVID-19 patients who are under home isolation.

### Distribute food, oximeters: Gupta

Delhi President Adesh Gupta said: "The decision taken today was to distribute oximeters, medicines and masks to home-quarantined patients, to provide rice, flour, lentils, potatoes, oil, spices through Modi Kits in all areas besides getting these areas sanitised."

## Over 19K new cases, 141 deaths: Capital scales new COVID peak

Out of 15,680 beds available in hospitals, 4,412 are lying vacant, states govt. data

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 19,486 fresh COVID-19 cases and 141 deaths on Friday – the highest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic.

The health bulletin issued by the Delhi government said 98,957 tests were conducted in 24 hours with a positivity rate of 19.69%. Out of the total tests conducted, 64,939 were RT-PCR.

The city has 61,005 active cases with 29,705 patients under home isolation. On November 19, the city recorded its previous highest single-day fatality count with 131 deaths.

The COVID-19 patient management system shows that out of the 15,680 beds available in hospitals for treatment, 4,412 are vacant.

At dedicated COVID Care Centres that have a capacity of 5,525 beds, 5,049 are vacant. According to the Delhi Corona app of the Delhi government, of the total of 1,269 COVID-19 ICU beds with ventilator, 183 were va-



A woman gets tested for COVID at a government dispensary in Paschim Vihar in Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

cant and out of those without ventilator, 300 were vacant.

far, 24,50,424 beneficiaries have been vaccinated out of which 4,22,875 have received their second dose.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who has been appointed as the nodal Minister for COVID-19 management in the Capital, visited GTB hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Hospital and Lok Nayak Hospital in the city to review the situation on the ground.

"Visited GTB hospital and reviewed its patient admission system. Met some of the patients and also interacted with the doctors. I

### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
8,03,623	11,793
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
19,486	141

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

would like to thank the medical staff who have been working round-the-clock," Mr. Sisodia tweeted after the visit. He also met the HODs of Lok Nayak Hospital.

### 10 IAS officers appointed

The Delhi government also appointed 10 IAS officers as "nodal officers" for COVID-19 hospitals run by it and asked them to work from the healthcare facility they have been assigned.

"The officers will be overall in-charge of the COVID-19 hospital assigned to them and will exercise general superintendence, directions and control over the functioning of the hospital," an order issued by the health department read.

## Prosecute weekend curfew violators: CP

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava on Friday said the weekend lockdown restrictions imposed by the Delhi government will be enforced strictly by the force.

### CP to district DCPs

The Commissioner held a videoconference meeting on Friday with district Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCP) to review the preparedness and plan of action to follow on the ground for strict enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions and DDMA order. He asked the officers to prosecute those flouting rules without a valid identity card.

The DCPs were asked to ensure that policemen are careful – wear masks, follow social distancing and hand hygiene. Hours before weekend lockdown came into force, Delhi Police launched a COVID helpline number – 01123469900 – to facilitate movement pass.

Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswas said the CP asked district DCPs to make extensive arrangements of pickets, patrolling and police presence on the ground.

"If anyone is found moving without a valid emergency

or movement pass for essential services or goods, they would be stopped, and case will be registered against them and they may face arrest too. Medical services, food materials, fruits and vegetable supply need to go on as usual for normal life," he said.

"These will operate normally, and our personnel will facilitate it. But no one under the garb of these activities can undertake undue movement to violate the restriction orders," the CP said. They also said doctors and journalists will be allowed to travel freely with a valid identity card.

The DCPs were asked to ensure that policemen are careful – wear masks, follow social distancing and hand hygiene. Hours before weekend lockdown came into force, Delhi Police launched a COVID helpline number – 01123469900 – to facilitate movement pass.

## Allow 24-hour home delivery: NRAI to govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Commenting on orders by the Delhi government to stop dine-in facilities at restaurants in the Capital and allow them to open only to provide home delivery orders, the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) said it supports this decision in the larger public health interest. But it requested the government to help in the delivery segment.

"We request the government to allow round-the-clock home delivery of food in line with what Mumbai has done and to smoothen the process of e-passes and issue clear directions to the law enforcing agencies so that our workers, who are also front-line warriors, are not subjected to any undue harassment by these law enforcing authorities," the NRAI said.

As an industry, the NRAI said the situation has left them where they were standing at the start of the pandemic. "We were closed for the most part of last year. We opened up gradually with restricted capacities and curtailed operating hours and fought hard to regain some of our lost vibrancy. Just when things were looking up, this second wave has come as a massive dampener," the NRAI said.

## 'Give free meals through homeless shelters'

Food rights network writes to CM, seeks COVID ration cards

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Rozi Roti Adhikar Abhiyan on Friday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urging the government to provide free meals through homeless shelters and dedicated relief centres to migrant workers, daily wagers and others who have been affected by the restrictions.

The DRRAA said restrictions like night curfew and

other curbs were adversely impacting economic activity in Delhi.

Stating that the Delhi government must ensure that ration is made available to all those in need, the DRRAA said: "Provide free hot cooked meals through homeless shelters and dedicated relief centres and ensure no person desirous of obtaining food is turned away from these centres. Universalise the public dis-

tribution system by providing ration to all persons in need of food security, irrespective of whether they possess a ration card."

It also suggested that COVID ration cards be generated for people who require temporary documentation.

"At this time of distress, the government should allow self-certification for emergency food security....," the letter read.

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Executive Engineer,  
Jal Shakti Division, Nahani

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DELHI

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Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 40 20  
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Delhi Palam Today  
36°C A spell of rain and thundershower with moderate winds and partly cloudy sky likely at few places over the area.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
37°C Drop in morning temperature likely. A pleasant morning and very warm day. Surface winds likely to increase.

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## Metro trains to run at reduced frequency

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Friday said that in view of the weekend curfew, set to be imposed from Saturday, frequency of metro trains across the network will reduce.

In a statement issued, DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal said, "Metro services will be available with a headway of 15 minutes across the network on the weekend, that is on April 17 and 18."

He further added: "The two sections where there is a bifurcation in the network - Noida and Vaishali section on the Blue Line and Kirti Nagar and Inderlok section on the Green Line, the headway will become double - services will be available after every 30 minutes in these sections."

# Migrants leaving city in hordes, but not due to lockdown fears

Their trips were mostly pre-planned, though some are apprehensive of shutdown

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

Despite the Delhi government announcing weekend lockdown, migrant workers in the Capital appear not to be leaving the city yet, though they're gathering at transport hubs in hordes. Most migrant workers *The Hindu* spoke to at Anand Vihar ISBT said they are going home for reasons other than lockdown fear and plan to return.

Some, however, were scared that the weekend lockdown might extend. Vir Singh (33) from Uttar Pradesh's Badaun, sat with his wife, children and other family members with eight pieces of luggage and said he was scared if the lockdown will extend. However, they will come back if the lockdown is not announced, he said.

He also said that the fear of lockdown is not the reason they are leaving. "Currently, we are going home to cast



Migrant workers at the Vaishali bus stand in Delhi on Friday.

• SANDEEP SAXENA

our vote in panchayat elections and plan to come back in 20-25 days but we haven't forgotten last year also. Thankfully, we were back home when the lockdown was announced but my nephew was stuck in Delhi. I remember bringing him on a bike after riding all night," he said.

Mr. Singh works as a labourer and resides in Nangli Dairy. Hari Lal Gupta, a resident of Sonipat and a vegeta-

ble vendor, and his brother Hari Prasad Gupta, a labourer in Delhi, got together at Anand Vihar bus stand to go to their village in Azamgarh but not because of the lockdown fear.

### Other reasons

"Our brother is really unwell and we have to meet him. We'll come back in a few days. Last year during the lockdown, we got stuck here in Delhi so that scare is there

Rajeev Kumar sat with his peers - all labourers in Rajasthan - at the bus stand waiting for a bus to Etah because they too wanted to cast their vote. "There is no fear of the lockdown at the moment. We are only going for a few days," he said.

### Fear of the past

However, there were some who had packed their luggage for more than a few days fearing a repeat of 2020. Hamid Ali and Sabreena, with their three-year-old son and elder brother, were all set to leave for Mainpuri. "I am a labourer. Work has been less in the last few days and then this weekend lockdown has been announced. This might extend. Last year also it had started with two days and then we'll be stuck here without any transport to go home. I am leaving now. Don't know when I'll be back," he said.

JNU issues advisory for students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University on Friday issued an advisory asking students who are on campus to leave for their home. The university said that there were 64 positive cases on the campus and 322 cases have been recorded since March 2020.

"Keeping in mind the well-being and safety of students and all campus residents, it is advisable, where feasible, for the students to leave for their hometown in order to stay safe and also help curb the virulent spread of the COVID-19 virus," an advisory issued by the Registrar of the university said.

The advisory added that the predicament of students and research scholars to pursue and complete their academic assignments is understandable. However, the library, the hostel mess and eateries may be super spreaders. "There is no place better than home for getting a safe environment," it added.

## HC to hold in-camera proceedings in scribe's anticipatory bail plea

Varun Hiremath is accused of rape

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday agreed to conduct in-camera proceedings in the anticipatory bail plea of a Mumbai-based television journalist in an alleged rape case.

Justice Mukta Gupta gave the direction after senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing journalist Varun Hiremath, requested for in-camera hearing.

The High Court, on April 9, granted interim protection from arrest to Mr. Hiremath in the case till April 16, provided he joined the police investigation. Mr. Hiremath has approached the court after his earlier anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by a trial court here on March 12.

The trial court had said that consent cannot be implied from the complainant's previous experiences with the accused. If the wo-



man stated in her evidence before the court that she did not consent, the court shall presume that she did not, the trial court had said while rejecting his anticipatory bail plea.

The woman, in her FIR filed at Chanakyapuri Police Station, had alleged that she was raped by Mr. Hiremath at a five-star hotel here on February 20.

Mr. Hiremath's counsel, however, claimed that there had been a history of previous sexual relationship between the accused and the complainant.

## Three arrested after brief exchange of fire

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Three men were arrested after a brief exchange of fire for an alleged robbery attempt in north-east Delhi's Bhajanpura on Thursday night, police said.

The accused, Sabir (30), Ravi (32) and Zuber (22), have previous criminal record. Sabir and Ravi sustained bullet injuries on their legs and were shifted to a hospital for

treatment, they said.

According to the police, while Bhajanpura SHO Ashok Sharma along with his team was enforcing night curfew in the area on Thursday night, he noticed three persons on a scooter trying to rob a person. Sensing police presence, they tried to escape but were chased by the police. Sophisticated pistol with six live cartridges were recovered from them, said the police.

## Ghaziabad manufacturers asked to stop making industrial-use oxygen

They were told to ramp up supply for medical purposes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GHAZIABAD

With the COVID-19 surge continuing unabated, the district administration here on Friday asked manufacturers to halt production of industrial-use oxygen and ramp up the supply for medical purposes, officials said.

District Magistrate Ajay

Shankar Pandey said the administration also asked all hospital in the city to not deny treatment to COVID-19 patients even if they have no beds. He said such hospitals can refer the patient to a dedicated COVID-19 facility after giving them preliminary treatment.

The administration on Fri-

day met oxygen manufacturers and suppliers here and issued a slew of instructions to them so that adequate supply is maintained here to meet the high demand.

Joint Commissioner of Industries, Vinod Singh has been ordered to monitor the city's biggest oxygen manufacturing unit, he said.

## Dust storm brings relief from soaring temperature

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The IMD reported that during the storm, the wind speed surged to about 50-70 km per hour and light rain was also recorded at many parts of the city. The maximum temperature is likely to stay below the 40-degree Celsius mark for the next five days, it said. "Partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain accompanied with gusty winds on April 17," read the extended forecast.

The minimum settled at 20.2 degrees Celsius, which was two degrees below normal.

दिल्ली सरकार  
आप की सरकार

# Wear mask Stay Safe!

Once again, Corona figures in Delhi are increasing at a fast pace. So, do not forget to wear a mask before stepping out of your home. Come, let's defeat this pandemic together.



Please get vaccinated to protect yourself from Corona

DIP/Shabdardhi/D/00002/21-22

For more information related to Corona log on to [delhifightscorona.in](http://delhifightscorona.in)

DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, GOVERNMENT OF NCT OF DELHI



Wash Your Hands  
Frequently with  
Soap and Water



Follow Social  
Distancing  
6 Feet





IN BRIEF



Karnataka bus strike enters 10th day

BENGALURU  
Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi warned RTC workers, who are on strike demanding a pay hike, against threatening those willing to return to duty. The strike, which saw a driver – Rabeed Rasul K. Avati, 56 – dying in a stone-throwing incident, entered the 10th day on Friday.

137 temples, monuments in A.P., Telangana shut

ANANTAPUR  
The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has ordered the closure of all 137 temples and monuments under its control in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana from Friday till May 15 owing to the pandemic. There are eight monuments in Telangana and 129 museums/ temples/forts controlled by the ASI in A.P.

# Cases soar, Karnataka CM tests positive

Yediyurappa was infected last year too; Jagan seeks 60 lakh vaccine doses; Kerala cases cross 10,000

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU  
Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, who campaigned hard for Saturday's by-elections, tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday. He contracted the infection for the second time and was under treatment at Manipal Hospital.

Karnataka reported its biggest single-day spike of 14,859 cases and 78 fatalities on Friday.

**COVID-19**

Mr. Yediyurappa earlier tested positive in August 2020 and had got one dose of vaccine. He appealed on Twitter that all those who had come in contact with him recently should be observant and self-quarantine.

A statement from Manipal Hospital said that he was un-



**Endless wait:** People standing in a long queue for COVID-19 test at Kottamaidan in Palakkad on Friday. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH

der evaluation and being treated for respiratory symptoms.

Karnataka on Friday decided to impose restrictions on gatherings and celebrations. For marriages and pol-

itical events, 200 people were permitted in an open space, but religious gatherings were banned. For marriages in a closed space, the limit was 100 people, and for birthdays and other celebra-

tions, it was 50 in open spaces and 25 in closed areas. At funerals, the limit was 50 people in an open space and 25 in a closed area.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting 60 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine to cover the population aged above 45 for the first dose in the next three weeks.

The Chief Minister said the State proved its capability, but the same could not be continued as the vaccine stock was exhausted.

The State reported 20 deaths and 6,096 new infections on Friday morning. The tally increased by 1,000 infections in just a day.

In another spike, Telangana recorded 3,840 cases on Thursday. There were nine deaths, the highest this year. Greater Hyderabad re-

corded 505 cases.

On Friday, Kerala's new cases stood at 10,031 with a TPR of 14.8%. The active case pool in the State now was 69,868 patients, with two districts having over 10,000 active cases.

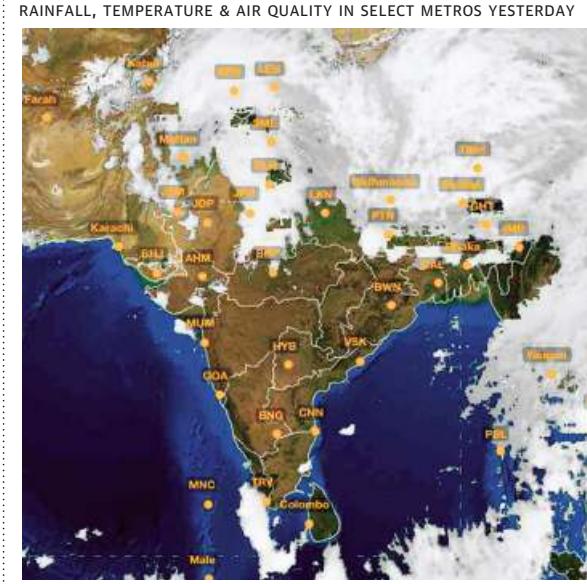
The State added 21 recent deaths to its tally.

Fresh infections soared in Tamil Nadu, with its daily count surpassing 8,000 on Friday. The State recorded 8,449 new cases of COVID-19 and 33 deaths, taking its tally to 9,71,384 and toll to 13,032.

With this, the active cases have exceeded 60,000 for the first time since the start of the pandemic. As many as 61,593 persons, including 22,420 in Chennai, are presently under treatment across the State.

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

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP, INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)  
**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorms with lightning, hail and gusty wind very likely at isolated places over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Uttarakhand; with lightning and gusty wind at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	37.3	22.6	Kozhikode	—	34.2	26.0
Ahmedabad	—	39.5	25.1	Kurnool	—	39.9	27.0
Aizawl	—	28.4	15.8	Lucknow	—	41.1	22.7
Allahabad	—	42.2	24.1	Madurai	60	35.5	22.5
Bengaluru	—	33.4	20.8	Mangaluru	—	35.0	24.6
Bhopal	—	39.2	22.1	Mumbai	—	32.7	24.5
Bhubaneswar	—	37.6	23.0	Mysuru	7	36.0	21.0
Chandigarh	—	41.8	22.9	New Delhi	—	40.0	20.2
Chennai	0.1	33.8	25.9	Patna	—	38.6	24.6
Coimbatore	—	36.3	23.0	Port Blair	0.8	27.6	25.5
Dehradun	—	36.6	17.5	Puducherry	0.5	33.4	24.4
Gangtok	3.3	26.5	13.0	Pune	—	37.0	18.6
Goa	—	34.0	26.2	Raipur	—	36.2	22.0
Guwahati	0.2	32.2	23.3	Ranchi	—	35.0	24.8
Hubballi	—	34.0	22.0	Shillong	2	24.4	11.6
Hyderabad	—	36.8	24.1	Shimla	—	25.0	14.4
Imphal	—	30.1	17.2	Srinagar	1	33.2	8.0
Jaipur	—	38.4	25.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.0	25.2
Kochi	—	32.6	25.4	Tiruchi	—	38.7	25.3
Kohima	1.8	27.4	12.4	Vijayawada	—	36.8	25.2
Kolkata	—	35.5	28.4	Visakhapatnam	—	33.0	25.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)  
**Yesterday**

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	40	58	49	...84	130	■
Bengaluru	—	53	52	126	90	■
Chennai	16	16	56	...31	—	■
Delhi	23	54	79	340	324	■
Hyderabad	—	51	34	...92	100	■
Kolkata	25	20	71	137	121	■
Lucknow	23	84	54	311	246	■
Mumbai	—	9	82	120	...91	■
Pune	—	21	17	105	100	■
Visakhapatnam	17	59	19	25	62	■

In operation made at 6.00 p.m. Sompot, Haryana quality index (AQI) score of 42 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gummidiipondi, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

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

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

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

# Fousiya set to renew legal battle

SC order in ISRO espionage case has kindled Maldivian woman's hope for justice

K.S. SUDHI  
KOCHI

The Supreme Court order asking the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into the D.K. Jain Commission report on the Kerala Police framing space scientists in the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) espionage case has rekindled hopes of justice for Fousiya Hasan, the Maldivian woman who was imprisoned in Kerala for three years in the case.

"Though I had engaged a lawyer in India to file the case, it had to be put off following the pandemic," Ms. Hasan told *The Hindu* from Sri Lanka.

After learning about the



Fousiya Hasan

Supreme Court order, Ms. Hasan said she would discuss the developments with her lawyer in India. She had earlier announced her decision to seek compensation from India for her illegal custody and the torture she suf-

fered at the hands of the police.

The police had picked her along with Mariam Rasheedha, another Maldivian, on charges of espionage three decades ago.

"I don't know the names of the police officers who assaulted me. I don't remember those details now. They kicked and slapped me on my face and back. They pricked my fingers and toes. They wanted me to confess that I paid ISRO scientists Nambi Narayanan and Sasi-kumar money and smuggled out the secrets," she said.

"Besides assaulting me, the police destroyed my life and also that of my daughter.

"I can't walk properly and I am unable to stand for long," she said.

# Kerala HC quashes FIRs against ED officials

ED Deputy Director had moved court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

In a setback to the Left Democratic Front government, the Kerala High Court on Friday quashed the two first information reports (FIR) filed by the State police against unnamed officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Kochi for allegedly forcing Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, accused in the diplomatic channel gold smuggling and money laundering cases, to give false statements against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and other higher-ups.

Justice V.G. Arun, while quashing the FIRs, observed

that the police could not register FIRs for the offence under Section 193 of the Indian Penal Code (fabrication of false evidence) against the ED officials in view of the prohibition under Section 195(1)(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). According to Section 195(1)(b) of the CrPC, only the court before which the proceedings are pending could take cognisance of an offence relating to fabrication of evidence.

The court passed the verdict disposing of two petitions filed by P. Radhakrishnan, Deputy Director, ED, against registration of FIRs.

# WEST

# MVA faces Pandharpur bypoll challenge amid COVID-19 surge

Contest between NCP candidate Bhagirath Bhalke, BJP's Samadhan Autade today

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

The byelection in Pandharpur Assembly constituency in Solapur district on Saturday amid the COVID-19 surge in Maharashtra poses a tough test to the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

The seat became vacant following the death of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA Bharat Bhalke owing to COVID-19 complications in November last year. Both the MVA and the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed the upper hand in the electoral campaign, which concluded on Thursday. The result will be declared on May 2.

While the NCP has fielded Bhalke's son Bhagirath, the BJP has given its ticket to Samadhan Autade, who contested the 2019 poll as an independent and secured 54,124 votes. In 2019, the BJP's Sudhakar Paricharak polled 76,426 votes, and Bhalke won 89,787 votes. According to the BJP, the com-



**People of Pandharpur have the first opportunity to show this government, involved in corrupt practices, its place**

DEVENADERA FADNAVIS  
Leader of Opposition

the late MLA's popularity, developmental efforts, and empathy of the electorate will lead the alliance to victory.

The BJP, meanwhile, is betting on Mr. Autade's charisma and backing from the politically influential Paricharak and Mohite-Patil families.

During the poll campaign, the BJP did not miss any opportunity to predict the fall of the MVA government. At a rally, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said, "Leave it to me on when the government needs to be changed. You all do not worry... People of Pandharpur have the first opportunity to show this government, involved in corrupt practices, its place. Ensure that Autade emerges victorious."

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said, "The one who can dislodge the government is yet to be born. While we don't poke our noses in someone else's business, we don't spare those who interfere in ours."

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said, "The one who can dislodge the government is yet to be born. While we don't poke our noses in someone else's business, we don't spare those who interfere in ours."

# Bombay HC allows Jain temples to deliver food through volunteers

Temple trusts had sought nod to take away parcels during fast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday allowed Jain temples in Mumbai, Pune and Nashik to carry out through



## Steep climb

Darjeeling and Gorkha politics will test the BJP's vision for West Bengal and beyond

The three seats of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal may count for little numerically in the State Assembly of 294 members, but their political significance is a different story. The demand for a separate Gorkhaland State in the hills has singularly driven politics among the Gorkha population for more than three decades now. The agitation has been often violent. In 2017, during the last eruption of violence, the hills were in blockade for 104 days and several people were killed. The BJP's close involvement with Gorkha politics suggests that it has certain plans for the region, which could have ripples in other parts of the country where demands for autonomy or separate States exist. It was in Darjeeling that the BJP got its foothold into West Bengal. From 2009 to 2019, the region sent a BJP member to the Lok Sabha. The BJP's traditional position in favour of smaller States created an affinity for it, but more importantly, the fact that it had little stake in West Bengal politics in general allowed it to be experimental here. Though it never declared in clear terms its support for a separate State, by maintaining an ambiguous stance, it became acceptable to an expanding segment of the hill population. In 2014, then BJP prime ministerial nominee Narendra Modi said he shared the dreams of the Gorkhas, and the BJP later on shifted to a promise of 'permanent political solution'. Home Minister Amit Shah campaigned in the hills and reiterated the promise. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stayed away from campaigning, avoiding the contentious question.

The politics in the hills is framed in antagonistic terms with the Bengali population in the plains. Any concession to the Gorkhas, let alone a separate State, can be viewed unsympathetically by the rest of the population. The two experiments in the past of allowing autonomy to the region under the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council from 1988-2012, and the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration established in 2012, more than mitigating the grievance of the Gorkhas, splintered their politics. The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha which dominated politics in the region is divided into two factions – one led by its founder Bimal Gurung and other by Binay Tamang and Anit Thapa. Ms. Banerjee's TMC is said to be in alliance with both factions, which means little more than creating confusion. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), the party set up by Subhas Ghisingh who started the agitation, is an ally of the BJP. The experiments of alliances and self-governance led to an erosion of trust in local leaders. While Gorkha politics view Bengali leaders of all parties with suspicion, they have bought into the nationalist politics of the BJP to some extent. The BJP has emerged as a serious player in West Bengal and will remain so in the near future. Darjeeling will test its agility and vision, certainly for the State, but probably beyond its borders too.

## Exiting Afghanistan

The U.S. pullout without any settlement leaves the Taliban stronger

By announcing that all U.S. troops would be pulled out of Afghanistan by September 11, President Joe Biden has effectively upheld the spirit of the Trump-Taliban deal, rather than defying it. In the agreement between the Trump administration and the insurgents in February 2020, U.S. troops were scheduled to pull back by May 1, in return for the Taliban's assurance that they would not let terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State operate on Afghan soil. When Mr. Biden ordered a review of the U.S.' Afghan strategy, there was speculation that he would delay the pullout at least until there was a political settlement. But he chose an orderly pullout – the remaining troops (officially 2,500) will start leaving Afghanistan on May 1, with a full withdrawal by September 11. Besides the U.S. troops, the thousands of coalition troops under the NATO's command are also expected to pull back along with the Americans. Mr. Biden's push to revive the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban has hit a roadblock. A U.S.-initiated, UN-led regional peace conference is scheduled to take place in Ankara, Turkey, on April 24. But the Taliban have made it clear that they will not participate in it, and have threatened to step up attacks if the U.S. did not meet the May 1 withdrawal deadline. It is not clear whether the peace conference will go through without the Taliban's participation and what it would achieve even if it goes through without the Taliban.

This leaves the already shaky Ghani government in an even more precarious situation. After September, the government will be left with itself on the battleground against the Taliban. For now, Mr. Ghani has held together the powerful sections of the state and society against the Taliban at least in the provincial capitals. But once the Americans are gone, the balance of power in the stalemated conflict could shift decisively in favour of the Taliban. In the recent past, whenever the Taliban overran cities, U.S. air power was crucial in driving them back. The country is already witnessing a series of targeted killings of journalists, activists and other civil society members opposed to the Taliban. This does not mean that the government is on the verge of collapse. The U.S. has promised that it would continue remote assistance to the government. The role of regional players such as Russia, China and India, which have a shared interest in a stable Afghanistan, will also be crucial in deciding the country's future. But one thing is certain: the U.S., despite all its military might, has lost the war and its withdrawal, without any settlement or even a peace road map, leaves the Taliban stronger and the government weaker. That is an ominous sign.

# The roots of a decentred international order

In the post-pandemic period, developing economies should rise to meet the U.S.-led liberal hegemonic world order



SHELLEY WALIA

The International Institute for Strategic Studies puts the overall estimate of China's military budget at \$230 billion (<https://bit.ly/3sofrDw>). The intentions for global supremacy are apparent, chiefly to outrun the Pentagon. The primary geopolitical rivals, namely Russia and China may possibly provide the strategic and tactical counterbalance to the hegemony of America. Moreover, the international order is under threat of the rising economic power of the BRICS nations, with China dominating in its economic and military capacity.

### Rising powers and an agenda

Though it is a far cry from surpassing the United States in its military prowess, particularly Russia which has no ambitions of a global outreach, it is apparent that the future of global politics requires a significant programmatic agenda in the hands of the rising powers that are aggressively building a parallel economic order envisaging new centres of hegemonic power. It forebodes the final decline of American ascendancy that began after the end of British imperialism in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis (1956) when the knuckles of America led to the withdrawal of Britain and France. Pax Britannica gave way to Pax Americana.

From the Renaissance period onwards, 14th-15th century Europe began its hegemonic ambitions through trade and commerce, taking almost 500 years to colonise and influence nations across the world. The tectonic shifts in the postcolonial era saw the interrogation of Eurocentrism and its biased accounts of the East, especially with the appearance of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*

and Edward Said's *Orientalism* which began to propel freedom struggles against western-centric perspectives inherently inadequate and biased for the understanding of the emerging new world order. It was the Bandung Conference of 1955, a meeting of Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent, that set the schema for the rise of Asia, politically and economically. The confrontational stance was therefore the expected corollary in third world struggles to create a parallel order.

### Dents to American supremacy

Nevertheless, in all likelihood, America will continue to play a prime role in international affairs though its image representing universal brotherhood has sharply declined under the Trump regime, particularly his foreign policy of threatening to withdraw from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change. Furthermore, his bare-faced racist obsession and his handling of the marginalised immigrants has left the democratic world aghast. The rising tide of far-right ultra-nationalism and ethnic purity experienced in the Brexit phenomena, in Trumpism and in the promotion of the right-wing agenda in India, has set in motion the wearing down of liberal democracy. Other threats such as terrorism, ethnic conflicts and the warning of annihilation owing to climate change necessarily demand joint international action where American "exceptionalism" becomes an incongruity and an aberration. This indeed has chipped away at the American global supremacy.

The world is, as a result, witness to a more decentred and pluralistic global order, a rather compelling vision of the empowerment of liberal forces standing up for an international order incentivised by long-term structural shifts in the global economy, indicating the evolving nature of power and status in international politics, especially



cially in the context of the rising impact of Asian Regionalism on international trade and commerce.

### Direction by China

This is the evolutionary path the developing nations are already embarking on, though the current raging novel coronavirus pandemic has retarded economic development and sent many economies such as Brazil, India, Turkey and South Africa into a downward spiral. It is hoped that in the post-pandemic period, these economies would rise to meet the American-led liberal hegemonic world order. With China spearheading Asian regionalism, a serious challenge is possible but there is deep scepticism about China's self-enhancing economic and military greed reflecting its personal economic rise. China must strengthen the opposition to the West through the promotion of regional multilateral institutions. Its self-centered promotion of building its own stature through the recent concentration on principle of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Silk Road project has, indeed, provoked an understandable clash with India and Japan. More than having individual partners or allies, China must embrace and give a push to multilateral affiliations in order to not further exacerbate regional tensions.

Power rivalry in a multipolar world would remain a possibility with military conflict not ruled out. It would be overly optimistic to imagine that the threat of war is behind us, though it can be safely said that it is unlikely. Regional military activity can be seen in

Russia's assertion of power in Georgia and Ukraine, Turkey in the east of the Mediterranean, India's disputes with Pakistan and China's infiltration into India as well as its rivalry within its periphery. History is a witness to nations beginning to flex their muscles once economic rise is assured and recognised across the world. Indeed, the international state of affairs is rather fuzzy and frenzied.

However, the capabilities of the rising economies cannot be underestimated. China and India clearly have the age-old potential to lead as, historically, they have been pioneers of some of the oldest civilisations in the world. Whereas, China's military capabilities must not make China lose its bearings, economically it must spearhead the challenge to the established western world that has ingrained its superiority in the consciousness of the developing world for centuries. China indeed is a valuable bedfellow for the launching of a union which could be a formidable challenge to the West at a stage when multifaceted transnational threats confront the world and need the collective universal attention.

This has implications for the functioning of a civilisation that is not controlled by the indomitable will of one.

### On sharing and treaties

The emphasis, therefore, would be a move towards restructuring and advancement, as well as adopting an oppositional posture as a robust replacement of subservience to western hegemony. The challenges of the 21st century can be met head on through mutual sharing of knowledge and more ground-breaking inclusive treaties.

It is feared that there could be a possibility of a multipolar world turning disordered and unstable, but it is up to the rising nations to attempt to overcome territorial aspirations and strike a forceful note of faith on cultural mediation, worldwide legitimacy, and the appeal of each society in terms of its democratic values. Interestingly, the sun is now setting on the empire and the rising nations are gradually waking up to a new experience of freedom and self-confidence.

*Shelley Walia has taught cultural theory at Panjab University and is the author of *Humanities at the Crossroads*.*

## Vaccine diplomacy that needs specific clarifications

The government needs to convince Indians that the vaccine exports have not been made at the cost of their health



VIVEK KATJU

On March 18, V. Muraleedharan, Minister of state in the Ministry of External Affairs, while responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha on the "Distribution of Covid-19 Vaccine in Foreign Countries", noted, "External supplies are done factoring in domestic production, requirements of national vaccination programme and requests for the 'Made in India' vaccines. These supplies will continue in the weeks and months ahead, in a phased manner, depending on production and needs of the national vaccination programme".

### As an obligation

Mr. Muraleedharan also stated that India was sending these vaccines abroad in the "form of grant, commercial sales of manufacturers GAVI's COVAX facility (<https://bit.ly/3x04yg>)". Eight days later, Mr. Muraleedharan made the same points while answering a question in the Lok Sabha but he also, significantly, added, "The supply to GAVI's COVAX facility is an obligation since India is a member of this multilateral body and also a recipient of vaccines from this body (<https://bit.ly/32l2gb0>)."

As on April 13, India had supplied over 65 million vaccines to 90 countries. Of these more than 10 million were sent as grants, al-

most 36 million on a commercial basis and about 19 million under the COVAX programme. These estimates are based on the Ministry of External Affairs statistics. Taken together, these supplies come to around a month of India's current COVID-19 vaccines production. An analysis of the timing of these supplies is revealing. Vaccines were sent as grants from the third week of January through March; some small quantities have also been sent this month. Vaccines were exported on a commercial basis mainly from end January through February, with a small number in March. The COVAX despatch was made overwhelmingly in March, though some small supplies have continued in April.

**'Why' as a crucial query**  
Mr. Muraleedharan's responses to the Parliamentary questions focussed on 'how' vaccine supplies were sent. They also mentioned that these exports were contingent on requirements of the national vaccination programme, vaccines production and the compulsion arising out of the GAVI membership. They do not however go to the basic question: 'why' send vaccines at all. That is certainly a crucial query for the enormous domestic need for vaccines made each dose precious; hence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis that no vaccine should go waste.

An answer to 'why send vaccines' was given by Mr. Modi during his address to the Raisina Dialogue on April 13 when he said "...we in India have tried to walk the talk" (<https://bit.ly/3gfdDKL>). Mr. Modi followed this vision when he also told the

Raisina Dialogue, "And we must think of the entire humanity not merely of those who are on our side of the borders. Humanity as a whole must be at the centre of our thinking and action." The Modi government also time and again invokes the ancient phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'; Mr. Jaishankar did so at the Raisina Dialogue too. The premise of the ideal 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is no different to that of the Objective Resolution.

These approaches are the idealistic side of the foreign policy coin whose other face is fashioned by cold and ruthless realism and exclusive self-interest. Foreign policy makers often seek to emphasise a country's tradition of altruism and the imperative of enlightened self-interest – in all peoples' safety and prosperity lies our own – to justify the assistance they give to other lands. But they have to ultimately justify it to their own people on the basis of tangible short- or long-term strategic and economic interests. This is particularly so in times of shortages when the welfare of a country's own citizenry is directly and obviously at stake. India's vaccine supplies to foreign countries will be judged by its people on this criterion. How do they measure?

### A side to foreign policy

This desire to be a good global citizen can be traced to the Objective Resolution moved by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Constituent Assembly on December 13, 1946. It noted, *inter alia*, "This ancient land attains its rightful and honoured place in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind" (<https://bit.ly/3ggh1or>). Mr. Modi followed this vision when he also told the

Raisina Dialogue, "And we must think of the entire humanity not merely of those who are on our side of the borders. Humanity as a whole must be at the centre of our thinking and action." The Modi government also time and again invokes the ancient phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'; Mr. Jaishankar did so at the Raisina Dialogue too. The premise of the ideal 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is no different to that of the Objective Resolution.

These approaches are the idealistic side of the foreign policy coin whose other face is fashioned by cold and ruthless realism and exclusive self-interest. Foreign policy makers often seek to emphasise a country's tradition of altruism and the imperative of enlightened self-interest – in all peoples' safety and prosperity lies our own – to justify the assistance they give to other lands. But they have to ultimately justify it to their own people on the basis of tangible short- or long-term strategic and economic interests. This is particularly so in times of shortages when the welfare of a country's own citizenry is directly and obviously at stake. India's vaccine supplies to foreign countries will be judged by its people on this criterion. How do they measure?

### Factors that mattered

The implications of Mr. Muraleedharan's responses show that the government made estimates of the vaccines that could be sent abroad on the interplay of three factors: domestic production, the demands of the national vaccine programme and requests for vaccines manufactured in India. What

is not known is how these factors were collectively addressed in the decision-making process. For instance: did the health authorities come to an independent judgment of domestic demand and base the national vaccine programme on this independent judgment? If this was the case, then the foreign supplies that have been made have been only of those vaccines that the health authorities thought could be spared to be sent outside. In such a scenario, the onus for answering questions on the making of the national vaccine programme would lie squarely with the health authorities. It would obviously not be so if domestic availability of vaccines was reduced by the number that had to be sent abroad on any consideration.

Mr. Muraleedharan clarified that it was obligatory to send vaccines contracted under GAVI's COVAX facility. Experts in international law can weigh in on this assertion because sovereign states can always invoke supreme national interest to over-ride obligations. Certainly, the vaccines sent as grants were voluntary and the commercial contracts of the company concerned could always be disregarded under existing laws. Thus, all in all, vaccines sent abroad were for general foreign policy considerations for which there is some justification. But that is insufficient. Specific clarifications are needed to convince the people that these exports have not been made at the cost of their health.

*Vivek Katju is a retired Indian Foreign Service officer*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

**Needed, direction**  
With the spread of what can be called the second wave of the novel coronavirus in India, there is clearly a lack of commitment toward ensuring the well-being of the common man. There is no guarantee of even the right to get space for the proper and dignified cremation of a loved one leave alone a hospital bed. For the common man, his earnings are under serious threat and with daily living expenses on the rise, fears

are only increasing. There is inappropriate COVID-19 behaviour. The Kumbh mela for example, goes on, unleashing herd spread. Across the country, politicians of every hue have held election rallies in scant regard for safety. Many of us expected sage advice from the Election Commission of India, the Supreme Court of India and even the President of India but have been left deeply disappointed. Human rights are being compromised. The political leadership needs to take responsibility. Each of us must also commit to rise and overcome this situation. Every small action counts if all rise to the occasion.

NAVEEN KHANANCHI,  
Kolkata

'Tika Utsav'. When States are facing vaccine shortage, how far will the 'Utsav' be able to accomplish its objective of vaccinating the most number of people? To overcome the vaccine shortage, the Centre should transfer adequate funds from "PM CARES" to the manufacturers of vaccines so that they can improve the infrastructure at their end. In turn, the Centre can get vaccines at subsidised rates.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,  
Chennai

With some States beginning to implement 'mini-lockdowns', many migrant workers have begun returning to their hometowns, clearly implying their mistrust in the government and the administration. There is still no clarity about whether India has sufficient data about its migrant workers. Even now, the States have to be empowered to draw up an *ad hoc* policy concerning the welfare of migrant workers. We definitely do not want a

repeat of 2020.  
**S. GOWTHAM BHARATHI,**  
Kollamappally, Erode, Tamil Nadu

### The 'Gridman'

I had always been a bit puzzled by the absence of the 'Gridman'; sadly, yesterday, I read the touching report in *The Hindu* about him (Inside pages, April 16). We will miss his tantalising clues.

USHA MUKUNDA,  
Bengaluru

# Meth, gold and arms – a force to stop them all

The Assam Rifles faces the twin challenges of checking smuggling and preventing illegal crossings into Mizoram even while overseeing the much-delayed and ambitious Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. **Dinakar Peri** reports on the paramilitary force



An Assam Rifles border patrol team being briefed near the India-Myanmar border. (Below): A bad road patch on the way to Zorinpui near the India-Myanmar border. The Kaladan Project is under construction along the way. ■ DINAKAR PERI

Dressed in combat uniform and with AK-47 assault rifles slung over their shoulders, Jagriti, Sophie and Lucy are living their dream. The riflemen, posted in Mizoram, are among the 200 women soldiers serving with the Assam Rifles in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir. Training in Assam Rifles for women began in 2013 and formal induction took place in 2014.

Jagriti, who hails from Aravalli district of Gujarat and is posted with 3 Assam Rifles battalion, said: "I have completed four years of service. Earlier, I was deployed in Nagaland, and Jammu and Kashmir, and took part in counter-insurgency operations. Throughout my childhood, I saw my uncle in uniform. It was my dream to join the forces. Now I feel proud."

Jagriti, the most experienced of the three, has also served in Nagaland and along the Line of Control (LoC) at Pharkian Gali in north Kashmir, known for heavy infiltration from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Similarly, Riflewomen Sophie, who hails from Serchhip in Mizoram, and Lucy, from Churachandpur in Manipur, have served in diverse roles. Lucy and Sophie are posted with 46 Assam Rifles Battalion. Lucy, selected in 2017, said, "I took to the uniform after seeing people living close to my native place joining the forces." Sophie had earlier served at Sadhna Pass in Tandhar sector near the LoC. "I was told that I have to go to Kashmir along with other troops. I was happy to serve the country. Our focus was to check women suspected of smuggling goods," she said. In fact, interceptions have revealed that 60% of the conduits are women. Women soldiers are deployed for patrol duties and also at check posts.

Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force, is administratively under the Ministry of Home Affairs and operationally under the Army. Riflemen have played a stellar role in the short time since they were inducted into the force, said several officers to a group of print and television journalists from Delhi who visited Mizoram in March. Recoveries of narcotics and contraband have gone up significantly since riflemen have been deployed, one officer said. The women perform all tasks and work equally with their male counterparts. Most importantly, they can check women carrying contraband, said the officer.

But while the authorised strength is 2,000 riflemen, Assam Rifles has only 200 riflemen. Jagriti's battalion has 16 women soldiers. To increase recruitment, "we need more women to apply," said another officer. To this end, in their current deployment, Lucy and Sophie are training women who come for the pre-recruitment process, organised by the Assam Rifles.

**Rampant drug use**  
The Assam Rifles faces the twin challenges of checking smuggling and preventing illegal crossings into the State which has a porous border and also a



Free Movement Regime up to 16 km for residents on both sides. It also has to oversee the much-delayed and ambitious Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, which seeks to ease India's access to Southeast Asia and also provide an alternate route between the landlocked Northeast and the rest of India. The project is finally nearing completion.

Drug use and smuggling remain the biggest challenges for Mizoram, which shares the longest border with Myanmar among the four north-eastern States that border the Southeast Asian neighbour.

"Narcotics is a big challenge for us," said Brigadier Digvijay Singh, Commander 23 Sector Assam Rifles, responsible for Mizoram. "But we are doing all that is in our hands. In the three months of 2021 alone, we have recovered narcotics worth almost ₹25 crore. As Mizoram is a dry State, cheap and easy availability of drugs has a wide impact on society. Mizoram has the highest percentage of drug addicts," he said.

According to data available with law enforcement agencies, in 2020, 21 kg of heroin and 130 kg of marijuana and Methamphetamine tablets worth ₹47 crore were found. In 2020, 190 smugglers were apprehended while over 53 were apprehended this year.

India is a prime market for illicit opiates originating in Asia. Government estimates say India witnessed a 45% increase in drug hauls between 2011 and 2020. Last year, on June 26, which is observed as International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, an annual anti-drug action plan for 2020-21 for 272 districts was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. In a recent survey conducted by the Social Welfare Department, 27.8% of the total drug users in the State came from Aizawl and the least from Lawngtai (5.9%). The most alarming fact is that most of the respondents of the sur-

vey are educated – nearly 40-45% completed middle school, 35-40% up to high school, and about 10-15% are graduates. Today, more than 200 million people are estimated to be consuming illegal drugs in India.

In Mizoram, 1,645 people have died due to drug abuse since 1984. In 2020 alone, 67 people died, and 268 people were arrested on drug-related charges. In India, about 0.7% of the population is affected by drugs. In terms of the percentage of population affected, Mizoram ranks the highest in the country. Ya ba tablets, produced in the Wa State of Myanmar and which are in high demand in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, are smuggled through Mizoram, local officials said.

Mizoram also acts as a conduit for transshipment of drugs to other parts of the country, Brigadier Singh said. "Assam Rifles is conducting anti-drug campaigns to create awareness about the ill-effects of drugs," he said.

Among the States bordering Myanmar, Mizoram is a peaceful State where "the insurgency ended with the stroke of a pen in 1986" as one official put it. With the other States affected by insurgency, Mizoram is the preferred route for transit, the official said.

A major anti-drug drive was launched by Assam Rifles in cooperation with the State government and local NGOs. As part of the awareness campaign last year, Mizoram Home Minister Pt Lalchamliana inaugurated an anti-drug campaign named 'Ruihilo Do', which means 'war against drugs'. It was organised along with 46 Assam Rifles in three phases.

Recoveries have gone up significantly in the last two years as the anti-narcotic grid has been strengthened by the deployment of women soldiers of Assam Rifles, sniffer dogs, and X-ray machines.

According to official data on recoveries in the Northeast, narcotics including Methamphetamine and Ya ba tablets worth over ₹368.19 crore were recovered last year. In addition, contraband such as gold, gems and teak worth ₹52.61 crore and other miscellaneous items including foreign currency worth ₹16.56 crore were recovered.

Apart from being an easy substitute for alcohol, drugs are very easy to be conceal and carry, said Colonel Viplav Tripathi, Commanding Officer of 46 Assam Rifles, responsible for north Mizoram. "People are doing a lot of business as a small quantity of a drug earns them big money. A Methamphetamine tablet costs around ₹10-20 in the border areas. In Aizawl, it is ₹350-500. And once it reaches mainland India for the festival season, it costs ₹2,000," he said.

Apart from drugs, other major items smuggled include gold, wildlife, weapons, Indian currency and foreign cigarettes. Mizoram is one of the fastest growing hubs of gold smuggling from China, one officer at Aizawl said. More than 8 kg of gold was recovered in 2020, and about 70 kg that was recovered in other parts of country is believed to have gone through Mizoram, said the officer.

Weapon recovery data show that in 2020, around 30 AK-47s, two Chinese pistols, one air rifle, around 600 rifle scopes and about 1.5 lakh detonators were recovered.

#### Local issues

Mizoram has a very high literacy rate of 91.2%, but very few employment opportunities. This is another reason why people turn to smuggling, according to observers.

Speaking to the media at Zorinpui near the border where the Kaladan Project enters India from Myanmar, H. Lalmuansanga, an elected member of the Lai Autonomous District Council, said this was one of the most backward districts of the country and appealed for Central government help. "The Kaladan Project is the gateway to Southeast Asia. Before the project is completed, we need to uplift the local people. The economic condition and education status here is very poor. We need the Central government to concentrate on this area. We need to boost the health system," he said.

Joseph Lalhmingthanga, Secretary, Central Young Lai Association, echoed his views. He said that apart from more recruitment into the Assam Rifles, they also need institutions where skills development is taught and job opportunities are created for the locals. "I hope the

Central government concentrates not only on international strategic policy but also on meeting local demands. Our population is very small and our needs can easily be met with a little attention," he said.

As the long convoy of vehicles meandered its way through the hilly terrain, the road from Aizawl to Lawngtai was black-topped and good for the most part. But the real test of our spines was from Lawngtai to Zorinpui. A common sight as we drove across the State was of people carrying cans and drums of water to their homes. Officials said water supply is a major issue across the State.

#### An ambitious project

After missing a few deadlines and crossing several hurdles, India's ambitious infrastructure project is nearing completion.

Since the February coup in which the military junta overthrew the democratically elected government and took control of Myanmar, hundreds of Myanmarese nationals including policemen crossed over into India seeking refuge. This prompted India to seal all the border points. Despite this, work was on full swing on a bridge at the border at Zorinpui, next to a Bailey bridge built by the Army last year for the project.

Officials dismissed any impact of the coup on the project or any threat from the Myanmar-based insurgent group, the Arakan Army. "Of late, there has been no incident where the Arakan Army has tried to hinder the progress of the Kaladan project. The project is progressing as per the timeline. It will have a huge economic impact on society as well as in the development of south Mizoram," said Brigadier Singh. "It is supported by the local people in Myanmar as development in Rakhine State is not great. So this road will bring a lot of prosperity and business opportunities for those people," he said.

The project has three legs – a 539-km sea stretch from Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar, an inland waterway on the Kaladan river from Sittwe to Paletwa extending to 150 km, and the 110-km land route from Paletwa in Myanmar up to Zorinpui in Mizoram. There is also another 88-km road stretch from Zorinpui to Lawngtai in Mizoram.

The private company RDS is executing the stretch from Lawngtai till the border at Zorinpui. There is another stretch of 109 km inside Myanmar. The Ministry of External Affairs is executing the project and appointed IRCON (Indian Railway Construction Limited) to monitor the project, explained Captain Vikas Sharma near the project site at Zorinpui. IRCON floated the project and tenders were given to EPIL and C&C, a joint venture company, Captain Sharma said.

The area was named Zorinpui, which means 'Mizoram's greatest hope', in 2008 when the Kaladan Project started. The place around the project site is populated by Mizo communities.

The joint venture started work in 2017 but stopped in 2019 as C&C declared bankruptcy. Subsequently the joint venture subcontracted work to another joint venture, RK-RPP, to complete the work between Kaletwa and Zorinpui.

"Five km of the road has been constructed though it is yet to be black-topped. Jungles up to 20 km have been cleared for the road and 10 km of road has been surveyed," said T.S. Negi, project coordinator. Negi said a major challenge is working in the jungles where there are a "lot of mosquitoes".

"We are trying to work with everyone," Negi said adding they have hired labour from villages on both sides of the border as they are economically backward and this is a good opportunity to take them along.

#### Many obstacles

Over the years, the project has seen several interruptions including monsoons, local issues and red tape.

"There was also a break because of the pandemic. There was also some fear because of the Arakan Army but work is now progressing smoothly," said another project official.

In early 2019, in a two-week-long coordinated operation with the Indian Army, the Myanmar Army destroyed 10-12 camps of the Arakan Army which set up camps in the Rakhine area, posing a threat to the project. In November 2019, the Arakan Army abducted five Indians from the project site, one of whom died of a heart attack while in custody.

There is no longer any threat from the Arakan Army. It too is supportive of the project as it wants development in the region, a local official said.

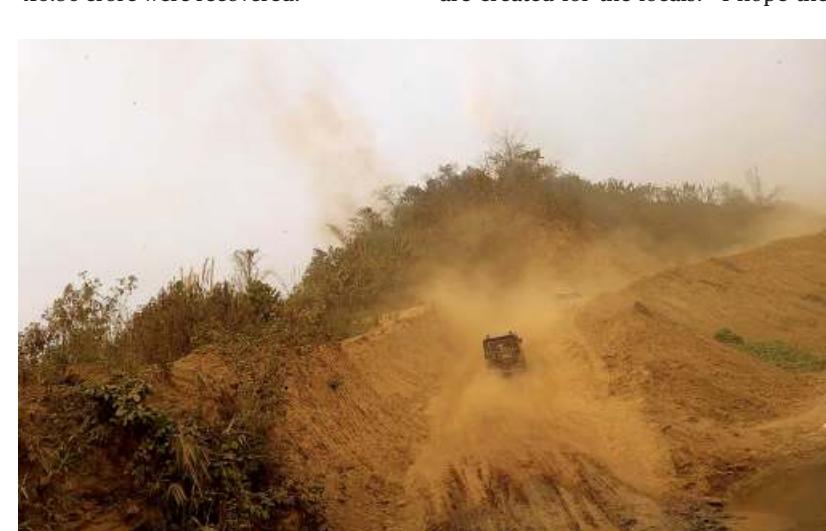
The project was first conceived in 2003 and an agreement was signed in 2008 at an estimated cost of ₹536 crore. The cost has since gone up to ₹3,200 crore and the deadline revised twice. It is expected to be completed by 2023.

The project, which opens an alternative route for India's landlocked Northeast to Kolkata through Myanmar, also opens connectivity to Southeast Asia. Kaladan can be a major push to counter China's influence in the region, another official said. As of now, the work on Sittwe seaport as well as the dredging of Kaladan port are complete. In June 2017, India handed over six cargo vessels to Myanmar. The final stretch is now the roads.

Work is being done to convert the 100-km road on National Highway to four lanes, between Zorinpui and Lawngtai. Further on, from Lawngtai to Aizawl, the existing 246-km National Highway 54 connects to Dabaka in Assam.

The Kaladan Project holds the promise of not only ease of movement but development too in a long-neglected State.

The correspondent's trip was facilitated by the Assam Rifles



FROM PAGE ONE

## Centre promises oxygen for U.P., Chhattisgarh

"22 districts have crossed their reported highest cases in the last 30 days. Raipur, Durg, Rajnandgaon and Bilaspur are the most affected districts. In contrast to the week 17-23 March, in the week of 7-13 April, RT-PCR tests have decreased to 28% from 34% while the antigen tests have increased to 62% from 53%," the Ministry said.

Uttar Pradesh has reported a growth rate of 19.25% in daily new cases. 46 districts in Uttar Pradesh have crossed their reported highest cases in the last 30 days – Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi and Prayagraj are the most affected districts. In contrast to the week 17-23 March, the week of 7-13 April, RT-PCR tests have decreased to 46% from 48% while antigen tests have increased to 53% from 51%.

The reported shortage of hospital infrastructure such as ICU and oxygen supported hospitals beds resulting in difficulty to the public in easily accessing critical healthcare services were discussed in comprehensive detail, requiring an urgent ramping up of hospital infrastructure, the Ministry said.

"Normal" rainfall refers to a range – 96%-104% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 88 cm.

Earlier this week, private weather forecasting company, Skymet Weather, too, said it expected India to get normal rainfall, but said this was likely to be 103% of the LPA, whereas the IMD, on Friday, has estimated it to be 98% of the LPA.

The April forecast, which is based on an analysis of select meteorological factors in March, is updated in May, along with estimates of how the monsoon will perform in different geographical regions.

In 2019, the IMD forecast 96% LPA in April, but India ended up with record excessive rainfall of 110%. In 2020, it said 100% LPA, but India wound up with 109%. IMD officials, however, said it was unlikely there would be such excessive rain this year.

In 2019, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) – defined as a swing in temperatures in the western and eastern sections of the Indian Ocean, where a positive phase usually corresponds to good rains over India – contributed to the excess rains. Last year it was La Niña – the converse of an El Niño and associated with a cooling of the equatorial central Pacific – again a feature correlated with heavy India rains.

Based on the CBI case, the ED also carried out a money laundering probe and attached assets worth hundreds of crores in India and abroad.

## U.K. nod for extradition of Nirav Modi

The CBI had registered the first case against the diamond merchant and others on January 31, 2018, alleging that they cheated the PNB of about ₹6,498 crore by getting Letters of Undertaking (LoUs) issued fraudulently to overseas banks for securing buyer's credit in favour of his three firms.

Months later, the agency filed a charge-sheet against him and 24 others.

Subsequently, in August 2018, the first extradition re-

quest was sent to the U.K. via diplomatic channels.

The second chargesheet was submitted against 30 accused, including some companies, on December 20, 2019, regarding 150 outstanding LoUs that caused a loss of about ₹6,805 crore to the bank.

A report prepared by the Concerned Citizens' Group, led by former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha, has said Kashmiri Pandits, who did not migrate from the Kashmir Valley even at the peak of militancy, "were being continuously ignored in the plans of the government for the economic rehabilitation of the community".

"Blaming the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] for their woes, the Kashmiri Pandit representative said that it used the plight of the Pandits in every election, including in the ongoing West Bengal Legislative Assembly election. However, it does nothing for them, especially for those who never migrated out of the Valley even in the worst of times," the report said.

The report said Kashmiri Pandits had become very insecure in the last few years

## India likely to receive normal monsoon: IMD

Separate forecast being developed for Monsoon Core Zone

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

India is likely to receive "normal" monsoon rainfall this year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said as part of its official April forecast. Except for parts of eastern and north-eastern India, many parts of the country are expected to get "above normal" rainfall, the IMD's models show.

"Normal" rainfall refers to a range – 96%-104% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 88 cm.

Earlier this week, private weather forecasting company, Skymet Weather, too, said it expected India to get normal rainfall, but said this was likely to be 103% of the LPA, whereas the IMD, on Friday, has estimated it to be 98% of the LPA.

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**Wet days ahead:** A person riding a scooter during the monsoon in Mumbai last year. •REUTERS

"This year, the models show a weak IOD and neutral conditions in the central Pacific. It's unlikely there will be over 105% LPA this year," D.S. Pai, a meteorologist with the IMD's National Climate Centre, Pune, told *The Hindu*.

Though the IMD now issues short-term and extended range forecasts – that is, an estimate of rainfall in time frames of three days to 15 days – for the first time this year, it will begin giving monthly forecasts for all months.

It has so far refrained from giving a forecast for June and September, months that are known to be erratic as those are the months when the monsoon enters and exits the country, respectively, posing a challenge to meteorologists. Dr. Pai, however, said the IMD's work for several years in honing the skills of a class of models, called dynamical models, has improved their forecasting abilities over three weeks. "So we can now extend it to monthly forecasts. The overall aim of these models is to be able to accommodate changes in the global weather that will

influence the monsoon. This is more useful for planning," he said.

The IMD also said it was developing a separate forecast for the Monsoon Core Zone (MCZ), which represents most of the rain-fed agriculture region in the country. "A separate forecast for the MCZ will be more useful for agricultural planning and crop yield estimation, etc. In the second stage forecast in May, IMD will issue a separate probabilistic forecast for the MCZ, based on MME [Multi Model Ensemble] system and a new statistical model," said a statement.

Rox Mathew Koll, climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, tweeted that the reduction in rainfall in eastern India has been consistently decreasing. For an adequate monsoon, it is important for a temperature gradient to be present between the ocean and the land.

In recent years, however, the India Ocean has been warming faster than the land surface, reducing this temperature differential and affecting the monsoonal flow.

## We are continuously ignored by govt., say Pandits in Kashmir

Report speaks of alienation among members in the Valley

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

### Mirwaiz Farooq under detention for 20 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SRINAGAR

The Hurriyat Conference on Friday said it was "extremely unfortunate" that even in the month of Ramzan, its chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who is a prominent religious leader in Kashmir, has not been released from his

and "fear they could be targets of a false flag operation before the next general election in India."

"Many alluded to the all-pervasive role of the intelligence agencies in the Valley with access to every militant group through what they called embedded militants. A Valley resident said that there was trouble brewing in the Valley already," the report said.

The report said Kashmiri Pandits had become very insecure in the last few years

"arbitrary" detention.

He was detained on August 4, 2019, a day ahead of the Centre announcing the withdrawal of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, and its bifurcation into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

port said.

The Concerned Citizens' Group visited the Valley from March 30 to April 2.

The group has asked the state and other political actors to address the sense of defeat and anger among the Kashmiris by opening up the democratic space for people to express themselves and also to restore the earlier policy of restraint.

Mr. Mohib, who said he had called National Security

## Two policemen hacked to death in Sukma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SUKMA

## Amid speculation, ex-Minister Natwar Singh meets Modi

A number of issues were discussed during the meeting

KALLO BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

Former External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, triggering speculation.

The former External Affairs Minister, who had been away from public life during the pandemic, was driven to the Prime Minister's residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg for the meeting.

It was learnt reliably that Mr. Modi discussed a num-

ber of issues during the meeting. It lasted for half an hour.

### Royal family

Mr. Natwar Singh, who hails from the royal family of Bharatpur, joined the Indian Foreign Service on April 14, 1953.

The former External Affairs Minister served in Indian missions in Beijing, Washington D.C., Warsaw and was in charge of the NAM summit of 1983 during

## The Hindu Group appoints Krishna Prasad as Group Editorial Officer

The Hindu Group Publishing Pvt. Ltd. (THGPP), publisher of *The Hindu*, *The Hindu BusinessLine*, *Frontline* and *Sportstar*, has appointed Krishna Prasad as Group Editorial Officer effective April 16, 2021. He will lead and enable greater synergies across the different print publications and digital offerings, by coordinating content efforts across all publications of The Hindu Group.



Krishna Prasad

digital life.

Welcoming Krishna Prasad on behalf of the Board of Directors of THGPP, Malini Parthasarthy, Chairperson, THGPP, said, "Krishna Prasad as Group Editorial Officer will play a guiding role on content management and strategy across all the publications, working with the editors of the various publications, digital editors, and the business and technical teams to drive THG's digital transformation. He will help sit-

uate content optimally across publications and ensure synergy between our product offerings. We are confident that he will help us not only build greater synergy in our content offerings but help us raise the bar in building high quality journalism and widen our digital imagination."

On joining the group, Krishna Prasad, Group Editorial Officer, THGPP, said, "For 143 years, *The Hindu* has been India's most trusted newspaper, respected the world over for its independence, credibility and authority. It is a real honour to be tasked with shaping its direction for the digital age, while keeping journalism front and centre. I look forward to working closely with the group's editors and journalists, business and technical teams, to future-proof the institution's awesome legacy."

## IN BRIEF



Prakash Javadekar tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI  
Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar announced on Friday that he had tested positive for COVID-19. "I have tested #COVID positive today. All those who have come in contact with me in the last 2-3 days may please get themselves tested," he said on Twitter. He joins a long list of Cabinet Ministers and senior politicians who have contracted the disease.

### Riyaz Kazi in judicial custody till April 23

MUMBAI  
A court here on Friday remanded police officer Riyaz Kazi, an associate of suspended officer Sachin Waze, in judicial custody till April 23 in connection with the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence and the subsequent death of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hirani. Mr. Kazi, an assistant police inspector, was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on April 11. He was produced before a holiday court here at the end of his NIA remand on Friday.

### 'Give safe passage to Myanmar journalists'

GUWAHATI  
A forum of Manipur journalists has appealed to the State government not to send back three of their Myanmar counterparts who fled the military junta and have taken shelter in Moreh. The All Manipur Working Journalists' Union (AMWU) also asked the government to give the journalists a safe passage to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New Delhi for seeking refugee status. "We are alarmed by the prevailing situation in Myanmar, especially by the fate of the media and mediapersons," they said.

## Former CBI chief Ranjit Sinha passes away at 68

He had tested positive for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) chief Ranjit Sinha passed away in the early hours of Friday. He was 68.

It is learnt that Mr. Sinha, a 1974-batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre, tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday.

In 2017, pursuant to a Supreme Court directive, the CBI had registered a case against Mr. Sinha for alleged abuse of authority to scuttle investigations in the coal block allocation cases.

The mainstay of production will be Bharat Biotech which is in the process of scaling up its Bengaluru manufacturing facility.

"Scaling up a manufacturing facility to be able to make 10 crore doses a month is a huge challenge," Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, told *The Hindu*. "But we've asked all companies to accelerate."

"Haffkine didn't immediately have the facilities to handle live virus and so building those would take time," Ms. Swarup said. "We don't know how long COVID will last but there may be other needs in the future. These are now investments for the future," she added.

"Inter-ministerial teams had visited the sites of vaccine manufacturers in India to get their inputs on how production can be ramped up. In this period, there have been extensive reviews and feasibility studies on the plans being discussed with vaccine manufacturers," the DBT's press statement noted.

On Friday, India administered 2.2 million vaccine doses, much below its peak of April 5 when it administered over 4.3 million doses. So far India has administered 111 million doses, making it the third largest inoculator in the world. However this has covered only 7% of India's population with only 1.1% getting fully inoculated.

## Bharat Biotech to make 6 crore doses by July

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BENGALURU

Two policemen were allegedly hacked to death by unidentified persons in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Sukma district, police said on Friday.

The bodies of assistant constables Dhaniram Kashyap and Purnendu Hamed, bearing injuries inflicted by sharp-edged weapons, were found lying on a road on the outskirts of Bhejji village around 5 p.m. on Thursday, a senior police officer said.

It was learnt reliably that Mr. Modi discussed a num-

ber of issues during the meeting. It lasted for half an hour.

### Royal family

Mr. Natwar Singh, who hails from the royal family of Bharatpur, joined the Indian Foreign Service on April 14, 1953.

The former External Affairs Minister served in Indian missions in Beijing, Washington D.C., Warsaw and was in charge of the NAM summit of 1983 during

the last stint of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Mr. Natwar Singh served as the External Affairs Minister in the first UPA government, headed by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, when India firmed up ties with the United States, which ultimately led to the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal.

The former External Affairs Minister served in Indian missions in Beijing, Washington D.C., Warsaw and was in charge of the NAM summit of 1983 during

the last stint of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

He was appointed the

CBI chief in December 2012 for a fixed tenure of two years. In 2013, during his stint in the CBI, the Supreme Court had observed that the agency was a "caged parrot that speaks in its master's voice". Mr. Sinha had then said: "Whatever the Supreme Court said is correct."

In 2017, pursuant to a Supreme Court directive, the CBI had registered a case against Mr. Sinha for alleged abuse of authority to scuttle investigations in the coal block allocation cases.

A NO-NDE

# Mamata blames BJP for COVID-19 surge

Bengal sees a new high, one more candidate dies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

On the eve of the fifth phase of the Assembly election, West Bengal saw a record 6,910 new COVID-19 cases and 26 deaths, including a candidate, prompting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to blame the BJP for the surge.

Speaking at a public meeting, Ms. Banerjee blamed the spike on "BJP people" from "worst-hit" States like Gujarat brought in for erecting stages and marquees for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's poll rallies.

"I will tell the EC to stop the inflow of outsiders from States like Gujarat who are responsible for the COVID-19 spread in Bengal ... We have nothing to say if the PM or other leaders come for campaigning ... Why should the BJP bring people from worst-affected States to set up podiums and *pandals* for rallies?" she said.

The Trinamool Congress chief said local workers and decorators can be engaged for the purpose after necessary COVID-19 tests.

Ms. Banerjee said the COVID-19 surge in West Bengal could have been under check had the Prime Minister ensured vaccination for every citizen of the State.

"The virus had become weak in the last five-six months. But, the PM did not take steps to vaccinate every citizen. He did not even respond to my suggestion for



**Election fever:** Amit Shah campaigning at Krishnanagar in Nadia district of West Bengal on Friday. ■ PTI

free vaccination for people of the State for political reasons," she said.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with several political leaders held a public meeting and a roadshow at Tehatta in Nadia, and BJP president J.P. Nadda addressed a public meeting at Ketugram in Bardhaman district.

#### CEO holds meeting

The State's Chief Electoral Officer, Aariz Aftab, held a meeting with representatives of political parties on maintaining COVID-19 protocols.

Trinamool Congress leaders, who participated in the meeting, sought clubbing of the last three phases of the election after the fifth round of polling on Saturday.

Another candidate con-

testing the West Bengal Assembly election died after testing positive for COVID-19 on Friday.

Pradip Nandy, 73, a Samyukta Morcha candidate from Jangipur in Murshidabad, was representing the Revolutionary Socialist Party, a constituent of the Left Front. He is the second candidate to die of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. On Thursday, Congress candidate from Shamshergunj, Rejal Haque succumbed to the infection.

At least four other poll contestants have tested positive for the infection.

A number of hospitals in Kolkata are facing a shortage of beds as the number of patients continued to rise. The city recorded about 1,844 new infections in the past 24 hours.

In North 24 Parganas, over 280 companies of

## 1,071 companies of Central forces deployed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India deployed 1,071 companies of Central forces for polling in 45 Assembly seats across six districts of the State on Saturday.

Going by the deployment of the Central armed police forces in the previous four phases, this is the highest-ever deployment. This is also the highest number of Assembly seats going to the polls in any phase in the marathon eight-phase election in the State.

In North 24 Parganas, and there are eight each in Nadia and Bardhaman.

Central forces have been deployed for 16 Assembly seats. Darjeeling has about 142 companies. Purba

Bardhaman, where eight seats are going to the polls, will have 155 companies, and Nadia district, where a similar number of seats are going to the polls, will have 151 companies. In north Bengal, 13 seats are spread across three districts – five in Darjeeling, seven in Jalpaiguri and one in Kalimpong. In south Bengal, 16 seats are spread across North 24 Parganas, and there are eight each in Nadia and Bardhaman.

# Amid poll promises, distress brews in Bengal tea gardens

Minimum wage, land ownership are among key issues

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

In the past few elections, Benam Oraon, a tea garden worker at Nagrakata Tea Estate in West Bengal, attended several election meetings and kept a note of the promises political parties made. In this election, however, he is contesting as a candidate from the Nagrakata Assembly segment in Jalpaiguri district representing an unregistered Progressive People's Party.

"My election symbol is football. This is to give a message that tea garden workers have been treated like a football by political parties," he said.

As the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri go to the polls on April 17, more than 10 lakh workers of tea gardens and leaf factories are set to vote in the 13 Assembly constituencies.

Kiran Kalindi, a trade union leader of the Progressive Planters Workers Union (PPWU), said the wages of tea garden workers stand at ₹202 per day. "Several tea gardens remain closed in the Doobars. The workers are still demanding a notification for inclusion of tea garden workers' wages under the Minimum Wages Act," said Mr. Kalindi.

The issue of a legally binding wage for tea garden em-



**Tough conditions:** Lakhs of workers are caught in a vicious cycle of bondage. ■ REUTERS

ployees has been raised for many years but political parties have shied away from addressing it. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in its manifesto for the Assembly election, has promised to increase the wages to ₹350 per day.

The Trinamool Congress has promised pucca housing to over three lakh permanent tea garden workers through the 'Cha Sundari' project. The party has also promised that 23 tea gardens will come under a renewable project.

The Left parties have said they will place emphasis on addressing the concerns of workers of closed-down tea gardens and take steps for reopening them.

Anuradha Talwar, an activist, said the daily wages were as low as ₹68 during the Left Front regime. After a lot of pressure, it was increased to ₹202. "A similar promise of increasing the wages was made by the BJP in Assam but the owners went to court, and the tea

garden workers were left in the lurch. Unless there is a legal guarantee of minimum wage, the workers will continue to suffer."

The denial of any right to land also makes the workers vulnerable. Though the Cha Sundari project promises houses to workers, they have to get a 'no objection' certificate from the tea garden management, which cannot be easily obtained.

Debjit Dutta, another activist, said as the BJP is keen on the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens, a sense of unease is visible. "The tea garden workers, who came from the States of Bihar and Jharkhand before Independence, have worked in the gardens for generations but cannot prove their citizenship," he said. With no ownership of land and denial of minimum wage, lakhs of workers continue to live in a vicious cycle of bondage, plucking and processing tea leaves, he added.

# In Jorasanko, a prestige battle for the BJP

The seat is the ancestral home of the Tagore family

NISTULA HEBBAR  
JORASANKO

In the tightly poised 11 seats in Kolkata city, where the Trinamool Congress has held ground in the past, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is hoping to make headway this time around, and one of the seats its hopes are pinned on is the ancestral home of the Tagore family, Jorasanko.

The area's fame outside Kolkata is its connection to the Tagore family, the Thakurbari, or mansion of the Tagore family, former home to Nobel laureate Rabindran-



**Rich past:** Jorasanko, home to the Thakurbari mansion, now comprises a mixed population of non-Bengalis. ■ FILE PHOTO

nath Tagore, and currently a museum.

The office of BJP candidate Meena Devi Purohit is, however, in a crowded area just below the incomplete Vivekananda Setu, a portion of which crashed in 2016 in the midst of the last Assembly election. The toll of that acci-

dent was 27 and it injured scores of others. The ill-fated flyover remains incomplete. "If elected, I promise a solution to the flyover issue. I'll make sure that the flyover is either completed or completely removed," Ms. Purohit told *The Hindu*.

She has been a corporator

in Kolkata for almost three decades and many civic issues of the area, rather than any civilisational ones, dominate the fliers she distributes. Both Ms. Purohit and Trinamool candidate Vivek Gupta are non-Bengalis.

Mr. Gupta, owner of the newspaper *Samprag*, was earlier a Raja Sabha MP from Trinamool. The area is now dominated by trading communities from Rajasthan and workers from Bihar, as it is contiguous to Bara Bazaar, once the largest wholesale market in Asia. The three corporators from the area – Sunita Jhaveri, Vijay Ojha and Ms. Purohit – are all non-Bengalis.

Ms. Purohit, therefore, wears the accusation of the

BJP being a "Bohorigato", or a party of outsiders, very lightly. "We are a party founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, who is a son of Bengal. How can we be outsiders?" she says.

Her confidence also stems from the fact that in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the Assembly seat showed a lead of 14,000 votes for the BJP.

The Trinamool's hold on the city's 11 seats is considered firm and the BJP's own realistic assessment is that they are in the fight in only three to four seats, including Jorasanko.

Unlike in other States, the BJP is more of a rural party in West Bengal than urban, and the Kolkata seats are hence a battle joined.

## EC tightens restrictions in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Friday ordered curbs on campaigning for the last three phases of the West Bengal election, including extending the silence period before voting from 48 to 72 hours and barring all campaigning from 7 p.m. to 10 a.m., in view of the rising COVID-19 cases.

The EC said it observed violations of its August 2020 guidelines during the ongoing Assembly polls and warned parties that it would not hesitate in banning such events if it continued.

Unlike in other States, the EC is more of a rural party in West Bengal than urban, and the Kolkata seats are hence a battle joined.

## EC notice to Trinamool leader for 'beggar' remark

It flags 'disparaging' comment on SCs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission issued a notice to Trinamool Congress leader Sujata Mondal Khan on Friday for making a "disparaging" comment on Scheduled Castes, which the EC found to be in violation of the model code of conduct (MCC) in force for the West Bengal poll.

The EC said it received a complaint from a BJP dele-

gate led by Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi about Ms. Khan's remarks in an interview to a television channel. The EC notice said she called the SC community "beggars by nature". Finding her remarks in violation of the MCC and sections of the Indian Penal Code, the EC asked her to explain her stand and why her status as a star campaigner should not be revoked.

## CICSE defers exams for Classes 10, 12

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CICSE) on Friday deferred the Board exams of Classes 10 and 12 in view of the rise in COVID-19 cases across the country.

In light of the surge in COVID-19 cases across the country, examinations for Classes 10 and 12, which were to be held from May 4, have been deferred, said Gerry Arathoon, chief executive and secretary of the CICSE.

"We will closely monitor the situation and review it in the first week of June to take a final decision on conduct of examination," he said.

#### Option for Class 10

"While Class 12 exams will be conducted at a later stage, Class 10 students will get an option to either appear in offline exams later or get evaluated on the basis of fair and unbiased criteria to be developed by the Board," Mr. Arathoon added.

Earlier this week, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) cancelled its Class 10 Board exams and deferred the Class 12 Board exams. Several State Boards have postponed or cancelled their exams too.

## Rahul slams Modi govt's strategy on COVID-19

'Centre banking on divine intervention'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed the Narendra Modi government's strategy and said on Twitter that after imposing a "Tughlaqi lockdown", it is now banking on divine intervention to fight COVID-19.

Mr. Gandhi, who was scheduled to address a press conference on the second wave, however, cancelled it.

Party insiders say he, along with other senior leaders, may do so after a virtual meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Saturday.

"The Central government's COVID-19 strategy – Stage 1- Impose a Tughlaqi lockdown, Stage 2- Ring bells, Stage 3- Sing praises to the Lord," Mr. Gandhi said on Twitter.

On Instagram, he also shared a video clip of his comment from a virtual press conference last year on April 16 on how the lockdown would only allow authorities to ramp up medical facilities but the virus would return.

Mr. Gandhi shared a video of a news clip of hospitals being overwhelmed with fresh COVID-19 cases, in an attempt to convey that



Rahul Gandhi

little was done in the past one year.

#### 'Mismanaged situation'

The Congress has been criticising the handling of the pandemic by the Modi government. Party chief Sonia Gandhi, at a recent meeting with Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States, accused the Central government of mismanagement.

"The Modi government has mismanaged the situation – exported vaccine and allowed a shortage to be created in India. Mass gatherings for elections and religious events have accelerated COVID-19, for which all of us are responsible to some extent. We need to accept this responsibility and keep the interest of the nation above our own," Ms. Gandhi told her party colleagues at the virtual meet on April 10.

Mr. Gandhi said that while there may be a case against a complete lockdown, it was essential to put a stop to mass gatherings that spread the COVID-19 infection.

## Former Law Minister writes to CJI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former law minister Ashwani Kumar on Friday wrote to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other judges of the top court urging them to take note of the worsening COVID-19 situation and issue "suitable directions" to the Centre and State governments to ban political rallies, protest assemblies and religious or festive congregations of more than 50 people.

Mr. Kumar asked the Supreme Court "to issue suitable directions suo-moto in the exercise of its plenary jurisdiction in pursuance of Article 21 of the Constitution".

Noting that the daily cases of infection had crossed 2 lakh, Mr. Kumar said, "It is officially acknowledged and medically confirmed that the life-threatening surge in the number of corona cases, which is highest in the world, is substantially on account of a free run enjoyed by the super-spreading events, including political rallies, religious congregations and festive events.."

Mr. Kumar said that while there may be a case against a complete lockdown, it was essential to put a stop to mass gatherings that spread the COVID-19 infection.

## TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF TELANGANA LIMITED e-PROCUREMENT NOTIFICATION

TSTRANSCO invites tenders under Local Competitive Bidding for Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of PRULS Phase-II works on Turnkey Basis through e-procurement as detailed below.

Specification No. e-EHTT-01/2021-22, Name of Work: Palamuru Ranga Reddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (Phase-II)-Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of the following works on turnkey basis: (i) 400/11KV Uddandapur LSS (incl.1NO.125MVAr Bus Reactor), (ii) 20 Nos. 400V QMDC Bays at 400/11KV Vellore Substation, (iii) 20 Nos. 400V QMDC Bays at 400/11KV Uddandapur LSS to proposed 400/11KV Uddandapur LSS (65Mft) and (iv) 400V QMDC Line from proposed 400/11KV Uddandapur LSS to proposed 400/11KV Uddandapur LSS (34.129 Mft). The interested bidders may enquire themselves in e-procurement at [www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in](http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in). The tender documents are available at the web site [www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in](http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in), Contact Nos.: 040-23223868, 232961000-Ext.3485, 3667, 3563, RO : 0421/2.

SD/- CHIEF ENGINEER / PRLS

## KMML The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd. (A Govt. Of Kerala Undertaking)

# India adds 2.33 lakh cases, 1,338 deaths

Maharashtra leads with 63,729 cases, followed by U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

India registered 2,33,728 new COVID-19 cases as of 11.45 p.m. on Friday, the highest single-day spike so far. As many as 1,338 deaths were recorded on the day.

Maharashtra reported 63,729 infections (accounting for 27% of the new cases) on Friday, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 27,426 new infections and Delhi with 19,486 new cases. Maharashtra also recorded the highest number of casualties (398) on Friday. Delhi followed with 141 new deaths, while Chhattisgarh registered 138 new casualties.

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



**Virus check:** A health worker collecting a swab sample for COVID-19 testing in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The country has so far reported a total of 1,45,21,654 cases and 1,75,673 deaths.

As many as 14,73,210 samples were tested in India on Thursday (results of which were made available on Friday), the second-highest number of tests conducted in a single day. Over 14.9 lakh tests were conducted on September 24, 2020. A total of 26.34 crore samples have

been tested in the country since the beginning of the pandemic.

Around 27.3 lakh vaccination doses were administered in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on Friday in the country, which is 5.83 lakh doses less than what was given in the previous 24 hours. A total of 11,72,23,509 doses had been administered as of 7 a.m. on Friday.

## Union Ministries, PSUs told to make beds available

'Work with State, district authorities'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has advised Central ministries and their PSUs to dedicate their hospital beds for COVID-19 management in States/ UTs and to ensure that details of such dedicated hospitals/blocks be provided to the public.

In a release issued on Friday, the Ministry said, "To substantially augment the hospital infrastructure for effective clinical management of severe COVID-19 patients across the country, the Health Ministry has advised all Central Ministries to issue instructions to the hospitals under their control or their PSUs to set up exclusive dedicated hospital

wards or separate blocks within the hospitals for COVID Care, as was done last year," noted the Ministry release.

It added that these hospitals/blocks should have separate entry and exit points to provide treatment services including specialised care for the confirmed COVID-19 cases. Additionally, these dedicated hospital wards or blocks have to be equipped to provide all supportive and ancillary services including oxygen supported beds, ICU beds, ventilators and specialised critical care units (wherever available), laboratory services, imaging services, kitchen, laundry etc., along with a dedicated health work force.

## Don't conceal COVID-19 data, HC directs Gujarat

Report accurate figures, it tells govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

A day after raising doubts about the actual number of COVID-19 cases and the numbers reported by the State government while hearing a *suo motu* petition, the Gujarat High Court on Friday asked the State to publish actual data on the number of RT-PCR tests conducted and people found positive for COVID-19.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav Karia also asked the government to release the actual number of patients who died of COVID-19 and those who died with co-morbid conditions.

The court observed that transparency was needed to

erase the general conception that the data shared by the government were not accurate. "Accurate reporting of RT-PCR testing with correct figures of positive results should be made public," the Bench said.

### Restore trust

The court said the State had nothing to gain by suppressing real and actual data, saying "suppression and concealment of accurate data would generate more serious problems, including fear, loss of trust and panic amongst public at large".

The High Court advised the government to establish an "honest and transparent dialogue" with the public to restore trust.

## Variants found in 1,189 samples

RT-PCR tests were able to detect them: Health Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Friday said that so far 1,189 samples had tested positive for variants of concern for SARS-CoV-2 in India. These include 1,09 samples with the U.K. variant; 79 samples with the South African variant and 1 sample with the Brazil variant.

The Ministry said the RT-PCR tests being used in India did not miss the U.K., Brazil, South Africa and Double Mutant variants.

"The Indian Genomic Consortium for COVID-19 has shared the genome sequencing data with States multiple times and has so far processed more than 13,000 samples," noted the release.

Minister for Chemicals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

U.K. health authorities have identified 77 cases of the highly infectious B.1.617 variant of coronavirus, first found in India, and has designated it a Variant Under Investigation (VUI).

Public Health England (PHE), which releases weekly updates on the

and Fertilizers D.V. Sadananda Gowda on Friday noted that the Department of Pharmaceuticals and the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority were continuously monitoring the production of remdesivir.

"The production has gone

number of confirmed new cases of Variants of Concern (VOC) and VUI in the U.K., reported on Thursday that the variant first detected in India includes a number of mutations. "The variant, first detected in India, includes a number of mutations including E484Q, L452R, and P681R," the PHE weekly report said.

up from 28 lakh vials per month to 41 lakh vials per month during the last week," he said.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday reviewed the preparedness of AIIMS, Delhi, in the light of recent surge in cases.

## U.P. to shut down on Sundays, patients struggle to find beds

The State recorded 27,426 new COVID-19 cases and 103 deaths over 24 hours, said officials

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Mounting cases of COVID-19 forced the Uttar Pradesh government on Friday to declare a weekly shutdown in both rural and urban areas on Sundays and take steps to increase the number of COVID-19 beds in the city.

COVID-19 patients in Lucknow, meanwhile, continued to struggle to find beds in hospitals. The city was filled with testimonies of how patients were finding it difficult to get admitted in hospitals or secure oxygen supply smoothly in time.

The State recorded 27,426 new cases and 103 deaths in

the last 24 hours, including a massive 6,958 cases and 35 deaths in Lucknow, as per health department figures.

Physiotherapist Ashish Srivastava's father (73), a diabetic with breathing problems, died in a private hospital but it was preceded by the family's desperate attempts to find him a bed in a hospital. Despite running around with an oxygen cylinder supporting the septuagenarian in a private car, the family alleged they failed to find a hospital that admitted him as hospitals demanded a COVID-19 report first or cited lack of beds.

Mr. Srivastava said he

dialled the COVID centre here for three-four days but they did not admit his father, who had tested positive.

"We kept waiting outside the hospital with the oxygen. Despite registering several times at the COVID centre, he didn't get the bed," said Mr. Srivastava, adding that no officials offered help despite their pleas.

### Hospital negligence

Retired district judge Ramesh Chandra also suffered a tragedy as his wife died with COVID-19 symptoms and was allegedly not admitted to any hospital.

He alleged he was given

false assurances of help by the officials leading to wastage of crucial time.

His wife died due to the negligence of the administration, alleged the retired judge. The couple had been administered Covaxine shots but still ended up with symptoms. Mr. Chandra says he first took her to a government hospital but they said they could not accommodate her. "They made us wait for six-seven hours and told us to take the patient away. It would be at our own risk if we let her stay there, they warned us," he said.

Patients and their kin are also dialling the emergency services of the U.P. police as they struggle to find beds in hospitals or get tested.

before approaching a major private hospital where he was told they did not carry out any COVID test. He says he made calls to the numbers provided by the administration but nobody came home with medicine or admitted her to the hospital.

"They kept us hanging. She died at home. They left her to die. Had they told us they can't arrange anything, I would have made alternate arrangements elsewhere in Gonda district," he said.

Patients and their kin are also dialling the emergency services of the U.P. police as they struggle to find beds in hospitals or get tested.

## Researchers propose method to treat blood clots after jabs

They outline how it resembles a reaction to heparin

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN  
CHENNAI

The U.S. on April 13 paused the use of Johnson and Johnson's vaccine following adverse reactions in a few vaccinated persons while investigations are on to understand the mechanism of the rare reaction better. This followed the fact that six people in about 7 million vaccinated with J&J's vaccine developed blood clots in the days following vaccination.

A similar adverse reaction to AstraZeneca's vaccine has been observed in rare cases. In this situation, a German and Austrian group, led by Andreas Greinacher of University Medicine Greifswald, in Germany, has announced a partial understanding of this mechanism and a possible method of treatment.

Several countries have set age limits for the use of the AZ vaccine.

Researchers have come closer to identifying the reason for the blood clotting events, seen in rare cases,



The AstraZeneca vaccine is named Covishield in India.

following vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine.

The researchers differentiate the blood clots arising from vaccination from HIT and have also outlined a way to test patients exhibiting the worrying symptoms and to manage the condition. They have developed a screening assay to determine whether the person has developed these particular antibodies.

The researchers advise first ruling out heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and then testing for vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) followed by specific treatment of the condition with immunoglobulin.

thrombocytes and activate them to form clots which could eventually block the blood vessel (thrombosis). There is an accompanying decrease in the free platelets (thrombocytopenia).

The researchers are not sure whether it is the vaccine that is causing the reaction or it is due to some factor in the person's constitution.

In two separate papers published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, a group of researchers from Norway and another from Austria and Germany have outlined how this adverse reaction resembles a reaction to heparin – a blood thinner.

Heparin can induce a condition where the platelet number dips and blood clots form. This is known as heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT).

After vaccination, the vaccinated person develops specific antibodies which can bind to the platelets or

## NSA against three for selling COVID drug at higher rates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The police in U.P.'s Kanpur have said they will slap the National Security Act (NSA) against three persons who were arrested on charges of allegedly smuggling and selling Remdesivir, an injectable drug used in the treatment of COVID-19, at rates higher than in the market.

The recovered injections, which cost around ₹5,400 each did not have any batch number, the STF said.



Adar Poonawalla appeals to Biden

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer, Serum Institute of India (SII), on Friday tweeted an appeal to U.S. President Joe Biden seeking lifting of the embargo on U.S. export of raw materials, which, he said, was affecting its production of COVID-19 vaccine.

He said: "If we are truly unite in beating this virus, on behalf of the vaccine industry outside the U.S., I humbly request you to lift the embargo of raw material exports out of the U.S. so that vaccine production can ramp up. Your administration has the details." The SII is making the AstraZeneca vaccine Covishield.

The appeal comes when the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday urged countries in the southeast Asian region to apply all tools to prevent further infections and save lives.

**'Worrying trends'**

"Cases are rising for the past several weeks. These are worrying trends as we continue to see opening of societies and emergence of variants. Basic public health measures remain the foundation of pandemic response and we need to reinforce them. We need to apply all the tools we have, and apply them together,"

## 70% of trains operational now: Railways

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Railway Board Chairman and CEO Suneet Sharma on Friday said 70% of passenger train services were currently operational, and no State had yet asked the Railways to stop services amid a surge in COVID-19 cases.

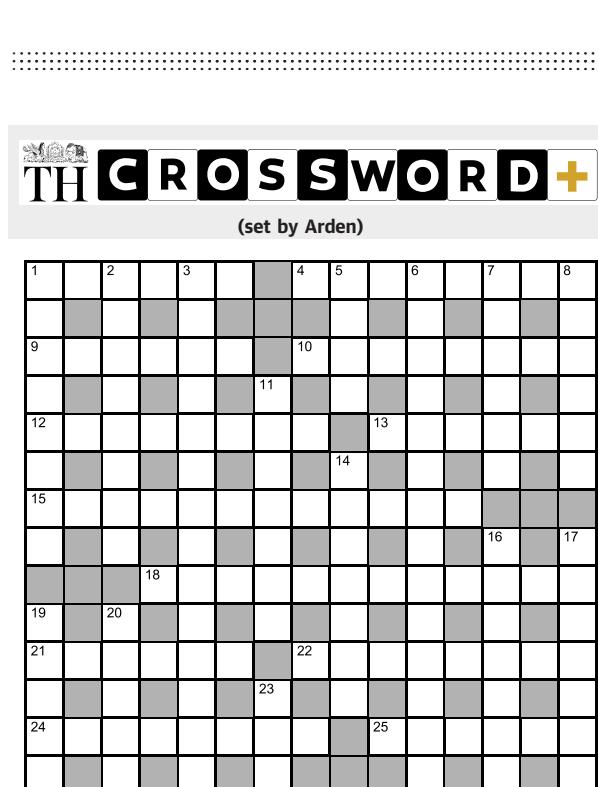
"I assure you that there is no dearth of services, the situation is quite normal..." Mr. Sharma said during a press conference. He added that the Railways had put up all details on the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation website.



Solution to puzzle 13223

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

- 15 The establishment in place, everyone comes in (12)  
18 Doctor Hammond Stein gets a reprimand (12)  
21 Get on, fix bait inside (6)  
22 Song of songs able to amuse when heard (8)  
24 He refuses to strike – pitch outside (8)  
25 Died – one's nameless at the rim (6)  
26 Honestly done, or not so honestly done (2,3,3)  
27 Time taken to go through high command (6)
- DOWN  
1 Left it – involving artist for painting (8)  
2 Granite's broken, extremely cross (8)  
3 Standard tools? (6,3,6)  
5 Rising star gets a flower (4)  
6 Rebuilt the tattered home, has the best equipment to fight (5,2,3,5)  
7 Make things hard for boy to support girl (6)  
8 Swelling comes down over the years (6)  
11 Happiness buried under ice by spoil sport (7)  
14 Moral make up of the Indian state (7)  
16 Bill, Harry, Paul follow me in admitting guilt (3,5)  
17 See the real picture, part of it is exquisite (8)  
19 Say no to limited editions (3-3)  
20 Finally, time to support a titan (2,4)  
23 Separated himself – at heart is a rogue (4)



### ACROSS

- 1 Second of April every year, that's fine (6)  
4 Dance with a Kuwaiti in desert (8)  
9 Rule, say, kept in cold storage (6)  
10 Soldier, is ahead by small number (about five hundred) (8)  
12 Controlled some of them from there in Edinburg (6,2)  
13 Gullible people are crazy from top to bottom, like direction to follow (6)

## FAITH

### Songs of devotion

The Thevaram hymns are songs of devotion that are the outcome of divine inspiration and hence remain relevant to sincere devotees who wish to seek God. Among these, it is held that Siva graced and granted that the songs of the saint devotee Karaikal Ammaiyan would spread the cause of Saivism and foster Siva devotion among people, pointed out Selvi Lemuria Manickam in a discourse. From Sekkizhar's account of her story, she emerges as a woman devotee with extraordinary viveka that makes her fully aware of the hurdles to true devotion. So she seeks a rare boon from Siva, to be granted to live as a mere skeleton without the physical frame. In this wish is subsumed the jnana that transcends the sense of pride in one's physical appearance and inherent achievements and to aim for the ultimate goal, to be filled with the everlasting longing to be with the Lord. No wonder Sekkizhar records that the terrestrial and celestial worlds celebrate when Siva grants her wish.

Living in a skeletal frame, she decides to visit the Lord in Kailasa. Not willing to climb the mountain with the feet, she walks on her head and hands all the way up. Parvati asks Siva about this strange display of love. Siva says, "She is going to spread the tenets of Saivism to the world." He addresses her as 'Ammaiye' meaning mother. Ammaiyan is the title given exclusively to her by Siva. She falls at His feet and the boons she asks are pointers to mankind. She desires to cherish the undying bliss of devotion to Siva. She also wishes not to have any further births. In case she has to be born owing to karma she wants to never forget the love for Siva. Finally she wishes to remain at His feet and be an eternal witness to His renowned cosmic dance.



## Instapick

**KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature:** Visitors to the New York Botanical Garden are being treated to monumental floral sculptures by Yayoi Kusama, as part of *KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature*. The 92-year-old Japanese artist's work relates in different ways to the natural world. One of the artworks debuting at the show is this 16-foot dotted octopus called *Dancing Pumpkin*. Till October 31. [@nybg](#)



## Talking point

**World Earth Day:** US President Biden's World Leaders Summit is on April 22, two days after the Global Youth Climate Summit in collaboration with [earthday.org](#). While this year will see activities around the theme, *Restore Our Earth*, what is significant is the growing involvement of young climate activists around the world. Don't miss the Earth Day Live digital event, 9.30 pm IST, on [earthday.org](#)



JANE DE SUZA

My publishers are demanding a decent picture for my author profile. They have rejected my attempt at passing off a 14-year-old photo as recent. That's when my teenage niece, most generously, offers to peel herself off her phone and take me outdoors to photo-

tograph me haloed against the sunset from a nearby hilltop.

So, here I am – struggling up this hill, huffing, hair soggy, *kajal* running ditchwater streaks down my cheeks – while she cheers me on, running ahead in her shiny pink shoes. Sweet child!

She chirps, "Meanwhile, why don't you

film me running up the hill?" Five seconds later: "Just for peeps to see how I'm helping you out." Five seconds after that: "Quick, now you've lost me. I'm so far ahead. Wait, I'll run back."

She runs up and down seven times, while I stumble behind her, filming the video. "No, no, my ponytail isn't swinging enough. Again!" I manage to get grass, pebbles, discarded chips packets, and on occasion, sky – when I go sprawling. She coos, "I love you. You're totally saving my face." Put like that, I have to save her face, even though it's through filming her back. Remember how selflessly she offered to click my pic.

"Oh, sorry, you need to rest. No more vids!" says this golden-hearted child. I'll casually lean against this tree. Unposed pics are so it! Wait, does my neck look long enough?"

I assure her it looks swanlike. "Eww, is it curved? Click again!" After 15 tries, she bursts into tears. "This just isn't my right profile. You have to take it from the right side." Huh?

"My left side is my right side. Please please. I could never live down the shame if I post this."

I give her 23 different versions of her left

right side. She protests each time. "My eyes look manic, my legs are sooo fat, my smile is demented, my stomach looks like I'm having hippo babies – wait, I'll suck in my breath, now from a 45 degree angle – didn't you do geometry? Lean more... 1-2-3 shoot!" Finally: "Nooo! I look like I'm laying an egg! You secretly hate me, what did I ever do to you to get these awful pictures?"

We do make it to the hilltop and while I collapse into a gasping, retching bundle, she clicks a pic. "Just as promised!" She trills happily.

I look like an axe-murderer or worse, his victim.

"No problem," she says, "I'll put filters. Deer eyes and rabbit whiskers. No one will even recognise you."

"It's an author pic. I need to be recognised."

"Now!" she shrieks. "The sun is setting. Capture me pushing it into the horizon. Now! Now! Eww, you missed it. I'm pushing nothing into nothing. Omg, I look mental. How will I ever go out in public again?"

Not with me, for sure!

Where Jane De Suza, author of *Flyaway Boy*, pokes her nose into our perfect lives.

## Pick of the week

**Concerts, stand-up, other events and the articles you just can't miss.**



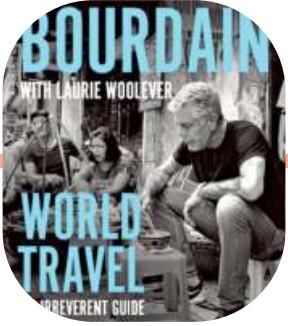
### Go traditional

From classic *davarah*-and-coffee filters to Kerala *urulis* – interest in traditional products, especially for the kitchen, has been growing in recent years. Now, Chennai residents can browse over 410 such products sourced from across 14 states, as Bengaluru-based *Zishta* opens in the city today. With revival stories and a keen eye for hand craft, the brand's popular picks include cast iron skillets and *eeyaa chombu*, the tin utensil used to make *rasam* that's trending on the 'gram. The newest addition is Manipuri pottery. Buy at *zishta.com*.



### World Heritage Day

Whether it is the Harappan civilisation or Sangam literature, heritage enthusiasts are encouraged to show off a bit on April 18. Dubbed 'India's first Heritage Olympiad' by arts consulting enterprise Cultre, this hour-long competition is open to participants at [heritageolympiad.com](#). ₹299. There's more on World Heritage Day: 10 days after receiving the mummified remains of 22 pharaohs and queens in a grand parade, the **National Museum of Egyptian Civilization** has prepared 14 **mummies**, ready for visitors from April 18.



### Bourdain's last book

Chef and TV host Anthony Bourdain's new book will be published posthumously. Co-authored by his long-time assistant Laurie Woolver, *World Travel: An Irreverent Guide* covers 43 countries and has Bourdain's recommendations for restaurants and other attractions. On April 20. Back home, celebrities like Kareena Kapoor Khan, Malaika Arora and Karan Johar are cooking up a storm on the new show, *Star vs Food*, which dropped on April 15. DiscoveryPlus.



### Prince Philip on Audible

While only 30 royal family members are permitted to attend the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral service on April 17, it will be broadcast on a number of networks. Prince Philip was known for speaking his mind and the last week has seen his memorable quotes and funny moments shared on social media. Now audiobooks streaming service, *Audible*, has got in on the act, with a list of titles on the late Prince and the royal family. There's *The Wicked Wit of Prince Philip and Young Prince Philip: His Turbulent Early Life*, for starters.



### Dial N for navratra food

The newly opened Dhansoo *Cafe* has a navratra menu that includes *saboodana poha*, *alo chaat*, *sama ke chawal ki kheer* and more, all put together by chef Ashish Singh at Pacific Mall, Tagore Garden, Delhi; on until April 22; 11 am to 9 pm. 1911 At The Imperial is doing *satvik* cuisine in a *thali*, with *pethe ki sabzi*, *kuttu ke pakode*, *kaju badaam ki sabzi*, and more. On until April 21; 12 noon to 8 pm. Café G, Crown Plaza Today Gurugram also has *Navratri Vrat-Bhoj delicacies*. On until April 21; 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, 7 pm to 10:30 pm.



### Ready for South Korea?

Join an online discussion by *The Hindu* on *The Rising Korean Wave in India*, and how this will influence post-pandemic travel to South Korea. Panelists include singer and K-beauty expert, Chinmayi Sriprada, chef Vikramjit Roy, lifestyle content creator Scherezade Shroff, and moderator Rathi Jaffer, director, InKo Centre. Everything from K-drama, K-beauty, Kimchi fried rice, even the Tamil-Korean language connect will be explored. In association with Korea Tourism Organization. April 22, 4 pm. Register at [bit.ly/3tr1aqQ](#)



### Brides take note

With weddings and jewellery shopping continuing during the pandemic, *Tanishq* (from the Tata Group), has decided to get community specific. *Rivaah*, a new jewellery line, targets brides across the country with over 400 themed pieces inspired by Indian embroidery and traditions. So, in addition to the *maang tikka* and *addiyam* there are *thalis* for different sub-communities in the South, and staples like the *maavinkai haara* (mango motif necklace) for the Kannada bride. Details: [tanishq.co.in](#).



The Submersible EcoPangaea Tourbillon GMT 50mm Mike Horn special edition and (below) explorerMike Horn ■ GETTY IMAGES

## Horn and a hydrogen-fuelled future

In a post-pandemic world where sustainability is on everyone's mind, Mike Horn shows us nothing is impossible if you set your mind to it

MITRAJIT BHATTACHARYA

Isolation, social distancing... terms we've become intimately familiar with now have been part of Mike Horn's lexicon for almost 25 years. The South Africa-born Swiss adventurer is renowned for pitting himself against the most challenging of endeavours (often alone), be it swimming the Amazon River or climbing 8,000+ metres of the Gasherbrum I and 2 peaks sans supplementary oxygen. All this with sustainability at its heart (bringing attention to melting ice caps and deforestation). It may be far-fetched to draw parallels between what Horn has been doing and what we dealt with during the pandemic. "I think the pandemic has given us time to take a step back and think about where we are headed," Horn says. "We can make big changes in the 30,000-32,000 days that we live. All seven billion people on the planet have to decide that we want our world to

change." Edited excerpts from an interview.

### How involved is Panerai in giving shape to your vision of exploration?

Let me tell you a story. When I sailed to the Philippines, I had to change the axe of my radar. The piece of metal had taken me 27 times around the world, helped me cross Antarctica, the North Pole, sail to the Amazon, to the Sundarbans... and I thought, 'Let's make a watch out of it'. I gave the problem to Panerai [with whom he's been associated since 2001], saying, 'You make amazing timepieces but the metal has no story to tell. This piece has planted five million trees, cleaned beaches, taken plastic out of the ocean. It has taken me on explorations and has always brought me back alive.' Jean-Marc Pontroué [CEO] loved the idea. That's how the five-piece Submersible EcoPangaea Tourbillon GMT 50mm Mike Horn edition was born. That also

started the move towards building a watch that is 100% recycled.

### At last month's Monaco Ocean Week, you spoke about hydrogen as the energy for the future.

Hydrogen moves the planets, so it can help us conserve ours. Carbon emission is our problem. Why not look at what we have all around us? Last year, when I participated in the Dakar car rally, I was criticised because, after crossing the North Pole [where I brought attention to the melting ice caps], I jumped into a diesel-powered car and drove across the desert. But I was there to see how we could change rally vehicles [Horn's project, Gen-Z, aims to enter a competitive hydrogen-powered car in the 2023 rally]. When I first launched the research programme, everybody said

### How did you get interested in high latitude sailing?

It is the feeling of going somewhere that nobody else has been! In 2019, my custom-made boat, Pangaea [which uses a combination of solar and hydrogen fuel cell power], became the first to get to the highest point in the polar ocean. The tough part of high latitude sailing is that you are never sure of coming back alive. We need to have all the information to make decisions, so as to ensure the safety of the vessel and the lives of the crew.

### Last year, you sailed to Greenland and Svalbard.

It was the first time we went back to the polar region after the pandemic broke. The purpose was to research the impact of lockdown on the lives of whales [as they were not being hunted during the pandemic]. We recorded whale songs and had the opportunity to decode many patterns related to their behaviour and to compare them [before and after Covid-19].



## Green room



### Dial up brilliance

Bejewelled timepieces are the flavour of the season, writes Riyaan Jacob George – from Bulgari's daring colour combinations in its high jewellery cuff watch, the Serpenti Misteriosi Cleopatra (pictured) to Piaget's avant garde Limelight Gala, with its rainbow hues. Track the trend and read the full story on [weekend.thehindu.com](#).

NEHA BHATT

In the past year, several anthologies, such as *Unpaused* and *Paava Kadhaigal* have made it to OTT platforms, following the tried-and-tested formula of four short films under one umbrella, loosely tied together by a common theme. In the latest anthology, *Ajeeb Daastaans*, four stories are built around fractured relationships – and unusual ways of navigating them.

In Shashank Khaitan's *Majnu*, Jaideep Alawat and Fatima Sana Shaikh find themselves in a knoty love triangle at a brooding *haveli*. In Neeraj Ghaywan's *Geeli Puchi* (Sloppy Kisses), the strongest film in the anthology, two women (Konkona Sensharma and Aditi Rao Hydari) who work in a factory are drawn to each other as they grapple with their widely diverse identities.

In Raj Mehta's dark drama *Khilna* (Toy), actors Nushrratt Bharuccha, Abhishek Banerjee and child actor Inayat Verma stumble through toxic alleys of elite apathy as their days living in a shanty take a bizarre turn. In Kayoze Irani's quietly poetic *Ankahi*, Shefali Shah and Manav Kaul strike a special connection that unfolds in unexpected ways. The films travel a full arc, with biting twists in the tales. Some are subtle, others startling.

Produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Entertainment, the contrasting stories are located in a variety of lived-in spaces as the characters work through strands of dysfunctional love, jealousy, prejudice, oppression, loneliness, revenge.

#### Exploring patriarchy

Where did the ideas come from? For Ghaywan, the film was a track that was on his mind when he was writing his first film, *Masaan*, many years ago. "But it was too *ajeeb* (strange) for *Masaan*, so I thought here is an opportunity for me to make something different and I jumped at it," says the director over a Zoom interview. Hydari, who appreciated the sensitivity of Ghaywan's first film, adds, "Saying yes to the film was a no-brain-



Netflix's latest anthology explores themes like dysfunctional love, prejudice, loneliness and revenge

# Ajeeb Daastaans & the four shorts formula

er. It was a world and a working style that was very different and I wanted to experience a film like this." The film, says Ghaywan, gave him the chance to talk about the largely unexplored intersection of caste, class, gender, sexuality in India. "For example, Koko (Konkona) and Aditi's characters come from different backgrounds, yet their experience of patriarchy is the same," he says.

One of the *ajeeb* elements he wove into the film was playing with the classic idea of a manic pixie dream girl through Hydari's character. "I feel it's such a male gaze and is so prevalent and I wanted to subvert it," he says. Prep involved several discussions

on the history of politics and caste to let it seep into the actors. Sensharma was spotted on set reading Yashica Dutt's *Coming Out as a Dalit*, but Ghaywan also relied heavily on the raw energy of the actors, both of whom he said have a different process. "Koko wants to understand every bit of it and Aditi's process is more being in the moment."

**Across the divide**  
In *Khilna*, that also explores the dynamics of class divide, the title runs as a telling metaphor through the story. What attracted Raj Mehta of *Good Newwz* to the film is that it could be interpreted in many ways. "Sumit (Saxena), the writer, built the story around



Writers are going to change the game and directors have to take it forward. The audience has definitely evolved and you can't just give them the old dated stuff

RAJ MEHTA, DIRECTOR

(Clockwise from left) Stills from *Geeli Puchi*, *Majnu* and *Ankahi* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



a real incident. It's about different kinds of people trying to survive.... They have common traits and that blurs the differences between them," he says, adding that it was a tricky subject to navigate, especially with a child at the centre. His lead actor, Bharuccha, was taken in by the ending. "I did not see it coming. It's a very bold, brave move and we did it without toning it down," she says. Prepping for her role of a domestic worker meant she had to shoot herself mopping the floor at home and send it to Mehta to prove she could do it. "I like doing a role I haven't done before. It was different and challenging. The method to my madness is just to have fun with it," says the *Pyaar Ka Punchnama* actor.

"The way I look at the world has changed a bit. My sensitivity towards urban apathy has changed, one of my favourite subjects that I keep exploring. I got to see it first hand," says Ghaywan.

Has it then become easier to tell stories that push the boundaries of Hindi cinema? "That Karan Johar and Netflix have come together to make a film like this is a healthy sign of changing times and how there is freedom to make these kinds of films," says Ghaywan. The anthology, he says, shows that "there is no black or white. There are shades of everything in our lives."

*Ajeeb Daastaans* is now streaming on Netflix

Watch the cast in conversation with Neha Bhatt on weekend.thehindu.com

#### FOOD SPOT



RAHUL VERMA

One of the best potato curries I have ever eaten was at a Jain household, decades ago. The potatoes were soft but not mushy and had soaked in the flavours of the gravy. I later asked what the masalas were, assuming that there would be a long list. Nothing but *hing* (asafoetida) and cumin seeds, I was told.

Since then, I have been a fan of Jain food, cooked without onions and garlic, and usually with just two or three spices.

Last week, stuck at home and thinking wistfully about the next meal, I was struck by a yen for *satvik* food. I did some research and found a restaurant called Jain Annapurna Shudh Satvik Rasoi in Rampurash Colony, just across the border from Vivek Vihar in East Delhi (Phone number: 9810836525). I was impressed by all that the menu offered: It had some nice veggie dishes served with the bread of your choice: *lachha* parathas, rotis smeared with ghee, or plain rotis.

We asked for the special masala *puri* (*tihali* ₹216), *mung dal khichri* in desi ghee (₹152), *muttar ki sabzi* with tomatoes and *zeera* aloo with *lachha* paratha (₹172), and *masaledar lauki tamatar ki sabzi* with *zeera* aloo and ghee roti (₹172).

I started with the masala *puri*. A mix of spices had been kneaded into the dough. The fragrance and taste of *ajwain* in it gave the *puri* a nice punch, and I had it with the light potato *curry* and the *muttar ki sabzi*, which was mildly sweet and soft, but not soggy. The ghee-topped *lachha* paratha was soft and



## Light fare for warm days

Jain Annapurna Shudh Satvik Rasoi home delivers fresh food with minimal processes and spices



*Mung dal khichri* with pickles and chutney; *masala puri* with *lauki ki sabzi* and *rasedar aloo*

The food was mostly cooked with *hing*, *zeera*, red chillies and *desi ghee*, said Ritu Jain, of Jain Annapurna Shudh Satvik Rasoi. She wouldn't say what the masalas in the *puri* were

called *sannata*, prepared with curd collected from different households for a village feast. This curd dish used to be so sour that it evoked total silence – or *sannata*! The *raita* didn't reach the *sannata* level but my lips stayed puckered for quite a while.

I, however, enjoyed the food so much that I called up the *rasoi* and spoke to the lady in charge: Ritu Jain. The food was mostly cooked with *hing*, *zeera*, red chillies and *desi ghee*, she said. She wouldn't tell me what the masalas in the *puri* were (it is a family secret, she said) but agreed that there was an *ajwain* in it. How was the *khichri* so light? "Haath ka kamaal hai (It's all in the hand)," she replied. I give her a big hand.

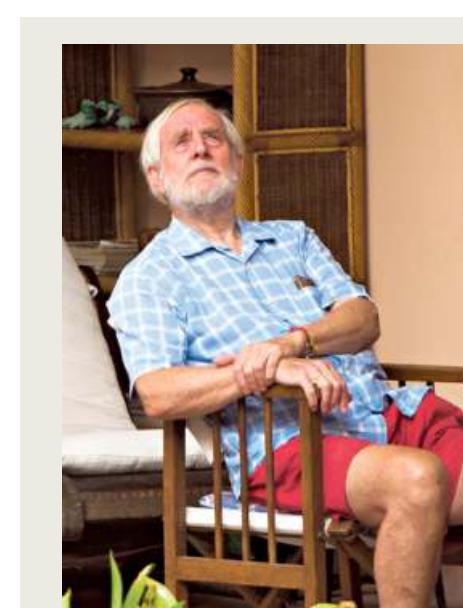
The writer is a seasoned food critic

layered, and went really well with the potato, cooked with tomatoes in a dry preparation.

The *lauki* – bottle gourd – was pretty amazing too. The gourd had taken in the flavours of the light gravy, which had been simmered with tomatoes, cumin seeds

and chillies. The rotis were soft, and made softer still with a dab of ghee. The *mung dal khichri* was the grand finale. It was deliciously light, though creamy and aromatic.

What didn't work was the *raita*, which had turned too sour. It reminded me of a dish



COSMO BROCKWAY

There is nothing more poignant in a faraway land than stumbling across a remnant of your native culture, marooned thousands of miles away. I first encountered this sensation as a budding young travel writer one foggy Christmas outside Delhi. Turning up the drive, lined with Traveller Palms and pecking Guinea Fowl, a rose-pink bungalow came into view. Under the pillared portico, stood a tall Englishman with a polka-dot cravat and twinkling eyes. My host, Martin Howard, was an exuberant, Kipling-quoting, salty-humored old India hand, who, with his elegant wife, Annie, lived here, at the delightfully-named Tikli Bottom. Preparations were in full swing for a Christmas party. Annie, breezy in turquoise block print and beaming welcome, thrust some tinsel into my hand with the request, 'Do decorate the camel'.

The real joy of Tikli Bottom, in many ways an English estate with tropical fronds, was the community that the Howards created around them. The bungalow's interiors were airy and serene, thanks to Annie's eye, but they were also open to the much-loved local children, who bounced on the sofas and jumped in the swimming pool, like flocks of starlings. The couple had opened Tikli to paying guests and visitors came from New

(Clockwise from left) Martin Howard, and snapshots from Tikli Bottom • KARAM PURI/GLORIOUS HOTELS OF INDIA



Remembering Martin Howard, naval captain and raconteur, who hosted everyone from backpackers to retired prime ministers at his Gurugram *haveli*

## The squire from Tikli Bottom

COSMO BROCKWAY

York, Edinburgh and Mumbai, including at least one member of the British Royal Family – all fascinated by this unique swansong of the Raj on the rural fringes of Gurugram.

Martin, who was 84 when he passed away last month, was born into a farming family on the East Coast of England. After a successful career as a naval engineer, he came to Delhi and landed a coveted role as Naval Advisor to the British High Commission.

Martin had married Annie, as his second wife, on a snowy day in

December 1979. The couple took to life among the Delhiwallahs and expats with aplomb. A directorship at the Delhi outpost of Rolls Royce kept them in India after Martin's retirement from the British Navy and the subcontinent became their permanent home.

**Farmer at heart**  
Their friendship with Anne Wright, of

Kipling Camp fame, led to the Howards buying land near the Haryana village of Teekli and enabled Martin's dream of returning to his farming roots. They built what Martin liked to call 'a four-bedroom house with a courtyard – for the 'breezes', in a fact a Lutyens-inspired throwback to a more considered, languid age.

Celebrated for their spirit, the couple became known for their own Anglo-Indian lifestyle, as British as cucumber sandwiches, and yet deeply rooted in their adopted culture.

Martin was a squire, a plantsman, a storyteller and a buffalo farmer all at once. Diplomats, backpackers and retired prime ministers enjoyed sitting at his table, as he strewed bon mots and great chunks of If by Kipling.

#### Education for all

Martin was concerned about India's growing population time bomb. He felt education to be key to progress, so in 2000 he founded a school, the first ever for the village. Now operating under an Indian-registered charity, the Baas Education Trust, it is an astonishing success story. "These children need to be told that the sky's the limit," he loved to say. "He recognised the importance of faith, but did not want religion to play a central role in his school," Tom Homfray, the very first volunteer, told me. "He knew that it had the potential to sow division, when he was trying to achieve inclusivity... and unity."

An MBE honour was conferred on Martin by Prince Charles on the final afternoon of his 2017 India Tour. It was a moment of huge pride and recognition, although underplayed by the retired naval captain with characteristic modesty. He leaves behind three daughters, Joanna, Samantha and Tabatha. Perhaps this inspiring life is best summed up in the murmured epitaph of his widow Annie to me, spoken with all the simplicity of a long-held intimacy, "My boy did well."

Cosmo Brockway is a travel and interiors author and his book,

Glorious Hotels of India, is available at bookstores nationwide.

tiklibottom.com

# Opponents of Myanmar coup form shadow government

It includes members of Suu Kyi's ousted Cabinet and ethnic minority leaders

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON

Opponents of Myanmar's ruling junta went on the political offensive on Friday, declaring they have formed an interim national unity government with members of Aung San Suu Kyi's ousted Cabinet and major ethnic minority groups.

The move comes on the eve of a diplomatic initiative to solve Myanmar's crisis by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which is expected to hold a summit next week.

A violent crackdown by the junta has failed to stem opposition to the coup, and as the Army has spread the fight to ethnic minorities in border areas, some ASEAN members believe the crisis threatens regional stability.

Opponents of the coup have been seeking an alliance with ethnic minority groups as a way of strengthening their resistance.

While it was not clear if the minority political organisations had formally joined an alliance, the appointment



**Silent prayers:** People paying tribute to pro-democracy protesters killed in the military crackdown. • AP

## EU set to expand sanctions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BRUSSELS

The European Union is set to impose more sanctions next week over the coup and crackdown in Myanmar, targeting 10

of prominent personalities from their ranks showed a commitment to a joint struggle against the military, which is certain to boost morale to the anti-coup cause.

individuals and two businesses controlled by the military. The measures come after the bloc hit junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and 10 other senior officials with sanctions last month.

Security forces have killed at least 726 protesters and bystanders since the February 1 military takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political

Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests.

The National Unity Government is nominally an upgrade from what had been called the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, which was formed shortly after the coup by elected lawmakers who were barred by the Army from taking their seats. The junta declared the CRPH an illegal organisation, and issued arrest warrants for its leading members.

### 'Support us'

A video posted on Friday on social media showed veteran activist Min Ko Naing announcing the formation of the new body. He was a leader of the failed 1988 uprising against a previous military dictatorship and is one of the country's most respected political figures aside from Ms. Suu Kyi. He went quickly underground after the coup.

"Please support the National Unity Government for the future of our citizens and our younger generation," he said.

## Media tycoon among 5 jailed in Hong Kong

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai was jailed for 14 months on Friday along with four other veteran democracy activists for their roles in protests that helped trigger a sweeping crackdown on dissent by China.

Mr. Lai was given two jail terms for separate rallies in August 2019, at the peak of a democracy uprising that paralysed the financial hub for months.

The jail terms were the first ever for the 73-year-old millionaire, who has spent decades using his media empire to support democracy in Hong Kong.

Among the other defendants was Martin Lee, 82, a respected barrister known as the "father of democracy" in Hong Kong, who was once chosen by Beijing to help write the city's mini-constitution.

They also included Margaret Ng, a 73-year-old barrister and former Opposition lawmaker.

Mr. Lee and Ms. Ng were given prison terms, but their sentences were suspended.

# Russia bans FBI chief, other U.S. officials as tensions soar

It expels 10 U.S. diplomats in retaliation for sanctions

## Finland offers to host meet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HELSINKI

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto has offered Finland as a host country for a possible meeting between U.S. president Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, Mr. Niinisto's office said on Friday.

"When it comes to this possible meeting, the readiness of Finland to organise it has been presented to both Washington and Moscow," a spokesman for the Finnish President's Office told AFP by email.

Austria has also offered to host the world leaders.

Mr. Biden's proposal to hold a summit with Mr. Putin "positively", adding that it was "currently under consideration".

Mr. Biden's offer earlier this week of a summit had amounted to a peace offering, as tensions between Russia and the West have escalated over the conflict in Ukraine and the new penalties levied by Washington.

The U.S. penalties widened restrictions on U.S. banks trading in Russian government debt and sanctioned 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential vote.

Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters that Russia was responding to U.S. sanctions in a "tit-for-tat manner" by asking 10 U.S. diplomats in Russia to leave the country while also expelling five Polish diplomats in response to a similar move by Warsaw.

**'Serious consultations'**  
Mr. Lavrov also said that Mr. Putin's top foreign policy aide, Yury Ushakov, had recommended that U.S. envoy John Sullivan leave for Washington to conduct "serious consultations".

But Russia's Foreign Ministry insisted that it viewed

## Iran says it has started enriching uranium to 60%

Bid to create pressure on nuclear talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI

Iran began enriching uranium on Friday to its highest level ever, edging closer to weapons-grade levels to pressure talks in Vienna aimed at restoring its nuclear deal with world powers after an attack on its main atomic site.

A top official said only a few grams an hour of uranium would be enriched up to 60% purity – triple the level it once did but at a rate far slower than what Tehran could produce.

International inspectors already said Iran planned to do so above-ground at its Natanz nuclear site, not deep within its underground halls hardened to withstand airstrikes.

The move is likely to raise tensions even as Iran negotiates in Vienna over a way to allow the U.S. back into the agreement and lift the crushing economic sanctions it faces. However, its scope also provides Iran with a way to quickly de-escalate if it chose.

The announcement also marks a significant escalation after the attack that damaged centrifuges at Na-

## Pak. suspends social media after protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government imposed an hours-long shutdown of social media and instant messaging platforms on Friday, after days of violent anti-France protests.

The move came after French nationals and companies in Pakistan were advised by their embassy to temporarily leave the country, in the wake of rallies led by an extremist party that paralysed many cities.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority cut Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Telegram until late afternoon on Friday to "maintain public order and safety", following a request by the Interior Ministry.

The announcement came just before Friday prayers, which usually draw huge crowds to mosques where firebrand sermons have in the past catalysed protests.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Friday that four police officers had been killed and more than 600 injured in clashes.

## Biden, Suga may announce next in-person Quad summit

U.S. President is hosting Japanese leader in White House

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga at the White House on Friday – the first foreign leader visit for a presidency that began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two leaders are likely to announce the next in-person Quad (India, the U.S., Japan and Australia) meeting according to a senior administration official.

At their first summit level meeting, held virtually on March 12, Quad leaders had committed to meeting in person before the end of this year.

Mr. Suga and Mr. Biden are also expected to discuss regional security, including North Korea, China and China-Taiwan issues. Japan is also expected to announce a \$2 billion 5G network technology initiative.

Mr. Suga is scheduled to meet Vice-President Kamala Harris in the morning and will hold a joint press conference with Mr. Biden following their meetings in the afternoon, where an



Yoshihide Suga

announcement on the Quad is "likely". The leaders are expected to review a Quad initiative to supply up to a billion doses of the Johnson and Johnson (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine to South East Asia and the Pacific.

The plan will harness India's vaccine manufacturing capabilities, American and Japanese finance and Australia's distribution capacity.

However, these plans could run into trouble as U.S. drug authorities paused the use of the J&J vaccine this week after a handful of the close to 7 million recipients developed blood clots.

**Reviewing progress**  
"...I think the two leaders are going to review the pro-

gress to date on this [the Quad vaccine distribution plan] and underscore future plans of what we want to do – the future plans of what we want to do in the Quad going forward," a senior administration official told reporters on a briefing call on Thursday.

"So we view the Quad, even though it's an unofficial gathering, as a huge part of the architecture of the Indo-Pacific going forward," the official said.

### Korea ties

Some amount of time will be spent discussing the Japan-South Korea relationship, which has historically been strained since Japan's occupation of Korea in 1910.

The two leaders will also discuss China's recent assertiveness with regard to Taiwan, with a view to sending a message to China that flying its fighters into Taiwan's airspace is destabilising, as per the official who briefed reporters on Thursday. The U.S. and Japan would like to "calm tensions" and "discourage provocations", the official said.

## U.S. mass shooting leaves 8 dead in Indianapolis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

A gunman killed at least eight people at a FedEx facility in the U.S. city of Indianapolis before turning the gun on himself in the latest in a string of mass shootings in the country, authorities said on Friday.

The incident came a week after President Joe Biden branded gun violence an "epidemic" and an "international embarrassment" as he waded into the tense debate over gun control.

The gunman responsible for the overnight shooting was not immediately identified and it was not known if he was an employee at the FedEx facility near the airport in the state capitol of Indiana, deputy police chief Craig McCarron told CNN.

Several others were injured in the shooting, which started when the gunman opened fire in the parking lot and then went inside and kept shooting. When the police entered the plant, the gunman "immediately took his life", Mr. McCarron said.

<b>म.प्र. राज्य सहकारी विपणन संघ मर्यादित</b>	
मुख्यालय : ज़ाहांगीराबाद, भोपाल	
क्र.यां./49/2021	
भोपाल, दिनांक : 16.04.2021	
<b>CORIGENDUM - 01</b>	
With reference to "General Expression of Interest" for Lease out Rice Mills/Cold Storages which was issued by No./890/2021 Bhopal Dated 25.03.2021 and Published on dated 26.03.2021 & 27.03.2021 in which Pre-Qualification meeting was organized on dated 15.04.2021 at 12:00 Noon is Ammendment on <b>dated 03.05.2021 at 12:00 Noon</b> with some Administrative Reasons and all other conditions will be remain same.	
Venue : Conferencing Meeting Hall, New H.O. Building of MARKFED, Jehangirabad, Bhopal at 12:00 Noon.	
Contact Person :	
Secretary (Mobile No.)	- 7000039589
Chief Engineer (Mobile No.)	- 7771855526
Assistant Engineer (Mobile No.)	- 9893041725
M.P. Madhyam/100607/2021	
SECRETARY	

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA email:- serv\_ctc@yahoo.com

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,

RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, CUTTACK.

No. Tender Online RWC – 09/21 Letter No.- 1318 Date :- 13.04.2021

### C - Procurement NOTICE

1. Name of the Work : Construction of Periodical Maintenance road works of Post DLP PMGSY roads in the District of Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur.

2. Class of Contractor : B & A Class

3. Time for Completion : As specified in the Column-6 of the Annexure

4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached

5. Other Details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender
1	2	3	4	5
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttack.	Tender Online RWC -09/21	From 11.00 A.M. to 05.00 P.M.	30.04.2021 up to 2.00 P.M.	04.05.2021 at 11.30 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

O-63 Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttack.

OIPR-2509/11/0001/2122

E-mail ID: cebuildings\_orissa@yahoo.co.in; cebuildings@rediffmail.com; Tel. - (0674)-2391523

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA NIRMAN SOUDHA, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

File No. B-IV-FARD-01/2016 No.-16609 Dt. 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. 2021

**Invitation For Bids - Bid Identification No. EIC (B) - 01 / 2021-22**

1. The Engineer-in- Chief (Buildings) Odisha, Bhubaneswar, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for the work " Construction of Boundary Wall around Chudanga Reserve Forest and Krishna Nagar Protected Forest of Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar" amounting to Rs.17,18,50,000/- (Approximate) as detailed below.

2. Nature of work : Building work

3. No. of work : 01 No.

4. Bid Cost : ₹.10,000/-

5. Class of Contractor : Super Class

6. Availability of Bid Documents in the website : From dt.22.04.2021 to 17:00 Hours of dt.12.05.2021.

7. Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 13.05.2021 at 11.30 AM

8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (Buildings), Odisha, Bhubaneswar OIPR-34117/11/0010/2122

B-28:

## U.S. says Russia was given Trump campaign poll data

Manafort aide passed it on, it says

## MARKET WATCH

	16-04-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	48,832	0.06
US Dollar	74.35	0.77
Gold	46,431	0.28
Brent oil	66.77	0.24

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	755.50	5.15
Asian Paints	2663.70	76.00
Axis Bank	669.20	0.35
Bajaj Auto	3634.65	37.15
Bajaj Finserv	9824.75	85.05
Bajaj Finance	4616.60	-43.70
Bharti Airtel	540.75	1.40
BPCL	413.80	8.95
Britannia Ind	3696.50	3.80
Cipla	938.05	23.85
Coal India	127.85	-0.40
Divis Lab	3821.85	38.45
Dr Reddys Lab	4893.25	47.70
Eicher Motors	2434.85	22.25
Gasim Ind	1353.20	3.95
HCL Tech	1012.75	20.85
HDPC	2574.05	26.90
HDPC Bank	1428.65	-1.45
HDPC Life	690.65	-3.80
Hero MotoCorp	2894.85	32.30
Hindalco	370.00	16.45
Hind Unilever	2458.90	-1.75
ICICI Bank	566.95	-8.25
IndusInd Bank	862.95	4.60
Infosys	1353.75	-7.00
Indian Oil Corp	90.15	0.05
ITC	207.95	1.25
JSW Steel	619.40	-9.70
Kotak Bank	1764.10	-9.15
L&T	1359.15	-15.50
M&M	821.65	16.55
Maruti Suzuki	6648.10	3.85
Nestle India Ltd.	17252.10	376.45
NTPC	102.45	1.10
ONGC	107.30	2.20
PowerGrid Corp	209.85	2.05
Reliance Ind	1932.10	-12.20
SBI Life	914.20	5.50
State Bank	339.90	-2.80
Shree Cement	30821.10	515.70
Sun Pharma	646.05	12.80
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	671.30	12.00
Tata Motors	310.00	6.50
Tata Steel	890.25	-7.95
TCS	3195.15	-23.80
Tech Mahindra	1010.30	17.15
Titan	1549.05	10.50
UltraTech Cement	6715.20	175.90
UPL	611.75	4.40
Wipro	469.40	38.50

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.15	74.47
Euro	88.85	89.24
British Pound	102.35	102.80
Japanese Yen (100)	68.12	68.43
Chinese Yuan	11.37	11.42
Swiss Franc	80.58	80.97
Singapore Dollar	55.59	55.86
Canadian Dollar	59.31	59.57
Malaysian Ringgit	17.97	18.05

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Maruti increases prices as input costs increase

NEW DELHI  
India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki announced a price increase of up to ₹22,500 for select models following a rise in input costs. This is the second time the firm is raising prices this year. Maruti Suzuki had, in January, increased prices by up to ₹34,000.

## Honda recalls 77,954 cars for faulty pumps

NEW DELHI  
Honda Cars India on Friday announced a recall of 77,954 units of its various models, including Amaze, City, WR-V, Jazz, Civic, BR-V and CRV, to replace a faulty fuel pump. This will largely impact cars manufactured in 2019. It had recalled about 65,651 units last year for the same issue.

## SPORT

## Divya clinches second Asian gold

Vinesh, Anshu also bag the yellow metal; Sakshi takes silver in 65kg section

## WRESTLING

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA  
Divya Kakran emerged as the second Indian woman to secure two gold medals in the Asian wrestling championships on Friday as women wrestlers of the country returned four gold medals in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

In the continental event marred by the absence of strong countries China and Japan, three Indian women – Divya (72kg), Vinesh Phogat (53kg) and Anshu Malik (57kg) – bagged gold medals. Only Rio Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik settled for silver in 65kg.

A day after Sarita Mor became the first Indian woman to win two Asian titles, Divya, who had claimed the 68kg crown in New Delhi a year ago, took the gold in a

## Economy in better shape than during 2020's COVID-19 wave'

CEA Subramanian says uncertainty is much lower because of vaccination drive



Remain on guard: People should be careful and follow all regulations, says the CEA. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

test lockdowns, leading to a massive contraction of about 24% in GDP.

Beginning March this year, the second wave started rearing its head with a sudden jump in cases, forcing many States to go for lo-

calised restrictions. India added a record 2,17,353 new coronavirus infections in a day, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday. This is the second consecutive day that the country has reported ov-

## U.S. Treasury keeps India on currency watch list

Country meets 2 of 3 review criteria

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON DC

India is one of the 11 countries on the U.S. Treasury's 'Monitoring List' with regard to their currency practices, according to the April 2021 edition of the semi-annual report, the first from the Biden administration. India was on the list in the December 2020 report as well.

The report on Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States, which is submitted to the U.S. Congress, reviews currency practices of the U.S.'s 20 biggest trading partners. Three criteria are

used to review partners: a significant (at least \$20 billion) bilateral trade surplus, a material current account surplus, and 'persistent one-sided intervention' in foreign markets.

The other 10 countries on the list with India are China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Mexico. All of these, except Ireland and Mexico, were on the December 2020 list.

India met two of the three criteria – the trade surplus criterion and the "persistent, one-sided intervention" criterion, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

It said the government had received ₹57.38 crore from Bharti Airtel and ₹2,149.59 crore from Jio.

## Jio, Bharti pay DoT ₹2,307 cr. for spectrum

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom (DoT) said it has completed the assignment of frequencies to successful bidders in the recently-concluded spectrum auctions, adding it has received ₹2,306.97 crore from Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel by assigning them spectrum immediately.

"[The] Department of Telecom has successfully completed the assignment of frequencies to successful bidders of the spectrum auction 2021," DoT said.

It said the government had received ₹57.38 crore from Bharti Airtel and ₹2,149.59 crore from Jio.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Hyundai Motor India Ltd. has again emerged as the country's leading passenger vehicle exporter by shipping more than 1.04 lakh cars during FY21, the company said in a statement.

HML also became the leading exporter of sport utility vehicles with cumulative shipments of the Creta and Venue crossing two lakh units to overseas markets including Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Nepal and Chile.

The new i20 was shipped to all key markets across Africa and Latin America, HML said.

Despite numerous chal-

lenges emerging out of the global pandemic, HML continued to drive operational excellence to ensure customer satisfaction, said MD & CEO S.S. Kim.

The Indian unit of the South Korean automaker, which commenced shipments to Nepal through Railways, currently exports 10 models to 88 countries.

## Quess to buy out Tata stake in Conneqt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Quess Corp, a business services platform, said it will acquire the residual 30% equity stake in Conneqt Business Solutions from Tata Sons for ₹208 crore.

Quess had acquired 51% of Conneqt in November 2017 and further increased its stake to 70% in May 2019 via infusion of primary capital, which was later used to fund its acquisition of Allsec Technologies.

"The consolidation of our holding in Conneqt will further accelerate Conneqt's transition to non-voice services," said Suraj Moraje, Group CEO and MD, Quess Corp.

ISMA, quoting market reports and information from ports, said that 29.72 lakh tonnes of sugar have been exported so far this season compared with 30.64 lakh tonnes during the same period in the previous season.

However, the current season's exports include 4.48 lakh tonnes exported under the Maximum Admissible Export Quota of 2019-2020

## China's GDP grew record 18.3% in Q1

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
BEIJING

China's economy expanded at a record pace in the first quarter as the country continued its rapid recovery from last year's pandemic-fuelled slump, official data showed Friday.

The 18.3% expansion in gross domestic product was the fastest pace since quarterly records began three decades ago, but came off a historic contraction in 2020 during the depths of the pandemic.

While the coronavirus first emerged in central China in late 2019, the country was also the quickest to bounce back after authorities imposed strict control measures and consumers stayed home.

GDP rose 0.6% from Q4 of 2020, slowing slightly amid local virus outbreaks.

## Hyundai ships 1.04 lakh cars, is top PV exporter

Firm's total SUV exports cross 2 lakh



lenges emerging out of the global pandemic, HML continued to drive operational excellence to ensure customer satisfaction, said MD & CEO S.S. Kim.

The Indian unit of the South Korean automaker, which commenced shipments to Nepal through Railways, currently exports 10 models to 88 countries.

## Indonesia, Afghanistan buy more Indian sugar

Exports stand at 29.72 lakh tonnes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
COIMBATORE

Major destinations for sugar exports from India this season (October 2020 to September 2021) are Indonesia and Afghanistan, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).

ISMA, quoting market reports and information from ports, said that 29.72 lakh tonnes of sugar have been exported so far this season compared with 30.64 lakh tonnes during the same period in the previous season.

Industry sources said that during the last season, major sugar exports were to Iran and Afghanistan.

This year, with currency restrictions, exports to Iran were affected, they added.

Also, with lower output in Thailand, Indian exports to Indonesia have picked up.

## India badly placed to tackle infections: Fitch

'States short of health infrastructure'



public sector do not match up with the growing needs of the population," it noted.

**'Inadequate cover'**  
Besides, more than 80% of the population still does not have any significant health insurance coverage and approximately 68% has limited or no access to essential medicines.

"The low level of public spending on health is both a cause and an exacerbating factor accounting for the poor quality, limited reach and insufficient public provisioning of healthcare."

States such as Maharashtra, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Karnataka, bearing the maximum load of the pandemic, are already falling short of health infrastructure and equipment, ranging from oxygen to ventilators, Fitch said.

"Despite several healthcare reforms, India remains badly placed to tackle the rapid spread of the coronavirus," it said, adding the epidemic could be worse in India if it was not adequately contained.

With 8.5 hospital beds per 10,000 population and 8 physicians per 10,000, the healthcare sector is not equipped for such a crisis.

"Moreover, the significant inefficiency... and acute shortage of the healthcare delivery systems in the

## Mindtree net up 54%, to pay ₹17.5 dividend

# Deepak Chahar has the ball talking in CSK's thumping win

Opening bowler's four for 13 breaks the back of PBKS; du Plessis (36 n.o.), Moeen (46) help Chennai chase down 107-run target with 4.2 overs to spare

## IPL 2021

AMOL KARHADKAR

Deepak Chahar's inspiring spell of swing bowling set up Chennai Super Kings' facile win over Punjab Kings to help the three-time champion open its account in IPL-14.

Thanks to Chahar's trademark spell up front, aided by Ravindra Jadeja's magic in the field, CSK stifled PBKS to a meagre 106 for eight at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The top-order then ensured that the team presented M.S. Dhoni – making his 200th appearance for CSK, which includes 24 in the Champions League – with a fitting gift, a dominant six-wicket victory.

Chahar sealed the fate of the game in the PowerPlay itself once Dhoni elected to field. With the dew yet to set in, the swing bowler took just four balls to flummox Mayank Agarwal. The delivery started on the middle-stump but moved away after pitching to hit the top of off-stump.

Had Ruturaj Gaikwad not dropped Chris Gayle at point two balls later, Chahar may have celebrated twice in the first over. In Chahar's next over, captain K.L. Rahul took on Jadeja's arm while attempting a sharp single and the fielder, running in from the covers, struck timber to find the batsman short.

It meant Gayle had no option but to rebuild the innings along with the opening game's hero, Deepak Hooda. But Chahar had different plans as he struck twice in his third over. He first saw Jadeja lunge forward to pouch an uppish drive by Gayle and then used the short-ball ploy effectively against Nicholas Pooran.

Chahar persisted with Chahar even after the PowerPlay and Hooda offered Faf du Plessis catching practice at mid-off in the seventh over. At 26 for five, the game was all but done and dusted.

Despite M. Shahrkhan Khan's impressive innings (47, 36b, 4x4, 2x6), with little support from the other end, PBKS had to find solace in the fact that it managed to reach three figures without being bowled out.

In the chase, Gaikwad and du Plessis struggled for timing against accurate pace bowling. Although Gaikwad holed out in the deep off Arshdeep Singh, Moeen Ali (46, 31b, 7x4, 1x6) continued his silken touch with the willow.

While Moeen scored freely – his twin fours off Mohammed Shami, either side of the wicket, were a treat to watch – du Plessis (36 n.o.) took his time before going after leggie M. Ashwin.

CSK lost Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu off successive Shami deliveries, but by then the writing was on the wall.



**Swing king:** Deepak Chahar castled Mayank Agarwal with a beauty, triggering Punjab Kings' slide. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL



**Swing king:** Deepak Chahar castled Mayank Agarwal with a beauty, triggering Punjab Kings' slide. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

## SCOREBOARD

### PUNJAB KINGS

K.L. Rahul run out 5 (7b, 1x4), Mayank Agarwal b Deepak Hooda 0 (2b), Chris Gayle c Jadeja b Deepak Chahar 10 (10b, 2x4), Deepak Hooda c du Plessis b Deepak Chahar 10 (15b, 1x4), Nicholas Pooran c Shardul b Deepak Chahar 0 (2b), Shahrkhan Khan c Jadeja b Sam Curran 47 (36b, 4x4, 2x6), Jhye Richardson b Moeen 15 (22b, 2x4), M. Ashwin c du Plessis b Bravo 6 (74b), Mohammed Shami (not out) 9 (12b), Riley Meredith (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (w-4): 4; Total (for eight wkt., in 20 overs): 106.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-1 (Mayank, 0.4 overs), 2-15 (Rahul, 2.5), 3-19 (Gayle, 4.2), 4-19 (Pooran, 4.4), 5-26 (Hooda, 6.2), 6-57 (Richardson, 12.1), 7-87 (M. Ashwin, 16.5), 8-101 (Shahrkhan, 19.1).

### SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 4-1-13-4, Sam Curran 3-0-12-1, Shardul 4-0-35-0, Jadeja 4-0-19-0, Moeen 3-0-17-1, Bravo 2-0-10-1.

### CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Ruturaj Gaikwad b Hooda b Arshdeep 5 (16b), Faf du Plessis (not out) 36 (33b, 3x4, 1x6), Moeen Ali c Shahrkhan b M. Ashwin 46 (31b, 7x4, 1x6), Suresh Raina c Rahubal Shami 8 (9b, 1x4), Am-

bati Rayudu c Pooran b Shami 0 (1b), Sam Curran (not out) 5 (4b, 1x4); Extras (lb-5, w-2): 7; Total (for four wkt., in 15.4 overs): 107.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-24 (Ruturaj, 4.6), 2-90 (Moeen, 12.3), 3-99 (Raina, 14.2), 4-99 (Rayudu, 14.3).

### PUNJAB KINGS BOWLING

Shami 4-0-21-2, Richardson 3-0-21-0, Arshdeep 2-0-7-1, Meredith 3.4-0-21-0, M. Ashwin 3-0-32-1.

### Toss:

Chennai Super Kings.

### Man-of-the-Match:

Deepak Chahar.

Super Kings won by six wickets with 26 balls to spare.

## Innings scan

PBKS	Dots	CSK
64	49	
10	12	
2	2	
26/4	32/1	
5.30	6.82	

## Next assignment

PBKS: April 18 vs. DC

Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

CSK: April 19 vs. RR

Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

'Dhoni the heartbeat of CSK'

AMOL KARHADKAR

towards the game and the franchise. I think the franchise has grown and MS has grown with it, so it's a very good relationship and great fun."

For Punjab Kings, M. Shahrkhan Khan gave a glimpse of his talent with a composed knock of 47. The Tamil Nadu youngster hopes to cash in on the wealth of knowledge shared by some of the stalwarts of the game.

"He has been absolutely the heartbeat of CSK, there's no doubt about it. Whether it's performances, guidance or leadership... you run out of things to say about him," Fleming said on Friday after CSK celebrated Dhoni's milestone with its maiden win in IPL 2021.

"His longevity also has to be mentioned and appreciated... to play 200 games and still have a desire to do well and perform well is a testament to his attitude to

"Obviously I am new to the IPL. It's different compared to domestic cricket. Getting to learn a lot of things, trying to improve my game 1% every session I go in," Shahrkhan said.

"I am having conversations with Wasim Jaffer (batting coach) and Andy Flower (assistant coach), and they have been helping me with my batting."



**That's 200!** Dhoni's longevity is a tribute to his commitment to the game and franchise, says Fleming. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

## Nortje out of quarantine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Delhi Capitals pacer Anrich Nortje, on Friday, came out of his hard quarantine that was extended by a couple of days following a false COVID-19 positive report.

The Proteas speedster had tested positive while in quarantine, but was retested and came out negative in three RT-PCR results.

"Our pace superstar is now out of quarantine. After a false positive result for COVID-19, Anrich Nortje tested negative thrice, and is now part of our team bubble," DC tweeted.



**Chipping in:** Rahul Chahar spun it MI's way against KKR while Pandey came up with two good knocks though SRH fell short on both occasions. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

## S. DIPAK RAGAV

Mumbai Indians will look to build on the momentum gained from a brilliant win over Kolkata Knight Riders when it takes on an unsettled Sunrisers Hyderabad at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Saturday.

The reigning champion managed to defend a small total with some exceptional bowling, especially towards the end, a performance which suggested that its loss in the opener was an aberration. Even in that game, against RCB, MI did well to take the contest to the final ball.

Although the five-time winner will feel it has most bases covered, it will want to improve the batting, given it did not manage to post a big total in either game.

The pitch in Chennai so far has been better for the team batting first, and it will be interesting to see whether the captain winning the toss opts to set a total for the first time.

After two losses, both while chasing, SRH could consider defending a score if it gets lucky with the toss again, given it has one of the best bowling attacks in the competition.

The team has a bit of a headache in terms of figuring out its best combination. The big question will be how it can accommodate Kane Williamson if he is match-ready.

### Adding stability

The New Zealand skipper adds stability to the batting unit, an area of concern, es-

pecially in the middle-order.

SRH will also hope players such as Manish Pandey and Vijay Shankar can bat more aggressively and thus limit the reliance on David Warner and Jonny Bairstow.

The 2016 champion needs to get on the board soon, and a win against a side like MI could be the booster shot it desperately seeks.

## TODAY'S MATCH



CHENNAI, 7.30 P.M.

### HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 16

MI 8 | SRH 8

In 2020

Played 2 | MI 1 | SRH 1

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

## BCCI offers conditional support for cricket's inclusion in LA Games

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

The BCCI's apex council on Friday offered conditional support for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games.

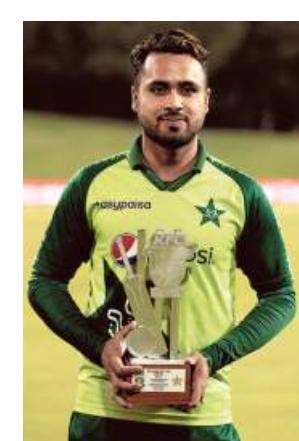
The marathon meeting on Friday night is understood to have decided to inform the International Cricket Council (ICC) that it will support the inclusion of men's and women's events in the quadrennial showpiece

events only if the BCCI's status as an autonomous sports federation is retained.

The BCCI at present isn't an affiliate of the Indian Olympic Association and is keen on participating in the Olympics without being a party to the proposed National Sports Code.

While the apex council didn't discuss the compensation package for domestic cricket stakeholders announced by the AGM last De-

## Pakistan wins series 3-1



Faheem Ashraf. ■ AP

## PAK IN SA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE CENTURION

Pakistan beat South Africa by three wickets with one ball to spare in the fourth and final T20I here on Friday.

Faheem Ashraf shone with three wickets.

Pakistan's 3-1 series win completed a clean sweep of four series against South Africa during the season.

**The scores:** South Africa 144 in 19.3 overs (Rassie van der Dussen 52, Janneman Malan 33, Faheem Ashraf 3/7) lost to Pakistan 149/7 in 19.5 overs (Fakhar Zaman 60).

(Fakhar Zaman 60).

Faheem Ashraf overcame a fiercely determined Ankita Raina 62, 5/7, 7/5 to put host Latvia 10 ahead in the Billie Jean King Cup World Group playoff tie at the indoor arena in Jurmala on Friday.

Tsitsipas, the World No. 5, will play his sixth Masters 1000 semifinal on Saturday against Djokovic's conqueror Dan Evans of England, who battled past Belgian David Goffin 5/7, 6/3, 6/4.

Tsitsipas is the highest seed left after World No. 2 Daniil Medvedev was forced to withdraw due to a positive COVID-19 test.

**The results:** Quarterfinals: Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Alejandro Davidovich 7-5, retd.; Dan Evans bt David Goffin 5-7, 6-3, 6-4; Casper Ruud bt Fabio Fognini 6-4, 6-3; Andrey Rublev bt Rafael Nadal 6-2, 4-6, 6-2.

Earlier, Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to the last four when his quarterfinal opponent Alejandro Davidovich

also made the Miami Masters semifinals at the start of April. "I'm shocked to see the level which he can reach despite this pressure. It's much easier to play when you have nothing to lose."

It was only the second time in 16 appearances in Monte Carlo that Nadal had failed to make the semifinals.

World No. 8 Rublev will face unseeded Casper Ruud, who put out defending champion Fabio Fognini, 6-4, 6-3 for a place in the final.

Nadal, bidding to reach the semifinals of a Masters event for the 75th time, followed World No.1 Novak Djokovic, who was beaten in the third round, out of the tournament.

"For Rafa, it must be in-

credibly difficult to play with this pressure of always hav-

ing to win," said Rublev who

also made the Miami Masters

semifinals at the start of April. "I'm shocked to see the level which he can reach despite this pressure. It's much easier to play when you have nothing to lose."

## TV PICKS

**IPL:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**Italian Grand Prix:** Qualifying, Star Sports 2HD & 3, 5.25 p.m.  
**Premier League:** SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 5 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Sunday)  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**FA Cup:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10 p.m.  
**Billie Jean King Cup:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



Harmanpreet Kaur recovers from COVID-19

NEW DELHI Indian women's T20 captain Harmanpreet Kaur, on Friday, announced that she has recovered from COVID-19. Harmanpreet had tested positive and made it public on March 30. After more than two weeks, her RT-PCR report has come negative. "Happy to inform you all that I have tested negative & I'm feeling better. Wishing strength to the ones who are in the middle of the fight," Harmanpreet tweeted. PTI

## Kenisha Gupta swims to her third gold

TASHKENT Kenisha Gupta completed a hat-trick of gold medals at the Uzbekistan Open swimming championships, securing the 50m freestyle with a personal best time of 26.61s on Friday. The 18-year-old had won the 100m and 200m freestyle, also with career-best performances.

## Yuka Saso on top; Aditi T-35 at Lotte meet

KAPOLEI (USA) Aditi Ashok found each of the 14 fairways but missed a few greens in regulation for another three-under 69 to be tied 35th after the second round of the Lotte Championship on Thursday. Yuka Saso of the Philippines is 16-under 128 and leads New Zealander Lydia Ko by a stroke. PTI

## Coleman's ban reduced, but will still miss Tokyo

GENEVA World 100m champion Christian Coleman's suspension over doping test violations has been upheld on appeal but reduced to 18 months, the CAS said on Friday. However, Coleman will still miss the Tokyo Olympics. He was first suspended for two years from May 14, 2020. AFP



Vihari falls to Broad for a duck on county debut

NOTTINGHAM India Test specialist Hanuma Vihari had a forgettable English county debut for Warwickshire against Nottinghamshire on Thursday. He was caught without scoring by Haseeb Hamid off England international Stuart Broad off the 23rd delivery he faced. PTI

## Prajnesh crashes out

## INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU ORLANDO Former world No.8 Jack Sock beat Prajnesh Gunneswaran 6-3, 6-4 in the second round of the \$52,080 Challenger tennis tournament here.

In doubles, Yuki Bhambhani and Australia's Matthew Ebden had to give a walkover in the doubles quarterfinals, on medical grounds.

The results: **\$52,080 Challenger, Orlando:** Second round: Jack Sock (USA) bt Prajnesh Gunneswaran 6-3, 6-4. Doubles: Quarterfinals: Christian Harrison & Dennis Novikov (USA) w/o Matthew Ebden (Aus) & Yuki Bhambhani. **\$15,000 ITF men, Cairo, Egypt:** Second round: Bautista Vilicich (Arg) bt Sasikumar Mukund 6-2, 6-2.

## Pathak primed for Tokyo action

Thinks the competition with Sreejesh has only made him better

## HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BUENOS AIRES

Young goalkeeper Krishan Pathak, one of the architects of India's superb show against Argentina, said he wants to be in top form for the Tokyo Olympics and is eyeing another superlative performance against Great Britain in the FIH Pro League games next month.

The 23-year-old, who earned his 50th international cap during India's tour of Argentina, played a big role in his side registering back-to-back victories against the reigning Olympic champion in the FIH Pro League this month.

"I am very happy to have completed 50 international caps. So much has happened in such a short space of time. I have had the opportunity to play in big tournaments and learnt a lot from my seniors," Pathak said in a release issued by Hockey In-



Coming good: Goalkeeper Pathak played a big role in India scoring back-to-back wins over Argentina. ■FIHPROLEAGUE.COM

dia. "The coaches have always believed in my talent. I want to continue working hard and win games for India. Reaching this milestone makes me proud."

**Impressive** While fellow custodian P.R. Sreejesh was brilliant when the visitor won the first match in a penalty shootout, Pathak was equally impressive during India's 3-0

win over the host in the second game.

"I got to learn a lot from the Argentina tour. I know I have to prove my worth as a goalkeeper every time I am playing," said Pathak.

"I feel we showed a lot of fight and character there. Over the past year, we've had good games against the top sides in the world and I feel that gives us the right kind of boost going into a

## DELHI ROUND-UP

## Delhi Challengers wins rain-marred game

Fine half-centuries by Sameer Chaudhary and Vaibhav Rawal and three wickets by Asif Mansoori helped Delhi Challengers Cricket Academy beat Wonders Club, Noida by 46 runs through the DLS method when rain stopped play and enter the pre-quarterfinals of the 31st All-India Hitkary Om Nath Sood Memorial tournament. The scores: Wonders Club Noida 247/8 in 40 overs (Karan Sharma 115, Jageer Singh 48, Asif Mansoori 3/50) lost to DCCA 197/3 in 28 overs (Sameer Chaudhary 74, Vaibhav Rawal 52 n.o., Uvais Ahmed 42), via DLS method.

**Yash, Bhavy and Raunak hog the limelight** Man-of-the-match Bhavy Goel made 89 not out and Raunak Modi added 67 not out as Dahiya Academy entered the final of the Kragbuzz Sports Under-14 tournament with a 10-wicket win against Positive Roads Academy.

In the other semifinal, Yash Kaushik's unbeaten century and Rishabh Kumar's five for saw Ravinder Fagna Academy beat Udaybhan Academy by 128 runs. The scores: PRA 163/5 in 25 overs (Abhiraj Gagan Singh 53, Rajveer Bhatri 39) lost to Dahiya Academy 164/0 in 22.4 overs (Bhavy Goel 89 n.o., Raunak Modi 67 n.o.); RFA 219/3 in 25 overs (Yash Kaushik

113 n.o., Rizwan Khan 71 n.o.) bt UBA 91 in 18 overs (Rishabh Kumar 5/25, Anuj Bhardwaj 3/5).

**Shivam stars for Sporting**

Shivam Gupta smashed an unbeaten 52-ball 106 and Himanshu Rana added 65 as Sporting Club beat Rann Star Club by eight wickets to enter the quarterfinals of the 4th RK Kapoor T20 tournament. In another game, Money Grewal picked up four wickets as Goat Club beat SS Sports by four wickets to make last eight.

**The scores:** RSC 189/9 in 20 overs (Sombir Sheokand 61, Aayush Singh 39, Aditya Sharma 37, Yogesh Kumar 3/35) lost to Sporting Club 190/2 in 16.3 overs (Shivam Gupta 106 n.o., Himanshu Rana 65); SSSC 196/6 in 20 overs (Deepanshu Phore 73, Deepak Khatri 46, Money Grewal 4/45) lost to Goat Club 200/6 in 19 overs (Naman Grover 47, Gagan Solhi 40 n.o., Puneet Mehra 38, Deepak Khatri 2/32).

**Mohit, Swastik excel**

Mohit Malik's four wickets and Swastik Chhikara's 65 not out saw Haryana Academy beat RP Academy by eight wickets in the Captain Dharampal Under-19 tournament.

**The scores:** RPA 108 in 25 overs (Mohit Malik 4/35) lost to Haryana Academy 109/2 in 7.4 overs (Swastik Chhikara 65 n.o.).

**Yorks Club posts win**

Vyom Arora made 62 not out as Yorks Club beat St.

Angel Academy by nine wickets in the 11th Ghevra Under-16 tournament.

**The scores:** SAA 104 in 26 overs (Krishna Goel 3/33) lost to Yorks Club 105/1 in 14.4 overs (Vyom Arora 62 n.o.).

**Gav sizzles**

Gav Bhandari top-scored with 80, while Satyam Singh and Ronit Bhardwaj took three wickets each as Suryavanshi Academy beat MCG Cricket Academy by 66 runs in the BLS Under-15 tournament.

**The scores:** Suryavanshi Academy 184/8 in 45 overs (Garv Bhandari 80, Rohit 3/34) bt MCGA 118 in 41 overs (Satyam Singh 3/10, Ronit Bhardwaj 3/19).

**Good knocks by Dhaiya and Sumit**

Half-centuries by Dhaiya Dutta and Sumit Rai helped DIS Academy beat SD Youth Academy by 37 runs in the 4th Dobhal tournament.

**The scores:** DIS 240/7 in 40 overs (Dhaiya Dutta 76, Sumit Rai 75, Sachin Yadav 4/36) bt SDA 203/6 in 40 overs (Sachin Yadav 60, Naitik Yadav 44).

**Narrow win for UYC**

Nitin Choudhary and Dheeraj Vijay scored half-tones and as UYC Academy beat Yuva Shakti Academy by two wickets in the BLS Under-17 tournament.

**The scores:** YSA 236/8 in 50 overs (Shresth Yadav 124, Aditya Choudhary 48, Mayur Chauhan 3/38) lost to UYC 237/8 in 45.5 overs (Nitin Choudhary 66, Dheeraj 59).

## Bucks' balanced attack carries the day

Curry headlines Warriors' win

## NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LOS ANGELES

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 15 points on return from a six-game injury absence as Milwaukee Bucks used a balanced attack to beat Atlanta Hawks 120-109 on Thursday in Atlanta.

Antetokounmpo finished well below his scoring average, but it didn't matter because he got plenty of help from his supporting cast as seven Bucks players finished in double figures.

Hawks star Trae Young, returning from a calf injury that sidelined him for two

Elsewhere, Stephen Curry once again carried the offensive load for Golden State Warriors, scoring 33 points in a 119-101 win over Cleveland Cavaliers.

**The results:** Cavaliers 101 lost to Warriors 119; Hawks 109 lost to Bucks 120; Lakers 113 lost to Celtics 121; Suns 122 bt Kings 114.

Giannis Antetokounmpo finished well below his scoring average, but it didn't matter as seven Bucks players finished in double figures. ■AP



Subdued return: Giannis Antetokounmpo finished well below his scoring average, but it didn't matter as seven Bucks players finished in double figures. ■AP

## Double for Priyanka Rana

## ASIAN U-14

SPORTS BUREAU AHMEDABAD

Priyanka Rana bagged both the singles and doubles titles in the Altevol Asian under-14 tennis tournament on Friday.

Priyanka beat Aishwarya Jadhav 6-1, 6-4 for the singles title, and won the doubles title with Prarthana Solanki.

**The results (finals):**

**Boys:** Kriishi Tyagi bt Samprit Sharma 3-6, 6-0, 6-2.

**Girls:** Priyanka Rana & Aishwarya Jadhav 6-1, 6-4.

**Doubles:** Priyanka Rana & Prarthana Solanki bt Thaniya Sarai Gogulamunda & Aishwarya Jadhav 6-1, 6-4.

**Double for Priyanka Rana**

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