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Moeen, Jadeja spin CSK to victory against RR
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NEARBY



Capital sees record 240 COVID-related deaths

NEW DELHI
Delhi reported 240 COVID deaths over 24 hours – the highest since the beginning of the pandemic – taking the toll to 12,361, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday. Also, 23,686 new COVID-19 cases were reported over 24 hours, pushing the total number of cases to 8,77,146.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

'Invite farmer leaders for talks to end stalemate'

CHANDIGARH
As the stand-off between the agitating farmers and the BJP-led government at the Centre continues over the three farm laws, some eminent citizens have written to the Union government to invite the farmers' leaders for a dialogue to end the stalemate. The long-drawn peaceful movement against the laws was the manifestation of the persistent and deep-rooted agrarian crisis and farmers' distress, they said in a joint appeal.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

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Vaccines for all above 18 from May 1; States can buy directly

Manufacturers must sell 50% directly to Centre but can set price for open market

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

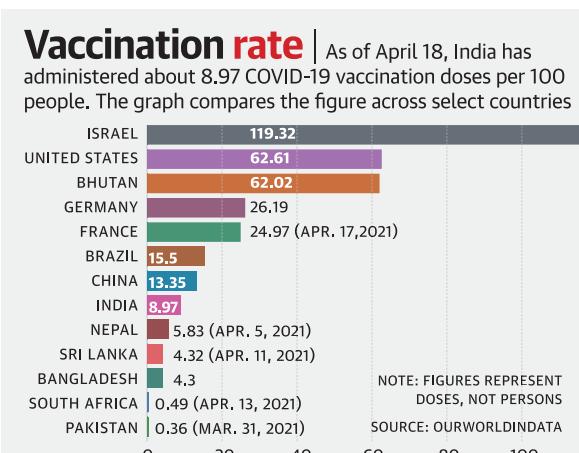
Amid a virulent second wave of COVID-19 in India, the Centre on Monday allowed vaccination against the infection for all persons above the age of 18 from May 1.

The decision followed a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and pharmaceutical company representatives, doctors, Union Ministers in charge of healthcare and medicines and officials from multiple nodal Ministries.

However, questions remain on whether enough stocks of vaccines will be available to cater to the accelerated demand. When the year began, the government's plan was to inoculate 30 crore, or about a third of the adult population, by August. As of Monday, only 8% had got one dose and 1% were fully inoculated.

Immunisation Phase 3
The Phase 3 of the National Vaccine Strategy will enable vaccine manufacturers to sell half their vaccines to the State governments and the open market. The rest will mandatorily be sold to the Centre.

Before May 1, manufacturers will have to make an advance declaration of the price for the 50% of the stock



Safety barrier: People waiting to get vaccinated at the Swarna Bharathi Indoor Stadium in Visakhapatnam on Monday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

Delhi imposes lockdown

U.P. declines Allahabad HC directive

JATIN ANAND
OMAR RASHID
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Delhi government announced a six-day lockdown from 10 p.m. on Monday to stem what it termed a sharp surge in COVID-19 cases, which had stretched the national capital's health infrastructure to its limits.

The Uttar Pradesh government, however, declined the Allahabad High Court's directive to enforce forthwith a strict, complete lockdown in five major cities, including Lucknow, till

April 26. The government said that along with lives, it was necessary to safeguard livelihoods.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, while announcing the lockdown, said the decision was made at a meeting with Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal in the morning, during which they agreed that the situation had left no other option, and that such a step was necessary to prevent a possible "tragedy".

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Johnson trip off, India on travel red list

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday cancelled his visit to India, due on April 25 and 26, "in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation", both governments announced.

Last week, officials said Mr. Johnson would cut short the duration of the trip and limit his travel to New Delhi.

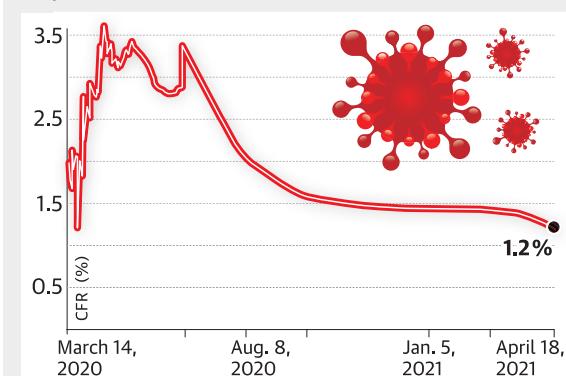
"I do think it's only sensible to postpone, given what's happened in India, the shape of the pandemic there," Mr. Johnson told presspersons, adding that while it would be "frustrating" to hold the summit via videoconference, he hoped to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi "when circumstances allow". He expressed "massive amounts of sympathy" for India.

Later, the U.K. Health Security Agency added India to its travel "red list", which restricts other passengers from entering the country and requires British nationals travelling from India to quarantine at a hotel for 10 days.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Death rate

In the second COVID-19 wave in India, until now, the rise in number of cases has outpaced the increase in related deaths. Thus India's case fatality rate (reported deaths/detected cases) has remained low and is even decreasing. However, death being a lag indicator, CFR may increase as the second wave unfolds



Second wave is not more lethal, says ICMR

Those above 60 are still most at risk

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

There is no difference in mortality among COVID-19 patients in the first and second waves, said leading doctors in charge of the national COVID-19 management strategy.

There was a relative increase in instances of those with shortness of breath as a symptom of the infection, but those above 60 – as in the first wave – continued to be most at risk from dying.

A "marginally higher" proportion of patients younger than 20 were present in the second wave (5.8%) compared with the first (4.2%).

In the first wave, 25.5% of the patients were between the ages of 20 and 40, compared with 23.7% in the ongoing second wave.

Shortness of breath
Citing data from a section of hospitalised patients from the first and second waves, Director-General of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Balram Bhargava said 47% of the symptomatic patients presented "shortness of breath" in the second wave (March-April 2021), compared with 41% in the first (September-November 2020).

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Microsoft 365

Even boardroom meetings may not be safe

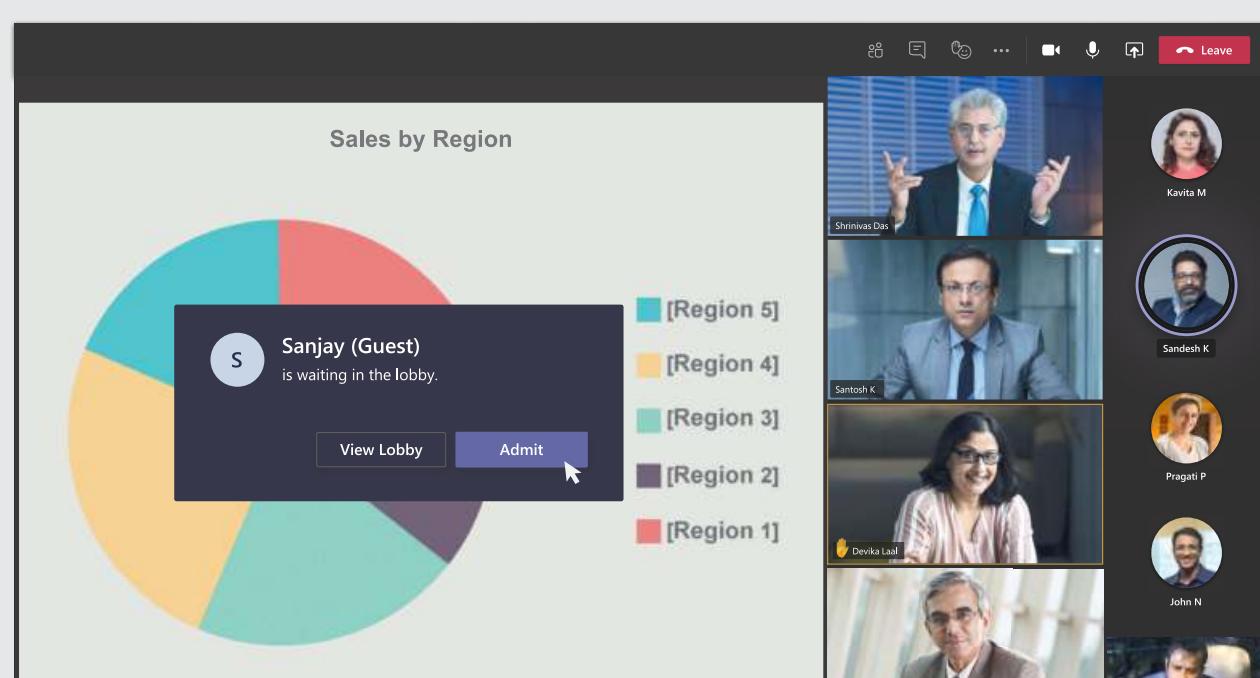
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Thousands of migrant workers and their families at Anand Vihar bus depot just hours before a six-day lockdown comes into effect in Delhi; a body being cremated at the Hindon Cremation Ground in Ghaziabad on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



Congress,
Left parties
seek relief
for workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Left parties wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday asking him to consider restarting last year's schemes of direct cash transfers, distribution of 35 kg free foodgrains and community kitchens/ food distribution to needy households as well as migrant workers.

Many of them feared a possible extension of the curfew beyond April 26.

Ashok Pal, a resident of Lakhimpur Kheri, said the ordeal he and his family faced during the 2020 lockdown is still fresh.

He returned to Delhi only around four months ago to resume work. However, fearing a new lockdown, he is

The parties also assured that they would cooperate with the State government in fighting the pandemic.

'Ineffective tactics'

The Delhi Congress, meanwhile, pointed out that Mr. Kejriwal was appealing to migrant workers not to leave the Capital during the week-long lockdown, without announcing any monetary relief package for them.

The party questioned as to how Mr. Kejriwal expected them to stay in Delhi without jobs. "Migrant workers cannot afford treatment without income. Delhi hospitals are bursting at their seams with COVID-19 patients. They have nowhere to go if they fall ill," the party said.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said the Delhi government's "ineffective tactics" to fight the pandemic were exposed as labourers have started to leave the city once again.

leaving the city with his family again.

'Curfew may extend'

"First they [the Delhi government] announced a lockdown at night, then on the weekends and now for six days. By any logic, the duration of the lockdown will keep increasing. Last time, we didn't even have food to eat; it was a dark time and I don't want to put my family and myself through the same thing again," complained Shalabh Kumar, a construction worker, from Prayagraj as he waited in a serpentine queue at a ticket booking counter at Anand Vihar ISBT.

Migrant workers complained that government buses are overcrowded and private buses operators are overcharging. But there are



Migrant workers at the Anand Vihar bus terminal in Delhi on Monday. ■ ANI

terminal instructed bus operators not to overcrowd buses as operators are charging double for the seat and half the amount if passengers travel on roof of the bus.

Kiran Kushwaha, a resident of Allahabad, who was waiting with her two children for her husband at Anand Vihar bus stop, said, "My husband has gone to arrange bus tickets, we will leave the city today. If we don't get tickets then we will look for some other option but will leave the city."

"Last time there was no milk and food for children but this time we won't fall for 'empty' promise just to suffice," said Ms. Kiran.

ding that he did not mind paying "almost double" the usual price of a bus ticket.

The police deployed personnel for crowd and traffic management at Anand Vihar railway station and bus stop. A senior officer said that there is no ban on inter-State travel. They are asking people to maintain social distancing and wear mask while boarding train or buses.

Alok Kumar, Joint CP (Eastern Range) said, "We have deployed policemen for crowd and traffic management at Anand Vihar. Senior officers have been deployed on ground to keep a close watch on movement and to avoid any chaotic situation."

Migrant workers scramble to leave the Capital... again

Many willing to pay double for a bus ticket to their home towns; police deployed to manage crowd at Anand Vihar Inter-State Bus Terminal

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Within hours of the six-day lockdown being announced by the Delhi government, migrant workers were seen leaving the Capital in hordes using whatever means of transport they could find at Anand Vihar ISBT.

Many of them feared a possible extension of the curfew beyond April 26.

Ashok Pal, a resident of Lakhimpur Kheri, said the ordeal he and his family faced during the 2020 lockdown is still fresh.

He returned to Delhi only around four months ago to resume work. However, fearing a new lockdown, he is

leaving the city with his family again.

'Curfew may extend'

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Burying 15 bodies a day at Delhi Gate cemetery'

Gravedigger writes to committee asking for additional space to ease burden

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

With the number of bodies increasing by the day, third-generation grave digger at Delhi Gate cemetery has written to committee members asking them to allow more space to bury COVID-19-infected bodies.

Running out of space
Mohammed Shamim, gravedigger at Jadiq Qabristan Ahle Islam, said that he had written to the members around a week ago, stating that he is falling short on space.

"I am burying at least 15 bodies a day for the last few days. In this 45-acre land, I have three acres space allotted to bury COVID-19-infected or suspected bo-



Infected bodies being buried at the Delhi Gate cemetery.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dies," he said.
He said that he along with others have buried nearly 1,000 bodies since the beginning of the pandemic and are now falling

short of space. "I am barely managing. It's only been a year so I can't dig the graves of others just yet," he said.

Reflecting on the gravity of the situation, he said that last year, they had received a maximum of 18 bodies and this time, so far, they have received 20 bodies on a single day. "And going by the numbers, it seems that it's only going to increase. Hence, we need the space," he said.

Shamim has asked for 1.5 acres of additional space to ease the situation.

Have written to CM, L-G
Responding on the letter, Qabristan Ahle Islam Committee vice-president Shamim Ahmad Khan told *The Hindu* that they had written

to the Chief Minister and Lieutenant-Governor regarding the space issue. He also said that they are now allowed to use the 4-acre space at the cemetery in Millenium Park.

Another burial ground

"Last year, during the pandemic, they had shut the In-draprastha cemetery. We wrote to them and they approved it in second week of April," he said. However, they're yet to formally start the burial at the said cemetery, he said.

"I would like to request your office to send directions that other cemetery may also be used for the same. Presently, there is total chaos due to this activity," the committee wrote.

IN BRIEF

District courts told to take up urgent matters only

NEW DELHI
All district courts in the Capital will take up only urgent matters and that too through videoconferencing in view of the exponential rise in COVID-19 cases. The direction of the Delhi High Court comes a day after it decided that from April 19 onwards it will only take up "extremely urgent matters" filed this year. The HC Chief Justice and three other judges are reportedly infected.

Hindon crematorium struggles after e-furnace stops working

At least 180 bodies cremated in just four days, say workers

SAURABH TRIVEDI
GHAZIABAD

The Hindon Cremation Ground in Ghaziabad is struggling to handle the surge in bodies of suspected COVID-19 patients after the electric furnace, which has been operating around the clock, temporarily stopped functioning on Friday.

Since then, the wait time for electric cremation has gone up to at least three hours. Some families were forced to carry out the last rites of their loved ones on footpaths.

ning to instal one more furnace to meet the demand.

"We have ordered regular sanitisation at the crematorium area and temporary parking has been developed. We have deployed employees at the site to take care of the facilities. The electric crematorium has been repaired but it has its functioning capacity," said a senior official with the district administration.

To take the pressure off the furnace, the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation has constructed nine platforms at the crematorium site.

But they are lying unused as they are not facing the "right direction".

"The platforms were constructed in a hurry without consultation with the priest at Hindon. The platforms are



There has been a sudden surge... people have been forced to cremate bodies on footpaths
■ SAGAR KUMAR
Caretaker at the crematorium

located in the wrong direction and under a Peepal tree, which is considered inauspicious for performing last rites," said Sagar Kumar, a caretaker at the crematorium.

"Around 12-18 bodies would come here daily, but there has been a sudden surge. From April 15-18, 180 bodies were cremated at Hindon. Due to scarcity of space, people have been forced to cremate bodies on footpaths," said Mr. Kumar.

Vineet Singh, who lives in Surya Nagar, said he visited the crematorium on Sunday to perform the last rites of his father-in-law who died of COVID-19. There was no facility for cremation as per COVID protocols.

"The employees at Hindon said they have no option and they cannot hold the body as they have to send back the ambulance to transport another body. We had no option and the body was cremated in the open," he said.

Police rescue 'lonely' elderly COVID patient

Constable admitted him to hospital and stayed till all his tests were done

HEMANI BHANDARI
SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

An octogenarian struggling with poor health and suspected of being infected with COVID-19 was taken to the hospital by the Delhi Police on Sunday.

Living alone at his central Delhi house, 80-year-old Murlidhar Tahiliani, who served as an under-secretary at Ministry of Home Affairs, suffered breathlessness on Sunday morning. His 23-year-old tenant saw him visibly facing respiratory problems and shivering, and called up Mr. Tahiliani's friend and his daughter.

"Uncle had been ill for the last 10 days. He had fever, and for the

last five-six days was only taking water," he said. Mr. Tahiliani had made the tenant read two pages pasted outside his house. One with important numbers and another which read: "My body may be given to Delhi Police for further necessary action and disposal. No chautha or uthala to be performed, except telephonically, just for courtesy sake".

Mr. Tahiliani's daughter Gitika called the police after which Constable Raju Ram and two of his colleagues reached the house to rescue the elderly man. "He was reluctant to come down. I told him that we are only taking him for medication and then will bring him back," the officer said.

They took Mr. Tahiliani to Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital.

'He is stable now'
Constable Raju said they were able to secure a bed after a lot of difficulty. Mr. Tahiliani is stable now, the officer said. Two-three days ago, Mr. Raju also provided assistance to a woman living alone and infected with the virus.

A few media reports said the elderly man was allegedly abandoned by his family due to the fear of contracting COVID-19. Ms. Gitika told *The Hindu* she was furious about how the incident was being played out on social media. "I made over 150 calls to several authorities for help," she added.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Department of Materials Management (Imports Section)

**Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences,
Soura, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir 190011**

E-mail: ammoimports@skims.ac.in Fax No: 0194-2403403

DATED: 16/04/2021

Subject: - Abbreviated Notice inviting e-tenders for supply of Antibodies/Markers, secondary (polymer kit) & Diluents etc.

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir union territory, e-tenders under two bid system are invited through Director Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences from Original Manufacturers/ their authorized distributors/ dealers for supply of Antibodies/Markers, secondary (polymer kit) & Diluents etc on two-year rate contract basis to be reckoned from the date of allotment of rate contract.

The detailed tender document is available on www.jktenders.gov.in & on SKIMS website www.skims.ac.in & the NIT schedule is as following:

Last Date for submission of online bids 25/05/2021 upto 2:00 pm Opening of technical bids 28/05/2021 at 12:30 pm

Complete bidding process will be online on e-tender portal www.jktenders.gov.in & the tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed NIT.

No: SIMS-324-eNIT - 09 (Imports)-2021-1266-72-6277-79

Dated:- 16.04.2021

Sd/-
Materials Management Officer
Imports SKIMS

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website: www.hptenders.gov.in

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Gohar Division,
HPPWD Gohar-175029
On behalf of
Governor of Himachal Pradesh

HP /0332/21-22 HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

CM
YK

Timings

DELHI

TUESDAY, APR. 20
RISE 05:51 SET 18:50
RISE 11:45 SET 01:15
WEDNESDAY, APR. 21
RISE 05:50 SET 18:51
RISE 12:44 SET 02:01

THURSDAY, APR. 22
RISE 05:49 SET 18:51

RISE 13:46 SET 02:44

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	19
Safdarjung	38	19
Palam	39	22

Delhi Pali Today
38°C A hot and slight humid day. Chances of short spell dust storm and thunderstorm with gusty winds at some areas.

Delhi Pali Tomorrow
37°C Short spell rain or thunderstorm with gusty winds and lightning may occur at few places over the city.

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THE HINDU

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District court judge dies of COVID-19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A 47-year-old district court judge died due to COVID at a government hospital here on Monday.

Kovai Venugopal, who was a judge at the Saket Family Court, died at 11 a.m. at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Naryan Hospital.

According to the court sources, he was admitted to the hospital on Sunday and was being treated in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward. Saket Bar Association secretary Dhir Singh Kasana alleged that the incident was a result of "negligence on the part of the government".

"We have been continuously asking the government to make vaccination for all judges and lawyers mandatory as we have to work among thousands of people on a daily basis to keep the justice delivery system working," he said. "Had the government agreed to our demand, this incident would not have happened," Mr. Kasana added. Venugopal was battling the virus for over a week.

Only 58 ICU beds left, hospitals turning away COVID patients

79 facilities did not have any vacant bed on Monday night, show govt. data

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

When 24-year-old Asma placed her hand on her father's forehead around 7 p.m. on Monday, he asked her if they got a bed at a hospital. Her father, who tested positive for COVID, is being kept temporarily at the emergency ward of the hospital.

"Yes, we are going," Ms. Asma muttered but she is yet to find a bed for him, even after 10 hours of searching.

Only 58 ICU beds were vacant in the city as of 9.30 p.m. on Monday and many of them were not available when calls were made to the hospitals. COVID-19 positive and suspected patients were being turned away from even bigger hospitals on Monday as beds were full in many facilities, including LNJP Hospital - the largest Delhi government hospital.

Also, just 16.9% of the total 19,461 hospital beds were vacant at the same time; 79 COVID-19 hospitals did not have any vacant bed on Mon-



An isolation centre being set up at the Yamuna Sports Complex in Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

day night, government data showed. Many smaller hospitals were also full and they were getting dozens of calls daily for admission.

Asma with brother Asad, 21, and sister Ela, 26, had left their house in Indirapuram at 10 a.m. on Monday to look for a bed when their father developed breathlessness.

"First, we went to Shanti Gopal Hospital where they gave him oxygen and asked us to go to a bigger hospital. Then we went to Yashoda Hospital and Max Hospital, but both denied us admis-

sion, saying that there were no beds," Ms. Asad said.

At 2 p.m., they reached Fortis Hospital in Okhla where doctors said COVID beds were full but took him into the emergency temporarily. "The hospital kept asking us to take the patient to a COVID hospital with a ventilator, but we couldn't find any despite searching for hours," she said.

At the emergency ward, their father breathed with the help of a BiPAP machine. Till 9 p.m., they had not found any ICU bed.

At Holy Family Hospital, Mini, was trying to get her father admitted but was turned away.

"We came here in the morning and they took him into the emergency, but they did not give us a bed. I have tried every hospital I could but there is no bed anywhere. I'm going back home for time being," she said. Her father breathed with the help of an oxygen cylinder inside the ambulance.

"There are no beds available. We don't even have space to walk inside the ICU," a doctor said.

At Safdarjung Hospital also, all 219 hospital beds were occupied, as per a government website.

Outside the COVID-19 block, family members of a pregnant woman, who is COVID-19 positive, complained that she was not getting water and food properly on many days. All beds were also occupied at Metro Hospital, a smaller hospital with 30 COVID-19 beds.

bly" on the migrant crisis in last year's lockdown and lessons are required to be learnt from it.

The Bench said it has been seeing reports about migrant labourers going back. With imposition of curfew, these daily wagers are again faced with a grim reality, the Bench added.

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli directed the Centre and Delhi government to provide food to daily wagers at their work sites and to utilise the service of contractors who used to prepare mid-day meals in schools. The court remarked that the migrant workers were left on their own or to good Samaritans.

In view of the recent resurgence of COVID-19 cases, the court revived a disposed of PIL related to COVID-19 testing and infrastructure. The court remarked that the virus has raised its "ugly head" once again and the pandemic is raging with much greater intensity.

School summer vacations to start today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Monday declared early summer vacations for all schools in the city. The vacation, which was to start from May 11 and continue till June 30 has now been rescheduled from April 20 to June 9.

The Directorate of Education in an order said: "In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic situation, the summer vacation has now been rescheduled and will be observed from April 20 [tomorrow] to June 9."

It added that during the vacation period, heads of schools are authorised to call vacation staff as per requirements for any school related work maintaining COVID-appropriate behavior and following standard operating procedure.

The Delhi government had earlier this month ordered closure of schools and suspension of physical exams for all classes in view of rise in COVID-19 cases.

Record 240 COVID deaths in city

Delhi reports over 23,000 new cases, positivity rate 26.12%

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 240 COVID deaths in 24 hours – the highest since the beginning of the pandemic – taking the toll to 12,361, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

Also, 23,686 new COVID-19 cases were reported in a day, taking the total number of cases to 8,77,146.

On Sunday, there were 25,462 new cases.

A total of 90,696 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. The test positivity was 26.12%.

Of the total cases, 7,87,898 people have recovered and there are 76,887 active cases.

Control rooms

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Monday directed officials to monitor procurement and distribution of medical oxygen from point of manufacture to procurement by distribu-



A total of 48,088 beneficiaries got vaccinated against COVID in the city in 24 hours. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tors or hospitals.

A team of nine officers will be at oxygen-filling plants to check the procurement of medical oxygen.

"To oversee distribution of medical oxygen to various hospitals and nursing homes in Delhi, each officer shall submit a report daily to the Officer on Special Duty," the order said.

The government also assigned 28 inspectors to monitor the movement of oxygen from distributors to different levels.

Also, two control rooms

to monitor and manage the supply of "COVID-19 management drugs" was set up by the government and emergency contact numbers were also issued.

"Delhi government forms 24-member oxygen audit committee to ensure continuous monitoring of the oxygen stocks and its consumption. The committee will ensure that the use of Oxygen for management of COVID patients is rational and as per prescribed treatment protocols," said Health Minister Satyendar Jain.

DDU to get more beds
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that 500 more COVID-19 beds will be added in Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, while 250 more will be added in Acharya Shree Bhikshu Hospital.

A total of 48,088 beneficiaries got vaccinated against COVID-19 in the national capital in 24 hours, as per the bulletin.

Kejriwal says situation in city 'very critical' as health system is under 'great stress'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 situation in the Capital was "very critical" with the daily load of thousands of cases having stretched the health system and put it under "great stress", said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday.

Following a meeting with Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal to review the pandemic situation, Mr. Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown between 10 p.m. on Monday and 5 a.m. on April 26.

"In the six days that we are taking from you, we would arrange for a large number of beds in Delhi. The Central government is helping us too, for this, we are very thankful. We will also utilise



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal ■ THE HINDU

this lockdown to arrange for oxygen and medicines. We would fight this together and surely win," he also said.

CM's appeal to migrants
He also issued an appeal to migrant workers to not travel to their villages, seeking to assure them that they would be taken care of despite the curbs on daily activities.

"In the last 24 hours, ap-

proximately 23,500 new cases have come up. Prior to that, around 25,500 cases came to light. The number of beds in the Delhi hospitals is falling short. There is a shortage of oxygen as well. We are falling short of medicines, especially Remdesivir," said Mr. Kejriwal.

"I had a meeting with the L-G and we felt that Delhi's healthcare system would not be able to take more patients on such a large scale. If we do not impose a lockdown now, we might face a tragedy. We do not want Delhi to face such a situation where patients are lying on the corridors or losing their life on the streets, at any cost. After reviewing the entire situation, your government feels that it

Metro to run at reduced frequency

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Monday said that trains will operate at reduced frequency in view of the week-long lockdown imposed by the Delhi government. The trains will operate at 50% capacity and no standing passengers will be allowed.

DMRC officials said trains will be available at a frequency of 30 minutes during peak hours, and every 60 minutes during non-peak hours.

"Services during morning peak hours, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., and evening peak hours, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., will be available with a headway [frequency] of 30 minutes," the DMRC said.

Metro services will only be available to those under the exempted category on production of valid identity cards, the DMRC said.



People line up outside a liquor store shortly after the Delhi government announced a six-day lockdown to curb the surge in COVID-19 cases. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Crowds seen at markets, liquor stores in panic buying spree

Shoppers worried about commute, essentials running out of stock

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The liquor stores in the city saw huge crowds on Monday after the announcement of a six-day lockdown. At some stores, the customers formed queues, but at most others, there were no social distancing norms in place.

At the markets too, a larger than normal rush was seen, as customers made a last-minute dash to stock up before the lockdown enforcement. Even though shops selling essential supplies and medicines will be allowed to remain open, people queued up saying that commuting would be a problem during the week and that they prefer to buy in advance.

Chemists, retailers, traders, etc. should not be allowed to take undue advantage of the health crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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COVID patients scramble for beds in western Odisha

Experts say the situation is rapidly deteriorating and its impact will soon be felt on the State's health infrastructure

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

Bibek Meher's search for a COVID bed for his father finally ended after 16 hours when he got one at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar.

On April 13, when his father's oxygen level dipped at Kantabanjji in Odisha's Balangir district, he and his mother scrambled for a bed. He had to inquire at four hospitals during a 600-km restless travel in four western Odisha districts, with his father in an ambulance.

He could have easily availed a bed at a government hospital, but there was perhaps lack of centralised information regarding the availability of COVID-19 bed for public.

Though the struggle for hospital bed was not bad as it is in States like Delhi, Maharashtra or Chhattisgarh, con-



People standing in a long queue for vaccination at a hospital in Bhubaneswar on Monday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

fusion prevails among relatives of COVID-19 patients in western Odisha where spike in daily cases was higher than many coastal districts.

"I had found a bed for my father as the situation was not that bad five days ago. With situation rapidly deteriorating, I found many people being turned away here," said Mr. Meher at the private

hospital.

In western Odisha's Sambarpur district, Newton Roy, a journalist, said his mother-in-law (65) was turned away at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Burla, due to unavailability of bed on Monday. "Beds at all private hospitals are occupied. If condition of my mother-in-law worsens,

we have no idea where to go," said Mr. Roy.

Those who are fortunate to have availed beds in special COVID-19 hospitals in Bhubaneswar, are anxious too.

"I had taken admission in a government-sponsored private hospital in Bhubaneswar. No doctor or nurse turned up even after ten hours. Though my husband is 79-year-old and I am 74, I pleaded before hospital authorities to send us home," said Sandhya Das, who is recuperating in home isolation. Their son Nishikant Das, who had flown from Hyderabad to take care of his ageing parents, tested positive too. "Private hospitals, where one expects better services, do not have bed," said Mr. Das.

Disturbing reports were emanating from western Od-

isha. People were seen lying in hospital verandas and inside car on hospital campus for accessing oxygen in Balangir. The situation in Sundergarh is equally horrifying. Patients were lying on hospital floors.

Odisha on Monday reported the highest-ever single-day figure, with 4,445 cases. It surpassed previous highest daily spike of 4,356 reported on September 26 last.

The Odisha government, however, said there was neither shortage of hospital beds nor oxygen.

As per official information available till Sunday, 1,576 patients were occupying beds, with 9,008 being the total number of general beds. It constituted 17.50% bed occupancy. Similarly, of 2,018 total beds in ICUs, 424 were occupied. Only 59 (7.54%) of 782 ventilators

were in use.

"We are ramping up COVID-19 beds. The special hospitals, which were created last year, are being made functional. The bed strength will go up by four to five times," said Niranjan Mishra, State Director of Public Health.

There are 11,381 active cases in seven out of 30 districts.

Active cases in these western Odisha districts - Sundergarh, Jharsuguda, Baragarh, Sambalpur, Balangir, Nuapada and Kalahandi - constitute 46.32% of the State's total active cases. Health experts said the situation was rapidly deteriorating in western pockets and its impact would soon be felt on the health infrastructure. Unless the State government immediately ramps up beds for COVID-19, there would be chaos, they pointed out.

Naveen govt. announces weekend shutdown

Night curfew remains in force in State

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

On a day when Odisha reported its highest single-day spike in COVID-19 cases, the State government announced weekend shutdown on Saturday and Sunday from April 24.

"In the interest of public health and for the containment of spread of COVID-19 in the State, weekend shutdown on Saturday and Sunday shall be imposed in all urban areas of the State from April 24," said Pradeep Kumar Jena, Additional Chief Secretary and Special Relief Commissioner, on Monday.

Weekend shutdowns were in force in urban areas of 10 districts having close proximity to Chhattisgarh. Mr. Jena said night curfew would continue to be

imposed in the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Balangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. every day.

However, night curfew would continue to be in force in all urban areas of other districts of the State, from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. in the remaining 20 districts of the State.

District magistrates, municipal commissioners and the police administration have been asked to strictly enforce measures and the new guideline has laid emphasis on imposition of penal provisions on any person violating the same.

Essential services have been allowed during shutdown.

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, SURESH Sadasivan Changed My Son Name To Shaan Suresh, Vide Affidavit No DC546364, 19/4/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Know all men by these presents that my clients Smt. Badami Devi W/o Sh. Asipal Singh and Sh. Asipal Singh S/o Late Sh. Puran Singh R/o H. No. F-171, Gali No. 5, F-Block, Molarband Ext., Ill 60 Feet Road, Badarpur, New Delhi-110044, have discovered and declared their son Avneesh Gautam and daughter-in-law Shweta @ Sheetal from their all movable and immovable properties and assets and severed all relations with them, for their misbehaviour, disobedience and acts of discipline. Whoever deals with them shall do so at his/her own risk and my clients will not be responsible for the same.

SIDDHANT GAUTAM (Advocate)
Ch. No. 573, Saket Court, New Delhi-17

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one person namely Sonu S/o Sarvesh

R/o KH No.50/3, Gali No. 9, Gautam Colony, Narela, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS:

Narela, Delhi since 20.03.2021. In this regard, a case DD No. 72A Dated 25.03.2021 has been registered at P.S. Narela, Delhi. The description of the missing person as under.

Age: 18 Years, **Complexion:** Fair,

Height: 5' 4", **Face:** Long, **Hair:** Black,

Wearing: Sky Blue colour Jeans and White colour shirt.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped person then please inform P.S. Narela, Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail:

cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.gov.in>

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

Fax No. 011-24368639

PS: Narela, Delhi

Ph: 011-27281521,

27280435, 27282350

DP/944/ON/2021

SD/- S.H.O.

PS: Narela, Delhi

Ph: 011-27281521,

27280435, 27282350

PR.NO.245745 Road(21-22):D

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DEATH OBITUARY



T. ADHIRAJ
Alumnus CEG Guindy Chennai 1951, Retired Deputy Chief Engineer Railways and Lifetime President Tamil Nadu State Amateur Boxing Federation on 17/04/2021. Family and Friends Contact: 9884027467, 044-24421004

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



K.A. CHANDRASEKARAN
Retd. Additional Secretary, Govt. of India.

In Loving Memory
Wife : M. Chellamal
Daughter : Kalavathi
Son-in-law : Ganesh
Granddaughter : Shriya

12th ANNIVERSARY



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1st Call

Tender Ref No:- RCD/PI Div./Ranchi/04/274

Date:-13.04.2021

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5

Mode of Bid Submission

tendering(<http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>)

6

Date/Time of Publication of Tender on Website

22.04.2021, 10:30 AM

7

Last Date/Time of Bid Submission

28.04.2021, 15:00PM

8

Last Date/Time of Submission of Tender Fee & EMD

IN BRIEF



Jagan releases ₹672 cr. for fee reimbursement

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday released the first instalment of fee reimbursement under the Jagananna Vidya Deevena scheme, amounting to nearly ₹672 crore. The money was transferred into the bank accounts of the mothers of 10,88 lakh students pursuing higher studies.

CPI(M) candidates file papers for RS election

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
CPI(M) candidates for the Rajya Sabha election John Brittas and V. Sivadasan filed their nomination papers on Monday. Three seats from Kerala had fallen vacant after the terms of K.K. Ragesh of the CPI(M), Vayalar Ravi of the Congress and P.V. Abdul Wahab of the Indian Union Muslim League had ended.

Take a call on curfew, HC tells Telangana

Court says it will be compelled to pass directions if State does not take a decision in 48 hours

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday asked the State government to take a call on imposing night curfew or weekend lockdowns to check the spread of COVID-19.

Observing that the courts were "bound by the interest of public," the High Court told the government that it would be compelled to pass directions if the government did not take a call on the matter in the next 48 hours. "You do whatever you can do... We will do what you cannot do," Chief Justice Hima Kohli told Advocate General B.S. Prasad appearing for State.

Taking strong exception to the government's inadequate response to its directions on managing and curtailing COVID-19, the court instructed the Health Secretary and the Director General of Police to appear during

next date of hearing. A Bench of Chief Justice and Justice B. Vijayeswara Reddy, hearing a batch of PIL petitions on COVID-19 related issues, noted that the "government's monitoring was not enough".

Seeks fresh affidavit

The Bench directed the government to file a fresh affidavit. Among other details, the affidavit should explain what arrangements the government had made for people not having money for ambulances and to get blood and other tests done. The court wanted the government to explain if any nodal officer was appointed to supervise availability of Remdesivir vials.

"What facilities were put in place to store Remdesivir stocks if they were seized during raids on hoarders," the CJ wanted to know.

During the second wave of coronavirus infection, entire



Back again: Corporation workers sanitising a street in Hyderabad on Monday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

families were testing positive. The court sought to know if the government mooted any idea of supplying food to all such affected families since they cannot prepare food for themselves. The CJ repeatedly asked the AG why the government had not taken any specific decision to control the number of persons participating in marriages, funerals and elec-

tion rallies. What steps was the government taking in areas witnessing high incidence of COVID-19, the Bench asked the AG.

Night curfew in Kerala

Meanwhile, the Kerala government on Monday urged citizens to remain sequestered indoors between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. till May 3 to curb the COVID-19 resur-

gence. The government will further tighten controls on civic life if the surge in infections fails to plateau out in the next 14 days.

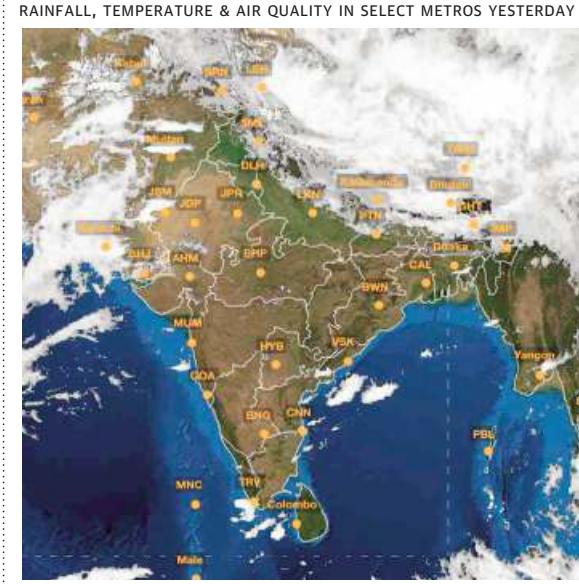
The administration has ordered cinema halls and malls to close at 7.30 p.m. Other businesses, including hotels, should shutter by 9 p.m. There is no restriction on vehicular traffic at night. However, the police will check vehicles passing through containment zones.

The government has advised the public and private sectors to weigh the option of working from home given the risk of disease transmission in hemmed-in spaces. Respective department heads should take a final call in the matter. The State has banned private tuitions.

The decisions were taken at a core committee meeting chaired by Chief Secretary V.P. Joy.

(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram)

WEATHER WATCH



RAINFALL DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)
Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Thunderstorm with lightning/hail/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, Odisha, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...36.3...	25.8	25.6	Kozhikode	...33.8...	25.6	25.6
Ahmedabad	...41.4...	25.3	25.3	Kurnool	...40.5...	28.5	28.5
Aizawl	...24.4...	14.1	14.1	Lucknow	...39.2...	21.5	21.5
Altahabad	...40.8...	21.2	21.2	Madurai	...37.7...	25.8	25.8
Bengaluru	...34.6...	22.7	22.7	Mangaluru	...34.3...	22.6	22.6
Bhopal	...39.3...	24.0	24.0	Mumbai	...33.4...	26.6	26.6
Bhubaneswar	...40.6...	23.0	23.0	Mysuru	...35.0...	20.4	20.4
Chandigarh	...37.3...	19.9	19.9	New Delhi	...37.8...	18.5	18.5
Chennai	...37.4...	27.7	27.7	Patna	...39.2...	22.2	22.2
Coimbatore	...35.7...	24.4	24.4	Port Blair	...32.4...	24.7	24.7
Dehradun	...35.0...	16.0	16.0	Puducherry	...36.6...	26.0	26.0
Gangtok	24.4...	9.3	9.3	Pune	...38.2...	22.6	22.6
Goa	...33.8...	25.7	25.7	Raipur	...40.4...	25.8	25.8
Guwahati	19.4...	32.0	18.8	Ranchi	...36.5...	21.1	21.1
Hubballi	...36.0...	23.0	23.0	Shillong	1.9...	12.1	12.1
Hyderabad	...37.1...	23.8	23.8	Shimla	...26.0...	11.5	11.5
Imphal	7.9...	28.5...	14.8	Srinagar	...16.6...	6.2	6.2
Jaipur	...39.5...	28.3	28.3	Thiruvananthapuram	11.5...	32.4	24.7
Kochi	13.4...	32.8...	25.4	Tiruchi	...40.5...	27.0	27.0
Kohima	2.6...	25.8...	12.6	Vijayawada	...39.1...	26.4	26.4
Kolkata	...39.5...	25.8	25.8	Visakhapatnam	...33.6...	28.2	28.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	22	47	30	...86	...75	■■■
Bengaluru	.7	62	47	...56	...75	■■■
Chennai	.5	23	40	...43	...45	■■■
Delhi	23	42	34	23.0	25.7	■■■
Hyderabad	.4	54	24	103	115	■■■
Kolkata	21	20	44	122	89	■■■
Lucknow	.8	28	56	206	132	■■■
Mumbai	...—	2	75	126	105	■■■
Pune	.5	25	42	58	81	■■■
Visakhapatnam	19	47	24	...43	...80	■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Bhawali, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 100 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 33.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

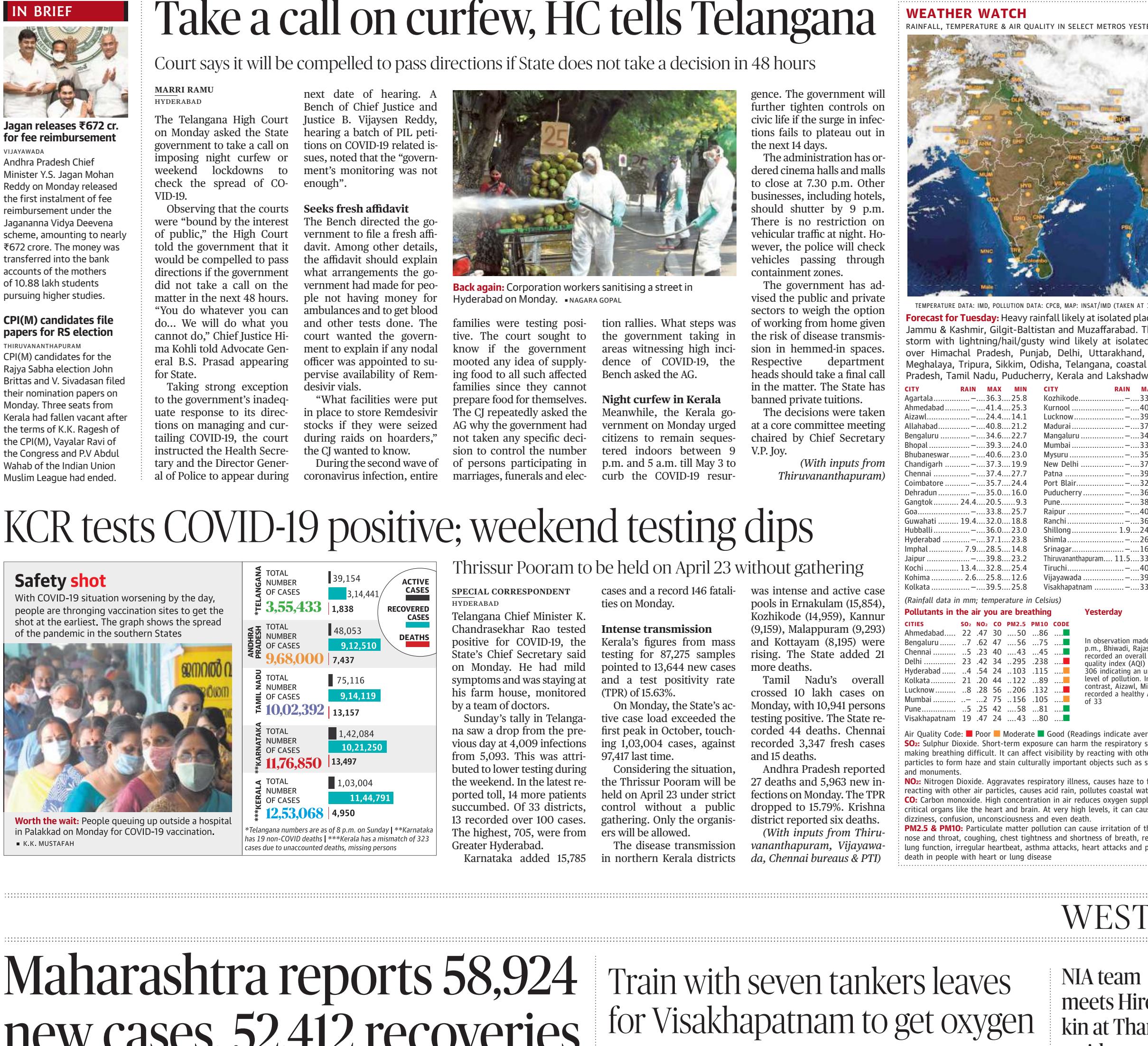
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death people with heart or lung disease

Safety shot

With COVID-19 situation worsening by the day, people are thronging vaccination sites to get the shot at the earliest. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Worth the wait: People queuing up outside a hospital in Palakkad on Monday for COVID-19 vaccination. ■ K.K. MUSTAFAH



351 succumb to virus taking death toll to 60,824; active case tally crosses 6.76 lakh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

While Maharashtra reported a spike of 58,924 new COVID-19 cases on Monday, the surge was tempered by a relatively robust number of recoveries as 52,412 patients were discharged across the State.

The State's active case tally climbed to 6,76,520 while 351 fatalities pushed the death toll to 60,824. Of the 351 deaths, 220 occurred in the last 48 hours while 85 were from last week and the remaining 46 were from an earlier period.

The State's recovery rate marginally rose to 81.04%.

While the total case tally has now reached 38,98,262, the cumulative recoveries stand at 31,59,240 with 2.21 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours.

"Of a total 2,40,75,811 laboratory samples tested thus far, 38,98,262 (with the average case positivity rising to 16.19%) have returned positive with over 2.21 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate said, adding that the State's case fatality rate had incrementally declined to 1.56%.

Pune district reported more than 9,500 new cases to take its total case tally to 7,35,378. As per the State Health Department figures, six deaths were reported as the death toll went up to 8,824. According to district authorities, the active case tally crossed 1.03 lakh while the fatality count has surpassed 11,500.

Mumbai recorded 7,381 fresh cases, taking its total tally to 5,86,867 of whom



Arduous journey: Migrants wait in a long queue outside Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai to take trains back to their home towns, on Monday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

76,961 are active. As many as 58 fatalities took the city's death toll to 12,412.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha registered more than 6,700 cases as its total cases touched 3,38,620 of whom

case tally rose to 82,833 of whom 13,398 are active while the death toll climbed to 2,024.

Osmannabad in Marathwada added 605 new cases to take its total tally to 30,922 of whom 5,260 are active. As many as 19 deaths took the fatality toll to 722.

Nanded district logged 21 deaths and more than 1,300 cases as its death toll reached 1,231 while its total case tally went up to 70,551 of whom 13,497 are active.



Saving lives

India must quickly improve health facilities to be able to prevent deaths

After painfully negotiating numerous hurdles during the first wave that peaked in mid-September last year, India appears to have learnt little as a more ferocious second wave is ravaging the country. Precious time was wasted before critical facilities began to be scaled up to meet the demands of the second wave that is accelerating at an unprecedented pace, leading to health-care facilities being overwhelmed; the number of deaths shows a sharp growth of 10.2%. A mad scramble for hospital beds, oxygen, medicines, vaccines and even a quick funeral are witnessed in many cities. If the mindless rush for convalescent plasma and hydroxychloroquine even in the absence of any evidence of benefit was seen last year, there is now hysteria to get remdesivir for hospitalised patients, leading to drug shortages. Though a small trial did show that the drug shortened the time to recovery, the World Health Organization's large Solidarity trial found no evidence of its benefit in reducing mortality, initiation of ventilation or substantial reduction in the time to recovery. Being an intravenous injection, remdesivir can be administered only in hospital settings, and any benefit might be seen only in moderately sick patients. Due to an acute shortage of beds, the disease in most patients is often severe at the time of admission. The Health Ministry's July 2020 COVID-19 clinical management protocol does suggest that remdesivir may be considered in patients with moderate disease. But steroids such as dexamethasone may be better at helping patients on oxygen support or on ventilator support from progressing to respiratory failure and death.

The first wave in India and elsewhere clearly highlighted the weaknesses in health delivery. Yet, nearly a year after hospitals were stretched beyond capacity and beds and medical oxygen supplies were in short supply, no attempts have been made either by State or Union governments to significantly augment medical oxygen supplies. According to reports, the Union government took eight months to initiate steps to build oxygen generation plants that will reduce the reliance on pressurised liquid oxygen. Of the 162 plants approved, only 33 have been installed, the Health Ministry tweeted. Large buildings converted into temporary hospitals, without necessary oxygen supplies to individual beds and sufficient care workers, can at best serve as isolation centres. Despite private health facilities playing only a minor role in treating COVID-19 patients last year, NITI Aayog in a 2021 report sees it as a priority to get private players to invest and expand in Tier 2 and Tier 3 locations. With the virus unlikely to be eliminated in the near future, being better prepared with vaccines and health-care facilities will be a prudent way to save lives.

Vulnerability reminder

The RBI needs to ensure tighter oversight over large-value credit-related corporate frauds

The U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel's reported decision to allow fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi's extradition to India, three years after state-owned Punjab National Bank admitted it had been defrauded to the tune of over ₹14,000 crore, serves as a reminder of the urgent need to address the banking system's vulnerability to fraud. India's lenders have had to contend not only with a sizeable share of sour loans but also a growing number and cumulative value of frauds. The RBI noted in its latest Annual Report, in August last year, that the total number of cases of fraud (minimum size of ₹1 lakh) at banks and financial institutions rose 28% by volume and surged 159%, or more than 2.5 times, by value to ₹1.85-lakh crore in the 12 months ended March 31, 2020. While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may have likely slowed the cognisance of frauds since then, the trend from the preceding years is deeply troubling from multiple perspectives. With frauds mainly occurring in the loan portfolio, the RBI observed that there was "a concentration of large value frauds, with the top 50 credit-related frauds constituting 76% of the total amount". Also, despite the central bank having created a framework to facilitate the prevention, if not early detection and prompt reporting of such frauds, the average lag in detecting these transactions was 24 months during 2019-20. And most disturbing was the RBI's finding that in cases of sizeable fraud, where the sum involved exceeded ₹100 crore, the average lag was 63 months, or more than five years.

While the public sector banks (PSBs) have had to bear the brunt of the hit from fraudulent borrowing – they accounted for an almost 80% share in 2019-20 – the private sector lenders outpaced their peers both in terms of number of cases and the increase in value of frauds. Even granting that fraud at a single private lender skewed the increase in cumulative value of transactions that year, a fivefold surge in value to ₹34,211 crore was on the back of a 34% jump in the number of fraud cases at these banks while the PSBs suffered only a 24% increase. These facts are especially germane when one considers that the government has been on mission mode in trying to expedite consolidation among the PSBs and is ultimately looking at opening up the sector as a whole to greater private sector participation. With the RBI lamenting the 'weak implementation of early warning signals', non-detection of signals during internal audits and non-cooperation of borrowers during forensic audits as being among the key factors leading to delayed detection of fraud, the impending concentration of risk in fewer lenders is far from reassuring. The fallen jeweller's case is only the symptom of a deeper malady. The RBI as industry regulator needs to walk the talk and ensure tighter oversight. Any laxity threatens overall financial stability.

Protecting children in the age of AI

Their rights, privacy, and well-being must be protected in digital environments just as they are in the physical world



RENATA DESSALLIEN

We are now living among history's very first "AI" generation. From the Alexa they converse with, to their robot playmates, to the YouTube wormholes they disappear into, the children and adolescents of today are born into a world increasingly powered by virtual reality and artificial intelligence (AI).

AI is not only changing what humans can do, it is shaping our behaviours, our preferences, our perceptions of the world and of ourselves. Older people still remember life before AI and the digital world – our references, anchors and pole stars pre-date the fourth Industrial Revolution. Not so for the millions of children and adolescents who were born into it. What does this mean for them, and for us – their parents and guardians?

The task ahead

Double imperatives – this would mean getting all children on-line and creating child-safe digital spaces

One of the most pressing concerns is that not everyone can tap into the opportunities offered by this transformation. According to UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as many as two-thirds of the world's children do not have access to the Internet at home.

In addition to closing the digital divide, we need to better protect children and adolescents online; but how does one childproof AI? How do we encourage and support the tremendous good AI can do for children's growth and deve-

lopment, while simultaneously mitigating the harm? And how do we equip children and young people with the knowledge, tools and awareness to protect themselves?

In the old-fashioned physical world, we evolved norms and standards to protect children. For instance, there are policies and protocols for a child travelling alone as an unaccompanied minor. Parents are understandably reluctant to let their children be photographed by the media, and in many countries, news outlets blur children's faces to protect them. Where are these protections online?

The virtual world is full of unsupervised "vacations" and "playgrounds" – with other children and, potentially, less-than-scrupulous adults, sometimes posing anonymously as children. While video gaming and chat forums like Fortnite: Battle Royale, to name one popular example, offer an online space for children to socialise with their friends, multiple reports identify such virtual playgrounds as "honeypots" for child predators. Short of banning screen time entirely, parents are hard-pressed to keep tabs on just what their children are doing online, and with whom. With online homework, this has become even more difficult.

Right to freedom of attention

It does not help that the AI systems driving many video games and social networks are designed to keep children hooked, both through algorithms and gimmicks like "streaks", "likes", infinite scroll, etc. Even if this is an ancillary consequence of the underlying business model, the damage is done – children, from a tender age through adolescence, are becoming digitally addicted.

Similarly, right when children and youth are forming their initial views of the world, they are being sucked into virtual deep space, in-

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cluding the universe of fake news, conspiracy theories, hype, hubris, online bullying, hate speech and the likes. With every click and scroll, AI is sorting them into tribes, and feeding them a steady diet of specially customised tribal cuisine. All this is thrown at our children just when they are starting to try to make sense of who they are and the world they live in; right when it is so important to help them understand and appreciate different perspectives, preferences, beliefs and customs, to build bridges of understanding and empathy and goodwill.

Harvesting, algorithmic bias

Other insidious pitfalls also lie in the path of the Generation AI child. Today, many AI toys come pre-programmed with their own personality and voice. They can offer playful and creative opportunities for children, with some even promoting enhanced literacy, social skills and language development. However, they also listen to and observe our children, soaking up their data, and with no framework to govern its use. Some of these AI toys even perform facial recognition of children and toddlers. Germany banned Cayla, an Internet-connected doll, because of concerns it could be hacked and used to spy on children. Yet, most countries do not yet have the legal framework in place to ban such toys.

Finally, in the field of education, AI can and is being used in fabulous ways to tailor learning materials and pedagogical approaches

to the child's needs – such as intelligent tutoring systems, tailored curriculum plans, and imaginative virtual reality instruction, offering rich and engaging interactive learning experiences that can improve educational outcomes. But algorithms can also both amplify existing problems with education systems and introduce new challenges – when the pandemic caused the usual tests to be cancelled in the United Kingdom and by the International Baccalaureate board, for instance, the algorithms that served as a fallback meant thousands of students lost out on college admissions and scholarships. And unless the educational and performance data on children is kept confidential and anonymous, it can inadvertently typecast or brand children, harming their future opportunities.

Rights, protections

So, how do we balance the tremendous good AI can do for children, while keeping their unique vulnerabilities topmost in our pre-occupations, mitigating inadvertent harm and misuse?

The next phase of the fourth Industrial Revolution must include an overwhelming push to extend Internet access to all children. Governments, the private sector, civil society, parents and children must push hard for this now, before AI further deepens the pre-existing inequalities and creates its own disparities. And on mitigating online harms, we need a multi-pronged action plan: we need legal and technological safeguards; we need greater awareness among parents, guardians and children on how AI works behind the scenes; we need tools, like trustworthy certification and rating systems, to enable sound choices on safe AI apps; we need to ban anonymous accounts; we need enforceable ethical principles of non-discrimination and fairness embedded in the policy and design of

AI systems – we need "do no harm" risk assessments for all algorithms that interact with children or their data. In short, we need safe online spaces for children, without algorithmic manipulation and with restricted profiling and data collection. And we need online tools (and an online culture) that helps prevent addiction, that promotes attention-building skills, that expands children's horizons, understanding and appreciation for diverse perspectives, and that builds their social emotional learning capabilities.

Key first step

In February, in a landmark decision, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General Comment 25, on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fulfilling all children's rights in the digital environment. This is an important first step on the long road ahead.

The Government of India has put in place strong policies to protect the rights and well-being of children, including a legislative framework that includes the Right to Education. Laws and policies to prevent a range of abuses and violence, such as the National Policy for Children (2013), can be extended for children in a digital space.

But much more needs to be done, here in India and around the world. And in this interconnected world, the more we can agree upon multilaterally and by multi-stakeholder groups, the easier it may be to implement nationally and locally. Just as India proactively helped shape the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and gave the world the principle of *Ahimsa*, it could also galvanise the international community around, ensuring an ethical AI for Generation AI.

Renata Dessallien is United Nations Resident Coordinator, India

The ordinance route is bad, re-promulgation worse

Governments, Centre and State, are resorting to the practice which is a usurpation of legislative power by the executive



M.R. MADHAVAN

The central government has re-promulgated the ordinance that establishes a commission for air quality management in the National Capital Region, or the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3du2mHW>). This raises questions about the practice of issuing ordinances to make law, and that of re-issuing ordinances without getting them ratified by Parliament.

The Constitution permits the central and State governments to make laws when Parliament (or the State Legislature) is not in session. As law making is a legislative function, this power is provided for urgent requirements, and the law thus made has an automatic expiry date. The Constitution states that the ordinance will lapse at the end of six weeks from the time Parliament (or the State Legislature) next meets.

In the Constituent Assembly, while there was a discussion on how long the ordinance could re-

main valid (with some members asking for it to lapse within four weeks of promulgation as that would be sufficient time to call an urgent session of Parliament), no one raised the possibility of an ordinance to be re-promulgated. Perhaps such an eventuality was beyond their imagination.

What the data show

Whereas an ordinance was originally conceived as an emergency provision, it was used fairly regularly. In the 1950s, central ordinances were issued at an average of 7.1 per year. The number peaked in the 1990s at 19.6 per year, and declined to 7.9 per year in the 2010s. The last couple of years has seen a spike, in 2016 in 19, 15 in 2020, and four till now this year (<https://bit.ly/3go9YKf>).

State governments also used this provision very often. The issue was brought up in the Supreme Court through a writ petition by D.C. Wadhwa, a professor of economics, who discovered this fact when he was researching land tenures. He found out that Bihar had issued 256 ordinances between 1967 and 1981, of which 69 were re-promulgated several times, including 11 which were kept alive for more than 10 years.

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in 1986, ruled that re-promulgation of ordi-



nances was contrary to the Constitutional scheme. It said, "it would most certainly be a colourable exercise of power for the Government to ignore the Legislature and to re-promulgate the Ordinance and thus to continue to regulate the life and liberty of the citizens through Ordinance made by the Executive.

Such a stratagem would be repugnant to the constitutional scheme as it would enable the Executive to transgress its constitutional limitation in the matter of law making in an emergent situation and to covertly and indirectly arrogate to itself the law making function of the Legislature (<https://bit.ly/3mXExC>). Interestingly, the Court pointed out that there was not a single instance of the President (i.e., the central government) re-promulgating an ordinance.

The judgment did not stop the practice. Instead, the Centre also

started to follow the lead of Bihar. For example, in 2013 and 2014, the Securities Laws (Amendment) ordinance was promulgated three times. Similarly, an ordinance to amend the Land Acquisition Act was issued in December 2014, and re-promulgated twice – in April and May 2015 (<https://bit.ly/32svBkM>).

An unconstitutional practice
The matter came up again in the Supreme Court, and in January 2017, a seven-judge Constitution Bench declared this practice to be unconstitutional. The judgment concluded that, "Re-promulgation of ordinances is a fraud on the Constitution and a subversion of democratic legislative processes (<https://bit.ly/3sq95Du>)."

Even this judgment has been ignored. The Indian Medical Council Amendment Ordinance was issued in September 2018, and reissued in January 2019, as it was passed by only one House of Parliament in the intervening session. The current case of the Commission for Air Quality Management is even more egregious. While the ordinance of October 2020 was laid in Parliament on the first day of the recent Budget Session, a Bill to replace it was not introduced. However, the ordinance has been re-promulgated now (<https://bit.ly/32uEuIC>).

States have also been using the

ordinance route to enact laws. For example, in 2020, Kerala issued 81 ordinances, while Karnataka issued 24 and Maharashtra 21. Kerala has also re-promulgated ordinances: one ordinance to set up a Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology has been promulgated five times between January 2020 and February 2021 (<https://bit.ly/2Q6zglJ>).

Onus on legislatures, courts
The legal position is clear, and has been elucidated by constitution Benches of the Supreme Court. Ordinances are to tackle exigencies when the legislature is not in session, and expire at the end of six weeks of the next meeting of the legislature. This time period is given for the legislature to decide whether such a law is warranted. Repromulgation is not permitted as that would be a usurpation of legislative power by the executive. As governments, both at the Centre and States, are violating this principle, the legislatures and the courts should check the practice. That is what separation of powers and the concept of checks and balances means. By not checking this practice, the other two organs are also abdicating their responsibility to the Constitution.

M.R. Madhavan is President of PRS Legislative Research, New Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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- Pandemic management**
The alarming rise in COVID-19 cases, made worse by the shortage of essentials including medical oxygen cylinders, hospital beds and vaccines, tells the grim tale of how unprepared the Centre and several States have been in tackling the ongoing second wave. The authorities either choose to ignore it or be callous about it. Health protocols have been observed in breach during the campaigning for the Assembly elections with the Election Commission having mostly remained a mute spectator. Restrictions that were clamped during the first wave have returned, threatening to derail India's nascent economic recovery. As the country cannot afford another stringent lockdown, whose horrid memories are still fresh in the minds of people, impositions of local restrictions even while hastening the vaccination drive and widening its ambit should inform the strategy to contain the spread of the contagion. M. JAYARAM, Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu
- It is disquieting that the Prime Minister of the largest democracy is involved in the micro-management of activities such as the supply of oxygen, medicines and so forth. In the first place why does the Chief Minister of a State have to reach out to the Prime Minister for oxygen cylinders? Is the country being run on the whims and fancies of a few? There ought to be a robust and transparent mechanism in place with minimal human intervention for the supply of requisite medical supplies to needy States. Governments ought to rise above petty politics for the sake of humanity and the Centre should not slam States at the drop of a hat. In this game of one-upmanship it is India's own citizens who are suffering. DEEPAK SINGHAL, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
- ECD's role**
The Election Commission of India (ECI), of late, tends to assign itself with the task of ensuring the overall administration of States going to the polls, which for sure is not enshrined in the Constitution. Article 324(I) empowers the Commission for the 'superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice President held under this Constitution shall be vested in a Commission (referred to in this Constitution as the Election Commission)'. The word to note here is 'conduct'. The role of the ECI is more of a facilitator and not an 'administrator'. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the ECI to confirm that its actions on the model code of conduct do not go beyond the purpose to encompass the whole administrative machinery in the guise of ensuring a free and fair election. In fact it would be more appropriate if the ECI urges the government to initiate action to include 'voting right' in the Constitution either as a fundamental right (Part III) or as a fundamental duty in Part IV. Constitutional
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- authorities may take steps to strengthen democratic practices rather than to usurp more powers to showcase their supremacy over others (Editorial page, "The ECI cannot be a super government", April 19). BASKARAN KRISHNAMURTHY, Chennai
- No one in the country wants the Election Commission of India to be a super government. But what every voter expects the ECI to do today is to exercise its available powers judiciously and fairly among the political parties of India. A few disturbing happenings in the country in the phase of the
- CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:**
A story titled "BJP candidate shot at in Malda, taken to hospital" (April 19, 2021) incorrectly said that the constituency would go to polls in the eighth phase of the Assembly elections on April 26th. It should have been April 29th.
- The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

India and Russia look for a reset

By steering clear of alliances and retaining autonomy of policy, India can maximise its global influence



P.S. RAGHAVAN

It was clear from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's 'working visit' to India two weeks ago that India-Russia relations are not quite the flavour of the season.

Mr. Lavrov's principal objective was to prepare the ground for the visit of President Vladimir Putin later this year. The break in 2020, after 20 annual summits, had provoked speculation, partly flowing from Mr. Lavrov's criticism last year of a U.S.-led Indo-Pacific policy, drawing India into "anti-China games" and undermining the India-Russia partnership. A few weeks earlier, Mr. Putin had extolled the vibrancy of Russia-China defence cooperation. These remarks encouraged the advocacy for a shift of India's foreign policy away from a weak and China-tethered Russia and towards the U.S.

Same narrative

The joint media appearance of Mr. Lavrov and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar did not change the narrative. They said their talks were warm, comprehensive and productive; they mentioned the time-tested friendship, energy projects, defence cooperation and Russian support for India's manned space programme. They glossed over their divergent perspectives on Afghanistan. Phrases like "identical or similar views" did not carry much conviction. Much more eloquent than fine words was the fact that, for the first time in all his visits to India, Mr. Lavrov could not meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Jaishankar said he conveyed the Indian perspective on the Indo-Pacific and Mr. Lavrov said they discussed the Asia-Pacific. "Indo-Pacific" continues to stick in Russian throats. India insists that its Indo-Pacific initiatives seek a cooperative order, that the Quad dialogue (of India, Japan, Australia and the U.S.) is not the nucleus of a politico-military alliance, and that it never subscribed to the Trumpian posture (now under review by the Biden administration)



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (L) and Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar attend a press conference after their meeting, in New Delhi. • AFP

of military confrontation with China. A \$1 billion Indian line of credit for projects in the Russian Far East and activation of a Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor were announced when Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin met in 2019. The message was that India's effort to restrain Chinese aggression is compatible with Russia's vision of a Eurasian partnership. Russia remains unconvinced, either because it feels India's words do not match its actions or because of its close ties with China.

As India-China tensions have grown, so have India's concerns about Russia's China embrace, encompassing close political, economic and defence cooperation (Russia accounted for 77% of China's arms imports in 2016-20). India's apprehensions about their technology- and intelligence-sharing were heightened by Mr. Putin's remark that he would not rule out a future Russia-China military alliance. It is not clear whether he was stating a conviction, reassuring China or warning India and/or the West. Mr. Lavrov said in Delhi that Russia-China relations, though very close, are not "aimed at establishing a military alliance". Mr. Modi would like this confirmation from the ultimate maker of Russian policy, when he meets Mr. Putin. He may also hear why Russia cannot see the logic of India's Indo-Pacific actions.

Mr. Lavrov visited Pakistan directly after India – the first time a Russian Minister has done so. He received red-carpet treatment and met the Army Chief and the Prime Minis-

ter. He confirmed that Russia would strengthen Pakistan's "counter-terrorism capability" – a euphemism used by the U.S. earlier for its weapons supplies to Pakistan. Russia is now Pakistan's second largest defence supplier, accounting for 6.6% of its arms imports in 2016-20. Their cooperation includes joint "counter-terrorism" drills and sharing perspectives on military tactics and strategic doctrines.

At the same time, Russia remains a major supplier of cutting-edge military technologies to India. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) records that Russia supplied 49% of India's arms imports in 2016-20. The proportion has been falling, as India diversifies its imports. Despite this, India's second largest supplier, France, had only an 18% share. SIPRI estimates that recent orders for Russian arms could boost future import figures. This is a reality check. Defence cooperation is not a transactional exchange. Sharing of technologies and strategies is underpinned by a mutual commitment to protection of confidentiality.

Sustainable defence cooperation is based on a credible assurance that what is transferred to our adversaries will not blunt the effectiveness of our weapons systems. In this already complex mix, the American sanctions legislation, CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), adds an external layer of complexity.

The criticality of geography in geopolitics is often underestimated. The Eurasian landmass to India's

north is dominated by Russia and China. Strategic and security interests in Central Asia, West Asia and Afghanistan dictate our engagement with the region and the connectivity projects linking it, like the International North-South Transport Corridor through Iran (that was discussed with Mr. Lavrov). India cannot vacate this space to a Russia-China condominium (with Pakistan in tow), without potentially grave security consequences.

The China angle

The Modi-Putin summit will tackle the "irritants" and, as before, will probably announce that perspectives have been reconciled. But such annual assertions do not convince the political, official, business, media and academic circles in the two countries, which have to sustain a major partnership.

The relationship has to be located in a broader geopolitical context. The principal element in this is the drive for superpower status of a powerful, assertive China. It is self-evident that the U.S., as the pre-eminent superpower, seeks to retard this process. In a deviation from classical geopolitical strategy, the U.S. is taking on both China and Russia (which is the lesser power, despite its military power and energy dominance), thereby driving the two together and arguably accelerating the move to bipolarity. Even so, the differentials in military, economic and political power across countries may complicate the emergence of two clear poles of the Cold War variety. A let-up in the Western hostility to Russia could add to the complexity, if Mr. Putin's Russia takes the opportunity to loosen the Chinese embrace and position itself as a pole in the multipolar world.

India has to explore the space within these processes to maximise its global influence by steering clear of alliances and retaining autonomy of policy. The partnership with Russia will not have the salience of past decades, but will remain important for our continental interests and defence capability. The depth of the relationship will depend on the willingness and capacity of both countries to show mutual sensitivity to core security concerns.

P.S. Raghavan is a former Indian Ambassador to Russia

Sharing the burden of care

The load on tertiary health services during the pandemic can be reduced by strengthening community health centres



MATHEW GEORGE

The resilience of national health services is characterised by their ability to respond appropriately to epidemics, pandemics and disasters. There has been a consistent failure in India to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in the second wave. It is the responsibility of the state to first prevent the spread of a pandemic, failing which it needs to be extra vigilant in order to prevent every death from the disease. It is unfortunate that people are dying not because of inadequate solutions (technology and knowledge) for dealing with the virus but due to inadequate access (economic, physical and others) to that knowledge and technology. This is serious injustice.

A nation will face several challenges if it wants to improve an otherwise ailing health system: poor infrastructure, inadequate staff, and so on. How can we turn even the worst crisis into a sustainable opportunity?

Two approaches

There are two possibilities that exist in strengthening curative care for COVID-19. The first is a reactive approach, which is what is carried out by most of the State governments. This is done by transforming a few of the well-performing facilities at the tertiary level into state-of-the-art COVID-19 hospitals. However, this comes at a cost: people are not be able to get their routine hospital services from these tertiary facilities.

At the primary level, most of the facilities created were temporary structures. They were created by hiring buildings and open spaces as COVID-19 treatment centres providing only beds. This approach of providing beds without adequate infrastructure was extensively critiqued for its inability to cater to the needs of patients in real-time situations. A slightly modified approach was to create first line treatment centres. Most of these facilities were a failure due to their inability to build trust among people as COVID-19 treatment centres. Most of them were shut down when the cases went down.

The second possibility, less tried out, is to equip the functional facilities of government health services at the secondary level and convert them into exclusive COVID-19 care centres. These could be used to treat those patients who don't need ICU support.

As the three-tier structure of health servic-

es in India envisages, a community health centre (CHC) can potentially become a fulcrum on which the entire health system can bank on, especially during a crisis. A CHC is supposed to cover a population of 80,000-1,00,000 in rural areas. A CHC is supposed to have 30 beds with at least four specialty services and is expected to function as a first referral unit for curative care services referred from primary health centres (PHCs).

Sadly, several States have failed to develop this facility. Many CHCs are grossly underdeveloped. Over 5,000 CHCs exist in rural areas, and can they can add 50,000-75,000 beds if 10-15 beds are added in each. This facility can be strengthened to address COVID-19-specific treatment needs (primary and secondary) of the rural population, especially in States with an increasing case load and poor health infrastructure like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Feasible and sustainable solution

This can be a more feasible solution as specialists for this facility can be directed from district hospitals or medical colleges and the numbers can be managed for four-six CHCs under each district. This can be a sustainable solution as already there is a certain level of trust and functionality built into these centres as treatment centres. They have the potential to become centres for sample collection and vaccine delivery too.

These CHCs can also easily be converted into independent standalone centres for COVID-19 treatment. After the pandemic ends, they can be converted into normal secondary-level facilities that cater to other needs. This can substantially reduce the overload faced by tertiary facilities as more than the severity of the disease, it is inadequate access to timely treatment that results in several deaths. It is always possible to strengthen the PHCs nearby to cater to the needs of people for other curative care services.

For urban areas too, there is a need to develop peripheral hospitals at the secondary level within the government sector (100-150 bedded facility for every 3 lakh population), which can cater to the needs of the population during COVID-19 times. Instead of placing 500 and 1,000 beds in playgrounds and parking lots, it is important to expand beds which are effectively integrated into the existing health services. Only then will infrastructure facilities be good enough to provide effective care. This can build trust among people and contribute to strengthening health services in the long term.

Mathew George is Professor, Centre for Public Health, School of Health Systems Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Views are personal

A huge, costly mistake

The Ken-Betwa project will take a tremendous toll on the ecosystem, and its benefits are not certain

SUNNY SEBASTIAN

A river project which remained a pipe dream for more than three decades after it was first mooted may now become a reality. Last month, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and the Centre signed a tripartite agreement to transfer "surplus" water from the Ken basin in M.P. to the "deficit" Betwa basin in U.P. The Ken-Betwa project is part of the national river linking project which proposes to connect 14 Himalayan and 16 peninsular rivers with 30 canals and 3,000 reservoirs in order to irrigate 87 million hectares of land. It has the status of a national project, as the Centre will contribute 90% of the cost. It is India's first river linking project and will take eight years to complete.

First mooted in the 1980s, the Ken-Betwa project was taken up seriously only during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's regime. Since then, former Union Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti has been the torch-bearer of the project. The project, the government says, will enhance the irrigation potential of the water-starved Bundelkhand region in U.P. and M.P., facilitate groundwater recharge and reduce the occurrence of floods. According to the Memorandum of Agreement signed, the to-be-built Daudhan dam is expected to irrigate nearly 6,00,000 hectares in four districts in M.P. and 2,51,000 hectares in four districts in U.P. and provide drinking water supply to 41 lakh people in M.P. and 21 lakh in U.P.

Environmental concerns

However, the excitement of planners and politicians about this project, which costs ₹37,611 crore (2018 figure), is reportedly missing on the ground. The people of the region who are going to be affected by the project seem resigned to their fate. In public hearings held in the past, they were divided on political lines and also worried about the loss of the ecosystem and displacement.

The project was on the drawing board for years mainly due to environmental concerns. Of the 12,500 hectares of land to get submerged by the project, more than 9,000 ha are categorised as forest land. The sub-

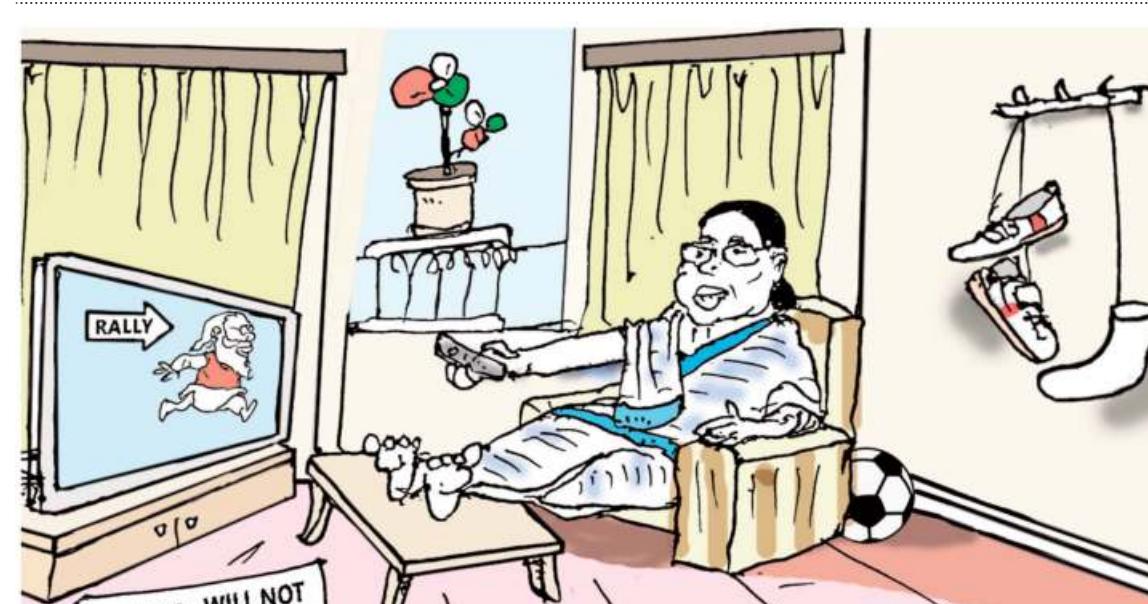
mergence area includes a critically important section of the Panna Tiger Reserve. The Reserve is considered as a shining example of conservation after it successfully improved the tiger and vulture populations. Echoing the concerns of environmentalists, Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar asking him not to implement the project. She said "around 40% of the area of the tiger reserve will be irretrievably damaged" if the project is implemented. Also, the project may destroy about 7.2 lakh trees. South Asia Network on Dams, River and People convener Himanshu Thakkar fears that this will affect rainfall in the already parched region.

Cost and benefit

The claims of Ken having surplus water may be unrealistic as the river is not perennial – in the past sometimes, it has slowed to a trickle. Another difficulty will be that the Ken flows 60-70 feet lower than the Betwa and at least 30% of the 103 MW power generated will be used for pumping the water up. The Union Ministry and the National Water Development Agency, which is entrusted with the project, have some issues to sort out. These include getting clearance from the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court, which had raised concerns about the project. The cost-benefit calculations of the project also don't take into consideration the environmental and social impacts. Thus, the benefits do not seem certain and are far outweighed by the costs on the environment.

It is surprising that alternatives such as water-conservation and water-harvesting methods without building a dam haven't been seriously considered in the region. Large-scale solutions such as these are not always viable and the best. Given the serious doubts about the benefits of the project and the monumental toll that it would have on the ecosystem, including on carefully preserved wildlife, the Ken-Betwa project seems like a huge, costly mistake.

Sunny Sebastian is a former Vice-Chancellor and member, Rajasthan State Board for Wildlife

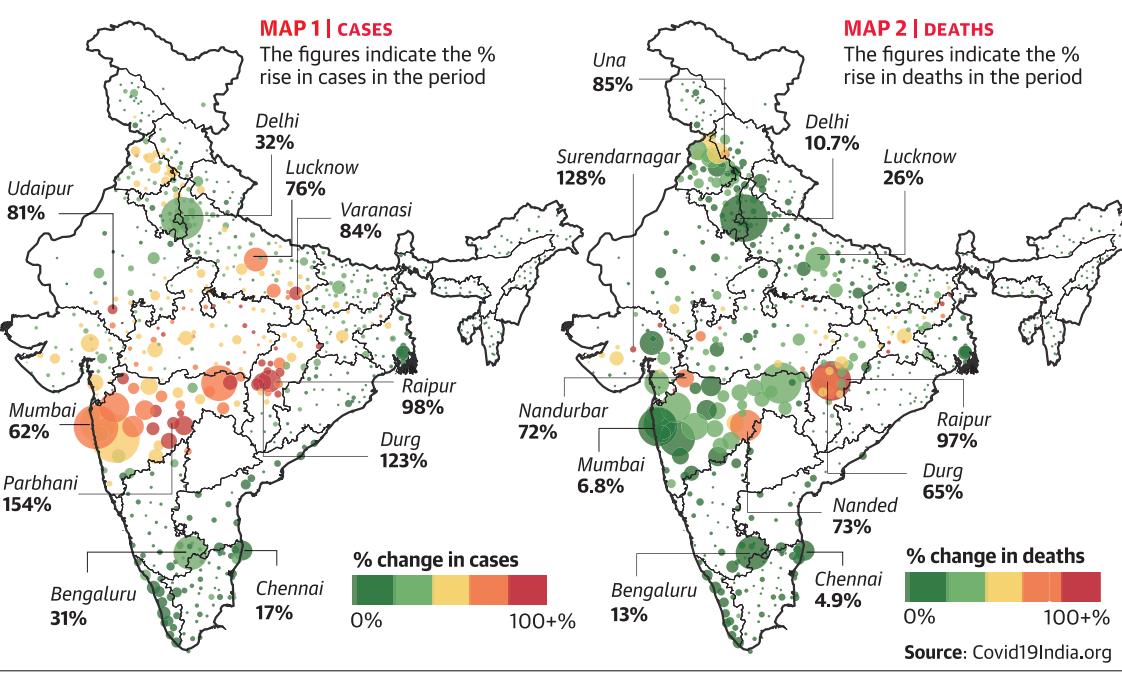


DATA POINT

COVID-19 hotspots

While cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru continue to bear the brunt of COVID-19 cases during the second wave, rural/semi-rural districts such as Parbhani, Agar Malwa and Durg have recorded among the sharpest increases in cases. Similarly, the sharpest increases in deaths have been registered in rural/semi-rural districts such as Surendranagar, Una, Nanded and Dharmati. However, in terms of the absolute number of fatalities, cities continue to dominate. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

HOW TO READ THE MAPS | In both the maps, each circle corresponds to one district. In the first map, the size of the circle corresponds to the new cases recorded in the March 18-April 18 period. The bigger the circle, the more the cases in that period. The colour of the circle corresponds to the % rise in cases in that period. In the second map, the size of the circle corresponds to the new deaths registered in the March 18-April 18 period. The bigger the circle, the more the deaths in that period. The colour of the circle corresponds to the % rise in deaths in that period



FROM PAGE ONE

Vaccines for all above 18 from May 1, says govt.

On Monday, nearly 2.8 million doses were administered.

Several States have complained of shortages. After initially defending its decision to rationalise vaccine administration as based on "global scientific protocol", the Centre subsequently allowed imported vaccines to apply for supply without first conducting mandatory local trials.

Serum Institute of India is supposed to have supplied 100 million doses of Covishield every month from May but has said it would not be able to do so before July.

Bharat Biotech, manufacturer of Covaxin, whose current capacity is around 20 crore doses annually, is supplying around 1 crore vaccines a month. It has said it will take around two to three months to start production at its Bengaluru facility, which will take its over-

Boris Johnson trip off, India on travel red list

"The two sides will be holding a virtual meeting in the coming days to launch plans for a transformed India-U.K. relationship," the Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson said in a statement.

"Both leaders attach the highest importance to taking the India-U.K. partnership to its fullest potential and propose to remain in close touch in this regard and look forward to an in-person meeting later in the year."

While the virtual summit is expected next week on Monday, Prime Minister Modi has also been invited to the U.K. to attend the G-7 summit in mid-June in Corn-

Second wave is not more lethal, says ICMR

In all other symptoms associated with COVID-19 – "fast breathing", cough, chills, joint pain, fatigue – there was a greater proportion who manifested these symptoms in the first wave than in the ongoing second wave. A key caveat to the data was that for the first wave, 6,642 patients were analysed, while in the second wave, only 1,405 were analysed.

Of 6,650 admitted patients from September to November last year, 9.6% succumbed, whereas from March to April, 9.7% of a group of 351 died from the virus. There was no difference in the proportion of patients who required mechanical ventilation in the first and second waves, Dr. Bhargava said. The second wave – apart from a steep rise in coronavirus cases – has been characterised by

Delhi imposes lockdown

"I appeal to migrant labourers not to leave the city because it is a short lockdown. We will take very good care of you. During these six days, we will make arrangements for oxygen, medicines and hospital beds. We will confront this situation and we will win," Mr. Kejriwal said.

However, despite the Chief Minister's assurance, the announcement triggered a desperate exodus of migrant workers – most notably from the Anand Vihar area which has both an inter-State bus terminal and a railway station in close proximity.

Blaming the Uttar Pradesh government for the "present chaotic health problems" and not planning in advance, the High Court directed it to enforce a complete lockdown in Lucknow, Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Kan-

eral manufacturing capacity to 70 crore doses annually, or around 6 crore doses per month.

Sputnik V, the Russian vaccine, has been approved and is set to begin supply by May, though it is not clear how many doses will be available to Indians.

The ongoing vaccination programme for healthcare workers, frontline workers and those above 45 will continue.

While all vaccines manufactured in the country will have to abide by the 50% rules, imported fully-ready-to-use vaccines can be entirely sold to the States and the open market. The Centre, from its share, will allocate vaccines to the States/Union Territories based on the criteria of extent of infection (number of active COVID-19 cases) and performance (speed of administration).

Bharat Biotech, manufacturer of Covaxin, whose current capacity is around 20 crore doses annually, is supplying around 1 crore vaccines a month. It has said it will take around two to three months to start production at its Bengaluru facility, which will take its over-

wall, where India is a special invitee, and the COP climate change summit in Glasgow in November. The G-7 meeting is considered important as it will also be a possible venue for the four-nation Quad summit with the U.S., Australia and Japan, that U.S. President Biden has been keen to convene.

Prior to that, Mr. Modi is expected to travel to Porto, Portugal for the E.U.-India summit on May 8, and also visit France at the same time. Officials said that at present, both visits are still on. It is unclear whether Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who was due to visit Delhi soon after Mr. Johnson, will still do so.

Chinese occupation of Gogra-Hot Springs & Despang plains is a direct threat to India's strategic interests including the Daulat Beg Oldi [DBO] airbase. National security massively jeopardised by GOI's wasteful talks. Our nation deserves better," Mr. Gandhi said in a tweet.

His comments came after India and China held the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks in Ladakh last week on the issue of disengagement of troops at Gogra-Hot Springs and Despang plains. While there was no official word, there were reports that China, after initially agreeing to pull

No difference
V.K. Paul, who chairs the empowered group on vaccinations and COVID-19 management (NEGVAC), said there was no difference in mortality, in the first and second wave, in those 40 and under. "There is no overarching extra/ excess risk of younger becoming COVID-19 positive," he said.

On drug protocol for treatment, AIIMS director Randeep Guleria stressed that none of the antiviral drugs – Remdesivir, Favipiravir – as well as convalescent plasma had any established benefit in curing the disease.

National Film Award winner Bhave dead

Navy seizes narcotics worth ₹3,000 crore in Arabian Sea

Over 300 kg was confiscated from a fishing vessel, it says in a statement

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Navy on Monday seized over 300 kg of narcotics, estimated to cost ₹3,000 crore in the international market, from a fishing vessel in the Arabian Sea.

"INS Suvarna, whilst on surveillance patrol in the Arabian Sea, encountered a fishing vessel with suspicious movements. To investigate the vessel, the ship's team conducted boarding and search operation, which led to the seizure of more than 300 kg of narcotics substances," a Navy statement said.

"The boat with its crew have been escorted to the nearest port of Kochi in Kerala for further investigation."

The Navy said it was a major catch not only in terms of



Catch of the day: The crew has been escorted to Kochi for investigation. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the quantity and cost but also from the perspective of disruption of the illegal narcotics smuggling routes, which emanate from the

Makran coast and flow towards Indian, Maldivian and Sri Lankan destinations.

"Apart from the human costs from drug addiction,

JMM first to declare name of electoral bonds donor

Party declares ₹1 cr. donation in report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) is the first party that has declared the name of the entity which made donations to it through electoral bonds, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a poll rights group, said. A declaration of a ₹1 crore donation was made in the party's 2019-20 contribution report for FY 2019-20. However, this income through electoral bonds has not been declared by the party in its audit report for FY 2019-20," it

According to the contribution report of the ruling party in Jharkhand, the donation was made by aluminium and copper manufacturing company Hindalco.

The ADR, in a new report, said the most common source of income for national and regional political parties in 2019-20 were donations made through electoral bonds. "Given the anonymity provided to donors by the scheme, electoral bonds

have emerged as the most popular channel of donations to parties in the last two years," the ADR report said.

"It is to be noted that the JMM party has declared the name of the donor who donated ₹1 crore through electoral bonds in its contribution report for FY [financial year] 2019-20. However, this income through electoral bonds has not been declared by the party in its audit report for FY 2019-20," it

said. This raises the question as to whether political parties are aware of the identity of the donors who have made contributions through electoral bonds, the report added. Electoral bonds have been pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring transparency in political funding.

Shots exchanged in Shopian

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Fire broke out between security forces and hiding militants at Shopian in south Kashmir on Monday afternoon. Two militants were killed in the operation in Shopian, the police said.

A police spokesperson said the shootout started during a search operation in Zepora area of Shopian. "A contact was established during the operation. The police and the security forces are on the job," the police said. The bodies of the two slain militants were retrieved from the site of the shootout, they added. They have been identified as Sabzar Ahmad Ganie from Sehpura, Kulgam, and Amir Ahmad Bhat from Malibugh, Imamsahib, Shopian.

The police said the militants were associated with the Hizbul Mujahideen. One rifle and a pistol were also recovered. "The last rites of the killed militants shall be performed after conducting medico-legal formalities. Their nearest family members shall be allowed to participate in the last rites," the police said.

The police asked the people to cooperate till the area was completely sanitised.

Ongoing talks with China wasteful: Rahul

'It has jeopardised national security'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday targeted the Narendra Modi government over the ongoing talks with China, describing them as "wasteful" and claiming that it has "jeopardised" national security.

Separately, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge reacted to reports that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was trying to "broker" peace between India and Pakistan, and asserted that the two neighbours had always dealt with each other bilaterally.

"Chinese occupation of Gogra-Hot Springs & Despang plains is a direct threat to India's strategic interests including the Daulat Beg Oldi [DBO] airbase. National security massively jeopardised by GOI's wasteful talks. Our nation deserves better," Mr. Gandhi said in a tweet.

His comments came after India and China held the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks in Ladakh last week on the issue of disengagement of troops at Gogra-Hot Springs and Despang plains. While there was no official word, there were reports that China, after initially agreeing to pull



Rahul Gandhi

out its troops from Hot Springs and Gogra, has refused to do so.

For almost a year now, the two countries have been engaged in a military face-off, but disengaged from the most contentious Pangong Tso area last month after extensive talks.

The Congress also questioned India's policy with regard to Pakistan. "We have seen reports of a UAE diplomat claiming to have brokered contacts between India and Pakistan. It has been one of the successes of Indian diplomacy since the 1972 Simla agreement to ensure that we deal with Pakistan bilaterally... Not only are others now mediating between India and Pakistan but our internal affairs like Jammu and Kashmir have been internationalised," Mr. Kharge said in a virtual press conference.

The CAS will flag off the next batch of three or four Rafale jets, a defence source said. These jets, once inducted into service, will complete the first Rafale squadron – No. 17 'Golden Arrows' – based in Ambala.

As reported by *The Hindu*, India will receive another eight or nine Rafale jets from France by mid-May.

The IAF has so far inducted 14 jets, which arrived in four batches, and is also set to operationalise the second Rafale squadron at Hasimara in West Bengal. Last September, the IAF inducted the batch of five Rafales of 36 jets contracted from France under a €7.87 billion Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in September 2016.

The CAS will hold meetings and discussions with the senior military leadership of France and visit operational facilities and airbases, an IAF statement said.

IAF chief to flag off Rafale jets during France visit

IAF has so far inducted 14 jets, which arrived in four batches

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, who left on a five-day visit to France on Monday, will flag off the next batch of Rafale fighter jets to India, according to a defence source.

"The Air chief will flag off the next batch of three or four Rafale jets," a defence source said. These jets, once inducted into service, will complete the first Rafale squadron – No. 17 'Golden Arrows' – based in Ambala.

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BJP to have smaller crowds at rallies

Mamata, Amit Shah hold meetings amid a record surge in COVID-19 cases; Modi to canvass this week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The BJP on Monday decided against holding large rallies, gatherings and meetings for the West Bengal Assembly election, capping attendance at 500, as West Bengal registered a record 8,426 new cases of COVID-19 and 38 deaths in 24 hours.

In a statement, the party said BJP president J.P. Nadda had decided that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other central leaders of the party would address only small public meetings and no more than 500 people would be allowed to attend. The party has also set a target of distribution of 6 crore masks and sanitisers in West Bengal, it said.

Multiple rallies

Political campaigns by the BJP and Trinamool Congress, however, continued in full swing across several districts through the day.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda held public meet-



Show goes on: Home Minister Amit Shah at a rally in support of party candidates for the West Bengal Assembly poll at Balurghat in South Dinajpur district on Monday. ■ PTI

ings in different parts of the State. The Home Minister addressed public meetings at Pandaveshwar in Paschim Bardhaman and at Chakulia and Kaliaganj in Uttar Dinajpur district.

The BJP president campaigned in Raiganj in Dakshin Dinajpur and Bolpur in Birbhum district. Among the other BJP leaders that cam-

paign in the State was Union Minister Smriti Irani and State BJP president Dilip Ghosh.

From the Trinamool Congress, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed three public meetings at Uttar Dinajpur's Chakulia, Hemtabad and Kaliaganj.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to cam-

paign on April 24, and BJP leaders said there was no information about cancellation of his public meeting.

Union Minister and senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad, who held a press conference in Kolkata, said elections were a "Constitutional obligation", and the matter should be left to the EC.

West Bengal Pradesh Con-

gress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Rabin Deb of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have asked the EC that polling for Shamsheganj and Jangipur – rescheduled because of death of Samyukt Morcha candidates – should be held after Ramzan.

6th phase campaign

Campaigning for the sixth phase of the Assembly polls on April 22 for 43 Assembly constituencies ended on Monday.

Nine seats in Uttar Dinajpur district in north Bengal will go to the polls along with 17 in North 24 Parganas, nine in Nadia and eight in Purba Bardhaman district. A total of 306 contestants are in the fray including Trinamool Ministers like Jyoti Priya Mullick and Chandrima Bhattacharya, senior BJP leaders Mukul Roy and Rahul Sinha and the sitting MLAs of Samyukt Morcha like Ali Imran Ramz of the Forward Bloc and Tanmoy Bhattacharya of the CPI(M).

The Chief Minister also announced closure of schools in the State, and said her party would campaign through small programmes.

Schools across the State would remain closed from April 20 as the State government had decided to advance the summer holidays.

"On behalf of our party, we have written to the Election Commission (EC) on holding polls of the remaining phases on a single day. It also makes a lot of administrative sense to hold remaining phases in one day – will the District Magistrate manage the polls or the COVID-19 situation?" Ms. Banerjee told

presspersons in Malda on Monday. ■ PTI

Trinamool holds smaller rallies; schools in West Bengal shut



Pressing her demand: Mamata Banerjee during a press conference in Malda on Monday. ■ PTI

few or lockdown in the State. "Night curfew is not the solution," she said responding to questions. Ms. Banerjee pointed out that people have to suffer because of the lockdown and such decisions makes no sense when the trains and buses are running and reiterated her allegation that many people from outside the State had come to participate in the election campaign.

During the day senior officials of the State government met Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and briefed him about the steps taken to mitigate the surge of COVID-19 in the State.

"CS @MamataOfficial and Health Secretary briefed me on Covid-19 scenario. Impressed upon them to take all affirmative steps to secure full participation of people. Central Government & State Government must act in tandem to combat this menace to humanity," Mr. Dhankhar tweeted.

26% in fray for phase 7 have criminal cases

PM ignoring responsibilities: Cong.

'Why is he addressing poll rallies in West Bengal in the middle of pandemic?'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Almost 26% of the candidates in the fray for the seventh phase of the West Bengal Assembly election have declared criminal cases against themselves, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said in a report on Monday.

In its analysis of the election affidavits of all 284 candidates for the 36 constituencies in the seventh phase on April 26, ADR found that 73 of the contenders had declared criminal cases and 60 (21%) had serious criminal cases.

Among the major political parties in the fray, 69% of the CPI (M) candidates analysed, 53% of the Trinamool Congress candidates, 53% of the BJP candidates and 47% of the Congress candidates had declared criminal cases. A total of 18 candidates had declared crimes against women, three declared murder cases and 14 declared attempt to murder cases pending against themselves, it said.

A total of 23% candidates declared assets worth over ₹1 crore and the average assets of the candidates was ₹1.22 crore.



Drawing fire: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally at Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman district. ■ FILE PHOTO

rather than on political rivals.

"Why is PM addressing 4 rallies in one day ignoring his responsibilities as PM?" asked Mr. Chidambaram on Twitter, wondering if it is "because of fear that the

BJP is losing the election".

At a virtual press conference, addressed by Mr. Chavhan and spokesperson Supriya Shriniwal, the party asked if seeking votes was more important than saving lives. "Is Modiji, on whose shoul-

ders lie the responsibility of running this country, not aware of his responsibility? Is seeking votes at election rally more important for him than protecting lives of his countrymen?" Ms. Shriniwal asked.

The former Maharashtra Chief Minister said it was time the Centre rose above politics and took the challenge head-on.

"The government should bring in the NIA, CBI and the Enforcement Directorate against black-marketeers and hoarders of injections and vaccines. When you can use them to target your political opponents, why not utilise them sensibly against black-marketeers and hoarders?" Mr. Chavhan said.

BJD won't hold rallies for Pipili bypoll: Naveen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi suspended all his rallies in West Bengal, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Monday announced that his party would not hold any public rallies or campaign meetings

for the ensuing Pipili bypoll.

The Pipili by-election, scheduled to be held on April 17, was postponed following the death of Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj due to COVID-19. Subsequently, the Election Commission has announced May 13 as the new date for polling.

In a series of posts on Twitter, Mr. Patnaik said, "every life is precious and I always consider people of Odisha as my family members. In this extremely serious COVID-19 situation amid surge in cases in the country, the Biju Janata Dal has decided not to hold any

public rallies or campaign meetings in Pipili by-poll."

The BJD's decision came on a day when the State clocked highest single-day infection since the pandemic hit the country last year. The State on Monday reported 4,445 cases, taking the total cases to 3,72,703.

Jaishankar returns after UAE trip

MEA silent on any dialogue with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are focused on post-COVID recovery, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Sunday.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit to the Gulf nation drew attention as it overlapped with that of Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The minister met his UAE counterpart, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who met Mr. Qureshi.

The meetings came amid strong speculation that the Gulf country was mediating to restart dialogue between India and Pakistan.

"Took forward our ongoing



discussions on this subject (bilateral cooperation), starting on February. The strong focus on post-COVID economic recovery will remain a priority for us," said Mr. Jaishankar, indicating India's concern about

re-employment of nationals who lost jobs in the Gulf country during the pandemic and are now waiting to return to their previous positions.

While the External Affairs Ministry has maintained silence about any dialogue, Mr. Qureshi, in an interview to *Gulf News*, talked about "sittings" that had taken place in the UAE during the past few days.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit lasted a day, while Mr. Qureshi's visit was from April 17 to 19.

This was the first time that Pakistan has given a strong hint of third party-led talks on India-Pakistan ties. Mr. Qureshi said Pakistan "always welcomes third party media-

JD(U) MLA Mewalal dies of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PATNA



Former Bihar Education Minister and Janata Dal (United) MLA Mewalal Choudhary, 68, died of COVID-19 on

Monday.

In November, Mr. Choudhary was inducted as Education Minister in the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government, but he had to resign after a few days following corruption charges in a teachers' recruitment scam case against him. He was the ruling party MLA from the Tarapur Assembly constituency in Munger district.

EU Council approves conclusions on Indo-Pacific strategy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Council of the European Union on Monday approved conclusions on a European Union strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to "reinforce its strategic focus, presence and actions" with the aim to contribute to "regional stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development," at a time of "rising challenges and tensions in the region."

"Current dynamics in the Indo-Pacific have given rise to intense geopolitical competition adding to increasing tensions on trade and supply chains as well as in technological, political and security areas. Human rights are also being challenged. These developments increasingly threaten the stability and security of the region and beyond, directly impacting on the EU's interests," a statement from the Council said.

"The Council tasked the High Representative and the Commission with putting forward a Joint Communication on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by September 2021," it stated.

Long-term focus

The renewed EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific will have a long-term focus and will be based on "upholding democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for internation-

al law," it stated. The EU will aim to promote effective rules-based multilateralism, it said, reiterating its support for ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) centrality, a point also stressed by India.

The EU will work together in order to mitigate the economic and human effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and work towards ensuring an inclusive and sustainable socio-economic recovery, it said. The EU's ap-

proach and engagement will look to foster a "rules-based international order, a level playing field, as well as an open and fair environment for trade and investment, reciprocity, the strengthening of resilience, tackling climate change and supporting connectivity with the EU."

"Free and open maritime supply routes in full compliance with international law remain crucial," it said.

Mamata repeats demand for clubbing of three phases

Trinamool holds smaller rallies; schools in West Bengal shut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday reiterated her demand for holding the remaining phases of elections on a single day, emphasising that it also makes administrative sense.

The Chief Minister also announced closure of schools in the State, and said her party would campaign through small programmes. Schools across the State would remain closed from April 20 as the State government had decided to advance the summer holidays.

"On behalf of our party, we have written to the Election Commission (EC) on holding polls of the remaining phases on a single day. It also makes a lot of administrative sense to hold remaining phases in one day – will the District Magistrate manage the polls or the COVID-19 situation?" Ms. Banerjee told



Pressing her demand: Mamata Banerjee during a press conference in Malda on Monday. ■ PTI

elections have been completed and three phases are remaining. We have no issues if the polls are clubbed. Even if they cannot club all the three together, the last two phases can be clubbed, that will save one day," Ms. Banerjee said. The Trinamool Congress chairperson urged the EC not to listen to the BJP and play with the lives of the people.

Later addressing another rally at Kaliaganj, she urged the people to exercise their right to franchise even if they tested positive for COVID-19.

Speaking to journalists, Ms. Banerjee said she would hold small rallies as part of her campaign and give shorter speeches.

Earlier in the day, while addressing a public meeting at Chakulia in Uttar Dinajpur district, Ms. Banerjee once again urged the Election Commission to club the remaining three phases.

"I will appeal to the Election Commission with folded hands that five phases of

BJP lodges plaint with EC over Mamata audio

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday asked the Election Commission to take action against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "promoting hate" in the context of an alleged conversation she had with Trinamool Congress candidate from Sitalkuchi, Partha Pratim Roy.

Led by Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, a BJP delegation submitted a memorandum to the EC at a virtual meeting.

The BJP said the audio of the conversation between the CM and Mr. Roy showed an attempt to "incite and aggravate the differences between two communities on religious lines". The two allegedly discussed carrying out a rally with the bodies of four people who were killed in on April 10.

K-rail
Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited
E Tender
E tenders are invited for Conducting Aerial LIDAR Survey between Kollapally near Ramapuram and Erumeli as part of Angamali Sabari BG Line Rail Project.
Tender No KRDCL/26/2021
Tender documents can be downloaded from tenders.keralarail.com.
For more details visit www.keralarail.com

PGI/RC/022/2021/1378 RECRUITMENT NOTICE		Dated: 19.04.2021
The Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh invites ONLINE applications from Indian Nationals for filling up of 64 posts of Senior Residents, 08 posts of Jr. Sr. Demonstrators in different specialties and 01 post of Senior Medical Officer (Casualty in Emergency) in PGIMER, Chandigarh for a maximum period up to 03 years as per details given below:-		
ITEM(S)		AS PER DETAILED GUIDELINES WITH THIS ADV. NOTICE AT www.pgimer.edu.in
OPENING DATE FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR FILLING UP OF ONLINE APPLICATION ON PGIMER'S WEBSITE www.pgimer.edu.in (Recruitment link at Home Page)		19.04.2021
CLOSING DATE FOR ONLINE REGISTRATION & SUBMISSION OF ONLINE APPLICATIONS		10.05.2021
DATE FOR COMPUTER BASED TEST (CBT) FOR 75 MARKS		14.06.

IN BRIEF

**J&J seeks nod for phase 3 trials of vaccine**

NEW DELHI Multinational pharma giant Johnson & Johnson has applied to India's drug regulator seeking permission to conduct phase 3 clinical trial of its single-dose COVID-19 vaccine in India as well as import licence, sources said. PTI

New Parliament work to go on during lockdown

NEW DELHI Construction of the new Parliament building would continue during the lockdown announced by the Delhi government on Monday with the workers who are staying on site, according to government sources. The building is scheduled to be completed by November 2022.

Use PSUs to make vaccines: CPI(M)

NEW DELHI The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has urged the Central government to use all public sector drug production facilities to make vaccines. The CPI(M) Polit Bureau in a statement said that the Centre must spend the budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crore for vaccine production immediately.

Om Birla calls upon lawmakers to report gaps

NEW DELHI Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday suggested a feedback mechanism to deal with the lapses in the pandemic management, by setting up control rooms at State legislatures and Parliament levels where the lawmakers can report the difficulties that the people are facing to the government for quick action.

ITB-run care centre awaits MHA order

NEW DELHI As hospitals in Delhi and its neighbouring districts are swamped by COVID-19 patients in need of oxygen beds, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is yet to issue orders to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to restart one of the largest COVID-19 care centres in Delhi that was discontinued in February. The 10,000-bed Sardar Patel COVID Care Centre and Hospital was operationalised on July 7, 2020.

Government likely to grant ₹30 bn to SII

NEW DELHI The Centre is set to accept the Serum Institute of India's (SII) request for a ₹30 billion (\$400 million) grant to boost its capacity to make the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, a government source with knowledge of the matter said. SII, the world's biggest vaccine maker, sought the funds to increase its monthly capacity to more than 100 million doses by the end of May, from up to 70 million currently. REUTERS

2.56 lakh fresh cases reported

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka lead daily count of new infections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India recorded 2,56,828 new COVID-19 cases as of 9.20 p.m. on Monday. As many as 1,757 deaths were also recorded on the day.

The country has so far reported a total of 1,53,44,714 cases and 1,80,550 deaths.

The slight reduction in the daily cases was due to a drop in the number of tests carried out on Sunday (results of which were made available on Monday).

Only 13.56 lakh tests were carried out on Sunday, about 2.1 lakh lower than Saturday. However, it is 1.76 lakh tests more than what was recorded the previous Sunday.

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

Maharashtra reported 58,924 infections (accounting for nearly 23% of the new cases) on Monday, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 28,211 new infections and Delhi



It's yesterday once more: Migrant workers at the Anand Vihar bus depot as the lockdown began in New Delhi on Monday night. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

with 23,686 new cases. Maharashtra also recorded the highest number of casualties (351) on Monday. Delhi followed with 240 new deaths, while Chhattisgarh registered 175 new casualties.

About 12.29 lakh COVID-19 vaccination doses were administered in the 24 hours ending at 7 a.m. on

Monday. It is about 14.54 lakh doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours.

Also, it is about 17 lakh doses lower than what was recorded in the same period, one week ago.

The daily vaccination rate in India has been on a declining trend in the past week.

As on April 11, India's average daily doses was around 36.31 lakh. One week later, as on April 18, the average has reduced to 27.60 lakh.

India has administered around 9 vaccination doses per 100 people as of April 18. It is slightly lower than the world average of 11.61 doses per 100 people.

Sena, BJP in war of words over supply of Remdesivir

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

The ruling Shiv Sena in Maharashtra on Monday accused the Opposition BJP of playing with an agenda to ensure that the State government failed in handling the COVID-19 situation.

The BJP, however, dared the government to take action against its leaders if it had evidence that the party leaders were involved in black marketing of Remdesivir injection.

The Congress, a Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partner, too slammed the BJP alleging that the party misled the State by claiming that it had permission to buy and distribute Remdesivir in Maharashtra.

The political slugfest began on Saturday night after the Mumbai police questioned the owner of a pharma company over the allegations of hoarding of thousands of vials of the injection, which is being used to save lives amid the pan-

HC asks Maharashtra govt. to release 10,000 vials to Nagpur

needs to be resolved on a "war-footing".

The Bench also directed the State and the Centre to file affidavits by April 21 on what parameters were followed to distribute and allocate Remdesivir to different States and districts.

demic. BJP leaders, including former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, rushed to the police station objecting to the police action and claimed that the BJP had permission to buy and distribute Remdesivir in Maharashtra.

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Sena mouthpiece *Saamna*, in its editorial, on Monday said that at a time when the State government is not getting Remdesivir, the BJP is purchasing it. It termed this behaviour of companies a 'crime'.

Healthcare firms should innovate'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday defended the decision to export vaccines, and urged the domestic industrial sector to innovate so that they can meet the challenges thrown up by the second wave of COVID-19. At a virtual event organised by the All India Management Association (AIMA), Mr. Jaishankar said "irresponsible people" were likely to criticise the exports.

"My prayers are with Manmohan Singh ji and his family today, and my deepest respect. May he fight this scourge with all his might and get well soon," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Twitter.

"So ask yourself this question: can I go around the world and say guys keep your supply chains flowing towards me and by the way, the end product of the supply chain I am asking you raw material for – the vaccine – I am not going to give you," said Mr. Jaishankar to a question from industrialist Sunil Munjal.

Mr. Jaishankar also said that, he is pushing big countries to send raw materials that are necessary to produce vaccines in India. The declaration came shortly before he spoke to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Following the telephone conversation, the Minister said, he discussed "issues pertaining to our health cooperation".

Mr. Jaishankar said the second wave had exposed the vulnerabilities in the Indian capabilities that require upgrade.

Congress fuelled vaccine hesitancy'

Harsh Vardhan replies to former PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A day after former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ramp up vaccination efforts, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan alleged that the statements by Congress leaders were behind "vaccine hesitancy" in the country and accused Congress-ruled States to be "big contributors" in the second wave.

In his letter, Dr. Singh had suggested scaling up vaccination efforts, giving flexibility to State governments in deciding who needed to be vaccinated and expanding the number of vaccine producers by invoking compulsory licensing.

Responding to the letter, Dr. Vardhan said while the former Prime Minister understood the importance of vaccination, his party, the Congress, not only did not share such a view but was spreading "negativity".

"History shall be kinder to you Dr Manmohan Singh ji if your offer of 'constructive cooperation' and valuable advice was followed by your @INCIndia [Congress] leaders as well in such extraordinary times! Here's my reply to your letter to Hon'ble PM Sh @narendramodi ji," tweeted Dr. Harsh Vardhan in an apparent reference to Dr. Singh's January 2014 comment at a press conference that "history would be kinder to him than

the Opposition and contemporary media".

"Let alone thanking our scientists, many Congress members and Congress-ruled State governments have taken extraordinary interest in spreading falsehoods regarding the efficacy of these vaccines, thereby fuelling vaccine hesitancy, and playing with the lives of our countrymen," Dr. Vardhan added.

Without naming anyone, the Health Minister also accused a sitting Chief Minister of a Congress-ruled State of "directly inciting people against an indigenously developed vaccine".

"The irresponsible public pronouncements made by some of your leaders have resulted in a below national average vaccination coverage of senior citizens and even frontline workers in some of the Congress-ruled States. Please do note that it is these very same States that have also become the big contributors in the second wave of COVID-19 infection," the Health Minister said.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi in a statement said, "I am deeply concerned to learn that Dr. Manmohan Singh ji good health and a speedy recovery," tweeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Monday after testing positive for COVID-19.

"Wishing our former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh ji good health and a speedy recovery," tweeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi in a statement said, "I am deeply concerned to learn that Dr. Manmohan Singh is unwell & has been hospitalised. On behalf of all of us in the Congress Party I send my good wishes to him

Manmohan in AIIMS with COVID-19

He has been admitted for monitoring, his condition is reported to be stable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Monday after testing positive for COVID-19.

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Manmohan Singh

for a speedy and complete recovery."

A source close to 88-year-old Dr. Singh said he had been admitted to the AIIMS trauma centre for monitoring and further treatment and his condition is reported

to be stable. He had taken both the doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

The former Prime Minister, who has been having a mild fever since Sunday night, tested positive on Monday morning.

'Get well' wishes

As the news of his hospitalisation spread, messages for his speedy recovery poured on social media platforms.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "Wishing you a speedy recovery. India needs your guidance and advice in this difficult time."

Former Union Minister P. Chidambaram, Union Minis-

ter Nitin Gadkari, Chief Ministers Ashok Gehlot, Amarinder Singh and Mamata Banerjee, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, National Conference leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah were among several leaders who prayed for the early recovery of Dr. Singh.

"My prayers are with Manmohan Singh ji and his family today, and my deepest respect. May he fight this scourge with all his might and get well soon," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Twitter.

"The solution to every problem can't be a PR gimmick to deflect attention & grab headlines. Where are the vaccines for those above-18 to be vaccinated? Unless the numbers for provisioning the vaccines are publicly declared, this announcement has no meaning," said Mr. Jaishankar to a question from industrialist Sunil Munjal.

Minister had finally listened to India's only woman Chief Minister.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, however, questioned the vaccine availability for such large population.

"The solution to every problem can't be a PR gimmick to deflect attention & grab headlines. Where are the vaccines for those above-18 to be vaccinated? Unless the numbers for provisioning the vaccines are publicly declared, this announcement has no meaning," he said on Twitter.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After the Centre decided to allow vaccinations for everyone above 18 from May 1, Opposition leaders on Monday sought to claim credit for making such a suggestion to the Narendra Modi government.

With the decision coming a day after former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh made five concrete suggestions to the Modi government, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram claimed nearly all his suggestions were accepted.

"The nation is gratified to know that practically all the suggestions in Dr. Manmohan Singh's letter have been accepted by the government. Better late than never. Two suggestions remain: ONE, there is an immediate need to provide funds to the manufacturers of the two Indian-made vaccines to ramp up production. TWO, there is an urgent need to invoke the provision of compulsory licensing of the India-made vaccines. That is the only way to use the enormous vaccine manufacturing capacity in India," he said in a

series of tweets.

Earlier, both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi had written to Mr. Modi to open vaccination to all those "who need based on their exposure instead of age".

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien tweeted that the Prime

Faith

Yoga Maya's forewarning

Krishna was taken to Gokula by Vasudeva in order to protect Him from Kamsa. In Gokula, a girl was born to Yasoda. She was taken away by Vasudeva, who left Krishna in her place. When this girl child was lifted by Kamsa, with a view to killing her, she slipped from his grasp, rose in the sky, and warned Kamsa that the One who was going to kill him was safe and sound in Gokula.

Who was this girl child? She was Yoga Maya. She always remains single, and so she is known as a nitya kannika. She is also called Durga, but is not to be confused with Parvati, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan in a discourse. She is known as antari because she rose up in the sky. All this was pre-planned by the Lord. Balarama was the seventh child of Devaki. But he was transferred by Yoga Maya to the womb of Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva. Later Yoga Maya entered the womb of Yasoda, and Krishna took His place in Devaki's womb. After birth, the two were exchanged by Vasudeva. Krishna was born on Ashtami and because Yoga Maya was born on Navami, which comes after Ashtami, she is considered His younger sister.

In Her Nachiar Thirumozhi, Andal, while speaking of Her marriage to Krishna, speaks of Her sister-in-law Antari! She says Antari helped Her drap the wedding saree. It is customary for the groom's sister to help the bride wear the wedding saree, and Andal refers to this tradition, and says it was Antari who performed this task as Krishna's sister. We find a representation of Yoga Maya in the Trivikrama temple in Thirukoilur, in Tamil Nadu. Although Yoga Maya warned Kamsa, he could not bear to think that Krishna was alive. "Tharikilaanaagi," says Andal, of Kamsa's intolerance. He sent many to kill Krishna, but Krishna destroyed all of them.

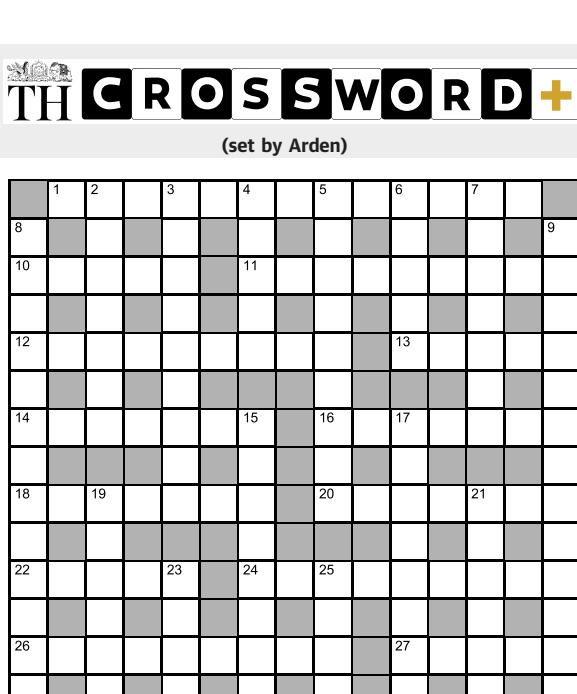
CROSSWORD

13226

(set by Arden)

Never go off the grid.
We are digital now. Come solve online!
<https://rgo.page.link/jptn>

SCAN TO PLAY

**ACROSS**

- 1 Doctor takes certain pains, refuses a box of goodies (8,5)
- 10 Some of it is awful, certainly a deep wound (5)
- 11 Quiet study sitting in recliner, one can't hear you (9)
- 12 Gives final touches – it's four in another state (9)
<li



The ultimate face-off

Filmmaker Shalini Kantayya says *Coded Bias* highlights data rights as the unfinished business of the civil rights movement

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

While Shalini Kantayya was working on *Coded Bias* for two years, she would be asked at social gatherings what her *projet du jour* was. The filmmaker would often find it hard to explain the complexities of technologies with controversial biases, powered by Artificial Intelligence, so she would simply say 'I'm working on a film about racist robots'.

Over a video call from her home in Brooklyn, New York, Kantayya laughs as she recalls these moments. Switching to a more serious and urgent tone she says, "We are living in an era where it is absolutely necessary for the public to understand complex science and how these systems work. Data rights are the unfinished business of the civil rights movement."

Documentary *Coded Bias*, currently streaming on Netflix, is making waves for its narrative around the troubling intersec-

tions of Artificial Intelligence, facial recognition and racial bias. It is packed with compelling plot twists around the future of a surveillance state. Kantayya has let researchers Joy Buolamwini, Deborah Raji, Meredith Broussard, Cathy O'Neil, Zeynep Tufekci, Safiya Noble, Timnit Gebru, and Virginia Eubanks, all women of minority communities, explain the flawed system.

The filmmaker, whose family comes from Madurai, is well aware of the 'dark skin obsession' across offline spaces. "I realised this is not a technology that is being beta tested on a shelf so-

how racial profiling has been contentious for thousands of immigrant families. In one scene, a black 14-year-old is flanked by authorities and fingerprinted, having been marked by a facial recognition system. Big Brother Watch intervenes with the authorities who, in turn, justify the flawed system.

Kantayya says working with these academics has been "incredibly humbling". Her driving force to make the film lies in the opening scenes of *Coded Bias*, where Buolamwini, as a young grad student, tries to get the camera to recognise her face. It registers a blank, white mask while not registering her face.

Large parts of the film were shot in the United Kingdom where facial recognition is openly used by governments. Freedom rights group Big Brother Watch features in *Coded Bias* as group director Silkie Carlo speaks against the privacy breaches and



mewhere in a laboratory. This was tech being sold to the FBI, immigration officials, and being deployed by law enforcement departments across the US with no one we had elected."

She, like millions of others, is astounded at how this became a government oversight. "Law enforcement bodies all over the world are picking up the tools of authoritarian states with no democratic rule that would protect our civil rights. This is frightening to me

that, as we trust these systems, we could roll back on these civil rights that help make society more equal."

Making it accessible
Kantayya is aware she is not a technologist – in fact, this helped her. "Anyone challenging the system has felt like an imposter thinking 'I didn't go to MIT or Harvard, who am I to talk about these issues?' When it comes to technologies such as AI or facial

With lockdowns brewing, here are all the latest games to keep you indoors, safe and sane — as well as games you can look forward to in the next few months

HOT GAME SUMMER

JULIAN ALMEIDA

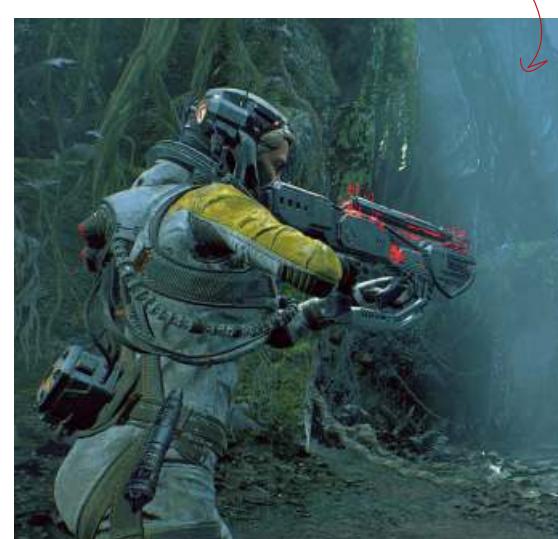
Outriders

Outriders quickly became one of the most popular games of 2021. This sleeper hit has you play a super soldier with powers tasked with colonising a new planet full of massive monsters. Created by a small studio that brought you Bulletstorm, Outriders has done what Fallout 76, Avengers and Anthem struggled to do – usher in a fun, online co-op looting and shooting experience. While the initial launch was a disaster, the servers are slowly getting better as is the cross-play. With an excellent story and superb action game mechanics, this should keep you busy for months.



Returnal

Release: April 30
If you are one of the lucky few to secure yourself a PlayStation 5, then you are in luck. One of Playstation's first party games is scheduled to launch on April 30. Made by the folks behind the bullet hell game Resogun, Returnal is, well, another bullet hell game. Yet this time around the character and monster designs have been unique making this an interesting horror take on the genre.



Mass Effect: Legendary Edition

Release: May 14
The original Mass Effect trilogy is a sweeping soap opera of a role-playing game. It follows you, Commander Shepard, and your assembled crew of humans and aliens as you jet across the galaxy dealing with universe-ending threats. A graphics overhaul as well as tweaks based on feedback over the years and better controls for the Mako, the vehicle you use to explore planets, you cannot afford not to miss out on Mass Effect.



Resident Evil VIII: Village

Release: May 7

If you feel that things out there are not horrifying enough, the new Resident Evil is scheduled to be out in a few weeks. Stylised as 'Village', the new entry continues the story of Ethan as he finds himself in a European village that is ruled by a 10 foot tall vampire countess Lady Dimitrescu, who with her hideous daughters relentlessly pursue you.

Considering the fan love that Lady Dimitrescu has already garnered through fan art and cosplay, this game is going to be worth the wait. Over the weekend, a demo came out into which to sink your teeth before the big release.



Hitman 3 (also 1 and 2)

The Hitman: World of Assassination trilogy over the past 20 years came to a close with Hitman 3. If you have been putting the series off to play at a later date, now would be the best time to stealth up. This murder simulator has deep and vibrant levels teeming with life (and death), giving you multiple paths to eliminate your targets – some hilarious and some gory – but the sheer openness allows you to get creative by engineering your own 'accidents' or using cunning to lure your opponents into unfortunate situations. If you are playing the third entry, you might as well revisit the first two as well.

Cyberpunk 2077

Freshly updated, bugs fixed

Were you one of millions disappointed by the disastrous bug-riddled release of Cyberpunk 2077 and has completely abandoned that game? Now would be a good time to believe in second chances. Though the game is still brimming with mishaps on last gen consoles, on PC, there has been a steady stream of updates that have fixed a lot of things, including driving and the pesky 'instant cop spawn' when you commit a crime.

Keanu Reeves-starrer Cyberpunk 2077 is worth a second chance, it is one of the best entries this decade.



The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel



Lord no more

Amazon Game Studios has cancelled a *Lord of the Rings* online role-playing game. The company announced the project with Leyou-owned Athlon Games back in 2019, and planned it to be a free-to-play game for PC and consoles.

The game was to be set "at a time long before the events of *The Lord of the Rings*, exploring lands, people and creatures never seen before by fans of the Tolkien universe," according to an announcement from Athlon at the time. Leyou was then acquired by Tencent Holdings in December, and Amazon states the company was "unable to secure terms to proceed with this title at this time." However, the team from the LOTR project will work on other games for the company.

Please send feedback and queries around Wireless articles to techknow@thehindu.co.in

recognition, all of the knowledge and power is in the hands of a few. These technologies dovetail with almost every freedom we enjoy in democracies."

Through *Coded Bias*, she learned how there is no power like that of big tech. "Three years ago I didn't even know what an algorithm was," she admits. "Everything I knew about AI came through the imagination of Steven Spielberg or Stanley Kubrick; I think my 'street cred' comes from being a sci-fi fanatic. I didn't understand what facial recognition really was, how algorithms work or how Machine Learning, AIs and algorithms were gatekeepers of opportunity until I discovered Joy's work. They were gatekeepers in that they decide who gets hired, who gets healthcare and who gets scrutiny."

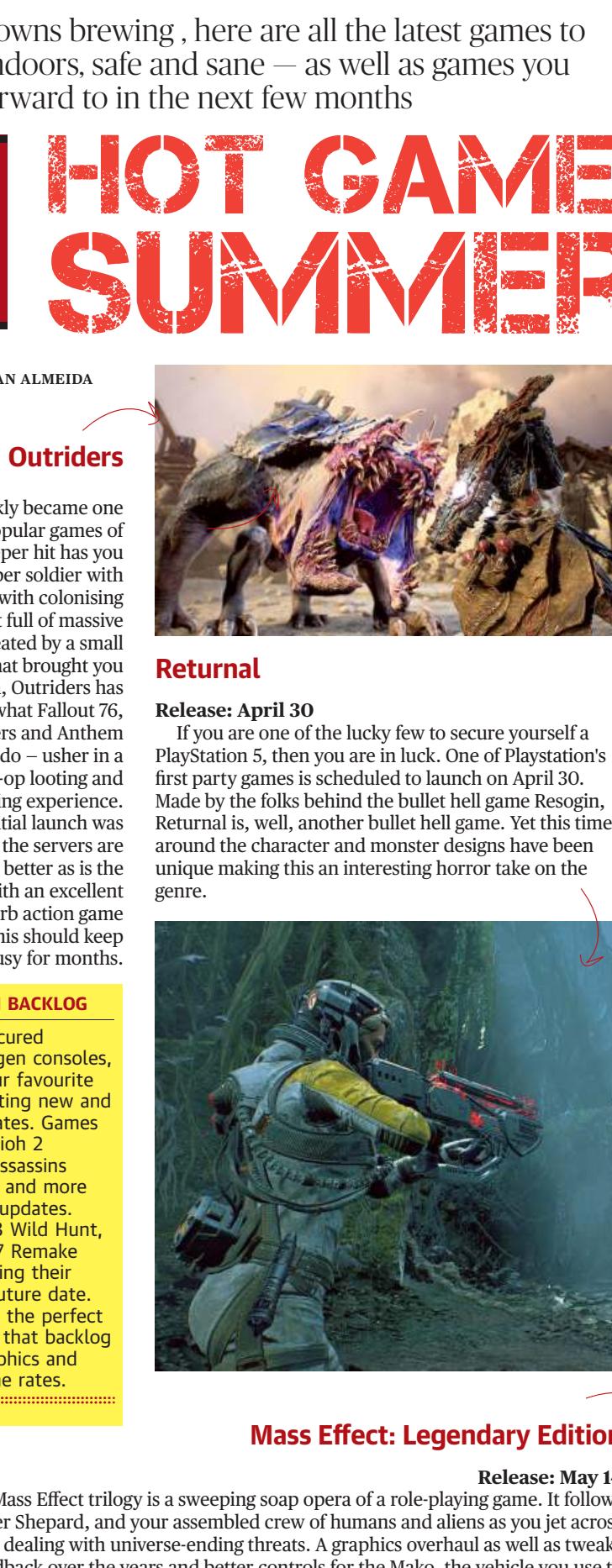
Kantayya elaborates on the implicit trust populations have in these enigmatic technologies. "They have not been vetted for gender bias or racial bias, for whether or not they can cause harm to people, or even for some shared standard of accuracy outside of a company that stands to benefit economically."

The director particularly enjoyed condensing complex sciences into two-minute sound bytes for the lay-person, while ensuring it is all visually stimulating. Kantayya drew on the visual language of science fiction which is what she knows best. "It was important that the science had integrity, distilled in a way that was easily accessible and digestible by audiences while holding relevance for their lives, instead of remaining abstract."

She concludes that *Coded Bias* reveals that where there is more education and dialogue around these technologies, policy is quick to be implemented. She hopes audiences watch *Coded Bias* to not just understand these technologies better but also consider big tech companies and governments accountable. "I hope this is the movie that pulls a chair out for all of us and gives us a seat at the table, because these systems influence all of our lives and opportunities." The film reminds people that, at the end of the day, human beings create these technologies and, in turn, these technologies perpetuate the creators' biases.



Double take Stills from the documentary; (below) director Shalini Kantayya ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Artistic legacy Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan's book on Raja Ravi Varma looks at his life from the perspective of a child ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

Author, poet and voice artiste Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan brings alive the life and times of Raja Ravi Varma, the celebrated artist, in *Prince With a Paintbrush: The Story of Raja Ravi Varma*, her book for children. The book, which released on Monday, introduces children to the artist whose works have influenced and continue to inspire designers, artists and historians. Excerpts from an e-mail interview:

Raja Ravi Varma is an unusual subject for a book for children...

● So many children are familiar with artists in the western canon; they can recognise DaVinci's Mona Lisa, or Van Gogh's Starry Night, but cannot recognise paintings of well-known artists from India. The idea of a book collection on Indian artists had thus been in my mind for a while. I had begun looking at the art of Raja Ravi Varma and Abanindranath Tagore as I was planning to do a series of art books for young children with poems to accompany the art.

Ravi Varma is one of India's most famous 19th Century Indian painters. Yet so few children seemed to know him! I thought there was no better time to address this lapse. By reading this book, readers will discover that



Retelling the legend of Ravi Varma

Author Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan's latest *Prince With a Paintbrush: The Story of Raja Ravi Varma* paints a vivid portrait of the multifaceted artist

Ravi Varma's use of colour and realistic renditions of portraits have been "copied" in old Bollywood posters and in Amar Chitra Katha comics.

How did you go about the research?

● I read widely on the Internet, which was my primary source. There are interesting anecdotes, such as personal reflections from family members. I read articles on Ravi Varma's painting technique, commentary on the breadth of his travels throughout India etc. Since this is a

children's book, my task was to frame the story in a manner that worked for them.

Ravi Varma was a painter and businessman, perhaps the first to start the printing of Indian art works...

● My main purpose for the book was to introduce Raja Ravi Varma's paintings to children. I wanted to showcase Ravi Varma's portraits which were beautiful and memorable, and also wanted to share a few of his mythological paintings which gave

Hindu gods their most popular renderings. I feel we have represented quite a bit of the artist's variety in the book.

Of course, the fact that he started a printing press which made it possible to mass produce his art and make it affordable is important as well. In fact, the public acquisition of his paintings allowed gods to be worshipped at home. This was important during a time when many Indians were excluded from visiting temples.

It must have been hard to strike a balance between the nuances of art and the narrative...

● It was important to me that young readers found themselves on the page as they read the book. Rayika Sen's representation of the narrator is delightful; children love bright colours, and enjoy looking at characters with character. It was important that the illustrations complemented Ravi Varma's incredible art and did not take away from his tone and style. His art is visually appealing and his paintings have been characterised as "a burst of colour". You will see in the book that the illustrations accompany the art with skill and creativity. I wanted readers who are artists themselves to have an opportunity to think about their own creativity.

some with their partners," he says. It was a video-on call and Amit's favourite part about it was "to see so many strangers without masks again".

"There was a lady from Kolkata who was so tired that she kept the phone aside and just listened. But then there was a Marwari guy who was simultaneously stock trading! Despite being COVID positive, he had us on one screen and on another he was commodity marketing. So much energy!"

Amit did not want these sessions to be about standup (or sit-down) comedy. He did not want to go with the mission and promise of making people laugh. All he wanted was to open up a floor for everyone to talk light-heartedly. Talking to people has helped him too and brought him out of his slump. "It's like I have something to look forward to. That makes a big difference to my mental health," he says.

Enthusiased with the response, he is already planning his next line of talks – purely for doctors. "We can sit around and complain about all the people who are careless about COVID precautions," he laughs.



The lone ranger

Forest Range Officer S Sathish on bagging the International Ranger Award 2021 for his contribution to marine conservation at the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Palk Bay

SUSAN JOE PHILIP



Ramanathapuram Forest Range Officer S Sathish's fascination for woods started at a young age. "My home is at Thalavadi, which is close to the Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary in Erode. As a child, I enjoyed sighting wild animals. I also had plenty of opportunities to interact with forest officials. By the time I completed my schooling, I was sure that I wanted to work in the forest," says Sathish, who graduated from the Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam.

The 35-year-old is now in the news for winning the International Ranger Award 2021, issued by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland, World Commission on Protected Areas, International Ranger Federation and Global Wildlife Conservation and Conservation Allies, for his work in marine conservation at the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Palk Bay region. "It is awarded to 10 officials across the world. This is the first edition of the award and I am honoured to be selected from 600 entries from 100 countries." Other than Sathish, Mahendra Giri, a range officer from Rajaji Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, has also won it from India.

Sathish started his work at the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park four years ago and has been involved in growing 100 acres of mangrove forest and maintaining another 100 acres in the Palk Bay region. "Mangroves help to maintain the water quality in the area by filtering the sediments and other pollutants through its roots. It also helps to reduce the effect of cyclones and other natural disasters. Now, the area is home to hundreds of birds such as sandpipers, grey herons, kingfishers, black-winged stilts and common greenshanks."

He is also part of the national park's scuba diving team. Explains Sathish, "This is the only such team that belongs to the Forest Department in India. It was set up in 2017 under the guidance of the Wildlife Warden. We received seven days of training and now go under

A forest matter (top) Mangrove forest creation at the Palk Bay; (inset) S Sathish ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the sea once a month to assess and maintain the coral reef, sea grass and also to clean the coastal areas."

One of the problems still faced by the department is the illegal poaching and killing of wild animals. "Migratory birds, turtles, sea cows, sea cucumbers, etc fall prey to it. Since 2017, I have booked around 110 cases under this. Taking strict action has helped bring down the number of such offences over the years."

The prize involves a uniform patch and a cash prize of \$10,000 for the Forest Department to support his works there. Sathish was nominated by K Sivakumar, a senior scientist from Wildlife Institute of India, for this award. "I have worked with him (Sivakumar) on several projects and I had the confidence to win this award," he concludes.

Just talk a while

Amid the gloom of the pandemic, comedian Amit Tandon is hosting sessions with people who have tested COVID-19 positive and are quarantining alone

SWETA AKUNDI

When we catch up with standup comedian Amit Tandon on the phone from Mumbai, he is in good spirits.

He has just finished the first two sessions of his new project #TalkPositive where he gets on a call with COVID-19 positive patients who are stuck alone, in quarantine, everyday.

With the second wave hitting the nation, Amit confesses he had been down in the doldrums. "I started this project on an impulse. The second



The need to open up Comedian Amit Tandon ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

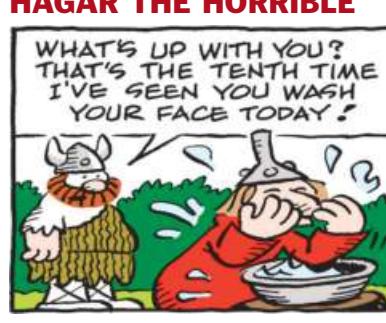
POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



Navalny sent to prison hospital in Russia

Move comes after EU, U.S. warn Moscow over his failing health, with doctors saying he could die 'any minute'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MOSCOW

Russia's penitentiary service on Monday said it was transferring ailing Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny to prison hospital, as the EU warned it would hold Moscow "responsible" for the state of his health.

The U.S. on Sunday threatened Russia with "consequences" if President Vladimir Putin's major domestic opponent - who launched a hunger strike three weeks ago - dies in jail, with Mr. Navalny's private doctors warning at the weekend he could pass away at "any minute".

Russia's prison authorities, which have barred Mr. Navalny's own medical team from visiting him, said its doctors had decided to move him to a medical facility on the premises of another penal colony outside Moscow.

But the authorities insisted the anti-corruption cam-



Looming uncertainty: Opposition leader Alexei Navalny at a hearing in Moscow on February 20. • REUTERS

his chosen team of doctors to inspect him.

Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis pushed further, saying the bloc should prepare a "humanitarian mission" to fly him out of Russia for treatment.

Kremlin dismisses outcry

"If the international community does not respond, the regime's opposition leader will be sent silently to his death," Mr. Landsbergis said.

The Kremlin dismissed the outcry from foreign leaders over Mr. Navalny's condition.

"The health of convicts in the Russia Federation cannot and should not be a topic concerning them," said Mr. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Mr. Navalny, 44, was arrested in Russia in January after returning from treatment in Germany for a near-

fatal nerve agent poisoning he says was carried out by Moscow - accusations denied by Mr. Putin's administration.

Sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for embezzlement, he began a hunger strike on March 31 demanding medical treatment for back pain and numbness to his hands and legs.

The EU in October sanctioned six Russian officials over the Novichok nerve agent attack on Mr. Navalny, and in February sanctioned another four individuals over his arrest and sentencing.

Mr. Navalny's supporters have called for a major protest across Russia on Wednesday to demand his release, hours after a state-of-the-nation address by Mr. Putin.

Police warned people not to demonstrate, saying officers would take "all necessary measures to maintain law and order".

NASA Mars helicopter makes first flight on another planet

Ingenuity flew 10 feet above Martian surface for 39 seconds

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

NASA successfully flew its tiny helicopter Ingenuity on Mars early on Monday, the first powered flight on another planet and a feat a top engineer called "our Wright brothers' moment."

At 3:34 a.m. Eastern Time (0734 GMT), the 1.8 kg rotorcraft lifted off, hovered 10 feet above the Martian surface, then came back to rest after 39.1 seconds.

Data and images from the autonomous flight were transmitted 278 million km back to Earth where they were received by NASA's array of ground antennas and processed more than three hours later.

Ingenuity quickly sent back black-and-white image from its downward pointing navigation camera, showing its bug-like shadow cast on the surface.



Rare feat: NASA helicopter Ingenuity, left, flying over the surface of Mars and, right, its shadow on the surface. • AFP

NASA had originally planned the flight for April 11 but postponed it over a software issue that was identified during a planned high-speed test of the aircraft's rotors. The issue was resolved with a software update and tweak in coding.

Tech demonstration

Ingenuity travelled to Mars attached to the underside of Perseverance, which touched down on the planet on February 18 on a mission to search for signs of extraterrestrial life.

Ingenuity's goal, by contrast, is to demonstrate its technology works, and it won't contribute to Perseverance's science goals.

Biden pressed on emissions goal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

When President Joe Biden convenes a virtual climate summit on Thursday, he faces a vexing task: how to put forward a nonbinding but symbolic goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that will have a tangible impact on climate change efforts not only in the U.S. but throughout the world.

The emissions target, eagerly awaited by all sides of the climate debate, will signal how aggressively Mr. Biden wants to move on climate change.

The target Mr. Biden chooses "is setting the tone for the level of ambition and the pace of emission reductions over the next decade," said Kate Larsen, a former White House adviser.

Scientists, environmental groups and even business leaders are calling on Mr. Biden to set a target that would cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The 50% target would nearly double the nation's previous commitment and require dramatic changes in the power and transportation sectors.

Iran nuclear talks enter 'drafting stage'

Solutions are still far away, but we agree on specific steps towards goal: Ulyanov



Some progress: The meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission in Vienna on Saturday to discuss the Iran nuclear deal. • AFP

been brainstorming solutions to the two major issues: The rollback of American sanctions on one hand, and Iran's return to compliance on the other.

Now, said Russian representative Mikhail Ulyanov, "we can note with satisfaction that the negotiations (are) entering the drafting stage."

"Practical solutions are still far away, but we have moved from general words to agreeing on specific steps towards the goal," he wrote on Twitter.

"Overall, we may be, and hopefully are on a path of rapprochement," German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Adebahr told reporters in Berlin.

"But there are still many, many open questions," she added.

France 'enabled' 1994 Rwanda genocide: report

It 'did nothing to stop' the massacres

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS

The French government bears "significant" responsibility for "enabling a foreseeable genocide," a report commissioned by the Rwandan government concludes about France's role before and during the horror in which an estimated 8,00,000 people were slaughtered in 1994.

The report comes amid efforts by Rwanda to document the role of French authorities before, during, and after the genocide, part of the steps taken by France's President Emmanuel Macron to improve relations with the central African country.

The 600-page report says that France "did nothing to stop" the massacres, in April and May 1994, and in too slowly to appreciate the extent of the killings and to respond to them.

tried to cover up its role and even offered protection to some perpetrators.

It concludes that in years leading up to the genocide, former French President François Mitterrand and his administration had knowledge of preparations for the massacres - yet kept supporting the government of then-Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana despite the "warning signs."

"The French government was neither blind nor unconscious about the foreseeable genocide," it stressed.

The report comes after a French report, commissioned by Mr. Macron, concluded that French authorities had been "blind" to the preparations for genocide and then reacted too slowly to appreciate the extent of the killings and to respond to them.

CM YK

ELSEWHERE



Saudi activist wins top Europe rights award

STRASBOURG

Saudi activist Loujain al-Hathloul was awarded the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, a top European rights award, on Monday in recognition of her fight for women's rights in the kingdom, including her efforts to end a ban on women driving. Ms. Hathloul was detained in 2018. She is now on probation and barred from leaving Saudi Arabia for five years. AFP

Chad says 300 rebels killed to halt offensive

N'DJAMENA

Chad's Army said on Monday it had killed over 300 insurgents, claiming to have halted a rebel advance towards the capital N'Djamena as the country awaits the results of the presidential election. REUTERS

Radical Pakistan party frees 11 police hostages

Supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan held them at a mosque during anti-France protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LAHORE

Eleven Pakistani police officers seized by supporters of a radical Islamist group as part of their campaign to get the French Ambassador expelled have been released, officials said on Monday.

The officers were taken as hostages on Sunday by supporters of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) during violent protests in Lahore.

Video circulating on social media - and confirmed officially by police as genuine - showed some of them bloodied and bruised, with bandages around their heads.

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said the police had been released early on Monday after "negotiations" with the TLP, which the government banned last week after effectively labelling



Hitting back: A TLP supporter prepares to hurl a teargas canister at police personnel in Karachi on Monday. • AFP

ing it a terrorist organisation.

The officers had been held at a TLP mosque stronghold in Lahore, which is now packed with supporters and surrounded by police.

"Negotiations have been started with TLP; the first round completed successfully," said Mr. Ahmed in a video on Twitter. "They have released 11 policemen who were made hostages."

He said a second round of negotiations would take place later on Monday, although it is not clear what they will discuss.

Previously the TLP had set an April 20 deadline for the expulsion of the French Ambassador.

The group has been behind an anti-France campaign for months since President Emmanuel Macron

defended the right of Charlie Hebdo magazine to republish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammed - an act deemed blasphemous by many Muslims.

Protests paralyse cities

Last week the Embassy in Pakistan advised its nationals to leave the country - a call that appears to have gone largely unheeded.

"The TLP people have gone inside the Mosque and the police have also stepped back," said Mr. Ahmed.

"Hopefully, the rest of the issues will be settled in the second round."

Rioting has rocked the country for the past week since the leader of the TLP was detained in Lahore after calling for a march on the capital.

The protests have paralysed cities and led to the deaths of six policemen.

TLP leaders say several of the party's supporters were killed in Sunday's clashes.

"We won't bury them until the French ambassador is kicked out," Allama Shafiq Amini, a TLP leader in the city, said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government has struggled to bring TLP to heel over the years, but this week announced an outright ban against the group - effectively labelling it a terrorist outfit.

Still, on Saturday he suggested the party hadn't been banned for its ideology, but rather its methods.

"Let me make clear to people here & abroad: Our govt. only took action against TLP under our anti-terrorist law when they challenged the writ of the state and used street violence & attacking the public & law enforcers," he tweeted.

France 'enabled' 1994 Rwanda genocide: report

It 'did nothing to stop' the massacres

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MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	47,949	-1.81
US Dollar	74.87	-0.69
Gold	47291	1.85
Brent oil	66.58	-0.28

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	720.95	-34.55
Asian Paints	2571.90	-91.80
Axist Bank	648.15	-21.05
Bajaj Auto	3515.55	-119.10
Bajaj Finserv	9469.90	-354.85
Bajaj Finance	4479.60	-137.00
Bharti Airtel	526.45	-14.30
BPCL	408.75	-5.05
Britannia Ind	3742.80	-46.30
Cipla	946.30	8.25
Coal India	124.60	-3.25
Divis Lab	3807.10	-14.75
Dr Reddys Lab	4968.10	-74.85
Eicher Motors	2370.35	-64.50
Grasim Ind	1324.70	-28.50
HCL Tech	994.60	-18.15
HDFC	2492.35	-81.70
HDFC Bank	1412.40	-16.25
HDFC Life	665.95	-24.70
Hero MotoCorp	2785.55	-109.30
Hindalco	361.40	-8.60
Hind Unilever	2436.65	-22.25
ICICI Bank	559.75	-7.20
IndusInd Bank	832.00	-30.95
Infosys	1362.55	8.80
Indian Oil Corp	88.10	-2.05
ITC	205.60	-2.35
JSW Steel	615.80	-3.60
Kotak Bank	1700.75	-63.35
L&T	1310.45	-48.70
M&M	794.95	-26.70
Maruti Suzuki	6511.75	-136.35
Nestle India Ltd.	17089.95	-162.15
NTPC	99.05	-3.40
ONGC	103.05	-4.25
PowerGrid Corp	201.20	-8.65
Reliance Ind	1901.70	-30.40
SBI Life	906.25	-7.95
State Bank	331.15	-8.75
Shree Cement	30057.75	-763.35
Sun Pharma	640.65	-5.40
Tata Consumer	664.10	-7.20
Tata Motors	301.40	-8.60
Tata Steel	888.05	-2.20
TCS	3161.80	-33.35
Tech Mahindra	1000.10	-10.20
Titan	1518.70	-30.35
UltraTech Cement	6509.75	-205.45
UPL	597.45	-14.30
Wipro	472.75	3.55

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.68	75.00
Euro	89.88	90.27
British Pound	104.07	104.55
Japanese Yen (100)	69.07	69.39
Chinese Yuan	11.47	11.52
Swiss Franc	81.72	82.07
Singapore Dollar	56.10	56.38
Canadian Dollar	59.71	59.99
Malaysian Ringgit	18.09	18.19

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Payment services firm Razorpay raises \$160 mn

NEW DELHI
Financial services firm Razorpay on Monday said it has raised \$160 million in a Series E funding round, co-led by Sequoia Capital and GIC, that values the firm at \$3 billion. Razorpay plans to infuse funds into scaling up its business banking suite, new acquisitions and global expansion, the company said in a statement.

Jubilant develops oral Remdesivir

MUMBAI
Jubilant Pharma Ltd., a subsidiary of Jubilant Pharmo Ltd., has announced the successful completion of safety and pharmacokinetic/absorption studies in animals and healthy human volunteers in India using a novel oral formulation of Remdesivir. The drug is currently commercially available as an injectable formulation and is being used in the treatment of COVID-19.

Sensex slides 1.8% as ongoing COVID wave rattles investors

'Rapid rise in infections, tighter curbs may have significant economic impact'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices slid 1.8% on Monday as the rapid spread of COVID-19 infections and gathering local restrictions to check the current wave in various States intensified investor concerns about the economic fallout.

The S&P BSE Sensex fell 882.61 points, or 1.8%, to settle at 47,949.42. The slide was led by PSU and banking stocks. The NSE Nifty 50 index slid 1.77%, to 14,359.45.

With the Centre and States considering additional restrictions to contain the pandemic, market volatility has increased, said analysts.

The scarcity of vaccines,



Darkening horizon: With authorities considering more curbs, market volatility has increased, say analysts. ■ PAUL NORONHA

Remdesivir, oxygen and hospital beds have only added to the concerns.

"The economic impact of the current rise in COVID-19 cases will be significant in the short term as it will lead

to lockdowns across many States in the country," said Naveen Kulkarni, chief investment officer, Axis Securities.

He said while many industries like travel, tourism, res-

taurants and hotels would experience a significant impact, IT, pharma, metals, telecom and consumer staples would be less vulnerable and provide support.

Rupee weakens

"Discretionary consumption will be the most impacted," he added.

The rupee weakened by 52 paise to close at 74.87 against the dollar, amid fears foreign investors may eye the exits.

"Going forward, the COVID-19 situation and the pace of vaccinations would be a key monitorable," said Ajit Mishra, VP, research, Religare Broking Ltd. "

Sugar demand falters in peak season due to virus curbs

'Prices fell 0.8% in 2019-20 because of lockdowns'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

HDFC Bank has embarked on a 'technology transformation agenda' to provide safe and secure banking services to its customers, in a bid to avoid any technical glitches in digital banking and prevent any regulatory action,

In a letter to employees, MD Sashi Jagdishan on Monday said the bank had invested heavily in infrastructure to handle any potential load that might be encountered in the next three to five years.

Mr. Jagdishan assured the employees that their bonuses, promotions and increments were safe just like last year despite COVID-19 challenges.

Lower demand could increase inventories in India, the world's biggest consumer of the sweetener, and may put downward pressure on local prices.

Lower domestic sales could force mills to export more sugar in the next marketing year, putting pressure on global prices as well.

"The second wave of co-

ronavirus has been disrupting the market during the peak demand season. Purchases by bulk buyers have been falling," Praful Vithalani, president of All India Sugar Trade Association (AISAT), told Reuters.

Demand from bulk consumers had recovered to normal levels by the end of 2020 but started falling again this month due to uncertainty over coronavirus-led lockdowns, said Ashok Jain, president of the Bombay Sugar Merchants Association.

Consumption of cold drinks and ice cream, and as a result, demand for sugar, rises in India during the summer months that run roughly from March to June.

Sugar demand, which usually rises by more than 1% each year, fell 0.8% in 2019-20 to 25.3 million tonnes because of one of the world's strictest lockdowns imposed last year in March.

As per the research 7 in 10 Indian adults (70%) believe that remote work has made it much easier for hackers and cybercriminals to take advantage of people.

"Around half (52%) say they do not know how to protect themselves from cybercrime, and even more (68%) say it is difficult for them to determine if the information they see online is from a credible source," NortonLifeLock mentioned in the report.

He said while the report suggested that many Indian consumers (90%) were taking proactive steps to safeguard their data, 2 in 5 still felt it was impossible to protect their privacy (42%) in this age or say they don't know how to do so (42%).

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Moeen and Jadeja trap Royals in a web of spin

Duo triggers middle-overs panic — Rajasthan losing five for eight — to help CSK defend 189, a target set by collective effort

IPL 2021

S. DINAKAR

The calm M.S. Dhoni, captaining Chennai Super Kings for a momentous 200th time, rang in the changes and cut the angles on the field much like a wizard, as his side crushed Rajasthan Royals by 45 runs at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium on Monday.

Dhoni and CSK were in control when RR, pursuing 189, lost the plot on a pitch that offered some purchase for the spinners. Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali struck body blows. In fact, Jadeja's dream ball triggered RR's decline.

Jos Buttler can innovate and create, and the cheeky dabs and reverse sweeps were on view. The Englishman was on 49 when Jadeja bamboozled him with a delivery that pitched on leg and hit middle-and-off.

Jadeja struck again in the same over, sliding one into left-hander Shivam Dube.

CSK made further inroads. Moeen consumed left-hander David Miller on the sweep.

The off-spinner struck again when he had the high-value Chris Morris caught at deep mid-wicket. It was all over for RR.

Earlier, left-arm swing bowler Sam Curran dented RR, dismissing Manan Vohra and Sanju Samson with short-pitched deliveries.

CSK made 188 for nine after being inserted and, astonishingly, the highest score was Faf du Plessis' 33.

CSK made 46 in the first six PowerPlay overs and smashed 61, despite losing wickets, in the last five.

Curran and Dwayne Bravo added crucial quick runs in



A ripper! Jos Buttler is bowled by a Ravindra Jadeja special which pitched on leg-stump and hit the middle-and-off stumps. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

the end. The intrepid Curran sliced Chetan Sakariya for a six.

And Dwayne Bravo, who struck some brave blows, concluded the innings with a rousing six over long-on off the innings' last ball from Mustafizur Rahman.

Earlier, Rituraj Gaikwad's dry run continued; done in by canny Mustafizur's change of pace.

du Plessis, batting with panache, danced down to strike Jaydev Unadkat for maximum.

A stunning blow. However, fellow South African Morris bowled one outside off and du Plessis, charging, slashed fatally.

The easy-hitting Moeen Ali soon swung Mustafizur and pulled Morris for sixes before miscuing a short ball

Innings scan

CSK	RR
46	Dots
12	Fours
10	Sixes
46/2	PP
9.40	RR

from leg-spinner Rahul Tewatia. CSK pushed on. Ambati Rayudu waded into Tewatia with footwork and timing.

The innings once again hit a roadblock when Rayudu hit a back of a length ball from Sakariya to be held at the cover-point fence. Sakariya struck again when Suresh Raina, attempting to switch gears, drove the bowler straight to mid-off. But CSK eventually put together a combative score.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Rituraj Gaikwad c Dube b Mustafizur 10 (13b, 1x4), Faf du Plessis c Parag b Morris 33 (17b, 4x4, 2x6), Moeen Ali c Parag b Tewatia 26 (20b, 1x4, 2x6), Suresh Raina c Morris b Sakariya 18 (15b, 1x4, 1x6), Ambati Rayudu c Parag b Sakariya 27 (17b, 3x6), Ravindra Jadeja c Samson b Morris 8 (7b, 1x4), M.S. Dhoni c Buttler b Sakariya 18 (17b, 2x4), Sam Curran run out 13 (6b, 1x6), Dwayne Bravo (not out) 20 (8b, 2x4, 1x6), Shardul Thakur run out 1 (1b), Deepak Chahar (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (b-1, lb-4, w-8, nb-1); 14; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 188.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-25 (Rituraj, 3.5 overs), 2-45 (du Plessis, 5.4), 3-78 (Moeen, 9.2), 4-123 (Rayudu, 13.2), 5-125 (Raina, 13.5), 6-147 (Dhoni, 17.2), 7-163 (Jadeja,

18.3), 8-174 (Sam Curran, 19.1), 9-180 (Shardul, 19.4).

ROYALS BOWLING

Unadkat 4-0-40-0, Sakariya 4-0-36-3, Mustafizur 4-0-37-1, Morris 4-0-33-2, Tewatia 3-0-21-1, Parag 1-0-16-0.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Jos Buttler b Jadeja 49 (35b, 5x4, 2x6), Manan Vohra c Jadeja b Sam Curran 14 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), Sanju Samson c Bravo b Sam Curran 1 (5b), Shivam Dube lbw b Jadeja 17 (20b, 2x4), David Miller lbw b Moeen 2 (5b), Riyan Parag c Jadeja b Moeen 3 (7b), Rahul Tewatia c Rituraj b Bravo 20 (15b, 2x6), Chris Morris c Jadeja b Moeen 0 (2b), Jaydev Unadkat c Jadeja b Shardul 24 (17b, 2x4, 1x6), Chetan Sakariya (not out) 0 (0b), Mustafizur Rahman (not out) 0 (4b); Extras (b-1, lb-3, nb-1, w-8); 13; Total (for nine wkts.

in 20 overs): 143.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-30 (Vohra, 3.5), 2-45 (Samson, 5.5), 3-87 (Buttler, 11.1), 4-90 (Dube, 11.6), 5-92 (Miller, 12.5), 6-95 (Parag, 14.1), 7-95 (Morris, 14.3), 8-137 (Tewatia, 18.6), 9-143 (Unadkat, 19.2).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING

Deepak Chahar 3-0-32-0, Sam Curran 4-0-24-2, Shardul 3-0-20-1, Jadeja 4-0-28-2, Bravo 3-0-28-1, Moeen Ali 3-0-7-3.

Toss: Rajasthan Royals.

Man-of-the-Match: Moeen Ali. *Chennai Super Kings won by 45 runs.*

Next assignment

CSK: April 21 vs. KKR, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

RR: April 22 vs. RCB, Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

Fleming says Moeen adds all-round value

'CSK missed a player like him last year'



An asset: Moeen has been in the thick of things for CSK, both with bat and ball. ■ SPORTZPICS/IPL

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming is happy with the way Moeen Ali has brought value to the side, adding that the team missed an all-rounder like him last year.

"He is adding an all-round aspect to our game which we lacked last year."

"His contribution today [Monday] was just what we were looking for. We are absolutely happy with the way he has started," said Fleming.

"I don't want to restrict my shots. I am willing to accept a few failures on the way, but at the same time, I will look to contribute to my team's victories in the coming matches," said Samson.

in us getting good scores," added the former New Zealand skipper.

Despite another failure, Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson said he would continue to play aggressively.

"IPL demands risk-taking. When I succeeded I took a lot of risks and that is why I scored a 100 (in the first match)."

"I don't want to restrict my shots. I am willing to accept a few failures on the way, but at the same time, I will look to contribute to my team's victories in the coming matches," said Samson.

POINTS TABLE

Team	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Royal Challengers	3	3	0	6	0.750
Chennai Super Kings	3	2	1	4	1.194
Delhi Capitals	3	2	1	4	0.453
Mumbai Indians	3	2	1	4	0.367
Kolkata Knight Riders	3	1	2	2	-0.633
Rajasthan Royals	3	1	2	2	-0.719
Punjab Kings	3	1	2	2	-0.967
Sunrisers Hyderabad	3	0	3	0	-0.483

After the CSK-RR match on April 19

Daunting Mumbai roadblock looms for Delhi

Having gone 0-4 vs. MI in 2020, DC needs its openers to counter Boult-Bumrah

AMOL KARHADKAR

Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw are in red-hot form at the top of Delhi Capitals' batting order. As are Mumbai Indians' Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah, arguably the IPL's best pace combination. Their face-off may well decide Tuesday's game — a repeat of last year's final.

Although both teams have wasted little time in getting off the blocks, notching up two wins each in three games so far, DC will know that MI, perhaps the best-oiled outfit in the IPL, has its measure. Rohit Sharma's men came out on top in all four of their meetings last season — twice in the league and twice in the playoffs.

MI is also better acquainted with the conditions at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, where it has played its three games so far, while it will be DC's first match in Chennai this year.

It will help DC if its open-



Key battle: Rahul Chahar vs Rishabh Pant will be watched with interest as MI takes on DC.



ers can continue their form from Sunday. Interestingly, both have strong ties with Mumbai — while Dhawan opened for MI in the IPL's

early years, Shaw is a product of Mumbai's stable of batsmanship.

If the duo can weather the Boult-Bumrah storm and let

captain Rishabh Pant go after spin twins Rahul Chahar and Krunal Pandya, DC's chances of finally finding a way past MI will improve.

UEFA in crisis mode

Threatens bans as breakaway Super League sends shockwaves

FOOTBALL

REUTERS

MANCHESTER

European soccer's governing body UEFA held a crisis meeting on Monday, hours after 12 of the continent's leading clubs shocked the football world by announcing the formation of a breakaway Super League.

After all, the Rabada-Nortje combine tallied a whopping 52 wickets in IPL-13, the same as Boult and Bumrah's joint total.

MI has most things covered, but it still has not solved the third-pacer riddle. Neither Marco Jansen nor Adam Milne, both of whom have been handed MI debuts, has looked effective so far.

The bitter battle entered a new phase with a letter sent by the 12 clubs to UEFA on Monday in which they said they would take legal steps to protect their interests.

The breakaway clubs will be guaranteed annual places in the competition — in contrast to the current UEFA Champions League, which

C Kids grow up dreaming to win the World Cup and the Champions League — not any Super League. Really hard to understand

MESUT OZIL

Formerly of Real Madrid and Arsenal

requires teams to qualify via their domestic leagues.

New format

Meanwhile, UEFA on Monday confirmed that a new format for the Champions League will be introduced from 2024 with the number of clubs in the group stage increasing from 32 to 36 and all clubs brought together into one pool instead of the current system of four-team groups.

This was approved at an executive committee meeting in Switzerland.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin reiterated that clubs and players involved in the proposed breakaway league could be banned "as soon as possible" from all of its competitions and the World Cup.

The Super League letter meanwhile also urged FIFA and UEFA to agree to talks and said it wanted the breakaway league to exist alongside current European club competitions.

Top clubs missing

Qatari-owned Paris St Germain and European champion Bayern Munich, which is majority-owned by the fans, have not signed up to the plans, meaning that France and Germany are not represented in the Super League as things stand.

The breakaway clubs will be guaranteed annual places in the competition — in contrast to the current UEFA Champions League, which

C This greedy and callous move would spell disaster for our grassroots, for women's football, and the wider football community

LUIS FIGO

former Portugal forward



Disgruntled: Unhappy fans make their feelings known at Anfield, the home of Liverpool. ■ AFP

Muralitharan discharged

SPORTS REPORTER

CHENNAI



75 years for the cause of bank employees

**'From scratch to Silver,
Silver to Gold,
Gold to Diamond and
now from Diamond to Platinum
AIBEPA @ 75 on 20th April, 2021 ,'**



ADVERTISEMENT

All Indian Bank Employees Association, popularly known as AIBEPA is the oldest and largest trade union of bank employees in our country. It represents about half a million bank employees working all over the country in public sector Banks, private sector Banks, Reserve Bank, Foreign Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Apex to Primary Co-operative Banks, and including contract employees, Daily Deposit Collectors, Jewel Appraisers, employees paid on Cost to Company basis, Business Correspondents and temporary employees working in these Banks.

All India Bank Employees Association is celebrating its Platinum Jubilee and 75th Anniversary on 20th April, 2021.

AIBEPA was founded on 20th April, 1946 in the then Calcutta. Started as a tiny bush with very less number of employees, today it commands a large membership. Except a few Banks, AIBEPA is the recognized majority union and sole bargaining trade union in most of the Banks.

The background: Those days, when there were no Unions in the Banks, bank employees were being exploited. Their salary was pitiable and there were no codified service conditions. Everything was decided by the managements at their whims and fancies. Employees got jobs in the Banks only through some recommendations of people known to the managements. Hence employees always worked under fear and were afraid to displease the management in any manner. It was virtual slavery and below any sense of dignity.

Employees were being harassed, victimized, discriminated, fined, unfairly treated, and ill-treated. There were no working hours, no holidays. Employees were being denied leave even for their marriages or obsequies of their parents. But yet, employees could not raise their little finger for fear of losing their jobs. Bank employees being typically middle-class minded, were afraid of raising their voice and were working in the Banks without any self-respect.

Within this jungle of anarchy and high-handedness of the managements, few employees here and there were thinking that something should be done to change the situation. Few voices were raised but they were instantly and mercilessly crushed by dismissals and marching orders.

But even under these odds and threats, some employees of some Banks started to feel that when factory workers can have their Unions to protect, why not bank employees. The seed was being sown in their minds that bank

employees also should have their Unions. The more the managements were ruthless, the more they were convinced that Unions should be formed. The 2nd World War and defeat of fascism gave a boost to their confidence level. The struggles of the working class for their rights and for country's freedom was at the zenith and these gave lot of inspiration. Thus were started some unions in some banks in some States in the 1940s.

These efforts culminated with the initiatives taken in Calcutta which resulted in the formation of AIBEPA in 1946 on the 20th April.

AIBEPA built up on the sacrifices of the founding fathers: This gave a lot of fillip to form some more unions in different banks in different parts of the country. Behind all these efforts were some daring young employees who were working in the Banks but who refused to be reconciled to the atrocities of the managements and decided to take efforts to mobilise, organize and lead the unions. Invariably they were targeted by the managements. Most of them were victimized by the Banks. Some of these dare-devil employees did not lose their heart nor felt frightened but decided to stand up and continue their efforts, come what may. Because of their dedication, their courage, their commitment, their conviction, above all, their willingness to sacrifice for the cause of other workers, that our Unions could withstand the pressures and survived.

Ethos and tenets of AIBEPA: The founding of the AIBEPA was not merely out of the need for a strong trade union for promoting the interests of the bank employees but was born out of a deeper conviction and the larger vision. The founding fathers had a clear mission. The foundation Conference of AIBEPA was in 1946, that is during the British regime. So, naturally, the foremost demand in the Conference was that India must get its freedom. Thus, patriotism was in the womb itself. Again, besides passing resolutions demanding better wages and service conditions, the Conference demanded that when India became independent, the Banks must be brought under Government control to subserve the interest of the common masses. Thus, the demand for nationalisation of Banks was made at that time itself.

Two Pillar Policy of AIBEPA: The

visionary leaders who founded AIBEPA wanted that AIBEPA should not only fight for the welfare of the bank employees but should also fight for better banking system which will help the people at large. Thus became the Two Pillar Policy of AIBEPA and even today, AIBEPA is guided by this principle and value. That is why we can observe from the history of AIBEPA in the last 75 years that AIBEPA has fought for the betterment of bank employees and simultaneously championed the cause of people and social orientation of our Banks. We must nurture and preserve this basic philosophy of AIBEPA in future also.

From slavery to security: Even though Banks were in existence for nearly a century, bank employees were suffering from absence of any codified wages and even minimum service conditions. In the absence of any Union to voice their grievances, there was total high-handedness and arbitrariness on the part of managements in dealing with the employees. Employees were treated shabbily like slaves. With AIBEPA coming in the picture and various unions started in different Banks, slowly the situation changed. Through continuous endeavours and struggles, AIBEPA has ensured total job security today. This is one of the most outstanding contributions of AIBEPA.

From anarchy to collective bargaining: In the pre-Union days, it was sheer anarchy and salary of the employees were poor and plat. Wages were unilaterally fixed by the employers and employees had no say in it. Not only that, the salaries were different in different Banks and in different places according to the whims of the Banks. There was no DA compensation when prices went up. There was no leave rules and employees were at the mercy of the Managers. If Manager was unhappy with any employee, he would fine them. There was no working hours and employees used to go home very late in the night. They had to come to the Bank on Sundays and festival holidays also. The petitions and representations from the staff were rejected with contempt. Today all these will look like stores because we have the most regulated and collective bargained bipartite wage settlements.

Bitter experience before Tribunals: When AIBEPA was born in 1946, a Charter of Demand was prepared and placed on the bank managements. They refused to talk. They refused to recognise Unions. Because of agitation by bank employees in many States by bank employees, the Government promulgated an Ordinance on 30-4-1949 bringing banking and insurance

under subject which were under State subject so far.

Sen Tribunal: Then, the Central Government referred the demands before the Justice K C Sen Tribunal for adjudication. Sen Award was published in August, 1950 but the bankers challenged the Award and in April, 1951, Supreme Court declared the Award as null and void. Bank employees were in square one.

Sastri Tribunal: This led to agitations again and the Government appointed Justice Divatia Tribunal in 1951. Unions object to his appointment as he was a shareholder in many Banks. So, he was forced to resign. Unrest amongst bank employees continued and Government appointed Justice Panchapakesha Sastri Tribunal in January, 1952. Sastri Award was published on 20th April, 1953. Employees were expecting some wage revision but Sastri Award proposed wage reduction.

Labour Appellate Tribunal: Once again powerful agitations were there and the Award was referred to the Labour Appellate Tribunal. LAT Award came out in April, 1954 restoring the wage cut. But shockingly, succumbing to the pressure of the Bankers, in August, 1954 the Government unilaterally and illegally modified the LAT Award to the detriment of bank employees.

1st All India Strike by AIBEPA: Angered by this unfair action of the Government, AIBEPA gave the call for its first All India Bank Strike on 23rd September, 1954. The strike was a thunderous success. After this, AIBEPA gave the call for Indefinite Strike from 10th December, 1954. Shri VV Giri, the then Labour Minister resigned from the Cabinet in support of AIBEPA and in protest against Government's illegal intervention in the Award. Government agreed to appoint a Commission to look into the matter. Leaders like Com S A Dange, Shri Ashok Mehta appealed to AIBEPA and the indefinite strike was deferred.

Bank Award Commission: Justice Gajendra Gadkar Commission went into the issue and gave its Award known as Bank Award Commission. These recommendations were incorporated by the Government by enacting Industrial Disputes Banking Companies Decision Act, 1955. This was valid upto 31-3-1959.

Desai Tribunal: With the expiry of Amended Sastri Award, in March, 1960, Government appointed Justice K T Desai Tribunal. Desai Award was

published in June 1962 but its Award was twice extended upto March 1963 and again upto 1964.

AIBEPA said No More Tribunals: Because of the prolonged proceedings and unsatisfactory Awards, in 1964, AIBEPA demanded "No More Tribunals, We want Bipartite Settlement". As expected, Government and bankers did not agree because, there was no such precedence. But AIBEPA launched countrywide agitation. The entire banking system got paralysed.

Great Epoch started - 1st Bipartite Settlement: Outside bank employees were agitated. Inside the Parliament, Com. Prabhat Kar, the General Secretary, who also won the elections to Lok Sabha, took up the issue and many Members of Parliament supported us. Ultimately Government relented and agreed for the first ever bilateral industry-level Bipartite Settlement in 1966. AIBEPA became the trend-setter and path-finder.

Bipartism continues till now: between 1966 and 2021, AIBEPA has achieved 11 industry-level Bipartite settlement including the recent Settlement reached in November, 2020. Thus right of collective bargaining and bilateralism has been secured and maintained for the past 55 years, despite various repeated attempts to dismantle this system at various points of time by various Governments.

Struggle for Nationalisation of Banks: At the time of our country's independence in 1947, there were 648 Commercial Banks. There were about 2900 Branches with total Deposits of Rs. 1080 crores and Advances of Rs. 475 crores. Banks were entirely in the hands of private sector. Even Reserve Bank of India became a full-fledged Government's Bank only in 1948.

Bank failures galore: Even though all the Banks were in private sector, they were not being run properly. Mismanagement was rampant and abuse of public deposits was prevalent. Hundreds of Banks started failing and were getting closed. Innocent people who had kept their savings in these Banks lost their money. Employees who were working in these Banks lost their jobs. On this issue, there was a big agitation in Kerala by AIBEPA under the leadership of Com TKV Nair, the General Secretary of AIBEPA's Kerala State Federation. In West Bengal also, there large-scale bank failures and poor people lost their savings. Com. Prabhat Kar, took up these issues very effectively in the Parliament and forced a lot of discussion and debate drawing the attention of the Government.

Major Breakthrough - Amendment to Banking Regulations Act: Because of the persistent efforts of AIBEPA and its General Secretary Com. Prabhat Kar, the Government agreed and in 1961, Section 45 of the Banking Regulations Act was amended. This was a major breakthrough because, this clause enabled the Government to advise the Reserve Bank to order for merger and amalgamation of Banks in public interest. That is why we will find that after 1961, there had been no Bank failures. Many Private Banks which were otherwise to be closed down due to mismanagement, were merged with public sector banks and thus saved the people's money. In 1950s, there were 560 private Banks. In 1969, this came down to 90 Banks through mergers and amalgamations. This is a very important contribution of AIBEPA to the people of this country.

From 1961 to 1968, 263 private Banks failed but all these Banks were merged with some Bank or the other. No Bank was closed.

1961	47	1964	82	1967	15
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1962	33	1965	42	1968	7
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1963	20	1966	17	1961-68	263
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AIBEPA's crusade for nationalisation: AIBEPA has been demanding for Nationalisation of the Banking Industry to help the country's economy since its formation. This assumed greater significance when in the 3rd Conference of AIBEPA, held in 1950 at Jalandhar, Punjab, when a clear Resolution was adopted.

Call for struggle: AIBEPA, from its Conference held in 1964 in Trivandrum demand immediate nationalisation banks and declared nationwide struggle. Bitter struggle ensued. The demand of AIBEPA was echoed in Parliament. Communist Party of India played a leading role in the Parliament to highlight the demand of AIBEPA.

Major Banks nationalised: The Government of India issued an ordinance and nationalized 14 largest commercial banks with effect from the midnight of 19th July, 1969.

Public Sector Banks - Neelkant Mahadev - the swallower of private losses - the Savior of people's money: After nationalisation of Banks, we have seen so many failed private banks have been merged with public sector Banks. Public Sector Banks have become the Neelkant Mahadev by swallowing the poison of loss of the private Banks and safeguarding the precious savings of the common people kept in the Banks as Deposits.

Failed Private Bank	Merged with Govt. Bank	Year
1 Bank of Bihar	State Bank of India	1969
2 National Bank of Lahore	State Bank of India	1970
3 Krishnarao Baldeo Bank	State Bank of India	1974
4 Belgaum Bank	Union Bank of India	1976
5 Lakshmi Commercial Bank	Canara Bank	1985
6 Miraj State Bank	Union Bank of India	1986
7 Hindustan Commercial Bank	Punjab National Bank	1986
8 Traders Bank	Bank of Baroda	1990
9 Bank of Tamilnad	Indian Overseas Bank	1990
10 Bank of Thanjavur	Indian Bank	1990
11 Parur Central Bank	Bank of India	1991
12 Purbanchal Bank	Central Bank of India	1991
13 Bank of Karad Ltd.	Bank of India	1993
14 Kashinath Seth Bank	State Bank of India	1995
15 Punjab Co-operative Bank	Oriental Bank of Com.	1997
16 Bari Doab Bank Ltd.	Oriental Bank of Com.	1997
17 Bareilly Bank Ltd.	Bank of Baroda	1999
18 Sikkim Bank Limited	United Bank of India	1999
19 Benaras State Bank Ltd.	Bank of Baroda	2002
20 Nedungadi Bank Ltd.	Punjab National Bank	2003
21 SouthGujarat Local Area Bank	Bank of Baroda	2004
22 Global Trust Bank Ltd.	Oriental Bank of Com.	2004
23 United Western Bank	IDBI Bank	2007
24 Bharat Overseas Bank	Indian Overseas Bank	2007
25 YES Bank, bailed out by	State Bank of India	2020

Now Government wants privatisation: Privatisation of Banks is a negative step in a developing economy like India. Indian Public Sector Banks represent the hard-earned savings of the people. Privatisation of banks would risk their savings as many private banks in the past have collapsed and people lost their savings. Private banks do not entertain loans to poor people and for the priority sectors. Their aim is only more and more profit. Service charges are more in private banks and common people will be affected. Rural branches may be closed in the name of non-viability.

If Banks are privatised, employment opportunities will be reduced for the educated youth. And job will be on contract basis instead of permanent jobs. Job security will be affected. Reservation policy will not apply to private Banks and hence reserved category employees will be affected. Hence privatisation will only benefit the rich corporate houses who will buy these Banks. Already many corporate houses are defaulters of huge bank loans and there is a risk of such defaulters becoming owners of these Banks. Government says that some of the public sector banks are in losses and hence Government can no longer take care of them. The fact is that all public sector Banks are earning Operating Profits. Because of provision for bad loans some of the Banks are in net loss. So the priority is to take tough action on defaulters and recover the loans. But Government is encouraging more write offs and concession to corporate defaulters. Between 2010 and 2020, public sector banks have earned total operating profit of Rs. crores. Only because of provisions for bad loans, banks have been incurring net loss. Instead of taking action on these defaulters and recover the bad loans, the attempt is to privatise and hand over the Banks with public money to the big corporate houses.

Bulging Bad Loans - Who are the main culprits: Everyone knows that

the only major ill confronting our Banks today is the alarming and huge bad loans. From 2001 to 2020, public sector banks have written off bad loans to the tune of Rs. 6,94,037 crores. Everyone also knows that the main people behind these bad loans are the Corporate delinquents and wilful defaulters.

Today when we look back, we feel proud that AIBEPA signifies the unity of bank employees, AIBEPA manifests the struggles of the bank employees, AIBEPA symbolises the hopes and aspirations of the bank employees.

Platinum Jubilee Pledge: On the happy occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of AIBEPA, we the bank employees under the banner of AIBEPA take the pledge to continue our endeavour to uplift the economic well-being of the bank employees and to further ameliorate their living conditions.

We resolve to continue our struggle to enable public sector banks to play a catalytic role in the economic development of the country. We resolve to fight against attempts to privatise public sector Banks. We resolve to further improve customer services in the Banks to make banking services more people friendly.

We believe that a trade union has an important role to play in shaping up the workers and employees to discharge and play their due role as responsible citizens of this country. We believe that trade unions have a great role in fighting against all types of discriminations and injustices in the society, especially amongst the weaker sections of the society.

We promise to play this role in the days ahead.

C.H. VENKATACHALAM
GENERAL SECRETARY

RAJEN NAGAR
PRESIDENT

Vibrant Banks for a Vibrant Economy

PEOPLE'S MONEY FOR PEOPLE'S WELFARE

NATIONAL SAVINGS FOR NATION'S DEVELOPMENT

AIBEPA's Suggestions and Demands

- Strengthen Public Sector Banks
- Provide adequate capital to all the Banks
- Stop privatisation of Banks
- Open more Branches in unbanked areas
- Make Banking a Fundamental Right of people
- Take stringent measures to recover corporate bad loans
- Make willful default of bank loan a criminal offence
- RBI to publish the names of loan defaulters once in 3 months
- Make RBI more effective and accountable
- Debar loan defaulters from contesting in the Elections
- Strengthen recovery laws – review IBC
- Increase interest rate on Deposits
- Reduce service charges to common people to access banking service
- Merge all RRBs with sponsor Banks
- Revive IDBI Bank as specialist DFI in public sector
- Strengthen District and Primary Co-operative Banks
- Provide adequate staff in Branches to improve Customer Service
- Ensure functional autonomy in the administration of Banks
- EDs and MDs to be given longer terms of office
- Fill up all vacant posts of Workmen/Officer Directors in Banks

ALL INDIA BANK EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

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