



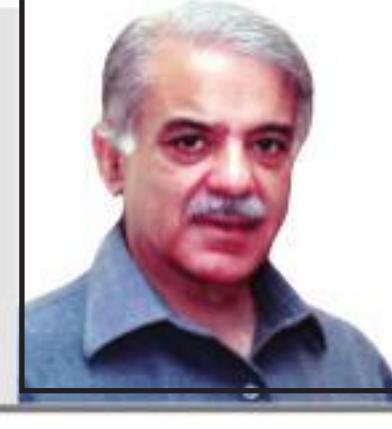
'LOCKDOWN
WILL INCREASE
SUFFERING'

P7



NAVALNY TO END
PRISON HUNGER
STRIKE ON 24TH DAY

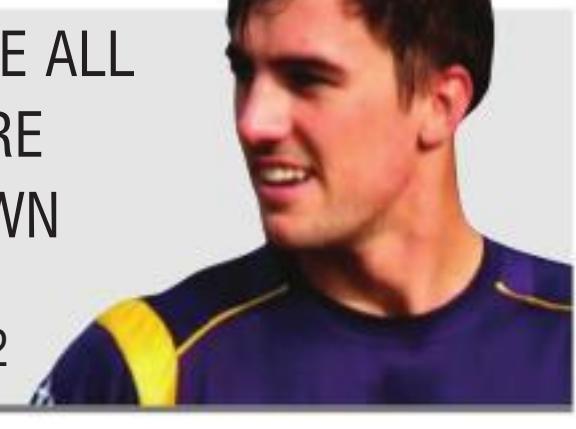
P10



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

SHAHBAZ SHARIF
WALKS FREE
FROM JAIL

P11



KNIGHTS ARE ALL
SET TO STARE
ROYALS DOWN

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 20 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: 0.00.6 Mm

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 71% Min: 43%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 33.6°C (-4) Min: 22.0°C (-1)

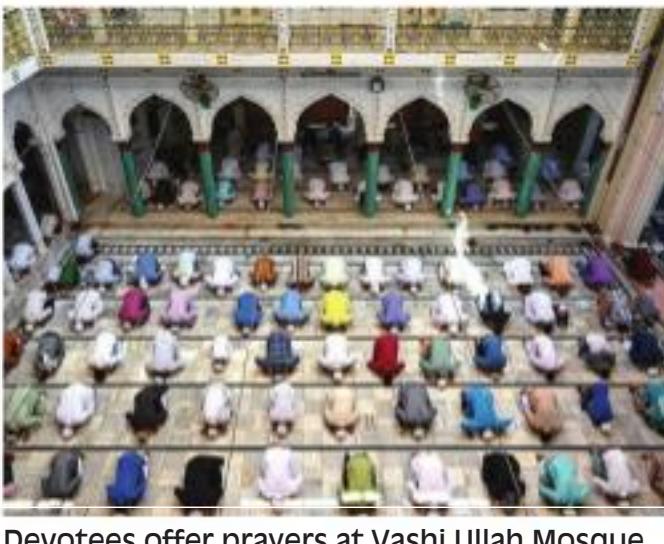
SUN RISES SUN SETS

05:46 hrs 18:52 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

15:54 hrs 04:37 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Devotees offer prayers at Vashi Ullah Mosque, in Prayagraj during Ramadan on Friday. AGENCIES

80 crore beneficiaries to get free food grains: The Central government on Friday decided to resume providing free food grains to 80 crore poor beneficiaries in May and June to help them tide over the economic hardship in the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, a move that would cost the exchequer around Rs 26,000 crore. "We will provide 5-kg additional food grains for free to PDS beneficiaries under the PMGKAY for two months. This time, we are not providing pulses under this scheme," Food and Public Distribution secretary said.

NIA arrests one more cop in Hiran case: The NIA on Friday arrested Mumbai police inspector Sunil Mane in connection with the recovery of an explosives-laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence here and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, an official said. With this, the NIA has so far arrested three police officers in Mumbai, including suspended assistant police inspector Sachin Waze and his colleague Riyaz Kazi, in connection with these cases.

O2 crisis claims several Covid patients

Scramble for Oxygen leads to deaths of 25 'sickest' Covid patients at Delhi hospital; similar scenes of death and despair across India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Twenty-five of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's "sickest" Covid-19 patients died in 24 hours and the lives of 60 more hung in precarious balance, officials said on Friday as the scramble for oxygen got more increasingly frantic in hospitals across the national capital.

Sources said low pressure oxygen could be the likely cause of the deaths in Ganga Ram, one of the city's biggest and most high-profile hospitals, where healthcare staff was reduced to manually ventilating patients in its ICU and emergency department. The hospital announced the deaths shortly after 8 a.m.

After the unprecedented crisis of the morning, an oxygen tanker did reach Ganga Ram in central Delhi at 9.20 a.m. but it was enough to last up to about five hours depending on consumption

GANGA RAM TRAGEDY

» Sources said low pressure oxygen could be the likely cause of the deaths in Ganga Ram, one of New Delhi's biggest and most high-profile hospitals

» After the unprecedented crisis of the morning, an oxygen tanker did reach Ganga Ram in central Delhi at 9.20 a.m. but it was only enough to last up to about five hours depending on consumption

Ganga Ram said. It is wrong to say the deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage. We provided oxygen to patients manually when the pressure dipped in the ICU

DR D S RANA
SGRH CHAIRMAN

It is wrong to say the deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage. We provided oxygen to patients manually when the pressure dipped in the ICU

DR D S RANA
SGRH CHAIRMAN

KEJRIWAL PLEADS FOR HELP

“People are in major pain due to oxygen shortage. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. I request you with folded hands to direct all CMs to ensure the smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi”

AT A COVID MEET CHAIRED BY PM MODI

Narendra Modi to ensure the supply of oxygen to the city.

"People are in major pain due to oxygen shortage. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. I request you with folded hands to direct all CMs to ensure the smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi," he said at a Covid meet chaired by Modi.

The Centre should take over all oxygen plants

through the Army and every truck should be accompanied by an Army escort vehicle, he suggested, pressing for a national plan to deal with the crisis. "The oxygen supply scheduled to come to Delhi from Odisha and West Bengal should either be airlifted or brought through the Oxygen express started by the Centre," Kejriwal added.

Ganga Ram Chairman Rana verbalised the demand of all hospitals, struggling to replenish their oxygen stocks for the last

four days in the face of the explosion in the number of Covid-19 cases. "All we need is uninterrupted and timely supply of oxygen, he said. More than 500 coronavirus patients, including around 150 on high flow oxygen support, are admitted in his hospital.

"Ventilators and BiPAP machines are not working effectively. Lives of another 60 'sickest' patients are at risk. Major crisis likely," a senior official at the hospital said. The oxygen emergency was mirrored at the Max Hospitals as well.

Though no deaths were reported, Max Healthcare sent out an SOS at 7.43 am, saying that Max Smart and Max Hospital Saket had less than an hour of oxygen left for the about 700 patients admitted. Outside the hospitals, too, despair escalated. Ambulances could be seen lined up, patients waited on stretchers, some visibly gasping for breath, and family members and friends desperately tried to get their loved ones a bed.

(See page 2)

Another hospital, another fire: 14 die in ICU blaze in Maha



» There were 90 patients in the hospital, 17 of them in the ICU, when the fire broke out after a blast in the AC unit

» Five patients were rescued and shifted to other hospitals in the area

fire broke out in the ICU on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital at Virar shortly after 3 a.m., an official said. Firefighters extinguished the blaze at 5.20 a.m.

Five patients were rescued and shifted to other hospitals in the area, he added.

The other patients in the hospital were not affected as the damage was confined to the ICU, he added.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has ordered a probe into the tragedy, health minister Rajesh Tope said. Former BJP MP Kirit Somaiya said authorities should check if there was a fire safety audit of the hospital, which is over 50 km from Mumbai.

The tragedy comes two days after 22 Covid-19 patients who were either on ventilator or oxygen support, suffocated to death when their oxygen supply stopped suddenly due to a malfunction in the main storage at a civic hospital in Nashik. District Disaster Control Cell chief Vivekanand Kadam said that the Virar hospital fire was preceded by an explosion in the AC unit of the ICU.

Five die in MP hospital after O2 runs dry

Bhopal, 23 April

Hospital authorities said they were expecting 10 cylinders of oxygen but the vehicle carrying the cylinders broke down on the way

whom five died allegedly when the oxygen supply ran dry and there was no provision of additional oxygen.

According to health authorities, the incident occurred at the Galaxy Hospital in Jabalpur. Some patients in the ICU were on oxygen support, out of

Kuraria said the authorities had already directed all private hospitals to ensure adequate additional oxygen supply.

Police said the incident was reported in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday and soon after getting the news, a police team was rushed to the hospital.

Some relatives of the deceased were highly enraged and trying to vent their ire on the hospital's doctors and staff but the police personnel pacified them.

Hospital authorities told police that they were expecting 10 cylinders of oxygen but the vehicle carrying the cylinders broke down on the way and so the additional oxygen could not reach the hospital in time.

Police then arranged for another vehicle and got the required oxygen cylinders delivered to the hospital, which enabled the doctors to save the lives of other critically ill patients.

Two Covid patients die sans O2 in WB

KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

On Thursday night, a 77-year-old woman died of Covid-19 at her residence in Garphe after several hospital denied admission when she was suffering from severe respiratory distress.

In another incident, a 67-year-old Covid patient of Madhyamgram died allegedly after being denied admission. She was taken to Medical College Hospital with acute breathing distress but MCH referred her to the NRS where she was declared brought dead.

Over 3.32 lakh fresh cases in India, record 2,263 fatalities

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Amid raging Covid horror, Delhi logs highest-ever 348 deaths: Convulsed by the unprecedented Covid catastrophe with its health system in shambles due to lack of beds, oxygen, and other critical care resources, the national capital today recorded 24,331 fresh coronavirus cases and 348 deaths – its highest-ever single-day Covid fatality count – according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

According to health authorities, the incident occurred at the Galaxy Hospital in Jabalpur. Some patients in the ICU were on oxygen support, out of

FACT FILE
TOTAL CASES
1,62,63,695
ACTIVE CASES
24,28,616
NEW CASES
3,32,730
NEW RECOVERIES
1,93,279
TOTAL DEATHS
1,86,920
UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 08.00 A.M.
FRIDAY 23 APRIL 2021

Air Force, Rlys to transport O2 tankers: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Amidst several states flagging scarcity of medical oxygen in the Covid-19 fight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said Railways and Air Force are being deployed to reduce the transportation time for oxygen tankers and all state governments need to work together to meet requirements of life-saving gas and medicines.

Chairing a high-level meeting with chief ministers of 11 states and union territories with maximum Covid-19 cases, Modi urged states to work as one and coordinate with one another to fulfil medical requirements, asserting that "if we work as one nation, there will not be any scarcity of resources."

Modi said every state should ensure that no oxygen tanker,

'COORDINATION IS KEY'

» PM Modi, chairing the meet with 11 worst hit states, said all state governments need to work together to meet requirements of life-saving gas and medicines

» The PM's call for coordination comes amidst multiple reports of medical oxygen supply being stopped at borders during transit

irrespective of its destination, is stopped or gets stranded, a statement said.

The Prime Minister's call for coordination and working together to meet the spiralling health crisis comes amidst multiple reports of medical oxygen supply being stopped at borders of one state or the other during transit.

Modi noted that the Railways and Air Force have been deployed to reduce the travel time of oxygen tankers and

making people continuously aware so that they do not indulge in panic buying.

With some Opposition-ruled states criticizing the Centre's updated vaccination policy as discriminatory against states, Modi said that the Union government has already provided them more than 15 crore doses free of cost.

He said each state should ensure that no oxygen tanker, irrespective of which state it is headed for, is stopped or gets stranded, and urged chief ministers to set up a high-level coordination committee to carry oxygen to different hospitals of the state. This committee should ensure that as soon as there is an allotment of oxygen from the Centre, it can deliver oxygen as per requirement in different hospitals of the state immediately, he said.

Second wave tightens grip



India's Covid-19 graph may peak by 15 May: The ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India may peak between 11-15 May with 33-35 lakh total 'active' cases and decline steeply by the end of May, according to a mathematical module devised by IIT scientists.

China to provide help to India: China on Friday said it firmly supports the Indian government and the people in their fight against the coronavirus pandemic and is in communication with New Delhi on its offer to provide assistance to deal with the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country.

Macron expresses solidarity with India: As India battles a massive spike in coronavirus cases amidst an oxygen shortage, the EU and French President Emmanuel Macron expressed solidarity with the country and offered their support in dealing with the crisis.

Travel bans mount: The red list Covid travel restrictions came in force for India on Friday, which bans entry for travellers from the country to UK. Canada has banned all passenger flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days due to surge. The US has also advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Maldives.

Leaving with satisfaction, did my best: CJI Bobde

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Justice Bobde decided several key cases during his tenure including the historic Ayodhya verdict and headed the judiciary during the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic

al bench before but did not feel such mixed feelings which could enable me to say things clearly.

I leave this court with happiness, goodwill with very fond memories of wonderful arguments, excellent presentation, good behaviour, commitment to the cause of justice from not only Bar but all connected with it, Bobde, who was speaking on his last in the apex court, said.

Bobde said he was demitting office after 21 years as



judge and it has been his richest experience in the top court and the camaraderie with brother judges has been wonderful.

Contending that transition to the virtual mode during coronavirus pandemic would not have been possible without the registry, Bobde said that there are many unsatisfactory things about virtual hearings which can be ironed out.

Attorney General KK Venugopal said the tenure of a CJI must be a minimum of three years. In March 2020 the world was suffering from Covid-19. Supreme Court also had to take a call and bar that court will close down.

But then CJI Bobde rose to the occasion and started virtual hearing and almost 50,000 cases have been disposed of. It's a great achievement, Venugopal said, adding that bar should unanimously applaud the CJI for the work he has done.

Born on 24 April, 1956 in Nagpur, Justice Bobde practised law at the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court with appearances at Bombay before the Principal Seat and before the Supreme Court for over 21 years. He was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on 12 April, 2013.

Bengal govt urges Centre not to divert medical oxygen elsewhere

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Keeping in mind the current patient load and the rising trend of infections that might raise the oxygen consumption level in West Bengal, the state government has urged the Centre not to divert the medical oxygen available in the state to elsewhere.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on 21 April allotted 200 MT of oxygen from different plants located in West Bengal to the state. As per the current patient load and the rising trend of the infections, it is expected that the consumption level in West Bengal will radically rise to roughly 450 MT per day in the next couple of weeks.

As per the current patient load and the



On March 7, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan had said COVID is on its way out. It means that the central government had no inkling about the impending crisis. It did not act on the recommendations of the World Health Organization to ramp up the stock of oxygen

MAMATA BANERJEE
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

'Oxygen langar': Good samaritans come to rescue of Covid patients across Delhi-NCR

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

With hospitals in the city scrambling to shore up oxygen supplies, good samaritans and social organisations across Delhi-NCR are giving a new lease of life to COVID-19 patients gasping for breath by opening "oxygen langar" for them and refilling cylinders for free.

Twenty-five of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's "sickest" COVID-19 patients died in 24 hours and the lives of 60 more hung in precarious balance, officials said on Friday as the scramble for oxygen got more increasingly more frantic in hospitals across the national capital.

Inderjeet Singh Monty, president of Mayapuri Trading Association, told PTI, "We have been helping hospitals and people with free oxygen supply from this Mayapuri plant for the past five days now. Everyday over 500-600 people come here to get their oxygen cylinders

refilled. Anyone in need of oxygen for a patient in their family can come and get the oxygen cylinder refilled here."

Brainchild of Abhishek Gupta, the plant's owner, the noble initiative is getting all sorts of support from the administration as well as the Delhi Police, which has helped him in supplying oxygen to several West Delhi private hospitals -- and in some cases to patients' homes as well.

The plant, with the refilling capacity of 1,500 oxygen cylinders per day, keeping in view the ongoing crisis is operating round-the-clock. "The whole cost of this is borne out by Abhishek Gupta. He just told us to help manage the things on ground and see that people's demands are being met smoothly. He is not bothered about money and wants to help people in whatever way he can amid the worst health crisis that the city and whole nation has seen," said Monty, who is also a member of the Delhi Sikh

Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC).

Gupta, even after several attempts, could not be reached for the comment.

Also, rising up to the occasion in these challenging times is a gurudwara in Ghaziabad's Indirapuram. It has opened an "oxygen langar" for COVID-19 patients and promised to supply oxygen in its premises to patients till the time they don't find a bed for themselves in hospital.

They have also launched a helpline number for the people to call and book oxygen cylinder.

"We are not giving or refilling oxygen cylinders. We are asking people to come here at the Indirapuram Gurudwara along with the patient in their car and we will provide oxygen to them."

"Be it two, four or 8 hours, we will provide oxygen till the time the patient is not getting a bed in the hospital," said Gurpreet Singh, in a viral video informing people about the initiative.

Big tragedy may hit Delhi due to O2 crisis: CM's SOS to PM

Delhi hospitals are gasping for oxygen, threatening lives of many Covid patients, says Kejriwal, seeking Modi's urgent intervention; Capital's health infra on verge of collapse amid raging Covid storm

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Sending out an SOS that a "big tragedy" may happen due to oxygen crisis gripping Delhi's hospitals for days in the face of the raging catastrophic wave of coronavirus, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today said the Centre should take over all oxygen plants through the Army.

At a virtual conference on the Covid situation, held by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with CMs of 10 worst Covid-hit states, Kejriwal urged the PM to direct chief ministers of all states to ensure smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to the national capital.

"Covid patients are in major pain due to oxygen shortage in Delhi. We fear a big tragedy may happen due to oxygen shortage and we will never be able to forgive ourselves. Despite being a CM, I am not able to help the people of Delhi. I request you with folded hands to direct CMs to ensure smooth movement of oxygen tankers coming to Delhi," he said during the meeting.

"We need a national plan to deal with the crisis. Central government should take over all oxygen plants



through the Army and every tanker coming out of the oxygen plant should be accompanied by an Army escort vehicle," the Delhi CM said.

"We are thankful to the

Central government that they increased our quota of oxygen but we have been trying for two days to get the oxygen supply. The oxygen supply scheduled to come to Delhi from Odisha and West Bengal should either be airlifted or brought through the 'Oxygen Express' started by the Centre," he said.

"We need a national plan to deal with the crisis. Central government should take over all oxygen plants

cine, and said "one nation, one rate" policy should be followed.

"In a single country, why are we having two prices for the same thing. There should be one nation, one rate policy. The entire country should get vaccine at a similar rate. Every one in the country should be entitled to vaccine, medicines and oxygen, without any dispute," he said.

The suggestions made by Kejriwal during the meeting were shared through its live telecast.

Upset over this, PM Modi chided the Delhi CM, saying such live broadcast of an "in-house meeting" with CMs

was "against tradition and protocol". Kejriwal immediately expressed his apology.

Later, the Delhi CM's Office issued a statement saying,

"The CM address was shared live because there has never been any instruction, written or verbal, from central govt that the said interaction could not be shared live. There have been multiple occasions of similar interactions where matters of public importance which had no confidential information were shared live.

While some hospitals have managed to make short-term arrangements, there is no immediate end to the crisis in sight, a government official had said yesterday.

The hospitals in the national capital have been sending

Khalsa Aid to provide free oxygen concentrators to Covid-19 patients in Delhi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Khalsa Aid India on Friday said it will provide oxygen concentrators to COVID-19 patients in Delhi free of cost.

Delhi is facing a severe oxygen shortage for the past few days with several hospitals scrambling to shore up their oxygen supplies.

"Around 1.15 pm, one Tawinder Singh, a resident of Amritsar in Punjab, was apprehended and three vials of remdesivir injections were recovered from his possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj said.

During interrogation, the accused disclosed that he was selling the injection on higher price as its demand was shooting and there was scarcity of the injection, the DCP said.

"There is a huge gap between the demand and supply of oxygen, we want to play a minuscule part to bridge that gap. Though our effort is like a drop of water in an ocean, it was much needed. We were getting requests for oxygen so we managed to procure concentrators for the needy underprivileged

patients," said Amarpreet Singh, director of Khalsa Aid Project (Asia Chapter).

Singh said his organisation will procure more oxygen concentrators in the coming weeks, taking the number from present 65 to 100.

Oxygen concentrators, witnessing a massive surge in demand amid the crisis in Delhi, is a portable medical device used for delivering oxygen to individuals with breathing-related disorders. It filters the surrounding air, compressing it to the required density, and then delivers purified medical-grade oxygen into a pulse-dose delivery system or continuous stream system to the patient.

"Seeing the present situation we are trying to procure more machines to serve maximum (number of patients). The organisation has set up an online WhatsApp registration process to avoid physical contact. We are also trying to procure oxygen cylinders to fight this situation more efficiently," said advocate Puneet Singh, a trustee of Khalsa Aid India.

29-year-old SI of Delhi Police dies of Covid

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

A 29-year-old Delhi Police sub-inspector died of Covid-related complications at a hospital in Ghaziabad on Friday morning, police said.

The deceased, Ankit Choudhary, tested positive for Covid on 15 April. Initially, he was under home quarantine and was shifted to a hospital in Uttar Pradesh four days after he was infected, police said.

He had severe symptoms of the coronavirus and was in a critical condition. A plasma donor was also arranged but his lung was severely affected, the police official said.

tion which falls under the jurisdiction of Delhi Police's northwest district, police said. The SI had been working for the Delhi Police for over eight years.

The deceased is survived by his wife and a two-year-old daughter who live in Wazirabad, the officer said.

"We tried to look for a bed but couldn't find one in Delhi. He complained of breathlessness and his health was deteriorating. At last, we admitted him at a hospital in Ghaziabad. Doctors told us the infection spread to his lungs," said a police official who refused to be identified.

According to police, around 1,500 Delhi Police personnel tested positive for the coronavirus during the second wave since March end.

More than 8,000 personnel of the force have so far been infected with the virus. Around 7,000 of them have recovered and over 1,000 are still under treatment, police officials said.

Four arrested for black-marketing of remdesivir injections in Delhi

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Four persons were arrested here in two separate incidents for alleged black-marketing of remdesivir injections, police said on Friday.

According to police, they received information and laid a trap on Wednesday near Parmanand Chowk in north Delhi's GTB Nagar area.

"Around 1.15 pm, one Tawinder Singh, a resident of Amritsar in Punjab, was apprehended and three vials of remdesivir injections were recovered from his possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj said.

The volunteers will be delivering oxygen concentrators in all parts of the capital, it said.

"There is a huge gap between the demand and supply of oxygen, we want to play a minuscule part to bridge that gap. Though our effort is like a drop of water in an ocean, it was much needed. We were getting requests for oxygen so we managed to procure concentrators for the needy underprivileged

Grave Oxygen crisis continues to grip Delhi hospitals amid raging Covid wave

PTI
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Some hospitals in the national capital continued to grapple with severe shortage of medical oxygen on Friday even after receiving emergency supplies.

The Max Hospital-Saket on Friday morning sent out an SOS, saying it was left with "an hour's oxygen supply" and over 700 patients admitted.

"Update: We have received emergency supplies at Max Saket and Max Smart which will last another 2 hours. We are still awaiting more supplies," it said.

"SOS - Less than an hour's Oxygen supplies at Max Smart Hospital & Max Hospital Saket. Awaiting promised fresh supplies from INOX since 1 am. @drharshvardhan@miosisdia @PMOIndia @ArvindKejriwal @PiyushGoyal @SatyendarJain over 700 patients admitted, need immediate assistance," the Max Hospital had tweeted at 7.43 am.

"Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in Vasant Kunj also posted on Twitter at 4.20 pm that it was left with only one hour of oxygen and asked for help at the earliest.

"Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, Vasant Kunj, with 160 #Covid19 patients, are left with another 1 hour of Oxygen cylinder stock. We have been waiting for the supply

so far. Please help us at the earliest. @PMOIndia @ArvindKejriwal," it said.

A senior official of the Batra Hospital said the oxygen situation at their facility is extremely poor.

"We got a refill around 1 pm. After that, some more refill came from the Delhi government, which is actually pulling us through. We have around 2.5 metric tonnes which can last up to 8:30 pm. Our primary supplier isn't responding to our calls. We hope that the Delhi government bail us out, the official said.

Amid a serious oxygen crisis in the national capital, 25 "sickest" COVID-19 patients died at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here in the last 24 hours, officials said on Friday.

Sources said "low pressure oxygen" could be the likely cause for the deaths.

A central government source said the SGRH has "sufficient balance of oxygen and a tanker has reached the hospital, which will fill

up the storage capacity".

The tanker reached the hospital around 9.20 am. The stock can last up to five hours.

depending on the consumption, an official at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital said.

Sources at the Holy Family hospital also told PTI that they had received emergency oxygen supply from the Delhi government and the "stock can last for six hours".

"AAP MLA Raghav Chadha said an additional vehicle carrying 20 D type oxygen cylinders was sent to the Holy Family hospital.

"Emergency cryogenic vehicle carrying liquid oxygen has reached Holy Family Hospital. An additional vehicle carrying 20 D type oxygen cylinders was previously sent to cater to interim requirement. Situation is grim- but we are working tirelessly despite obstacles in oxygen supply," Chadha said.

Meanwhile, Dwarka-located Aakash Healthcare

managed to refill their cylinders through small vendors across the city.

"We have succeeded to manage this time by refilling our oxygen cylinders from various small vendors in Delhi. We have just received a liquid oxygen tanker which will last for 14 hours," said Dr Kousar A Shah, COO-Aakash Healthcare.

With the coronavirus situation grim in the national capital, patients and their family members waited outside hospitals, hoping to get a bed.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain had on Thursday said beds would be increased in large numbers once the oxygen crisis was resolved.

A government doctor said hospitals in Delhi are wary of admitting more patients amid a serious shortage of oxygen in the city.



Tragic news has been received from Vijay Vallabh COVID centre in Virar about the death of patients due to a fire. My deepest condolences to the families of the victims

RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2021

03

Centre's vaccine policy for 18+ unfair to states: Punjab CM

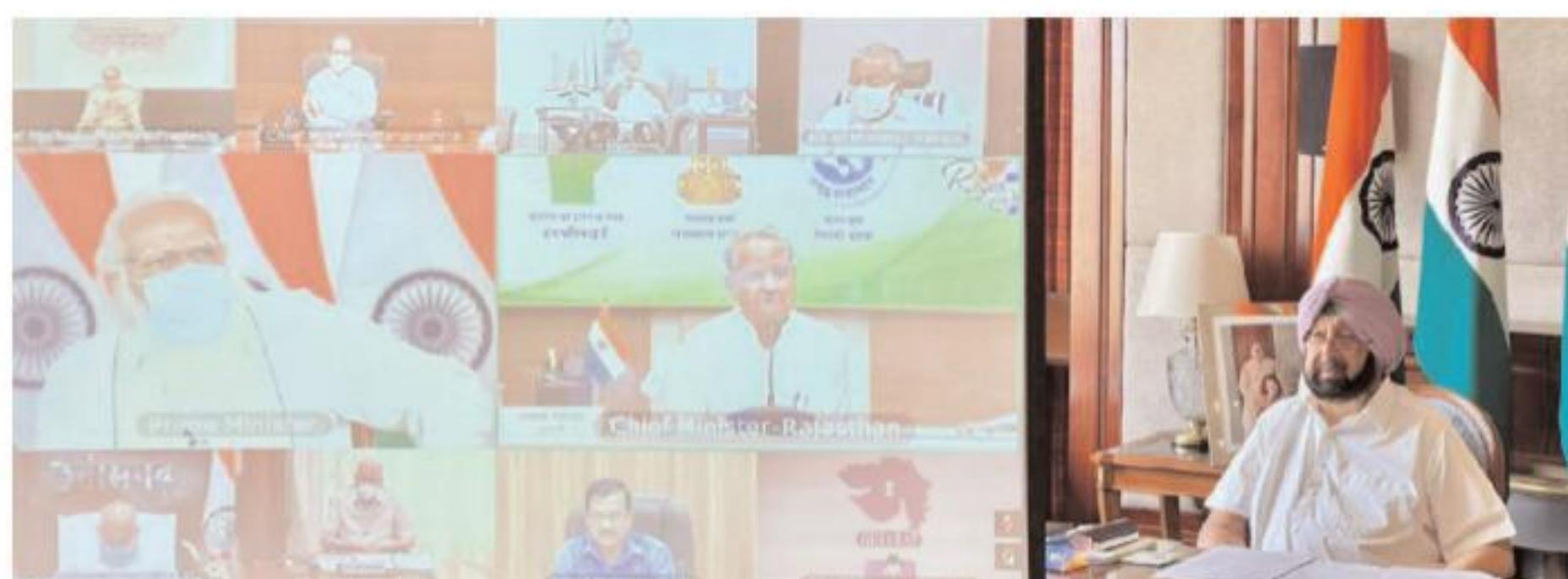
At PM Modi's virtual conference with CMs on the grave coronavirus situation, Capt urges the Centre to take urgent steps to ensure adequate supply of oxygen and Covid vaccines to states

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 23 APRIL

Termining the Centre's new vaccination policy for 18+ age group as unfair to the states, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday sought the Centre-states parity in vaccination for 18+ age group from 1 May, while calling for urgent steps to ensure adequate oxygen supply.

While his government has adopted all measures to minimise demand for oxygen, given the criticality of it as the most essential drug for treatment of serious Covid patients, the Centre must ensure all commitments as per the allocation are complied with by liquid oxygen manufacturers in other states, Capt Amarinder demanded.

"This is not happening at present. Punjab's supplies come from Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and there are



reports of supplies being 'hijacked,' the Punjab CM said at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's virtual conference (VC) held to discuss the Covid situation with chief ministers of the worst Covid-hit states.

On the vaccination front, Capt Amarinder said at the rates declared by one manufacturer, the cost to the Punjab government will be

over Rs 1000 crore. He sought Central government funding for vaccination, with permission to make the cost a flat charge on state disaster relief funds in the interim.

Regular vaccine supply must be ensured to maintain the supply chain to the last vaccination booth, he further said, adding that due to supply shortage, the vaccination in the last one week has

been slightly low, i.e. around 75-80,000 daily. While Punjab received fresh supplies yesterday the current stocks can last only three days as demand for vaccines is increasing, he stressed.

Capt Amarinder also expressed concern over lack of clarity on the quantity of vaccine to be made available by the Centre after 1 May, and how the manufacturers will

regulate supplies to different States and private purchasers.

The CM also pointed to the shortage and blackmarketing of medicines like Remdesivir and Tocilizumab, which he said was creating great panic in the media and among general public.

Pointing to the shortage of anti-viral Remdesivir injections and zero availability of Tocilizumab in the state, he said

he said hospitals were, however, following treatment protocol for critical patients and using alternate medicines.

Citing the increase in the number of Covid cases in Punjab to around 5000 per day, with 10 per cent positivity in the last one week, from around 3000 a day with eight per cent positivity during the last VC on 8 April, the CM urged the Prime Minister to direct Central institutions like AIIMS, Bathinda, PGI Satellite Centres and Military Hospitals in the state to provide additional Covid beds.

Expressing concern over the point that Punjab had not received any fresh results on viral genome sequence in the last nearly one month, when the last results showed over 85 per cent UK strain, Capt Amarinder urged the Prime Minister to order escalation of efforts to understand the mutations, and their implications for proper policy response.

Vihar, Gurugram and recovered the canter. The team brought the vehicle back to Panipat in which 296 kg ganja patti was found. This way, police have recovered a total of 325 kg 465 gram ganja patti.

A case has been registered against him under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and a further probe is underway.

Meanwhile, Haryana Police also claimed to have busted an inter-state narcotic drug racket and arrested three persons in this connection from Sirsa.

The police also recovered 900

gram of heroin that was to be supplied in Rajasthan and Punjab areas, besides Ellenabad in Sirsa. Giving this information today, Haryana Police spokesperson informed that the value of the recovered heroin in the international market is worth crores of rupees.

Arrested accused were identified as Amandeep Singh, a native of Punjab, Gurmeet Singh of Rajasthan and Nanak Singh, a resident of Ellenabad in Sirsa.

They had brought the seized contraband from Delhi for supply in Rajasthan, Punjab and Ellenabad areas. It has also been revealed that arrested accused were involved in the drug trafficking trade in Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan areas for a long time.

Haryana Police seizes 325 kg 'ganja patti' in Panipat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 23 APRIL

Haryana Police on Friday claimed to have thwarted an attempt to push a big drug consignment in the state and seized 325 kilogram (kg) 465 gram of 'ganja patti' (marijuana leaves) from a canter in Panipat.

Giving this information here today, Haryana Police spokesperson informed a team of Crime Investigation Agency, after getting a secret input had nabbed Shakeel, a resident of Shamli (Uttar Pradesh), with 23 packets weighing 29 kg 465 gram of ganja patti from near bus adda Samalkha.

During interrogation, accused Shakeel informed that he along with one of his fellow drivers brought the consignment in a canter from Andhra Pradesh. Both planned to smuggle the drug into small quantities to avoid police arrest and parked the vehicle at Udyog Vihar in Gurugram.

They unloaded four bags of drug from the canter, out of which three bags were taken by his associate for smuggling and he kept one bag with him. As soon as he reached Samalkha for drug smuggling, the police team nabbed him.

Along with Shakeel, the police team went to Udhog

Himachal to open wheat procurement centres

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 23 APRIL

Himachal Pradesh agriculture minister Virender Kanwar on Friday said the state government has decided to strengthen wheat procurement by opening wheat procurement centres in the state this year to facilitate farming community.

Informing about this, Kanwar said farmers of the border areas of the state like Kangra, Solan, Sirmour and Una go to sell their produce in neighbouring states of Punjab and

Haryana and face many problems.

Therefore, it has been decided to open wheat procurement centers had been opened at Paonta Sahib and Kala Amb in Sirmour district, Kangra (Haroli) and Takrala in Una district and Fatehpur in Kangra district.

He directed to provide necessary facilities for opening wheat procurement center at Nalagarh in Solan district. "Around 6,701 quintal wheat has been procured in the state so far this year.

5,570 quintal wheat has been procured in Paonta Sahib and 3,671 in Kala Amb in Sirmour

district, 379.50 in Kangra and 132 in Takrala in Una district and 252.50 quintal in Fatehpur in district Kangra," he said.

He directed the department to make timely arrangements for wheat procurement and also to provide basic facilities at the procurement centers so that the farmers visiting the center do not face any kind of inconvenience.

Kanwar urged the farmers of the state to bring their produce to nearby procurement centers and sell their products at fixed minimum support price (MSP).

Amid virus wave, Pb govt opts for virtual celebrations of Guru Tegh Bahadur's 400th birth anniversary

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 23 APRIL

The Punjab government has decided to hold virtual celebrations to kick off the historic 400th Prakash Purab (birth anniversary) of Guru Tegh Bahadur from 28 April amid the uncertain situation resulting from the continuous surge in Covid cases, Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh announced on Friday.

Online kirtans will be organized by the government on

television and social media channels, with people being urged to offer ardas (prayer) for 'sarbat da bhala' (blessings for everyone) from their homes, the CM said, adding that he will speak to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) chief Bibi Jagir Kaur to shift all celebrations to the virtual mode in view of the crisis situation.

While he and the whole state had been looking forward to celebrating the great event in a befitting manner in mem-

ory of Guruji's sacrifice for Hindus, the situation was not conducive to grand celebrations, noted the CM.

He appealed to people to watch the events on TV and offer ardas from their homes for sarbat da bhala on May 1 — the Guru Purab of the ninth Guru.

All programmes will be held as scheduled now, but through virtual mediums, with no physical gatherings, an official spokesperson disclosed after a meeting of the executive committee set up to oversee

the historic celebrations.

Chairing the meeting, the CM exhorted the people to participate in the various events, including live televised kirtans etc, which will also be telecast on social media, from their homes.

Chief secretary Vini Mahajan also suggested online programmes since the mutated strain of the virus seemed to be extremely dangerous. The SGPC should also be taken on board with this decision, she said.

Co-WIN Winning Over COVID - 19

<http://www.cowin.gov.in/home>

अथवा

<http://selfregistration.cowin.gov.in> पर जायें



अपना मोबाइल नंबर दर्ज करें
मोबाइल पर प्राप्त ओटीपी नंबर दर्ज करें और सत्यापित करें



फॉर्म के अनुसार विवरण भरें
और खुद को रजिस्टर करें



अब आप

आरोग्य सेतु ऐप
के माध्यम से भी खुद
को कोविड टीकाकरण
के लिए पंजीकृत कर
सकते हैं

इसके उपरांत
अपना टीकाकरण
स्थल एवं समय
का स्वयं चयन करें

खत्ता अभी टला नहीं है
ज़रूरी है #दवाई भी कड़ाई भी



अपने हाथ साबुन और
पानी से नियमित तौर पर
अच्छी तरह धोएं



फेस-कवर/मास्क
हर समय पहनें



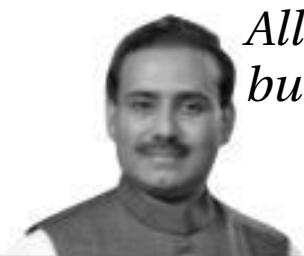
दूसरों से 2 गज
की दूरी बनाकर रखें

क्या करें और क्या न करें

- ✓ अगर आपको दुखार, खांसी और सास लेने में कठिनाई है तो ख्याल रखें, तुरन्त डॉक्टर से सम्पर्क करें।
- ✓ छींकते और खांसते समय, अपना मुँह व नाश टिशू पेपर / रुधाल या कपड़े से ढकें।
- ✓ प्रयोग के तुरन्त बाद टिशू पेपर को किसी बंद डिब्बे में फेंक दें।
- ✓ हवादार कमरे में रहें, यातायात करते समय गाड़ी के शीर्ष स्थल रखें।
- ✓ अगर आप में कोरोना वायरस के लक्षण हैं तो कृपया हेल्पलाइन नम्बर 104 पर कॉल करें।
- ✓ सरकार के दिशा-निर्देशों का अनुपालन करें।

क्या न करें

- ✗ यदि आपको खांसी और दुखार अनुभव हो रहा हो तो किसी के सम्पर्क में न आएं।
- ✗ भीड़-भाड़ वाली जगह पर न जाएं।
- ✗ अपनी ओंच, नाश का मुँह को न छुएं।
- ✗ ए.सी. का प्रयोग ना करें।
- ✗ मास्क पहने बिना घर से न निकलें।



All the major states have demanded one nation-one rate for vaccine, but no response from Centre on demand for uniform vaccine rate

MAHARASHTRA HEALTH MINISTER RAJESH TOPE

India

BSY: Covid-19 situation has become uncontrollable

BENGALURU, 23 APRIL

Chief minister B S Yediyurappa admitted that the Covid-19 situation in the state is deteriorating and has become uncontrollable. This comes at a time when the state has already seen cases soar to over 23,000 per day, taking the total case-load to over 12 lakh.

He told while the government had taken strict measures in terms of weekend curfew, it was imperative for the citizens to cooperate.

In fact, the IT capital, in particular, has become the epicentre accounting for about 70 per cent of the cases recorded so far. That the situation is deteriorating is evident from the fact that in every house at least three to four people are affected. "We have reached a stage where things have become uncontrollable," the CM said.

The government has urged Centre to provide 1,500 tonnes of oxygen daily by next month in addition to one lakh vials of Remdesivir. Karnataka has sought 600 tonnes of oxygen a day this month even as the centre today decided to release 25,400 vials of the anti viral drug for the state. SNS

'India's Covid graph may peak at 33-35 lakh cases by 15 May'

The scientists believe that Covid-19 cases will decline steeply by the end of May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

The ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India may peak between 11 to 15 May with 33-35 lakh total 'active' cases and decline steeply by the end of May, according to a mathematical module devised by IIT scientists.

On Friday, India saw a single-day rise of 3,32,730 (3.32 lakh) Covid-19 infections and 2,263 fatalities with 24,28,616 (24.28 lakh) active cases.

In predicting that the active cases would go up by about 10 lakh by mid-May before sliding, scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur and Hyderabad applied the 'Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach' (SUTRA) model. The scientists also said Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Telangana may see a high of new cases by 25 to 30 April, while Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh might already have reached their peak in new cases.

The scientists in their study found that there are several novel features in the SUTRA model. Whereas previous papers divided the patient population into asymptomatic and Infected, the new model also accounts for the fact that some fraction of asymptomatic patients could also be detected due to contact tracing and other such protocols.

Earlier this month, the mathematical modelling approach predicted that active infections in the country would peak by 15 April but this didn't come true. "The para-



Mass cremation of Covid-19 victims at Old Seemapuri Crematorium as Covid cases surge, in New Delhi on Friday. AGENCIES

contact rate, which measures how many people an infected person infects per day. It is related to the R0 value, which is the number of people an infected person spreads the virus to over the course of their infection," Agrawal explained. The other two parameters are 'reach', which is a measure of the exposure level of the population to the pandemic, and 'epsilon' which is the ratio of detected and undetected cases.

There are other mathematical modules as well. Independent calculations by Gautam Menon and his team at Ashoka University in Haryana have predicted that the peak of the ongoing wave of infections could be between mid-April and mid-May.

Menon also cautioned that such projections of Covid-19 cases should really be trusted only in the short term.

"Any excessively precise prediction, of a peak within just a five-day window would ignore the many uncertainties associated with the inputs to any such calculation," Menon, who was not involved in the modelling, had told earlier.

Farmers should not be forced to go for Covid test or vaccination: BKU leader

SONIPAT (HR), 23 APRIL

BKU leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni has said protesting farmers should not be compelled to get themselves tested or vaccinated and if health workers tried to force them, they will not allow them to enter protest sites.

A few days ago, Haryana's home and health minister Anil Vaj had said that the farmers sitting at Haryana's borders with Delhi will be tested and vaccinated. "If they try to force us, then we will not even allow them to enter (protest sites)," said Chaduni, adding that testing or vaccination should be left to farmers' choice. A large number of farmers have been sitting in protest against the Centre's three new agri laws for months at Singhu and Tikri.

Sonipat Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Jashandeep Randhawa told reporters here that more than 1,100 farmers have been vaccinated so far. If need be, mobile teams of the health department will be pressed into service and farmers will be encouraged for vaccination, he said. Chaduni said a farmer will get tested only if he feels sick. PTI

Telangana uses army aircraft to airlift oxygen to meet crisis



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 23 APRIL

has breached the 1000 mark. The state is also running short of RT-PCR kit with diagnostic centres swamped with samples.

Yesterday, health minister Eatala Rajender had bitterly complained that the Centre had allocated oxygen from plants in Odisha which are 1,300 km away and the road journey by special tankers would require days causing immense delay.

With Tamil Nadu refusing to supply any oxygen the minister complained why the state was not being allowed to procure from Vizag. It was due to the acute crisis over oxygen that the state government had set up a team of 10 IAS officers to monitor the oxygen requirement round the clock and resolve the problem.

The chief minister then directed officials to airlift eight oxygen tankers to the liquid oxygen plants in Odisha with the help of defence aircrafts. Two C-17 aircrafts were pressed into service to airlift nine empty oxygen tankers Andhra Pradesh chief minister too reached out to the Krishna Ella, MD of Bharat Biotech for Covaxin and that of Hetero Pharmacy for the antiviral drug Remdesivir vials. AP has announced that it will vaccinate the entire population between 18-45 years age group for free, covering almost two crore people.

With Covid cases, concerns grow in Siliguri

SANKHA GHOSH
SILIGURI, 23 APRIL

Former Siliguri mayor and senior CPI-M leader Asok Bhattacharya has stressed on steps to combat the Covid-19 situation in the town.

As the chairperson of the board of administrators at the Siliguri Municipal Corporation (SMC) earlier, Mr Bhattacharya had engaged himself in several activities on the ground during the coronavirus pandemic last year.

"It appears that the government is in tatters when it comes to dealing with the present Covid-19 situation. The situation is alarming and people are worried. People were infected during the first wave of the coronavirus, but they more or less received treatment. The civic body had engaged health workers and they used to enquire about the patients suffering from Covid-19. Teams of doctors would monitor the condition of the patients in home isolation. Ward committees and ward coordinators would deliver medicines and other commodities at patients' doorsteps. We had arranged for special

ambulances to ferry patients," Mr Bhattacharya said today.

"Elections for many civic bodies, including the SMC, could not be held almost for over a year. We are demanding that like the last year private hospitals be requisitioned as there has been a massive spurt in Covid-19 cases. The North Bengal Medical College and Hospital should be upgraded for the treatment of Covid-19. There should be no shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, life-saving medicines and oxygen, while visit of health workers in people's house must be ensured, and more beds should be arranged for in hospitals," he added.

The principal secretary of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, Surendra Gupta is presently in charge of the civic body as an administrator. The Left Front has decided to activate its ward committees to provide food and medicines to the affected families if required. "If the situation demands, members of the ward committees will deliver food and medicines like last year. We are ready to cooperate with the administration and the SMC and stand with the people, while it hard-

ly matters which party will form the government in the state," said Mr Bhattacharya, who is seeking re-election as an MLA from Siliguri.

The veteran Marxist leader alleged that some nursing homes in the town had been charging an "exorbitant amount" from Covid-19 patient parties during their admission.

Doctors, organisations demand more bed

Doctors and voluntary organisations under the banner of Covid Care Network and Siliguri Fights Corona, have demanded that the health department increase the number of beds for Covid-19 patients. They have mentioned reports about artificial scarcity of the pulse oximeter, medicines and oxygen, as they held a meeting with Darjeeling chief medical officer of health Dr Pralay Acharya today. "We have also highlighted the enormous billing by some private nursing homes and the immediate need to control the same and also proper monitoring. We have also stressed on monitoring of private pathological laboratories, where RT-

PCR tests are conducted," the coordinator of the network and dean of student affairs at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital, Dr Sandip Sen Gupta, said. They demanded opening of more Covid-19 vaccine sites to meet the demand.

The convenor of Siliguri Fights Corona, Animesh Bose, said more kiosks should be opened for sample collection for tests. They also met civic body officials. "Nodal officers for every borough need to be appointed to monitor the present situation. The ambulance service of the corporation should be started immediately. Houses / apartments where positive patients are in isolation should be marked by putting up stickers or ribbons. We also demand proper collection and disposal of Covid waste from home isolation patients," Mr Bose said.

SMC strict on masks

The SMC has asked traders to ensure that people wear masks in markets in Siliguri. The corporation held a meeting with traders' bodies and market committees today. Corporation commissioner Sonam Wangdi Bhutia said 37 markets

in Siliguri had been sanitized and more will be covered. He said a joint team will be constituted with the police to check whether Covid-19 protocols are being followed in the markets.

Record single-day spike in Darj district, SMC

Meanwhile, Darjeeling district and the SMC reported a record single-day spike of Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours. The district recorded 343 cases, while the SMC area, including the Jalpaiguri district portion, registered 251 cases. "This is the highest single day count of Covid-19 cases in the district as well as in the SMC area in the last one year. We should not be surprised if the single day figures go up further," said a public health expert.

Fifty-eight cases were found in Matigara, 54 in Naxalbari, 16 in Sukna, 10 in Darjeeling Municipality, nine in Kharibari, six in Suknia, Pokhri, four in Phansidewa, three in Mirik, two in Kurseong Municipality, two in Bijanbari and one in Takhad, sources said. Meanwhile, three persons who had tested positive for Covid-19 died in Siliguri today.

SMC strict on masks

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ment under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), Pandey said.

About 80 lakh tonne of food grains will be required to meet the demand for two months. The move, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to the poor, will cost the exchequer over Rs 26,000 crore, including on account of inter-state transportation of food grains, he added.

Modi stressed that it is important that the poor have nutritional support when the country is facing a second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, officials said. The PMGKAY is being re-implemented amid the second wave of the pandemic amid demand from Rajasthan, Kerala, Uttarakhand governments as well as from MPs, including NCP chief Sharad Pawar and TMC leader Saugata Roy.

was announced in 2020 for three months till July and later extended till November to combat the economic impact of the pandemic on the poor.

Under the scheme, additional 5 kg wheat and rice along with 1 kg pulses to each family per month was provided to beneficiaries registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). But this year, only grains will be given.

Free grains -- which will be distributed on the same pattern as earlier -- will be given to 80 crore beneficiaries. The free grains will be over and above the monthly entitlement.

EMPTY STREETS



Seth Srilal Market wears a deserted look as people stay away from market places due to the rising cases of Covid-19, in Siliguri on Friday. PULAK KARMAKAR

UP gets 43.34 tonnes of oxygen from Bokaro

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
ASANSOL, 23 APRIL

The South Eastern Railways has dispatched 46.34 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to Uttar Pradesh from Bokaro Steel Plant of SAIL in Jharkhand.

Today, chief minister Mamata Banerjee has alleged that Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been diverting LMO to UP from its steel plants in West Bengal.

In a press communiqué, the SER HQ in Kolkata has said that an Oxygen Express train refilled and reloaded three empty oxygen tankers of about 46.34 tonnes and dispatched through the Oxygen Express rakes to UP from Bokaro railway station in Jharkhand.



The transportation of liquified oxygen has been done through Roll on Roll Off (Ro Ro) service with road tankers placed on flat wagons of railways.

Few days back, the Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) of SAIL has also announced to supply 34 tonnes of medical oxygen for Covid-19 purpose.

Petroleum and steel minister Dharmendra Pradhan has urged the oil, gas and steel plants to manufacture medical oxygen instead of industrial oxygen to meet the growing demand due to worsening Covid-19 situation.

TMC cancels S Dinajpur rallies; BJP holds five

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALURGHAT, 23 APRIL

The Trinamul Congress cancelled two meetings scheduled to be addressed by party leader Abhishek Banerjee in South Dinajpur today, the final day of campaigning for the seventh phase of the Assembly elections.

On the other hand, the BJP went ahead with five meetings in South Dinajpur in the presence of BJP state president Dilip Ghosh today. Though the gathering of supporters was limited in all the meetings, it was seen that they did not follow the social distancing norm.

Due to recent surge in cases of Covid-19, the election commission of India has shortened the campaign period while it has imposed restrictions on road shows, rallies and huge gatherings during election campaigns.

South Dinajpur will vote on 26 April for the six Assembly seats.

The TMC was scheduled to organise two big rallies at Kushmandi and Kumarganj in the district today and all the preparations were done, party leaders said.

"Youth Trinamul Congress president Abhishek Banerjee was supposed to address the meetings, but the party cancelled both the meetings in the last minute," a party source said.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SILIGURI, 23 APRIL

With Covid-19 cases on the rise, the demand for oxygen cylinders has also soared high in Siliguri. Wholesalers, on the other hand, have said that they were unable to sell the cylinders as per the demand in the past few months. They cited their inability to refill cylinders and non-supply of new ones from oxygen plants.

According to experts, the demand for oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators, a device that concentrates oxygen by removing nitrogen, is high, given the surge in the Covid-19

cases. "We had the capacity to sell 40-50 oxygen cylinders daily, but now it has come down to 10-15," said a wholesaler, Ranjan Saha.

"Many Covid patients who are under home isolation require oxygen cylinders, while people suffering from diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or other pulmonary diseases, asthma, also need them," Mr Saha added.

Meanwhile, people are also buying oxygen cylinders in panic.

A customer who purchased a five-litre cylinder said, "Only I am vaccinated in my family.



Although no one has been infected with the virus, I purchased a cylinder today just in case it runs out of stock."

According to Mr Saha, they had been facing problems refilling the cylinders and of non-

supply of new cylinders from plants.

People protest vaccine refusal

Vaccination centres in Siliguri are grappling with the rush of people wanting to get the Covid-19 shot. I stood in the queue at 9 am at the NBMCH, and they counted the number of people in the queue to 90. After waiting for hours, they closed the gate of the vaccination centre, saying they had run out of

shots, given the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines. Some persons today agitated at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital (NBMCH) after they failed to get the Covid-19 jabs, it is learnt.

A woman, who works in a canteen of a bank as a daily wage earner, said she was not able to get the first dose of the vaccine.

"I work as a daily wage earner, and had taken leave to take the Covid-19 shot. I stood in the queue at 9 am at the NBMCH, and they counted the number of people in the queue to 90. After waiting for hours, they closed the gate of the vaccination centre, saying they had run out of

stock. They stopped the vaccination process midway. It is very difficult for me to come again because my absence at work means a day's wage gone," said the resident of Milan Pally, Renu Subba.

Another woman from Sakrigar said that she waited for more than three hours and then came to know that she would not be given the vaccine today. "They first said only 90 persons will be administered with the Covid-19 shots, but after around 40 persons they said there was no vaccine left. How is this possible?" she said.

Many elderly persons said they were facing problems wait-

ing in long queues for hours.

Sources at the community medicine department at the NBMCH said they had requested many people to wait for the shots today



The best way forward is for the state governments to jointly form a Price Negotiation Committee and offer to negotiate a uniform price with the two vaccine manufacturers

TERMING THE CENTRE'S DECISION TO ALLOW MULTIPLE PRICES FOR VACCINES 'DISCRIMINATORY'

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



Workers scatter wheat for drying after heavy rains in the city, at a grain market in Amritsar on Friday. **IANS**

Nestle ad row: FMCG major Nestle India on Friday apologised for wrongly depicting Manipur's Keibul Lamjao National Park location in Meghalaya on the packaging of its KitKat chocolate after objection from the state government. The packaging of the KitKat travel break chocolate had also displayed a picture of a Red Panda, which is not found at the park. **PTI**

UP BJP MLA succumbs: BJP MLA Sadar Ramesh Chandra Diwakar (56) died of Covid in Meerut on Friday, family sources said. An MLA from Auraiya, Diwakar was admitted at a hospital here four days ago. His condition had been serious for the last two days, they said. **PTI**

Army rescues 18 civilians: The Indian Army has rescued 18 civilians who were stranded in snow slides at two places on the Kargil-Leh highway. An Army spokesman said on Friday that the civilians were stranded at Khardung La top and North Pullu. The troops of the Siachen Brigade launched a rescue operation to extricate the stranded civilians. **SNS**

Mamata blames Centre for Covid-19 calamity

Centre has diverted medical oxygen from SAIL steel plant to UP, she charged

DEBJAYOTI CHAKRABORTY

DURGAPUR, 23 APRIL

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Centre for the harrowing scenario due to the resurgent virus and alleged that if he had followed the WHO guidelines regarding oxygen requirements, the devastating situation could have been averted.

She lambasted Modi for his 'myopic vision' when the country is struggling with shortage of oxygen cylinders, vaccines and even Covid medicines.

"Even in this situation the Centre has been diverting the medical oxygen supply of SAIL steel plants to Uttar Pradesh. The SAIL steel plants used to supply medical oxygen to the state earlier. Still we have been procuring 5,000 additional oxygen cylinders today. Already we have a stock of 15,000 cylinders. We are also in the process of negotiations with other private players for oxygen supply," the Trinamul supremo added.

Miss Banerjee said that the PM has exported about 65 per cent of vaccines to foreign countries which has perpetuated the crisis in the country.

She also questioned the price disparity of vaccines as the state have to purchase it at Rs400 against Rs150 by Centre and Rs600 for private hospitals.

If the PM Cares Fund had procured vaccines and supplied the state free of cost instead of splurging for new Parliament building, largest statue, temple, the states would have been spared the onus of financial burden, she said and alleged that the Centre was giving priority to BJP-



ruled states like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh regarding vaccine distribution.

No tests have been done for either those lakhs of people who came from other states during BJP campaigns and neither over two lakhs paramilitary who have been deployed for poll duty, she said. These people have been spreading Covid-19 and the election commission is silent on this issue, she added.

"Today the PM has been holding several meetings but did not invite me though I was ready to attend the meeting. Only the worst-hit 10 states have been invited for the meeting," she said.

She said that she is constantly in touch with the CMO&H in the districts and giving necessary instructions. The CM alleged that she had

no knowledge about the EC decision till evening otherwise she would have wrapped up her campaign by yesterday.

Tomorrow, she is slated to visit Berhampore, then Birbhum, and after offering prayers at Taraphit temple she will visit Behrampore again and then to Malda and Kolkata (Mirza Hall) for virtual meeting.

The Trinamul supremo exuded confidence about forming government in response to a question by The Statesman correspondent. She added that she wants all the seats in the remaining two phases also.

The CM also warned the state police officials who have fired at voters and threatened them to take action after 2 May. Some DMs and SPs are thinking that BJP will come already, she said.

The CM urged the voters of all the 9 constituencies in Burdwan (west) to vote for the party if they want to oppose privatisation, disinvestment of public sectors.

Free vaccine 'jumla': Derek



KOLKATA, 23 APRIL
Trinamul Congress Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien today slammed the BJP central leaders for their free vaccine 'jumla'.

"Here comes the free vaccine JUMLA announced from Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Bengal", O'Brien tweeted.

Similar promise was made by them to fool people in Bihar before elections, which they have conveniently forgotten, he said.

O'Brien stated, "Bengal won't be fooled". He asked the voters in last two phases not to trust BJP.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee too slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not supplying the adequate vaccines and oxygen cylinders to the state. She said, "While there is a shortage of vaccines all round, Gujarat has already received enough to cover 60 per cent of their 45-plus population, while many states haven't got enough to cover 20-30 per cent of their 45-plus age group." **SNS**

She has urged the voters of all the 9 constituencies in Burdwan (west) to vote for the party if they want to oppose privatisation, disinvestment of public sectors.

Bengal polls: Campaigning ends for phase 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, 23 APRIL

Curtains came down on Friday over the campaigning for 34 assembly seats in West Bengal which are scheduled to go to the poll on 26 April in the seventh phase of election being held amidst the surge in Covid-19 cases across the country.

The campaigning for the seventh phase ended 72 hours before the polling on 26 April.

A total of 86,78,221 voters - 44,44,634 male and 42,33,358 women and 229 from the third gender will exercise their franchise in the 34 constituencies spread across Malda (Part I), Kolkata, Dakhin, Murshidabad (Part I), Paschim Bardhaman (Part I) and Dakshin Dinajpur districts.

Polling will be held between 7 am to 6.30 pm as in other phases at 12,068 polling stations in nine Assembly constituencies each in Murshidabad and Burdwan (west) districts, six each in Dinajpur (south) and Malda districts four in Kolkata (south).

Polling for two Assembly seats in Samserganj and Jangipur have been declared void following the deaths of two candidates there.

The Election Commission has fixed 16 May for the polling in these two seats.

The focus in this phase of polling will be on seats in the southern part of the city, mainly Bhawanipore which is the stronghold of chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

While the fiery Miss Banerjee has contested from Nandigram this time, she nominated one of her senior most party leaders Sovendu Chatopadhyay from Bhawanipore. BJP has fielded actor-turned-politician Rudranil Ghosh from the seat.

From Rashbehari the saffron party has named Lt Gen (Dr) Subrata Saha against TMC's Debasish Kumar. State minister Firhad Hakim will test his luck from Kolkota Port constituency where he will lock horns with BJP's Awadh Kishore Gupta and Congress Mohammed Mukhtar.

Focus will also be on polling at Balurghat, Malda, Chandchal, Harishchandrapur as well as in Lalgaon, Murshidabad and Farakka seats.

Following the surge in Covid-19 cases across the country, the EC has banned road shows and vehicle rallies in the state with immediate effect. It has noted that Covid safety norms were being flouted in Bengal during campaigning. It also disallowed any public meeting with more than 500 people.

The BJP leaders in their campaigns attacked Miss Banerjee, her nephew Abhishek along with involvement of party leaders in the Saradha and Nara-das tapers scams to the recent allegations of siphoning of funds allocated for Amphan and the Covid-19 pandemic relief.

NOTICE
That my client Mrs. Sanku Das, wife of Biplob Das residing at B-6/288, P.O. Kalyani, P.S. Kalyani, District - Nadia having filed Original Petition and Motion of Transfer Being No. 9864 for the year 1998 registered before R.A. Calcutta and also lodged a General Diary in the Kalyani Police Station dated or 21.03.2021 vide G.D. Entry No. 1043 of 2021. Any person having any claim share, right, title, interest, concerning the matter mentioned in the petition whatever may be the date when the same is filed with the concerned authority with supporting documentary evidence within 15 days from the date where after the claim if any shall be deemed to be waived and no further claim shall be entertained.

Sanjukta Sarkar,
Advocate
Ph.no. 8100182297

NOTICE
That my client Mrs. Jayasree Chakraborty wife of Mr. Goutam Chakraborty residing a Pratima Apartment, Flat No. 3C (2) 5, Roy Bahadur Road, P.S. Behala, Kolkata 700034, has filed one original Agreement in between Mr. Anirudha Biswas and Mrs. Chaitali Biswas (Transferor) AND Mrs. Jayasree Chakraborty (Transferee) AND Paharpur Cooling Towers Limited (Confirming Party) and also lodged a General Diary in the Paharpur Police Station dated or 27.02.2021 vide G.D. Entry No. 2365 of 2021. Any person having any claim, share, right title, interest, concerning the matter or any obligation whatsoever may file the same to the concerned authority with supporting documentary evidence, within 15 days from the date where after the claim if any shall be deemed to be waived and no further claim shall be entertained.

Sanjukta Sarkar,
Advocate
Ph.no. 8100182297

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI,
4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001.
OA NO. 734/2019 HDFC Bank Ltd. ... Applicant Versus Mr. Dinesh Nagpal ... Defendant To, 1) Mr. Dinesh Nagpal, At- Rebsel Designs, C-62, Sudershan Park, Moti Nagar, Delhi-110015, Also At: S/o. Mr. Prem Nath Nagpal, A3/42, Jain Mandir, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi-110063. (Email Id: rebsel.design@gmail.com) (Mobile No. 9873930971). Phone Number : 011-23748473). Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence. Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose: (i) All the Advocates/ Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/ Software; (ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/ Recovery Officer- I and Recovery Officer- II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in under Public Notice Head. (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/ Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473. Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 21st January of 2021.

By order of this Tribunal, For Registrar.

PUBLIC NOTICE

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI.

4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING,

PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

OA NO 730/19

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DATE: 22.03.2021
APPLICANT

To,
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DEFENDANTS

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Ten-Foot-Tall Syndrome

At the peak of the Cold War, US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger cautioned against what he termed the "ten-foot-tall syndrome" or the proclivity of American policy makers to view their Soviet counterparts as towering figures of immense strength and overwhelming intellect. In a recent article in the influential journal Foreign Policy, the argument is made that a similar syndrome has taken hold in America today, and the harms are not just analytical. Concentrating on China's strengths without accounting for its vulnerabilities creates anxiety. Anxiety breeds insecurity. Insecurity leads to overreaction, and overreaction produces bad decisions that undermine the US' own competitiveness. Seeing China clearly is the first step toward getting the China policy right, the article iterates. Recent Sino-Indian tensions including over the border issue have shown that New Delhi is learning fast from the mistakes made by Washington. So, there is a welcome and clear-headed acceptance of the fact that China has become the driver of global economic growth, the largest trading nation in the world, and the largest destination for foreign direct investment. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is touted as the largest development project of the 21st century, is also recognised for what it is - a potent tool for Beijing to win greater influence in every corner of the world. The Indian policy establishment has factored in the dual-use technologies China is exporting - from computer chips to 5G - which will aid its aim of converting its economic and political heft into unrivalled military might. Equally, however, the PLA has not been tested in real battle conditions in over four decades. One of the reasons Beijing encourages state-controlled media to take an inordinate interest in running down India is because China recognises that unlike the USA, Japan, Australia or Vietnam, its southern neighbour poses a challenge to it which none of the aforementioned countries does. First, India has shown post-Doklam that it is willing to militarily escalate the situation if what it considers Chinese expansionism doesn't stop. Secondly, the potential economic challenge posed by India over the next two decades if it gets its act together is the real danger for Chinese hegemony, not the US-led West which is merely fighting to protect the prosperity it has got used to. As Chen Yixin, a top-ranking security official, told a Chinese Communist Party study session in January this year: "The rise of the East and decline of the West has become a trend." India, as an integral part of the East but very much outside the Chinese sphere of influence, is, to put it bluntly, a thorn in Beijing's side. India's allegedly dysfunctional democracy, its shambolic infrastructure, the failure of the state to meet the basic requirements of food, water, shelter and education for its citizens all find a place of pride in Chinese media reportage with the occasional feel-good story thrown in to project 'balance'. The latest trend is to celebrate China's success in 'defeating' Covid-19 and reopening the country, while pointing out with barely concealed glee that the USA, India and others are struggling. The momentum is with China but will time be on India's side?

Sanctions prick bubble

While the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) is yet to execute its pledge against Myanmar, the European Union has spelt out its plan of action in less than three months of the 1 February coup, reaffirming in the process that it remains a united entity. On Tuesday, it announced the toughest measures yet against the military that has cracked down on the people's upheaval with brutal severity. Very legitimately, the protesters are shrilling for the return of the elected government. The protest is concordant with the certitudes of democracy. There has been an outcry in Myanmar as the military aired images of 'tortured' detainees. The sanctions include freezes on assets and a ban on visas; the cache of curbs will affect ten military figures as well as two giant conglomerates. According to the EU member states, the individuals were "all responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar and for repressive decisions and serious human rights violations". On closer reflection, democracy has been undermined since the early 1990s; stability remains a scarce commodity, one that has eluded the country for three decades. The indictment this time is severe and it shall not be easy for the cantonment to shore up its image. The army has brought Myanmar to the brink. While the EU has struck hard, diplomatic sensitivities hinder a suitably robust response on the part of the United Nations, almost reminiscent of its masterly inactivity and dithering in Libya and Syria. Myanmar's State Administration Council (SAC), set up by the military the day after it seized power, was "responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law", the EU said in its official journal. "The military forces and authorities operating under the control of the SAC have committed serious human rights violations since February 1, 2021, killing civilian and unarmed protesters," the EU said. Nine of those singled out are members of the State Administration Council. Also sanctioned was the Information Minister, U Chit Naing. Myanmar has been rocked by almost daily protests since the coup and the military has intensified its attempts to crush dissent, though the UN and Western countries have condemned their takeover and the escalating violence. Thousands have been arrested since the coup and at least 738 civilians have been killed, according to the human rights group, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which is monitoring the situation. More than 4,000 people have been arrested and 3,261 remain in detention, according to the group, which the military has accused of spreading 'fake news'. There is a bubble of untruth floated by the military as well. And the coup is integral to that bubble.

Fractured Ties ~ II

It seems Prime Minister Khan failed to convince his Cabinet colleagues, particularly, the hardliners, that resumption of India-Pakistan trade relations need not be conditional on the restoration of Article 370 which, after all, is India's internal matter. When he talked about improvement in India-Pakistan relations was he really serious, or was merely trying to gauge the extent of political support he would get for such a move?



Was Prime Minister Imran Khan serious when he talked of improvement in India-Pakistan relations? He said quite sensibly that the only way to remove poverty in the subcontinent is to improve trade relations. Then why did he change his position when an opportunity came along? After the Cabinet meeting of 1 April, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in a video message that the Cabinet discussed the issue of cotton and sugar imports from India. An impression was being created, he said, that "relations with India have become normal and trade has been restored". But this was not true as "the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had a consensus opinion that until India reviewed the unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, it would not be possible to normalise ties with India."

Will this volte face create the 'enabling environment' for a constructive dialogue between India and Pakistan for resolving all outstanding issues, including Kashmir? The 25 February ceasefire agreement between the DGMOs was certainly the right step towards the reduction of violence and tensions between the two countries but a mere ceasefire will not lead to normalisation of relations unless other measures are taken - the restoration of diplomatic ties at the level of High Commissioners, trade and commerce, and people-to-people contacts through the opening up of channels of communications, cessation of high decibel jingoistic rhetoric and, of course, an end to cross-border terrorism.

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In India there are many, including the present writer, who have been critical of the way New Delhi's ruling dispensation decided to abrogate Jammu and Kashmir's special status; but that in no way justifies Pakistan's bellicosity as seen in the aftermath of the 5 August 2019 decision of the Indian government nor does it justify the position taken by the Pakistan Cabinet on 1 April. If the Prime Minister failed to get the support of his Cabinet colleagues, what guarantee is there that his moves will be supported by his political opponents?

There can be no denying the fact that Kashmir has been the

main stumbling block to the development of friendly relations between the two neighbours and a peaceful settlement of the dispute, through dialogue, will go a long way in normalisation of relations between the two states. But to achieve this, the most important thing would be a change in the mind-set, especially in Pakistan. For generations the Pakistanis have been led to believe that Pakistan remains incomplete without the incorporation of Kashmir. The pursuit of Kashmir remains embedded in popular as well as official imagination, which makes any deviation from that position difficult.

As Zaib-un Nisa Aziz wrote in the Herald in November 2015, there is "a state-driven national narrative" that sees Islam and Kashmir as the two foundational pillars of the state of Pakistan. Even as late as 2015, one could see auto rickshaws in Lahore carrying posters proclaiming that Pakistan has the right to get Kashmir back from India. Politicians of all hues have deliberately stoked the flames for the pursuit of Kashmir, for their own political gains, nay survival.

Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan's bête noir, declared at a public meeting on 22 July 2016 that the country was waiting for the day when "Kashmir becomes (a part of) Pakistan". This came barely seven months after Prime Minister Modi made an unscheduled visit to Pakistan while returning from Afghanistan, as a goodwill gesture, although that raised many eyebrows in India, including of the late President Pranab Mukherjee.

Viewed from the perspective of the state-driven national narrative in Pakistan, Kashmir becomes a zero-sum game. But the reality is much more complex. In India, except the jingoistic nationalists, the majority would be prepared to settle for a solution that does not envisage the possibility of India 're-uniting' the whole of the former princely State of Jammu and Kashmir by force, notwithstanding the political rhetoric of some leaders of the ruling party at the Centre in the aftermath of abrogation of Article 370.

Then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Sri Prakasa, India's first High Commissioner to Pakistan, that Kashmir is of utmost vital significance to India as well as to Pakistan. There lies the rub ... This was a realistic view; unfortunately Nehru himself

self did not always follow this realistic path. Adversarial relations are hurting both states and attempts should be made to reverse the trend. The Simla Agreement (1972) provided that the Kashmir issue should be resolved through bilateral discussions, and towards the end of the 1980s such a possibility had emerged. According to a PTI report, Asif Ali Zardari, a former President of Pakistan, claimed in February 2018 that Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto talked in 1990 and agreed to resolve the Kashmir issue amicably, but Rajiv was assassinated in 1991 during an election campaign.

In April 2009, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told a US delegation led by the then Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, that during General Musharraf's tenure as the President of Pakistan, Islamabad and New Delhi had made great progress in finding a non-territorial solution of the Kashmir dispute, that included free trade and movement of people across the LoC. The Indian Prime Minister's comments were confirmed by Musharraf in 2010 when he asserted that India and Pakistan had reached the stage where they were preparing for the final draft of the resolution spelling out the terms of settlement. But the move was abandoned because, as Asif Ali Zardari asserted later, the Pakistani Army top brass did not approve of it. After the attack on Mumbai by Pakistan-based terrorists in December 2008, India-Pakistan relations reached a new low and the Kashmir issue was put on the back burner.

After Benazir, the next PPP government in Pakistan (2008-13) had also taken up the issue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, claimed Zardari though there is no evidence to show that any serious attempt had been made towards that end. The two leaders met in New Delhi in 2012 and discussed the need for improvement in bilateral relations between the two states, through development of trade and commercial links and resolution of the Kashmir problem. Neither Manmohan Singh nor Zardari was then in a position to take decisions on such a sensitive issue as Kashmir, given their own domestic problems.

Prime Minister Modi has a huge parliamentary majority and also enjoys support within his own party and, therefore, can

take bold decisions. The position of Imran Khan is, however, different because of the stiff domestic opposition he has been facing on a whole range of issues, though on the Kashmir issue he seems to enjoy the support of the Army, if General Bajwa's recent utterances are any indicator.

During the Simla conference of 1972, India was in a very strong negotiating position and wanted a permanent settlement of the Kashmir issue by converting the ceasefire line into an international boundary, with minor changes, but Pakistan balked. President Bhutto said this would not be acceptable to the people of Pakistan smarting under the trauma of the humiliating military defeat and urged Indira Gandhi not to press for it. So the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir had been converted to a LoC, pending the final settlement of the problem. Bhutto promised, however, to take up the issue at the appropriate time, which he never did.

It is important to note that the remarkable improvements in India-Pakistan relations during 2003-2007 were the result of sustained efforts made by the government earlier, under the leadership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, starting with his Bus Trip to Lahore and the Lahore Declaration, to underline the point that India desired friendship with Pakistan by encouraging people-to-people contacts and communications, and was committed to the settlement of the Kashmir problem through bilateral discussions.

Manmohan Singh pursued a similar policy and established a degree of trust in dealings with Pakistan. During 2003-2007, the improvements in India-Pakistan relations were made possible by the ceasefire agreement and encouragement of contacts between the people of Kashmir living on either side of the LoC, by opening up trade across the LoC. Back-channel diplomacy did play a significant part in all these developments.

For normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan, mutual trust has to be built through incremental changes, before moving on to the Kashmir issue, and sustained efforts have to be made by both sides, without the glare of publicity and with the cooperation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. On the Kashmir issue, Nawaz Sharif reportedly said on 26 December 1991: "We will have to give up something, India will have to step back, Pakistan will have to step back, and so will the Kashmiris." That was a realistic statement but will the politicians on the two sides be able to act accordingly?

(Concluded)

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Vacant seat in Parliament

One of the more interesting features about the current Parliament of Sri Lanka, is that it has the highest number of parties with representation in that august Assembly, mostly through a plethora of small parties, which have been elected with one or two members to Parliament.

Most of these parties are regional in scope and represent specific communities, often ethnic or religious minorities from the Northern and Eastern provinces. Generally colourful almost quixotic political characters have been elected from these single ticket parties, with a couple of them, including the EPDP and the ACTC securing two seats each. They certainly add colour and a vibrant diversity to the composition of the legislature.

Also falling into this same category of a single seat party, from among the minor parties, is the former governing United National Party (UNP), which rather fortuitously through its vote tally in all districts, managed to qualify for a single National List seat in Parliament.

The UNP is a small party with a big party mentality and blessed with close links to major national newspapers, its unelected office-bearers and defeated candidates, manage to make the news daily, if rather irrelevant.

The UNP has rather unusually been unwilling to fill its single seat, making the current Parliament a full house at 224 members, rather than its complete complement of 225. However, political circles are abuzz with talk that finally its longest serving and possibly leader for life, former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, will have himself nominated to the UNP's solitary seat in Parliament.

It has to be a record in any country with a proportional representation electoral system, for a party to fall from a governing party with 106 seats, to a solitary parliamentary seat in the

The Island

ensuing election.

Leaving that grand old party with a nice head office, a proud history, and some political personalities who made a serious error in political judgement, when they denied its longtime deputy leader and presidential candidate, the party leadership, resulting in the formation of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party.

Just over a year since nominations for the parliamentary elections closed on 20th March 2020 and the UNP thinks about finally getting its act together, to nominate Mr. Wickremesinghe to its solitary seat, and the SJB celebrated the first year anniversary of its formation; it is worth examining the implications to politics and national governance, created by the Rajapaksa political vehicle of the SLPP supplanting the SLP, and on the Opposition side of the House, the even newer Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) of Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa, taking over the constituency, the younger generation leaders and the political leadership of the non SLPP/Rajapaksa socio-political forces in the country.

The SLPP created its own history in the August 2020 parliamentary elections becoming the most electorally successful political party under the 1978 constitution, securing 145 seats in Parliament, bettering its predecessor UPFA's result of 144 seats won in 2010. The SJB also performed approximately comparative to its parent UNP's 2010 post war performance, securing 54 seats in 2020.

However, the SJB has also made its own mark on the political landscape of the country in its relatively short history. Firstly, by comprehensively wiping its predecessor UNP off the electoral map, and firmly capturing the Opposition political space. It has faced the juggernaut of an SLPP Administration with a super majority in Parliament.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Churlish response

SIR, This refers to the reports, "2nd wave fuelled by Cong-ruled states: Vardhan slams ex-PM" and "Above-18 can get Covid jabs from 1 May" (20 April). Over the last 24 hours, India reported 2,73,810 new cases, pushing the caseload to 1,50,61,919.



Everyone above 18 years of age may receive Covid-19 vaccines from May 1, the government said on Monday evening in a somersault that drew on some of the easiest tips offered by Dr Manmohan Singh who was treated to uncommon churlishness

and ingratitude earlier in the day. Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's letter to Dr Singh reads more like a partisan rant than a response from the strongest Centre in over three decades. Singh had suggested ways to ramp up vaccination and the Health Minister accused him and his party of being ungrateful, incompetent, dangerous and what have you. Just a day earlier, Rahul Gandhi cancelled his rallies in West Bengal asking other politicians to rethink their campaign plans.

Science doesn't make these distinctions. It dictates that Covid protocol and vaccination are the only two weapons in the arsenal against the virus. Significantly, the Centre's decision to al-

Jamaat gathering in Delhi in March, Onam celebrations in Kerala in late August, farm protests and rail rokos across Punjab, then the stand-off in Singh and Tikri, Assembly elections in Bihar, multiple festivals across India, most recently the Kumbh, and, of course, the polls in the five states, was, by its very nature, a violation of Covid protocols but each was framed ~ and was sought to be justified ~ as per a political script.

Science doesn't make these distinctions. It dictates that Covid protocol and vaccination are the only two weapons in the arsenal against the virus. Significantly, the Centre's decision to al-

SIX MILLION LIVES

SIR, Apropos Mr Jaydev Jana's "Decentralised approach harmful" (*The Statesman*, 20 April), I would like to add the following from H. A. L. Fisher's *A History of Europe* (London, Edward Arnold, 1949 edition; page 1157) in connection with India's contribution in 1918 influenza deaths: "Indeed, the ill-consequences of the war were felt throughout the world, and nowhere more seriously than in those regions where a slight rise in food prices drives a whole population into want. Such was the case of India, where an epidemic of influenza which might otherwise have been relatively harmless carried off the enormous total of six million lives."

Yours, etc., B Mondal, Kolkata, 20 April.

low vaccinations for everyone above 18 from May 1 is one of the suggestions made by Dr Singh. Perhaps, an all-party meeting will break the ice. On May 2, the election results will come in. By then, if the number of daily deaths doesn't dip, 20,000 more would have died.

Yours, etc., S S Paul, Nadia, 20 April.

'Lockdown will increase suffering'

A Padma Bhushan awardee, DR K K TALWAR is a renowned cardiologist and a former chairman of the Medical Council of India. A former director of the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh, Dr Talwar is the Punjab government's health adviser and head of the state's Covid-19 Expert Committee. In an interview with RANJEET JAMWAL, Dr Talwar spoke at length about the Covid surge in Punjab, one of the worst coronavirus-affected states in the country, and steps being taken to curb its deadly spread. Excerpts:

Q. What are the reasons for the fresh Covid surge in Punjab?

A. It was in the middle of February this year that we (Punjab) started realising our (Covid) cases which had come down to 400 a day started going up to 800 a day. We found 40 per cent of these cases were people below 30 years of age. It worried us as it was the young population getting affected. So, we suggested closure of schools and colleges as well as to limit the number of people in social functions, restaurants, and shopping malls because youngsters visit such places. We took these steps in March and by the end of the month, the number of new cases virtually stabilised. So these steps have certainly helped us. We have been sending our samples to designated labs since December (2020) but then in March we got the result that 80 per cent Covid cases in Punjab were infected with the UK strain of the virus, which is more contagious and virulent. Younger people may have milder symptoms, but they are superspreaders. These two factors – younger people getting more affected and the UK strain of the virus – are main reasons for the Covid surge. Punjab has its own issues of (political) rallies (with Assembly polls slated for early 2022). Such factors have also contributed to this surge. If people don't wear a mask at such rallies, it becomes a spreading place.

Q. Punjab's Covid case fatality rate (CFR) is the highest in the country. What are its reasons?

A. The number one reason for it is



that our people come late (for treatment). They don't go for test early (for Covid). They go to a local doctor, take medicines and avoid testing. In this, there is one phenomenon we call hypoxia (low oxygen in the blood). Patients don't initially see any symptom, only when it (oxygen level) falls very badly, do they become symptomatic and rush for treatment when

the golden period of required medical help has already been crossed. So this is one factor. And the second factor has been our (Punjab's) comorbid situation. Punjab has a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, cancer, liver disease, kidney disease. I also admit that in health facilities and medical colleges

earlier we had a problem but now we have upgraded them significantly. If you look at deaths in this surge, it's half of the deaths we saw in August and September (2020). The UK variant virus, we have documented, is more virulent than the original virus. These are the reasons that we have a high mortality.

Q. A Central team has highlighted the gaps in testing, contact tracing, and slow pace of vaccination. Are these factors also hampering Punjab's battle against Covid-19?

A. As for contact tracing, I agree we had a problem in July-August. This time our contact tracing is better than before but it's not been that good. The problem is people in small towns don't want to get tested. We have to accept the limitations of our cultural mindset. People think they are healthy, so what's the need to get tested for Covid. So we face this issue. But the effort has been to educate people. As for slow vaccination, initially health workers were not co-operating for vaccination. At the moment, our vaccination is fairly okay.

Q. What's your assessment of the second Corona wave?

A. As far as Punjab goes, it may peak in the middle part of April and then go down. Other states should also get virus sequencing done so that the picture becomes clear and that may help in taking more steps to control the spread of the virus.

Q. Punjab has imposed night curfew to curb Corona spread. Is it effective?

A. Night curfew is only to educate people and curb late evening activities. The people who go out in the evening are mostly youngsters. They visit places like restaurants which are closed places. In summer, the air-conditioners are on at such places and youngsters don't wear masks there, so the virus spreads much more. So night curfew is to curb late evening activities. There is no economic loss from it.

Q. Given the Covid surge, is lockdown a possibility?

A. Personally, I think there should not be any lockdown. There should be some restrictions to control some activities like in a lockdown. Lockdown was done earlier because we wanted to prepare our health services. Now, I personally feel we should not go for lockdown. Of course, we must effectively control the assembly of people and the use of masks should be enforced strictly. If people follow these restrictions and don't defy these, I am sure in the next three-four weeks, things will change. But I think complete lockdown will only make people suffer more.

Steps to sustainable development



MAHEK GUPTA

With the International Community gearing up for the Conference of Parties to continue the conversations started during the Paris Climate Agreement, India needs to take another at its domestic policy to imbibe the Sustainable Development Goals it set out to achieve.

The 17 interlinked Sustainable

Development Goals were formulated coherently; acting as a blueprint to bring us in sync with the path of a sustainable future for all. To accomplish this ambitious project by 2022, India has not just pledged to put a full stop to single-use plastic but has also decided to install a capacity of 175 GW solely dedicated to renewable energy. By 2030, India aims to improve on its energy sector through cleaner technology and the Green

Climate Fund. To achieve this, some of its core targets are to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent from 2005 levels, keeping non-fossil fuel-based energy resources at the centre for deriving about 40 per cent cumulative electric power and creating a carbon sink of about 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ with the help of additional forest and tree cover.

As regards execution, the Niti

Aayog has been monitoring contributions made towards SDGs targets for 2030, and released an SDG India Index - Baseline Report 2018. India is among the frontline countries in implementing the Paris agreement on climate change, with renewable energy contributing one-fourth of its total energy production. The Government of India had already reduced its emissions intensity of GDP by 21 per cent compared to 2005 levels by 2020. India's renewables have grown by two and a half times in the past six years, and solar energy capacity by 13 times. Not just that, work on the world's largest hybrid renewable energy park in Kutch, Gujarat has begun recently.

In March 2018, Haryana became the first Indian state to have an annual budget primarily focused on the attainment of SDGs. States like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh are making their way up the ladder with an SDG India Index score of 69 while among UTs, it is Chandigarh with a score of 68. The government's efforts, from 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' to 'Ayushman Bharat', from 'Clean Ganga Mission' to 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan', from 'Self-Reliance' to 'Vocal for Local', and many more have collectively aimed at empowering all citizens equally. These diverse schemes are in direct harmony with SDGs specifically, SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 11, and SDG 12.

India is, however, ranked 117th among 183 countries on the Sustainable Development Index 2020. Despite some significant efforts, such a low score signifies that there are

loopholes in the functioning of the system. Out of the world's 30 most polluted cities, 21 are in India, hundreds and thousands of rivers and wells have already dried up and our holy rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna are polluted to the extent that we are finding high proportions of lead in them. Due to increased temperatures each year, we are witnessing more and unparalleled series of floods, cyclones, and hurricanes. Assam, Bihar, and Chennai are the worst affected.

Our wildlife is constantly threatened. Over the past two decades, India has lost some 1.6 million hectares of land - approximately four times the size of Goa. India generates one-tenth of the total waste produced in the world, which amounts to some 277 million tonnes each year. It is also the third-largest e-waste generator in the world. The rate of waste generation is so exponential that the garbage mountain at Delhi's Ghazipur is claimed to go higher than the iconic Taj Mahal.

The World Bank has already said that it will be next to impossible for India to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals in the coming decade. All this suggests that we have a long way to go. This is not just the duty of the government but of every institution, corporation, and individual. Climate change has turned into a climate emergency only because people are not willing to accept responsibility for direct or indirect contribution to global warming.

The writer is a student at the Jindal School of Environment and Sustainability.

NO 28893

ACROSS

- 7 Players of games put on half-length legwear (6)
- 8 Several gods – the acting god of nature to the fore (8)
- 9 Fielding – possibly with new spinning stars (4)
- 10 Worker works with skilful movements (10)
- 11 Trained pear lies against the wall? (8)
- 13 See 19
- 15 Incidents of motorway madness? They're insubstantial (7)
- 16 Fatigue turning into bout of fever (4-3)
- 19/21 Booker Prize winner in demand before university called foul (5,2,3)
- 21 Iron Duke not due to appear in high-class gathering after having gone downhill (5-3)
- 22 Progressive increase of
- 24 delight about regular social appearances (10)
- 25 Seven from Paris quietly going for more time in subterranean home (4)
- 26 Conventional way of reaching country home kept by the French? (4-4)
- 27 Gold accepted by first person to get gold for acting great (6)
- 28 See 19
- 29 Incidents of motorway madness? They're insubstantial (7)
- 30 Fletcher has designs on prison uniforms with Mackay innocently trusting him at first (10)
- 31 Invalid entrance to nightclub gets jammed, not opening (4)
- 32 End sentence with period children are taught (4-4)
- 33 Definitely where Sir should go to be loved! (6)
- 34 French noblemen's 'à votre santé', drinking a litre between six (10)
- 35 Slowly run out of unopened alcohol (4)
- 36 Need peer to crush a Parisian uprising (6)
- 37 Alt-Right advantage for Left-Bankers? (5-5)
- 38 Night-time predator pursuing insect into willow (7,3)
- 39 Nothing trivial, perhaps, upset tribal leader (8)
- 40 Start a Ximenean section for A to Z connoisseurs? (7)
- 41 Escort fuel once had this? (4,2)
- 42 Take time out to obtain closure (4)
- 43 Paris summit proscribed synthetic dress (4)

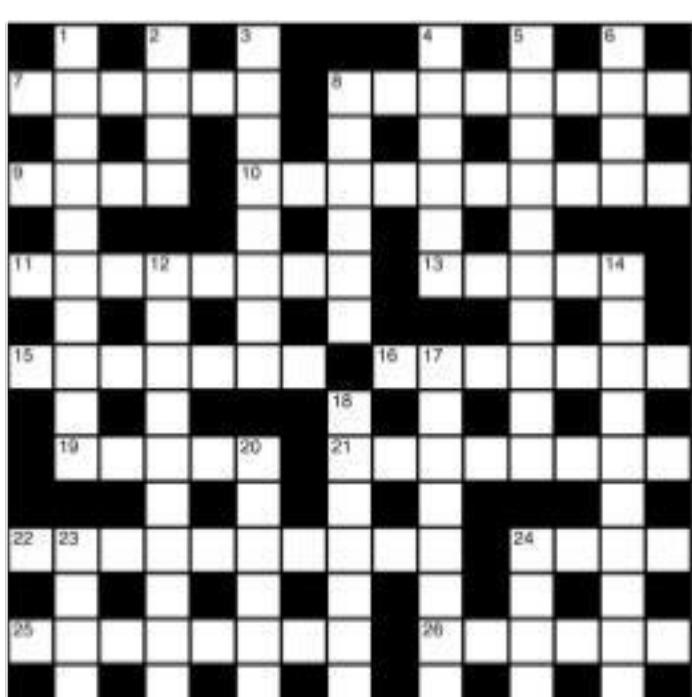
YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

SOLUTION FOR 17 APRIL

S	I	P	A	C	L	A	S	E	R	S
M	R	A	T	H	O	N	G	R	A	S
A	R	T	U	S	C	T	A	N	A	A
R	A	T	U	S	F	T	A	N	A	A
A	R	T	U	S	F	T	A	N	A	A
S	R	E	S	R	O	R	S	E	R	S
T	E	N	T	E	R	T	E	N	E	S
E	N	T	E	R	T	E	N	E	E	S
G	B	N	F	L	T	D	G	N	E	S
L	A	I	E	N	T	E	I	N	E	S
A	R	E	N	T	E	E	R	E	E	S
S	E	V	H	N	E	R	N	E	E	S
P	A	T	R	O	N	E	O	E	E	S
A	R	T	U	S	F	T	A	N	A	A
B	A	L	E	T	M	O	N	A	A	A
A	B	L	E	T	M	I	S	T	A	A
E	O	E	H	E	O	R	E	E	A	A
P	A	R	F	F	A	R	E	E	A	A
A	U	D	O	T	P	L	I	E	A	A
S	T	R	O	L	A	D	E	A	A	A
Y	F	D	L	R	E	A	E	A	A	A

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

CROSSWORD



100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The question whether the Census returns for Calcutta can be depended upon is a very important one for the city, and the Corporation is well advised in looking into the matter. The minutes of the General Committee just issued show that the question was raised by Mr. Bonpas, in reply to whom the Chairman stated that he had discussed the subject with the Special Census Officer, who pointed out that there had been "very great difficulty" in taking the census. The Chairman asked the Census Officer to test the figures in a number of selected areas, with a view to a more exhaustive test in certain wards if the result of this preliminary inquiry should justify such a step. That there is a prima facie case for further inquiry has been shown by the testimony of some of our correspondents who found themselves overlooked in the enumeration, and by the Census Officer's admission that there was very great difficulty in the task. That Calcutta is not the only place where difficulty was experienced is indicated by a note on the Bombay Presidency returns in which the provincial superintendent of the Census points out, amongst other handicaps, the difficulty of obtaining voluntary workers. Those who did the work voluntarily are entitled to public thanks, but in these hard times it is too much to expect clerks or others to undertake such a task for nothing.

NEWS ITEMS

ROBBED OF FIVE DAYS' MARTYRDOM

Karachi, Apr 23

An amusing incident is reported in connection with the charge against two Jacobabad agitators, one the secretary of the local Congress Committee and the other the secretary of the local Khilafat Committee. They were sentenced by the Resident Magistrate of Jacobabad to five days' imprisonment or a fine of twenty rupees for organising a procession without the permission of the police to welcome a local Khilafatist returning to Jacobabad after release from imprisonment. The two accused elected to go to jail, but fifteen minutes later somebody paid the fine and the men were released, greatly to their disgust. They protested vehemently, but without avail and did not even succeed in eliciting the name of the individual who had deprived them of five days' martyrdom.

ALLEGED MURDER OF ADOPTED SON

Rangoon, Apr 23

A Chinese woman, Ohn Hmwe, has been arrested by the police on a charge of beating her adopted son, Eng Uga, to death. Her husband, Tat La, is also accused but not yet arrested. It appears the accused bought Eng Uga for Rs 400 about three months ago, and adopted him as their son. Accused belong to the Lee family, while the deceased boy belongs to the Sent San family, which is of higher social position and culture. It is alleged that the accused ordered the deceased boy to say that he belonged to the Lee family, and that he refused to comply. It is said that the accused consequently beat him day and night with a bamboo stick for ten to fifteen days, until he died from injuries on the evening of April 22.

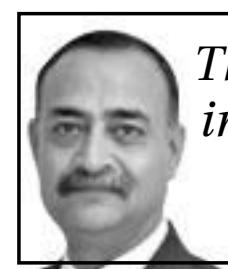
RACE-COURSE HOOLIGANS

Evidence of the menace of organised race-course hooligans was forthcoming on Saturday at Alexandra Park, where a fight between two groups known as the Birmingham gang and the Italian gang resulted in a man receiving a bullet wound in the head. The incident occurred near the enclosure before the start of the first race, and was the culmination of several savage encounters between various individuals belonging to these rival gangs. A determined attack was made on two men by a party of hooligans from the Midlands. The two men were suddenly surrounded, struck on the head, and kicked by their assailants in so severe a manner as to necessitate medical attention. About 100 men were eventually escorted from the course.

AFGHAN MISSION IN EUROPE

The Afghan delegation which was recently visiting Latvia has now found its way to Poland, and will proceed to Berlin. Its members hope to visit France, Britain and the United States. Its mission seems to be to announce to the Governments of Europe the accession of the new Amir and the complete independence of Afghanistan. The members have impressed those who have talked with them, on the one hand with their native ignorance of European affairs and political conditions generally, and on the other hand with the genuineness of their desire to discover means whereby their country may escape from the isolation which its position as a barrier State between two great Empires has forced upon it.





The race towards 5G would make infrastructure space even more relevant.

BIMAL DAYAL
MD & CEO, INDUS TOWERS LIMITED

THUMBNAILS

SBI slashes GDP growth forecast to 10.4%

It had earlier projected 11% GDP growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

With India topping the global infection list for the third consecutive day and more states imposing restrictions, SBI Research today cut its growth forecast for the current financial year to 10.4 per cent from 11 per cent earlier.

India reported over 3.34 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours.

The report penned by the bank's chief economic advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh also suggested that faster vaccination is cheaper on the economy than complete lockdowns, pointing out that the total cost of vaccination is much lower at 0.1 per cent of GDP while the lockdowns have already cost 0.7 per cent of GDP.

SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH
CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR, SBI

on MP is seen at Rs 21,712 crore of its Rs 11.3 lakh crore GSDP, and that of Rajasthan, which is also under lockdown till 3 May, its Rs 12-lakh crore economy will lose Rs 17,237 crore.

Ghosh's 0.1 percentage point of GDP loss assessment is based on the fact that this is only 15-20 per cent of these states' health expenditure. Budget assuming half of the population in these states will get vaccinated by the Centre.

These 13 states will have to collectively cough out Rs 1,66,216 crore, of which, UP will have to spend the highest at Rs 32,009 crore, given that it has 13.6 crore people above 18 years who are eligible for vaccination. It is followed by Maharashtra at Rs 26,432 crore for vaccinating 6.9 crore of its people and Rajasthan at Rs 16,269 crore to inoculate 3.5 crore people.

He further said that given the current circumstances of partial, local and weekend lockdowns in almost all the states, we are revising downwards our growth forecast to 10.4 per cent real GDP and 14.3 per cent nominal GDP in financial year 2021-22.

Total loss arising from the limited lockdowns is estimated at Rs 1.5 lakh crore, of which, Maharashtra, MP and Rajasthan account for 80 per cent and Maharashtra alone at 54 percent, he said.

With the entire Maharashtra is in lockdowns till month-end, its Rs 29.8 lakh crore economy will see an erosion of Rs 81,672 crore. However, with 15 of districts under weekend lockdown, the economic impact

Maharashtra is the economically biggest and the most industrialised state contributing 13.9 per cent to the national GDP.

5G smartphone: Smart-phone maker Realme on Friday unveiled a new 5G smartphone ~ Realme 8 5G. The smartphone is equipped with MediaTek Dimensity 700 5G processor, the company said. It has been priced at Rs 14,999 (4GB+128GB) and Rs 16,999 (8GB+128GB) and will be up for sale from 28 April onwards on Flipkart.com, realme.com and mainline channels, the company added.

SNS

Bridgestone pact:

Bridgestone has announced an exclusive partnership with Netherlands-based mobility innovator Lightyear. Bridgestone has engineered tyres specifically for Lightyear One, the world's first long-range solar electric vehicle, which is set for commercial availability by the end of this year, according to a company statement.

SNS

Sebi bar:

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has barred two entities and three individuals from the securities market for providing unauthorised investment advisory services. A2 Financial Services and its partners Ashish Jain and Ashutosh Mishra, and Money Booster and its sole proprietor Anurag Singh have been barred from the securities market, as per two separate orders passed on Thursday.

PTI

Zomato appointment:

Food ordering platform Zomato on Friday said it has appointed five independent directors on its eight-member board, including four women.

PTI

HCL Tech net dips 6.1% to ₹2,962 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

REPORT CARD

IT firm HCL Technologies today posted a 6.1 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,962 crore for the March quarter. The Noida-headquartered firm has also announced a special interim dividend of Rs 10 per share to mark the \$10 billion annual revenue milestone.

The IT major had registered a net profit of Rs 3,154 crore in the January-March 2020 quarter, HCL said in a regulatory filing. Including the impact of a one-time milestone bonus, the company's net profit for March 2021 quarter was at Rs 2,387 crore.

Its revenue grew by 5.7 per cent to Rs 19,642 crore in the quarter under review, from Rs 18,590 crore in the corresponding quarter last year, as per US GAAP.

For financial year 2020-21, HCL Tech's consolidated

net profit increased by 17.6 per cent to Rs 13,011 crore, while revenue grew by 6.7 per cent to Rs 75,379 crore from the previous financial year. The company expects its FY'22 revenue to grow in double digits in constant currency.

In dollar terms, net income declined by 5.1 per cent to \$410 million, while revenue grew by 6 per cent to \$2,696 million in the March 2021 quarter over the year-ago period.

For FY'21, net income grew



21, HCL Tech's consolidated net profit increased by 17.6 per cent to Rs 13,011 crore.

by 13.2 per cent to \$1,760 million and revenue was up 2.4 per cent to \$10,175 million over the previous fiscal.

"We have posted a robust Q4 FY'21 sequential constant currency revenue growth of 2.5 per cent. Our FY'21 revenue stands at \$10.175 billion, a growth of 2.4 per cent year-on-year and a net income growth of 13.2 per cent y-o-y (excluding bonus)," HCL Technologies president and CEO C Vijayakumar said.

With a total interim dividend at Rs 16 per share, the company's total dividend for the year is at Rs 26 per share.

"At least 4 per cent of GDP is a lost potential in terms of

The company has also registered the highest-ever new deal booking this quarter of \$3.1 billion with an all-time high exit pipeline, he added.

"The booking and pipeline represent a well-balanced mix of service lines, geographies and industries...With these solid financials, a passionate employee family and a business model that has consistently proven itself for its resilience and relevance, we step confidently into FY'22,"

The company has declared a dividend of Rs 6 per share. In addition, the board has declared a special interim dividend of Rs 10 per share to mark the company crossing the \$10 billion milestone in revenue.

With a total interim dividend at Rs 16 per share, the company's total dividend for the year is at Rs 26 per share.

"At least 4 per cent of GDP is a lost potential in terms of

tial. That is a lot that is about 25 per cent of the total taxes collected by Centre and states".

The 15th Finance Commission report, tabled in Parliament in February, had highlighted that the actual tax collections by the Centre during the last ten years, on average, was four per cent less than what was budgeted.

"The gap between revised estimates and actuals is by no means negligible. This prediction error leads to ad hoc expenditure management, health needs, but find a convergence between sustainable development and medium-term fiscal policy statement..."

Singh said.

Speaking at the event, former RBI deputy governor Rakesh Mohan said: "According to finance commission's calculation, we are about 4 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) below our tax poten-

cial. That is a lot that is about 25 per cent of the total taxes collected by Centre and states".

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Chakrabarty to be part-time chairman of HDFC Bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

HDFC

Bank

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Fear of triple mutant from Bengal looms over Odisha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 23 APRIL

Odisha government erected barricades at all entry points bordering West Bengal to keep strict vigil on travellers as a triple mutant had been detected in the neighbouring state. Mandatory 14 day institutional quarantine for people coming from Bengal has been ordered except for those who produce a RT PCR negative test (done 48 hrs prior to their journey) and/or a double dose vaccination certificate.

The orders were issued yesterday and today district authorities of Balasore and Mayurbhanj enforced it. At the Laxmannath and Jamsoila check gates there were scores of vehicles stranded and even angry wordy duels as travelers were caught unaware. A bridegroom who had to reach Balasore was among those who were stuck at the check gate.

Heavy police deployment was made at the check gates. Efforts were on to try and check even the rural roads where people often cross over for their daily needs including buying fish from the Bengal side.

Balasore district collector K Sudarshan Chakravarthy and additional district mag-



istrate Nilu Mohapatra besides senior officials visited the interstate check gate at Laxmannath to stock the stock of security arrangement.

According to Mohapatra "The entry from Bengal end has been thoroughly screened. The vehicles with essential commodities are allowed with driver and helper. Rest are asked to furnish NRC vaccination proof or RT PCR test. Those who fail to produce such certificates are being lodged in quarantine centres at Jaleswar".

Trespassing via village roads is also being checked. The marine police have been instructed to intensify patrolling.

Chhattisgarh was the cause of spread in western Odisha districts and now the Bengal mutant is likely to hit the coastal districts, remarked an official.

Odisha has witnessed a rapid doubling of COVID cases with the daily count crossing the 6000 mark for the second successive day. A total of 6215 new cases were detected in the last 24 hours; 3604 were from quarantine centres and 2611 local contact cases. Eight people succumbed to the virus.

Khordha district (including state capital Bhubaneswar) topped the list with 950 cases followed by 684 and 620 cases Sundargarh and Kalahandi districts respectively.

State capital Bhubaneswar recorded this year's biggest spike of 698 new cases on Friday.

The Odisha government has decided to conduct 50,000 COVID-19 tests from Monday.

Over the last three days as many as four journalists working for different vernacular daily newspapers in Ganjam district have succumbed to the virus.

The state government has been increasing bed strength in hospitals and has directed private hospitals to reserve 50 percent of their bed for COVID patients. The hospitals have been asked to provide information on the progress of the patient on a daily basis to the family members.

District collectors advised to keep their Covid call centers fully active and responsive on 24x7 basis.

All the districts were asked to functionalize the Covid Care Centres with oxygen facilities.

Public health experts said the rapid rise in the state of about 6000 cases per day is likely to increase to over 10,000 to 15,000 cases per day as Odisha is expected to reach the peak by first week of May.

Odisha , with a number of steel plants and a couple of fertilizer units has turned out to be a major provider of the emergency medical oxygen to several states which are in dire need of it.

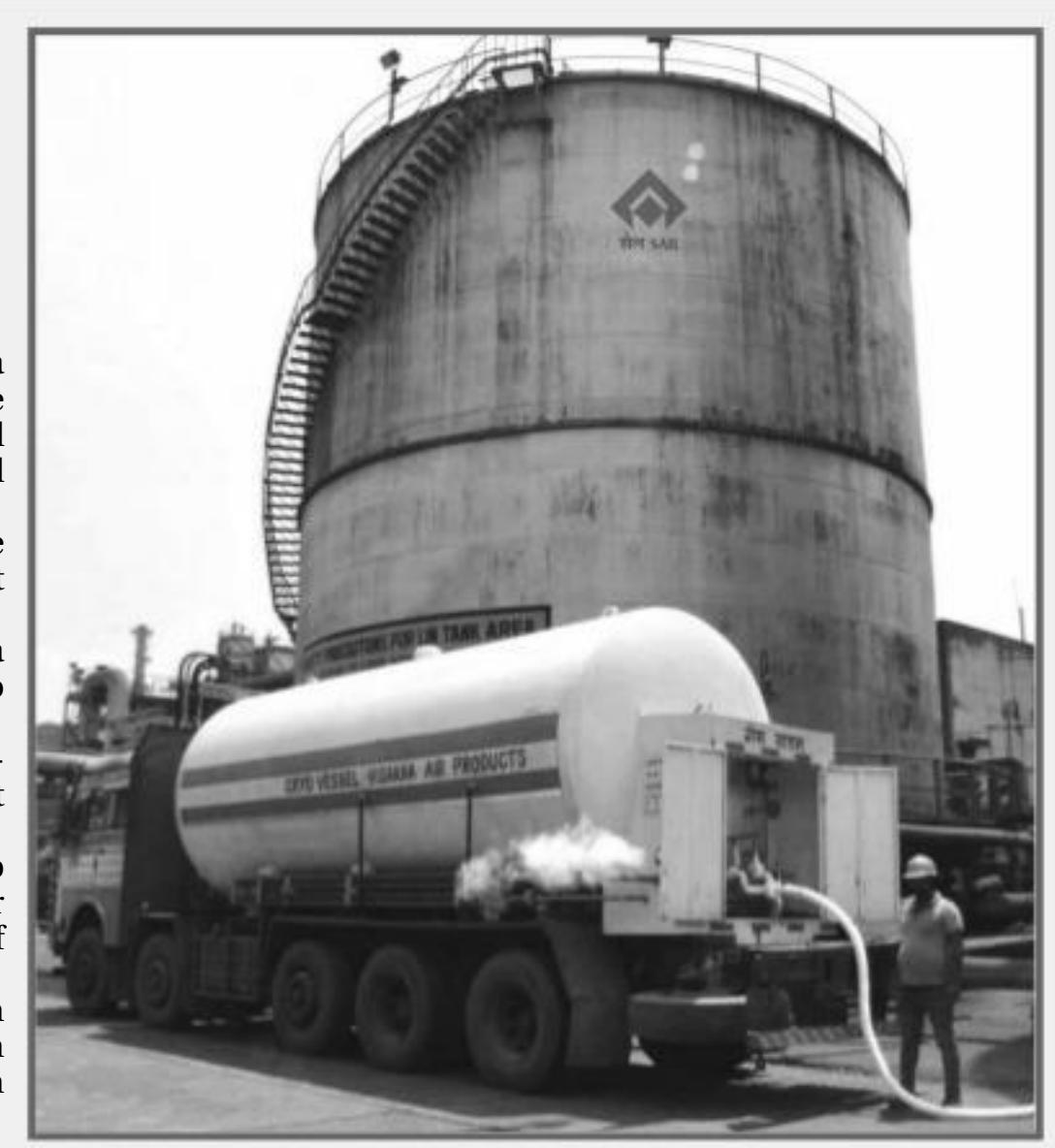
Today as many as 15 tankers containing more than 250 tonne of medical oxygen were sent from Rourkela, Jajpur and Angul districts.

CM's of Maharashtra, Delhi, Telangana had spoken to Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik who assured them full support.

Odisha police has formed a dedicated corridor for prompt and unhindered movement of the tankers.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has set up a special cell with an IPS officer to monitor and coordinate loading and transportation of medical oxygen to different states.

Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has also been monitoring the production and dispatch of oxygen from steel plants in Odisha.



Odisha provides oxygen to different

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 23 APRIL

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Odisha move to 'rationalize' sanctuary boundaries

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 23 APRIL:

Odisha government proposed 'rationalization' of the boundary of Karlapat and Sunabeda sanctuaries in the state among six other proposals which will soon be sent to the central government.

The Standing Committee of State Board for Wildlife which met under the chairmanship of Forest Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha today cleared the seven proposals for approval of CM Naveen Patnaik and sending it to the centre.

The proposals included laying the 3rd and 4th railway line between Budhapank-Salegaon by East Coast Railways, completion of the Renigali irrigation project as well as widening and strengthening of certain roads in Mayurbhanj district.

The committee has also suggested improvement of passenger jetty and public rain shelters in Bhadrak district.

Additional chief secretary forest, Ms Mona Sharma, PCCF, SK Rath, PCCF Wildlife Sasi Patel, MLA Rajkishore Das and several other stakeholders attended the meeting.



IC BSF, visits Malkangiri district and the forest areas bordering Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.



We have the resources to help, and other people need it; that makes it our moral obligation to do so.

DEMOCRATIC SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	26 CL
HONG KONG	31	24 CL
TOKYO	19	9 CL
LONDON	16	4 CL
DUBAI	38	24 S
SAN FRANCISCO	13	9 H
NEW YORK	18	9 S
MOSCOW	14	4 R

S=sunny, CL= clear,
H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



People attend a demonstration against the tightening of Denmark's immigration policy and deportation orders to some Syrian families

AGENCIES

France stabbing: A French police officer was stabbed to death inside her police station Friday, and her attacker shot and killed by officers nearby, authorities said. The police officer was an administrative employee in the station, the spokesperson said.

AP

UK budget: Britain has seen its budget deficit rise during the coronavirus pandemic to its highest level since the year after the end of World War II, official figures showed Friday. The scale of the borrowing the government has undertaken in the wake of the pandemic is evident in the size of the increase.

AP

Vaccine cuts infection rate: A single dose of the vaccines, currently being administered in the UK, cut the rate of coronavirus infections by around 65 per cent, according to a new UK study on Friday. Studies which are yet to be published, found that a single jab of the two-dose vaccines protected older people almost younger and healthier individuals.

PTI

Covid 'red list' travel ban begins in UK

The UK has tracked 55 more Indian variant cases and had imposed a temporary travel ban on India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON, 23 APRIL



The 'red list' Covid-19 travel restrictions came into force for India on Friday, which bans entry for travellers from the country and requires British and Irish nationals and long-term UK residents returning home to undergo a compulsory 10-day hotel quarantine.

The ban comes as Public Health England (PHE) confirmed 55 more cases of the so-called double mutant Indian variant, B.1.617, from all coronavirus cases tracked until 14 April, taking the total for the Variant Under Investigation (VUI) in the UK to 132.

Experts are still studying whether any of the mutations mean the variant can be transmitted more easily, is more deadly or can evade the effectiveness of vaccines or natural immunity.

At this point they are designated VUI with a year, month, and number. Following a risk assessment with the relevant expert committee, they may be designated Variant of Concern (VOC). PHE said of the Indian variant, designated as VUI-21-Apr-01.

The last flight from India before the red list categorisation, which includes 40 countries considered high-risk zones for the spread of new variants of the deadly virus, landed at Heathrow Airport in

London from Delhi on Thursday evening. Earlier, Heathrow had confirmed that it turned down requests for at least eight additional flights that were seeking landing rights ahead of Friday's 4am cut-off to avoid long queues and crowds building up at the airport.

Families and students who were able to make it back in time must now self-isolate at their own homes or student accommodation registered on passenger locator forms and

take follow up coronavirus tests for the National Health Service (NHS) to continue tracking their results.

Anyone arriving from India from Friday must now budget for a 10-day quarantine period at a government-approved hotel quarantine facility and take two follow-up PCR tests, adding approximately 2,000 pounds per person to the travel costs.

Indian students are the worst-hit by this additional requirement as they were preparing to either resume their on-campus studies at UK universities or start a new term next month. Universities UK International, a representative group for the UK's leading universities, has said that given the government may have difficulty providing capacity, they should look at where universities have accommodation to meet the standard of the hotel quarantine system.

Americans advised to avoid travels to Asia:

The US has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Maldives due to the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the region.

In a series of travel advisories on Thursday, the authorities also urged to reconsider travel to China and Nepal; exercise increased caution while travelling to Sri Lanka and exercise normal travel precaution to Bhutan, which has been given Level 1, the safest level for travelling overseas.

India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Maldives have been put in Level 4.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a Level 4 Travel Health Notice for India due to a very high level of Covid-19 in the country.

Canada bans passenger flights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TORONTO, 23 APRIL

The Canadian government has banned all passenger flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days due to the unprecedented spike in Covid-19 cases in the region, the longest country-specific travel ban imposed by Canada.

The flight ban took effect from midnight Thursday, Transport Minister Omar Alghabra said on Thursday. A number of countries like the UK, Australia and Singapore have banned travel to and from India due to a surge in coronavirus infections. Over 3.14 lakh new coronavirus cases were regis-

Russian troops starts pulling back from Ukrainian border



ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 23 APRIL

Russian troops began pulling back to their permanent bases Friday after a massive buildup that caused Ukrainian and Western concerns.

The concentration of Russian troops amid increasing violations of a cease-fire in the conflict in eastern Ukraine raised concerns in the West, and ordered the military to pull the troops that took part in them back to their permanent bases by 1 May.

At the same time, he ordered their heavy weapons kept in western Russia for another massive military exercise called Zapad (West) 2021

Moscow has rejected Ukrainian and Western concerns about the troop buildup, arguing that it's free to deploy its forces anywhere on Russian territory.

Asked if the Kremlin thinks that the Russian troop pull-back could help ease tensions with the United States, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that the issues aren't connected.

We have said that any movement of Russian troops on Russian territory doesn't pose any threat and doesn't represent an escalation. Russia does what it thinks is necessary for its military organization and training of troops.

The Russian Defence Ministry said its forces that took part in the massive drills in Crimea were moving Friday to board trains, transport aircraft and landing vessels en route to their permanent bases. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has welcomed the Russian pull-back.

On Thursday, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu declared the sweeping maneuvers in Crimea and wide swaths of western Russia over, and ordered the military to pull the troops that took part in them back to their permanent bases by 1 May.

The US and NATO have said the buildup was the largest since 2014, when Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and threw its support behind separatists in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas.

Baltics expel Russian diplomats

VILNIUS, 23 APRIL

The three Baltic countries on Friday ordered the expulsion of a total of four Russian diplomats as an act of solidarity with the Czech Republic, where scores of diplomats have been expelled since Saturday over the alleged involvement of Russian spies in a massive ammunition depot explosion in 2014.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said two embassy staff had been declared persona non grata because they had carried out activities incompatible with their diplomatic status. They were given seven days to leave.

On Thursday, the Czech Republic ordered 63 more Russian diplomats to leave the country after previously expelling 18 whom it had identified as spies in a case related to the huge blast.

Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia are among the Kremlin's harshest critics.

AP

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny to end prison hunger strike on 24th day

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 23 APRIL

Imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny says he is ending his hunger strike after getting medical attention and being warned by his doctors that continuing it would put his life at risk.

In an Instagram post on Friday afternoon, the 24th day of his hunger strike, Navalny said he will continue to demand a visit from his doctor to address a loss of sensation in his legs and arms—the main demand the politician announced when launched his hunger strike.

But he said he would stop the strike after having been examined by non-prison doctors, something he called a huge progress.

"Thanks to the huge support of good people across the country and around the world, we have made huge progress," Navalny said in his message.

Two months ago, my requests for medical help were prompting smirks. I wasn't given any medications....Thanks to you,



now I have been examined by a concilium of civilian doctors twice. Navalny said he would start coming out of the hunger strike on Friday and the process of ending it will take 24 days.

The 44-year-old politician, who was arrested earlier this year and is serving a 2-year sentence, began the hunger strike on 31 March to protest prison authorities' refusal to let his doctors visit after he developed severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

Officials insisted Navalny was getting all the medical help he needs, but Navalny said he received effectively no treatment. On Wednesday night, another round of mass protests demanding his freedom swept across Russia. A top aide said Wednesday night's protests seemed to have brought a compromise from Russian authorities on getting Navalny the medical help he had demanded when launching the hunger strike.

Navalny, who is President Vladimir Putin's well-known critic, was arrested in January upon his return from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from a nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin accusations that officials reject.

HUNGER GAMES



A family cooks breakfast over a campfire at a squatter settlement on a hilltop in the Villa El Salvador neighborhood, occupied by people who can no longer pay their rent because of restrictions on economic activity aimed at limiting the spread of Covid-19, in Lima

Spanish politics takes nasty turn

MADRID, 23 APRIL

Most political parties in Spain put aside their differences Friday to condemn a series of death threats mailed to the country's interior minister, the director of the Civil Guard police force and the leader of a far-left political party.

The threats were delivered in envelopes filled with bullets and accompanied by anonymous letters either demanding the three officials step down from their positions or plainly menacing the recipients and their relatives.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska and his appointee, Civil Guard Director General Mara Gomez, received letters.

"You have 10 days to step down. The time to laugh at us has ended. National Police, Civil Guard," read the letter addressed to Grande-Marlaska.

AP

Evidence in Chauvin case contradicts first Minneapolis police statement

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PHILADELPHIA, 23 APRIL

Moments after former officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder in George Floyd's death, copies of the original Minneapolis police statement began recirculating on social media.

It attributed George Floyd's death to medical distress and made no mention that the Black man had been pinned to the ground at the neck by Derek Chauvin, or that he'd cried out that he couldn't breathe.

Many were posting the release to highlight the distance between the initial police narrative and the evidence that led to the conviction Tuesday, including excruciating video shot by a teenage bystander of Derek Chauvin with his knee on George Floyd's neck, even after Floyd had stopped moving.

And while Chauvin's conviction is a high-profile case



of video rebutting initial police statements, criminal justice experts and police accountability advocates say the problem of inaccurate initial reports especially in fatal police encounters is widespread.

If it wasn't for this 17-year-old who took the video,

Derek Chauvin would in all likelihood still be on the police force training officers, said Andre Johnson, a University of Memphis professor of communication studies. This has been going on for a while, and it's just now coming to light for a lot of Americans because of video evidence.

For their part, police officials say they give the most accurate information they can during fast-moving and complicated investigations. But the frequency with which misleading information is published cannot be ignored, critics say.

In 2014, the New York Police Department's narrative of Eric Garner's death was that he'd gone into cardiac arrest. It made no mention of an officer's extended chokehold on Garner, shown in a bystander video that captured repeated pleads that he couldn't breathe.

A grand jury declined to

indict the since-fired officer

Daniel Pantaleo, who said he was using a legal maneuver called a seat belt.

A year later, then-police-man Michael Slager said he shot Walter Scott because he'd grabbed for the officer's stun gun.

But by stander video of the North Charleston, South Carolina, shooting showed Slager chase Scott after he fled a traffic stop and fatally shoot him in the back.

Slager was charged with murder in state court, but released after a hung jury. He later pleaded guilty to federal civil rights violations.

Roughly 80% of departments with 500 officers or more are now using cameras, but video storage can be costly.

Official police video is also increasingly showing discrepancies in initial police narratives, though generally the images are withheld for days or sometimes months during internal investigations.

SpaceX launches third crew in under year, fly on reused rocket

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAPE CANAVERAL, 23 APRIL

SpaceX launched four astronauts toward orbit Friday using a recycled rocket and capsule, the third crew flight in less than a year for Elon Musk's rapidly expanding company.

The astronauts from the US, Japan and France should reach the International Space Station early Saturday morning, following a 23-hour ride in the same Dragon capsule used by SpaceX's debut crew last May. They'll spend six months at the orbiting lab.

It was the first time SpaceX reused a capsule and rocket to launch astronauts for NASA, after years of proving the

capability on station supply runs. The rocket was used last November on the company's second astronaut flight. Embracing the trend, spacecraft commander Shane Kimbrough and his crew weeks ago wrote their initials in the rocket's soot, hoping to start a tradition.

For NASA astronaut Megan McArthur, it was a bit of déjà vu. She launched in the same seat in the same capsule as her husband, Bob Behnken, did during SpaceX's first crew flight. This time it was Behnken and their 7-year-old son waving goodbye. McArthur blew kisses and offered virtual hugs. Also flying SpaceX on Friday: Japan's Akihiko Hoshide and France's Thomas Peschel.

Indian-origin postal managers are among a group of 39 people who won a Court of Appeal case in the UK on Friday that quashed their convictions for allegedly stealing money and false accounting following the installation of a new computer system in local post offices in a historic scandal dating back several years.

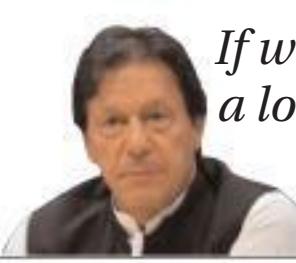
These former sub-postmasters were hit by a faulty IT system, called Horizon, that led to accusations of them stealing funds from the UK's Post Office Ltd.

In 2019, a High Court ruling had approved a 57.8-million pounds settlement between hundreds of claimants and the Post Office, with many then left to overturn their convictions. Among

the group of 39 are the likes of Seema Misra and Vijay Parekh, who had maintained their innocence.

Misra took over her post office in Surrey in 2005 and was pregnant when she was wrongfully handed a 15-month sentence 10 years ago after being accused of stealing 75,000

pounds from her branch. "I would definitely have killed myself if I hadn't been pregnant," said Misra, a mother of two who hailed Friday's Court of Appeal verdict as a huge moment.



If we (as a nation) don't take precautionary measures, we will have to impose a lockdown which will also affect our economy at a time when it is on the rise

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN

WARNING OF ANOTHER NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN IN THE COUNTRY

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 24 APRIL 2021

11

THUMBNAILS

Dhaka warehouse fire: At least four people, including a woman, were killed and 23 others injured after a fire broke out at a chemical warehouse here in the Bangladeshi capital early on Friday, according to media reports. The fire started at the ground floor of the building in Old Dhaka's Armanitola area after 3 am PTI

Zimbabwean Prez takes vaccine dose: Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa took his second dose of the Chinese-made Covid-19 vaccine in the town of Kwekwe, Midlands Province IANS

Bus-truck collision kills 15: A total of 15 people were killed and eight others injured as a mini-bus collided with a truck coming from opposite direction in Afghanistan's southern Zabul province on Thursday, provincial police chief Mohammad Wais Samimi said on Friday. IANS

Thailand Covid cases: Thailand's total Covid-19 cases have surpassed 50,000 as a record 2,070 new infections were recorded on Friday, according to the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). IANS

Asean summit to address Myanmar's post-coup crisis

The junta's foes promoted the idea that the National Unity Government should represent Yangon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BANGKOK, 23 APRIL

When the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations holds a special summit Saturday to discuss Myanmar, the regional body will be under as much scrutiny as the general who led the February coup ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Opponents of the junta are furious that ASEAN is welcoming its chief, Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, to its meeting in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, arguing that because he seized power by force, he is not Myanmar's legitimate leader.

Also weighing heavily against him is the lethal violence perpetrated by the security forces he commands, responsible for killing hundreds of largely peaceful protesters and bystanders.

Min Aung Hlaing, who faces international sanctions for his role in military atrocities and the brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, should not be welcomed at an intergovernmental gathering to address a crisis he created, said Brad Adams, Asia director for New York-based Human Rights Watch.

ASEAN members should instead take this opportunity to impose targeted, economic sanctions on junta leaders and on businesses that fund the junta, and press the junta to release political detainees, end abuses, and restore the country's democratically elected government.

The junta's foes have promoted the idea that the opposition's parallel National Unity Government, recently estab-

lished by the elected lawmakers the army barred from being seated, should represent Myanmar, or at least have some role in the Jakarta meeting. It has not been invited.

It's unacceptable that they invite this murderer-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing, who has just killed more than 730 people in Myanmar, and I think it is very unfortunate that they, again and again, talk to the military generals and not to the civilian government of Myanmar, which is the NUG, says the parallel government's Minister of International Cooperation, Dr Sasa, who uses

one name.

Evan Laksmana, a researcher for Indonesia's Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank with close government ties, told The Associated Press there is a very practical reason for engaging Min Aung Hlaing face to face.

ASEAN recognises the reality is that one party is doing the violence, which is the military, and therefore that's why the military is being called to the meeting.

So this is not in any way conferring legitimacy to the military regime, he said.

By talking to the general, ASEAN hopes to initiate a longer term framework process, starting with ending the violence, that will hopefully help facilitate dialogue among all the stakeholders in Myanmar, not just (with) the military regime. Skeptics feel ASEAN faces more basic problems in seeking to resolve Myanmar's crisis.

They point to the divergent interests of the group's members, its longstanding conventions of seeking consensus and avoiding interference in each other's affairs, and the historic obstinacy of Myanmar's generals.

One faction in the group, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, believes the instability engendered by the coup threatens the entire region as well as ASEAN's credibility as a group powerful enough to act independently of big power influence.

They also point out that the ASEAN Charter adopted in 2007, 40 years after the group's founding includes democracy, human rights, good governance and rule of law as guiding principles.



and rapes.

Ethiopia has said that life in Tigray is returning to normal.

Lowcock, meanwhile, told the council last week that some 4.5 million of Tigray's 6 million need humanitarian aid and that there is no doubt that sexual violence is being used in this conflict as a weapon of war."

He cited alarmingly numerous reports of rape and other sexual attacks, mainly by men wearing the uniforms of various forces.

In Thursday's statement, the council conveyed deep concern about allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including reports of sexual violence. It welcomed an agreement by the UN and an Ethiopian rights agency to conduct a joint investigation into reported abuses.

The council also acknowledged Ethiopia's humanitarian efforts but called for a bigger response.



AP

More than 100 migrants feared dead as boat capsizes off Libya

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAIRO, 23 APRIL

More than 100 Europe-bound migrants are feared dead in a shipwreck off the Libyan Mediterranean coast, independent rescue groups said.

SOS Mediterranee, which operates the rescue vessel Ocean Viking, said late Thursday that the wreck of a rubber boat, which was initially carrying around 130 people, was spotted in the Mediterranean Sea northeast of the Libyan capital, Tripoli. The aid vessel did not find any survivors, but could see at least ten bodies near the wreck, the group added in a statement.

We are heartbroken. We think of the lives that have been lost and of the families who



might never have certainty as to what happened to their loved ones, read the statement.

In the years since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that ousted and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, torn Libya has emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East. Smugglers often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber boats that stall and founder along

the perilous Central Mediterranean route.

The European humanitarian organization added that more than 350 people have drowned in the sea so far this year, not counting the victims of this latest shipwreck.

States abandon their responsibility to coordinate Search and Rescue operations, leaving private actors and civil society to fill the deadly void they leave behind, added the statement.

Covid: Japan declares emergency in Tokyo, Osaka

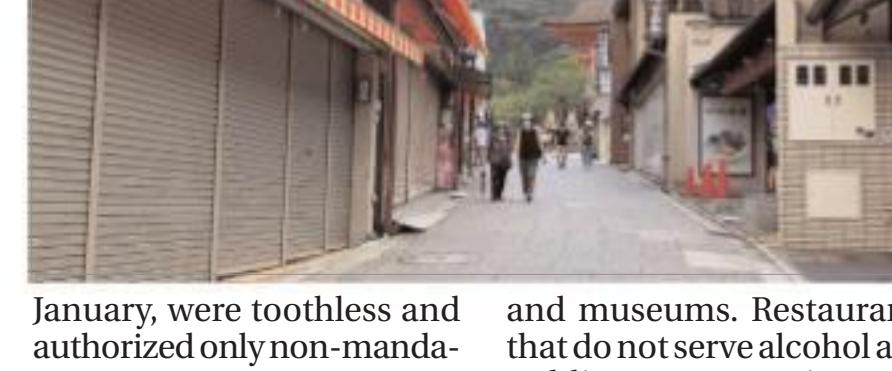
ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 23 APRIL

Japan declared a third state of emergency for Tokyo and three western prefectures on Friday amid skepticism it will be enough to curb a rapid coronavirus resurgence ahead of the Olympics in July.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the emergency for Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo from 25 April through 11 May.

Japan's third state of emergency since the pandemic began comes only a month after an earlier emergency ended in the Tokyo area. For days, experts and local leaders said ongoing semi-emergency measures have failed and tougher steps are urgently needed.

Past emergency measures, issued a year ago and then in



January, were toothless and authorized only non-mandatory requests.

The government in February toughened a law on anti-virus measures to allow authorities to issue binding orders for nonessential businesses to shorten their hours or close, in exchange for compensation for those who comply and penalties for violators.

The measures this time are to include shutdown orders for bars, department stores, malls, theme parks, theaters

and museums. Restaurants that do not serve alcohol and public transportation services are asked to close early. Schools will stay open, but universities are asked to return to online classes. Mask-wearing, staying home and other measures for the general public remain non-mandatory requests, and experts worry if they will be followed.

Japan, which has had about half a million cases and 10,000 deaths, has not enforced lockdowns. But people are becoming impatient and less cooperative and have largely ignored the ongoing measures as the infections accelerated.

Osaka, the epicenter of the latest resurgence, has since 5 April been under semi-emergency status, which was expanded to 10 areas including Tokyo, a step promoted by Suga's government as an alternative to a state of emergency with less economic damage.

Osaka Gov. Hirofumi Yoshimura, who on Tuesday responded to the emergency, said the semi-emergency measures were not working and hospitals were overflowing with patients.

The virus surge, fueled by a new, more contagious variant detected earlier in Britain, has spread rapidly across the country.

Africa's Covid cases pass 4.47 million

ADDIS ABABA, 23 APRIL

The number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Africa has reached 4,476,121 as of Friday noon, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said.

The Africa CDC said that the death toll from the pandemic stood at 119,174, while 4,016,834 patients across the continent have recovered from the disease.

South Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Egypt have highest cases in the continent. In terms of the number of cases, southern Africa is the most affected region, followed by northern Africa and eastern Africa regions. IANS

Police arrest dozens in Jerusalem clashes

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 23 APRIL

Israeli police say 44 people were wounded in a night of chaos in Jerusalem, where security forces separately clashed with Palestinians angry about Ramadan restrictions and Jewish extremists who held an anti-Arab march nearby.

Tensions have spiked in recent days in Jerusalem, which has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and is home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Residents braced for possible further unrest as police stepped up security and the US Embassy appealed for calm.

There were concerns the violence could reignite fol-



lowing Friday prayers at a major holy site in Jerusalem, but thousands of worshippers dispersed peacefully after Muslim religious leaders called for restraint.

Palestinians have clashed with Israeli police on a nightly basis since the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The tensions began when police placed barricades outside the Old City's Damascus

Gate, where Muslims traditionally gather to enjoy the evening after the daytime fast.

Late Thursday, hundreds of Palestinians hurled stones and bottles at police, who fired a water cannon and stun grenades to disperse them.

Dozens of Palestinians were wounded in the melee.

Meanwhile, a far-right Jewish group known as Lahavah led a march of hundreds of pro-

BIDDING GOODBYE



Son of the late Chadian president Idriss Deby, general Mahamat Idriss Deby (centre) sits in the front row as he attends the state funeral for the late Chadian president Idriss Deby in N'Djamena, Chad on Friday.

could have spilled from a crack in the submarine's fuel tank or the crew could have released fuel and fluids to reduce the vessel's weight so it could surface. Margono said an unidentified object exhibiting high magnetism was located at a depth of 50 to 100 meters (165 to 330 feet) and officials held out hope it is the submarine.

The navy said it believes, however, that the submarine sank to a depth of 600-700 meters (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth, at which water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand. The vessel's collapse depth was estimated at 200 meters (655 feet) by a South Korean company that refitted the vessel in 2009-2012.

The cause of the disappearance is still uncertain. The navy has said an electrical failure could have left the submarine unable to execute emergency procedures to resurface.

PML-N leader Shahbaz Sharif walks free from jail after eight months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, 23 APRIL

Pakistan's Opposition leader in Parliament and PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif walked out of jail on Friday after spending about eight months behind bars in two corruption cases filed against him by the country's anti-graft body.

Shahbaz, the younger brother of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, was released from Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail on Friday afternoon, a day after a full bench of the Lahore High Court granted bail to him against furnishing two bail bonds worth Rs 5 million each.

Many supporters of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had gathered outside the jail and showered the car of the 69-year-old former chief minister of Punjab province with rose petals



and chanted slogans against Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Shahbaz was arrested in September 2020 in money laundering and assets beyond means cases by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) after a court here had rejected his bail application in the money laundering case.

The NAB had alleged that Shahbaz's family had assets of around Rs 16.5 million till 1990, which increased to over Rs 7 billion in 2018 that were disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The Shahbaz's counsel told the court since no investigation was pending against his client in these cases as the NAB had already filed a case against him, he should be granted bail.

Declaring Shahbaz's release from jail death of selected Prime Minister Imran Khan's fake accountability narrative', PML-N spokesperson Marriyam Aurangzeb said: Lahore High Court judges had not only stamped Shahbaz Sharif's innocence but also exposed the malicious intent behind the government's fictitious cases.

She said the release of the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly is the death of Khan's fake narrative on corruption.

Aurangzeb said this bail in the assets beyond means case filed against Shahbaz was a blow to adviser to the premier Shehzad Akbar.

time. The family is in a good condition and keeps praying," said Ratih Wardhani, the sister of 49-year-old crewman Wisnu Subiyantoro. We are optimistic that the Nanggala can be rescued with all the crew.

Twenty-four Indonesian ships and a patrol plane were mobilized for the search on Friday, focusing on the area where an oil slick was found after the submarine disappeared during an exercise. Rescuers made similar massive searches in the previous two days.

An American reconnaissance plane was expected to join the search Saturday and a second Australian ship was due soon. These two Australian ships will help expand the search area and extend the duration of the search effort, Australian Navy Rear Adm. Mark Hammond said.

Singaporean and Malaysian rescue ships were also expected in the coming days. Indonesian President Joko Widodo canceled a visit to Banyuwangi port, where some rescue ships left earlier, to prepare for a weekend region-

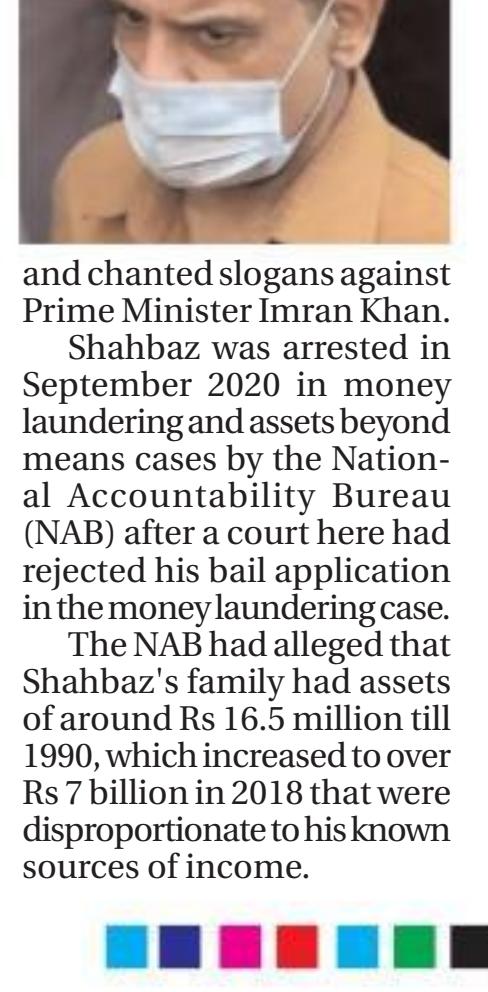
al summit in Jakarta, officials said. He asked Indonesians to pray for the crew's safe return, while ordering all-out efforts to locate the submarine.

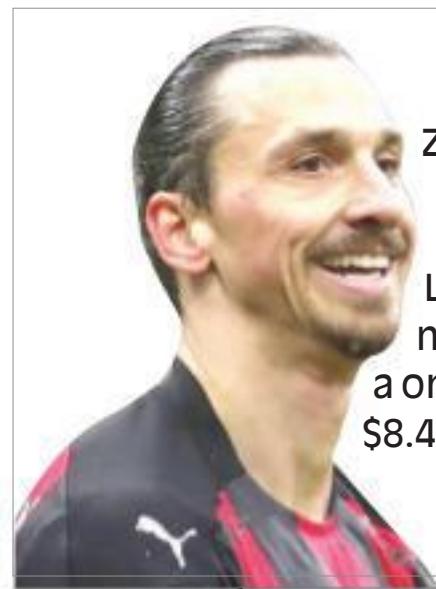
Our main priority is the safety of the 53 crew members, Widodo said in a televised address on Thursday. To the family of the crew members, I can understand your feelings and we are doing our best to save all crew members on board.

There's been no conclusive evidence the oil slick was from the sub. Navy Chief of Staff Adm. Yudo Margono said oil



AP





MAGIC MAN

Zlatan Ibrahimovic (in photo, left) is going to keep playing with AC Milan when he's 40. And he'll likely make his return to the Champions League. Milan announced on Thursday Ibrahimovic, who would be 40 in October, had signed a one-year contract extension for the same pay, \$8.4 million, as now.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Natarajan out: Sunrisers Hyderabad paceman T Natarajan has been ruled out of the Indian Premier League owing to a knee injury which he sustained during India's tour of Australia earlier this year. He has played only two of SRH's four games so far.

Patel recovers: Delhi Capitals and India all-rounder Axar Patel has rejoined his Indian Premier League side after staying in a medical facility in Mumbai for nearly three weeks following a positive Covid-19 test after entering the bio bubble completely unaffected.

Purple cap: Royal Challengers Bangalore fast bowler Harshal Patel may have given away 47 runs during RCB's match against Rajasthan Royals but his three wickets helped him get to 12 scalps for the season and solidify his place at the top of the Purple cap table.

Coach suspended: The Sports Authority of India has suspended a coach who allegedly molested a minor he was tutoring. A day after news surfaced that the coach had been arrested, the SAI issued a statement saying that the coach had been suspended.

Commercial protection: Bordeax placed themselves under the protection of the city's commercial court after the club's American-based owner King Street withdrew its financial support. King Street no longer wishes to support the club and finance their needs.

Leicester win: Jamie Vardy ended his two-month goal drought as Leicester tightened their grip on a Champions League spot with a 3-0 win over West Bromwich Albion that pushed the visitors closer to relegation. Vardy had not netted in his previous 11 games.

La Liga: Atletico Madrid defeated Huesca 2-0 to regain sole possession of the Spanish league lead, while Lionel Messi scored twice as Barcelona stayed in the title race with a victory over Getafe. Messi's double in a 5-2 win helped Barcelona return to third place.

Atalanta held: Ten-man Atalanta wasted a chance to move into second place in Serie A with a 1-1 draw at Roma. Still, Atalanta extended their unbeaten streak to six matches. Napoli beat visiting Lazio 5-2 to move within two points of the Champions League places.

Russian anthem: Russian gold medalists at the Tokyo Olympics are set to hear music by Tchaikovsky as the replacement for their national anthem, banned as punishment for state-backed doping, the International Olympic Committee said on Thursday.

Match postponed: Indian club Bengaluru FC's AFC Cup play-off match, scheduled to be held on April 28, has been indefinitely postponed as the preliminary game to decide their opponents is yet to take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Archer out of IPL: The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Friday announced that star fast bowler Jofra Archer will not play in the ongoing 14th Indian Premier League, compounding his franchise Rajasthan Royals' misery.

SA cricket crisis: The South African government exercised its power to intervene in the running of the country's troubled cricket federation on Friday, leaving the federation to face its "greatest crisis" since the end of apartheid. The move threatens South Africa's teams as the International Cricket Council does not allow governments to interfere in national cricket bodies. The ICC has previously banned countries from international competitions when that happens.

Chance for Knight Riders to turn things around

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 23 APRIL

A desperate Kolkata Knight Riders will look to bring their campaign back on track after three consecutive defeats when they face a beleaguered Rajasthan Royals in an Indian Premier League match in Mumbai on Saturday.

Big on paper, KKR, led by England's World Cup-winning skipper Eoin Morgan, have so far failed to get going as a unit, slipping to No 6 after starting the tournament on a high against SunRisers Hyderabad. Facing bottom-placed Rajasthan Royals, the most inconsistent team so far in this season, KKR will be desperate for a turnaround.

The rise of Pat Cummins (in photo) as a batsman despite their 18-run defeat by Chennai Super Kings will be a big boost but it can't mask the failure of their star batsmen, who have floundered even while chasing modest targets. Their seamers have leaked runs in the so-called death overs. Having struggled on Chepauk's slow surface, KKR had hoped to recover at Wankhede stadium but Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad took their attack to the cleaners, totalling 220 for three in



their previous match.

As if that was not enough, their top quintet, inclusive of Shubman Gill and Morgan himself, surrendered inside the powerplay session. Andre Russell and Dinesh Karthik then revived the chase before Cummins produced some sensational hitting, slamming a 34-ball 66 not out before running out of partners as KKR

finished on 202 after being 31/5 in 5.2 overs.

"Everyone's pumped. I am sure if we get a win or two, we will be on our way and flying. I think there's a feeling that we can win from basically anywhere," Cummins had said after the match.

The other positive factor has been Russell's return to form. It was his 54 off 22 balls that had set the tone for KKR's riposte and it would not be a bad ploy for Morgan to promote the Jamaican in the batting order, while Cummins provides late blitz.

had set the tone for KKR's riposte and it would not be a bad ploy for Morgan to promote the Jamaican in the batting order, while Cummins provides late blitz.

Samson's men have failed to consolidate their position after posting their only win of the tournament, against Delhi Capitals, in their second match.

Samson has fizzled out after a blazing 119 against Punjab Kings and the top and middle-order batting look brittle with Jos Buttler, Manan Vohra and David Miller enduring a run of poor form. Bowling is also a big concern for them as Chris Morris and Mustafizur Rahman have struggled to check runs. Also, they have limited overseas options with Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes ruled out because of injuries. Liam Livingstone has left, citing bio-bubble fatigue.

Match starts 7.30pm

Rating: 10-wicket loss against RCB. Sanju Samson's men have failed to consolidate their position after posting their only win of the tournament, against Delhi Capitals, in their second match.

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I promise to help anyone that is within my capacity: Ashwin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 23 APRIL

Saddened by the death and destruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, India's senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (in photo) on Friday said he will do whatever he can in his capacity to help those battling the unprecedented crisis.

Ashwin said it is heart-breaking to see people's sufferings in the wake of a deadly second wave that has ravaged the country.

"Heart breaking to see what's happening around my country! I am not in the healthcare fraternity, but my sincere gratitude to each of them. I would also like to make an earnest appeal to every Indian to exercise caution and stay safe," Ashwin tweeted.

The 34-year-old cricketer, one of the country's all-time greatest spinners, is currently representing his franchise Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League, which is being held in a bio-secure bubble.

Ashwin reminded that the virus does not spare anyone.

In another post, he wrote, "I know there will be people who will retort with a tweet about my position of privilege. I would like to reiterate that

Sachin clinches gold in youth world boxing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 23 APRIL

Indian boxer Sachin (56kg) (in photo) on Friday added an unprecedented eighth gold to the country's historic medal haul at the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland, a day after all seven women swept the top honours in an astonishing performance.

Sachin rallied to defeat Kazakhstan's Yerbolat Sabyr 4-1 in a gritty performance by the end of which his confident opponent was left with a bloodied face and exhausted body.

The Indian was off to a spirited start and was definitely impressive with his counter-attacks but the Kazakh clinched the opening round 3-2.

Sachin intensified his attacks after the break with his right straight fetching him the points. He drew level by getting a split verdict in his favour in the second round.

The final round belonged to the relentless Sachin as Sabyr ran out of steam.

India thus ended their campaign with 11 medals -- eight gold and three bronze medals to claim the top spot in overall standings.

This was an improvement on two gold, two silver and six bronze medals claimed at

the event's 2018 edition. On Thursday, Gitika (48kg), Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg), Pooman (57kg), Vinka (60kg), Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Thokchom Sanamachu Chanu (75kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) ensured a perfect finish to the women's campaign.

Earlier, Asian youth silver-winner Ankut Narwal (64kg), Bishwamita Chongtham (49kg) and Vishal Gupta (91kg) ended with bronze medals following semifinal losses in the men's draw.

Sachin is the first Indian male boxer since 2016 to finish on top. It was his namesake Sachin Siwach, now a senior camper, who fetched a gold in that edition.

India fielded a 20-member team -- 10 men and as many women -- in this year's event which featured 414 boxers from 52 countries.

Punjab Kings restrict Mumbai Indians to 131/6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, 23 APRIL

Punjab Kings produced a discipline bowling performance to restrict Mumbai Indians to 131 for six despite a fine half-century by Rohit Sharma (in photo) in the IPL here on Friday. Mumbai struggled to 21 for one in the first six overs, the lowest powerplay score this season after being put into bat.

A 79-run stand between Rohit (63 off 52) and Suryakumar Yadav (33 off 27) steadied the ship for the five-time champions but they could not find the final flourish, managing only 34 runs in the last five overs for the loss of four wickets.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, playing his first game of the season, was the standout bowler for Punjab Kings with two wickets for 21 runs in four overs. Lead pacer Mohammad Shami (2/21 in four overs) was also impressive. As has been the case so far at Chepauk, batsmen found it extremely difficult to get going early in the innings on a slow surface.

Quinton de Kock perished as early as the second over after he mistimed one off spinner Deepak Hooda to be caught at mid-on. Ishan Kishan (6 off 17) came ahead of Suryakumar Yadav at number three but the southpaw struggled once again before being caught behind in Bishnoi's first over, making it 26 for two in seven overs.

Rohit, at the other end, managed to keep the scoreboard ticking. Left-arm spinner Fabian Allen bowled a full toss to Rohit in the 10th over and he duly dispatched it over the cover corner for a six to release some pressure. After Suryakumar joined Rohit in the mid-

dle, batting suddenly started looking much easier. A well-set Rohit started playing the ball late and was good with finding the gaps. Suryakumar, at the other end, got into the groove with a four and six off left-arm pacer Arshdeep.

SCOREBOARD

Mumbai Indians Innings:	
Q de Kock (wk)亨瑞克 b 胡达3	Extras: 6 (b 4, lb 0, w 2, nb 0, p 0)
Rohit Sharma c/yc Allen b Sham 63	Total: 131 (6 wkt, 20 Ov)
I Kishan c Rahul b Ravi Bishnoi 6	Fall of Wickets: 7-1, 26-2, 105-3, 112-4,
S Yadav c Gayle b Ravi Bishnoi 33	122-5, 130-6
Kieron Pollard not out 16	Bowler: 亨瑞克 3-0-12-0, 胡达 3-0-
H Pandya c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 1	15-1, Sham 4-0-21-2, Bishnoi 4-0-21-1,
K Pandya c Pooran b Sham 3	Allen 3-0-30-0, Arshdeep Singh 3-0-28-1

Nadal defeats Nishikori

BARCELONA, 23 APRIL



Rafael Nadal (in photo) beat Kei Nishikori 6-2, 6-2 to advance to the quarter-finals of the Barcelona Open yesterday. The 11-time tournament champion looked ready to roll to a quick victory after dominating the first set, but Nishikori responded with some fine net play to level it at 1-1.

Nadal broke Nishikori twice in the decisive set, converting his second match point by driving a forehand winner down the line. The top-seeded Nadal is still searching for his best tennis after being upset in the Monte Carlo quarter-finals by Andrey Rublev. The league is considering sanctions aimed at the club officials who plotted to join the breakaway venture, rather than punishing the teams themselves, the person said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations within the Premier League.

In Stuttgart, Germany, Nadal needed three sets to beat 11th-ranked Ilya Ivashka of Belarus in his first match in Barcelona on Wednesday. "I didn't play a lot last year so I know that I will struggle," Nadal said. Simona Halep returned from injury to start her clay-court season with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Marketa Vondrousova to reach the quarter-finals of the Porsche Grand Prix.

The third-ranked Romanian was back on court for the first time since a shoulder injury had forced her out of the Miami Open last month, and in only her second match since her straight-set loss to Serena Williams in the Australian Open quarter-finals in February. AGENCIES

Sri Lanka 229-3 at stumps, trail Bangladesh by 312 runs

AGENCIES
PALKELE, 23 APRIL

Dimuth Karunaratne led Sri Lanka to 229-3 in its first innings at stumps on the third day of the first Test, still 312 runs behind Bangladesh's mammoth 541-7.

There was little threat from Bangladeshi seamers when the Sri Lankans started their reply but the two spinners Taijul Islam and Mehidy Hasan were rewarded for some tight bowling on Friday.

Karunaratne is Sri Lanka's best player of spin bowling and the captain countered the threat well, but his team needs at least two more big partnerships. Karunaratne batted for more than five hours for his 85 not out as play was extended on day three to catch up for time lost due to bad light on Thursday. Karunaratne was given out leg before wicket to Taijul (1-56 off 20 overs) but the deci-

Barca support Super League despite backlash

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BARCELONA, 23 APRIL

The ill-fated Super League has enraged fans and troubled authorities while making allies of a pair of soccer's fiercest enemies. After 10 of the 12 clubs involved in the creation of the breakaway competition quickly dropped out under an escalating backlash, Barcelona president Joan Laporta emerged yesterday as the sole supporter of the plan hatched by Real Madrid counterpart Florentino Perez.

"It is absolutely necessary," Laporta said on Catalan public television in his first public comments on the project. "The biggest clubs create the most financial resources and we must have our say in deciding how the earnings are shared." Even so, his own club issued a statement hours after he spoke that was aimed at calming tensions and promised to listen to the plan's critics. The six English clubs involved in the competition pulled out Tuesday.

In England, having rapidly mobilised to thwart rebel clubs from joining the breakaway competition, the Premier League

is taking steps to prevent the so-called Big Six from attempting something similar in the future.

England's biggest clubs have often used threats of joining a Super League as a power play in the past but now find themselves badly weakened after such a venture collapsed within 48 hours of being launched amid a torrent of outrage from fans, players, government and even royal family. Now the Premier League is working to neuter those clubs further with punishments and measures to stop them playing the same bargaining chip again, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press.

The league is considering sanctions aimed at the club officials who plotted to join the breakaway venture, rather than punishing the teams themselves, the person said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations within the Premier League.

In Stuttgart, Germany,