

IN BRIEF

Delhi sees record 306 Covid deaths

New Delhi: Delhi logged a record 306 Covid deaths and 26,169 cases with a positivity rate of 36.24 per cent, highest since the pandemic began a year ago, on Thursday even as the city hospitals grappled with depleting oxygen supply for the third consecutive day.

The city has reported over 1,750 deaths due to the deadly virus in the last 10 days. It had recorded 24,638 cases and 249 deaths on Wednesday, as the positivity rate stood at 31.28 per cent. On Tuesday, 28,395 cases, the highest single-day tally so far, were registered with a positivity rate of 32.82 per cent. The capital had witnessed 23,686 cases with a positivity rate of 26.12 per cent on Monday. Authorities logged 249 deaths on Wednesday, 277 on Tuesday, 240 on Monday, 161 deaths on Sunday, 167 on Saturday, and 141 on Friday. With the fresh cases, Delhi's cumulative tally has risen to 9,56,348. The death toll stands at 13,193, according to the latest health bulletin. A total of 72,208 tests, including 48,346 RT-PCR tests, were conducted on Wednesday, the bulletin said. The number of tests is significantly less than the average of around 90,000 tests a day being conducted in the national capital. — PTI

11 more deaths, 530 new cases in Noida

Noida: The Covid death toll in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar rose to 129 on Thursday with 11 more fatalities, the highest in a day till date, while 530 new cases pushed the infection tally to 32,133, official data showed. The district's active caseload reached 4,088 from 4,009 the previous day, according to the figures released by the UP Health Department for a 24-hour period. On the brighter side, 444 patients got discharged during the period, taking the overall recoveries to 28,450, the fifth highest in the state, it showed. — PTI

Need more docs: AIIMS Covid task force chief

New Delhi: The head of the medicine department at the AIIMS here has requested his colleagues from other departments to provide 80 per cent of their resident doctors and faculty members for Covid management. In an urgent request, Dr Naveet Wig, who is also the chairperson of the hospital's Covid Task Force, said that in view of an alarming rise in the number of patients suffering from the disease and the opening of multiple Covid facilities in the hospital, the need of manpower has increased multi-fold. "To meet this demand, as directed by the director, you are requested to provide 80 per cent of your residents and 80 per cent of your faculty members for Covid management," the request stated.

SIR GANGA RAM SAYS ONLY 5 HRS OF OXYGEN LEFT

New Delhi: The Sir Ganga Ram Hospital on Thursday sent an SOS to the Delhi government, saying there is only five hours of oxygen left at the facility, and requested that it be replenished urgently. "At 8 pm, the oxygen in store at the hospital was for five hours for peripheral use till 1 am and less for high flow use. Need urgent oxygen supplies," an official of the hospital said. There are 510 coronavirus patients, including 142 patients on high flow oxygen support, admitted in the hospital located in central Delhi. "The hospital is in touch with the agencies. Need urgent supplies," the official said. Earlier in the day, the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) had said their oxygen stock could last till 10 am on Friday. "Many more patients with high flow need got admitted to the hospital. Almost 40 patients are extra," the official said. Several small hospitals in the city struggled to replenish oxygen supply for coronavirus patients on Thursday, even as some big healthcare facilities received fresh stock. The Delhi High Court had on Wednesday night ordered the Centre to "forthwith" provide oxygen by whatever means to hospitals here facing shortage of the gas in treating serious Covid patients, observing it seems human life is not important for the state. — PTI

Covid-19 situation in Delhi precarious, says HC

Asks Centre to ensure oxygen supply to hospitals

New Delhi, April 22: The Delhi High Court Thursday observed that the Covid situation in the national capital has turned precarious with many hospitals running out of oxygen and directed the Centre to ensure the gas is supplied to the city as per the planned allocation and without any hindrances.

"As it stands, we all know that this country is being run by God," observed an anguish bench of justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli which was of the view that all measures should be taken for removing obstructions in the transportation of oxygen.

If the government wants it can do anything and can even make heaven meet earth, the bench, which heard the matter from 2 pm to 6:40 pm, said.

The bench, while dictating its order, said the position in Delhi has turned rather precarious with several hospitals reporting that either they have insufficient oxygen or will not last for longer period.

The high court directed all the authorities concerned, which are bound by the order passed under the Disaster Management Act, to ensure strict compliance of the Centre's direction that there shall be no restriction on inter-State and intra-State movement of persons and goods, including medical oxygen. The bench made it clear that non-compliance of the order will be viewed seriously since it

'Centre's allocation to Delhi not respected by some states'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

The Delhi high court, on Thursday, said the Centre's allocation of oxygen for Delhi from plants in other states like Haryana was not being respected by the local administration there and it needs to be resolved immediately.

The observation by a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli came after the Delhi government told the court that the oxygen which was to come from Panipat in Haryana was not being allowed to be picked up by the local police there.

The Delhi government also told the court that

is going to result in grave loss of lives and will invite criminal action.

"We direct the Central government to peremptorily ensure strict compliance of the allocation order dated April 21, its own order passed on April 22 under Disaster Management Act, and our order dated April 21. We also direct all the authorities concerned who are bound by the order passed under the Disaster Management to ensure strict compliance. We make it clear that non-compliance of the said orders will be viewed seriously since non-com-

pliance of these orders is likely to result in grave loss of life," the bench said. We also direct the Centre to ensure allocation of oxygen takes place as planned and transportation of the tankers takes place unhindered, the bench said and added that they shudder to think what will be the condition in other states.

It also directed that adequate security be provided to lorries transporting oxygen so that they move without obstructions and a special corridors may be created for immediate transportation of oxygen to hospitals. — PTI

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Migrants rush to leave despite city govt's promises

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22, 2021

Even after repeated assurances by the Delhi government, the hundreds of migrant workers in Delhi thronged the bus terminals and railway stations in an effort to find transport back to their native places on Thursday. The labourers said their employers had told them that factories would be shut down. "I worked at an iron factory, but there is no work anymore. No work means no money, so we are heading home," told a worker even as Anand Vihar bus terminal officials held a meeting with authorities of the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand bus systems to prevent the sort of chaos seen after the lockdown last year.



Migrants board buses to leave for their native places amid a surge in coronavirus cases at Rajiv Chowk in Gurugram on Thursday.

At the bus terminal and railway station at Anand Vihar, there were arrangements to ensure orderly movement of travellers, overseen by Delhi Police and Civil Defence Volunteers. Hundreds of migrants, some of whom could not

get a bus or train earlier when a week-long lockdown came into effect in Delhi, gathered at Anand Vihar to try again on Thursday.

Though the terminal was lined with government buses, many seats were full because passen-

gers booked tickets online. In private AC buses, passengers claimed conductors were charging as much as ₹1,500-₹2,000 for a seat.

A migrant worker along with his two friends were also very keen to find a bus to take them home to Sitapur in Lucknow. "I worked at an iron factory in Brijwasan, but the management told us that the unit was being closed due to the lockdown," said Kumar. "Last year, I remember walking for kilometres to get a ride back home. This time I don't want to waste time, but return at this point only," said Sunil.

On Tuesday in an order, the Delhi government has announced ₹5,000 relief for registered construction workers. The relief is part of a slew of steps that will be taken to help

migrant workers and daily wagers, many of whom are leaving the city fearing loss of livelihood after the government announced a six-day lockdown to arrest the spread of Covid cases in Delhi.

There are a total of 1,71,861 registered workers but registration will be kept open and newly registered workers will be covered too, stated the order.

The order states that a committee of officers is to be constituted to ensure the welfare of daily wagers and migrant workers. The committee is tasked with ensuring that food, water, shelter, clothing and medication are made available to workers. Those workers at construction sites are to be provided with food, shelter and other medications, too.

hospital in time.

An official from Shanti Mukund Hospital told PTI they have not been able to get in touch with their oxygen supplier.

"There are 110 coronavirus patients in the hospital right now. We have no option but to send patients to other hospitals," he said.

Dr Sanjeev Sharma, chief operating officer at Delhi Heart and Lung Institute, said their oxygen stock will last till 4 pm.

"Supplier provided the last refill in the morning; we are on our own. A total of 71 patients are on O2 support," he said. — PTI

Court allows cops to obtain Sidhu's voice sample



Deep Sidhu

application is pending in the matter.

In it's application, the police said that during the investigation, it came to the notice that accused was live on Facebook page and also made various posts on the date of incident.

These video clips/Facebook live have been taken on record which contain the voice of accused, the police told

Police averts crisis, manages to restore oxygen at hospital

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

Following the severe shortage of oxygen supply in the national capital, the Delhi police has come to the rescue of several hospitals and arranged oxygen for those facilities where Covid patients are undergoing treatment. Several hospitals in Delhi were running short on oxygen cylinders and had only an hour's back up.

"In the past three days, many city hospitals have made SOS calls to various police stations seeking help in arranging oxygen

cylinders. On Wednesday night, a major crisis was averted after the Delhi police managed to restore oxygen supply to a hospital here where over 350 Covid patients were undergoing treatment," said Chinmoy Biswal, the public relation officer (PRO) of the Delhi police. According to DCP (South district) Atul Kumar Thakur, chief engineer of Baniwal hospital R.K. Baniwal informed the police that the oxygen at their facility would only last for two hours and they were not sure when their supply would be restored.

The court added, In light of above observation, the application of the IO (investigating officer) is hereby allowed. The accused Deep Sidhu was, in FIR No. 98/21, remanded to 14 days in Judicial Custody.

Production warrant be issued against the accused with direction to Jail Superintendent to produce the accused at FSL, at a convenient time allocated by FSL, under more favourable conditions for the purpose of recording his voice sample in the presence of his counsel, the court said. — PTI

accused. The admissibility and quality of evidence is a question to be determined during the trial and not at the stage of investigation, the court said.

The CM received a call from his Odisha counterpart, Naveen Patnaik, assuring complete support to Delhi government in airlifting oxygen. Mr Kejriwal also spoke to Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar and sought his help in facilitating transport of oxygen trucks from the neighbouring state and claimed he assured "full support." He said Delhi had a daily quota of 378 MT of medical oxygen, which has been increased to 480 MT, and thanked the Central government for it. But, he said, more supplies are needed as according to estimates Delhi needs 700 MT of oxygen daily.



Relatives of Covid-19 patients carry oxygen cylinders themselves to tend to their relatives at Mayapuri in New Delhi on Thursday.

Ex-city minister A.K. Walia succumbs to coronavirus

New Delhi, April 22: Senior Congress leader and former Delhi government minister A.K. Walia died of covid in the early hours of Thursday, party leaders said. He was 72.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal among others condoled his demise.

Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar expressed grief over the former MLA's death. He said Walia breathed his last at the city's Apollo Hospital. — PTI

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Sisodia says oxygen tankers not able to reach city hospitals

New Delhi, April 22: Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia wrote to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday alleging that tankers carrying oxygen were not able to reach hospitals in the national capital as they were being stalled by police and officials in UP and Haryana.

"Police and senior officials of the administration in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are stalling the tankers carrying oxygen, delaying the tankers from reaching Delhi hospitals on time," Mr Sisodia said in the letter.

"I urge you ensure that the oxygen allocated for Delhi by the Centre reaches there without any delay to save lives of the patients," he added.

Several small hospitals in the city struggled to replenish oxygen supply for coronavirus patients on Thursday morning, even as some big healthcare facilities received fresh stock overnight.

The Centre on Thursday directed states to ensure uninterrupted production and supply of medical oxygen and its transport along inter-state borders and said the district magistrate and superintendent



Manish Sisodia

► **DELHI DY-CM** Manish Sisodia wrote to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan alleging that tankers carrying oxygen were not able to reach hospitals in the national capital as they were being stalled by police and officials in UP and Haryana

dent of police of the district concerned will be held responsible if there is any violation of its order.

The directive under the stringent Disaster Management Act 2005 was issued by Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla in the wake of reports that some states blocked supply of medical oxygen to other states amid sudden spike in coronavirus cases and demand for it. — PTI

Taking efforts to airlift oxygen from Odisha, says Kejriwal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

In a bid to deal with the shortage of oxygen in hospitals amid rising Covid cases in Delhi, the Delhi government is making efforts to airlift its enhanced quota of oxygen supply from Odisha, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday.

He thanked the Centre and the HC for their efforts towards raising Delhi's oxygen quota for treating patients and said supplies have started reaching the city.

He also urged the Centre and Haryana government to facilitate "smooth passage" to vehicles carrying medical oxygen to Delhi.

The CM received a call from his Odisha counterpart, Naveen Patnaik, assuring complete support to Delhi government in airlifting oxygen. Mr Kejriwal also spoke to Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar and sought his help in facilitating transport of oxygen trucks from the neighbouring state and claimed he assured "full support." He said Delhi had a daily quota of 378 MT of medical oxygen, which has been increased to 480 MT, and thanked the Central government for it. But, he said, more supplies are needed as according to estimates Delhi needs 700 MT of oxygen daily.

SHORT TAKES

Over 1,700 doses stolen in Haryana

Chandigarh: Over 1,700 doses of anti-coronavirus vaccine were stolen from a government hospital in Haryana's Jind, a police official said on Thursday. The incident took place at the civil hospital in Jind on Wednesday night. A total of 1,270 doses of Covishield and 440 of Covaxin were stolen from the hospital, SHO of Civil Lines police station Rajender Singh said. "The accused did not touch any other vaccine, medicine, cash, etc. lying in the store," he said. The matter came to light when a sanitation worker found the locks of the store and deep freezer broken on Thursday morning. A health department official in Jind said there are still enough doses of anti-coronavirus vaccine available. By Thursday afternoon, 1,000 additional doses each of the two vaccines would be available at the civil hospital, he said.

Maha varsities to hold exams online

Mumbai: Examinations for undergraduate students of 13 state-run universities in Maharashtra will be held online, state minister Uday Samant said on Thursday. Speaking to reporters, the minister for higher and technical education said that he also plans to request the state government to include exam-related work in the essential services category. "There are strict restrictions imposed to break the chain of the Covid-19 spread in the state. Hence, we have decided to conduct examinations for undergraduate students, from first to third year, online," Mr Samant said. The minister said he will also request the state administration to include some exam-related works in the essential services category. The decision has been taken after consulting vice-chancellors of universities, he said. — PTI

Patnaik speaks to PM Modi, Delhi CM

Bhubaneswar: Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over telephone and discussed the Covid-19 situation in the country. Mr Patnaik said Odisha was ready to assist pandemic-battered states by ensuring adequate oxygen supplies. "It's a war-like situation and Odisha will extend all cooperation in the fight against Covid at the national level, including ramping up oxygen production to assist other states in this emergency situation," he told the PM, the CM's Office said. Earlier in the day, the Odisha CM had called his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal and assured him of complete support, including in facilitating lifting of Delhi's quota of oxygen from Odisha.

MHA TELLS STATES TO SECURE ALL OXYGEN TANKERS

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla, in a stern letter to all states, said that no restrictions should be made for free movement of oxygen between states. The ministry has asked states to ensure adequate security for tankers or other vehicles carrying oxygen and providing them with a "green corridor" for their faster movement. "No restriction shall be imposed on the movement of medical oxygen between the states and transport authorities shall be instructed to accordingly allow free inter-State movement of oxygen-carrying vehicles. No restrictions shall be imposed on oxygen manufacturers and suppliers to limit the oxygen supplies only to the hospitals of the State/UT in which they are located," the letter states. The home ministry has also involved the Disaster Management Act which makes district magistrates and senior superintendent of police personally liable to ensure free and smooth movement of oxygen between different States. The directive comes in wake of some states like Delhi complaining to the Centre that states like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were blocking the supply of oxygen to Delhi as it procures all its oxygen supply from these two neighbouring states.

Shivraj empowers villages to impose lockdown

Panchayat secys authorised to set up quarantine centres

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, APRIL 22

The Madhya Pradesh government has empowered the panchayats in the state to impose corona curfew in the wake of a surge in Covid-19 cases. Principal secretary of state panchayat and rural development department Umakant Umrao has issued a circular asking the district collectors and chief executive officers of the zila panchayats in the state to generate awareness among the villagers about corona curfew.

The villages have now been given the power to make a decision on the imposition of corona curfew in their area of jurisdictions keeping in view the pandemic situation and threat of spreading the virus by the migrant labourers who return back to their homes in the current reverse migration triggered by the second corona wave of coronavirus, a senior officer of the panchayat and rural development department said unwilling to be quoted since he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"We plan to encourage community-based initiatives in villages to tackle the pandemic in view of



A replica of earth being cleaned by a worker on the banks of upper lake in Bhopal on Thursday. The Earth Day is being observed to demonstrate support to environmental protection for the theme "Restore Our Earth".

— PTI

the looming reverse migration to rural Madhya Pradesh in coming days", the officer said. Panchayat secretaries have been authorised to establish quarantine Centres for the migrant labourers who return to their villages from other states during reverse migration and also asked to lodge FIR against those who refused to be quarantined. Village community

Centres, schools and anganwadi Centres can be converted into quarantine Centres, the officer said.

Certain parts of rural MP have already witnessed the reverse migration of workers.

"At least 800 migrant workers have returned to their villages in Shahdol district in the past couple of weeks. We have already initiated the process of quarantining them outside their respective villages through community-based initiatives. Besides, we have set in motion the move to provide employment to them under NREGS after their quarantine period", Shahdol division commissioner Rajiv Sharma told this newspaper on Thursday.

People in at least 200 villages in the district have sealed their villages as part of the corona curfew imposed by them and made arrangements to quarantine the natives who returned their homes in reverse migration, outside their villages, official reports reaching here said. MP on Thursday reported 12,384 fresh cases of coronavirus positive taking the tally of cases to 4,591,95.

The state on Thursday recorded 75 deaths taking the death toll to 4,863.



Migrants arrive in Ranchi from Mumbai as they leave for their native places in Jharkhand amid rise in Covid-19 cases across the country on Thursday.

— PTI

HC sets aside Centre order cutting Maha oxygen quota

SHAHAB ANSARI MUMBAI, APRIL 22

A division bench of the Bombay high court in an urgent sitting on the night of Wednesday overturned a communication, issued by the Union ministry of health and family welfare, cutting down the oxygen supply to Maharashtra and directed that the oxygen supply to the state should continue as before. The judges also pulled up the state for not complying with its earlier order of supplying life saving drug Remdesivir and said that they feel ashamed of themselves for being part of such a nasty society.

A division bench at Nagpur of Justices Sunil Sukre and S.M. Modak questioned the ministry for reducing the supply of oxygen to Maharashtra from Bhilai Plant despite the state bearing the load of 40 per cent Covid patients in India. The ministry issued the controversial communication on April 18. As per this communication, the oxygen supply to Nagpur from a plant in Bhilai in Chhattisgarh was reduced from 110 metric tonnes to

Shiv Sena slams PM's advice on lockdown

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, APRIL 22

The Shiv Sena Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for suggesting states to use lockdown as a last resort during the pandemic. Despite restrictions, Covid cases in several states of the country are rising rapidly and a strict lockdown is the only option left to curb the spread, the party said.

Mr Modi in a nationwide address had said that the lockdown should be the 'last resort.' However, the ruling party in

Maharashtra came down heavily on him asking "on what basis he was suggesting this".

"It was felt that the Prime Minister will advice citizens on how to face such a situation. But he didn't tell how to save oneself from the coronavirus storm. He was expected to provide a vigour (in the battle against Covid), but instead a gist of his speech was like "you should take care of yourself," said the Sena in an editorial in the party mouthpiece *Saamana*.

The bench said that this communication from the Union ministry has hit the state of Maharashtra as a bolt from the blue.

To hear this issue, the bench held a hearing at around 8pm. According to the court, in this situation of emergency where 40 per cent of the patients are from Maharashtra, the

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, one of the respondents, should have increased the supply of oxygen to 200-300MT. "Unfortunately, things have gone in a reverse manner. Considering the dire need for Oxygen, we restore 110 MT supply of O2 from the Bhilai plant to Maharashtra," the court said.

PM calls off Bengal campaign visit

Modi to chair high-level meetings to review Covid-19 situation today

New Delhi, April 22:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not be visiting West Bengal on Friday to address poll meetings as he will be chairing high-level meetings here to review the prevailing Covid-19 situation, and will instead address the state voters virtually.

"Tomorrow, will be chairing high-level meetings to review the prevailing Covid-19 situation. Due to that, I would not be going to West Bengal," Mr Modi tweeted.

The BJP later said Modi will be addressing voters of West Bengal, particularly those in Malda, Murshidabad, Birbhum and Kolkata, through a virtual medium at 5 pm on Friday.

The Prime Minister was



Covid-19 victims being cremated at Bhairav Ghat Hindu crematorium in Kanpur on Thursday as coronavirus cases surge in record numbers across the country.

— PTI

scheduled to address four public meetings across four districts and 56 assembly constituencies.

Noting that the BJP realises the gravity of the situation and the rationale for him not being able

to visit the state in person, the party's West Bengal chief Dilip Ghosh said they requested him to give one address through a virtual medium to which he agreed.

After the BJP decided to

Didi wants one nation, one price for vaccine

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, APRIL 22

Calling the Centre's Covid-19 vaccination policy "anti-people" and "anti-federal," West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi to fix a uniform price for the vaccines to be bought by all the states. She pointed out that differentiation in rates is not only rare in the country's history but also would lead to an "unhealthy" business amid the pandemic.

"One nation, one party, one leader shouts BJP all the time but to save lives they can't have one price for the vaccine. Every Indian need a free vaccine, regardless of age, caste, creed, location. GOI must fix ONE price for Covid vaccine irrespective of who pays — Centre or the state," she tweeted.

Later Ms Banerjee, in her third letter in a week to the PM, alleged, "I am afraid, this policy is highly discriminatory and anti-people. Moreover, it appears that there is a bias in favour of market against the interest of common people."

Baghel says jab cost must be uniform

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, APRIL 22

Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday demanded the Centre to bring in uniformity in pricing of Covid-19 vaccines.

In a letter to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mr Bhagel said the cost of vaccines should be uniform for the Centre as well as the states. "A uniform rate of vaccines would be justified as both the state and the Centre earns revenue from the taxpayers' money," the letter said.

Mr Baghel was among several Opposition leaders who registered strong opposition to the Centre's decision to liberalise vaccination.

Over 300 flyers flee Silchar airport to skip Covid testing

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, APRIL 22

A day after over 300 air passengers escaped mandatory tests at Silchar airport on Wednesday, the police and district authorities of Southern Assam Thursday launched a drive to trace the passengers to subject them to mandatory Covid tests.

In view of the second wave of Covid, the Assam government has made it a must for all incoming passengers to undergo rapid antigen test and RT-PCR on arrival at all the airports. Over 300 passengers, who landed at the Silchar airport on Wednesday, created disorder and fled the facility to escape mandatory Covid-

19 testing, the district authorities said on Thursday.

Informing that criminal action will be initiated against all of them, the authorities said that the tests on incoming passengers at the Kumbhirgram airport are done at the Tikol Model Hospital nearby.

Pointing out that on Wednesday a total of 690 passengers arrived at the airport from various parts of the country aboard six aircraft, Cachar district additional deputy commissioner Sumit Sattawan said, "Six of the 189 passengers who underwent RAT and RT-PCR tested positive."

All incoming passengers at Kumbhirgram airport

are given the option to go to the hospital in buses provided by the local administration or take their own vehicles by giving an undertaking and noting the details of the vehicle and the driver.

About the reasons for which passengers created disorder at the hospital premises, sources said that few passengers took the refrain of inadequate security at the premises.

Asserting that all the passengers will have to undergo the mandatory tests, Mr Sattawan said, "The list of all the 300 passengers who skipped the testing is being prepared. We will start tracing and calling them by evening. If necessary police will pick them up."

Sitaram Yechury's son dies of Covid

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's elder son Ashish passed away due to Covid-19 related complications on Thursday morning at a hospital in Gurugram.

Mr Yechury tweeted, "It is with great sadness that I have to inform that I lost my elder son, Ashish Yechury to Covid-19 this morning. I want to thank all those who gave us hope and who treated him doctors, nurses, frontline health workers, sanitation workers and innumerable others who stood by us." Ashish, who studied at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, worked in several publications, including the Times of India in Delhi, before moving to Pune.

Journalists who worked with him remembered him as a mild-mannered and warm professional who was knowledgeable and well read. He would have turned 35 this year

in June. People close to the family said that he was doing fine in the Gurugram hospital for the last two weeks and finally passed away at 5.30 am on Thursday.

Condolences poured in from all quarters. Leaders from across the country, including President Ram Nath Kovind, vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, conveyed their condolences.

Several leaders, including Bengal chief minister Mamta Banerjee, DMK supreme M.K. Stalin, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor were among the many who sent their condolences. Mr Yechury further tweeted, "I bid goodbye to my son, Ashish (Biku) at noon today. I thank all of you who have shared our sorrow. I thank everybody who gave us strength to be able to face this dark hour. I know that I am not alone in my grief, with this pandemic consuming countless lives."

Amarnath registration suspended

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, APRIL 22

The registration for this year's Amarnath yatra has been suspended temporarily in view of the grim and worrisome Covid-19 situation across the country.

Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) on Thursday announced that it is constantly monitoring the situation and that the registration would be restarted once it improves.

"In view of evolving Covid situation in the country & the need to take all necessary pre-

cautionary measures, registration for Shri Amarnathji Yatra is being temporarily suspended. The situation is being constantly monitored and it would be reopened once the situation improves," the SASB wrote on Twitter.

The registration had opened through 446 designated branches of Punjab National Bank, Jammu and Kashmir Bank, and YES Bank, located in 37 states and Union Territories on April 1.

The annual pilgrimage spreading over 56 days to the revered cave-shrine at a height of 13,000 feet

in lower-Himalayas in south Kashmir is scheduled to begin from both traditional Pahalgam and shorter Baltal routes on June 28, coinciding with Ashaad Chaturthi, an auspicious day in Hindu calendar, and conclude on Shrawan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan) on August 22.

The authorities have this year increased the pilgrims' intake by five thousand a day. They have also said that they are making arrangements to host over 600,000 devotees during the event after SASB decided to enhance the daily route-wise pilgrim ceiling from 7,500 to 10,000 on each route excluding the pilgrims who would be flying in helicopters to Amarnath. The SASB had on March 13 said that the pilgrims' intake has been increased "considering the carrying capacity of the existing tracks and other available infrastructure in the yatra area." It, however, also said that the yatra would be held "as per Covid-19 SOPs developed by the government".

Last year, the yatra was cancelled at the eleventh hour in the face of the threat posed by the pandemic.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



VARSHA

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing girl please inform the undersigned.

Web-site : <http://cbl.nic.in>
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DP/494/SD/2021

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SHORT TAKES

UP: 5 dead as train rams into vehicles

Shahjahanpur, UP: Five people were killed and one person was injured after a train rammed into some vehicles at a manned level-crossing whose gates were allegedly not closed when the train came hurtling in, the police said. The locomotive of Lucknow-Chandigarh super-fast (5012-down) got derailed after hitting the vehicles, disrupting rail traffic in both directions for close to six hours. The incident took place after the train crossed Meeranpur Katra railway station this morning and hit two trucks, one car and one motorcycle at the open crossing. District magistrate Indra Vikram Singh said, "Around 5.10 am, when the train reached the Hulas Nagla crossing in Katra area, the pilot saw vehicles on the track and applied emergency brakes, but the engine hit them. Those killed in the incident include three of a family — Sidakat (30), Gulistan (27) and Hamja (1.5 years) — who were in the truck." — *PTI*

Sanskrit scholar Birajdar dies

Pune: Renowned Sanskrit scholar Pandit Ghulam Dastagir Birajdar died at Solapur in Maharashtra on Thursday afternoon following a brief illness, family sources said. Dastagir, 87, had in-depth knowledge of Hindu scriptures including the Vedas and had translated several books from Hindi and Urdu into Sanskrit. He had received several awards including the national teachers' award of the Union government. Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari condoled his death. "He dedicated his entire life to the promotion and propagation of Sanskrit. I pay my respects to the departed soul and convey my condolences to the members of the bereaved family," Koshyari said in his message. — *PTI*

Bombs hurled in North 24 Parganas

Kolkata: At least six persons, including a child, sustained splinter injuries in North 24 Parganas district's Titagarh assembly constituency after bombs were hurled indiscriminately on Thursday afternoon amid the voting exercise for the sixth phase of polls, a police officer said. A huge team of police personnel and CAPF jawans were rushed to the area following the incident, the officer said. Preliminary probe has revealed that unidentified persons, wearing masks, hurled several crude bombs near Tata Gate in Titagarh, he said. "The injured are undergoing treatment at BN Bose hospital. We are looking into the matter," the officer added. — *PTI*

Act globally, at high speed, urges PM

■ **Continued from Page 1**
dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060... China has committed to move from carbon peak to carbon neutrality in a much shorter time span than what might take many developed countries, and that requires extraordinarily hard efforts from China. ... China will strictly control coal-fired power generation projects." A separate Indo-US joint statement on the partnership to combat climate change and take strong action to meet the Paris Agreement goals said it would "proceed along two main tracks — the Strategic Clean Energy Partnership and the Climate Action and Finance Mobilisation Dialogue, which will build on and subsume a range of existing processes". It added: "The partnership will represent one of the core venues for India-US collaboration and focus on driving urgent progress in this critical decade for climate action". Mr Modi said at the summit, highlighting the steps India had taken: "Our ambitious renewable energy target of 450 gigawatts by 2030 shows our commitment. Despite our development challenges, we have taken many bold steps on clean energy, energy efficiency, afforestation and biodiversity. That's why we are among the few countries whose NDCs are 2-degree-Celsius compatible. We have also encouraged global initiatives like International Solar Alliance, LeadIT and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure."

No vehicle rallies, roadshows in Bengal

Public meetings of more than 500 people would not be allowed, says EC

New Delhi, April 22: Expressing anguish that Covid-related safety protocols were being flouted in West Bengal campaigning, the Election Commission Thursday placed an immediate ban on road shows, 'pad yatras' and vehicle rallies in the state and said public meetings having more than 500 people would not be allowed.

Using its constitutional powers, the commission issued an order placing fresh restrictions on physical campaigning in the state where two more phases of elections are due on April 26 and 29. The orders came into force from 7 pm on Thursday. "The commission has noted with anguish that many political parties/candidates are still not adhering to the prescribed safety norms during the public gather-



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee during an election rally at Habibpur in West Bengal's Malda district on Thursday.

ings..." the order read. "... the commission invoking its powers under Article 324 further orders that with effect from 7 pm of April 22, in the state of West Bengal no roadshow/padyatra shall be permissible; No cycle/bike/vehicle rally shall be permissible; No public meeting beyond the limit of 500 persons at a

place subject to availability of adequate space with social distancing, adhering to Covid-19 safety norms, shall be permissible," the order said. It made clear that permission for road shows, cycle, bike or vehicle rallies, if granted already, stands withdrawn. The order came on a day when the state registered

highest single-day spike of 11,948 Covid-19 cases. In a letter addressed to heads of all recognised parties on Wednesday, the commission had referred to the directions of the Calcutta high court issued on Tuesday which said that it would be open for the EC and the state chief electoral officer to take requisite steps and also to ensure successful implementation of Covid protocols by requiring strict compliance of prescribed guidelines and orders by all political parties, candidates and all other concerned with the poll process. The EC had recently prohibited campaign between 7 pm and 10 am to discourage public gatherings. It has also extended the silence period to 72 hours from 48 hours before end of poll in each phase. — *PTI*

Modi talked about '18 Asansol riots to provoke voters: Didi

Asansol/Tapan/Ratua, April 22: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminded people of 2018 Asansol riots during his rally last week to "provoke" voters amid the ongoing elections, and asserted that it was "unbecoming" of someone of his stature. The TMC boss, who addressed three rallies during the day, said it was a "matter of shame" that the PM, with his "provocative" remarks, tried to influence people. "You, members of different communities, are living in harmony. The other day, however, the Prime Minister visited Asansol and made many objectionable comments..." he brought up the issue of riots and made provocative statements. This doesn't befit a PM, or a home minister," she said. Mr Modi, during his address, had referred to

"You, members of different communities, are living in harmony. The other day, however, the Prime Minister visited Asansol and made many objectionable comments... he brought up the issue of riots and made provocative statements. This doesn't befit a PM, or a home minister."

— Mamata Banerjee, Bengal CM



the Asansol riots in 2018 on the occasion of Ram Navami, and indirectly blamed the TMC dispensation for the violence. Reminiscing that an imam of a local mosque, who lost his son in the riots, had said he didn't want any more bloodshed or death, the TMC supremo said, "The imam's words stand in contrast to what our PM says. "Even as people of different communities live here in peace, the PM rakes up the issue of riots." Claiming that she "has come to know that a photo of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam

was removed from the podium, minutes before the PM began his public meeting in Asansol", the CM said the media should be able to verify the same. "Kavi Nazrul Islam is the national poet of Bangladesh but he was born in Bengal, in Churulia village. We have named a university and the Andar airport after him. He is our pride," she stated. Earlier in the day, Ms Banerjee, during her rally in Tapan area of Dakshin Dinajpur district, slammed the BJP-led Centre over differential pricing of Covid-19 vaccines. — *PTI*

Indian Navy joins hunt for missing Indonesian sub

PAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 22

The Indian Navy has joined in the hunt to locate Indonesian submarine KRI Nanggala which was reported missing on Wednesday with its crew of 53 personnel. Indian Navy dispatched its deep submergence rescue vessel (DSRV) Thursday to assist Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Laut (TNI AL — Indonesian Navy) in search and rescue efforts for the submarine KRI Nanggala. Defence minister Rajnath Singh also spoke to the Defence Minister of Indonesia, General

Prabowo Subianto over the phone and "shared his pain over the news of missing submarine Nanggala and its crew members." "I have already directed the Indian Navy to move its deep submergence rescue vessel to Indonesia. I have also tasked the Indian Air Force to see the feasibility of induction of the DSRV intervention system by air," said Mr Singh. He said that India is extending its full support to the ongoing Indonesian rescue efforts and is always committed to assist its strategic partners during the times of necessity. An alert was received by



The Indian Navy dispatched its deep submergence rescue vessel to assist Indonesian Navy in search and rescue efforts for the submarine which was reported missing on Wednesday.

the Indian Navy through International Submarine Escape and Rescue

Liaison Office, regarding the missing Indonesian submarine. The submarine was reportedly exercising in a location 25 miles North of Bali with a crew of 53 personnel. India is amongst the few countries in the world capable of undertaking the search and rescue of a disabled submarine through a DSRV. Indian Navy's DSRV system can locate a submarine up to 1000 meters depth utilising its state-of-the-art side scan sonar (SSS) and remotely operated vehicle (ROV). After the submarine is successfully located, another sub-module of DSRV — the submarine

rescue vehicle — mates with the submarine to rescue the trapped personnel. The SRV can also be used to provide emergency supplies to the submarine. This system has a Side Scan Sonar for locating the position of the submarine in distress at sea, providing immediate relief by way of posting Emergency Life Support Containers with the help of ROV and thereafter rescuing the crew of the submarine using the DSRV itself. In a submarine accident, rapidity of response is most crucial to the safety of life. The Indian DSRV is the latest in terms of technology and capabilities.

Task force to 'weed out anti-nationals' in govt jobs in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 22

The Jammu and Kashmir government has constituted a Special Task Force (STF) for identifying and scrutinizing its employees involved in any activity detrimental to the security of the country or deemed as anti-national. The Union Territory's general administration department (GDA) has issued an order giving sanction for the constitution of an STF which would be authorised to identify and scrutinize cases of government employees found involved in such activity and refer these to the government for action against them in terms of provisions of Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution of India. Additional director-general of police (CID) has been nominated as chairperson of the committee which will have inspectors-general of police from Jammu and Kashmir Valley, representatives of home, law, justice member and parliamentary affairs and those of the concerned department of the employee under scrutiny as members. "The terms of reference of the special task force shall be to scrutinize cases of employees suspected of activities requiring action under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution of India," the order says. The STF will, as per the order, engage with other members of the terror monitoring group (TMG) for

identifying such other employees, as necessary. It will also avail the assistance of other law enforcement agencies and departments, if warranted, towards completing probes in a time-bound manner, the official sources said. The GAD order reads that the STF "shall speedily scrutinize such cases in a time-bound manner and shall be serviced by the criminal investigation department". The J&K government has, while pursuing a tough policy against what it sees as their anti-national activities and violation of Government Servants Conduct Rules, sacked a large number of its employees over a period of time. These rules lay down that no government servant shall take part in, subscribe in aid of, or assist in any way, any political movement in the country or relating to its affairs. In October 2016, 12 government employees were fired on charges of being involved in anti-national activities which included fuelling the unrest in the erstwhile state after the killing of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani. Some of the sacked officials were subsequently detained under J&K's stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) which allows a person to be jailed for three months to two years without formal trial being initiated against him or her.

All shops to shut by 6 pm in Haryana

Chandigarh, April 22: Having witnessed a rapid surge in Covid-19 cases in recent days, the Haryana government on Thursday announced several restrictions to control the spread, including closure of shops by 6 pm and a ban on all non-essential gatherings. The restrictions will come into effect from Friday, state Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said. "All shops will remain closed from 6 pm onward in Haryana from tomorrow, all non-essential gatherings are banned, anybody holding any function within prescribed limit will have to seek permission from concerned SDM (Sub Divisional Magistrate)," Mr Vij said in a tweet. The state government had recently capped the number of attendees in indoor events to 50 and that for open spaces to 200. About 10 days ago,

the Haryana government had imposed coronavirus-induced night curfew from 10 pm to 5 in the state after a surge in the cases. Talking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the state cabinet here, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said the standalone stores located in less crowded areas would be exempted, but deputy commissioners of the district concerned will take a final decision on this. The order will be strictly applicable on shops located in crowded areas, he said. Mr Khattar reiterated that the Haryana government was not contemplating to impose any lockdown in the state. He said the migrant workers need not worry and should carry on with their work. On April 21, Haryana recorded 9,623 new Covid-19 infections and 45 deaths. — *PTI*

Health emergency

■ **Continued from Page 1**
senior lawyer Harish Salve as amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter, the bench said that it will consider at a later stage transferring to itself the Covid related matters being heard by different high courts across the country. As solicitor general Tushar Mehta sought a clarification that since top court has taken suo motu cognizance of the situation created by the surge in Covid cases in its second wave, should Centre now respond to the proceedings before the high courts, Justice Ravindra Bhat said, "You can submit the national plan to the high courts. It (suo motu proceeding) is not to supersede any order as of now". The CJI Bobde said that the issue of transferring the Covid related matter being heard by the High Courts to the Supreme Court can be considered at a later stage. The court has sought Centre's response on four issues — supply of oxygen, essential drugs, method and manner of vaccination and the power to declare lockdown. Making it clear that the power to declare lockdown must rest with the state, the court said that it should not come from the high courts — an obvious pointer to Allahabad high court declaring lockdown in five

major cities of Uttar Pradesh — Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Gorakhpur. The top court had on April 20 stayed the Allahabad high court order passed the previous day, directing the lockdown in five cities of Uttar Pradesh. Observing that the national plan is the need of the hours and the six high courts were exercising their jurisdiction in the best interest but were ending up creating confusion in the management of Covid crisis, the top court said, "We find that there are six high courts — Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, MP, Calcutta and Allahabad. They are exercising jurisdiction in best interest. But it is creating confusion and diversion of resources." The matter will be taken up for hearing tomorrow (Friday) with court making it clear that it will hear the solicitor general Mehta and amicus curiae Harish Salve only. Vedanta's plea for reopening of its Thoothukudi plant got government push with solicitor general Tushar Mehta telling the court, "The country is in dire need of oxygen and the Centre is augmenting oxygen from whichever source. Vedanta wants to make its plant operational, let Vedanta only make it operational to manufacture oxygen for health purposes."

Hospitals forcing patients to leave

■ **Continued from Page 1**
the Centre has from April 21 allocated 6,822 MT/day to these states. The PM said responsibility has to be fixed with the local administration in cases of obstruction of oxygen supplies and asked all ministries to explore various innovative ways to increase the production and supply of oxygen. The PM directed officials to ensure that oxygen supply to various states happen in a smooth, unhindered manner and stressed on the need to ensure faster transportation of oxygen to the states. The PM stressed that the states should come down heavily on hoarding. The PM tweeted saying that he has cancelled his public meetings in West Bengal and will hold meetings to review the prevailing

Covid-19 situation on Friday. After the PM's review meeting, the Centre invoked the stringent Disaster Management Act 2005 and directed the states to ensure uninterrupted production and supply of medical oxygen and its transport along inter-state borders. In a letter to all chief secretaries, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla said the district magistrate and superintendent of police of the district concerned will be personally held responsible if there is any violation of the Centre's order and they have to oversee implementation of these orders. In fact, earlier in the day, Dr Sangita Reddy, joint managing director of Apollo Hospitals, tweeted tagging the PM that the Haryana police was not allowing oxygen tankers to leave the state.

"As I tweet, an oxygen tanker is outside the gate of Air Liquide Panipat plant at IOCL, and he is not being allowed inside. Haryana police are stopping it and not letting the oxygen out of Haryana. Need urgent intervention!!" Dr Reddy said. The situation was later resolved, and the oxygen tankers were allowed to move out of Haryana. Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia too wrote to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan alleging that tankers carrying oxygen were not able to reach hospitals in the city as they were being stalled by the police and officials in both Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. To prevent any repeat of such an incident, the home secretary directed that no restrictions

shall be imposed on oxygen manufacturers and suppliers to limit oxygen supplies only to the hospitals of the state and the Union territory in which they are located and there shall be free movement of oxygen carrying vehicles into the cities, without any restriction of timings, while also enabling inter-city supply without any restriction, it said. No authority shall attach the oxygen carrying vehicles passing through the district or areas for making supplies specific to any particular district or area, it further said. The supply of oxygen for industrial purposes, except those (nine specified industries) exempted by the government, is prohibited from April 22, 2021 and till further orders, according to the directive.

BJP workers attack cops, 2 injured in firing

■ **Continued from Page 1**
not impartial today. It tried to work at the behest of the ruling party." According to villagers of Ashoknagar in the same district, Central forces reportedly opened fire leaving a voter, Sheikh Shahjahan, injured when he was returning home after casting his vote. The firing, they said, followed a clash between TMC and BJP workers during polling at a booth in Ashoknagar Adarshapally High School in Tangra. Some buses were vandalised. Shahjahan allegedly

received a bullet injury on his leg and has been admitted to a hospital in Barasat. The EC, however, denied any incident of firing by the Central forces. Among the 43 seats that went to polls on Thursday, nine seats in North Dinajpur of North Bengal witnessed voter turnout of 77.90 per cent, while another nine in Nadia clocked 82.70 per cent polling. There was 76.19 per cent voting at 17 seats in North 24 Parganas and 82.13 per cent at eight seats in Burdwan East till 5 pm. Union home minister Amit

Shah, who could address only one of his three scheduled rallies during the day, exuded confidence on Thursday, claiming that the BJP would win with a "total majority". "The sixth phase of polls have been underway today. The people are casting their votes in large numbers in favour of the BJP to show Didi her place and bid her adieu. In the last five phases we have already won more than 122 seats. We will ensure the required number of seats for the total majority in the sixth phase itself," Mr Shah, with the magic

figure of 148 in the Assembly of 294 seats on his mind, told a rally at Harirampur in South Dinajpur of North Bengal. Pinning his hope on the BJP achieving its target of 200-plus seats in remaining two phases, he said, "Only two phases — seventh and eighth — of polls are left now. When the sixth phase of polls will be over in the evening today, we would certainly get a total majority. Nevertheless we will urge the people to bless us with over 200 seats. Only the voters of the remaining two phases can help us now to achieve that."

THE ASIAN AGE

23 APRIL 2021

Vaccine policy has many holes in it, needs a rejig

The Union government's decision to withdraw from its responsibility to complete a universal vaccination programme against Covid-19 militates against the basic ideas of democratic governance, governmental responsibility during a pandemic, and worse, makes its own budgetary proposals questionable.

Most vaccines against common diseases are free at the receivers' end as governments take upon themselves the primary responsibility of public health. Vaccines are a critical tool for ensuring it. And a pandemic means the crippling of normal life and the resultant crippling of the economy. No government can afford to pass over that job to any other agency, leave alone the private sector.

The Government of India, which worked with the state governments last year when the first wave of the pandemic Covid-19 hit our shores, seems to be abdicating that responsibility in so far as its younger population is concerned, despite studies pointing out that the current sweep of the virus has hit the younger ones more fatally than in its previous avatar.

The government has very little option, and time, to rework its policy and formulate a workable action plan as the nation scales new heights in the number of Covid-19 cases and sets world records every day

cer of Serum Institute of India says gives his company profits but denies it super-profits. Even if the government pays a little more, say ₹175 per dose, the budgeted amount of Rs 35,000 crores would be sufficient for a universal vaccination programme. Given this math, the government must now explain to the people why it has chosen to abandon the vaccination plan and asked the state governments to compete in the marketplace for vaccinating Indians.

The government has very little option, and time, to rework its policy and formulate a workable action plan as the nation scales new heights in the number of Covid-19 cases and sets world records every day. The country's poor health infrastructure, already overburdened, is bursting at its seams and as a nation we will hear more tragedies, such as the loss of 24 lives on ventilators in Nashik because of a gas leak. Thousands run pillar to post in search of a hospital bed or an oxygen cylinder and the unfortunate ones fall dead by the wayside. The Delhi high court was forced to censure the government and remind it that it must care for human lives.

The signals are too bad, and cannot brook delays. The government should take over Covid management without loss of time, reverse its ill-conceived vaccine policy, ensure every Indian is vaccinated for free as in most other nations, and stop the dance of death and the sinking of the economy.

Saving soccer's soul

English soccer fans scored the goal of their lifetime in staving off The Super League and helped keep the game tied to its traditional moorings in Europe. Twelve of Europe's biggest football clubs, including six giants of the EPL in Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Arsenal, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspurs, were planning to switch to a multi-billion dollar US pro sport format that would have made them stinking rich but would have left the game poorer. The fans reacted so fiercely that owners of all 12 clubs retreated. Fans who invest so much of their passion, time and money to follow the sport with their unique tribal loyalty to their clubs would have felt cheated by such a Super League.

The public outcry, the government of Boris Johnson taking a fierce anti-Super League stand with the PM's open threats of barring players from EPL and making them ineligible for their national teams and star players' opposition to the break-away proposal bound into such a powerful force that within three days of announcing grand plans, the owners of the "Big Six" of EPL plus Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid from Spain and Juventus, Internazionale and AC Milan from Italy, had to make grovelling apologies for so much as supporting it.

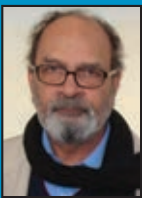
The American Pro Sport model is not universally liked as it breeds elitism and can be construed as non-competitive in the sense that participation rights are guaranteed regardless of performance and, importantly, very little of the billions trickles down. The traditional soccer model is more equitable even as it upholds the primacy of the Premier League in England and the national leagues in Europe. Foreign owners from the US, Russia and the UAE may not have seen it that way as they plotted to undermine traditions while inviting a kind of Kerry Packer revolution in football. Good sense seems to have prevailed in the nick of time and the soul of soccer saved — at least for the moment.

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Saeed Naqvi
Wide Angle



Recalling Iraq's tragedy in 2003 & statesmanship of PM Vajpayee

April 2003 was the cruellest month for the people of Iraq, a month of reflection on Pakistan by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and a rare opportunity for Worldview India, a group of Indian journalists who helped lift the mist from the month's historic events.

The Americans occupied Iraq by April 3. Vice-president Dick Cheney, the real author of the operation, was eager to declare victory on April 9. It had to be a spectacular media event. After all, Mr Cheney embedded 300-plus journalists with the US military.

The choreography was audacious. In a prepared statement, Mr Cheney would declare victory on the global media, which would be interspersed with images of an ecstatic, popular upsurge pulling down the statue of Saddam Hussain at Firdous Square. Mr Cheney's talking head would alternate with the slow fall of the statue. Mr Cheney would never have dreamt that all the back-channel tricks that went into the manufacture of the memorable spectacle would be exposed. For the first time in Indian journalism history, Worldview India posted camera units/reporters in Baghdad, Najaf, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Amman and in Lebanon. Some of these reporters hap-

pened to be in Palestine Hotel, witnesses to the real story, the one the world wasn't supposed to know.

Contrary to the narrative of a popular uprising toppling the statue, the Americans had to think on their feet: they had to improvise the iconic images because the popular upsurge had simply not materialised. US Marines were mobilised to "lasso" the statue's neck and have it pulled down by cranes. CNN, the occupation's premier cheerleader, has to this day incorporated a video of the statue as a lasting symbol of Americans replacing a "brutal" dictatorship with democracy. The sole superpower can arrange for a statue to be pulled down, but how does it show images of crowds celebrating Saddam Hussein's fall?

The 1991-92 Shia uprising in Najaf/Karbala, encouraged by Operation Desert Storm, was harshly put down by Saddam. The only images of the damaged shrine of Imam Hussain was brought to the world by a TV crew led by this reporter. The Shia refugees from this unreported conflict had been settled in a vast ghetto in Baghdad's outskirts. It was named, like much else those days, as Saddam City. It dawned on Mr Cheney's team that one group of people thrilled at

Saddam's fall were the inmates of the nearby ghetto, teeming with disgruntled Shias.

A deal was struck with controversial cleric Muqtada Sadr. Saddam City was renamed "Sadr" City. That's when celebrations erupted on Baghdad streets. Crowds from Sadr City trampled on Saddam posters and beat it with their sandals. The American romance with Iraq's Shias burgeoned.

On March 20, 2005, Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times* recommended Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani for the Nobel Prize. Sistani remains the blue-eyed ayatollah because he differs with Tehran on the clergy's role in governing the state.

Mr Cheney's contrivance of a quick victory in Iraq was matched by the energetic diplomacy of the US embassy in New Delhi. They persuaded South Block to participate in the American victory by taking over the administration of Iraq's Kurdish North. Powerful ministers like Jaswant Singh found the US blandishments tempting. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, as much a statesman as a skilful politician, rather than rubbish his Cabinet colleagues, went into one of his extended spells of deep reflection.

He called up his friend A.B. Bardhan,

CPI secretary-general. "Are you supporting Indian occupation of Kurdish Iraq?" Vajpayee taunted. "Not at all," exclaimed Mr Bardhan. "But I see no protest", Vajpayee replied. The PM was looking for signs of street restiveness on the issue to cite in opposing the idea. The source for this exchange was Mr Bardhan, but Vajpayee didn't deny it.

This was a period of extraordinary tension between India and Pakistan. After the December 13, 2001 attack on India's Parliament, the two militaries were in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation. On April 18, Vajpayee landed in Srinagar and, without a hint to his Cabinet, held out the hand of peace to Pakistan. "An awesome power has arisen". Regional quarrels have no meaning now. Conflicts in the region would have to be composed. The January 4, 2004 India-Pakistan summit in Islamabad followed.

Vajpayee found the "sole superpower" moment forbidding. Hence his quest for regional peace. Narendra Modi's crawl towards a regional entente is dictated by a different set of circumstances. The burgeoning China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan togetherness in the vicinity makes a friendly America look too distant.

Worldview India's journalists

remember April 2003 for the kind of journalism Indians haven't practised before or since. The idea was to cover the war and occupation of Iraq from an Indian perspective. The Western media would of course cover it, but from its own perspective. The embedded journalists were in fact a part of the war effort. This wouldn't be the Indian perspective, unless New Delhi accepted that it was India's war too. Indian media houses are stone deaf on such issues. For coverage of foreign affairs, they have deals with Reuters, BBC, CNN and so on — so much for "atma nirbharta". A word of gratitude is owed to S.Y. Qureshi, Doordarshan's then director-general, for grasping the significance of the project. He fought the resistance in the system. The standard argument against covering foreign affairs was that it "has low TRP ratings".

Let Mr Qureshi bear witness. Amitabh Bachchan's *Kaun Banega Crorepati* had the highest ratings until Worldview India's one-hour prime-time reporting from the Gulf by dedicated reporters pipped it to the post.

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

Subhani



To uphold secularism, free temples from state control



L. Ravichander

It has been Indian secularism's biggest defect that our Constitution, which promises to be fundamentally secular, has multiple provisions specifying exactly how religious institutions should run. A government that has its eye on the wealth of temples must also have the intellectual honesty to not maintain that it's a secular government. Yet of this failure, every single Indian government of the past, and the present, is culpable.

To argue that within the *praakaaras* of Hindu temple are layers of secular functions, which are intertwined and which necessitate the state's overarching intervention, is illogical. Such a schema is inherently faulty. If monies to temples come through *hundi* offerings by the Hindu devout, the government can't argue that since a temple also has secular dimensions, its control is kosher. This is a virus inside our collective thinking, a shibboleth serving the agenda of populist leaders.

Legally, what is a temple? A temple is not "an establishment" under the Shops and Establishments Act.

In accordance with Article 25 of the Constitution, which guarantees to all persons: "freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion", the proviso, which is also part of the original Constitution, that the guarantee does not prevent the state from making a law "regulating" or restricting any "economic, financial, political or other secular activity" which may be associated with religious practice was a red herring.

Would the "privatisation" or "liberalisation", to apply a phrase implying reverting of ownership and control from the state to the

people in economics, of Hindu temples necessarily lead to their better management? Would it assure these endowments are administered in a manner that guarantees safeguarding of the basic civil rights of the various different followers of the Hindu religion?

The state's argument that its intervention in Hindu endowments and trusts is not aimed at deforming religion out of existence, but rather at ensuring that the administration of endowments stays true to both the will and intent of the grantor and of India's secular ideals, is clearly flawed. In theocratic states like the Vatican, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the state is founded on a stated belief that a nation will be ruled directly by God's will, or indirectly through God's priests or theologically defined representatives. Religion, therefore, would have to have a stated, defined non-role in a secular system.

The Article 25, which envisages preventing the state from making any laws which restrict it, also empowers people's will to be really "free" to practise or profess whichever religion they believe in (or not in the case of atheists and agnostics). But the history of Hindu temples and religious institutions being supervised, controlled or regulated started emphatically way back in 1929. As the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha said recently, "Traditionally, a temple was at the centre of community life and was not just a place of worship. Education, art, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry, literature, agriculture and even the local judiciary were all promoted and sustained by a temple. We have several inscriptional evidences of such institutions. In the last nine

The liberal black robe has gone to an extent of declaring that the *seva puja* for Lord Jagannath has both a religious and a secular aspect, and the state was justified in regulating the secular aspect

decades, the government has taken control of almost all institutions around temples which have been systematically destroyed because none of such institutions exist today."

Those who speak of cultural invasion by the West, too, miss the point as to how the Indian arts lost their principal patron in the autonomous Indian temple. Aren't agricultural lands belonging to temples all too easily becoming governmental properties?

Historically, the Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, XIX, of 1951 was enacted signaling green pastures for governments not only to flex muscle but also brazenly control temples, and by implication, all their religious activities.

The Madras enactment did not pass judicial review. Notwithstanding the high court and, subsequently, the Supreme Court (seven-judge bench, Shirur Mutt case) ruling several sections of the law to be unconstitutional, another one was enacted in 1959, which reproduced these sections. The amended Act was again struck down by the Madras high court.

The Madras Acts served as inspiration and guide for more than a dozen laws passed by the Tamil Nadu government as well as by neighbouring states. It included the 1959 law of Andhra Pradesh. Tamil Nadu thus has the dubious distinction of pioneering the Hindu Religious and Endowments Acts, and controls directly through government servants around 43,000 temples and endowments, acquired

illegally. It is a fact reiterated repeatedly by the courts.

Moreover, a majority of over 100,000 temples in the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Puducherry are also under direct control of the state. Over 19,000 important temples are directly "managed" by government officials, in the absence of temple trustees from among Hindu society.

In recent years, the state control has extended to temples across India. Article 26 grants certain fundamental rights to religious denominations. The first test of what constitutes a "denomination" was decided by a seven-judge bench in 1954 in the Shirur Mutt case. This contentious issue has gone through prolonged legal gaze and scrutiny.

The liberal black robe has gone to an extent of declaring that the *seva puja* for Lord Jagannath has both a religious and a secular aspect, and the state was justified in regulating the secular aspect.

The appointment of priests is accepted to be a secular function, despite their performing an essentially religious duty.

This logic was taken to its extreme conclusions by the Supreme Court when it was held that management of a temple is, in fact, a secular function.

By holding succession a secular matter, the state has now become the appointer of a religious head of any Hindu institution. Resultantly, courts now determine if a matter related to a Hindu institution is religious or not. Would they be equally at ease doing so for other religions?

At a time when state roles in spheres like railways, airways, ports and banks are being privatised, and governments are claiming to be spokespersons of Hindu dharma, this is an issue that calls for attention. The state needs to hand over control of temples back to the Hindus.

The writer is a senior counsel of the Telangana high court

LETTERS

THE FLOYD LESSON

Remember the murder of the family man, Afrazul? The US has an affirmative action statute that predominantly deals with equal opportunities for employment and wage parity. We, on the other hand, have specific laws for crime against minorities. And yet we find that justice struggles to seep through a maze of sins of omission and commission. The case of George Floyd is thus all the more remarkable that with no special laws to cover crimes on minorities, the delivery of justice was not only expeditious but was seen to be done within a prevailing legal system. The best crafted laws may fail while a vibrant judicial system would repeatedly deliver.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

GOVT, TAKE CHARGE

THIS REFERS TO "Lessons not learnt after a year of battling Covid" (April 22). The uncontrolled spread of the pandemic has taken the shape of a huge threat looming over the country. We are at a critical juncture wherein the government must judiciously use its resources to distribute drugs, oxygen and vaccines while the people must act with both responsibility and caution. Let us pray that we overcome the challenge that it poses to all of us.

Bhagyendra Patel
New Delhi

SUDDEN TRAGEDY

IT WAS SADDENING to hear about CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury's 34-year-old son, Ashish Yechury's death due to Covid-19. Yechury thanked all those who treated him over the past two weeks including doctors, nurses and front-line health workers as well as the others who stood by the family. Ashish will be missed by his journalist colleagues.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

IN BRIEF

Pak hotel parking bomb blast kills 5

Karachi, April 22: A powerful bomb blast in the parking area of a luxury hotel in the restive southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta has killed at least five persons and injured 12 others, authorities have said, dismissing reports that the Chinese Ambassador was present in the building when the explosion occurred. The blast took place in the parking lot of the Serena Hotel in Quetta on Wednesday night. Several vehicles parked in the area caught fire after the blast. According to initial reports, the hotel was hosting Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong.

Quetta is the capital of Pakistan's Balochistan province. Initial investigation has revealed the blast was caused when explosive material, fitted inside a car was detonated, said police.

Dutch asylum stabbing: 7 hurt

The Hague (Netherlands), April 22: Seven people were injured, two of them seriously, in a stabbing at an asylum-seekers' centre in the Netherlands late Wednesday night, police said.

A 24-year-old resident of the centre was arrested. The motive for the stabbing in the town of Echt, located 180 kilometres south of Amsterdam, was not immediately clear. Police said in a statement on Thursday that officers were called to the asylum-seekers' centre around 10:15 pm (2015 GMT) and arrested the suspect 10 minutes later. The wounded were all taken to a hospital for treatment. Residents of the building where the stabbings happened were moved to other buildings in the centre while police investigated. — AP

China committing genocide: UK

London, April 22: British lawmakers on Thursday approved a parliamentary motion declaring that China's policies against its Uighur minority population in the far western Xinjiang region amounted to genocide and crimes against humanity.

The motion is non-binding and does not compel the British government to act. But it is another move signalling the growing outcry among UK politicians over alleged human rights abuses in China. The motion was moved by Conservative lawmaker Nus Ghani, one of five British lawmakers recently sanctioned by China for criticising its treatment of the Uighurs.

The US government and the parliaments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Canada have accused Beijing of genocide, although Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been reluctant to use the term. More than 1 million people have been confined to camps in Xinjiang, according to foreign governments and researchers. Authorities there are accused of imposing forced labor, birth controls and torture.

The Chinese government has strongly rejected complaints of abuses and says the camps are for job training to support economic development.

HOUSE OKAYS DC STATEHOOD, FIGHT LOOMS IN SENATE

Washington, April 22: A decades-long movement to reshape the American political map took a further step Thursday as the House of Representatives approved a bill to make the nation's capital the 51st state.

Voting along party lines with minority Republicans in opposition, the House approved the bill 216-208.

That's likely the easy part, though. The proposal faces a far tougher fight in the Senate, where simple Democratic control of the chamber won't be enough.

The legislation proposes creating a 51st state with one representative and two senators, while a tiny sliver of land including the White House, the US Capitol and the National Mall would remain as a federal district.

Instead of the District of Columbia, the new state would be known as Washington, Douglass Commonwealth — named after famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who lived in Washington from 1877 until his death in 1895.

An identical statehood bill passed the House in 2020, but it quickly died in the then-Republican-controlled Senate.

Now, with the 2020 elections leaving Democrats in control of both chambers and the White House, Republican senators may resort to a filibuster to stymie the statehood bill.

Heathrow: No to 8 India flights

Ahead of 'red list' travel ban from today

London, April 22: Heathrow Airport in London, the UK's largest and busiest airport, has declined requests from at least four international aircraft carriers to land eight extra flights from India on Thursday, ahead of the Coronavirus pandemic "red list" travel ban which comes into force from Friday.

The airport said the decision to decline requests for additional flights was taken to ensure that the existing pressures on the border are not "exacerbated", resulting in long queues and crowds at passport control on arrival. India's addition to the travel "red list" was announced in the House of Commons earlier this week amid 103 cases recorded in the UK of a new variant of Coronavirus first detected in India.

Health Secretary Matt

ANYONE WHO is not a UK or Irish resident or a British citizen cannot enter the UK if they have been in India in the previous 10 days.

MATT HANCOCK, Health Secretary

Hancock told MPs that the decision had been made after studying the data and on a "precautionary basis". "That means that anyone who is not a UK or Irish resident or a British citizen cannot enter the UK if they have been in India in the previous 10 days. UK and Irish residents and British citizens who have been in India in the 10 days before their arrival will need to complete hotel quarantine for 10 days from the time of

arrival," said Hancock.

It has since triggered considerable confusion and panic as hundreds of Indian students and other UK-based British Indians scramble for return flights ahead of the Friday deadline.

London-based family-owned travel agency, Tickets to India, is among the agents who have been working round the clock to try and sort out charter flights to carry Indian-origin passengers back to the UK. "Hundreds of British nationals are still requesting seats but there is very little time to arrange a second charter before Friday," said the company, which was working on getting clearance for one Qatar Airways A350 to bring 300 passengers back before the cut-off time (4am local time) on Friday. — PTI

TRAVEL BAN: U.S. VOTES TO CURB PREZ POWER

Washington, April 22: The Democratic-led House passed legislation has designed to constrain a president's power to limit entry to the US, a response to former President Donald Trump's travel ban covering five Muslim-majority countries. President Joe Biden reversed the travel restrictions from the Trump administration in one of his first moves in office, easing limits on Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, as well as North Korea and some government officials from Venezuela.

But Democrats say Congress has a responsibility to prevent future administrations from enacting similarly broad restrictions. The bill passed the House by a vote of 218-208. It is unlikely to advance in the evenly split Senate, with Republicans broadly opposed. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, the Democratic chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said presidents from both parties have used their authority to exclude narrow groups of people from entering the US, such as certain North Korean officials. — AP

WH's tax credit to help spur vax

Washington, April 22: President Joe Biden on Wednesday announced new employer tax credits and other steps to encourage people reluctant to be inoculated to get the Covid-19 vaccine as his administration tries to overcome diminishing demand for the shots.

The moves came as Biden celebrated reaching his latest goal of administering 200 million Coronavirus doses in his first 100 days in office. With more than 50 per cent of adults at least partially vaccinated and roughly 28 million vaccine doses being delivered each week, demand has eclipsed supply as the constraining factor to vaccinations in much of the country. In a White House speech on Wednesday, Biden acknowledged entering a "new phase" in the federal vaccination effort that relies on increased outreach to Americans to get their shots, both to protect them and their communities.

"Vaccines can save your own life, but they can also save your grandmother's life, your co-worker's life, the grocery store clerk or the delivery person helping you and your neighbours get through the crisis," Biden said.

UK FOOD BANK USE UP BY A 3RD IN COVID TIMES

London, April 22: UK food bank rose by a third during the past 12 months as the Covid-19 pandemic left more people without the money to buy basic necessities. The Trussell Trust said the food banks it works with handed out more than 2.5 million food parcels in the year through March, up from 1.9 million a year earlier. — AP

ing you and your neighbours get through the crisis," Biden said.

"That's why you should get vaccinated." Over the past week, the pace of inoculation in the US has slowed slightly. That is partly a reflection of disruptions from the "pause" in administration of the Johnson & Johnson shot for a safety review, but also of softening interest for vaccines in many places even as eligibility has been opened to all those older than 16. — AP

Aboriginal art

The Opera House sails are lit with art works by six female Aboriginal artists as part of Badu Gilli: Wonder Women in Sydney on Thursday. — AFP

EXCHANGE | SHUT**Several police vans were seen parked outside the Istanbul's Thodex office**

Turkish crypto founder flees with \$2 bn

Istanbul, April 22: Turkish prosecutors on Thursday launched an investigation after the Istanbul-based founder of a cryptocurrency exchange froze trading and fled the country with a reported \$2 billion in investors' assets.

The Thodex exchange suspended trading after posting a mysterious message on Wednesday saying it needed five days to deal with an unspecified outside investment.

Turkish security officials then released a photo of Thodex founder Faruk Fatih Ozer going through passport control at Istanbul airport on his way to an unspecified location.

Local media reports said Ozer — reported to be 27 or 28 years old — had flown either to Albania or Thailand.

Thodex went dark after running a promotional campaign that sold Dogecoins at one-fourth the price

at which they were trading on other exchanges. But the exchange locked in those investments and did not allow the coins to be either sold or converted into other cryptos.

"Why don't you allow my coins to be transferred?" Dogecoin investor Kaya Dinar asked Thodex in one typical tweet from a worried crypto trader.

Reports said the website and the entire exchange



Indonesian marine police take part in the search operation for an Indonesian Navy submarine that went missing during military exercises off the coast of Bali, at Celukan Bawang port in Buleleng province on Thursday. — AFP

Race to find Indonesia sub

Oil spill points to fuel tank damage, fears of deadly disaster

Bali, Indonesia, April 22: Indonesian warships led the hunt Thursday for a submarine that went missing with 53 crew aboard and only enough oxygen for a few days.

An oil spill where the submarine was thought to have submerged early Wednesday pointed to possible damage to its fuel tank, and fanned fears of a deadly disaster.

The crew on the KRI Nanggala 402 could have enough oxygen until early Saturday, but time was quickly running out as rescuers scoured the coast

off holiday island Bali where it disappeared.

"The submarine's oxygen reserve capacity in a blackout is 72 hours," Navy Chief of Staff Yudo Margono told reporters.

"There's time until Saturday around 3:00 am. Let's hope we can find them before then." However, defence analysts have warned that the vessel could have broken into pieces if it had sunk to depths believed to be as much as 700 metres (2,300 feet).

Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton said initial reports raised the pro-

spect of "a terrible tragedy". The German-built submarine was scheduled to conduct live torpedo exercises when it asked for permission to dive. It lost contact shortly after.

Navy spokesman Julius Widjojono said Thursday that search teams were focused on an area around the oil slick, but that the exact location of the vessel had yet to be pinpointed. Six warships and a helicopter have been sent to look for the sub, the navy said.

Other nations, including the United States, Aust-

ralia, France and Germany have offered help.

"It's very distressing for families and particularly for the Indonesian navy," Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne told broadcaster ABC.

"We've indicated that we will help in any way we can."

Neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia have already dispatched ships that are expected to arrive in the coming days, including the city-state's MV Swift Rescue — a submarine rescue vessel. — AFP

RUSSIA DRILLS IN CRIMEA AMID UKRAINE STRAIN

Moscow, April 22: Russia's defence minister on Thursday ordered troops back to their permanent bases following massive drills in Crimea that involved dozens of navy ships, hundreds of warplanes and thousands of troops in a show of force amid tensions with Ukraine.

After watching the drills, Russian Defence Minister Shoigu declared the manoeuvres over and ordered the military to pull the troops taking part in manoeuvres in Crimea and western Russia back to their permanent bases. "I consider the goals of the snap check of readiness fulfilled," Shoigu said.

"The troops have shown their defence capability and I decided to complete the drills in the South and Western military districts," Shoigu said the troops should return to their bases by May 1, but he also ordered to keep the heavy weapons deployed to western Russia as part of the drills for another massive military exercise later this year. — AP

DY KILLED MAN DURING SEARCH, SENT ON LEAVE

Elizabeth City, April 22: A North Carolina deputy shot and killed a PoC man while executing a search warrant, authorities said, spurring an outcry from a crowd of dozens that immediately gathered at the scene and demanded law enforcement accountability. The Pasquotank County Sheriff's deputy was placed on leave pending a review by the State Bureau of Investigation. Sheriff Tommy Wooten II said at a news conference.

He said the deputy shot Andrew Brown Jr. at about 8:30 am on Wednesday while serving the warrant with the assistance of a nearby sheriff's office in Elizabeth City, a municipality of about 18,000 people 274 km northeast of Raleigh. Wooten said he didn't know Brown's age and he didn't release the deputy's name.

Local NAACP leader Keith Rivers said Brown was PoC. The deputy was wearing an active body camera at the time of the shooting, said Wooten, who declined to say how many shots he fired or release other details, citing a pending review by the State Bureau of Investigation. — AP

Oz cancels two China BRI deals

Canberra, April 22: Australia has cancelled two Chinese "Belt and Road" infrastructure building initiative deals with a state government, provoking an angry response from Beijing.

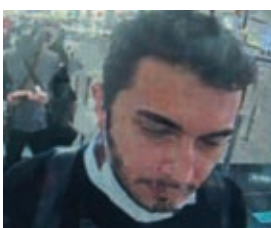
The bilateral deals with Victoria state were among four vetoed under new laws that give the federal government power to overrule international agreements by lower-level administrations that violate the national interest, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said late Wednesday.

The "Belt and Road" deals struck with Beijing in 2018 and 2019 triggered the legislative response. Victoria Education Department pacts signed with Syria in 1999 and Iran in 2004 were also cancelled. "I consider these four arrangements to be inconsis-

tent with Australia's foreign policy or adverse to our foreign relations," Payne said.

The Chinese Embassy in Australia said the decision "further shows that the Australian government has no sincerity in improving China-Australia relations." "It is bound to bring further damage to bilateral relations, and will only end up hurting itself," it said on Thursday, referring to the Australian government.

Global Times, the Chinese Communist Party's English-language mouthpiece, said in a headline: "Australia faces serious consequences for unreasonable provocation against China." The move "marks a significant escalation on that could push icy bilateral relations into an abyss," it said. — AP



Faruk Fatih Ozer

had shut down while holding at least \$2 billion from 391,000 investors.

"There has been no

access to Thodex website for more than 24 hours. Hundreds of thousands of users cannot get access to wallets holding their crypto assets or cash money," investors' lawyer Oguz Evren Kilic said.

"We have started the legal procedures and lodged a complaint at the prosecutor's office," he said.

Turkey's private DHA news agency said prosecutors were investigating the businessman on charges

of "aggravated fraud and founding a criminal organisation".

Several police vans were seen parked outside the Thodex office on the Asian side of Istanbul on Thursday afternoon.

The Thodex website re-emerged after going dark on Wednesday to state that "we kindly inform you that the negative news on the internet does not reflect the truth". — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,080.67	0.79
Nifty 50	14,406.20	0.77
S&P 500*	4,173.95	0.01
Dollar (₹)	74.96	0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.20	-0.90
Euro (₹)	90.24	0.40
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,450.168	0.35
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.52	0.31
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.050	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.552	-0.012

Rekha Menon appointed Nasscom chief

IT industry body Nasscom has appointed Rekha M. Menon as its chairperson for 2021-22. She is the chairperson and senior managing director of Accenture in India. Menon takes on the position from her previous role as vice-chairperson, succeeding U.B. Pravin Rao, chief operating officer, Infosys, who served as Nasscom chairman for the year 2020-21. Menon is the first woman to take on the role of chairperson at Nasscom.

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Eyes 2-wheeler sales in 100 cities in a yr
Ola plans largest charger network

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 22

Ola Electric is betting big on the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem.

After announcing the construction of the world's largest electric two-wheeler factory in Tamil Nadu with an investment of Rs 2,400 crore, the company on Thursday revealed plans to set up its 'hyper-charger network', which is billed to be the world's largest and densest EV charging network, in the country.

The network will cater to Ola's upcoming two-wheeler models, starting, with its first product, Ola scooter, to be launched in the coming months.

The network will offer a comprehensive set of charging options to Ola's EV customers, including high-speed Ola hyperchargers and home-chargers that will be offered as standard with Ola electric scooter purchase.

"Electric is the future of mobility and we are reimagining the entire user experience of owning an electric vehicle. By creating the world's largest and densest 2-wheeler charging network, we will dramatically accelerate the customer adoption of electric vehicles and rapidly move the industry to electric," Bhavish Aggarwal, chairman and group CEO at Ola, said.

Companies like Tesla and Ather Energy in India have been trying to implement a network to make

EV SALES DROP 20% IN FY21

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 22

After five years of growth, electric vehicle sales dropped 20 per cent in FY21 despite an uptick in electric four-wheelers' demand. The EV industry sold 2,36,802 units in FY21 against 2,95,683 in FY20, according to the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicle (SMEV).

In the largest segment of two-wheelers, the industry sold 1,43,837 units, including 40,836 high-speed and 103,000 low-speed vehicles. Com-

pared to 1,52,000 units sold in FY20 there was a decline of 6 per cent.

In the three-wheeler segment 88,378 units were sold against 1,40,683 units in FY20—a decline of 37 per cent. Three-wheelers not registered with the transport authority are not included in this. The four-wheeler segment saw a 52 per cent growth to 4,588 units compared to 3,000 units in FY20.

"A lot more needs to be done to achieve the target under the FAME II scheme," said Sohinder Gill, D-G, SMEV.

CHIP WOES: JLR TO SUSPEND PRODUCTION

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 22

Tata Motors owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) on Thursday announced plans to suspend production at two of its plants in the UK due to supply chain disruptions.

The luxury carmaker said operations at its facilities in Castle Bromwich, near Birmingham,

and Halewood, near Liverpool, will be put on hold from Monday. Its Solihull plant in the West Midlands region of England is unaffected.

"Like other automotive manufacturers, we are currently experiencing some Covid-19 supply chain disruption, including the global availability of semiconductors," JLR said.

charging their vehicles easier. Ola, however, wants to set up the network at a monumental scale with the long-term goal being over 1,00,000 charging points spread across 400 cities.

The company plans to set up over 5,000 charging points across 100 cities in the first year of operations, which is more than double the existing charging infrastructure in the country.

LIC clocks record new premium last fiscal

FC BANKING BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 22

Despite being a challenging year due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, strong traction in traditional insurance business and revival in unit-linked insurance plans (Ulips) helped public sector behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) collect its highest ever 'new business premium' of Rs 1.84 lakh crore. Both individual and group business showed high growth.

The individual assurance business grew 10.11 per cent during 2020-21, recording the highest ever premium of Rs 56,406 crore. LIC's pension and group schemes vertical also created a new record by clocking its highest ever new business premium income of Rs 1,27,768 crore over a huge base of Rs 1,26,749 crore in the previous year. The number of new schemes is also a new record of 31,795, a company release said.

The state-owned insurer procured an impressive 2.10 crore policies, out of which 46.72 lakh were procured in the month of March alone, with a growth of 298.82 per cent over last year for the corresponding month. The market share garnered by LIC comes to 81.04 per cent in number of policies for the month of March 2021 and 74.58 per cent for the year. For first year premium, the market share is 64.74 per cent for March and 66.18 per cent for the whole year.

Vedanta offers to make oxygen at copper unit; SC to hear plea

New Delhi, April 22: The Supreme Court on Thursday termed the Covid-19 situation as almost a "national emergency" while agreeing to hear Vedanta's plea for opening its Sterlite copper unit at Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu on the ground that it would produce a thousand tonne of oxygen and give it free of cost to treat patients.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S. A. Bobde was unimpressed with the objection of Tamil Nadu government which initially sought hearing of Vedanta's plea on Monday and opposed its opening on various grounds, including that it has been



rejected by the apex court earlier.

"We understand all this. We will ensure compliance of all environmental norms by the plant and its oxygen producing facility would be allowed to operate. We are on the oxygen plant," the bench, also comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat, said when senior advocate C. S.

Vaidyanathan, appearing for Tamil Nadu, objected to the company's plea.

"There is almost a national emergency and you (Tamil Nadu) don't put spokes in the solution. We will hear it (plea of Vedanta) tomorrow," the bench said in the hearing conducted through video conferencing.

The apex court on December 2 last year had rejected the interim plea of Vedanta Ltd that it be permitted to inspect its Sterlite copper plant and to operate it for a month to assess the pollution level.

Vedanta had sought handing over of the plant for three months.

—PTI

ESG FUNDS SEE RECORD INFLOW

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 22

Worldwide investment in ESG (environmental, social and governance) funds saw a record \$152.3 billion inflow in the fourth quarter of 2020, according to a note by Morningstar, released to coincide with Earth Day on Thursday.

The Covid-led crisis has only accelerated the demand for sustainable investing.

The Indian mutual fund industry also witnessed increased interest in ESG funds, with the launch of several new ESG funds in the second half of 2020. India had the largest quarter-on-quarter asset growth as new launches resulted in the doubling of ESG fund assets to \$1.3 billion," Morningstar note said.

Since India's first ESG fund launch in 2018, inflows in these funds are picking up pace (from Rs 16.01 crore in January 2019 to Rs 103.78 crore in March 2021), though it's still early days.

Globally assets in sustainable funds hit a record \$1,652 billion as of the end of December, up 29 per cent from the previous quarter.

"Europe accounted for almost 80 per cent of these inflows. The United States took in 13.4 per cent, up slightly from 12 per cent in the previous quarter, while flows in the rest of the world also grew, clocking in at \$1.1 billion for Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Japan, and Asia combined," the Morningstar note said.

BHAGYODAYA FRIENDS CO-OP'S LICENCE CANCELLED

Mumbai, April 22: The RBI on Thursday said it has cancelled the licence of Bhagyodaya Friends Urban Co-operative Bank Limited (Amravati), as the lender does not have adequate capital and will be unable to pay its present depositors in full.

However, as per the data submitted by the bank, more than 98 per cent of the depositors will receive the full amounts of their deposits from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation, the RBI said.

On liquidation, every depositor would be entitled to receive a deposit insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to Rs 5 lakh from DICGC.

—PTI

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Nadal struggles to win in Barcelona

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal needed three sets to beat his 11th-ranked opponent in his first match at the Barcelona Open, while Fabio Fognini was disqualified for alleged verbal abuse.

Fognini was defaulted while trailing 0-6, 4-4 against qualifier Bernabe Zapata Miralles of Spain, after a line judge told the chair umpire that the ninth-seeded Italian had used foul language.

Fognini denied wrongdoing and was upset as he left the court, breaking his racket after hitting it at the net post on his way out.

Nadal had to overcome a slow start to defeat Ilya Ivashka of Belarus 3-6, 6-2, 6-4. — AP

Aditi placed tied 43rd in LA Open

Los Angeles: India's Aditi Ashok got off to a modest start at the HUGEL-Air Premia LA Open here with a one-under 70 and was placed tied 43rd.

She looked set for a much better start but two late bogeys spoilt a card that was 3-under through 14 holes. Aditi was once again accurate off the tee finding 12 of the 14 fairways but reached only 10 greens in 18.

However, some good work on the greens with just 25 putts for the round gave her a decent score of 70 at Wilshire Country Club. She was six shots behind co-leaders, Jessica Korda and Tiffany Chan, who carded 64 each. — PTI

FC Goa to face Persepolis again

Margao: Debutants FC Goa will have another chance to make an impression against fancied Persepolis FC when they face the Iranian side in the second leg Group E league match of the AFC Champions League here on Friday.

After playing out 0-0 draws against Al Rayyan of Qatar and Al Wahda of the UAE, FC Goa lost to Persepolis 1-2 on Tuesday, and the two sides are facing each other once again in three days time.

Captain Edu Bedia gave FC Goa a surprise lead in the 14th minute before Persepolis replied with two goals (18th and 24th) soon in the match. — PTI

City fight back to conquer Villa

After Super League climbdown, Guardiola's men score vital win in EPL

London, April 22: A tough week for Manchester City and Tottenham, two of the rebel clubs in the aborted Super League project, got even more difficult when they fell behind on their return to Premier League action.

Both teams recovered to register vital wins and leave them in good spirits for their next match their meeting at Wembley Stadium for the English League Cup final on Sunday.

City fought back from conceding a goal after just 20 seconds to beat Aston Villa 2-1 and move 11 points clear in their march to a third league title in four years. A maximum of eight points are gained by Pep Guardiola's team from their final five games.

Each side had a man sent off at Villa Park, with City defender John Stones' straight red card for a reckless lunge late in the first half ruling him out for three matches starting with the cup final.

Tottenham needed a 90th-minute penalty from Son Heung-min to clinch a 2-1 victory over Southampton and close to within two points of fourth-place



Manchester City's Phil Foden (second from left) scores against Aston Villa in an English Premier League match at Villa Park Stadium in Birmingham on Wednesday.

— AP

Chelsea in the race for Champions League qualification.

It was a great way for Ryan Mason to start his interim tenure as manager, as the replacement for the fired Jose Mourinho.

At 29 years, 312 days, Mason became the youngest person to manage a team in a Premier League game, a proud moment for the former Tottenham midfielder who was forced to retire in 2018

after failing to fully recover from a fractured skull sustained during an FA Cup match.

They were the first games for City and Tottenham since they were pressured into withdraw-

ing from a breakaway Super League which they had formed with 10 of Europe's other elite clubs.

A small band of supporters protested outside Tottenham's stadium ahead of match against Southampton, calling for the removal of chairman Daniel Levy and the club's owners, the ENIC Group.

FANTASTIC FODEN

With City losing to Leeds in their last league game and second-place Manchester United winning their last five league games, the gap between the local rivals were down to eight points.

City were also coming off a loss to Chelsea in the FA Cup semifinals, ruining their bid for an unprecedented quadruple, so Guardiola knew the importance of the Villa match and fielded his strongest available team.

Phil Foden stood out, the 20-year-old England forward canceling out John McGinn's very early opener for Villa by scoring the equalizer with a volley at the end of a flowing team move involving Riyad Mahrez and Bernardo Silva.

— AP

SAI coach arrested for molesting minor girl

New Delhi, April 22: The Sports Authority of India on Thursday suspended a Project Officer-turned coach employed by it with immediate effect and ordered an enquiry after he was arrested for alleged sexual assault on a minor girl.

The accused, who is above 50 years of age and is an athletics coach, is currently lodged in Tihar Jail under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The SAI said it has learnt that a coach under its payrolls has been arrested after an alleged incident of molesting a 13-year-old girl, reportedly at

the Siri Fort Sports Complex where he was giving her private training.

"The alleged incident happened in a non-SAI premises, where the coach was imparting training to the said minor. The coach was imparting training on his own without sanction from Competent

Authority," the SAI said in a statement.

"The coach has been suspended and an enquiry has been ordered with respect to breach of conduct rules by the said coach. The alleged incident is being investigated separately by the police under relevant provision of law."

According to a SAI source, the coach breached his service agreement on two counts — first imparting private training without taking due approval and second under the POCSO Act, which calls for immediate suspension of a government servant.

—PTI

Gitika, Babyrojisana clinch gold medals

New Delhi, April 22: Indian boxers Gitika (48kg) and Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) clinched gold medals in the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland, notching up dominating victories in the finals on Thursday.

While Gitika prevailed 5-0 over Poland's Natalia Kuczweska, Babyrojisana defeated Valeriia Linkova of Russia by a similar margin.

Gitika opened the proceedings for India and she grunted her way to domination, outpunching her hapless opponent.

Kuczweska, on the other hand, looked clueless for most part, rarely managing to connect and unable to cope with the sheer

pace and aggression of her rival.

Gitika gave Kuczweska a bloodied nose in the third round, refusing to take her foot off the pedal even for a second.

Babyrojisana, on the other hand, fought out a more intense battle. Both the boxers spent the opening round taking a measure of each other but the Indian landed enough straight punches to get a 3-2 verdict in her favour in the first three minutes.

The engagement picked up in the second round and it was the Manipuri who grabbed the upper hand, negating the Russian's height advantage with some ferocious hooks.

—PTI

First Covid case at Tokyo torch relay

Tokyo, April 22: Tokyo Olympics organisers said on Thursday that a policeman tested positive for Covid-19 a day after his assignment last week at the Olympic torch relay.

It is the first positive test connected to the relay since it began March 25 from northeastern Fukushima prefecture.

Organisers say the 30-year-old policeman was assigned to control traffic on the April 17 leg in Kagawa prefecture. They said the officer developed symptoms and tested positive the next day. Local health authorities are investigating.

Officials say the policeman was wearing a mask and taking social-distancing precautions and other measures.

The report comes as Japan is preparing to declare a third state of emergency in western metropolitan areas around Osaka, and in Tokyo. It is expected on Friday and is being re-

instated after current measures failed to slow the latest resurgence fueled by a new, more contagious variant of the virus detected earlier in Britain. Japan had 541,496 cases and 9,710 deaths as of Tuesday. These results are good by global standard but poor in Asia.

— AP

HAMILTON HEART GOES OUT FOR COVID-HIT INDIA

London, April 22: Seventime Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton has expressed his concerns about the alarming Covid-19 situation in India.

The British racing driver has sent in his good wishes as the country battled a massive second wave of the coronavirus with daily cases going past three lakh.

"Praying for the beautiful of India this morning. I know this pandemic is hitting so many places around the world. Please stay safe out there," Hamilton wrote on his Instagram page.

India registered over 3.14 lakh new cases on Thursday morning, pushing the overall caseload to nearly 1.60 crore, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This is the highest single-day spike the country recorded ever since the pandemic began last year.

India also reported over 2100 fresh deaths due to the virus with maximum fatalities being reported from Maharashtra at 568.

—PTI

AMIT LONE INDIAN BOXER TO ENTER SEMIS IN RUSSIA

New Delhi, April 22: Olympic-bound world silver-medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) was assured of at least a bronze at the Governor's Cup in St. Petersburg, Russia after he advanced to the semifinals but five other Indian boxers bowed out following opening round losses.

The Haryana-boxer, who is also the reigning Asian Games champion, prevailed 5-0 against local favourite Tamir Galanov to make the last-four stage.

However, Sumit Sangwan (81kg), Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg), Naman Tanwar (91kg), the Olympic-bound Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Vinod Tanwar (49kg) made early exits.

While Vinod lost to Russia's Igor Tsaregorodtsev (49kg) 2-3, Sumit went down 0-5 to Uzbekistan's Dishod Ruzmetov (81kg). Naman, a Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist, was beaten 0-5 by Kazakhstan's Aybek Oralbay (91kg). Ashish, on the other hand, lost a close one to Russia's Nikita Kuzmin (75kg), going down 2-3.

—PTI

ORANGE

Shikhar Dhawan, DC

231

PURPLE

Glenn Maxwell, RCB

176

Jonny Bairstow, SRH

173

PURPLE

Harshal Patel, RCB

12

Deepak Chahar, CSK

8

Avesh Khan, DC

8

Off the field



Mumbai Indians pacer Dhawal Kulkarni is all smiles with his little daughter Nitara and wife Sharadha Kharpude.

Covid situation in MS family in control

Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming said the franchise will “monitor” the condition of skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni’s parents, who are being treated at a private hospital in Ranchi after testing positive for Covid-19.

At the post-match press conference after CSK’s win over KKR on Wednesday night, Fleming said the situation is “under control”.

“From the management point of view, we’re well aware of his family situation and the support has been set up for MS and his family. The situation is under control for now but we will monitor that over the next few days,” Fleming said.

VVS against too much workload

Former India batsman VVS Laxman on Thursday blamed too much workload of the players for the country not producing another genuine allrounder of great Kapil Dev’s ilk. Players like Hardik Pandya have been compared with legendary Kapil, the country’s first World Cup-winning captain.

“It’s a very difficult role being an all-rounder. Kapil paaji was someone who could take wickets and score runs. He was the ultimate match-winner for India. But with the amount of workload nowadays, it’s very, very difficult,” Laxman said during a *YouTube* launch of a book written by Boria Majumdar at “Tata Literature Live Sports Yatra”.

Eoin fined for slow over-rate

Kolkata Knight Riders skipper Eoin Morgan has been fined ₹12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during his team’s IPL match against Chennai Super Kings here.

“Kolkata Knight Riders captain Eoin Morgan has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during their VIVO Indian Premier League (IPL) 2021 match against Chennai Super Kings at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on April 21,” the IPL said in a statement.

“As it was his team’s first offence of the season under the IPL’s Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Mr Morgan was fined ₹12 lakh,” it added.

ROYAL RAP!

Kohli, Padikkal punch big as Bangalore bash up Rajasthan

Mumbai, April 22: Devdutt Padikkal managed to overshadow none other than the great Virat Kohli with an elegant hundred in Royal Challengers Bangalore’s successful 178-run chase against Rajasthan Royals, in a virtual cakewalk of an IPL contest here on Thursday.

It hardly happens that someone as brilliant as Kohli, plays second fiddle, allowing the talented left-hander use his sinewy wrists to caress the balls to all parts of the ground during a mind-blowing maiden IPL century — an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls.

RCB never looked in any tearing hurry and yet the target was achieved in only 16.3 overs with all 10 wickets intact.

Kohli went on the offensive once Padikkal had ensured victory as his contribution was 72 not out off 47 balls in their unbroken opening stand of 181.

The RCB juggernaut continues to roll with their fourth victory on the trot and a strong foundation in the points table going into the third week of the tournament.

Royals, with a team that hardly inspires confidence, are again looking good for bringing up the rear.

The sixes that came off Padikkal’s blade was more about timing than power as he hit 11 fours and six sixes during his knock.

Picking the length of Mustafizur Rahman’s short ball and getting into the shape to execute a perfect pull-shot for a six showed why experts feel that it’s only a matter of time before he dons national colours.

The inside out chip off Riyan Parag over extra cover to complete his half-century off 27 balls, the sweep shots, the slash over backward point and the straight sixes with economy of footwork, were all testimony to his solid technical foundation.



Devidutt Padikkal (right) of Royal Challengers Bangalore acknowledges cheers after scoring a fifty against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai on Thursday.

Once Padikkal was in his mid 80’s, the RCB skipper chanced his arms including a six over extra cover off Royals’ costliest buy Chris Morris.

Kohli’s 50 came off 34 balls and was followed by a personal milestone of 6000 runs in IPL as Royals surrendered way before the match officially ended.

Earlier, Rahul Tewatia’s impressive death overs hitting ensured a fighting 177 for 9 for Rajasthan Royals after yet another

familiar top order no-show.

On a good batting surface, Royals managed a total which may be 25 runs short but credit for the decent score goes to a counter-attacking effort from all-rounder Shivam Dube (46 off 32 balls) which stemmed the rot and big-hits from Tewatia (40 off 23 balls) that helped them get past 175-run mark.

Dube smashed two sixes and five fours and with Riyan Parag (25 off 15

balls) giving him good support, added 66 runs for the fifth wicket off only 6.2 overs to give his team’s total some semblance of respectability.

While the giant all-rounder was comfortable playing at “home”, using the pace of deliveries, the profligate top-order of Royals once again flattered to deceive along with their skipper Sanju Samson, who has been “consistently inconsistent”.

It took Dube’s impres-

SCORECARD

Rajasthan Royals: Jos Buttler b Mohammed Siraj 8, Manan Vohra c Kane Richardson b Kyle Jamieson 7, Sanju Samson c Glenn Maxwell b Washington Sundar 21, David Miller lbw Mohammed Siraj 0, Shivam Dube c Glenn Maxwell b Kane Richardson 46, Riyan Parag c Yuzvendra Chahal b Harshal Patel 25, Rahul Tewatia c Shahbaz Ahmed b Mohammed Siraj 40, Chris Morris c Yuzvendra Chahal b Harshal Patel 10, S. Gopal not out 7, Chetan Sakariya c AB de Villiers b Harshal Patel 0, M. Rahman not out 0. Extras (W-8, B-5) 13. **Total (for nine wickets in 20 overs) 177.**

FoW: 14-1, 16-2, 18-3, 43-4, 109-5, 133-6, 170-7, 170-8, 170-9.

Bowling: M. Siraj 4-0-27-3, K. Jamieson 4-0-28-1, K. Richardson 3-0-29-1, Y. Chahal 2-0-18-0, Washington Sundar 3-0-23-1, Harshal Patel 4-0-47-3.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Virat Kohli not out 72, Devdutt Padikkal not out 101. Extras (W-6, B-1, LB-1) 8. **Total (for no loss in 16.3 overs) 181.**

Bowling: Shreyas Gopal 3-0-35-0, Chetan Sakariya 4-0-35-0, Chris Morris 3-0-38-0, Mustafizur Rehman 3-0-34-0, Rahul Tewatia 2-0-23-0, Riyan Parag 1-0-14-0.

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	4	4	0	0	8	+1.009
CSK	4	3	1	0	6	+1.142
DC	4	3	1	0	6	+0.426
MI	4	2	2	0	4	+0.187
SRH	4	1	3	0	2	-0.228
KKR	4	1	3	0	2	-0.700
PBKS	4	1	3	0	2	-0.824
RR	4	1	3	0	2	-1.011

Mighty Mumbai seek consistency

Chennai, April 22: Mumbai Indians would be aiming to address their batting woes to achieve consistency while Punjab Kings would be desperate to arrest their overall slide when the two sides clash in an IPL match here on Friday.

The Rohit Sharma-led Mumbai crashed to defeat against Delhi Capitals following an inept batting performance and will look for redemption. The skipper shone with the bat, but others could not get going and the misfiring middle-order would be a major concern for the side.

The MI bowlers have more often than not risen to the occasion and won matches for the team.

However, they couldn’t do so against Delhi and would like the batters to put up bigger scores for them to do the job.

Rohit looked in good touch against Delhi. However, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan, stars of the team’s victorious 2020 campaign, have not been able to make match-winning contributions and that has hurt MI along with middling performances from Kieron Pollard and the Pandya brothers — Hardik and Krunal.

It is still early days in this year’s IPL but Mumbai Indians would like its players to find form and consistency and a match against an under-performing Punjab could well be the beginning.

Punjab have flattered to deceive after a winning start. Being shot out for 120 by Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday hinted at bigger problems for the KL Rahul-led team, which has more than one issue to resolve, especially its composition. The formidable

Live on TV

Mumbai Indians vs Punjab Kings
from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	26
MI	14
PK	11
TIE	1

● Punjab Kings defeated Mumbai Indians in Super over after match ended in a tie in 2020.

FOR THE RECORD

● Kieron Pollard with 199 fours in 151 innings of 168 matches, needs one more four to become the fourth Mumbai Indians batsman to complete a double century of fours in IPL.

● Mayank Agarwal who scored 981 runs at an average of 25.81 in 39 innings of as many matches, needs 19 runs to become ninth Punjab Kings batsman to complete 1000 runs in IPL.

LAST YEAR’S MATCHES

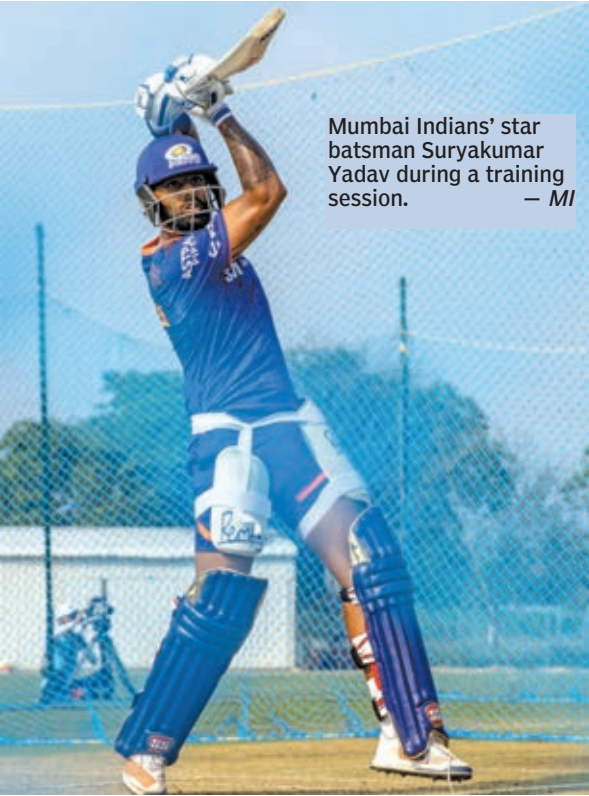
● Mumbai Indians defeated Punjab Kings by 48 runs at Abu Dhabi.

● Punjab Kings beat Mumbai Indians in Super over after match ended in a tie at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ KAISER

batting unit hasn’t hit the straps, save for Rahul and Mayank Agarwal and the bowling has been pedestrian. “Universe Boss” Chris Gayle has not been able to boss over proceedings while his fellow West Indian Nicholas Pooran, expected to provide the big shots in the middle, has come a cropper so far.

Three straight losses would have definitely dented Punjab Kings’ morale and the team needs to recover quickly or else its play-off hopes would slip fast.



Mumbai Indians’ star batsman Suryakumar Yadav during a training session.

Dhoni all praise for team effort

Mumbai, April 22: Chennai Super Kings survived some tense moments during their 18-run win over Kolkata Knight Riders in their IPL match on Wednesday but skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni said his job became “quite easy” towards the end of the game.

CSK posted a big total of 220 for 3 after being asked to bat and then reduced KKR to 31 for five. Andrew Russell (54) and Pat Cummins (66 not out) went on a six-hitting spree to keep KKR in the hunt before being bowled out for 202 in 19.1 overs.

“Quite easy in a game like this. From the 16th



Chennai Super Kings captain M. S. Dhoni shares a light moment with his team during an IPL game against Kolkata Knight Riders on Wednesday.

over onwards the contest was between the fast bowler and the batsman. You can’t do too much. You can’t put a different field.

It’s about you vs me. The side that has won is a side that has executed slightly better,” Dhoni said.

“You don’t want to take

too many early wickets. Big hitters coming in, 200 runs, there’s only one way they’ll play. Not much you can do. The only option was Jadeja. It was turning, was a bit dry.”

Despite putting up 220 on board, Dhoni felt it was a chaseable total.

“If they would’ve had more wickets, could’ve been different. Have seen enough in cricket, always like to be humble. There’s no good reason if you have scored, the opposition can’t score.

“My lines to the players was that we have got good runs on the board but let’s be humble,” he added.

KKR CAPTAIN MORGAN POSITIVE DESPITE DRY RUN

Mumbai, April 22: His poor run of scores notwithstanding, KKR skipper Eoin Morgan remains unfazed and says it’s a “matter of time” before he fires in the ongoing IPL.

“It’s everything’s about the process. The way I’m going about things at the moment is extremely positive. I’ve been here a long time now and I’ve been practising well and it’s a matter of time before something comes together,” he said. KKR have got a vaunted batting line-up, but it has faltered in three matches so far in the league.

Will other countries follow Eng model?



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

Even as the Indian Premier League juggernaut continues unaffected by the rising proportions of the covid pandemic in India, the landscape of the game of cricket is changing. England, where the game was born saw a change in age old tradition when the position of a national selector was made redundant in a bloodless (almost corporatesque) coup.

Ed Smith who was tasked with selecting England cricket teams for

the past three years found his position removed with immediate effect. Ashley Giles, the former England spinner and currently the managing director of men’s cricket in the country removed not just Smith but also the post of selector, handing over the charge of picking teams to the present head coach, Chris Silverwood.

Breaking a tradition is not easy especially in a country like England which swears by it. To do away with legacy that was 120 years old, almost as

old as the game, as part of a restructuring process, takes some courage and that is what Giles did. The man who is best known in India for bowling the famous ‘leg-stump line’ which frustrated Sachin Tendulkar in 2001, has now delivered a different kind of ball to further the cause of English cricket.

The yoke held by the lanky Smith, who played 3 Test matches for England, will solely be on the shoulders of Silverwood who will be assisted by the two England captains, Joe Root and Eoin Morgan who will together decide the final playing eleven.

Smith, under whose tenure the country won the International Cricket Council (ICC) 50-over World Cup for the first time in 2019 and headed

the One Day ICC rankings, must be left wondering if there was any other benchmark that he needed to reach.

Going ahead, the immediate goal for Silverwood would be to clasp their hands on the ICC Twenty20 World Cup which will commence (if all goes the way it has been so far) in India later this year. The other big goalpost in his sight will be the getting back the little urn called the Ashes which take place in Australia, end November. Considering that he will be relying on former England Test player James Taylor, who now becomes ‘head scout’ instead of selector, to look for local talent and a performance director, Silverwood has his task

cut out going ahead.

With England’s new thrust of redoing the old norm and banishing the ‘selector’ from its system, cricket’s landscape has further altered. We may well see the formal introduction (by the ICC) of Twenty10 (T10) to accommodate the game in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics which may further disturb a packed International cricket schedule (to accommodate the T10 format).

Meanwhile, Silverwood’s promotion has now made the coach more powerful, like in football. It has also thrown open a few questions: Does cricket need selectors who are not on the playing field unlike the coach? England has taken the lead. Will other countries follow?

DU PLESSIS MAKES MY JOB EASIER: RUTURAJ

Mumbai, April 22: Young Chennai Super Kings opener Ruturaj Gaikwad says Faf du Plessis’ ability to play innovative shots and take on the bowlers makes “my job easier” at the other end.

Gaikwad (64), du Plessis (95) and pacer Deepak Chahar (4/29) were the architects of CSK’s 18-run win over Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Wednesday.

“With Faf, it is pretty much easy. He has an innovation skill so he takes on the bowlers and it makes my job little bit easier,” Gaikwad told teammate Lungi Ngidi in a video posted on the IPL website.

The opening duo notched up dazzling half-centuries while stitching a 115-run partnership to give CSK the best possible start.

“Against KKR, it was a matter of taking a bit of time for me. We were playing on a small ground, we had to keep going.

“One over I used to take chances, the next over Faf used to take. It was just having each other’s knowledge and knowing each other very well,” he added.