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Sh. Manohar Lal  
Chief Minister, Haryana

## NEARBY



### 13 students test positive at St. Stephen's College

NEW DELHI  
Following 13 students of St. Stephen's College testing positive for COVID-19, the college administration has issued a notice stating that the inner perimeter of the campus will be out of bounds for everyone while the outer perimeter can be accessed after security checks.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3



MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES  
CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

## Safety first



**Germ alert:** People watching a movie in a cinema hall in Bengaluru on Saturday while maintaining physical distancing. Karnataka said it will strictly enforce 50% seating cap in theatres from April 7. ■ MURALI KUMAR K. (REPORT ON PAGE 7)

## Two arrested in gang rape, death of minor girl in Meerut

ANUJ KUMAR  
GHAZIABAD

A teenage girl was allegedly gang-raped and poisoned in a Meerut village on Thursday while she was on her way to a tuition class. The family members took her to a private hospital where she died during treatment.

The Meerut police arrested two of the four accused – Lakhman and Vikas – after an FIR was lodged by the girl's paternal uncle under relevant sections of the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

On Saturday morning, when the police were taking the accused to a Meerut court, Mr. Lakhman snatched the revolver of a head constable and fired at the police team. In retaliation, the Station House Officer, Sardhana, fired back at Mr. Lakhman and he was nabbed again.

Rajendra Kumar Shahi, Circle Officer, Sardhana, said Mr. Lakhman had no criminal record. "He has been admitted to CHC Sardhana. Both the accused are 19-20 years old," he added. Two other accused are still on the run.

While the police said a note had been recovered from the girl's house, family members denied it.

(Those in distress can contact Sanjivini Society for Mental Health helpline at 011-40769002; 10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

REUTERS

&lt;p

This is the largest of the three Regional Rapid Transit System stations, will be a nodal point

JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

**W**ork on the largest of the three Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) stations constituting the National Capital Region Transport Corporation's (NCRTC) Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor has begun on the ground at Sarai Kale Khan.

To be completed by 2025, the elevated Sarai Kale Khan station in the heart of the Capital, measuring approximately 215 metres by 48 metres, is likely to accommodate six platforms and four lines for trains running at up to 180 kmph. It will not only reduce travelling time to Meerut, which will be between 40 and 60 minutes, but also to the larger NCR, which will soon include Alwar and Panipat.

#### Spherical bearings

The 82-km long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is the first project of its kind to utilise spherical bearings to enable high speeds.

The 17-km-long priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is targeted to be operational from 2023.

"Manpower and machinery has been mobilised and construction on the ground has begun at the construction site. On the other hand, operational simulations related to the integration of the station with existing modes of transportation in its vicinity have also begun," said an NCRTC official.

#### No inconvenience

"The station is located at a significant distance from vehicular traffic and construction activity will certainly not cause any inconvenience for commuters using the stretch. Simulations in the virtual dimension are being conducted to ascertain operational aspects as well as linking it with other modes post-construction," the spokesperson said.

As *The Hindu* had reported on December 24 last year, "visible signs of construction" at the site, which is expected to see "significant commuter footfall" once completed, were scheduled to begin manifesting by early 2021 even as work related to the project in Uttar Pradesh is on in full swing.

Puneet Vats, NCRTC Chief Public Relation Officer, said the Sarai Kale Khan RRTS station is important as all the three priority corridors of RRTS will converge and it will be seamlessly integrated with the existing Hazrat Nizamuddin metro station, railway station and the Sarai Kale Khan ISBT.



Construction work in full swing for the Delhi-Meerut RRTS project at Sarai Kale Khan in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## Work on Delhi-Meerut corridor begins at Sarai Kale Khan

### SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY

- The entire 82-km-long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor to be completed by 2025

- Elevated Sarai Kale Khan station to measure approximately 215 metres by 48 metres

- Station likely to accommodate six platforms and four lines

- Elevated portion of 9.22 km and 4.28 km underground to be part of RRTS corridor in Delhi



• New Ashok Nagar station will be elevated while Anand Vihar station will be underground

• 17-km-long priority section of the corridor between Sahibabad and Duhai targeted to be completed by 2023

nect the Sarai Kale Khan RRTS station to New Ashok Nagar RRTS station. The length of the bridge crossing over the Yamuna will be around 626 metre and the rest of it will be over the Khadar area on both sides.

The bridge will be built using box girders with the help of Segment Launching Gantry capable of providing a speed of 160 kmph. It will have 32 piers and will span over 44 metres on these piers.

According to the NCRTC, the well foundation work for the construction of this bridge has also begun with its design having been finalised using the Building Information Modelling' technology.

On the other hand, pier construction of more than 16 km of the 82-km corridor has been completed with around 550 piers erected completely on which approximately 4 km of the RRTS viaduct has been completed.

Foundation work of the Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Duhai and Guldhar on the priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai has been completed and construction of superstructures is under way. The foundation work of the 16-km RRTS viaduct from on the 17-km priority section has also been completed, the NCRTC said.

The Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor, which also proposes two foot overbridges for multimodal connectivity at Sarai Kale Khan, will have a total of 24 stations and will be elevated for around 70.5 km, with 11.5 km of its stretch underground.

The rolling stock or coaches will be manufactured in Savli, Gujarat under the Make-in-India ini-

tiative. "The NCRTC is implementing India's first RRTS which will form a network of networks by integrating different modes of public transport together. An interconnected network of public transport systems will provide seamless travel experience to commuters," Mr. Vats said.

An elevated portion of 9.22 km and 4.28 km underground will be part of the RRTS corridor in Delhi with both – the Sarai Kale Khan and New Ashok Nagar stations to be above and the Anand Vihar station to be below the ground.

#### Bridge over Yamuna

Meanwhile, the NCRTC is also constructing a 1.35-km-long bridge over the Yamuna almost parallel to the existing DND flyover to con-

nect the Sarai Kale Khan RRTS station to New Ashok Nagar RRTS station. The length of the bridge crossing over the Yamuna will be around 626 metre and the rest of it will be over the Khadar area on both sides.

The bridge will be built using box girders with the help of Segment Launching Gantry capable of providing a speed of 160 kmph. It will have 32 piers and will span over 44 metres on these piers.

"This refurbishment includes a lot of minor and major overhaul activities such as internal painting, floor replacement, gangway overhauling and secondary suspension replacement. A total of 1,120 secondary suspension in 70 trains. All of these suspensions have been planned for replacement," officials said.

#### Floor repair

DMRC officials added that around 40 coaches required "major attention" to their floor and repair and replacement of the same is being planned with the assistance of the original car builder.

"Installation of CCTV will be done for saloon, rear view and catenary monitoring during train operations. All 280 coaches will also be provided with fresh layer of special water base paint," official said.

The official added,

The first phase of the mid-life refurbishment of the coaches is likely to be completed by mid-next year, DMRC officials said, while adding that the work for the second phase would be taken up accordingly.

## Industries welcome govt's excise policy

They write to L-G in support of move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

city that caters to a large number of young residents and tourists, it would also provide succor to the hospitality industry," the ISWAI wrote to the L-G even as it sought early implementation of the policy.

The International Spirits and Wines Association of India (ISWAI), the representative body of international spirits and wine companies with business establishments in India, and the Shopping Centres Association of India (SCAI) have written to Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal, supporting the move.

"The proposal on extended hours for on-premise AlcoBev outlets a good one, and in keeping with Delhi's image of a modern, bustling

Cross cases registered over death of constable's wife

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Saturday said that two cross cases have been registered in connection with a constable's wife allegedly ending her life after trying to kill her two children in south west Delhi's Ghitora.

The police said that one case has been registered against the constable based on the complaint of his wife's family alleging that he harassed her for dowry.

The second case has been registered based on the complaint of the constable on charges of attempt to murder the children.

A PCR call was made on Thursday afternoon wherein a constable posted in Vasant Kunj (South) police station said that his wife and children were at home and the wife was not opening the door.

When the police reached the spot, they broke open the door and found the wife dead.

The couple's two sons aged three and six were found unconscious in the bathroom and were taken to a hospital for treatment.

**Suicide prevention helpline:** Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
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SOURA, SRINAGAR-190011 EXT: 2275  
Email: ammpurchase1@skims.ac.in Tele/Fax No. 0194-2403929

Sub:- Notice regarding modification to NIT.  
Some modification / clarification has issued to e-NIT No. SIMS 325 (Pl) Tender 05 of 2021 Dated: 19.03.2021 (Tender id: 2021\_SKIMS\_121107 to 2021\_SKIMS\_121107) vide No: SIMS 325 (Pl) e-Tender 05 of 2021 of 2021-2323-26 Dated: 31/03/2021 regarding supply of various surgical disposable items on 2 years rate contract basis and same are available on www.jktenders.gov.in and also on SKIMS website www.skims.ac.in.

No: SIMS 325 (Pl)-e-Tender 05 of 2021-233-6207-07  
Dated : 31.03.2021  
No: SIMS-6208  
Dated: 01.04.2021

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Integrated MS-PhD Admissions  
Applications are invited from prospective candidates for admission to the Integrated MS-PhD Program at IISER Mohali in the areas of Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics for the session beginning in August/September 2021. The programme involves course work as well as research work. Successful completion of the program will lead to an MS degree and a PhD degree.

**Eligibility Criteria:** The applicant should have a Bachelors degree in Science and related areas with a good academic record (at least 60% aggregate or at least CGPA 6.0 on a scale of 10).

**Additional Qualifications:** Applicants who have obtained one of the following national-level qualifying examinations, are advised to mention the same in their application form:

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2. Rank in JEST examination for Physics  
3. DST INSPIRE fellowship or KVPY scholarship  
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**Application procedure:** Prospective candidates should apply online using the "Online Application Facility" by visiting the website at https://www.iisermohali.ac.in

Short-listed candidates will be invited for a screening-test/interview at IISER Mohali.

Last date: The online application facility will be open till 12.00 noon, April 30, 2021 (Friday). For further details about the program and research areas, please visit our website: https://www.iisermohali.ac.in

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**PhD Admissions**  
Applications are invited from prospective candidates for admission to the PhD Program at IISER Mohali in the areas of Biological Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Earth & Environmental Sciences and Humanities & Social Sciences, for the session beginning in August/September 2021. Candidates interested in pursuing research in interdisciplinary areas are also encouraged to apply. IISER Mohali is one of the PMRF granting institutes offering PMRF Fellowship to meritorious Ph.D. candidates. Candidates are advised to visit https://dec2020.pmrff.in to know more.

**Eligibility Criteria:** The applicant should have a Master's degree/ B.Tech/ MBBS/ M.Tech with a good academic record (at least a high second class) and should be GATE/ CSIR or IIT-JEST/ GPAT/ ICMR-JRF/ DBT-BINC/ ICAR-NET/ DST- INSPIRE qualified in the relevant subject. Additional details are available in the link: https://www.iisermohali.ac.in

**Application procedure:** Prospective candidates should apply online using the "Online Application Facility" by visiting the website at https://www.iisermohali.ac.in. Short-listed candidates will be invited for a screening-test/interview/on-line interview at IISER Mohali.

Last date: The online application facility will be open till 12.00 noon, April 30, 2021 (Friday). For further details about the program and research areas, please visit our website: https://www.iisermohali.ac.in

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JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543  
NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP  
LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

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Shiva statues were displaced and there were stones and bricks lying in the temple.

Ms. Goel said that when CCTV footage was analysed, it was found that a man later identified as Vicki Mal, a resident of Raghbir Nagar, was responsible for this. It was revealed that he is a vagabond and had a grudge against the God for giving him a life of a vagabond.

A case has been registered.

When the police reached the spot, they broke open the door and found the wife dead.

The couple's two sons aged three and six were found unconscious in the bathroom and were taken to a hospital for treatment.

**Suicide prevention helpline:** Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

THE HINDU  
SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2021

## DMRC begins revamp of 15-year-old coaches

280 coaches to be upgraded in first phase

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has begun the process of refurbishing 280 coaches which have completed 15 years of service on the Red Line.

"This refurbishment includes a lot of minor and major overhaul activities such as internal painting, floor replacement, gangway overhauling and secondary suspension replacement. A total of 1,120 secondary suspension in 70 trains. All of these suspensions have been planned for replacement," officials said.

Highlighting other refurbishments that will also take place in the coaches, officials said, "Other activities will include installation of mobile charging facility, refurbishment of electrical panels and installation of fire detection systems."

The DMRC has begun the process of mid-life refurbishment of 70 trains with four coaches each, that were initially pressed into service in 2002 on the Red Line.

"These trains and coaches have completed 15 years of their 30-year life," the DMRC said.

The first phase of the mid-life refurbishment of the coaches is likely to be completed by mid-next year, DMRC officials said, while adding that the work for the second phase would be taken up accordingly.

## Industries welcome govt's excise policy

They write to L-G in support of move

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Even as the political tug-of-war between AAP and BJP continue, industry bodies have welcomed the new excise policy proposed by the Delhi government.

The International Spirits and Wines Association of India (ISWAI), the representative body of international spirits and wine companies with business establishments in India, and the Shopping Centres Association of India (SCAI) have written to Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal, supporting the move.

"The new policy is expected to improve ease of doing business for the industry including restaurants and pubs, which form a key part of shopping centres across India..." the SCAI stated.

## Cross cases registered over death of constable's wife

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Saturday said that two cross cases have been registered in connection with a constable's wife allegedly ending her life after trying to kill her

Timings  
DELHI

SUNDAY, APR. 04	
RISE 06:08	SET 18:41
RISE 01:02	SET 11:25
MONDAY, APR. 05	
RISE 06:07	SET 18:42
RISE 01:59	SET 12:26
TUESDAY, APR. 06	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:42
RISE 02:50	SET 13:28

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	36 12
Safdarjung	36 12
Palam	36 15

**Delhi Pilm Today**  
35°C Surface winds speed would decrease. Light to moderate surface winds would continue during the warm sunny day.

**Delhi Pilm Tomorrow**  
36°C Temperature would rise. A very warm day would prevail with partly cloudy sky and light winds.

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IN BRIEF

6 women among 20 held for flouting COVID norms

NEW DELHI  
Delhi police on Saturday arrested 20 persons, including six women, for allegedly violating COVID-19 guidelines at a hookah bar in Paschim Vihar. Five hookahs have also been seized.

Inquiry into allegations of custodial beating

NEW DELHI  
An inquiry is being conducted by the Vigilance Branch of the Outer North Delhi district after a resident alleged he was mercilessly beaten in police custody at Shahbad Dairy police station.

BJP team visits vaccination centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Concerned about the surge in COVID cases in the Capital, BJP MP Anil Jain, who has been appointed National Observer for the ongoing vaccination drive across the country, visited several immunisation centres in the city on Saturday.

Accompanied by Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and other senior leaders, the party delegation visited vaccination centres under the BJP-run civic bodies in Tughlaqabad, Badarpur, Mehrauli and Daryaganj.

Dr. Jain talked to health workers and beneficiaries to identify shortcomings, and expressed satisfaction at the arrangements.

"The way more people are coming out now for vaccination shows that the people have full trust in Indian-made vaccinations. Though increasing cases are a matter of concern, one need not worry as our hospitals are fully prepared," he said.

Mr. Gupta blamed the "lackluster attitude" of the Aam Aadmi Party government for the rise in daily cases of COVID-19.

"It is time for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to take all possible measures to contain the spread," said the senior BJP leader.

## Labourer held for killing kin over money dispute

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 57-year-old labourer was arrested for allegedly killing his brother-in-law over a monetary dispute in Outer North Delhi's Narela, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Rajeev Ranjan Singh said the accused has been identified as Panna Ram, a resident of Narela. The police said that on Thursday, the body of one Karan Kumar, 36, with his face burnt was found inside a flat in Narela.

There were injury marks on his neck and hands.

"During investigation, the police arrested Panna from Bawana industrial area

# Over 3,500 cases for second day, positivity rises to 4.5%

Delhi reports 10 more deaths; there are now over 12,000 active cases in the city

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The surge in COVID-19 cases continued in the national capital with 3,567 new infections being reported in the last 24 hours. The case tally stands at 6,72,381, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday. This is the second consecutive day when over 3,500 cases have been reported. There were 3,594 new cases on Friday.

The test positivity rate jumped to 4.48% on Saturday, up from 4.11% on Friday. It was less than 1% for over a month but started increasing last month.

Ten deaths were also reported in the past 24 hours, taking the toll to 11,060. Of the total cases, 6,48,674 people have recovered and there are 12,647 active cases – up



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia gets the jab at Maulana Azad Medical College on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

from 11,994 a day before.

Over 6,500 in isolation

A total of 79,617 tests, including 57,296 RT-PCR tests, were done in a single day,

the bulletin said.

The number of people under home isolation rose to 6,569 from 6,106 a day ago.

The containment zones

rose to 2,618 from 2,338 on

### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,72,381	11,060
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
3,567	10

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Friday, it said.

After a peak in November, the number of cases had gradually decreased. COVID-19 cases were falling in early 2021 and on January 16, the number of new cases had dropped to 94. It gradually increased to 200 on February 24 and has been rising since then.

A total of 80,797 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city till 6 p.m. on Saturday, said a Delhi government spokesperson.

## 13 students test positive at St. Stephen's College

Officials restrict access to campus

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Following 13 students of St. Stephen's College testing positive for COVID-19, the college administration has issued a notice stating that the inner perimeter of the campus will be out of bounds for everyone while the outer perimeter can be accessed after relevant security checks.

"Faculty scheduled to come to college may defer it till a notification informs them of an improvement in condition," read the notice.

Field trip

Earlier, college governing body member Nandita Narain had written to principal John Varghese raising questions over reports of students testing positive.

Ms. Narain had also raised questions over a college trip that took place in March. "Why was this trip

organised by the college officials in the times of COVID-19 pandemic? Was the trip authorised by the principal? Was the consent of the parents of the students taken? Was permission of Delhi University and State government taken for organising such a trip in pandemic times?" Ms. Narain had asked in her letter to Mr. Varghese.

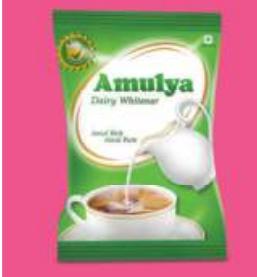
In his reply, Mr. Varghese confirmed that 13 students had tested positive for the virus and that the trip had been authorised by him following consent from the parents.

"As for the other questions, I shall answer them when I have a little more time to spare... the Dean's Office is aware of the situation and necessary steps have already been taken in consultation with medical and civic authorities," the reply read.

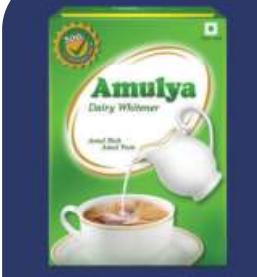
Amul



Amulya 1 kg | ₹ 380\*



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Amulya 500 g | ₹ 197\*



Amulya 200 g | ₹ 80\*



Amulya 200 g | ₹ 80\*



Amulya 100 g | ₹ 40\*



Amulya 24 g | ₹ 10\*



Amulya 12 g | ₹ 5\*

Clockwise from left: A resident of a homeless shelter washing clothes in Raja Garden; the men's section of the facility; residents of a night shelter in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



## Homeless face long wait for jab



nication from the authorities.

Some wary of vaccine

Another challenge faced by the caretakers is convincing the residents that the "vaccination is safe".

Paramjeet Kaur, 60, and her husband Vinod Kumar, 70, have been staying at the shelter for the last three months. They had left their rented Shahpura house after a fight with their son and daughter-in-law.

Mr. Kumar used to drive an autorickshaw but had to stop due to old age. Both of them have age proof but while Mr. Kumar is willing to get vaccinated, his wife is scared. "Cases are rising and I am scared to step out of the shelter.

Fifty-five-year-old Arjun Singh, who has trouble walking, echoed the same problem.

Also, I am healthy, and I do not need vaccination. My immunity is not good, what if something happens to me?" she said.

"If the government is providing vaccinations, then we must get the shot. There is nothing to be scared of. If everyone gets the shot, we will too," said Mr. Kumar.

In the men's section of the shelter, 60-year-old Rajan Singh, who is blind, said he has been living in the shelter for the last 11 years while his family is in Punjab. "I don't mind getting the vaccine if everybody gets it but how will I reach the hospital?" he said.

Caretaker of the shelter, Deepak Kumar, said he too had made a list of over 20 people who were eligible for vaccination, and had submitted it to his supervisor on March 17. He has also not heard back from the authorities.

I have a list of 14 eligible people but only three of them have an Aadhaar card. I drew the list just by looking at them. If they looked around at 50 years of age or above, I wrote down their names and age. But even those who don't have the identity proof deserve to get vaccinated

MOHAMMED JASIN  
Caretaker, Raja Garden night shelter

Many here are also unaware of the vaccine. Soni, 45, and her daughter Mangli, 12, who had no idea about the vaccination, said: "I don't know about any vaccine. I just pray that I don't get infected." She stays at the shelter with her three daughters.

Centre for Holistic Development's Executive Director Sunil Kumar Aledia said the NGO has been working towards vaccinating the homeless in the city. He added that their teams are finding the absence of age and identity proof to be a hurdle.

"It has also been observed that some people living in night shelters are going for vaccination. But lack of post-vaccination care is a cause of concern with regard to consumption of drugs and liquor, and inadequate nutritious food," he said.

Long list

Mr. Aledia said the CHD has drawn up a list of 1,500 people who are now eligible to get the jab. The organisation has also written to District Magistrates to look into the matter.

DUSIB member Bipin Rai said vaccination of eligible night shelter residents is likely to happen in the next 15 days. "They will be taken to hospitals for the vaccination," he added.

## Labourer held for killing kin over money dispute

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 57-year-old labourer was arrested for allegedly killing his brother-in-law over a monetary dispute in Outer North Delhi's Narela, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Rajeev Ranjan Singh said the accused has been identified as Panna Ram, a resident of Narela. The police said that on Thursday, the body of one Karan Kumar, 36, with his face burnt was found inside a flat in Narela.

There were injury marks on his neck and hands.

"During investigation, the police arrested Panna from Bawana industrial area

on Friday," Mr. Singh said. The police said it was revealed that after the death of Ram's wife, he married another woman. But his brother-in-law Karan was insisting he register his property in the name of his nephew Vikas.

Borrowed ₹29,000  
The accused had also borrowed ₹29,000 from the deceased and was unable to repay it, the police said, adding that Karan used to insult the accused in front of his family members and relatives, following which he planned to kill Karan.

He bought an axe and burnt his face to hide the identity, said the police.

**WELCOME TO KUMBH CITY HARIDWAR**

- Registration is mandatory while entering into the kumbh city Haridwar till 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
- For registration health certificate, photo ID and RT-PCR negative report (test done 72 hours prior to the time of arrival to Uttarakhand state) is mandatory.
- Without registration shelter will not be provided in Kumbh Mela area Haridwar.
- Kindly follow the latest covid-19 guidelines (SOP) issued by Govt of India.
- Non-compliance of covid-19 guidelines (SOP) issued by Govt of India will lead to penal action.

For Registration Use the Below Mention Websites

[www.haridwarkumbhmela2021.com](http://www.haridwarkumbhmela2021.com)  
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BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

## BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

### INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

#### BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

### COMPUTER / INFO.TECH.

Tamil/ Telugu Speaking girl, 5'4", MS (CS) US, June 1989. Mudaliyar, Non-brahmin, caste no bar +91-9848624004

### COSMOPOLITAN

Groom Needed. Casto no bar. Girl's details - DOB 20th Mar 1990. Birthplace: Sutluj (UP). Casto - Kori, 5'2". Working in MNC in Hyderabad as SW Engg. Contact No: 7887976659

**SOUTH INDIAN** Upper middle class brahmin seeking highly qualified life partner for daughter, 25 years, graduate from NLS and M.S. Law and Finance from a premier university. UK. Prefer similar profession. Contact: 9448092780

### DIVORCEE

FAIR/ MUDALIYAR Girl 30/162, 10th, No issue, seeks suitable groom, caste no bar, Chennai only. 9840353384

SC 36 Tamil Clinical Trials Bangalore Contact - 908511477

### DOCTOR

ALLIANCE INVITED from Senguntha/ Mudaliar DM/ MCh/ MD/ MS Groom for MD, 28 years, Visagam, Senguntha/ Mudaliar. Chennai affluent family. Kindly contact: 9791037884

HINDU NAIR/ Vanya girl, 30+ys, Chadayam with Sudha Jagannam, ENT Surgeon (MS Ent), settled in Chennai. Kerala sees alliance from Qualified Doctors. Cont: ramakrishnan arubudai@gmail.com, 9445641033

✓ Wanted Groom for Dentist (MDs), homely, tall (165cms), fair, grounded, and convert educated brahmin girl of vatsa born on May 31, 1992, contact:for.marriage.email@gmail.com

Madva/ Tamil parents seek suitable alliance for their daughter ' 94 born, M.S (OG) final year, TamilNadu Govt medical college, Hospital, Athreya Gothram, Ayilam 4th Patham from brahmin doctor (M.S / M.D ) rooms living in Chennai contact: 9840014588, / gmruthy@expoprints.in

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

PM for Delhi based brahmin girl, 5'2"/1993, Lawyer, LLM / Cambridge, UK, family in Punjab. Ph: 9501110099

### MALAYALAM

HINDU SC girl 28 Star chothi, MBA, MNC, Bangalore seeks suitable alliance caste no bar. 9446030562

DHEEVARA ENGINEER girl, Techno Park, 30/170 cm Avittam, Invites alliance from well educated boys. Caste no bar..8921656279

PROGRESSIVE MINDED Nair Girl from Cochini, Atham, 27/168 cms,Corporative Lawyer,Bangalore. 9847485004

CHRISTIAN NAIR 24 / 176cm B.E/ Fair Inc 50000, Bridgroom Wanted K.A Raman Nadar W-9380791999

VANNIYAR, 26, fair and good looking BDS girl, seeking a Groom with BDS/ MDS/MBBS/MD/MS from same community with good family background. send profile, photo and horoscope to: 9894273699.

HINDU/DKV 32/152 B.E. Middle Class. Divorcee. Seeks Suitable Groom. Castle No Bar. 94986 95984

SC AD, 38/165, Reethi, Meena rasi, MBBS, MD, Govt. Doctor, Bangalore, divorcee, no issues seeks suitable professional groom. Castle No Bar. Ct: 99164 72709, 080-25468640.

Sozhia Pillai Madhuri Hasham 33/154 MCA upper mid-class-chettinai seek professionally qualified girl. 944302103, 9159966477

Pillai Mudalai Hasham 33/154 MCA

Seeking educated well settled Groom

984412 82222 sivaprasadylamanchi@gmail.com

### TELUGU

39 Y Dreddy Girl Divorcee/ MCA 5'3/ Well Qualified Boy/ Decent Family Contact No: 770242938

Seeking educated well settled Groom

984412 82222 sivaprasadylamanchi@gmail.com

### TAMIL

VANNIYAR FAIR, Slim, 24/164, Avittam, B.E. seeks Groom from well settled family. Ct: 9840028346

HINDU 28/162, MS (C) the el fa

lly, working US seeks well educated

Chennai settled, Alliance invited

Chennai Nair family. 9500012855

M/Tech/ Engineer/ Bangalore

23years/ 168cm / Vanniyar looking

groom from decent educated family.

engprod@sdfgroup.com

CHENNAI NAIR Girl Software Engi

neer 13.06.1988 seeks Chennai w

orking Software/ Banking official

groom, vegetarian preferred. Ct:

9344385276

### MARATHI

CHENNAI BASED Marathi speaking

spinster Girl 33/164 M.D.S working at

Deemed University. Contact: 9841123425

### NRI

IT PROFESSIONAL good looking very

fair 39/168 Divorcee living with a child

in USA seeking groom from USA only

903793562/ +1 650507926

IT PROFESSIONAL USA good looking

41/165, divorcee no issue Green

card final stage seeks groom from

US only 9840206292/ alliance039@

gmail.com

### TAMIL

AD/CHRISTIAN ICSI 35 yrs/165 cms

B.Tech, M.B.A Software Engg. CTs

12 L pa seeks employed Bride gro

m. Groom. Ct: 9443609895

IT PROFESSIONAL

Good looking 41/165 divorcee no issue

Green card final stage seeks groo

m from US only 9840206292/ alliance039@

gmail.com

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### TAMIL

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Sunday:** Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Muzaffarabad, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Heat wave conditions likely in some/isolated pockets over Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Karaikal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 33.6	23.5	11.5	Kozhikode	... 34.0...	27.6	11.5
Ahmedabad	... 41.4	21.2	11.5	Kurnool	... 41.2...	25.4	11.5
Aizawl	1.3	27.8	12.1	Lucknow	... 37.2...	17.7	11.5
Allahabad	39.7	16.6	11.5	Madurai	... 41.2...	26.9	11.5
Bengaluru	35.0	22.4	11.5	Mangaluru	... 35.1...	25.0	11.5
Bhopal	... 38.7	20.0	11.5	Mumbai	... 31.6...	23.2	11.5
Bhubaneswar	... 37.4	26.0	11.5	Mysuru	... 36.7...	18.0	11.5
Chandigarh	33.9	13.8	11.5	Patna	... 35.5...	11.7	11.5
Chennai	38.3	28.4	11.5	Port Blair	71.4...	32.2...	17.7
Coimbatore	35.8	24.6	11.5	Puducherry	... 39.0...	26.0	11.5
Dehradun	32.0	11.0	11.5	Pune	... 39.1...	19.8	11.5
Gangtok	25.8	11.1	11.5	Raipur	... 40.4...	24.7	11.5
Goa	33.3	23.8	11.5	Ranchi	... 36.6...	18.6	11.5
Guwahati	0.6	32.6	20.0	Shillong	... 25.6...	14.4	11.5
Hubballi	34.0	20.0	11.5	Shimla	... 23.2...	9.0	11.5
Hyderabad	40.1	23.0	11.5	Srinagar	... 19.8...	2.6	11.5
Imphal	31.8	14.2	11.5	Thiruvananthapuram	... 34.4...	26.0	11.5
Jaipur	35.5	19.9	11.5	Tiruchi	... 42.5...	27.2	11.5
Kochi	32.2	26.4	11.5	Vijayawada	... 37.4...	28.6	11.5
Kohima	25.4	12.6	11.5	Visakhapatnam	... 33.4...	28.4	11.5
Kolkata	37.1	26.8	11.5				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh recorded the overall air quality index (AQI) score of 343 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Rupnagar, Punjab recorded a healthy AQI score of 41

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

**SO<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>2</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.

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** 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

# Commission agents not middlemen: Amarinder

Punjab CM asks PM to continue existing payment system

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking continuance of the existing system of payment to farmers till a consensus can be reached on the issue of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Asserting that commission agents (arhiyas) are not middlemen between the farmers and procurement agencies but are service providers, the Chief Minister urged Mr. Modi to ensure that the livelihood of the farmers and all others involved in the smooth procurement of foodgrains is not jeopardised.

**Promises to PM**

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Singh sought a meeting to apprise him of the concerns of various stakeholders about changing the existing payment system "before the situation gets out of hand."

On behalf of the Govern-



Farmers during their ongoing protest against the new farm laws at the Ghazipur border on Saturday. ■ PTI

ment of Punjab, he assured Mr. Modi of his complete support towards evolving a consensus amongst the stakeholders for long-term durable reforms.

"While I fully endorse the views that as a society and as nation we have to continuously evolve and reform, and as the political leadership of the world's largest democracy, we have to continuously think of improving, but I strongly believe that reforms are most successful and sustainable if carried

out through a consultative process with all stakeholders, ensuring ownership of all," said the Chief Minister.

He sought the Prime Minister's involvement in the matter with a request to advise the Department of Food and Public Distribution and the Union Ministry of Finance, to initiate discussions and consultations with the stakeholders including the farmers, farm workers and the arhiyas to evolve a mutually acceptable system through consensus.

## Centre praises Rajasthan's achievements in ration card scheme

State 12th in India to undertake reform that enables migrant families to get PDS benefits from anywhere

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

JAIPUR

The Centre praised the achievements of Rajasthan in the implementation of the "one nation, one ration card" scheme to enable migrant workers and their families to access the benefits of the public distribution system (PDS) from anywhere.

Rajasthan is the 12th

State to successfully undertake the reform.

**Food Secy visits State**

Union Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey, who was on a visit to the State over the weekend, observed the process for biometric authentication and transparency in the distribution of ration under the National Food Security Act (NFSAs).

Mr. Pandey held discussions with the State government officials on the arrangements for procurement of wheat in the rabi marketing season 2021-22.

Chief Secretary Niranjan Arya apprised Mr. Pandey of the initiatives launched for the supply of foodgrains under the PDS and various inspections undertaken in the field every Saturday

during the last three months.

The demand for making the process for procurement of wheat offline in the current season was reiterated before the Food Secretary.

**'All implemented'**

State Food & Civil Supplies Secretary Naveen Jain said all the announcements

made in the budget for the welfare of ration dealers

had been implemented and steps taken for strengthening the NFSAs.

Mr. Pandey suggested that the State government construct more warehouses for storing the foodgrains and ensure optimum utilisation of the resources provided by the Centre to protect the interests of farmers.

## IN BRIEF

**Sahada bypoll: 'Withdrew nomination after threats'**

JAIPUR

A day after BJP rebel Ladulal Pitliya withdrew nomination as an Independent candidate in the Sahada Assembly bypoll, a video clip and a letter circulating on social media suggest he pulled out of the elections as the "BJP was mounting pressure" on him, and his family was being harassed. In an audio clip, he is requesting CM Ashok Gehlot to provide protection.

## + CAG picks holes in Odisha drug distribution scheme

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK**

BHUABANESWAR

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India hauled up the Odisha government over reported mismanagement of Niramaya – a much vaunted free medicines distribution scheme.

The Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL), a nodal agency for implementation of Niramaya Scheme in the State, failed in timely procurement and supply of drugs, equipment and instrument to health institutions as per indent, says the General and Social Sector report of CAG. The report was tabled in the State Assembly on Saturday.

The CAG finds that the procurement process was riddled with systemic flaws and numerous instances of non-adherence to the procurement policy, consequently impacting availability of drugs and equipment. "There was stock out of essential drugs in hospitals leading to out-of-pocket ex-

pense by the patients. Monitoring of inventory management through e-Niramaya software application was ineffective leading to shortage of drugs in health institutions and expiry of drugs as well," it says.

**Problems in supply**  
"Government was unsuccessful in providing an unbroken supply of essential drugs to the patients in public health institutions as per its own prescribed Essential Drug List. Government's mandate to provide all prescribed drugs to patients free of cost in public health institutions remained largely unfulfilled," it sums up.

The Naveen Patnaik Government has been boasting of its Niramaya scheme which is implemented since May 1, 2015. According to report, audit noticed that 349 kinds of drugs valued ₹4.18 crore had expired during April 2017 to May 2019. These expired drugs were lying in 39 warehouses.

## WESTERN RAILWAY

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE NO. S/13/2021 Date : 01.04.2021

S.N.	Short Description of Item	Quantity	T.O.D
268	Bracket Supporting Plate	2600 Nos.	19.04.2021
269	Compreg Clamp	10400 Nos.	19.04.2021
270	Cochlear Implant	13 Nos.	19.04.2021
271	Lower Spring Seat for Motor Coach	88 Nos.	22.04.2021
272	LED Based Emergency Light Unit	1110 Nos.	26.04.2021
273	Yaw Damper	200 Nos.	29.04.2021
274	Microprocessor (ESMON)	64 Set	29.04.2021
275	Body Side Lower Panel of Lavatory	1350 Nos.	30.04.2021
276	Air Brake Hose Coupling	2600 Nos.	30.04.2021

CORRIGENDUM : Please visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for tender at Sr. No. 206 of Tender Notice No. S/10/2021 Dt. 10.03.2021 (Un-Insulated CCC Wire 125 Sq mm)

Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and [www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in).

0781

For Principal Chief Materials Manager

Like us on : [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://facebook.com/WesternRly) | Follow us on : [twitter.com/WesternRly](https://twitter.com/WesternRly)

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

**DEATH**

Perfection is a way of Life and Live it on your terms

We will always remember your teachings

With profound grief we inform you of passing away of our Mother on 2nd April 2021.

**Smt. Pushp Ram Khanna**

Wife of Shri Ram Singh Khanna, IAS (Former Chief Secretary, Government of M.P.) Family will conduct a prayer meeting at 10 am on 4th April, 2021 at their residence-E-4/9, Aera Colony, Bhopal. (Due to present covid situation, we request you to pray for her soul and bless us all from your homes.)

Aditya Khanna-9971266773,

Amot Khanna-9425012328

For enquiries on

announcements in this

section, please contact our

office at the following number

between 10a.m. and 8p.m.

New Delhi : 011- 43579797

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(Minimum Rs. 320/- 2 Lines

Extra Line - Rs.160/-)

&lt;p

# ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2021

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# In Kerala, a battle over the elusive fruit of continuity

Will this election change the typical pattern of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front and the Congress-led United Democratic Front coming to power alternately?

MOHAMED NAZEER  
KOZHIKODE

The campaign narratives in Kerala in the run-up to the Assembly election on April 6 illustrate a zealous attempt to validate, and an equally ardent bid to push back, the presumed "certainty" of a forthcoming turning point in its electoral history.

The battle lines are drawn between those who set store by the certitude encapsulated in the catchphrase of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) "Urappanu LDF" ("It's LDF, for sure") and those who don't. On either side of the divide is the LDF, led by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF), with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) posing a potential threat to the bipolar order in many places. A second tenure for Pinarayi Vijayan will be a shift in the accustomed electoral template of both the fronts alternately coming to power every five years.

The LDF's perceived advantage is its high-powered campaign projecting Mr. Vijayan as its brand icon. That advantage got zoomed in against the backdrop of the initial disarray in the UDF ov-

er candidate selection. The UDF, led by former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala, conveniently chose to leave unanswered the question of who would lead the government if it came to power. The UDF relied on roadshows by Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to buoy its campaign.

As for the BJP, its election rallies, addressed by an array of its top national leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, gave a boost to its electoral ambition in the State.

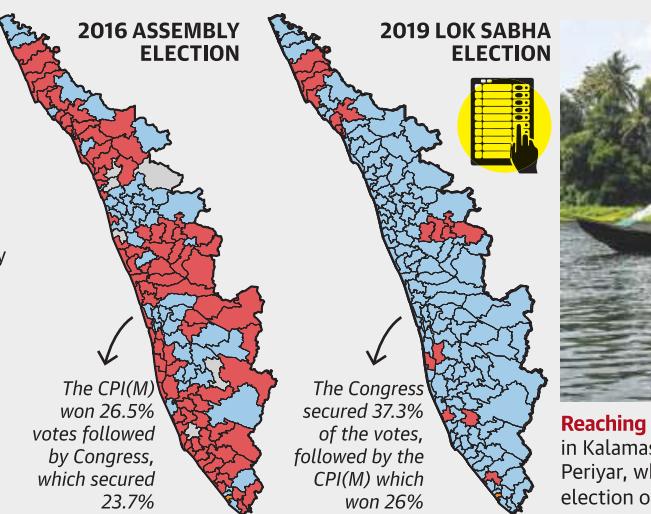
However hard the LDF tried to restrict the engineering discourse to its development record and social welfare initiatives such as pensions and distribution of ration kits, multiple scams, including the case of gold smuggling through diplomatic channels, allegations of nepotism, and the government's support to the Supreme Court's order allowing entry of women of all ages into the Sabarimala temple, have certainly shaped the poll atmospherics. Its electoral debacle in the 2019 Lok Sabha election in the State made the LDF jit-

### Shifting seats of power

As many as 140 Assembly seats in Kerala will go to the polls on April 6. The chart shows the major coalitions which formed the government in Kerala between 1980 and 2016. Since 1980, the two major coalitions have alternated in power

#### PAST RECORD

The maps show the party-wise wins/leads in each seat in the 2016 Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha polls. In the previous election in 2016, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by CPI(M) secured the majority by winning 91 seats and 43.1% votes, defeating the United Democratic Front (UDF), which won 47 seats and 38.6% votes. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the BJP, won one seat and secured 14.9% of the votes



74.24 %

The 2016 voter turnout percentage of Tamil Nadu which will go to the polls on April 6. **Palcode constituency** recorded the highest turnout of 88.6%.

77.10 %

The 2016 voter turnout percentage of Kerala which will go to the polls on April 6. **Manjeri constituency** recorded the highest turnout of 96.3%.



If they (BJP leaders) are spending so much time staring at Didi's feet, they might as well fall at her feet

KUNAL GHOSH  
Trinamool Congress spokesperson

ter over Sabarimala. The sparring between the LDF and the UDF over Mr. Chennithala's disclosure of over 4 lakh multiple entries on the electoral rolls across the State further augmented the campaign's decibel levels. Seldom have attempts to stoke fears in different segments of the electorate be-

come a dominant subtext of the election campaign. The CPI(M)'s initial salvo that the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is dominating the UDF is seen as a cynical ploy to whip up fears among Hindus and Christians. The UDF and the NDA raked up the Sabarimala issue to make the CPI(M) appear anti-believers.

The BJP pandered to the fear of Christians by raising the issue of "love jihad".

#### Temple issue

Sabarimala tops the campaign issues played up by the BJP, which won the lone Nenmam Assembly seat in 2016. Its chances of increasing its tally dominated the debates.

The candidature of "Metroman" E. Sreedharan in Palakkad and the party's top State leaders in constituencies it hopes to win left the impression that the party is serious in its resolve to change the bipolar order.

The LDF amplified its hope for the continuity of the Pinarayi Vijayan dispensa-

tion, with poll surveys lending credence to its claim that there were no anti-incumbency sentiments among the electorate. The government's handling of crises, including floods, Nipah virus outbreaks and the COVID-19 pandemic, is used to vindicate that perception. The LDF sought to neutralise its vulnerability vis-à-vis the investigations by Central agencies into the various scams by projecting them as the BJP-led Central government's bid to destabilise the Left government.

As usual, a heady mix of caste and religious interests is present to spice up the election scene. The UDF's efforts to capitalise on the resentment among fishers over the LDF government's pact with a U.S.-based company on deep sea fishing are pegged on the hope of wresting coastal constituencies in the southern and central parts of the State. Hence, the electoral significance of a pastoral letter issued by the Kollam diocese of the Latin Catholic Church flaying the government for devising policies detrimental to fisher folk.

The three fronts are kept guessing by caste organisations such as the Nair Service

Society and the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogan, representing Nair and Ezhava communities, respectively. The NSS's strident stand against the government on the Sabarimala issue is perceived as harmful to the LDF. Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan has decided to stay neutral, but the Bharat Dharm Jana Sena headed by his son Thushar Vellappally is an ally of the NDA.

The election will put to the test the LDF's hope of gaining entry into the Christian belt in the central Kerala that has traditionally supported the UDF. The inclusion of Jose K. Mani-led Kerala Congress (M) in the LDF has raised the front's optimism. The LDF's sweep of Thrissur and the inroads it made in Ernakulam in 2016 showed that the UDF's strongholds in the central parts of Kerala are not invincible. The northern districts, barring Malappuram, remain the mainstay of the LDF.

The LDF has fielded more dissident UDF leaders as Independents in UDF strongholds, especially in Malappuram, hoping a repeat of its experiment which succeeded in a couple of constituencies in 2011 and 2016.

## Blowing in the wind



**Keen listeners:** BJP and United People's Party Liberal supporters attending Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election rally at Nagrjuli in Baska district of Assam, on Saturday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

# Farmers hold key in battle for Tamil Nadu's heartland

With 41 seats over nine districts at stake, the region has often tipped the scales in deciding who takes Fort St George

S. GANESAN  
TIRUCHI

In the closely fought, high-stakes battle for the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the State's central region with 41 Assembly seats spread over nine districts, could prove to be the political barometer. In recent elections, the party that has won the most number of constituencies here, has eventually formed the government.

Having ceded much ground to its arch rival in the region in the past two Assembly elections, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is keen on reasserting its supremacy in the agrarian heartland of the State, spread largely over the fertile Cauvery delta.

**DMK revival** After the setback in 2011 when it won just seven seats by itself, the DMK substantially improved its performance to bag 16 seats in 2016. The party also recouped in the 2019 general election to win all the seven Lok Sabha seats from the region, after the total rout in 2014. And having put up an impressive performance in the 2019 local body polls, where it secured a ma-

jority in six district panchayat councils, the DMK is riding high on confidence.

The AIADMK, however, is hoping to reap the benefits of the slew of measures announced ahead of the election by Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami, especially the cooperative crop loan waiver and declaration of the Cauvery delta a protected agricultural zone. Mr. Palaniswami has also consistently sought to identify himself as a humble farmer, who has risen up the ranks.

Curiously, the Assembly election this time in the delta is seemingly bereft of any major issue. Even the three contentious new farm laws, despite the sporadic protests, do not seem to have become a major influencing factor here as farmers' organisations are divided on the issue.

"Despite stiff opposition from some of the organisations, the average farmer does not seem to be aware of the implications of the new laws," V. Jeevakumar of Thanjavur says.

Also, issues such as rising cultivation costs, poor returns and the impact of the pandemic on the rural econo-

### Cauvery delta region, a lowdown

In the 41 seats in the Cauvery delta\* of T.N., about 75% population are from the rural areas and over 21% of them earn mainly from cultivation. Demographics and socio-economic data from the region

**2016 PERFORMANCE** in the delta region of T.N.

Party	Vote %	Seat share %
AIADMK	43.6	59.0
DMK	30.4	41.0
INC	7.9	-
PMK	3.3	-
DMDK	2.5	-
IUML	2.1	-

\*according to the regional classification by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Region	Rural %	Urban %
Delta	74.8	25.2
All seats	51.6	48.4

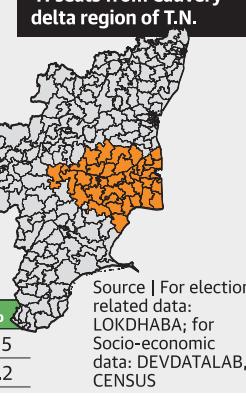
  

Region	ST (%)	SC (%)
Delta	0.4%	23.7%
All seats	1.1	20

Share of rural households WITH MAIN INCOME FROM CULTIVATION

Region	%
Delta	21.5
All seats	18.2

The map highlights the 41 seats from Cauvery delta region of T.N.



Source | For election related data: LODKDHABA; for Socio-economic data: DEVADATALAB, CENSUS

and AIADMK deputy coordinator R. Vaithilingam are contesting from the region.

For the DMK, former Ministers Senthil Balaji and S. Reghupathy, and the prodigal son, S.K. Vetharathinam, are among the prominent contenders besides Mr. Nehru.

#### Support from allies

Though the Congress has been allotted just two seats in the region, it still commands respect across the region. The DMK alliance has been bolstered by the return of the Left parties, which have a presence in the core delta districts, and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigai Katchi.

The support bases of the AIADMK's allies – the BJP, Pattali Makkal Katchi and Tamil Maanai Congress – are restricted to certain pockets.

But other factors could upset the fine calculations of the Dravidian majors. Seeman's Naam Tamizhar Katchi, which has a sizeable following, has played spoilsport in many seats the past few polls and Kamal Haasan's fledgling Makkal Needhi Maiam, in its quest to display its strength, could also cause a split in votes in urban segments.

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forensic lab for examination, officials said on Saturday. Two FIRs filed at Jagiroad police station by the scribes have been merged, and Mr. Hazarika has been booked under Sections 500 (defamation), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the Indian Penal Code.

The Minister, who is contesting from the Jagiroad constituency Thursday, had allegedly threatened the two scribes for reporting about a controversial campaign speech by his wife.

## 41 crude bombs found in Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on April 3 said 41 crude bombs were recovered during a raid in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas on April 2 after police received a tip from a source. The bombs were discovered in a bush in Bhadrakali assembly constituency.

The Assembly constituency and the two polling stations at Padmapukur were already being treated as "vulnerable" in the ongoing elections, it said. A case has been lodged and investigation ongoing, the EC said, adding that no arrests had been made so far.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MORIGAON (ASSAM)

Assam minister Pijush Hazarika, who allegedly threatened two journalists, has been issued a notice to appear before police and his call recordings have been sent to

the minister threatening scribes, booked under Sections 500 (defamation), 506 (criminal intimidation) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the Indian Penal Code.

The minister, who is contesting from the Jagiroad constituency Thursday, had allegedly threatened the two scribes for reporting about a controversial campaign speech by his wife.

FROM PAGE ONE

## ECI reduces campaigning ban on Assam Minister

The Commission wrote to Mr. Sarma saying that it had considered his representation and reduced the ban, which means that he can campaign from Saturday evening onwards. Canvassing for the third and final phase of Assam Assembly election comes to an end on Sunday evening.

In his representation, Mr. Sarma had also pleaded on the grounds that he was himself a candidate in the constituency that was scheduled to go for the polls on April 6.

Reducing the ban, the Commission said Mr. Sarma could be given permission to holding public meetings, processions, rallies and roadshows by the district authorities concerned.

In its April 2 order, the Commission said it had received a complaint from the Congress on March 30 that Mr. Sarma had on March 28 threatened to send the BPF chief to jail by "misusing" the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

According to the order, Mr. Sarma had spoken of a case being handed over to



Himanta Biswa Sarma taking part in a roadshow in Guwahati on Saturday.

■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

the NIA and of "arms recovery cases" that would be "counted one by one after the election".

The BPF is an ally of the Congress in Assam.

The Commission said it found Mr. Sarma's statement to *prima facie* be in violation of the model code of conduct and therefore issued a notice to him on April 1, asking him to respond by April 2. In his response, Mr. Sarma had denied the allegations against him, which the poll panel found "not to be satisfactory".

## Farmer injured amid protests against Lal

"The farmers, enraged by the highly disparaging remarks made during farmers' agitation by BJP leaders, had assembled to peacefully show black flags to the Chief Minister. Even women protesters were manhandled by the male cops. Some protesters have received grievous injuries," said a statement issued by Haryana All-India Kisan Sabha vice-president Inderjit Singh.

Later in the evening, farmers in Jind blocked the Jind-Chandigarh road at Kandela village in protest against police action on farmers in Rohtak.

"The road has been blocked for two hours, and traffic is diverted," said Dinesh Kumar, Station House Officer, Jind Sadar Police Station.

Tekram Kandela, convenor, Uttar Bharat Khap Panchayats, told *The Hindu* that the road was also blocked in protest against the attack on farmer leader Rakesh Tikait. He said the blockade would continue all through the night and next course of action would be decided in the morning.

The incident comes close on the heels of a similar protest against Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala in Hisar on April 1.

As harvesting of wheat is all set to commence in Punjab and Haryana, farmers are shaping up a strategy to

ensure that the build-up of protesters agitating against Centre's agriculture laws at state borders surrounding Delhi doesn't drop.

The SKM held a joint meeting of farmers, farm workers, women, employees, students, youth, commission agents, teachers, university staff and other organisations at Ludhiana based Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) to devise a strategy for the agitation during the upcoming harvesting season.

"More than 100 organisations took part in today's meeting organised by PAU Teachers' Union, PAU Employees' Union and PAU Students' Union. The meeting took cognisance of the fact that when farmers and farm workers attend to wheat harvesting in their farms, the Delhi protest sites have to continue to remain strong in terms of participation. While the farmers' movement will not be weakened in any way, this meeting sought ways of strengthening the protest sites by the participation of non-farmer unions," said Mr. Pal. Mr. Pal said all participants pledged to extend their full support in strengthening the movement. "The first meeting of 'Punjab for Farmers' will be held in Jalandhar on April 7," he said.

(With inputs from Vikas Vasudeva)

## NDA and LDF are spreading hatred in Kerala, says Rahul

He reiterates Congress' plan for creating more jobs

STAFF REPORTER

KOZHIKODE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said a Congress-free State was the prime agenda of both the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala to thwart the dream of a unified India led by the Indian National Congress.

Addressing an election campaign of the United Democratic Front (UDF) at Koyilandy, Mr. Gandhi said both the NDA and the LDF were spreading hatred and division in society. "Congress workers can never spread hatred. They spread only unity," he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Congress Mukt Bharat' (Congress-free India) slogan during the election campaign, Mr. Gandhi said, "Both the BJP (Bharatiya Ja-



Reaching out: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi conversing with people in Kozhikode on Saturday. ■ PTI

nata Party) and Left parties know that the real threat to them are the united forces and they together try to divide people".

Mr. Gandhi said whatever

India had gained till date

was because of the hard work of Indian citizens.

"Now, our country is facing the biggest problem of un-

employment and stagnated economy, which can be solved only through a proper plan for the future," he said. Reiterating the Congress' plan for creating more job opportunities and a strong economy, Mr. Gandhi said he wanted to stress more on the country's future growth in his campaigns.

## Cases in Telangana cross 1,000 mark again

Kerala CM cautions against travel-linked spike; A.P. testing 'low'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

Telangana crossed the 1,000 cases mark with 1,078 testing positive for COVID-19 on Friday. ICU beds occupied also crossed 1,000 and there were six deaths, recalling the

### COVID-19

figures last seen in October and November 2020.

■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

the 1,078 new cases include 283 from Greater Hyderabad, 113 from Medchal-Malkajgiri and 104 from Rangareddy.

Kerala's case graph rose further by 2,541 cases on Saturday. The test positivity

### The big battle

The increasing number of COVID-19 cases and the stepped-up vaccination drive have kept healthcare providers busy. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



**First step:** A health worker collecting swab samples at Kemppegowda bus stand in Bengaluru on Saturday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

\*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Friday | \*\*Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths | \*\*\*Kerala has a mismatch of 313 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

rate (TPR) rose to 5.67%.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said at Kannur on Saturday that the second wave raged through neighbour-

ing States was a warning for Kerala. Mutant variants were found in a significant percentage of samples in Maharashtra and Punjab and it was

likely that with unrestricted domestic travel, these variants could reach Kerala soon.

The State recorded 12 new

deaths in the list of COVID fatalities on Saturday.

Kozhikode reported the maximum number of new cases at 568.

Andhra Pradesh recorded nine more COVID-19 deaths, the highest since December 6, on Saturday morning. New infections stood at 1,398. Two fatalities each occurred in Guntur and Nellore, and one each in Chittoor, Kadapa, Kurnool, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts.

Even with a rising TPR, the State continued to test only around 30,000 samples a day. In the past day, 31,260 samples had a TPR of 4.47%.

### 19 dead in Karnataka

Karnataka on Saturday reported 4,373 new cases, 3,002 cases from Bengaluru Urban alone. With 19 more deaths, the toll rose to 12,610.

Over 70% of the fresh cases came from seven districts of Chennai, Coimbatore, Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur, Tiruchi, Kancheepuram and Thanjavur. Chennai leads the table with 1,290 cases followed by Coimbatore with 292 cases, Chengalpattu 285, Tiruvallur 201, Tiruchi 142, Kancheepuram 141, and Thanjavur 138 cases.

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

### IN BRIEF



Govt. unleashing reign of terror: Pawan Kalyan

TIJUPATI

Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan has accused the government of unleashing a reign of terror in various forms. Addressing a public meeting on Saturday, Mr. Kalyan said the State was trying to infuse a sense of fear among the people to "continue its loot."

### Bus catches fire in A.P., passengers safe

KAKINADA

At least 15 passengers had a miraculous escape on Saturday when an APSRTC bus caught fire a few minutes after leaving the Kakinada bus station in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district. Kakinada RTC Depot Manager said the engine of the bus caught fire due to short circuit.

### Man-elephant conflict claims fifth life in Hassan

HASSAN

A 65-year-old farmer was trampled to death by a tusker near Halekere in Karnataka's Sakleshpur taluk on Friday night. The incident came to light on Saturday morning when passers-by noticed the body and informed Forest Department officials. This is the fifth death due to man-elephant conflict in the district since January.

### TTD puts arjitha sevas at Tirumala temple on hold

TIRUMALA

The TTD has decided to postpone its decision to allow devotees to take part in arjitha sevas performed inside the temple of Lord Venkateswara here. The TTD board during its last sitting in February had resolved to allow the devotees for arjitha sevas from April 14.

Police attribute it to 'family dispute'; accused on the run

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MYSURU

Six persons, including three children, were burnt to death at Mugatageri village of Karnataka's Kodagu district early on Saturday.

The police said the accused, identified as Boja, 50, a labourer, set fire to the house where his wife, daughter, grandchildren and others were asleep, around 2 a.m.

### Frequent fights

The police said Boja's wife Bebi, 40, who was fed up with the frequent fights he used to have with her in a drunken state, had come to

the doors of the house were bolted, the victims suffered serious burns when the house caught fire.

Superintendent of Police, Kodagu, Kshama Mishra said

her daughter's house on Friday.

Though she wanted to leave on Friday night, her daughter asked her to stay overnight. But Boja, who was looking for his wife, arrived at his daughter's house late in the night.

"He went to the roof of the house using a ladder, removed the tiles, poured kerosene and lit a fire," said a police official.

As the doors of the house were bolted, the victims suffered serious burns when the house caught fire.

Superintendent of Police, Kodagu, Kshama Mishra said

three victims, including a six-year-old child, died on the spot. Three others died at a hospital in Mysuru.

Neighbours had to break into the house to rescue those who suffered serious burns. Two more persons who suffered serious burns

are undergoing treatment at K.R. Hospital in Mysuru.

The police have formed a team to trace the accused. *Prima facie*, the provocation for the act was a "family dispute". But, more details would emerge during the investigation, the police said.

The order stated advanced ticket bookings as

the reason for the decision.

Industry insiders, however, pointed out that this temporary extension would provide *Yuvarathnaa* the crucial first week collections.

D.R. Jairaj, chairman, Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, also met Mr. Yediyurappa and appealed for a reversal to full occupancy in theatres.

Though the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee had recommended restrictions over a fortnight ago, they were introduced only on Friday.

On March 19, Mr. Yediyurappa had tweeted that there was no proposal before the State government to impose occupancy restrictions in cinemas.

ly election. The ECI submitted that as the polls in Kerala and Tamil Nadu were scheduled on April 6, there would not be any possibility of cross-voting.

The petitioners pointed out that the three constituencies from where they are contesting shared their boundary with the Bodinayakanur, Cumbum and Theni Assembly constituencies of Tamil Nadu. Large number of voters in these constituencies had registered in the electoral rolls of the bordering constituencies of Kerala.

The ECI was not taking any steps to prevent the inflow of these persons with votes in two States, the petitioners alleged.

Besides, 1,229 shifted and dead voters were deleted during the renewal of the voters list ahead of the Assem-

of 9,636 names were removed from the categories of shifted and dead persons from the voters list in the dis-trict.

The ECI counsel further submitted that at a special summary revision held in the months of November and December 2020, a total

of 1,229 shifted and dead voters were deleted during the renewal of the voters list ahead of the Assem-

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# BJP engineering riots, alleges Mamata

Party files complaint against her with the Chief Electoral Officer for making 'provocative statements'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Accusing the BJP of engineering riots to win elections, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday urged the gathering at a rally in South 24 Parganas to take a vow not to allow any split in minority votes.

Ms. Banerjee targeted the Indian Secular Front (ISF), an ally of the Left and the Congress, and said they were out to split the minority votes to help the BJP. According to the previous census, West Bengal has about 27.01% minority population, which has largely supported the Trinamool.

South 24 Parganas, where Ms. Banerjee addressed several public meetings in the day though a stronghold of the ruling party, has seen the ISF fielding the most number of candidates. In all her public meetings, Ms. Banerjee accused the BJP of trying to engineer communal strife and urged people to be watchful. "If a tiger comes into your locality, it will attack both Hindus and Muslims. Both Hindus and Muslim will have to fight the tiger," Ms. Banerjee said at a public meeting at Canning.



**Pushing on:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has also spoken against the CAA at various public meetings. ■ PTI

Earlier in the day, at a public meeting at Raidighi, she said, "I am a devout Hindu who recites Chandi mantra every day before leaving home. But I believe in our tradition of giving respect to every religion."

She said she did not nominate actor Deboshree Roy from Raidighi as people did not want her as the candi-

they deleted the names of 14 lakh Bengalis and 2 lakh Biharis in the updated NRC in Assam," Ms. Banerjee said.

#### Plea against CM

The State leadership of the BJP filed a complaint against Ms. Banerjee at the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Kolkata alleging that she has violated model code of con-

duct by making provocative statements.

Ms. Banerjee, during a public rally at Kulpai, said why should people go to rallies of BJP leaders including Amit Shah for ₹500.

Mr. Modi, who campaigned in the State on Saturday, said such remarks were an insult to the people of West Bengal.

"I heard some people yesterday (Friday) saying something that had a double meaning. One meaning is that they have already accepted defeat, and the other is that they want to change the attire and appearance of the people in power. Nothing can be more insulting to Assam than this," Mr. Modi said. This was apparently in reference to an alleged inflammatory statement by All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badrudin Ajmal's son Abdur Rahim Ajmal.

"Such views have ex-

posed some people's design to capture power five years later. I appeal to all of you to exercise your franchise for defeating the sinister designs of those people," the Prime Minister said, asserting that the BJP-led alliance government in Assam ended decades of misrule, unrest and social friction under Congress.

Mr. Modi claimed that the people of Assam sealed their preference for NDA in the first two phases of polling for ensuring peace, stability and equitable development.

"They (Congress) revelled in keeping the people divided and doling out sops for their preferred vote bank in the name of secularism. But we are accused of being communal for ensuring development for all without discrimination. Don't fall for this secularism-communalism game that has damaged the country a lot," Mr. Modi said.

The third and final phase of polling across 40 seats are scheduled on April 6.

# Opposition has accepted defeat, PM says in BTR

*Mahajot planning to change Assam's identity, he says*

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the Congress-led *Mahajot* or grand alliance has already accepted defeat as the people of Assam voted for the NDA in the first two phases of polls.

Addressing a rally at Nagrjuli in the Bodoland Territorial Region, he also warned of a "dangerous" *Mahajot* strategy of supplanting Assam's culture and indigenous identity.



**Confident PM:** Narendra Modi waving to BJP supporters while addressing an election rally in Nagrjuli. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

## Assam campaign: a study in contrast

Congress can't match BJP's decibels

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
GUWAHATI

The tone and pace of campaigns by the BJP and the Congress in Assam could not have been more different. While the BJP's is a high-decibel campaign, the Congress's canvassing barely rose above a low hum.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has had nine public events spread over two months, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already addressed four public meetings in the last fortnight and is returning for another on Saturday.

Before the final whistle, Home Minister Amit Shah will hold a roadshow in BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma's constituency Jalukbari in Guwahati on Sunday.

In the last 15 days, from March 14, the BJP has ensured that every second day, Mr. Modi, Mr. Shah or BJP president J.P. Nadda is present in the State. Mr. Shah alone has clocked 10 public meetings. Apart from these three leaders, the BJP has done its usual carpet bombing, bringing in U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath, Cabinet Minister Smriti Irani, former Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and former Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh, among others.

"Our campaign has



The BJP had multiple public meetings across the State almost every day.

worked at two levels. One was at the ground level, keeping in constant touch with our workers, and the second was having multiple public meetings across the State," a senior BJP leader said.

The Congress, on the other hand, has conducted a low-key campaign. In a stroke of bad luck, three rallies of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had to be cancelled, as she went into self-quarantine after her husband Robert Vadra tested positive for COVID-19.

On March 30, Mr. Gandhi's three programmes, including a public meeting planned in Karbi Along, had to be cancelled because of bad weather.

Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot have been making up for their absence.

### BSF hands over boy who crossed IB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD

The BSF on Saturday said it has handed over an eight-year-old boy to Pakistani rangers, after he inadvertently crossed the international border (IB) and reached the Barmer sector.

The incident took place at the security fence near the outpost of Somrar in Rajasthan on Friday, officials said.

"As a goodwill gesture, the BSF on Friday handed over a Pakistani minor boy in a flag meeting with Pakistan Rangers," the BSF said in a statement.

"On April 2, Karim s/o Yamanu, age approximately eight years, had inadvertently crossed the IB, entered Indian territory and reached up to BS [border security] fence near border outpost Somrar of Barmer sector," it said. He was spotted by alert troops who asked him to go back. Seeing men in uniform, the boy started crying. But the BSF men calmed him and gave him some eatables and water, the BSF said.

The boy seemed to have lost his way as the nearest Pakistani village Somrar is about 3 km from the place, where he was spotted. "Soon, on the directions of headquarters, a flag meeting was held with Pakistan Rangers and the minor boy was handed over to them," the statement said.

The suspended BJP MLAs are Deputy Leader of the Opposition Bishnu Charan Sethi, BJP chief whip Mohan Charan Majhi, and senior member Jai Narayan Mishra.

Upset over the reported denial of the opportunity to present the party's point of view, BJP MLAs had alleged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has attached assets worth ₹73 crore in connection with two coal block cases.

In the first case, Visa Power Limited had got the Fatehpur Coal Block and Fatehpur East Coal Block in 2007 allegedly by false declaration of the net worth of principal company, Vida Minmetal AG, Switzerland, and by misrepresenting the capacity of its

end-use plant.

Before the cancellation of the coal block allotment in September that year, over ₹200 crore was infused in the company. The funds were used for project development, including land purchase in Odisha and Chhattisgarh, said the agency. Based on the findings, assets worth about ₹72 crore have been attached.

In the other one, Vini Iron & Steel Udyog Limited and others were convicted in the

case pursued by the CBI for alleged irregularity in the allocation of Rajahra East Coal Block. The ED has attached ₹90 lakh in two fixed deposits.

Assets worth ₹67 crore have been attached in various bank fraud cases. In the case against Pushpesh Kumar Baird and his family members, for alleged fraud of ₹182 crore, the agency has attached properties valued ₹24 crore.

Based on the CBI case

against M.K. Patel Exim and others, properties worth ₹17.86 crore have been attached and assets valued ₹18.60 crore have been attached in the case of Shree Ganesh Jewellery House (I) Limited.

In yet another case, involving SPS Steels Rolling Mills and others - who have been accused of a fraud of ₹551.13 crore - the ED has issued an order for the attachment of properties worth ₹6.60 crore.

## 3 BJP MLAs hurl shoes at Odisha Assembly Speaker

They were immediately suspended

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Hours after shoes were hurled at Surya Narayan Patro, Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly, inside the House, three Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators were on Saturday suspended from the ongoing Budget session.

The suspended BJP MLAs are Deputy Leader of the Opposition Bishnu Charan Sethi, BJP chief whip Mohan Charan Majhi, and senior member Jai Narayan Mishra.

Upset over the reported denial of the opportunity to present the party's point of view, BJP MLAs had alleged

they thrown shoes and dustbins at Mr. Patro. As soon as the House resumed in the afternoon, the Speaker invited Leader of the Opposition Pradipta Naik, Leader of the Congress Legislative Party Narasingha Mishra, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha and the State government's chief whip Pramila Mallick to review in his chamber the video footage for ascertaining who had thrown shoes at the Chair. After a few minutes, Mr. Patro announced the suspension of the three BJP MLAs for the violation of conduct rules.

## J&K govt. pulls up education officer

She had called a teacher a 'militant'

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
JAMMU

The J&K administration on Saturday sought an explanation from a Zonal Education Planning Officer (ZEPO), who allegedly described a teacher sporting a beard as "a militant", and "entered the premises of a mosque without removing shoes" during an inspection on April 1.

In an official communication, Sub-District Magistrate, Surankote, Saleem Ahmad asked ZEPO Kamlesh Kumar to submit an explanation within two days, after a video of the inspection went viral online and

evoked sharp reactions from netizens and religious leaders.

"A video is viral on social media in which you are seen using derogatory language during a visit of the Yaseen Public School, Dundhak (Khanikhodi) on April 1. A deliberate and malicious act, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religious beliefs is not expected from a government officer/public servant. You are seen uttering, using words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the feelings of a particular person," the official letter reads.

## PFI men got funds to stoke riots in Hathras: chargesheet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GAZIABAD

The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (UPSTF) filed a chargesheet against eight members of the Popular Front of India in a Mathura Court on Saturday.

They have been accused of receiving funds from abroad to foment riots in Hathras in the wake of the alleged gang rape and murder of a Dalit girl in September 2020.

The court took cognizance of the chargesheet and fixed May 1 as the date of the next hearing. In the 5,000-page chargesheet, the PFI members identified as Atiq-ur-Rehman, Sidique Kappan, Masood Ahmed, Alam, Rauf Shehri, Anshad Badaruddin, Firoz, and Danish have been accused of sedition and charged under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 and Information Technology Act 2000. They have been accused of receiving funds of about ₹80 lakhs from financial institutions in Doha and Muscat to create trouble. The STF said incriminating evidence were recovered from the laptops and mobile phones of the accused.

Defence lawyer Madhuvan Dutta Chaturvedi said the accused had denied the allegations.

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	8	5	6	7	4	9	3	2
9	7	2	3	5	1	6	8	4
6	4	3	8	9	2	1	5	7
3	6	4	7	2	8	5	1	9
2	5	8	4	1	9	3	7	6
7	9	1	5	6	3	4	2	8
5	2	6	1	4	7	8	9	3
8	1	7	9	3	6	2	4	5
4	3	9	2	8	5	7	6	1

CM  
YK

No.55035 Date/Time: www.brightfutures.com

## Woman given two doses of vaccine in U.P.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KANPUR

In a major goof-up, an auxiliary nursing midwife (ANM) was on a phone call as she administered two shots of COVID-19 vaccine to a woman at a primary health centre at Akbarpur of Kanpur Dehat district, officials said on Saturday.

As the news reached the woman's family members, they created an uproar at the centre and later senior officials including the District Magistrate and the Chief Medical Officer were informed about the alleged negligence.

The family members told presspersons that Kamlesh Kumari, 50, had gone to the Marhauli PHC on Thursday to get her first vaccine shot where ANM Archana ended up giving her two doses.

District Magistrate Jitendra Pratap Singh has asked for a report.

# Freeze on CoWIN registration for healthcare and frontline workers

Ineligible beneficiaries are taking the vaccine, says Health Ministry order

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

No fresh registration for COVID-19 vaccination in categories of healthcare and frontline workers will be allowed with immediate effect, a senior Health Ministry official said on Saturday.

The one-page order issued by Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan comes after "various inputs were received from different sources that in some of the vaccination centres, ineligible beneficiaries are being registered as healthcare and frontline workers and getting vaccinated in complete violation of the prescribed guidelines," the Ministry said.

The order further states that there has been a 24% increase in healthcare workers databases in the past few days.



**On priority:** The vaccination drive opened to healthcare and frontline workers on January 16. ■ FILE PHOTO

"This issue was discussed with State representatives and experts and per recommendation of National Expert Group on Vaccine Admini-

nistration for COVID-19 (NEGVC) no fresh registration will be allowed in these categories," said Mr. Bhushan.

Registrations of persons aged 45 years and above will continue to be permitted on CoWIN platform.

### 7.44 crore doses

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered has crossed 7.44 crore on Saturday, said the Health Ministry.

The provisional report till 8 p.m. put the figure at 7,44,42,267.

They include 89,53,552 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose and 53,06,671 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 96,19,289 frontline workers (first), 40,18,526 FLWs (second), 4,57,78,875 more than 45 years old (first) and 7,65,354 for more than 45 years old (second).

It said 13,00,146 vaccine doses were given till 8 p.m.

## ₹1,000 fine for violation of protocols

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

As per a Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) directive, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) has decided to levy a fine of ₹1,000 on any individual found violating the mandatory COVID-19 safety protocols at the airport. It has already come into effect.

The fine will be collected from individuals who refuse to comply with the safety norms such as wearing appropriate face masks and maintaining social distancing amongst others at the airport.

Marshals deployed by the airport operator will levy fines on any individual who refuses to comply with the safety protocols. In the event of further non-compliance, the violator will be handed over to the authorities for further action, CSMIA said.

## Odisha govt. orders night curfew in 10 districts

Curbs to be in force from tomorrow

tions such as Section 144 of CrPC, and ensure strict compliance, states the order. Collectors may impose any further restrictions or allow such activities as felt appropriate considering the local situation, said the Chief Secretary in the order.

### Emergency services

The government has, however, kept emergency services pertaining to health, electricity, police, fire service, water supply, telecom, railway and airport out of the purview of restrictions. Employees of IT firms and media houses have been given relaxation. Home delivery services have been allowed to function at night.

Odisha has been consistently reporting more than 400 daily cases for the past two days. Ten days ago, the daily spike in COVID-19 cases was in the range of just above 100. Western Odisha districts, which share borders with Chhattisgarh, are especially vulnerable to rapid rise in infections.

## President Kovind's health improves

He underwent bypass surgery at AIIMS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ram Nath Kovind

tude to you all," President Kovind said in his tweet.

"I've been recovering well after the bypass surgery, thanks to the amazing dedication of the doctors and caregivers. I'm touched by messages, from citizens and leaders from India and abroad, wishing me speedy recovery. It's difficult to express in words my gratitude to you all!" the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted.

## India extends condolences to Taiwan

At least 50 dead in the worst railway accident in the island nation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday conveyed condolences to Taiwan after the worst rail accident in the history of the island nation left at least 50 dead. The message triggered a series of exchanges among the officials on both sides, a rare sight in public diplomacy between the two countries that do not maintain full-fledged diplomatic ties because of objections from Beijing.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of so many lives in the railway accident in Taiwan. Our deepest condolences to the families. And our prayers for the early recovery of the injured," said Arindam Bagchi, Official Spokesperson of India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The message drew a prompt response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of



**Mourning day:** Relatives of the victims on Saturday grieving near the site of the deadly train accident in Taiwan. ■ REUTERS

Taiwan, which in a social media message thanked the Ministry of External Affairs and said, "The government is working to ensure rescue and recovery efforts continue apace while making certain those affected receive all requisite support."

Taiwan's Foreign Minister

Joseph Wu also came on social media and thanked India "for the expression of sentiment and support". This genuinely friendly gesture will touch the people, and bring Taiwan and India closer in a real and lasting manner," said Dr. Joseph Wu.

The India-Taipei Associa-

tion also issued a statement expressing condolences and wished a "speedy recovery to those injured in the accident".

### Tunnel accident

The express train with around 500 passengers crashed inside a tunnel after hitting a truck that had fallen on the track.

The train was heading to the eastern city of Taitung from capital Taipei.

Taiwan and India have maintained strong trade relationship over the last three decades, but they continue to maintain bilateral relation at the level of Trade Representatives because of objections from China. Both sides are however expected to intensify collaboration in the post-pandemic scenario in high-end industrial sectors as well as in the production of vaccines.

## NIA court extends Vaze's custody

He was arrested on March 13

SONAM SAIGAL  
MUMBAI

Suspended police officer Sachin Vaze being taken to a court in Mumbai.

sion of his custody. The agency has also raided a prominent eatery in South Mumbai after getting to know that Mr. Vaze used to hold several meetings there.

The NIA has seized seven vehicles including the SUV found with 20 gelatin sticks and a threat letter.

## No trade with India now: Imran

Pak. Cabinet had rejected plan on imports from India, linking decision to Kashmir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

Imran Khan

bers and the Prime Minister instructed that the ECC's decision be deferred and immediately reviewed, the report said.

The Cabinet on Thursday rejected the proposal of the high-powered committee to import cotton from India, with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi saying there can be no normalisation of ties until New Delhi reverses its decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

Pakistan's U-turn on Thursday came a day after the ECC, under newly appointed Finance Minister Hammad Azhar, recommended importing cotton and sugar from India, lifting a nearly two-year-long ban on its import amid tensions over the Kashmir issue.

In the present case, a proposal was presented to the ECC to allow the import of cotton, cotton yarn and sugar from India keeping in view domestic requirements, it said.

The ECC had decided on commercial grounds to recommend the imports for the Cabinet consideration.

While the decision was not on the formal agenda of the Cabinet meeting, the issue was brought up by mem-

ber approval, the report said.

In the present case, a proposal was presented to the ECC to allow the import of cotton, cotton yarn and sugar from India keeping in view domestic requirements, it said.

India has said it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has said the onus is on Pakis-

## Property attached

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate attached 10 immovable properties worth ₹197.34 crore in connection with the

Unitech Group case. These include two resorts in Gangtok and Alappuzha, office premises and land parcels, owned by various entities of one Carnoustie Group.

**Central Coalfields Limited**  
(A Miniratna Company)  
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)  
**NOTICE**  
"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. [www.coalindia.in/](http://www.coalindia.in/) respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, [www.centralcoalfIELDS.in/](http://www.centralcoalfIELDS.in/)), CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalinindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://reprocure.gov.in> in addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal <https://gem.gov.in>"

**VISVESVARAYA JALA NIGAMA LIMITED**  
(Government of Karnataka Enterprise)  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
VJNL, Yettinahole Project Division, No.3 Arasikere  
Ph: 08174233111 e-mail: [eypd3ask@gmail.com](mailto:eypd3ask@gmail.com)  
Tender Notification No: EE/YP/VJNL/DIV-03/YGC/TN/2020-21/1457 Dated:30.03.2021  
**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION NO: 06/2020-21Dtd: 30.03.2021 (TWO COVER SYSTEM) (Only through E-procurement system)**

Tenders in electronic mode on "PERCENTAGE BASIS" are invited on behalf of Managing Director, Visvesvarayala Nigama Limited, Bangalore by the Executive Engineer, VJNL, Yettinahole Project Division No.3, Arasikere, Hassan District in two cover system (Cover I and Cover II) from Category-1 contractors/firm/company enrolled under VJNL or KNNL for the work of

"Improvement works to the roads in the purview of Yettinahole integrated drinking water project in Sakleshpura, Alur, Belur and Arasikere Talukas of Hassan Dist". The amount put to tender is ₹5187.00 lakhs. Details for submission of bids/EMD/tender conditions/Pre-qualification criteria/ Pre bid details and other information related to above said work can be obtained through e-portal only [www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in). Intending bidder can access the tender document from

08.04.2021 through e-portal. The authority competent to accept the tenders shall have the right of rejecting all or any of the tenders without assigning any reasons and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender. Corrigendum/addendum will be published in the e-portal. Any further information required may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours. Executive Engineer, VJNL, YP Division, No.3, Arasikere. Ph: 08174-233111, e-mail: [eypd3ask@gmail.com](mailto:eypd3ask@gmail.com)

**Sd/- Executive Engineer,  
VJNL, YP Division, No.3 Arasikere**

**STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, DON'T CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.**

**6 Feet**

**Follow Physical Distancing**

**Maintain Hand Hygiene**

## APPOINTMENT

**MISHRA DHATU NIGAM LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise) (A Mini Ratna-I Company)  
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**CONTRACT ENGAGEMENT NOTICE**  
WALK-IN SELECTION PROCESS ON 17.04.2021

Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Qualification	Experience	Upper age limit as on 04.04.2021
Assistant (Level-4) Metallurgy	21 (UR-8, EWS-2, OBC-6, SC-3, ST-2)	Diploma in Metallurgical Engineering with minimum 60% marks	Minimum one year post qualification industrial experience	Rs. 27,90/- Years

Period of Engagement: Initially for 1 yr and further extendable up to 3 yrs based on satisfactory performance and requirements. Other benefits such as PF, ESIC/Medical, etc will be as per rules. Interested candidates may visit [http://mldhani-india.in/department\\_hrd/career-at-mldhani/](http://mldhani-india.in/department_hrd/career-at-mldhani/) for details.

Advt.No. MDN/HR/FTC/3/2021 Date: 04.04.2021 Sd/- General Manager (HR)

**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR,**  
**PANDIT DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA SHEKHAWATI UNIVERSITY, SIKAR**

No: 19646 Date: 30.03.2021

Sealed Technical and Financial Bids in Single Stage are invited upto 03:00 PM of 26.04.2021 for procurement of Furniture for Administrative, Academic & Library Building. Estimated cost of work is Rs. 3.25 Cr. Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the website of the State Public Procurement Portal <http://sppp.raj.nic.in> or <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> and may be downloaded from there or obtained from our office on payment of Rs. 3,000/-in banker's cheque / demand draft. UBN: SU52021GLOB00010.

Registrar, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Shekhawati University, Sikar

**Directorate Animal Husbandry**

F.9(129)/Purchase/Kravya-BINADCP LRL & VACCINE CARRIER /2020-22/4228 Dated: 26/03/2021

**Revise Notice Inviting Bid**

Bids for Ice line Refrigerator and Vaccine carrier(Cold box) rate contract 2020-22 are invited from interested bidders upto 2.00 pm on dated 15.04.2021 Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://proc.rajasthan.gov.in>) and departmental website (<http://animalhusbandry.rajasthan.gov.in>).

UBN: ANH2021GLOB00136 DIPR/C/3606 Director

**KARYALAY AMCHITTAJAT, JAL SANSAKHA KUT JOHAR**

कार्यालय अधिक

# Myanmar toll rises as protests continue

Four killed in firing on protesters; authorities issue warrants against 18 celebrities, including 2 scribes

REUTERS

YANGON

Myanmar security forces opened fire on pro-democracy protests on Saturday killing four people, a protester and media said, as the military reinforced its bid to end dissent with arrest warrants for online critics and internet blocks.

Despite the killing of more than 550 people by the security forces since the February 1 coup, protesters are coming out every day, often in smaller groups in smaller towns, to voice opposition to the reimposition of military rule.

Security forces in the central town of Monywa fired on a crowd killing three people, the Myanmar Now news service said.

"They started firing non-stop with both stun grenade and live rounds," a protester

said in Monywa said.

One man was shot and killed in the southern town of Thaton, the Bago Weekly Journal online news portal reported.

The demonstrations that drew tens of thousands of people in the early days of defiance in big cities have largely stopped with opponents of the coup adopting "guerrilla rallies" – small, quick shows of defiance before security forces can respond.

People also gather at night for candle-lit vigils.

## Actor defiant

The authorities have shut down mobile data and on Friday ordered Internet providers to cut wireless broadband, depriving most customers of access, though some messages and pictures were still being posted and shared on social media.



**In turmoil:** Protesters taking part in a demonstration against the military coup in Mandalay on Saturday. • AFP

Authorities issued warrants for 18 celebrities, including social media influencers and two journalists, under a law against material intended to cause a member of the armed forces to mutiny or disregard their duty, state media reported late on Friday.

Actor Paing Phyothu said she would not be cowed.

"Whether a warrant has been issued or not, as long as I'm alive I'll oppose the military dictatorship who are bullying and killing people. The revolution must prevail," the actor said on Facebook.

## Rebel groups back protests, slam junta

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

YANGON

Ten of Myanmar's major rebel groups threw their support behind the anti-coup movement on Saturday, fanning fears that a broader conflict could erupt in a country plagued by infighting.

On Saturday, 10 rebel groups met virtually to discuss the situation, condemning the junta's use of live ammunition on protesters. "The leaders of the military council must be held accountable," said Gen. Yawd Serk, leader of rebel group the Restoration Council of Shan State.

# Biden lifts Trump's sanctions on international court officials

ICC was probing alleged crimes by U.S. troops in Afghanistan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Friday lifted sanctions that Donald Trump had imposed on two top officials of the International Criminal Court (ICC), undoing one of the past administration's more aggressive moves targeting international institutions and officials.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement stressed that the U.S. still strongly disagreed with some actions by the court. "We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Mr. Blinken wrote.



Joe Biden

The U.S. sanctions had targeted ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and the court's head of jurisdiction, Phakiso Mochochoko, for pressing ahead with investigations into the U.S. and its allies, notably Israel, for alleged war crimes. Two sets of sanctions were imposed,

the first being a travel ban on Ms. Bensouda in March 2019, and then 18 months later a freeze on any assets she and Mr. Mochochoko may have in the U.S. or U.S. jurisdictions. The second round also made giving the pair "material support" a potentially sanctionable offence.

The Trump administration was openly hostile to the tribunal for pursuing prosecutions of Americans for actions in Afghanistan and Israelis for actions against the Palestinians.

Both sets of sanctions had been roundly denounced by the ICC. The removal of the sanctions was the latest signal that the Biden administration is intent on returning to the multilateral fold.

# Blinken speaks with Pearl's family, assures them of justice

Pakistan SC in January ordered the release of the accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has spoken with the family of slain American journalist Daniel Pearl.

Mr. Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for *The Wall Street Journal*, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the ISI and al-Qaeda.

"Blinken spoke with members of the family of Daniel Pearl and their repre-



Antony Blinken

sentatives today to assure them that the U.S. government remains committed to pursuing justice and accountability for those involved in Daniel's kidnapping and

murder," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Friday. Last week, Pakistan's Supreme Court criticised the prosecution for its failure to prove the guilt of British-born al-Qaeda terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the main accused. The Sindh High Court on April 2, 2020 commuted the death sentence of Sheikh to seven years. The Supreme Court on January 28 ordered authorities to release the accused while issuing a split order.

## Mummies' parade



**Majestic journey:** The carriage carrying the mummy of Pharaoh Seqenenre Tao II (1558–1555 BC), as part of the convoy of 22 Egyptian royal mummies, on its way from the Egyptian Museum to a new resting place at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, in Cairo. • AFP

# Jordan King's former adviser, others arrested

They were held on 'security grounds'

REUTERS

AMMAN

Jordanian security forces arrested a former adviser to King Abdullah, a member of the royal family and others on "security related" grounds, the Petra state news agency said.

U.S.-educated Bassem Awadallah, a long-time confidant of the king who later became Minister of Finance, and Sharif Hassan Ben Zaid, a member of the royal family, were detained along with other unnamed figures, Petra said. It gave no details.

Arrests of top officials

and royal family members are rare in Jordan.

Awadallah, who was a driving force behind economic reforms before he resigned as chief of the royal court in 2008, has long faced stiff resistance from an old guard and an entrenched bureaucracy that flourished for years on government perks.

Jordan's powerful intelligence agency has played a bigger role since the introduction of emergency laws at the outset of the pandemic, which activists say violate civil and political rights.

## CARRIE LAM

# + In the line of fire

Hong Kong's leader has backed Beijing's moves to erode the city's democracy

ANANTH KRISHNAN

When Carrie Lam was in 2017 appointed as Hong Kong's fourth Chief Executive and the first woman to lead China's Special Administrative Region (SAR) – her appointment by Beijing was greeted mostly with optimism.

Ms. Lam, who was sworn in by President Xi Jinping a month before she turned 60, had over decades of working in Hong Kong's bureaucracy garnered the reputation of a hard-working, effective and capable bureaucrat. Hong Kong's civil servants often like to quip that the SAR, as Asia's financial centre, may not make anything, but it makes things happen. Ms. Lam embodied that spirit.

She acknowledged at her swearing-in that Hong Kong was "suffering from quite a serious divisiveness" and said her "priority will be to heal the divide". Little would she have imagined that four years on, not only does that divide remain as far as ever, but Ms. Lam leaves behind a controversial legacy that many in Hong Kong say has permanently redefined what it means to be the Chief Executive (CE) of the SAR.

Ms. Lam triggered the unprecedented protest movement in 2019 that brought millions to the streets, by proposing a controversial extradition Bill that would allow suspects to be repatriated to the mainland. The protests against the Bill led to broader calls for democracy and for universal suffrage. Hong Kong's residents only vote for half of their 70 legislators, with the rest nominated by pro-Beijing bodies. The CE is also not voted for, but chosen by a Beijing-backed Election Committee.



ILLUSTRATION: R.RAJESH

the protests, starting with a new national security law in 2020 and unprecedented changes to Hong Kong's electoral system announced on March 30 that have drastically cut the share of democratically elected representatives. The number of elected legislators has been cut to 20 while the Legislative Council has been expanded to 90, thus ensuring a permanent majority for Beijing-nominated politicians and all but ending the pro-democracy movement.

## Rise to the top

Born in British-ruled Hong Kong in 1957, Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-nger graduated from St. Francis' Canossian College, according to her biography on China Vitae, and then entered Hong Kong University to study Social Science. According to a Reuters profile, Ms. Lam is the daughter of a Shanghai immigrant and a Hong Kong mother with no formal education, and grew up in a small apartment in Wanchai where "her bunk bed doubled as a desk; she used to stand on the lower tier and rest her schoolbooks on top." A top-ranking student, she joined the British government's civil service in 1980, and rose to become Chief Secretary under her predecessor, Leung Chun-

yung. When appointed in 2017 by the Beijing-supported Election Committee, Ms. Lam was, in one sense, an expected choice, having proven her credentials as a capable bureaucrat. Yet she would soon find, despite her long experience, her government facing Hong Kong's biggest crisis since the handover, one that she triggered.

**Protest Movement** The inherent tensions of the job of Hong Kong's CE, caught between the demands of the people of Hong Kong and Beijing's expectations, came to a head in 2019, when the extradition Bill triggered mass protests.

Martin Lee, a leading pro-democracy politician and barrister who is known as Hong Kong's "father of democracy" and was convicted last week for organising an unauthorised protest march in 2019, told *The Hindu* in 2019 that the political crisis was both systemic and of Ms. Lam's own making. How Ms. Lam became so beholden to Beijing, even as it drastically changed the contours of "one country, two systems", puzzled Mr. Lee and other politicians who had known her for decades as a playing-by-the-book bureaucrat.

"Through the protests in 2019, did we ever see Carrie Lam defend Hong Kong's

system?" he said. "She should have been defending the Basic Law and Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, but instead she was happily sitting with Beijing. The Basic Law requires the CE to be answerable to both Hong Kong and Beijing. But is that possible when she has this job because Beijing gave the job to her? That is a system that was always doomed to fail without democracy and without people voting for their leader."

That Mr. Lee has now been convicted and is awaiting a prison sentence underscores the dramatic change in Hong Kong's politics during Ms. Lam's tenure. Indeed, Ms. Lam will be remembered for presiding over the biggest changes to the "one country, two systems" model that has governed Hong Kong since 1997, guaranteeing a high degree of autonomy and a range of freedoms that distinguished the SAR from the mainland.

In line with the model, the position of the CE was often described as being "one servant to two masters", with the office answerable not only to the people of Hong Kong and its Legislative Council, but also to Beijing, which nominated the CE, a post created after the handover in 1997 to replace the position of Governor under British rule.

This inherent tension has always made Hong Kong's top job somewhat of a poisoned chalice, leaving every successive occupant dealing with a widening chasm with growing calls for genuine democracy from young Hong Kongers on the one hand, and a decreasing tolerance for accommodating them in Beijing on the other.

Ms. Lam, in one sense, resolved this tension, making it clear that there is, after all, only one master.

## PROFILES

## MADHAV KUMAR NEPAL

# A political game of chicken

The seasoned leader is looking for ways to stay relevant in Nepal's fractious polity

SRINIVAS RAMANI

If Madhav Kumar Nepal goes on to lead a new political outfit, after a vertical split of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML), as reported in *The Hindu* on March 31, it would mark the end of a long journey with the party that he was associated with as a general secretary for a decade and a half and as a single-term Prime Minister of Nepal. The circumstances leading to this decision were not atypical of Nepal's polity or the vicissitudes of communist party politics, but Mr. Nepal would certainly be leaving the UML with his rival and current Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli in a much stronger position than he had expected after the Supreme Court on February 23 had overturned Mr. Oli's decision to dissolve Parliament.

In a quirk of fate, the Supreme Court followed that decision with another one on March 7 that de-recognised the unified Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and reverted it to its two composite units before merger – the Oli-led UML and the Communist Party-Maoist Centre (led by Pushpa Kumar Dahal).

In the unified NCP, Mr. Oli's supporters included former Maoist leaders such as Ram Bahadur Thapa, while the dissident wing included Mr. Dahal, Mr. Nepal and former UML general secretary and ex-Prime Minister Jhalanath Khanal.

When Mr. Oli had unilaterally dissolved Parliament and sought fresh elections, the Dahal-Nepal faction led protests. The NCP was split vertically with the Dahal-Nepal faction retaining an edge in the restored Parliament, even as this divide carried over to the provinces where

the NCP was in power. But the revocation of the party name by the Supreme Court changed the equations.

Mr. Nepal and Mr. Khanal were back in the UML, while Mr. Dahal had to revert to reconstituting the smaller Maoist Centre. As things stand, reports indicate that the Nepal-Khanal faction has the support of more than half of the UML's Central Committee, but less than 40% of the parliamentary members – the magic figure that will allow Mr. Nepal to split the party as per the Political Parties Act, 2017.

Mr. Oli's prestige might have diminished after the Supreme Court's chastening, but his power seems to have substantially restored in the UML, allowing him to include former Maoist leaders such as Mr. Thapa in the party over the dissidence of Mr. Nepal and others.

If Mr. Nepal goes ahead and splits the party, irrespective of the consequences (such as losing his Parliament seat), Mr. Oli will still find it difficult to gain the support to form a majority government and that is what seems to lead to a protracted game of chicken between him and Mr. Nepal.

Ever since his All Nepal Communist Revolutionary Coordination Committee (Marxist-Leninist) merged

into the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) in 1978, Mr. Nepal has held a senior position in both the merged outfit and later, the consolidated UML.

## Democratic transition

The UML was led by Madan Bhandari during the period of transition into a multi-party democracy. Mr. Bhandari and Mr. Nepal played a significant role in changing the ideological position of the party in accepting "people's multi-party democracy" that abandoned the idea of a communist vanguard to promote a democratic multi-party system. Following Mr. Bhandari's death in 1993, Mr. Nepal took a prominent role in the UML and steered the party through a long period of moderation of its ideology and adoption of flexible political positions – which included being in coalition governments with royalist parties such as the Rashtriya Jhalanath Khanal.

Mr. Nepal went on to further consolidate his leadership of the UML and the turn of events following the merger of the UML with the Maoist Centre brought Mr. Nepal and Mr. Khanal closer to the former Maoists. If the Nepal-Khanal faction creates a new party taking on Mr. Dahal, it remains to be seen how it will differentiate itself ideologically from Mr. Oli's outfit. But if his history is any clue, it won't be a surprise if Mr. Nepal manages yet another unity of disparate forces for power.

the eight-party alliance with the Maoists on board. This ultimately led to the downfall of the monarchy and the first Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in 2008. But Mr. Nepal, along with other senior leaders such as Mr. Oli, suffered humiliating defeats as the UML emerged as the third largest party after the Maoists and the Nepali Congress. Mr. Nepal had to resign his post and was nominated to the CA after this loss, but skilfully emerged as the Prime Minister in 2009 after being supported by the Nepali Congress in a bid to prevent the Maoists from getting back to power.

Mr. Nepal and Mr. Khanal enjoyed small stints as Prime Ministers during the first iteration of the CA that ended in a deadlock following the inability of the parties to agree on the issue of federal state restructuring. Mr. Bhandari and Mr. Nepal played a significant role in changing the ideological position of the party in accepting "people's multi-party democracy" that abandoned the idea of a communist vanguard to promote a democratic multi-party system. Following Mr. Bhandari's death in 1993, Mr. Nepal took a prominent role in the UML and steered the party through a long period of moderation of its ideology and adoption of flexible political positions – which included being in coalition governments with royalist parties such as the Rashtriya Jhalanath Khanal.

After a gruesome civil war led to the emergence of the Maoists as a major political force, and following the usurping of power by the monarchy, Mr. Nepal was among the key leaders who forged first the seven-party alliance, including the Nepali Congress, the UML and others, and followed it with

## SNAPSHOTS



## New light

About ten years ago, researchers produced a state of light called an optical Bose-Einstein condensate, which effectively is one large 'super photon' made up of many light particles. Now, University of Bonn scientists have reported a hitherto unknown phase transition in an optical Bose-Einstein condensate called the overdamped phase. The study which has been published in *Science* may be relevant for encrypted quantum communication.



## Mice minds

The minds of mice may be closer to human minds than we think, according to a new study by Washington University researchers who studied how hallucinations take place in the brains of mice. They were helped in this study by a computer game which both mice and people can play. After establishing the similarity of mice and human brains in this aspect, the researchers studied the biology of hallucinations. The study may help in developing therapies for schizophrenia.

# What is driving the second wave in India?

Variants, imported and homegrown, are increasingly seen but have so far not been linked epidemiologically to the surge

## R. PRASAD

With a steady increase in the daily fresh cases since the third week of February, with over 89,000 cases reported on April 2, the seven-day average test positivity rate climbing to 6.8% as on April 2, and with the reproduction number (R0) – how many people each infected person will infect on average – above 1.5 and steadily increasing over the last two-three weeks, the second wave has well and truly begun in many States. The rate of increase in cases in India during March has been faster than at any other time during the pandemic, which is also reflected in the modelling studies by Indian researchers, including Gautam Menon, Professor of Physics and Biology at Ashoka University.

While the onset of the festival season since the pandemic peaked in mid-September in India, winter, no restrictions on movement, large gatherings and not-so-good adherence of mask wearing and other non-pharmaceutical interventions did not cause any spike in cases across the country, what is driving the current surge in cases in many States?

## Cited reasons

The Health Ministry has cited the general laxity among people regarding COVID-19 appropriate behaviour, including mask wearing, and lack of containment and management strategy at the ground level as reasons for the surge in cases. The role of variants, either the imported ones or those that have originated in India, are not seen to be responsible.

But Dr. Giridhara Babu, epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Bengaluru

cites three important factors – the virus, the host, and the environment – constituting the epidemiological triad for the surge in cases in many States. Explaining the contribution of the three factors, Dr. Babu says in an email: "New variants of concern might be in circulation, which is probably more infectious, and some can be an immune escape as well." The host factors include waning antibodies, not following COVID-19 appropriate behaviour and incomplete vaccination, while the environmental factors include super-spreader events and poor compliance with preventive measures. The misconception that vaccination prevents even infection might also be contributing to rising cases.

## Indian variants

"We just don't know enough about the Indian variants to say whether they are more transmissible or more virulent, at this stage. I would personally think, extrapolating from the very high levels of seropositivity in the cities that several surveys have detected across the past several months, that a more transmissible, immune escape variant is responsible," says Dr. Menon in an email to *The Hindu*.

In an email to *The Hindu*, virologist Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University says variants, both imported and home-grown, are increasingly seen but have so far not been linked epidemiologically to the surge. "It is possible that may be the case, but there is no data to either support or negate that possibility," he points out.

Explaining the tricky question of why no surge was seen between mid-September 2020 to end-Fe-



**Virus resurgence:** Large cities including Mumbai and Pune, which had recorded large infection rates during the first wave, are witnessing a surge. • GETTY IMAGES

bruary this year despite perfect conditions for the virus to spread wildly, Dr. Babu says the threshold for population immunity cannot be held as a yardstick when the virus is changing or when the immunity is waning. "Any infectious disease will have outbreaks whenever the susceptible pool builds up. Also, there has been the introduction of other variants due to international travel in some parts of the country, which can be more infectious than the earlier strain," he says.

## Surge in large cities

Large cities including Mumbai and Pune, which had recorded large infection rates during the first wave, are witnessing a surge. It is unclear if cases in such cities are only in virus-naïve people or if reinfections constitute a significant proportion. "There is no data I know of that is available in the public domain to address this question. Specifically, we don't know what fraction of these new cases might reflect a

new, more transmissible, immune escape variant that is responsible for reinfections," says Dr. Menon. An ICMR study covering January–October 2020 found reinfection, most likely due to older strains, accounting for about 4.5% of cases.

According to Dr. Babu, in the cities that reported more than 50% of seroprevalence (at least in some parts), resurgence of cases would either suggest that the antibodies are rapidly waning (and are below threshold levels to mount a response) or presence of newer variants.

An imported variant (UK variant) has been identified in a few States. A double mutant variant has also been identified in at least a few States but all three experts feel that it is too early to conclusively say if this variant is responsible for higher transmission leading to a surge in cases or increased disease severity and death. This is because epidemiological link has so far not been established. That said, the

U.K. variant and double mutant variant are considered to be more infectious and therefore more likely to contribute to intense transmission resulting in a faster peak wherever the variants are found.

## Systematic study needed

One way to know if the variant is more infectious is by undertaking concurrent genomic sequencing of the cluster of cases and establishing the chain of transmission of the variants among the contacts, says Dr. Babu.

Only such a systematic study will help establish the epidemiological linkage of the variant. Also, *in vitro* testing is necessary to establish infectiousness. Similarly, the extent of morbidity caused by the variant can be established by tracking the clinical parameters of individual patients. "I am not sure if these studies are being done at sufficient scale and results are certainly not available in the public domain," says Dr. Menon.

Also, against a target of sequencing at least 5% of positive samples across India to know the emergence of new variants, only 7,664 samples – less than 1% of the total positive samples from January to March 18 – have been sequenced.

Undertaking studies to understand infectiousness of the double mutant variant becomes all the more important as noncompliance to COVID-19-appropriate behaviour is uniformly poor across India. Yet, the surge in cases is seen only in 19 States, and mainly in about a dozen States. In the absence of timely results of such studies, which will help policy making, placing all the blame on people appears to be the easy way out.

**Amul**



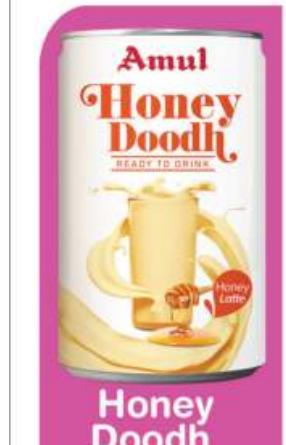
Rose  
180mL ₹ 20\*



Banana Milkshake  
200mL ₹ 25\*



Kadhai Doodh  
180mL ₹ 20\*



Honey Doodh  
125mL ₹ 25\*



Lychee  
180mL ₹ 10\*



Cafe  
500mL ₹ 60\*

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## IIT Kanpur develops touch-sensitive watch for the visually impaired

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Two researchers from IIT Kanpur have developed a touch-sensitive, tactile, haptic watch that can help visually impaired people learn what time it is by touching the face. The watch makes up for two of the disadvantages of watches made for the use of visually challenged people: first, the lack of privacy in watches that audibly announce the time and second, the large sizes of touch sensitive watches.

The prototypes were developed by Siddhartha Panda, who is a professor at the Department of Chemical Engineering and the National Centre for Flexible Electronics at IIT Kanpur, and Vishwaraj Srivastava who is a Senior Project Associate at the Centre.

## Telling time

The watch conveys the time in the form of vibrations when a person touches the right spoke on the face. For instance, if the time is 6.15, the watch gives a vibration of slightly long duration when the sixth spoke is touched and a short vibration when the third spoke is touched. "The watches have resolution of five minutes right now, but with an im-



**Timely touch:** The watch conveys the time by vibrating when a person touches the right spoke. • IIT KANPUR

provement we are planning, the resolution can go up to one minute," says Mr Srivastava. They have filed for a patent for the watch.

Not just the simple watch, the researchers have also developed a prototype smart watch which can, in addition to telling the time, measure vital health parameters.

They started working on the watches only in September 2020 as a part of an older and longer project to develop a tool that would help a visually challenged person interface with a computer. "This was basically the low-hanging fruit," says Prof. Panda, about the project.

Both Mr. Srivastava and Prof. Panda say that the projects are close to their hearts as they have been deeply affected by people close to them with visual impairment.

of being developed."

The watch has been tested with the help of a person from IIT Kanpur who is visually challenged. They plan to have a more formal testing done soon.

The other project - a computer user-interface that is friendly to visually impaired users - is gaining ground. The device consists of a wearable headset or headband, to which is attached a camera eye, and a haptic glove. The word haptic refers to technology that enables transmission and reception of information through touch.

## Virtual screen

By coupling the camera to the touch-sensitive glove, visually challenged users can be helped to navigate a virtual screen spread out before them. Further if this virtual screen is coupled to a smart phone or ATM, they can operate the same even if they are not able to see it. This device is still in the works.

Both Mr. Srivastava and Prof. Panda say that the projects are close to their hearts as they have been deeply affected by people close to them with visual impairment.

## How Asian desert dust enhances Indian summer monsoon

Dust swarms can influence moisture transport, increase precipitation, rainfall

## ASWATHI PACHA

Carl Sagan once described Earth as a 'small speck of dust', a seemingly insignificant tiny particle. But dust has incredible power: it is known to influence monsoons, hurricanes and even fertilize rainforests. A new study now details how dust coming from the deserts in the West, Central and East Asia plays an important role in the Indian Summer Monsoon.

## Reverse effect

The researchers also explain how the Indian Summer Monsoon has a reverse effect and can increase the winds in West Asia to produce yet more dust.

Dust swarms from the desert when lifted by strong winds can absorb solar radiation and become hot. This can cause heating of the atmosphere, change the air pressure, wind circulation patterns, influence moisture transport and increase precipitation and rainfall. A strong monsoon can also transport air to West Asia and again pick up a lot of dust. The researchers say this is a positive feedback

loop.

Lead author Qinjian Jin, lecturer and academic program associate at the University of Kansas explains a new hypothesis formulated by the team to *The Hindu*. "Not just the dust from the Middle East [West Asia], we think the Iranian Plateau also influences the Indian Summer Monsoon. The hot air over the Iranian Plateau can heat the atmosphere over the plateau, strengthen the circulation over the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and increase dust emission from the Middle East [West Asia]."

## Aerosols transported

He explains how deserts across the globe play important roles in monsoons. "The dust aerosols from deserts in West China such as the Taklamakan desert and the Gobi Desert can be transported eastward to eastern China and can influence the East Asia summer monsoon. And in the southwest United States, we have some small deserts that influence the North African monsoon."

When asked if anthropogenic dust from vehicles, mining, construction can in-



**Key factors:** The Iranian Plateau also may influence the monsoon. • GETTY IMAGES

change and the team writes that understanding these mechanisms and effects of dust will help understand our monsoon systems in the face of global climate change.

## Minor components

The team has now planned to study the minor components of desert dust aerosols. "We used to think that dust from deserts across the globe will have the same components, but we now know that different deserts have different chemical compositions and this can influence the dust's properties. For example, we think that dust from the Middle East [West Asia] has more absorbing ability of solar radiation than dust from North Africa and this difference in absorbing ability might influence monsoon systems," adds Dr. Jin. "We have also planned to use high spatial resolution remote sensing to identify source regions and create a better dust emission map. I would also like to study new drying lakes and how dust from them can also play a role in the monsoons."

## Researchers foresee trends in diphtheria incidence

Study maps tox genes, progression of antimicrobial resistance in pathogen

## SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Researchers from India, the U.K. and Russia have analysed a large collection of 502 genomes sourced from over 16 countries and collected from over a period of 122 years of the bacterium that causes diphtheria – *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. The results of this massive and collaborative study hint that we need to anticipate increase in incidence of diphtheria which may be fomented by the diversity of the species, emergence of variant toxin genes and progression of antimicrobial resistance.

They recommend that more *in vivo* and *in vitro* studies be undertaken to verify these hypotheses. The work



**Typical signs:** Formation of white-grey pseudomembrane over parts of the throat, voice box and tonsils and swollen bull neck are considered stereotypical. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

vaccine elicits an immune response against the toxin which is encoded by a tox gene of the pathogen. Sometimes, spouts of diphtheria outbreaks occur in unvaccinated or partially vaccinated communities.

There is an increasing trend in the number of cases of diphtheria globally, as the number of cases in

cal spread. It is needed to know whether the gene for antimicrobial resistance has evolved and to understand variants of the tox gene which may be prevalent thereby influencing the vaccine targeted towards toxin produced by an old strain of *C. diphtheriae*.

## Family tree

In order to map out the genetic spread of the organism, the group has done a phylogenetic analysis that basically gives a picture of the family tree of the species. Unlike certain other bacteria, *C. diphtheriae* has shown a diversity in evolution, which makes it, as a species, more stable and powerful. This is also true of clades (or groups) that are prevailing in India.

They then analyse the genes for their capacity to

wards antimicrobial resistance. Compared to the 1990s, isolates from the decade spanning the years from 2010 to 2019 show the highest average number of antimicrobial resistance genes encoding resistance for sulphonamides, aminoglycosides, chloramphenicol and trimethoprim.

## Transferred AMR genes

"These antimicrobial resistance genes might have been transferred by the mobile genetic elements from other bacteria," says Thandavarayanan Ramamurthy, one author of the paper. He is presently INSNA-Senior Scientist at the ICMR-National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases, Kolkata, and the work was completed when he was at DBT-Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad.

"Fortunately, none of the isolates harboured beta-lactam resistance genes. [that is, for example, resistance to antibiotics like penicillin]. Penicillin or erythromycin are the choice of antibiotics for the treatment of diphtheria," he explains.

Finally, the researchers study the variations (or mutations) in the tox gene, which is responsible for producing the diphtheria toxin – which is the main target of the vaccinations.

"We identified 18 tox gene variants, with mutations estimated in its toxin structural impact," explains Dr. Ramamurthy. This may imply that specific vaccines made for a particular diphtheria toxin may not work against newly evolved ones. "However, this hypothesis has to be demonstrated in *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies," he adds.



FILE PHOTO

## Reversing a ban

Why has Joe Biden allowed a Trump-era H-1B visa rule to expire and how will it affect Indian workers?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

**The story so far:** Last June, the administration of former President Donald Trump, a Republican, halted the issuance of non-immigrant work visas of several types, including the skilled worker visa, or H-1B. At the time, the White House had stated that the aim of the policy was to stop foreign workers from cornering American jobs during the economic distress and consequent shortage of economic opportunities brought on by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While the original order was valid until December 31, 2020, it was extended by the Trump administration to be valid until March 31, 2021. Now, the 46th and current U.S. President, Democrat Joe Biden, has allowed the ban on H-1B visa issuance to expire, potentially bringing relief to a large number of Indian nationals, especially IT workers who are prospective applicants for the visa.

### What was the context for the Trump administration issuing rules tightening immigration policy?

Immigration reforms in favour of protecting U.S. jobs for Americans and favouring legal over undocumented migration was a major policy thrust for Mr. Trump even during his days campaigning for the 2016 presidential election. In April 2020, the final year of Mr. Trump's term in office, the White House announced a 60-day halt on legal migration, effectively a ban on "green card" issuance. Then came the proclamation of June 22, which was justified by the White House on the grounds that the COVID-19 pandemic "significantly disrupted Americans' livelihoods", to the extent that the overall unemployment rate in the country nearly quadrupled between February and May 2020 to a little over 13%. Later, the Trump administration also announced that it would stop issuing visas for incoming students who had enrolled in programmes that were entirely online. Lawsuits filed by top U.S. universities challenging this policy resulted in the White House partially walking back on the new rules.

All H-1B visa applicants will now be in a position to receive a visa and travel to the U.S. to begin or resume work as full-time employees or independent contractors

**Was it economics or politics that prompted the ban?**  
It is unlikely that any significant economic benefits of the skilled-worker visa ban, in terms of protecting U.S. jobs from foreigners, could have been realised during 2020 and early 2021 given the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic on the U.S. economy. Firstly, the ban did not apply to visa-holders already within the U.S., or those outside the country for whom a valid visa was already issued. Second, given that the ban remained in force only during the pandemic and that there had been a slowdown in economic activity during this period, U.S. firms relying on skilled foreign nationals may have anyway been unable to make new hires. Given this, it is hard to see the Trump White House's policy as anything other than a political manoeuvre.

Mr. Biden has sought to nudge the broader immigration ethos of the U.S. back towards one that is consistent with Democratic values. In allowing the H-1B visa ban to expire, he is walking a fine line between restoring the inflow of skilled workers into the U.S., a source of productivity-increase for its labour force, and not being seen as overly aggressive in unwinding Trump-era immigration crackdowns. After all, around 74 million people voted for Mr. Trump in the 2020 presidential election, and they will continue to be vocal advocates for a political system that puts 'America First', even if their leader no longer occupies the Oval Office.

**What was the economic fallout of the visa ban?**  
Even more than Mr. Biden, it turned out that America Inc., the employers of perhaps millions of non-immigrant foreign workers, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley, was at the vanguard of the backlash against the skilled worker visa ban. For example, Google CEO Sundar Pichai lashed out at the policy, saying at the time of its announcement, "Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today. Disappointed by today's proclamation - we'll continue to stand with immigrants and work to expand opportunity for all." SpaceX founder and Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Apple CEO Tim Cook posted similar messages on social media.

Until now, the U.S. issued 85,000 H-1B visas annually, of which 20,000 went to graduate students and 65,000 to private sector applicants, and Indian nationals would garner approximately 70% of these. Analysts predicted that around 2,19,000 workers around the world might have been prevented from taking up work in the U.S. as a result of Mr. Trump's visa ban.

### What will be the impact of the ban's expiry on Indian corporations?

Given that the order banning H-1B visa issuance expired on Thursday, all H-1B applicants will now be in a position to receive a visa and travel to the U.S. to begin or resume work as full-time employees or independent contractors. In time, that will lead to a steady increase in the size of the talent pool available to IT companies with U.S. operations. This would also benefit Indian IT companies with U.S. operations. The opening up of H-1B visa availability is also premised on U.S. diplomatic missions worldwide resuming new visa issuance to appropriately qualified skilled workers.

## Umpire's call retained amid DRS tweaks

What changes has the ICC made to the way lbw decisions are judged and how will it impact the game?

N. SUDARSHAN

**The story so far:** The International Cricket Council's (ICC) cricket committee has made changes to the way lbws will be decided under the Decision Review System (DRS). The "wicket zone", the area of the stumps a ball must hit for an on-field not-out decision to be overturned, which previously ended below the bails, will now extend all the way up to the top. The committee also decided to retain the umpire's call, an element that allows the on-field decision to stand when there is no conclusive evidence to overturn it. A player can also ask the umpire whether an attempt was made to play the ball before deciding to review an lbw call. The soft signal protocol for outfield catches, which was in the news during the India-England series, was not adjudicated on.

### What necessitated the review?

Under DRS, 50% of the ball should predictively hit the "wicket zone" for an on-field not-out decision to be reversed. Earlier, if the ball-tracking simulation showed the ball to be clipping the bails, the on-field verdict, even if it was not out, stood because the "wicket zone" ended below the bails. This left both players and supporters exasperated because two balls, both predictively shown to be hitting the stumps, can both be out and not out depending on the on-field umpire's call.

The 50% test is also applied for balls projected to hit the outside of the off-stump or leg-stump. Virat Kohli recently said that "from basic cricket common sense", there should be no debate on how much of the ball was predictively hitting the stumps, a view previously expressed by Sachin Tendulkar and Shane Warne. The ICC's recent move to increase the "wicket zone" is partly to address this confusion. There will still be not-out decisions, even after Hawk-Eye estimates that the ball is hitting the stumps. But this will happen less often.

### Is the cricketers' understanding correct?

Kohli's position assumes that technology is fool-proof. But the ICC retaining the umpire's call is an acknowledgement that the DRS is not an exact science. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) review of the DRS technology from 2016, which the ICC has continuously relied on to improve rules, says that the error in predicting the height can be as high as 23 mm

### Zone change

The area of the stumps a ball must hit for an on-field not-out decision to be overturned, which previously ended below the bails, will now extend all the way up to the top. The illustration depicts this change



There will still be not-out decisions, even after Hawk-Eye estimates that the ball is hitting the stumps. But this will happen less often

and width 8 mm. The requirement that half the ball (the radius of a cricket ball can range from 35.6 mm to 36.4 mm) should predictively hit the "wicket zone" is to cover for this possible error.

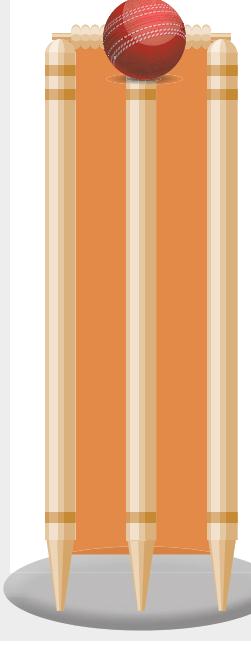
The MIT review

clearly states that there

should be enough time between a ball bouncing and striking the batsman – four uninterrupted frames – to plot a curve within the above-mentioned error estimate. There are other variables too: the size of a ball is not exact and the ball can wear out and lose shape during the course of a match. Also, faster and fuller deliveries will have fewer frames of video available (imagine a yorker, which bounces only at the fag end).

### BEFORE

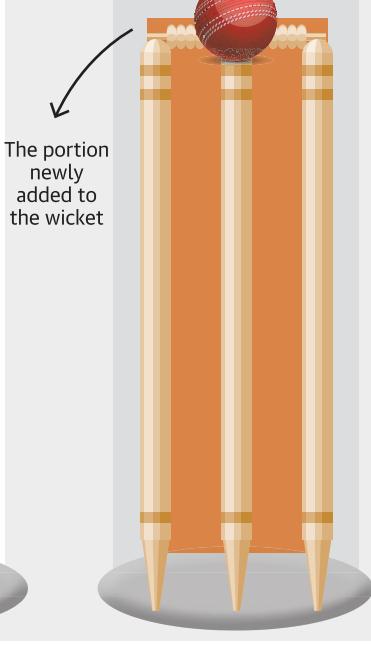
Umpire's call:  
Half the ball  
missing the  
bottom edge of  
the bails



### AFTER

Umpire's call:  
Half the ball  
missing the top  
edge of the bails

The portion  
newly added  
to the wicket



Tennis, another sport that uses Hawk-Eye, does not recognise such grey areas – the ball is either in or out. But the ball actually hits the ground before a decision is made, whereas, in cricket, it is purely a prediction. Even in tennis, the use of Hawk-Eye for calls as close as 1 mm, (in or out) when the figure for maximum error in the technology is around 3.6 mm, has invited criticism.

### What does the future hold?

Though the application of the DRS for lbws does not change, it is now slightly more in favour of the bowler. Senior cricket writer Scyld Berry, writing in *The Telegraph* during the recent India-England Test series, believed this was already the case. "Umpires have seen what a high percentage of deliveries would have hit the stumps but for the batsman's pads," he wrote. "So, the umpires have been erring in the bowler's favour, giving batsmen out on 'umpire's call', no longer giving them the traditional benefit of the doubt."

## Maintaining the inflation target at 4%

What are the implications of the Finance Ministry's decision for monetary policy and is this approach necessary?

VIKAS DHOT

**The story so far:** On the last day of the financial year 2020-21, the Finance Ministry announced that the inflation target for the five years between April 2021 and March 2026 will remain unchanged at 4%, with an upper tolerance level of 6% and a lower tolerance level of 2%. This is the retail inflation target that will drive the country's monetary policy framework and influence its decision to raise, hold or lower interest rates.

### Why is this important?

India had switched to an inflation target-based monetary policy framework in 2015, with the 4% target kicking in from 2016-17. Many developed countries had adopted an inflation-rate focus as an anchor for policy formulation for interest rates rather than past fixations with metrics like the currency exchange rate or controlling money supply growth. Emerging economies have also been gradually adopting this approach. In adopting a target for a period of five years, the central bank has the visibility and the time to smoothly alter and adjust its policies in order to attain the targeted inflation levels over the medium term, rather than seek to achieve it every month.

### What is the rate of consumer price inflation?

Terming India's inflation trends "worrisome", Moody's Analytics recently pointed out that volatile food prices and rising oil prices had already driven India's consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation past the 6% tolerance threshold several times in 2020 and that core inflation trends were rising again.



Rising oil prices have added to inflation woes. ■ FILE PHOTO

when the upper target was breached to the exceptional nature of the COVID-19 shock.

### What is the RBI's position on this?

The RBI had, in recent months, sought a continuance of the 4% target with the flexible tolerance limits of 2%. The 6% upper limit, it argued, is consistent with global experience in countries that have a large share of food items in their consumer price inflation indices. Accepting inflation levels beyond 6% would hurt the country's growth prospects, the central bank had asserted.

### Why should this concern consumers?

Suppose the inflation target were to be raised to 5% with a 2% tolerance band above and below it, for consumers, that would have meant that the central bank's monetary policy and the government's fiscal stance may not have necessarily reacted to arrest inflation pressures even if retail price rise trends would shoot past 6%.

For instance, the central bank has been perhaps the only major national institution to have made a pitch for both the Centre and the States to cut the high taxes they levy on fuels that have led to pump prices for petrol crossing ₹100 a litre in some districts. As high oil prices spur retail inflation higher, the central bank is unhappy as its own credibility comes under a cloud if the target is breached. If the upper threshold for the inflation target were raised to 7%, the central bank may not have felt the need to seek tax cuts (yet). Thus, the inflation target makes the central bank a perennial champion for consumers vis-à-vis fiscal policies that, directly or indirectly, drive retail prices up.

## The big push for digital currency in China

How is legal tender issued by the central bank different from payments guaranteed by a third-party operator?

ANANTH KRISHNAN

**The story so far:** China in February launched the latest round of pilot trials of its new digital currency, with reported plans of a major roll-out by the end of the year and ahead of the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February 2022. While several countries have been experimenting with digital currencies, China's recent trials in several cities have placed it ahead of the curve and offered a look into how a central bank-issued digital tender may impact the world of digital payments.

### How does China's digital currency work?

Officially titled the Digital Currency Electronic Payment (DCEP), the digital RMB (or Renminbi, China's currency) is, as its name suggests, a digital version of China's currency. It can be downloaded and exchanged via an application authorised by the People's Bank of China (PBOC), China's central bank. China is among a small group of countries that have begun pilot trials; others include Sweden, South Korea and Thailand.

### How is it different from an e-wallet?

Unlike an e-wallet such as Paytm in India, or Alipay or WeChat Pay, which are the two dominant apps in China, the Digital RMB does not involve a third party. For users, the experience may broadly feel the same. But from a "legal perspective", points out Santosh Pai, an Honorary Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) in New Delhi and a corporate lawyer who researches Chinese regulations, the digital currency is "very, very different". This is legal tender guaranteed by the central bank, not a payment guaranteed by a third-party operator. There is no third-party transaction, and hence, no transaction fee.

Unlike e-wallets, the digital currency does not require



A sign for China's new digital currency, at a shopping mall in Shanghai on March 8. ■ AFP

The digital money trials coincided with moves by Chinese regulators to tame some of its Internet giants, including Alibaba, which is behind Alipay, and Tencent, which owns WeChat Pay

months, with a wider roll-out expected before the Winter Olympics.

### What are the reasons behind the push?

The trials coincided with moves by Chinese regulators to tame some of its Internet giants, including Alibaba, which is behind Alipay, and Tencent, which owns WeChat Pay. "While digital

payment platforms have helped to facilitate commerce in China, they have placed much of the country's money into the hands of a few technology companies," said a recent report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). "In the fourth quarter of 2019, Alibaba controlled 55.1% of the market for mobile payments in China. Tencent controlled another 38.9%."

A "key objective of China's sovereign digital currency" was "to maintain financial stability should 'something happen' to Alipay and WeChat Pay," Mu Changchun, the director-general of the PBOC's digital currency institute, was quoted as saying by the *South China Morning Post*. Chinese regulators have also warily viewed the rise of cryptocurrencies.

The central bank-issued digital RMB will turn the logic of decentralised cryptocurrencies on its head, without the privacy and anonymity they offer, by giving regulators complete control over transactions. There are global motivations as well. "Beyond China's borders, DCEP could help facilitate the internationalisation of the renminbi," the CSIS report said.

# Individual loans continued to improve last quarter: HDFC

Mortgage lender says credit worth ₹7,503 crore was assigned to its banking unit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Mortgage lender HDFC Ltd. on Saturday said the company's individual loan business continued to exhibit improvement in the January-March quarter and loans worth ₹7,503 crore were assigned to its banking subsidiary.

"The individual loan business continued to see strong improvements during the quarter ended March 31."

**Buy-back option**

"During the quarter, pursuant to the buy-back option embedded in the home-loan arrangement between the



individual loans sold in the preceding 12 months (April-March) amounted to ₹18,980 crore ■ VIJAY SONEJI

Corporation and HDFC Bank, the Corporation assigned loans to the bank amounting to ₹7,503 crore," HDFC said in a regulatory filing. In the year-earlier quar-

ter, such loans assigned to HDFC Bank stood at ₹5,479 crore. The individual loans sold in the preceding 12 months (April-March) amounted to ₹18,980 crore

The Corporation's gross income from dividend for the March quarter was ₹110 crore as against ₹2 crore

(previous year ₹24,127 crore), the Corporation said in the filing.

Besides, the Corporation's gross income from dividend for the March quarter was ₹110 crore as against ₹2 crore in the year-earlier quarter. There was no sale of investments in subsidiary/associated companies during January-March, as also in the year-earlier period, it added.

## Boost testing, vaccinate those aged 18-45: FICCI urges govt.

'Younger age group acting as super spreaders of infection'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI has urged the government to ramp up COVID-19 testing across States and open up vaccination for the age group 18-45 years, while assuring it of the complete support of the industry in fighting the pandemic.

"We are currently testing about 11 lakh samples a day, while we had reached the level of testing 15 lakh samples a day in January," FICCI president Uday Shankar said in a letter to the Union Health & Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan.

"Further, there is capacity of performing much more tests with 2,440 labs in the country operational for CO-



VID-19 testing, including more than 1,200 from the private sector," he wrote.

**Tap private sector**

The States may be advised to utilise the facilities in the private sector to the maximum to achieve the desired testing capacity, he added.

Mr. Shankar also urged

**Augmenting capacity**

"Given that there is no shortage of vaccines and there is a huge scope of augmenting inoculation capacity through greater involvement of private sector, we urge you to open up vaccination for this age group to help subsidise the spread of infection as well as severity of cases in the country," the FICCI president added.

He assured the government of complete support and cooperation of the industry in fighting this crisis.

VID-19 testing, including more than 1,200 from the private sector," he wrote.

**FICCI president added.**

He assured the government of complete support and cooperation of the industry in fighting this crisis.

## 'Gas firms hurt by low prices fixed by govt.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Natural gas production remains a loss-making proposition for most fields for the Indian upstream producers as government-dictated gas price remains at its lowest level, rating agency ICRA has said.

The domestic gas price notified at \$1.79 per million British thermal unit for the six months beginning April 1 remains the lowest since the institution of the modified Rangarajan formula.

Also, the ceiling on price for gas produced from deep-water, ultra-deep-water, high-temperature and high-pressure fields has been fixed at \$3.62 per million Btu for April-September 2021-22 which is 10.8% lower than the ceiling for October-March 2020-21.

Helping customers

What will be Cisco's differentiation in the cloud play?

■ As companies look to growth and recovery in the next normal, they are rapidly turning to the cloud to enable new business models and hybrid work culture.

Here, they are looking at a hybrid cloud strategy to bring the best of both worlds: the innovation, speed, and scale of the public cloud and the security, compliance, and performance, of the private cloud.

Helping customers

India R&D is significantly helping Cisco transform its core businesses towards a software model

migrate to hybrid cloud and manage their multi-cloud environment to get more from their applications and data is the driving force behind Cisco's cloud strategy.

Some analysts feel Cisco is a sales/marketing-heavy enterprise and it is compromised on R&D?

■ Cisco of today is at the centre of our customers' strategy and no longer viewed just as an enabler of those strategies. We have taken what was considered threats to our business, for example like Cloud, SDN (software-defined networking), software and subscription services and turned them into growth opportunities.

All of this is a result of our commitment to R&D and to bring the best, most-relevant innovation in simpler, more easily-consumable ways.

What has been Cisco's contribution so far towards Digital India programme?

■ We are closely aligned with the Digital India programme and have been working on various initiatives across States and Central-government agencies.

Also, over 95% of the top 1,000 companies in India and over 25,000 small and medium businesses are using Cisco's technology to digitise for the future and inspire new possibilities.

Can you tell us about your Networking Academy programme?

■ Under the programme, Cisco is developing digital talent to meet the growing demand for a skilled workforce in cybersecurity

and other deep-technology expertise. We have already trained five lakh learners in India in the last 18 months.



## Are Royal Challengers equipped to break a 13-season curse?

The Bengaluru side has to solve two of its most pressing problems — an over-reliance on Kohli-de Villiers and a tendency to leak runs at the death

IPL COUNTDOWN

ASHWIN ACHAL

Season after season, Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) has suffered from one glaring problem – an over-dependence on captain Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers. When the two star batsmen click, all is well with RCB, but more often than not, the burden is too heavy to bear.

The support cast – which has included the likes of Gurkeerat Singh, Colin de Grandhomme, Marcus Stoines, Shimron Hetmyer, Aaron Finch, Chris Morris, Moen Ali and Shivam Dube in the last few seasons – simply has not delivered. The 2021 IPL auction was another chance for RCB to address this concern, but once again, it does not appear as if the right answers have been found.

The franchise invested heavily in Glenn Maxwell, with the Australian being touted by Director of Cricket Operations Mike Hesson as the 'X-factor'. A look at Maxwell's IPL record, however, does not inspire confidence. In his last two seasons, Maxwell has averaged 15.42 (2020) and 14.08 (2018), with a highest score of 47. And yet, RCB thought it wise to acquire his services for ₹4.25 crore.

There were more surprise picks in the auction, with Dan Christian, Sachin Baby, Rajat Patidar, Suyash Prabhudesai and Mohammed Azharuddeen added to bolster a frail middle- and lower-order. None of these signings – some experienced and others untested – count as consistent match-winners.

RCB also has to contend with Kohli's tendency to make impulsive selection and tactical decisions, all in the name of playing free, flexible cricket. Kohli himself is set for a big change, with the skipper an-

Overall\*

Played 196

Won 91

Lost 101

NR 4

26

vs. CSK 9

16

1

25

vs. DC 14

10

1

26

vs. KKR 12

14

27

vs. MI 10

17

26

vs. PBKS 12

14

22

vs. RR 10

10

2

17

7

10

### THE ROYAL CHALLENGERS DUGOUT

#### TOP GUNS IN CURRENT SQUAD

##### BATSMEN

	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	50s/100s
Virat Kohli	192	184	5878	113	38.16	130.73	39/5
AB de Villiers	141	130	4178	133 n.o.	42.20	159.46	35/2
Devdutt Padikkal	15	15	473	74	31.53	124.80	5/0

##### ALL-ROUNDERS

	M	Runs	HS	50s/100s	Wkts.	BBI	4W
Glenn Maxwell*	82	1505 (79 inns)	95	6/0	19 (50 inns)	2/15	0
Washington Sundar	25	177 (17)	35	0/0	16 (25)	3/24	0

##### BOWLERS

	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4W
Yuzvendra Chahal	98	97	121	4/25	22.22	7.66	2
Harshal Patel*	36	34	34	3/43	28.55	8.53	0
Mohammed Siraj	29	29	29	3/8	30.06	9.05	0

##### FACTFILE

###### MOST MATCHES AS CAPTAIN

	Virat Kohli	AB de Villiers	Washington Sundar
Total	125	57	71
Won	57	NR	4
Lost	64	4	79

###### BEST BATTING STRIKE-RATE#

	Virat Kohli	AB de Villiers	Washington Sundar
Runs	4178	2620	713
Balls	2620	57	260

###### BEST ECONOMY RATE#

	Virat Kohli	AB de Villiers	Washington Sundar
Overs	133 n.o.	25	713
Runs concd.	5878	113	713

###### (#CURRENT SQUAD)

##### ROYAL CHALLENGERS' 2021 FIXTURES

April 9	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 3	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Ahmedabad
April 14	vs. SRH	7.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 6	vs. PBKS	7.30 p.m.	Ahmedabad
April 18	vs. KKR	3.30 p.m.	Chennai	May 9	vs. SRH	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 22	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 14	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 25	vs. CSK	3.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 16	vs. RR	3.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 27	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Ahmedabad	May 20	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
April 30	vs. PBKS	7.30 p.m.	Ahmedabad	May 23	vs. CSK	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata

\* Royal Challengers' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (11),

# Sushil, Anand, Humpy, Manpreet and Rani strike it big

Cricketer Joginder, kabaddi player Ajay Thakur and boxer Akhil Kumar conferred with the Giant off the Field honour

## ACES AWARDS

SPORTS BUREAU

Sushil Kumar, Viswanath San Anand, Koneru Humpy, Manpreet Singh and Rani Rampal were among the big winners of the 2021 Sportstar Aces Awards on Saturday.

"I am very happy that the jury has chosen me for this award," said wrestler Sushil after winning the Sportsman of the Decade (Individual

in 2017). Each one of these was very significant for me, and emotionally draining," Anand said.

Humpy was adjudged the Sportswoman of the Decade in the same category.

India's hockey National team captains Manpreet Singh and Rani Rampal were named the Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Decade for Team Sports. "This award is for women's hockey. I hope this award will encourage more and more girls

### Third list of Sportstar Aces Awards winners

- Sportswoman of the Decade (Individual non-Olympic Sports): Koneru Humpy
- Sportsman of the Decade (Individual non-Olympic Sports): Viswanathan Anand
- Best Corporate for Promotion of Sports: Hero MotoCorp
- Giant off the Field (COVID Warriors): Joginder Sharma, Akhil Kumar, Ajay Thakur
- Sportswoman of the Decade (Team Sports): Rani Rampal
- Sportsman of the Decade (Team Sports): Manpreet Singh



**Delightful moment:** Viswanathan Anand receiving the Sportsman of the Decade (Individual non-Olympic Sports) award from Malini Parthasarathy, Chairperson, The Hindu Publishing Group. ■ K. PICHUMANI



#SportstarGoD

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Olympic Sports). "I am honoured that you would continue to support me as I continue to serve my country."

Malini Parthasarathy, Chairperson, The Hindu Publishing Group, presented the Sportsman of the Decade (Individual non-Olympic Sports) award to Anand, the five-time World champion in chess.

**Each one significant**  
"I'm really delighted to win the Sportsman of the Decade award. For me, that includes two World Championships, the qualification [for the World Chess Championship] in 2014 and the World Rapid Championship

to take up sports," said Rampal.

Hero MotoCorp was named the decade's Best Corporate for the Promotion of Sports. "Coming from such great icons [jury] from the field of sports, it's a true vindication of all that we have been doing to nurture sports in the country."

"I would like to assure you all that Hero MotoCorp and I remain committed to making India a sporting powerhouse in the years to come," said Pawan Munjal, Hero MotoCorp's chairman, managing director and chief executive officer.

Sportstar also recognised the efforts of three Indian



Manpreet Singh. ■ FILE PHOTO



Joginder Sharma. ■ FILE PHOTO



**Prized possession:** Sushil Kumar with the Sportsman of the Decade (Individual Olympic Sports) award. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN



**Recognition:** Hero MotoCorp's Pawan Munjal with the Best Corporate for the Promotion of Sports award. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN



Akhil Kumar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Cheese Cubes  
200g | ₹114\*



Cheese slices  
200g | ₹122\*



Cheese sauce Mexican  
200mL | ₹75\*



Cheese sauce Jalapeno  
200mL | ₹75\*



Diced Blend Cheese  
200g | ₹105\*



\*MRP (incl. of all taxes), Conditions apply.

## TV PICKS

**South Africa v Pakistan:** 2nd ODI, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.onwards

## IN BRIEF



**Aditi makes the cut; Tavatanakit keeps lead**

RANCHO MIRAGE (USA) Aditi Ashok picked up three birdies on a five-hole stretch in the second round to make the cut at the ANA Inspiration golf tournament here on Friday. Aditi was tied 59th at one over. Thailand's Patty Tavatanakit added 69 to her first round 66 to continue to lead by one shot over China's Shanshan Feng. PTI

**Smith reaches Mumbai to join DC squad**

MUMBAI Australian Steve Smith on Saturday joined the Delhi Capitals squad and will undergo a mandatory seven-day hard quarantine. The 31-year-old, who was released by Rajasthan Royals, was acquired by Delhi Capitals for ₹2.2 crore at the IPL auctions in February. PTI

**Karman falls in semis**

MONASTIR (TUNISIA) Karman Kaur Thandi lost 7-6(3), 6-3 to second seed Anna Kubareva of Belarus in the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis semifinals here on Saturday. It was the second consecutive semifinal for Karman who will be joining the Indian team for the World Group play-off against Latvia in the Billie Jean King Cup.

**Sandesh Kurale overcomes Manas**

INDORE Sandesh Kurale pipped the 13-year-old Manas Dhamne 4-6, 6-2, 7-6(3) in the boys' final of the National junior tennis championship at the Indore Tennis Club on Saturday.

**The results (finals): Under-18: Boys:** Sandesh Kurale bt Manas Dhamne 4-6, 6-2, 7-6(3).

**Girls:** Sanjana Sirimalla bt Suhitha Maruri 6-1, 6-3.

## West Brom stuns Chelsea

### EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES LONDON

Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel suffered the first defeat of his reign as lowly West Bromwich Albion swept to a stunning 5-2 win.

Tuchel saw his 14-game unbeaten run since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard come to juddering halt at Stamford Bridge come to a halt.

**The results:**

**Premier League:** Chelsea 2 (Putalic 27, Mount 71) lost to West Brom 5 (Pereira 45+, 45+, Robinson 63, 90, Diagne 68); Leeds 2 (Harrison 12, Jagielka 49-) bt Sheffield United 1 (Osborn 45+).

**LaLiga:** Granada 0 lost to Villarreal 3 (G. Moreno 9-, 18, 60-); Real Madrid 2 (Asenio 41, Benzema 73) bt Eibar 0.

**Bundesliga:** Borussia Dortmund 1 (Hummels 45) lost to Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Schulz 11-, Silva 87); Bayer Leverkusen

2 (Alario 26, Schick 72) bt Schalke 1 (Huntenaar 81); Wolfsburg 1 (Brekalo 69) bt Cologne 0.

Mainz 1 (Brosinski 56-) drew with Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Voglsammer 75); Augsburg 2 (Vargas 8, Hahn 23) bt Hoffenheim 1 (Skov 86).

**Serie A:** AC Milan 1 (Hauge 87) drew with Sampdoria 1 (Quagliarella 57); Atalanta 3 (Muriel 19, 43, Zapata 61) bt Udinese 2 (Pereyra 45, Stryger Larsen 71).

Napoli 4 (Insigne 19, Osimhen 22, Mertens 34, Di Lorenzo 72) bt Crotone 3 (Simy 25, 48, Messias 59); Lazio 2 (Lazzari 56, Caicedo 89-) bt Spezia 1 (Verde 73); Sassuolo 2 (Traore 57, Raspadori 85) drew with AS Roma 2 (Pellegrini 26-); Pescara 1 (Osborn 45+).

Benevento 2 (Glik 23, Ionita 67) drew with Parma 2 (Kurtic 55, Man 88); Cagliari 0 lost to Hellas Verona 2 (Barak 54, La-Sagna 90+9); Genoa 1 (Destro 13) drew with Fiorentina 1 (Vlahovic 23).

**Friday: La Liga:** Levante 0 lost to Huesca 2 (Mir 15, 54).

## Harshita finishes second

SPORTS BUREAU OMAN

Asian Games bronze medallist Harshita Tomar of India finished in second position in the laser radial class at the end of two races of the Asian Olympic sailing qualification which commenced here on Saturday.

Harshita came fourth and second in the two races. The event will run till April 8.

**The results (overall, placings of Indians):**

**49er:** 4. Varun Thakkar & K.C. Ganapathy; **49erFX:** 3. Ekta Yadav & Ritika Dangi; **Laser radial:** 2. Harshita Tomar, 4. Nethra Kumanan; **Laser standard:** 6. Upamanyu Dutta, 7. Vishnu Saravanan; **Windsurfing: RX:** Men: 5. Ebad Ali; RS: X: Women: 3. Ishwariya Ganesh.

Benevento 2 (Glik 23, Ionita 67) drew with Parma 2 (Kurtic 55, Man 88); Cagliari 0 lost to Hellas Verona 2 (Barak 54, La-Sagna 90+9); Genoa 1 (Destro 13) drew with Fiorentina 1 (Vlahovic 23).

**Friday: La Liga:** Levante 0 lost to Huesca 2 (Mir 15, 54).

## No plans to move out of Mumbai

Positive cases identified before biosecure bubble entry

official told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

At least 10 groundstaff at the Wankhede Stadium – which is to host 10 games – six members of the IPL's operations/event management team, Axar and a member of Chennai Super Kings' content management team have been confirmed as having contracted COVID-19.

However, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is not overly worried about the fate of the Mumbai leg, including Delhi Capitals' allrounder Axar Patel, have been confirmed as having contracted COVID-19. According to the IPL's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the groundstaff and BCCI operations personnel are not supposed to enter the bubble.

According to the BCCI official, all cases are being detected before they enter the biosecure bubble.

**Eliminating doubt**  
The main reason, according to BCCI official, is that all cases are being detected before they enter the biosecure bubble.

Even in 2020, almost two dozen individuals from various teams had tested positive upon arrival in the United Arab Emirates, but the event was staged successfully.

**Bubble sanctity**  
The BCCI is confident the sanctity of the bubble shall be maintained and the tournament will be conducted without health concerns to everyone involved.

According to the CSK team management, its crew member has not been in the bubble and yet is being regularly tested, while Delhi Capitals confirmed Axar's infection was detected during his second COVID-19 test. As a result, despite murmurs about possible back-ups, the BCCI is not considering moving IPL matches out of Mumbai, which has re-emerged as a

## Lanka holds out for a draw

### SL IN WEST INDIES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA & BARBUDA)

Sri Lanka's top-order held firm to ensure a draw and a drawn series against the West Indies on the last day of the second and final Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium here on Friday.

Set a daunting target of 377 and resuming at 29 without loss, the tourists reached 193 for two with a

top score of 75 by captain Dimuth Karunaratne and an unbeaten 66 by Oshada Fernando.

**The scores:** West Indies 354 & 280/4 deci. drew with Sri Lanka 258 & 193/2 in 79 overs (Lahiru Thirimanne 39, Dimuth Karunaratne 75, Oshada Fernando 66 n.o.).

**Man-of-the-Match:** Kraigg Brathwaite.

**Man-of-the-Series:** Suranga Lakmal.

**Match drawn and the two-match series drawn 0-0.**

## Axar tests positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals and India all-rounder Axar Patel has tested positive for COVID-19 and kept in isolation, the IPL franchise said on Saturday. Axar is the second IPL player to have returned a positive report after Nitish Rana.

**Gurkeerat replaces Rinku**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders has signed up Gurkeerat Mann as replacement for batsman Rinku Singh, who will be unavailable for IPL-14 due to a knee injury. KKR acquired Gurkeerat at his base price of ₹50 lakh, said a press release.



**Without a sweat:** Arjun Kadhe and Saketh Myneni with their doubles trophies. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

World junior rank of No. 8 in 2018.

In the ongoing tournament, the Czech had won his singles in three sets against third seed Aidan Mchugh of Britain and was quite robust in the doubles as well on Friday.

The fact that the Czech was also in the doubles final with Zsombor Velcz of Hungary meant that top seeds Arjun Kadhe and Saketh Myneni took the winner's trophy with a walkover.

It was the third doubles title of the season for the newly-crowned National champion Arjun Kadhe, while it was the second for Saketh, who had won the Lucknow event with Yuki Bhambri.

The 18-year-old Svcrina has been a phenomenal player so far. He had helped Czech Republic win the Junior Davis Cup in 2017, and had reached a career-high

Oliver Crawford of the US tamed second seed Simon Carr of Ireland 6-4, 6-3.</p