



The Statesman

DIDI'S DAY

■ Landslide win for TMC, could better 2016 tally ■ BJP emerges as principal Opposition, fails to cross 3-figures ■ Left-Congress draws a blank ■ Mamata loses Nandigram to Suvendu in neck & neck fight

WINNERS

SUVENDU ADHIKARI
BJP (Nandigram)
1,756 margin

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 2 MAY

Belying pollsters and resisting possibly the largest campaign ever launched against her, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was voted to power for a third time today as results of elections to the State Assembly showed her Trinamul Congress heading for a two-thirds majority.

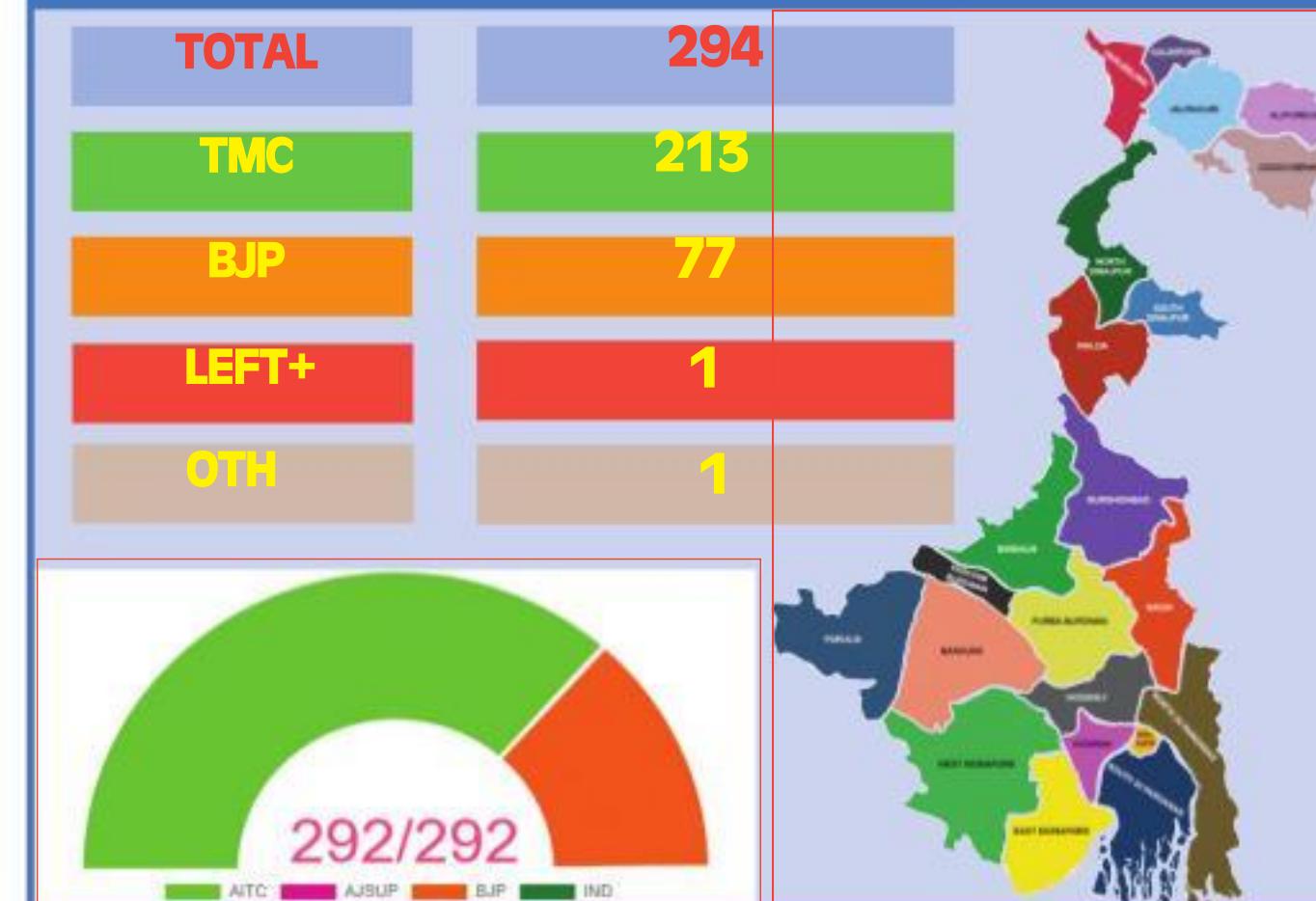
The Bharatiya Janata Party, whose leaders ironically had claimed not so long ago they would win as many seats as they ended up losing today, was relegated to a distant second place, but will be the main Opposition in the state as this election saw the eclipse of both the Congress and the Left parties.

In an election that saw the conduct of the Election Commission come under sharp focus - first, for the unprecedented eight-phase polling, then for failing to enforce Covid protocols and finally for the flip-flop at Nandigram - and was marked by a great deal of acrimony, Miss Banerjee overcame reverses caused by defections of key partymen to show that her grip on a majority of the state's voters has not loosened.

The results also suggest the Trinamul Congress learnt from the reverses it suffered in the 2019 parliamentary election, and addressed some of the weaknesses that saw it concede ground two years ago.

According to the Election Commission of India, the Trinamul Congress had won as many as 153 seats and was leading in 58 more, as of 10 p.m. on Sunday, while the BJP had won 47 and was leading in 32 for a total of 79.

WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2021



But the joy of the landslide win was marred by conflicting reports of her loss by a narrow margin in Nandigram to former aide Suvendu Adhikari, and of a recount, neither of which were confirmed by the Election Commission.

If the BJP managed to make its presence felt, emerging as the principal Opposition party, the actual results were a bitter let-down for the party, as Prime Minister Modi had staked his prestige in declaring his party was set to win over 200 seats after the first few phases of the unprecedented eight-phase election.

Modi and Amit Shah campaigned extensively throughout the state spending almost every other day of a one-and-a-half month long bruising campaign trying to breach

the TMC's Fortress Bengal.

On the other hand, the political presence of the constituents of the Samyukta Morcha, namely the Left parties and the Congress, which have drawn a blank, has shrunk as never before.

The results speak for themselves. Trinamul Congress has done exceedingly well in South 24-Parganas winning 30 seats out of 31. Trinamul lost its Bhanger seat to a ISF candidate. However, Trinamul Congress won all 11 Kolkata seats.

The party did exceedingly well also in Malda, Murshidabad, North and South Dinajpur where except Murshidabad it fared badly in 2019 Lok Sabha poll.

But the TMC has lost a considerable share of Matua

votes in Ranaghat Parliamentary constituency of Nadia, where they voted for the BJP, like they did in 2019.

However, in North 24-Parganas, the Trinamul has recovered and won 25 out of 33 seats.

In North Bengal, BJP won handsomely in Jalpaiguri and Siliguri, with sitting minister Goutam Deb losing to his BJP rival in Debagram-Phulbari.

As a political commentator pointed out, that it was a master stroke for Mamata Banerjee to contest from Nandigram which, despite her own loss there, helped TMC to gain all four seats in Jhargram and most of the seats in East and West Midnapore, Purulia, Bankura and East Burdwan which it lost in 2019.

In Birbhum too TMC got 10 seats out of 11. (SEE ALSO P 4,5)



Mamata Banerjee during a Press meet at her Kalighat residence in Kolkata on Sunday.

SNS

TMC victory has saved not only Bengal, but also India: Mamata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 2 MAY

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today congratulated the people of Bengal for the landslide victory of Trinamul Congress, asserting that her party's win has saved not only West Bengal but also India.

She also requested her party workers not to indulge in victory rallies, and promised that the party would organise a huge rally at Brigade Parade Ground once the Covid crisis is over.

She said, "Our first priority is to conquer Covid and as we have won the election, I'm hopeful to win the battle against Covid with the people of Bengal. I will again write to Prime Minister about medicines and vaccines and if I don't get them I will again



TMC activists celebrate their win in Kolkata. BHASKAR MALLICK

She said, "Election Commission is very rude to us. We have repeatedly told the election commission about how the BJP is looting votes in Nandigram. They have declared me a winner and now after an hour they are declaring something else. When the entire state is giving one verdict, why will Nandigram differ? We will move the court."

She said her party had to fight against all odds, all Central agencies, the Prime Minister, Union ministers, chief ministers from BJP-led states who were frequenting the state like daily commuters.

"My junior party colleague coined two slogans *Khela Hobe* and *Joy Bangla* and the game was played successfully. I will distribute 50,000 footballs to all clubs," she said.

LOSERS

BABUL SUPRIYO
BJP (Tollygunje)
loses to
AROOP BISWAS (TMC)

GAUTAM DEB
TMC (Dabgram-Fulbari)
loses to BJP's
Sikha Chatterjee

LOCKET CHATTERJEE
BJP (Chunchura)
loses to Asit Majumdar
of TMC

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 38 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 59% Min: 26%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 39.5°C (+1) Min: 24.8°C (0)
SUN RISES SUN SETS
05:38 hrs 18:58 hrs
MOON RISES MOON SETS
01:33 hrs 11:19 hrs

THUMBNAILS



During a partial lockdown due to surge in Covid cases. In Kolkata on Sunday. BISWAJIT GHOSHAL

Telangana minister dropped: TRS leader Eatala Rajender who held the health portfolio was dropped from the Telangana Cabinet after a preliminary inquiry report by district collector confirmed that the charges of land grabbing were true. Chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao who advised the governor to drop the minister has already assumed the health portfolio as the state grapples with second wave of Covid 19. Mr Rajender was a minister without a portfolio for a day before the inquiry report was submitted.

Final troops pullout from Afghanistan begins: The final phase of ending America's "forever war" in Afghanistan after 20 years formally began Saturday, with the withdrawal of the last US and NATO troops planned by the end of summer. President Joe Biden had set 1 May as the official start of the withdrawal of the remaining forces about 2,500-3,500 US troops and about 7,000 NATO soldiers.

LDF to return in Kerala, BJP in Assam; DMK eyes comeback in TN

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/GUWAHATI/CHENNAI, 2 MAY

The alliance may be successful in sending over 70 representatives to the 126 member-Assembly in the final outcome as the counting of votes, started at 8 a.m. on Sunday, continues.

The BJP's allies, namely Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) may win in 15 seats together, whereas the Opposition Congress-led grand alliance comprising All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Bodoland People's Front (BPF), Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) etc is understood to be limited to 55 seats. Incumbent State chief minister and

Congress party in the state. The alliance may be successful in sending over 70 representatives to the 126 member-Assembly in the final outcome as the counting of votes, started at 8 a.m. on Sunday, continues.

Senior BJP leader Sarbananda Sonowal has won the Majuli Assembly constituency, whereas powerful minister Himanta Biswa Sarma emerged successful in Jalukbari seat.

Kazhagam (DMK) is all set to form the next government in Tamil Nadu leading in almost 148 seats of the 234 Assembly segments in the state when the reports last

came in. The ruling AIADMK combine, which includes BJP was leading only in 81 seats.

DMK president MK Stalin, chief minister E K Palaniswami, Stalin's son and DMK youth leader Udhayanithi Stalin, veteran DMK leader Durai Murugan are some of the prominent leaders who won their battles. Meanwhile, MNM leader Kamal Haasan was leading in the Coimbatore South constituency.

Single-phase polling was held on 6 April for 234 seats to elect the 16th Tamil Nadu Assembly, besides a by-poll to Kanyakumari Lok Sabha seat. Any party needs to win 118 seats to form a government.

In Kerala, breaking the state's four-decade-old trend of alternating between

the CPI-M-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, the LDF has secured a second term in the state.

The CPI-M led alliance has won 99 seats of the 140 Assembly seats. It has repeated its triumph in the 2006 Assembly elections when it had won 99 seats.

In the outgoing Assembly, the LDF has 91 seats. The Opposition Congress-led UDF has secured 41 segments.

The BJP, which had opened its account in the state last time with one seat and had expected to win at least half a dozen seats, drew a blank this time. Mr Vijayan, Opposition leaders Ramesh Chennithala and former chief minister Oomen Chandy have won their respective constituencies. (See P5)

'Lives at risk, major tragedy may occur': Delhi hospitals send oxygen shortage SOS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Battling an acute shortage of oxygen, some hospitals in Delhi on Sunday sent out desperate SOS calls to authorities to replenish their dwindling stocks, with one healthcare facility even "crying out" to the government to shift out its patients.

Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Malviya Nagar on Sunday sounded an alarm about their depleting stocks around noon, saying 50 people, including four newborns, were "at risk". An official of the hospital said in the afternoon there

are around 80 patients, on oxygen cylinders from a private vendor. "It has become a daily fire-fight in the absence of a continuous supply. We require around 125 oxygen cylinders a day," he said.

The hospital said it received 20 oxygen cylinders around 1:30 pm with the help of government authorities. "45 COVID patients admitted. Need liquid oxygen supply by 5 PM. Help!" it tweeted.

"CRY FOR HELP: Received only 5 #oxygen cylinders after running around the entire day, not more than 60 mins left to save lives of more than 250 including those suffering from Covid-19, at the hospital. The hospital does not have a liquid oxygen storage tank and depends

patients," a tweet was posted from the hospital's handle.

Dr Deepali Gupta from Triton Hospital in Kalkaji said they have been struggling to arrange oxygen for their neonatal intensive care unit. Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research also took to social media seeking help from authorities. "45 COVID patients admitted. Need liquid oxygen supply by 5 PM. Help!" it tweeted.

On Saturday, 12 Covid-18 patients and a senior doctor, had died at south Delhi's Batra Hospital after the facility ran out of medical oxygen for around 80 minutes in the afternoon.

Record 3,689 daily Covid deaths in India; Modi reviews situation

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

A record 3,689 daily Covid-19 fatalities pushed India's death toll to 2,15,542, while the infection count reached to 1,95,57,457 with 39,488 more people being confirmed positive for the disease, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed various measures to augment human resources for effective management of the Covid situation and possible steps discussed include incentivising students and pass-outs of medical and nursing courses to join the pandemic duty, sources said. The final

details are likely to be announced on Monday, they added. Meanwhile, Haryana and Odisha joined several other states that have been forced to reimpose lockdown or similar curbs in a desperate bid to check the surge amid a grievous shortage of hospital beds, medicines and oxygen for patients. Delhi sees 407 fresh deaths, 20,394 cases. As it continues to be swept by an unprecedented public health emergency in the face of a Covid tsunami and unrelenting crises of medical oxygen, hospital beds, and essential medicines, Delhi today recorded 407 Covid fatalities and 20,394 infections with a positivity rate of 28.33 per cent. (SEE P2)

FACT FILE	
TOTAL CASES	1,95,57,457
ACTIVE CASES	33,49,644
NEW CASES	3,92,488
NEW RECOVERIES	3,07,865
TOTAL DEATHS	2,15,542

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M. SUNDAY 02 MAY 2021



It is not my defeat alone; we could not perform well across the state

ASOK BHATTACHARYA, SENIOR CPI-M LEADER

FOLLOWING HIS DEFEAT IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN SILIGURI

Covid vaccination for 18-44 to begin in Delhi from today

90L in this category'll be eligible; 5 vaccination booths each set up at 77 schools to expand capacity

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The third and the largest phase of vaccination, under which beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group will be given jabs against coronavirus, will begin in the national capital — which has been reeling under a Covid tsunami that has overwhelmed its healthcare system, hospitals, and crematoriums and graveyards for the past few weeks — from tomorrow.

Around 90 lakh people in this category will be eligible for the Covid shots in Delhi. Five vaccination booths each have been set up at 77 schools for the inoculation exercise, an official said on Sunday.

The government set up vaccination centres at schools to accommodate a high number of beneficiaries, he said.

At present, jabs are being given to those aged above 45 at around 500 centres in the national capital.

Pre-registration will be mandatory for beneficiaries



in the 18-45 age group and there will be no walk-ins for this category for now, the official said.

Three big private hospital chains Apollo, Fortis and Max have already started vaccinating people in the 18-44 age group at limited centres from Saturday.

The Delhi government has placed orders for 1.34 crore vaccine doses with manufac-

tures which will be delivered over the next three months. Of these, 67 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine are being procured from Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII).

Officials had earlier said the first tranche of three lakh doses would reach Delhi in the first week of May.

Altogether about 1.5 crore people are targeted to be vaccinated in Delhi, of which 32

lakh have received at least one dose so far, they said.

The Delhi government is taking the help of the voters' list to ascertain the number of eligible beneficiaries. According to it, there are around 60 lakh people aged above 45 years.

A government official had earlier said that inoculation of the 18-45 age group is likely to have a moderate start and will be ramped up gradually. Vaccine will be delivered to the city government in phases. Private hospitals will have to procure vaccines directly from manufacturers, he had said.

The Centre will continue to provide vaccine for those aged above 45 years.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had on 30 April told an online press briefing that the Covid vaccination process for people in the 18-44 years age group, which was to begin from 1 May, would get delayed by a day or two as Delhi did not have vaccine supplies required for it.

The CM had said the Covid

vaccines might be received in a couple of days from their manufacturing companies and then the exercise of vaccination of 18-44 age group — who get registered for it — will get underway.

Kejriwal had then said that the Delhi government was constantly in touch with the vaccine supplying companies. Delhi has to get 67 lakh doses each of Covishield and Covaxine vaccines over the next three months. The government has sought the supply schedule from the companies concerned.

"We are trying our best so that within the next three months the entire population of Delhi gets vaccinated. We have formulated a plan and even the infrastructure needed for this is in place. Now it will depend on the two companies as to how swiftly they provide us with the vaccine. We aim to vaccinate everyone in the next three months if a sufficient quantity of vaccines is supplied by the companies," Kejriwal had said.

Delhi horror rages on: 407 fresh Covid fatalities, over 20K cases

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

11,94,946 cases, of which over 10,85 lakh have recovered. The death toll due to the viral disease stands at 16,966, the bulletin said.

The fresh cases were detected out of a relatively lesser number of tests — 71,997 tests, including 17,510 rapid-antigen tests. The city currently has 92,290 active cases, the bulletin stated.

Altogether 24,444 patients recovered from coronavirus during the last 24 hours.

Of 21,483 Covid beds in various hospitals in the city, 1347 were vacant, the bulletin claimed. A total of 50,742 patients are recovering under home isolation, it said.

A total of 49,633 vaccine doses were administered in a day and included 28,775 who received the first dose and 20,858 who got the second dose.

The number of containment zones in the city has jumped to 42,098 from yesterday's 39,556, the bulletin added.

Ambulance driver held for overcharging

PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Delhi Police has arrested an ambulance driver for allegedly charging Rs 14,000 to ferry the body of a person who died of COVID-19 to the crematorium, officials said on Sunday.

Kandhi Lal was charging the exorbitant amount for a distance of six kilometres, they said.

On Saturday, after receiving a tip-off about the driver, the police laid a trap.

"Constable Mahesh called the ambulance driver and asked him to ferry the body of a person who died of COVID-19 to Nigam Bodh Ghat from NuLife Hospital. "The ambulance driver said it would cost him Rs 14,000 and sent a slip to give the money," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (north-west) Gurjbal Singh Sidhu said, adding that the distance between the two destinations was six kilometres.

The ambulance driver was found indulging in overcharging, police said. A case was registered and 45-year-old Lal, a resident of Jamuna Bazar, was arrested. Efforts are being made to track down and arrest his accomplice, police added.

'Lives at risk, tragedy may befall': Delhi hospitals continue to send SOS for O2

PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Battling an acute shortage of oxygen, some hospitals in Delhi on Sunday sent out desperate SOS calls to authorities to replenish their dwindling stocks, with one health-care facility even requesting the government to shift out its patients.

Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Malviya Nagar on Sunday sounded an alarm about their depleting stocks around noon, saying 50 people, including four newborns, were "at risk".

The hospital does not have a liquid oxygen storage tank and depends on oxygen cylinders from a private vendor.

"It has become a daily fire-fight in the absence of a continuous supply. We require around 125 oxygen cylinders a day," the official said.

The hospital said it received 20 oxygen cylinders around 1:30 pm with the help of government authorities.

Aakash Health Care in Dwarka appealed to government authorities to shift patients to other facilities so that they can be saved.

"CRYFOR HELP: Received only 5 oxygen cylinders after running around the entire day, not more than 60 mins left to save lives of more than 250 patients," a tweet posted from the hospital's handle read.

In the evening, Yateesh Wahaal, CEO of Vimhans Hospital in South Delhi, requested urgent support to save precious lives.

He said the hospital supplier has been changed as per a government order.

The new supplier is refus-

ing to supply and doesn't have stock for next 7 days to meet our requirement.

Around 135 patients are on oxygen support. Of these, 94 are in the ICU, he said.

Sitaran Bhartia Institute of Science and Research also took to social media seeking help from authorities.

"Forty-five COVID patients admitted. Need liquid oxygen supply by 5 PM. Help!!" it tweeted. At 6:10 pm, the hospital tweeted it received emergency oxygen cylinders that are expected to provide some air for 2-3 hours. Hanging by a thin thread. Need LMO on an emergency basis.

The Hakim Abdul Hamid Centenary Hospital, where 110 patients are admitted, sounded an alarm about depleting oxygen supplies around 2 pm.

"The city government is responsible for this situation. The supplies have become erratic ever since the government has taken over," Dr Sunil Kohli, the head of the department of medicine, said.

Several hospitals in Delhi continue to grapple with a shortage of oxygen, as coronavirus cases continue to spike every passing day.

The Delhi government has been demanding 976 metric tonnes of oxygen from the Centre against the existing allotted 490 MT quota.

On Friday, the city administration received just 312 MT, an official said.

According to official data, Delhi had got 305 MT of oxygen on April 25, followed by 408 MT on April 26, 398 MT on April 27, 431 MT on April 28 and 409 MT on April 29.

Delhi on Sunday recorded 407 COVID-19 deaths and over 20,000 cases with a positivity rate of 28.33 per cent, according to the latest health bulletin.

PIL in HC seeks permission to companies for sale of Remdesivir in domestic market

PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

A PIL in the Delhi High Court has urged it to direct the Centre to permit sale of Remdesivir, used in COVID-19 treatment, by those pharmaceutical companies which manufacture it solely for the purpose of export so that the drug is easily available in the market for needy patients.

The petition, which is listed for hearing on Monday before a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh, has said that there are more than 25 companies in India which manufacture the medicine, but only six to eight of them are permitted to sell it in the domestic market and the rest were producing it for exports alone.

The petitioner, Dincur Bajaj, has contended that since export of Remdesivir has been banned by the Centre, the companies which were producing it for export be permitted to manufacture and sell it in the domestic market.

"It is pertinent to mention that the scarcity of Remdesivir causing its extensive black-marketing and the black marketers are charging prices up to Rs 1,00,000 per vial, due to its non-availability," Bajaj, who is a lawyer and the Joint Secretary of the Delhi High Court Bar Association, has said in his plea.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli directed the government to book those persons found hoarding or black-marketing medicines and equipment related to COVID-19 and be brought before the court for taking independent contempt action against them.

Ensure Covid medicines, equipment not sold above MRP: HC to Delhi govt

PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Sunday directed the Delhi government to ensure that medicines and equipment like oxygen cylinders and concentrators needed for COVID-19 treatment not be sold above the maximum retail price (MRP).

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli directed the government to book those persons found hoarding or black-marketing medicines and equipment related to COVID-19 and be brought before the court for taking independent contempt action against them.

The direction was issued

after the court was informed by some lawyers that there was rampant overcharging of medicines and equipment.

Subsequently, senior advocate Rahul Mehra, appearing for the Delhi government, told the court that Delhi Police has set up a helpline -- 33469900 -- for receiving complaints about malpractices like overcharging for ambulances, hoarding or black-marketing of medicines, equipment.

He urged the court to direct that the helpline be widely publicised so that people can inform authorities about such unscrupulous activities and action can be taken against the same.

Taking note of the submis-

sion, the court directed the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) and police to give wide publicity to the helpline number.

The issue regarding overcharging, hoarding and black marketing of medicines and equipment related to COVID-19 was brought to the attention of the bench during hearing of an application moved by the Centre for recall of the court's May 1 direction to it to supply the entire oxygen allocated to Delhi.

The court had also warned of initiating contempt action against officials concerned, if the oxygen was not supplied, and the Centre wanted recall of that observation as well.

Bail granted to accused, citing day's delay in reporting minor's rape to police

PTI
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

A Delhi Court has granted bail to a man arrested for allegedly raping a 14-year-old girl, noting that there was a delay of one day in reporting the matter to the police and the probe was already complete in the case.

Additional Sessions Judge Raj Rani granted bail to accused Puran Singh Bisht on furnishing a bail bond of Rs 20,000 with one surety of the like amount, on contentions that he will permanently shift 15-20 kilometres away from the place where the victim is residing.

The applicant is in judicial custody since January 27, 2021 and chargesheet has already been filed. There is a delay of one day in reporting the matter to the police. In view of the totality of the facts and circumstances of the case, the applicant is admitted to bail on furnishing of bail bonds in a sum of Rs 20,000 with one surety in the like amount, the judge said.

Thirty-four-year-old Bisht was arrested on January 26 under Sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 4 (penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act. During the hearing on Bisht's bail application, the counsel for the accused submitted that his client and the family of the victim reside in the same building. In 2019, the father of the victim took a loan of Rs 1.20 lakh from Bisht. Applicant had requested several times to the father of the victim to return the same but he always delayed the repayment of the loan. Advocate Prateek Mehta, representing Bisht, told the court.

According to Mehta, when the applicant demanded his money from the father of the girl on January 26, he started quarrelling and threatened him and falsely implicated the accused in the case.

The Statesman

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RAY'S BIRTH CENTENARY



Satyajit Ray, whose birth centenary was on 2 May, not only strode the world of cinema like a colossus and brought global recognition to Indian films but was also a distinguished polymath and perhaps the last emblem of the best in Bengal Renaissance. He dabbled successfully in commercial art, graphic designing, advertising, illustration, calligraphy, Indian and Western classical music and, of course, filmmaking. He was a lyricist, cinematographer, screenplay writer, pianist, music director and also a prolific writer of short stories, science fiction, detective novels (under the legendary Feluda series) meant for children from eight years to eighty, as he once said, and much else. He also edited and published Sandesh, a children's magazine, for many years along with his aunt Leela Mazumdar. His multi-faceted genius found ultimate expression in his oeuvre of 365 films, including documentaries, from 1955 through 1992, the year he passed away in Kolkata at the age of 71. What is also noteworthy is the fact that he roamed in the services of some of our greatest contemporary musicians like Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Vilayat Khan, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Begum Akhtar, Kishore Kumar and a few others for his films. He was awarded, among others honours, the Bharat Ratna, Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Legion of Honour (France) and the prestigious Oscar Award for Life Time Achievement. Satyajit Ray was no stranger to Delhi. Apart from depicting Platform No. 1 of New Delhi Railway Station in his much-acclaimed film 'Nayak' (The Hero) with the iconic Uttam Kumar, which was shot on the

Covid Lockdowns rerun

The Covid-induced Lockdowns are back. They need not necessarily be days without hope, or of just boredom, within windows and doors. They can be periods of discovery of one's self, or of the environment one lives in. These periods have already been used by people for awakening their creativity and to suppress Covid-19 negativity. No doubt, they provide sufficient opportunity to open frontiers of achievements on new planes. In Delhi, the last two weeks of the Lockdown, and the week-end curfew before that, have been so far shorter than the total Lockdown during 2020. But working from home for over a year and more has not been less than a "lockdown experience" for most people. Stuck at one place for an indefinite period, people had to go for a long period without the freedom they were used to. To beat the blues of isolated living, people resorted to many ways to keep their body and mind agile. Beginning with self, in Delhi, many believed they could start with their book collections. They searched all the books they had read, and spent time reorganising their collections. The activity gives not just pride, but revives memories of when the books were bought, and what interesting things they contained. Away from the workplace, where one is used to frequent praise, even on small counts, the neatly organised bookshelves have great capacity to lift spirits.

The work from home saved people much precious time that was lost in travelling either on public transport or by private vehicles. In the time gained, many in the national capital have been going through their clothing stocks too. The discoveries are surprising that many of the clothes were never worn. Now, home-stuck, there was



plenty of time to try and wear all kinds of dresses without worrying about how they appeared. The formal dresses were given some time to rest. Staying at home, one did lose something, but not without gaining something in return.

The travel time saved was now available for experiment, and to catch up with things one was not doing. After spending time on Covid updates, one could introspect on what more to do. For example, one could think of

taking better care of oneself. There is no limitation of physical exercises one can do at home. A good beginning can be made during the limited shutdowns, and then ways can be found to continue them later. Staying at home, one did find time to innovate and invent. Many took to the kitchen. Now there was no hurry to pack up tiffin and rush out. One could get cooking tips from others, read food columns in newspapers or watch videos.

The short videos uploaded by people on social media confirm that there was much culinary creativity waiting to be explored by the people. Yoga and meditation have been other pursuits people have engaged in fruitfully. Now there was no excuse about the shortage of time to practice Yoga in the morning, as there was no leaving home for office because of the Lockdown.

Television channels have been frequently showing the

basic protocol of Yoga prepared by national experts. Delhiites have been good at learning from them and admitted doing so too.

The protocol is effective in keeping basic health in the sound frame, they realised. Many have taken to brief meditation exercises too.

People realised meditation could be an effective tool to get rid of feelings of fear, worry and anxiety during the Covid times. The epidemic of fear spread faster than the pan-

demic itself. Meditation can help fight this. The Lockdown does provide some peace; there are no shrieking noises from silencer-less bikes running on roads, just below your windows. Small packages of the ancient method of keeping calm and focusing on the strengths within oneself, produce energy of a different kind.

Instead of reacting in panic, one could gain emotional strength to deal with the problems objectively, many observed.

TAILPIECE

Never imagined one will have to stand in long queues outside a crematorium to perform the last rites of their near and dear ones," lamented a distraught young man as he waited for his turn to take a relative's body inside the Lodhi Road Crematorium.

Contributed by: Deepak Razdan, Bhaskar Roy, Rakesh Kumar and Ashok Tuteja

India

Covid: HP officials asked to ensure O₂, drugs, beds

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 2 MAY

Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur has directed the officials to ensure the supply of logistics like oxygen, drugs etc for effective fight against the Covid pandemic.

A state government official said Thakur gave these directions after a review meeting held last evening on the progress made by the committees notified recently to cope with the Covid-19 situation in the state.

"The CM had also directed to increase the number of beds for Covid patients wherever necessary and home isolation patients should be taken care of adequately."

"As per the guidelines all markets, shops, commercial establishments including malls, gyms, sports complexes, swimming pools etc will remain closed on Saturdays and Sundays till 10 May except shops of essential items and pharmacies etc."

However, restaurants, dhabas, hotels will operate in accordance with the SOPs and in adherence to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour," he added.

TIPPERS TALE

There is fear in the air ever since the country has been overwhelmed by a fresh, devastating wave of Covid-19. The situation is far worse than what it was last year. Corona cases are being registered in record numbers every day. To contain the spread of the deadly virus, there is no option but to declare Lockdowns. Last year, the fear was also there but the cases were relatively lesser, while this year the

cases are at highest-ever levels. Unfortunately, the casual behaviour of the people over the last 2-3 months is costing human lives now. Hospitals are flooded with patients while crematoriums are unable to cope with the number of bodies they are receiving. One does not know when the situation will improve. But for many, liquor is more important than anything else even during this unprecedented situation. People were seen forming long queues outside liquor

shops in the national capital as soon as the Delhi government declared a week-long Lockdown. Many of them were not even following Corona guidelines like social distancing or wearing of masks properly. News channels soon started playing footage of the people stocking liquor bottles and jokes started doing rounds on social media too. But how does it matter to those who must buy liquor at any cost? A colleague said one of his relatives failed to get liquor

at any of the shops near his house, forcing him to dial his friends to request them to buy the booze for him too. Another friend said he had visited three shops but failed to get his desired brand as it was out of stock. Another friend was cursing a policeman because he forced the closure of the liquor shop since the crowd there went out of control. All this was happening when people were struggling to get oxygen or beds for Corona patients in hospitals in the capital.

HP logs 750 pc spike in Covid fatality in April

The state also sees 600 pc surge in corona cases; 35,682 cases and 449 deaths logged in April

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 2 MAY

The second wave of Coronavirus has become more lethal in Himachal Pradesh with the state recording a 600 per cent spike in Covid cases in the month of April with a 750 per cent spike in fatality.

he state recorded 35,682

Covid cases and 449 deaths in the month of April with a positivity rate increasing to highest of 14 per cent as compared to 4,960 cases and 21 deaths in March.

Earlier, the highest number of Covid cases in the state were recorded in November last year when 18,459 persons tested positive for the viral disease with 323 deaths.

There are a total of 19,763 active cases in the state and the recent surge in Covid cases have pushed the recovery rate in the state to below 80 per cent as compared to only 318 active cases as on 28 February with a recovery rate of around 98 per cent.

HP National Health Mission's mission director Nipun Jindal said the total Covid cases have increased to 1.03 lakh and

as many as 80,534 people had been cured of the disease till date with 1,537 deaths. "The state government is taking several steps for prevention, containment and management of Covid-19.

The most challenging situation is for the patients who had co-morbidities and higher risk of morbidity and mortality due to the virus," he added. He further stated that many of the Covid positive patients were under home isolation and they can contact their mapped medical officer or helpline no 104 (Toll free) for medical advice.

"The state government is further facilitating the persons in home isolation through the e-sanjeevani OPD platform and it is bridging the gap between people, physicians and health systems and enabling everyone, especially chronic symptomatic patients, to stay at home and communicate with physicians," he said. He claimed that 22 per cent of the entire population has been covered so far under the Covid vaccination drive and around 76 per cent of 45 years and above population have been vaccinated with the first dose.

The Covid vaccination of the age group 18-44 will be

started once Covid doses are received in the state.

He urged all the remaining 45 years and above people to get themselves vaccinated as early as possible.

"Those people who are due for 2nd dose vaccination which is essential to be taken after a gap of 4-8 weeks from the first dose should also get their vaccination when due," he said while stating that there was no shortage of vaccine for this age group.

He appealed the people to abide by Covid appropriate behaviour even after completing 2 doses of COVID vaccination.

Himachal launches scheme to rejuvenate water resources

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 2 MAY

With the aim to preserve water resources that are on the verge of extinction, the Jai Ram Thakur-led Himachal Pradesh government has launched the 'Parvat Dhara' scheme to rejuvenate water sources and recharge aquifers in the state.

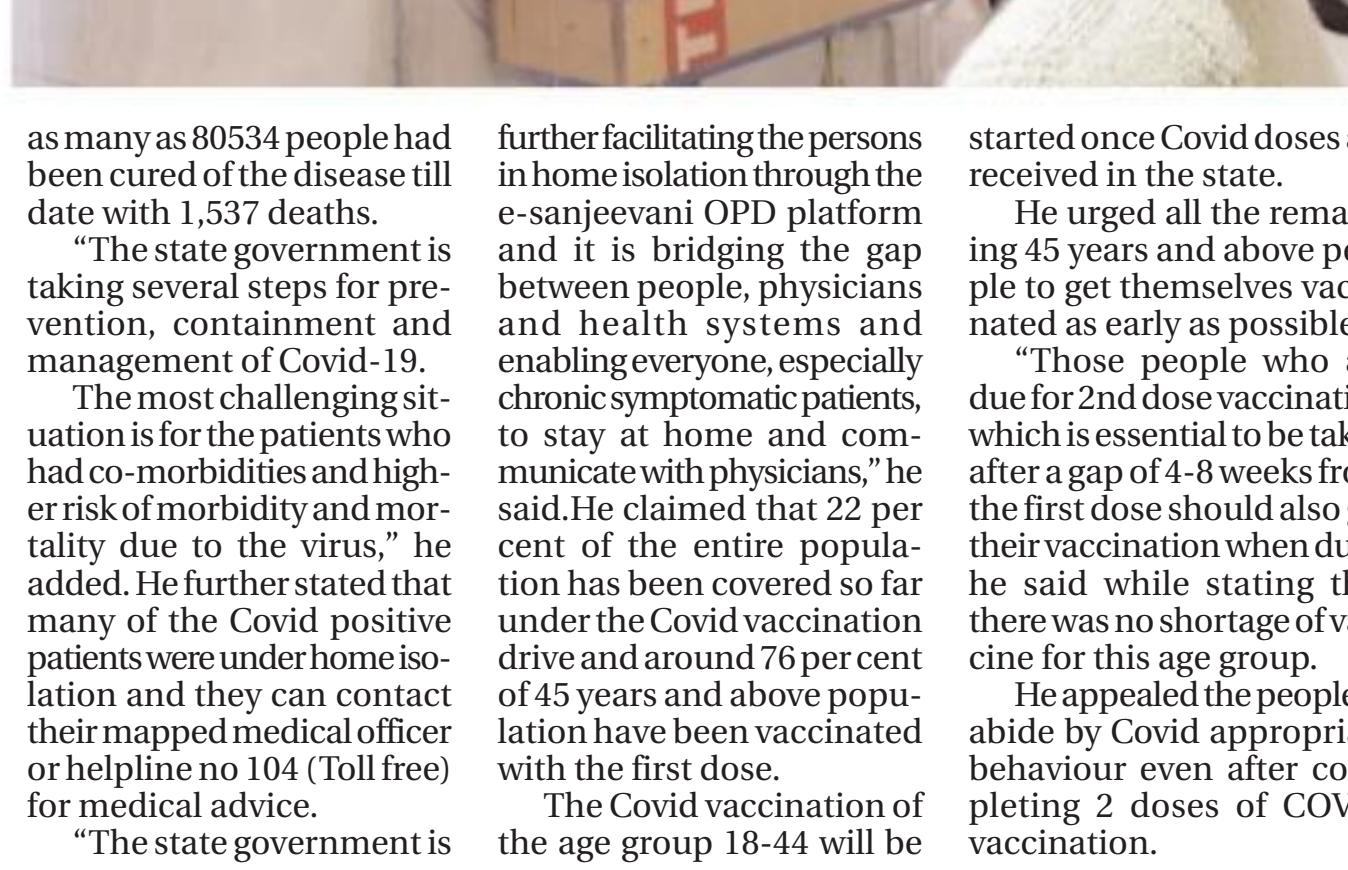
The scheme is being implemented by the Forest department in forest areas with an expenditure of Rs 20 crore and it is in 10 districts of the state except tribal districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti.

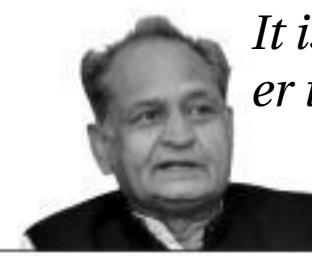
A state government official said the Jal Shakti department was working as the nodal department under the scheme in coordination with the Forest department as about two-third land in the state falls under the department.

The scheme lays emphasis on rejuvenation of water sources that are on the verge of extinction with the Forest department starting construction of storage structures.

Water conservation, construction and maintenance of reservoirs and management are also being done under the scheme and it will not only ensure rejuvenation of water sources but would also provide water for irrigation during summers," he added.

The official said in 2020-21, the Forest department started work on pilot basis





It is our endeavour that the Centre and state governments work together to fight against Covid-19.

RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT

APPEALING TO ALL TO RISE ABOVE POLITICS TO FIGHT THE PANDEMIC

india

THUMBNAILS



Family members wait to fill their cylinders with medical oxygen outside an oxygen filling agency, in New Delhi, on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

Toxic gas leak at Bhiwandi: A toxic gas leaked from some cylinders kept at an open ground and spread in Bhiwandi township in Maharashtra's Thane district, a civic official said on Sunday. There was no report of any casualty. ■ PTI

Randhir Kapoor out of ICU: Actor Randhir Kapoor, undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai, on Sunday said he has been moved out of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The 74-year-old actor informed he will be discharged soon. ■ PTI

Fire at ink factory: One person died after a major fire broke out at an ink manufacturing unit at Turbhe in Navi Mumbai on Sunday, an official said. It took around eight hours to bring the blaze under control. ■ PTI

Man held with 58 vials of Remdesivir: A man has been arrested with 58 vials of Remdesivir he was trying to sell at exorbitant rates in Ahmedabad given the high demand of the drug in the treatment of Covid-19 patients, police said on Sunday. Accused Rahul Patel had procured these injections from Hyderabad. ■ PTI

Saffron dent in CPM den; Deb loses Dabgram

SANKHA GHOSH
SILIGURI, 2 MAY

Results of the Assembly election votes counted today showed the BJP breaching the Left citadel in Siliguri, while the significant inroad of the saffron brigade also triggered the defeat of outgoing tourism minister Gautam Deb in the nearby Dabgram-Fulbari Assembly constituency.

CPI-M heavyweight and former Siliguri mayor Asok Bhattacharya also tasted defeat in Siliguri. One thing common about Mr Bhattacharya and Mr Deb's elections results was that they were defeated by their former party colleagues, who contested this election on BJP tickets.

Five-time MLA and former urban development minister, Mr Bhattacharya lost to his former protégé and BJP candidate Shankar Ghosh, who defected to the saffron camp only on 12 March while Sikha Chatterjee, who switched over to the BJP in 2018, beat Mr Deb. In a spectacular slay, the BJP also snatched the Matigara-Naxalbari and Phansidewa Assembly constituencies from the Congress.

Though the BJP won all the three Assembly seats in Siliguri Sub-Division, it seemed that the TMC gained strength, especially as the outgoing MLAs of both the CPI-M and Congress came down to the third position.

Shankar Ghosh bagged 89,370 votes against TMC candidate Prof Om Prakash Mishra's 53,784, while 28835 votes went to Mr Bhattacharya's kitty.

Mr Bhattacharya not only faced defeat, but also stood in the third position against Prof Mishra, who, despite being labeled as an "outsider," secured the second position.

Snigdhendu Bhattacharya, the author of *Mission Bengal: A Saffron Experiment*, a book highlighting the BJP's rise in Bengal, said, "Asok Bhattacharya's defeat, rather standing third, does not reflect his personal defeat. It reflects a larger political trend in which the Trinamul Congress emerged as the prime choice of not only the voters who were happy with the Trinamul Congress rule, but also of those who simply wanted to stop the BJP's progress."

Though the results here sprang a surprise to many, some political observers, however, said the BJP successfully worked on the massive lead that the party had

Govt, Cong spar over oxygen supply to foreign missions

IYC says they supplied oxygen cylinders to the Philippines and NZ missions after receiving requests

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Narendra Modi government and the Congress were involved in a war of words today over the supply of oxygen cylinders by the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) to two foreign missions in New Delhi.

The IYC said they supplied oxygen cylinders to the Philippines and New Zealand missions after receiving requests from the two missions.

After Indian Youth Congress president B V Srinivas tweeted visual of his party workers at the Philippines Embassy with cylinders, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted: "While I thank @IYC for its stellar efforts, as an Indian citizen I'm stunned that the youth wing of the opposition party is attending to SOS calls from foreign embassies. Is the MEA sleeping (External Affairs Minister) @DrSJaishankar?"

Jaisankar responded swiftly: "MEA checked with the Philippines Embassy. This was an unsolicited supply as they had no Covid cases. Clearly for cheap publicity by you know who. Giving away cylinders like this when there are people in desperate need of oxygen is simply appalling. Jairamji, MEA never sleeps; our people know across the world. MEA also never fakes; we know who does."

Meanwhile, the New Zealand High Commission in a tweet sought help from Srinivas and the Youth Congress for an oxygen cylinder.

When Youth Congress workers reached the mission, Srinivas tweeted: "We have reached New Zealand High Commission with oxygen cylinders. Please open the gates and save a soul on time."

The New Zealand mission, meanwhile, deleted the



A patient gets free oxygen, provided by a Sikh organisation at Indrapuram Gurudwara, in Ghaziabad, on Sunday. (Right) First 'Oxygen Express' with five tankers for Telangana from Odisha, arrives at Sanathnagar in Hyderabad on Sunday. ■ AGENCY



More emergency medical supplies reach India as nation fights 2nd wave

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The United States, France, Taiwan and other nations rushed more emergency medical supplies to India during the past 24 hours as the country continued its fight against the second wave of Coronavirus.

The USAID's third plane of critical relief arrived in India to deliver life-saving oxygen supplies and nearly 900,000 N95 masks to help stop the spread of Covid-19. "The American people continue to support the Indian people, just as India did for us," the US Embassy tweeted.

France has sent 28 tonnes of, including eight oxygen generators, to India. These oxygen generators can produce medical oxygen from ambient



air and support a 250-bed hospital for years.

To express strong friendship with India in its fight against Covid-19, Taiwan has delivered critical medical supplies to India. The first batch of 150 oxygen concentrator and 500 oxygen cylinders arrived in New Delhi this morning. Taiwan said it was committed to providing necessary assistance to the people of India in time of need.

The Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) said more batches of medical equipment and supplies will be airlifted to India soon.

Taiwan's deployment of medical supplies is testament to the close collaboration and partnership across multiple agencies on both sides. It also reflects the robust relief efforts and contributions made by the government and people of Taiwan to bring humanitarian relief to India," it said.

Romania, on behalf of European Union, United Kingdom, US, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, UAE, South Korea and Bhutan have already come forward to provide assistance to India in procuring tonnes of liquid medical oxygen, transporting mobile oxygen plants, drugs, and vaccines against the second wave of the pandemic.

This would ensure requisite medical oxygen across states which are suffering from oxygen shortages.



Sanitisation drive in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ BISWAJIT GHOSH

7-day lockdown in Haryana from 3 May: Amid a sharp surge in coronavirus cases, the Haryana government on Sunday announced imposition of a week-long lockdown in the state beginning 3 May. Earlier, a weekend curfew was enforced in nine districts - Gurugram, Faridabad, Panchkula, Sonipat, Rohtak, Karnal, Hisar and Fatehabad - from 10 pm on Friday till 5 am on Monday. Haryana on Saturday had registered 125 Covid fatalities, taking the death toll in the state to 4,341, while 13,588 fresh infections pushed the tally to 5,01,566. ■ PTI

Corona curfew extended in Bhopal till 10 May: The Madhya Pradesh government on Sunday extended 'corona curfew' in capital Bhopal till 10 May, an official said. The curfew, in force since 12 April with extensions on 19 and 26 April, was to end at 6 am on Monday, he added. Essential services and emergency travel are exempted from the curbs, the official informed. As on Saturday, Bhopal has a Covid-19 caseload of 91,456, including 742 deaths. ■ PTI

Armed Forces Medical officers to get extension: Around 200 Short Service Commission (SSC) officers with the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS), due for retirement over the next seven months, will get an extension till 31 December in view of the Covid-19 situation in the country, a senior Army officer said on Sunday. Lt-Gen (Dr) Madhuri Kantikar, part of the medical team under the Chief of Defence Staff, said they will be deployed for Covid-19 management programme initiated by the armed forces. ■ PTI

Opp leaders request free mass vaccination drives: Leaders of 13 Opposition parties on Sunday urged the Centre to launch a free mass vaccination drive across the country in view of the unprecedented surge in Covid-19 cases. In a joint statement, they also called upon the Centre to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply to all hospitals and health centres as they manage the staggering patient loads in view of the rising cases. ■ PTI

14-day lockdown in Odisha from 5 May

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Bhubaneswar, 2 MAY

With Covid surge going unabated, the Odisha government on Sunday declared a 14-day lockdown in the state from 5 May to contain the spread of the virus.

Odisha is reeling under the second wave of the pandemic and has recorded more than 18,428 cases in the last two days.

The lockdown, termed as curfew by officials, from Monday night will go on till early morning on 5 May till 19 May, a notification issued by the Special Relief Commissioner's office said.

People will be allowed to purchase essential items within 500-metre radius of their residences between 6 am and 12 pm, according to the official order. During weekends, they will only be able to avail medical services.

The order further said the lockdown and the weekend shutdown will not be applicable to any poll-related work, such as movement of personnel engaged in facilitating by-election to the Pipili Assembly constituency.

The government's decision will benefit 6,944 working journalists of the state. It may be noted here that at least 12 journalists have died during the pandemic.

primarily aimed at regulating movement of common people. No restriction has been imposed on goods carriers," the order said. Shopping malls, cinema spas, auditoriums and gyms will remain shut across all days until further orders are issued.

Dine-in facilities at restaurants and eateries in Odisha will remain shut during the fortnight lockdown.

Warrior tag on working journalists

Recognising the role of journalists who are at the forefront of fighting the pandemic, Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday conferred the working journalists of the state the status of frontline Covid warriors.

He said "working journalists are doing a great service to the state by providing seamless news feed, making people aware of issues relating to Covid at this very trying time and they are a great support for our war against Covid".

The government's decision will benefit 6,944 working journalists of the state. It may be noted here that at least 12 journalists have died during the pandemic.

BREATH OF THE WILD



Police personnel mounted on horses conduct a flag march during Covid-induced lockdown in Jaipur, on Sunday. ■ AGENCY

Cong slams Goa CM for not extending lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI, 2 MAY

stintuity to voluntary observe a week-long lockdown.

"I have already appealed to the government to extend the lockdown in Goa but it appears irresponsible BJP government is in no mood to listen," Kamat said in a statement.

Goa Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) president Girish Chodankar said the CM should be booked for culpable homicide.

"Irresponsible @BJP4Goa Government has pushed Goa into #Covid Death Trap. Rising positive cases and increasing death toll due to improper healthcare. Defective @goa cm says there is NO LOCK-

DOWN. Time has come for @Pramod Sawant to get into LOCKUP for culpable homicide," he tweeted.

Independent MLA Rohan Khaunte tweeted: "People of Goa deserve an explanation from @Pramod Sawant as to why #Goa government delayed preparation for Covid's 2nd wave? Why #Lockdown isn't Extended with Border Control? Why on Earth is he so against Goans?"

Earlier in the day, Kamat demanded the BJP-led state government announce a Rs 100-crore package for marginalised sector to minimise the effect of the lockdown.

Poonawalla: Will return to India in a few days

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

and aggression" over the demand of vaccines.

In a late night tweet on Saturday, he said the production of Covishield - the Oxford/AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine that is being produced by Serum Institute in India - was in full swing at SII's facility in Pune. "Pleased to state that COVISHIELD's production is in full swing in Pune. I look forward to reviewing operations upon my return in a few days," Poonawalla said. He, however, did not give a timeline for his return to India.

On his stay in the UK, the SII head said he "had an excellent meeting" with all partners and stakeholders in that country. Indian authorities are scrambling for vaccines, medicines and oxygen as the nation faces its worst health crisis. The number of daily coronavirus cases in India slipped slightly, a day after becoming the first in the world to cross the 4 lakh mark.

"I'm staying here for an extended period because I don't want to go back to that situation," The Times cited Poonawalla as saying

in an interview published on Saturday.

"I don't want to be in a situation where you are trying to do your job and just because you can't supply the needs of X, Y or Z, you really don't want to guess what they are going to do," he had said, adding, "Everything falls on my shoulders, but I can't do it alone."

When asked about the impact of t'Kumbh Mela' and the Assembly elections on the second wave in India, Poonawalla had said his "head would be chopped

off" if he answered on such a "sensitive" matter.

His comments triggered a range of comments, with some expressing disappointment at his move. Some even criticised him for stating in the interview that SII was planning to begin production outside India.

India rolled out the third phase of its Covid-19 vaccination drive for those in the age group of 18-45 years on Saturday though the inoculation process failed to take off in some states due to shortage of vaccines.



We humbly accept people's mandate... We will continue to fight for our values and ideals. Jai Hind

AFTER THE PARTY'S POOR PERFORMANCE IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN FOUR STATES

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 03 MAY 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



BJP activists celebrate their party's winning trend during the counting day of Assam Assembly Election in Guwahati on Sunday.

■ AGENCIES

AP Intermediate exams: Andhra Pradesh government on Sunday announced the postponement of the year-end examinations for Intermediate students, "in deference to the suggestion of the High Court." State education minister A Suresh said that they have decided to put off the examinations till normalcy is restored.

PTI

UP panchayat elections: A total of 3.19 lakh candidates have been elected unopposed in the Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections, the State Election Commission said on Sunday. In Ballia, Shailesh Singh (45), a candidate for the post of pradhan of Rampur village panchayat under Maniyar block, died on Sunday morning.

PTI

Mizoram bypoll: The ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) on Sunday suffered a humiliating defeat in the bypoll to the Serchhip Assembly seat as arch-rival ZPM's nominee Lalduhoma, whose disqualification necessitated the by-election, retained the seat by a landslide margin.

PTI

Dilip Kumar discharged from hospital: Legendary actor Dilip Kumar has been discharged from a hospital in Mumbai two days after he was admitted for a regular health check-up.

PTI

BJP-led alliance is all set to win in Assam

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, 2 MAY

The ruling BJP-led alliance in Assam is all set to win the legislative Assembly elections, and return to power in Dispur for the second time, setting a record for a non-Congress party in the state.

The alliance is expected to bag 70 seats in the 126 member-Assembly in the final results as the counting of votes which started at 8 a.m. on Sunday is still underway.

The BJP alliances - AGP and UPPL may win in 15 seats together, whereas the Opposition Congress-led grand alliance comprising of AIUDF, BPF, CPI-M, CPIML, AGM, RJD and others is seen to be limited to 55 seats only.

Incumbent state CM and senior BJP leader Sarbananda Sonowal has won the Majuli Assembly constituency. Himanta Biswa Sarma emerges successful in Jalukbari seat.

The Assembly speaker Harendra Nath Goswami won Jorhat constituency and

DMK-led alliance leads in TN

Ruling AIADMK combine, which includes BJP, lost the battle as it has conquered only 81 seats

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 2 MAY

After a gap of 10 years, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is all set to form the next government in Tamil Nadu leading in almost 156 seats out of the 234 Assembly segments in the state when the reports last came in. The ruling AIADMK combine, which includes BJP lost the battle as it has conquered only 81 seats.

DMK president MK Stalin, Edappadi Palaniswami, Stalin's son and DMK youth leader Udhayanthi Stalin, veteran DMK leader Durai Murugan are some of the prominent leaders who won their battle. Meanwhile, MNM leader Kamal Haasan was leading in the Coimbatore South constituency.

Other alliance parties like MDMK, CPI, CPI-M and VCK which contested six each constituencies this time are leading in four, two and four respectively. Manithanayake Makkal Katchi, another constituent of DMK alliance won one out of two contested seats. Meanwhile, AIADMK which contested 179 constituencies, are leading in 66 out of it. The party won 15 seats till the last reports came in. BJP, which is an alliance of AIADMK contested 20 constituencies of which they are leading in four. PMK, another AIADMK ally also are leading in four out of 23 contested. All other AIADMK partners are trailing in their respective constituencies.

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam which contested in 161 constituencies are trailing in all. Kamal Hassan's Makkal Needhi Mayam is trailing in 141 constituencies except Coimbatore South, contested by Kamal himself.

Meanwhile, the DMK cadre came under severe scrutiny on Sunday for violating Covid-19 protocol. Visuals of at least 50 party members and supporters bursting crackers and celebrating without masks and physical distancing went viral on social media.



DMK party workers celebrate during the counting day of Tamil Nadu Assembly poll results at their party headquarters, in Chennai on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

LDF sweeps Kerala, wins 99 seats

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 2 MAY

Breaking the state's four-decade-old trend of alternating between the CPI-M-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, the LDF has secured a second term in Kerala.

The CPI-M-led alliance has won 99 seats of the 140 Assembly seats. At the outgoing Assembly, the LDF has 91 seats. The Opposition Congress-headed UDF has secured 41 segments. The BJP which opened its account in Kerala only last time with one seat had expected to win at least half a dozen seats this time, drew blank.

CM Vijayan, Opposition leaders Ramesh Chennithala and former CM Oomen Chandy have won their respective constituencies. Pinarayi Vijayan has won by over 49,000 votes in Dharmadam constituency in Kannur. His cabinet colleagues including TP Ramakrishnan (Perambra), M. M. Mani (Udumbanchola), K. Krishnankutty (Chittur), Kadannappally Ramachandran (Kannur), KK Shylaja and Kadakampally Surendran (Kazhakkuttam) have won from their respective

seat. However, Congress candidate PCVishnunath defeated fisheries minister Mercutty Amma in Kundara.

KK Rema, RMP leader whose husband, TP Chandrasekharan was killed by CPI-M workers, won from Vadakara constituency. The BJP saw a major defeat in Palakkad after Metroman E Sreedharan, one of the party's most recognised faces, lost the race. Sreedharan maintained a lead in many of the 17 rounds. The BJP lost its lone seat in the Assembly as CPI-M's Sivankutty defeated Kummanam Rajasekharan by about 5,000 votes in Nemom constituency. On winning the seat, Sivankutty said, "Nemom was dubbed as the Gujarat of Kerala by BJP. But CM had said that the BJP's account will be closed in Kerala and we made it possible. I want to thank the secular people of Kerala for it."

In response to LDF's victory, CM Pinarayi Vijayan said,

"Our victory today is the victory of the people. We believe in the people and they have trust in us. That's why we have won more seats than 2016. We can go into the details of the election at a later time." Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala said, "We are accepting the people's verdict, but this was an unexpected loss. We never thought that such a failure would be there. However, we respectfully accept the verdict of people."

Sitaram Yechury in a video message on Sunday thanked the state's electorate for showing confidence in the party and vowed that the Left party will continue to fight the challenges faced by people.

"I thank the people of Kerala for reposing faith in an unprecedented manner in the way that the previous LDF government tackled all the challenges that the people have faced and also the pandemic scourge. The government gave a Kerala model to the world on how to handle the pandemic," he said.

He said the country and the state is facing twin dangers at the moment - livelihood issues arising out of the pandemic and defence and safeguarding of constitutional, secular, republic of India.

Congress on shaky ground as its poll fortunes plummet further

nating every five years.

With Mamata Banerjee emerging victorious, there would be more claimants to the Opposition leadership space in the coming times, even though Congress feels it is the only party with a national presence and outlook.

The post-election phase in the Congress would be crucial with the debate on leadership likely to be revived especially in light of the 22 January, 2021 decision of the Congress Working Committee that the party "will have a new president by June 2021 at any cost."

The leadership of the Gandhis would once again come under question in the party, where the G-23 leaders, including Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma, are waiting to make their next moves.

The former Congress chief and his sister and AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had campaigned vigorously in Kerala and Assam and the 'Group of 23' claiming themselves as "conscious-keepers" but considered "dissidents" within the party, would be out with knives once the poll analysis and deliberations on losses are done.

Humbly accepting the verdict, Rahul Gandhi said, "We will continue to fight for our

values and ideals".

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the party may have "lost" elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry and West Bengal but has not "lost its morale or resolve" to continue to be people's voice in these tough times. He said the party would deliberate on its failures and do course correction after internal deliberations. "The Congress Party will definitely study the results and all the reasons diligently and we are committed to correct our mistakes and do appropriate course correction," he said.

Former union minister Ashwani Kumar said the chastening election results are an SOS for the Congress ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 17,30,872/- (Rupees Seventeen Lacs Thirty Thousand Eight Hundred Seven Two Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is in your power to pay the amount in any convenient way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Lt. Registrar, New Delhi on 09.07.2021 at 10.30 AM. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.indrtrib.gov.in Email ID : -rcsben@indrtrib.gov.in)

2. Rajesh Sharma At - 243, Block No. 2, Subhash Nagar, New Delhi-110027. Also at: Government Girls Secondary School, Ashoka Nagar, Delhi-110018 (Mob: -9971831340) Email ID : -rcsben@indrtrib.gov.in

3. Mrs. Amrapali Leisure Valley Pvt. Ltd. Through Its M.D./ Directors, At - 307, 3rd Floor, Nipun Towers, Plot No. 15, Community Centre, Karkardooma, Delhi-110092. Also at: C-5640, Sector-82, Noida (UP)-201304. Email ID : -rcsben@amrapali.in

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 17,30,872/- (Rupees Seventeen Lacs Thirty Thousand Eight Hundred Seven Two Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is in your power to pay the amount in any convenient way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Lt. Registrar, New Delhi on 09.07.2021 at 10.30 AM. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.indrtrib.gov.in Email ID : -rcsben@indrtrib.gov.in)

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the cause will be adjourned and the same may be rescheduled.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that Purpose, (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex application/ software, (ii) Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cause will be issued by the Registrars/Office and Recovery Of It shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt2rtrt.gov.in". Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on 28th April of 2021.

By Order Of This Tribunal
Seal
For Registrar

Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further query

Mr. Amit Kumar, Lt. Registrar, DRT, New Delhi, Ph. No. 011-23748473, Email: drt1@delhi-dts.in

Commencement Date: 03.05.2021, 10:00 AM
Closing Date: 03.06.2021, 05:00 PM
Controller of Administration

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that services of following Special Trains will be discontinued due to low occupancy and other operational reasons from the date shown as under:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
02487/02488 Bikaner Jr.-Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Bikaner Jr. Special	03.05.2021 to till further advice

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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BJP retains Belagavi LS seat, a big boost to BSY

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 2 MAY

The ruling BJP today managed to retain the Belagavi Lok Sabha seat with its candidate, Mangala Angadi, wife of the late union minister, Suresh Angadi, beating Satish Jarkiholi, of the Congress, in a nail-biter.

Significantly, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Suresh Angadi had won this seat with a huge margin of 3,90,000 seats.

Nevertheless, for the BJP the bypoll win and its ability to retain the seat since 2004, would be extremely comforting.

The win comes as a major boost to the beleaguered CM B S Yediyurappa, who has been struggling to curb dis-

sension in the cabinet besides seeking to control the raging pandemic in the state. Not to mention the struggle to pacify a section of the Pan-chamshali Lingayats who want an increase in reservation quota and better facilities.

Additionally, the party won the Basvakalyan Assembly seat with its candidate Sharanya Salagar, beating Mala Narayan Rao of the Congress. The BJP, however, could not make any dent in the Congress fort in the Maski assembly constituency with its candidate, P Patil losing to B Turvihal.

To that extent, the BJP managed to win two of the three bypolls, elections to which were held on 17 April. TMC candidate from Malda Gopal Chandra Saha, who

defeated Isha Khan Choudhury of the Congress by a record margin, and the latter left the counting centre, before the counting process was completed, as he saw a huge number of votes going in favour of the TMC soon after counting began.

Former state minister Krishnendu Narayan Choudhury failed to register a win in English Bazaar, though outgoing MLA from the constituency, Nihar Ranjan Ghosh, won the Chanchal seats on a TMC ticket.

TMC candidate from Malda Gopal Chandra Saha, who

had been shot at a few days ago, won the seat, leaving behind his TMC rival Ujjwal Choudhury, who had defected to the TMC from the BJP just before the candidates had been announced by the party.

"There had been a major swing of the Muslim votes to the TMC from the Congress, and the poll results proved this to be true, as seats like Harishchandrapur, Chanchal, Malatipur, Ratua, and Sujapur, which have a huge Muslim population, gave the TMC wide leads," a political observer in the district said.

Glass ceiling broken

Quite the most dramatic feature of Joe Biden's address to the nation on completing 100 days in office was the fact that two ladies, holding coveted appointments, were in attendance on the rarefied dais, sitting to the left and right of the US President. Thus did Vice-President Kamala Harris and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, craft a watershed chapter in the history of America. Unmistakable too was the pregnant symbolism of the solemn occasion not the least because both Ms Harris and Ms Pelosi now personify the hierarchy of governance in the USA today. Well and truly has the President broken the historical glass ceiling. On closer reflection, the seating arrangement had a symbolic meaning in terms of the advancement of US women in recent decades. Ms Harris and Ms Pelosi are respectively first and second in the line of succession. The former is the first black woman and the first Black and Asian person to serve as Vice-President. She sat on the President's right. To his left was Ms Pelosi, the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives. While Ms Harris is a close adviser and "tie-breaker" in an evenly divided Senate, Ms Pelosi helps marshal the President's legislative agenda through Congress. Their potential is, therefore, profound.

As the pandemic overshadows governance, it will take a while to assess the President's performance in a little over three months, however reassuring on several fronts. Small wonder the evaluation has been described by the BBC as a "glass half full/half empty sort of affair", offering scope for mild optimism as much as cynicism, equally mild. Mr Biden has presented his signal of intent through a presentation that has been compared to the President's State of the Union address. On Wednesday night, he set before himself an ambitious agenda to redefine what they call the American "social compact" by expanding family leave, child and health care, pre-school and college education. However ambitious, the essay towards the goalposts will be financed with increased taxes on the "wealthiest earners". Theoretically, the plan of action ought to translate as the Benthamite doctrine ~ "the greatest good of the greatest number". There has been a fundamental reorientation in the role of governance as Mr Biden invokes the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He has unveiled a \$1.8 trillion social spending plan to buttress previous proposals to build roads and bridges, expand social welfare programmes, and combat climate change. While he had positioned himself during the election campaign as a "transition candidate" post-Trump, there is little doubt that he has now positioned himself as a transformational President. Indubitably, he is attempting a redistribution of wealth and has thus played to the gallery of the progressives. He has unveiled the agenda behind the microphone.

Dissent in the dock

The Kremlin has turned the screws further still against the dissident and fiercest critic of the establishment, Alexei Navalny. The sternness of the action comes in the immediate aftermath of the authorities informing the world that he "might die any moment". Having shifted him from prison to hospital, the Russian authorities have ordered his offices to suspend their activities pending a court ruling on whether to outlaw them as an extremist group. While this is akin to proceeding from conclusion to premise, it is doubtless a crippling blow to the dissident. Monday's injunction from the prosecutor's office in Moscow was another step in a sweeping crackdown on Navalny and his organizations. The prosecutor's office petitioned a court earlier this month to label Navalny's Foundation for Fighting Corruption and network of regional offices as extremist groups. In the net, the entity has been jolted to its foundations. Should such a label materialise, it would outlaw its activities and expose members and supporters to prolonged prison terms. It is a major challenge for Navalny's embattled team, with its leader incarcerated and dozens of its members under arrest, targeted in the aftermath of raids by law enforcement entities or facing criminal charges. The prosecutors also asked a Moscow court to restrict the activities of the foundation by banning it from spreading information to the media, taking part in elections, using banks or organizing public events, according to Ivan Pavlov, a lawyer representing the Foundation. It is a form of censorship reminiscent of the high noon of the pre-1991 Soviet era. The crackdown is remarkably severe, recalling Navalny's arrest at Moscow airport on his return from Berlin where he had gone for treatment. He was recovering from a nerve agent poisoning that he had blamed on the Kremlin. The injunction is "a total travesty of justice and lawlessness once again in Putin's Russia," said top Navalny associate Lyubov Sobol.

Navalny's foundation was set up 10 years ago and has since targeted high-ranking Russian officials with exposures on corruption, many in the form of colourful and widely watched YouTube videos. One of the latest postings, which has received 116 million views, alleges that a lavish palace on the Black Sea shore was built for Putin through an elaborate corruption scheme. The Kremlin has denied there are any links to Putin. Along with the foundation, Navalny had set up a vast network of offices in several regions of Russia when he was campaigning to run against Putin in the 2018 presidential election. He was eventually barred from contesting, but has retained the infrastructure. The case against Navalny's foundation and regional offices will be heard by the Moscow City Court behind closed doors. It remains unclear what evidence the authorities have against the organizations, as they have declared the case files a state secret, according to Navalny's allies. The outlook is grim, as much for Navalny as it is for Putin.

Negating Federalism

Both in the United States and in Germany different political parties have ruled at the centre and the states and that is welcomed democratically and on grounds of citizen participation. In Germany, the representational party system ensures that both at the Centre and in the states only coalitions would rule and that creates a situation of heterogeneity of political formations which the Germans cherish



In the election rallies held in West Bengal for the legislative Assembly election spread over eight phases, leaders of the Bhartiya Janata Party continuously harp on a theme that a single party rule both at the Centre and in the state would be better than two different parties ruling, one at the Centre and other in the state. Congress leaders used to argue in a similar vein when the UPA was in power at the Centre. This argument is questionable as it is violative of the federal order provided under the Constitution and in the context of rapid development.

For instance, Uttar Pradesh, the most populous and electoral-significant state as it sends 80 Lok Sabha members, has been ruled by the same party that rules at the Centre. But there is no tangible evidence of spectacular development in various indicators of education, health, employment generation and infrastructure facilities.

In elementary factors like maintenance of law and order and providing security to women and the lower castes the performance of the state government is grim. The Hathras, Unnao and Kampur atrocity cases involving both the law protectors and local administration in committing heinous crimes against women are cruel reminders that in UP nothing has changed at the ground level.

There is even no increase in financial assistance, which is a good indicator that even if a different political outfit rules, parity in financial allocation is maintained for all the states.

It is the same situation in MP and Tripura. The more developed Gujarat and Karnataka also have the same tale to tell. In Gujarat, many indices of human development are well below opposition-ruled West Bengal. Haryana and Assam have the highest unemployment rates and in both states the party at the Centre rules the state too.

Probably the most interesting negation of the argument is Gujarat where Prime Minister Modi's Gujarat model achieved impressive growth when the UPA was ruling at the Centre. Historically, Tamil Nadu has been ruled by Opposition parties since 1967 and its parameters ~ be it economic development or social in-

dicators ~ have been better than the national average. Kerala is another example where two parties have alternatively held power without much effect in governance and development.

Himachal Pradesh has registered cent percent literacy and made massive strides in bringing environmental safeguards. Here too many times the state has been ruled by a party different from that at the centre. To press for single party rule at the Centre and states goes against the grain of cooperative federalism which is referred to as marble cake federalism because of its functional cooperation, partnership and interdependence between the Centre and states.

Since its inception the German federation has been based on this principle. Even in the USA ever since the days of New Deal legislations, cooperative federalism has replaced dual federalism. With increasing intervention in states and regulations on issues like a minimum wage mandatorily applicable in the entire nation, the federal government has been playing a pivotal role even in areas traditionally reserved for the states. Both in the United States and in Germany different political parties have ruled at the centre and the states and that is welcomed democratically and on grounds of citizen participation.

In Germany, the representational party system ensures that both at the Centre and in the states only coalitions would rule and that creates a situation of heterogeneity of political formations which the Germans cherish.

The argument of elimination of conflict and emergence of consensus is also doubtful as federalism inherently implies well-defined spheres of power between the Centre and the state. This is done to check abuse of power and inefficiency.

A major shortcoming of a highly centralized central authority is the possibility of overload and possible misdirection of policies and implementation as there would be little inputs from diver-

gent sources. This is acknowledged by the BJP itself with different manifestos for the ensuring four states and one union territory.

The double engine proposition is a reminder of the days of India's quasi-federalism which allowed the existence of an over-developed state and inefficient administration which allowed, to quote Raj Krishna, only a Hindu rate of growth which meant a paltry growth rate of 3 per cent. The tilt of the Indian Constitution towards the Centre proclaiming a union of states was deliberately included because of the situation after independence to subvert secession, as Ambedkar put it.

Within the ambit of limited powers some of the states have achieved impressive results as the advancements of social sectors in Tamil Nadu and the land reforms in West Bengal show. CPI-M-led government which ruled for continuously 34 years innovated the term of step-motherly treatment by the Centre but its Kerala counterpart did not. The implication of this was that when the CPI-M would share power at the Centre, the imbalance would be corrected.

The Mamata-led Trinamool harps on it but also offered different policies. For instance, instead of Ayushman Bharat, it has Sasta Sethi and opposes direct transfer to farmers as it argues that such transfers have to be done under the state.

Modi, when he was the Chief Minister also protested central policies and wanted financial independence. He opposed the Planning Commission and GST and advocated different policies advocating cooperative federalism.

With the proclamation of GST, the scope of states to levy additional taxations have shrunk dramatically and in addition to that there are central policies like Swachh Bharat, Ujjawala and PM Kisan Bharat which are desirable but are violative of federal principles as they deal with areas that are either in the State list or in the Concurrent list. Even in

different policies. For instance, instead of Ayushman Bharat, it has Sasta Sethi and opposes direct transfer to farmers as it argues that such transfers have to be done under the state.

He held that "end cannot justify the means and that everything in politics must be fair and honest, based upon the noble principles of non-violence and non-injury".

He said in 1927, "if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and to resist any unlawful encroachment upon its own civilisation, which imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has withstood the ravages of time, she can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world. If we were to be saved and are to make a substantial contribution to the world's progress, ours must emphatically and predominantly, be the way of non-violence".

"Ahimsa", said he, "is the crux of all noble attitudes of man towards himself."



SUBRATA MUKHERJEE
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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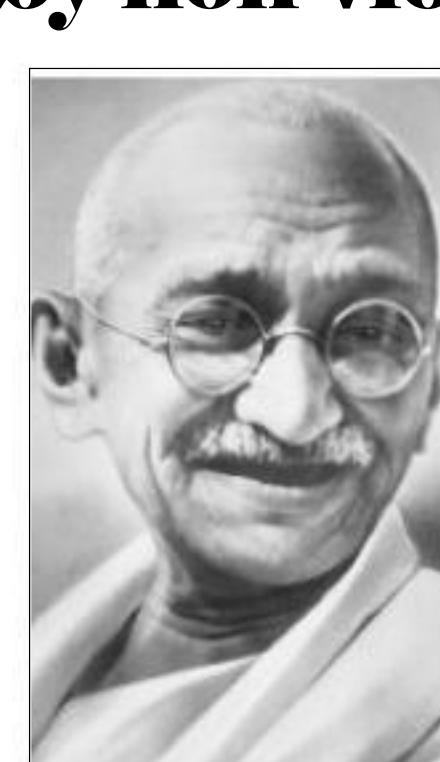
Moulded by non-violence

SIR, My compliments to *The Statesman* for having published Jaydev Jana's excellent article, "Gandhi's Ahimsa" (27 April) that dwells on Gandhi's attitude to non-violence.

Gandhi had an intrinsic and natural passion for truth since his childhood. His pursuit of truth led to his discovery of non-violence. It may be said that Gandhi's life and character are moulded by non-violence.

After occupying himself with the task of liberating the country from the bondage of British rule, Gandhi introduced his gospel of truth and non-violence on which he subsequently tried many experiments on a vast scale.

But he was humble in that he did not claim to have originated the principles of



truth and non-violence but he simply retrieved it.

He said, "I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Truth and non-violence are

as old as hills." The instrument of Satyagraha as a political weapon was enlivened by the religion of *Ahimsa* or non-violence.

Gandhi's non-violence or Satyagraha was really a dynamic philosophy which excluded any submission to evil. His philosophy represents a strong resistance to all social evils through love.

There is no gainsaying that Gandhi confronted the oppression of the British in India and wanted to bring it to an end with the "invincible constant of non-violence". In fact, the Mahatma, who led a saintly life, laid maximum emphasis on the cult of non-violence in the field of politics.

"Ahimsa", said he, "is the crux of all noble attitudes of man towards himself,"

towards his fellow human beings, towards life and its manifold problems and finally, towards God ~ his Master".

He held that "end cannot justify the means and that everything in politics must be fair and honest, based upon the noble principles of non-violence and non-injury".

He said in 1927, "if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and to resist any unlawful encroachment upon its own civilisation, which imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has withstood the ravages of time, she can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world. If we were to be saved and are to make a substantial contribution to the world's progress, ours must emphatically and predominantly, be the way of non-violence".

OFF THE MARK

SIR, I refer to Harsha Kakar's article "An ill-advised step by Americans" and the letter thereof "Selfish Americans". I beg to differ from the views expressed.

The primary responsibility of an elected government including USA and India is to protect and safeguard primarily the interests of its citizens.

Keeping critical raw materials or ready to use vaccines was to accord priority for its citizens first. We however chose to give away our vaccines free when it was desperately needed by vulnerable Indians with the virus spread expanding.

The US government has now undertaken to rush critical inputs in our hour of need. Charity starts at home is an age-old maxim and we chose to overlook this simple guideline.

Yours, etc., H N Ramakrishna,

Bengaluru, 27 April.

A political system, according to Gandhiji, which has no foundation of peace or non-violence, is the negative proposition of its significance.

An ideal statesman's highest quality, according to him, should be non-violent

and peace-loving nature. Non-violence is an important weapon to bind various nations and nationalities together in a common peaceful bond.

Yours, etc., Narayan Chandra Ghosh,

Madanpur, 28 April.

BHARAT DOGRA

History has provided several examples that when faced with difficult situations, communities responded with increasing unity and mutual help and this enabled them to not just reduce distress but even to make sustained gains and improvements. This is something worth remembering and emphasizing at a time when problems in many villages of India are increasing due to the pandemic, economic stress and other factors.

While the need for greater unity and mutual help in rural communities has always been there, this increases in such times of difficulty and uncertainty. To give just one example, the option of reducing problems by going to other places for better opportunities is reduced, or there is increasing uncertainty regarding this in times of pandemic. Hence people have more need to look for solutions within the community and in the process, they may discover possibilities of mutual help and cooperation to which they may not have given adequate attention earlier.

Small but nevertheless precious examples of such mutual help are taking place all the time but there is a real need to take this further in more sustainable and comprehensive ways so that these can have a much greater impact. Actions with clear promise for reducing distress should be emphasized.

Violence as well as discrimination against women and girls at several levels is clearly a problem in several communities. This is manifested in several forms of domestic violence, sexual violence, verbal and emotional abuse, dowry related problems, insecurity resulting in imposed and voluntary curbs on women, denial of education and other opportunities to realize potential and problems in finding suitable life partner. All these are a huge cause of avoidable distress on daily basis, for women of course but also for many men and children as well.

While laws to curb all or most of these problems may exist, perhaps sincere and sustained community action can achieve much more. And if in the process women are asked to express themselves freely and implement their own priorities of reform efforts, then it is quite likely that in many rural communities, perhaps

Communities must unite in times of distress



even in the majority of them, women will prioritize above all a big reduction in the consumption of liquor and all other intoxicants.

According to WHO data, three million people die in a year due to alcohol consumption at the world level. One half of all sexual assaults on women take place when the perpetrator of this violence is under the influence of alcohol, and other things being equal, cases of domestic violence, youth violence, accidents and crimes are much higher when liquor consumption is high.

Contrary to common perception there are many examples of community action leading to much lower consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants, and as worldwide data reveals, the cases of voluntarily giving up the liquor habit are much higher than is commonly believed. Hence reduction of liquor and all intoxicants

and all substance abuse can be a very important part of community reform effort, led by local women. This can help to reduce distress greatly.

Another community effort should be to resolve all village disputes, not just new disputes but also old festering ones, at the village level. Respected community elders can play a leadership role in this, while women too can make an important contribution.

However, reforms and cooperation work best in conditions of equality. In villages where inequality is very high and where Dalits or other disadvantaged sections face discrimination, it is difficult to create really strong community ties in sustainable ways. Ending discrimination and according a place of dignity to all sections of the rural community is both an essential pre-condition for establishing strong community ties as well as an important component and

means of strengthening all community-based reform efforts. In fact, the word community cannot really be used legitimately in a village where high levels of discrimination exist among substantial number of people.

Hence ending all discrimination based on caste, sub-caste, religion, sect etc. is an essential part of community effort. Ending discrimination and according dignity to all clears the ground for many-sided cooperation among all sections of people for the common good of the entire village.

Then there can be better cooperation for the most important tasks of protecting and increasing greenery in villages and for improving soil and water conservation, betterment of sanitation and composting. Better unity means that villagers can ensure better use of development funds, can better resist corrupt practices and ensure better functioning of rural

decentralization, at the level of not just panchayats but also gram sabhas. In addition, there can be much better cooperation for improving education and health, livelihoods, and organizing cultural activities.

At present the creativity of various sections of rural communities cannot be properly utilized because most of the potential energy and capacity is wasted in avoidable hostility at various levels. Of course, the need for resisting those who are unrepentant exploiters, corrupt and violent will remain. But the overwhelming majority of people, around 90 per cent perhaps in many cases, can benefit much from increasing goodwill, unity and cooperation as well as much-needed reforms made on the basis of this unity.

The writer is a journalist and author. His recent books include *When the Two Streams Met and Man Over Machine*.

iStock

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The latest story of non-cooperation in the villages comes from a correspondent and is to the effect that the local villagers in the district from which the letter is written have been forbidden to rear cattle or poultry for sale under penalty of disaster to themselves and their families, who are threatened, apparently, with the prospect of "becoming stone and mud." The immediate effect seems to have been to cause something like a rush to dispose of stocks, for the correspondent was surprised by an abundance of poultry and eggs at cheap prices. The result was to elicit a series of fantastic stories which, it is said, have quite frightened the ignorant and credulous villagers of the locality, who are "certainly parting with a source of income with reluctance" but are in dread of "awful punishments" if they disobey the Mahatma. Does Mr. Gandhi ever hear of these things, and, if so, what can he think of the uses that are made of his name? It is scarcely conceivable that he can wish to condone such pitiful work as that of scaring poor villagers out of part of their means of livelihood; yet this is what is being done ostensibly on his authority, just as boycotting of Europeans in the mofussil has been attempted. Nevertheless this is what must be done, if the root of the mischief is to be reached.

NEWS ITEMS

LORD RONALDSHAY IN DARJEELING

His Excellency Lord Ronaldshay with Mr. Gourlay, Private Secretary, and staff, arrived this afternoon by special train, the arrival being private. The Governor was met at the railway station by Mr. Goode, Deputy Commissioner and others. His Excellency later opened the new Post and Telegraph office on the Mackenzie Road, and expressed appreciation of the work done by the Post and Telegraph staff. Mr. G.P. Roy, Postmaster-General, thanked the Governor. At the flower show in the Rink Gymkhana Club, Mr. J. Morgenstern was awarded the Governor's prize for the best flowers in the show. Many Indian shops were closed this afternoon owing, it is alleged to the action of the police in arresting certain people.

YOUNG HINDU WOMAN MURDERED

At Alipore Criminal Sessions, before Mr. J.W. Ward, Additional Sessions Judge, a young Hindu, named Bharat Chandra Dass, of Bhangore, was charged with having murdered a young Hindu woman, named Kherada Dassi. It was stated that the woman left her husband's protection to live with Dass. Later the accused man was compelled to leave the village and asked the deceased to accompany him. On her refusal the accused got into a rage and attacked her with an axe, cutting off her head with one blow. Dass pleaded not guilty to the charge. The jury were divided in their verdict, three for guilty on a charge of murder and two for not guilty. The judge accepted the verdict of the majority and the prisoner was sentenced to death.

PUNJAB PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

The eighth session of the Punjab Provincial Conference, which opened yesterday afternoon, resumed its sittings today under the presidency of Hakim Ajmal Khan of Delhi. About 1,600 delegates attended from the different places of the Province, and a large number of Sikhs were also present, with black turbans. A noticeable feature of the Conference was the Khaddar dress worn by a very large number of the people. Jagat Guru Shankaracharya of Saidapeth was presented with a robe by Dr. Kitchlew on behalf of the Central Khilafat Committee. The Conference adopted resolutions declaring its firm adherence to the resolution of non-violent non-cooperation passed by the Indian National Congress, congratulating the Province on its splendid observance of the principle of non-violence in spite of grave provocation.

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION IN BOMBAY

The annual general meeting of the Bombay branch of the European Association was held at St. George's Hospital this evening. Mr. H.T. Gorrie, Chairman of the Association presiding. In seconding the motion for the adoption of the annual report for last year, Mr. J. Addyman, of the Bombay Woollen Mills, after appealing to the European community to take up whole-heartedly the share allotted to them in the gradual constitutional evolution of India, said, at the very time the new era dawns we find agitators still seeking to dispose of the law and order so necessary for the development of the reform scheme. We find Mr. Gandhi still advocating non-cooperation, still carrying out his destructive policy, with no alternative but utter chaos should his object succeed.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

In the train

I was lucky to find a job the moment I came out of the university. I felt I wasn't so lucky that the job was in an industrial town an hour's drive from the city. I had no car. I would take a train Sunday evening, arrive and stay in the apartment the company had allotted me during the week, and Friday evening return to the city. I resented the exile from city life. I thought sullenly of friends who had found jobs in the city and could explore its charms with newfound affluence. I forgot, of course, to think of the friends who had found no jobs at all. For the next two years, I used the local trains at least twice a week, sometimes more if there was a mid-week holiday. Very rarely I used a company car to visit the city, and thrice I accompanied a colleague who used his motorbike like a lance through urban traffic. Slowly I got used to the local trains, their plain look, hard seats, numerous stops and piercing whistles. I began to like them.

What I liked most was the cavalcade of people who joined me on this fleeting passage. It changed a lot, and that was the beauty of it. When I briefly met Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian author, in Washington he narrated how he had grown up insulated in his father's house, meeting only the elite of Lima. When his father, concerned by his 'effeminate' affinity for literature, put him in a military school, he got to meet the children from all layers of society.

My family wasn't elite, and my parents cultivated a variety of friends, but the local trains let me rub shoulders with a far greater variety of people. There were the affluent who needed to make a short trip and preferred the rail to a dusty car voyage; the middle-class professors, clerks, salesmen, students and housewives making their regular trips for work or pleasure; and



ILLUSTRATION: Debabrata Chakrabarty

the vast number of simple folk, factory workers, female domestics, delivery men and all kinds of small traders on their usual round. Most were ready to talk when they sat next to me and I asked a question or two, and a few were amazingly forthcoming.

Mala, who sat opposite me and changed a bandage on her arm as the train moved, was candid when I asked how she was wounded. "An animal," she said. "An animal did it. My husband. He drinks more than he earns. When I say anything, this is what he does." Her family does not want her to leave him, and he may create a problem with her little child. She has to work at a quarry during the day and endure his abuse at night.

Two college students who traveled with me gave me an object lesson. Bijon, who commuted to the city every day, for he couldn't afford to live there, returned to his village every evening, exhausted, quickly munched some puffed rice and went to teach poor boys in a night school. Arijit, even younger, did his classes and then proceeded to his cleaning job in the city restaurant before returning late to his town. "Why a cleaning job? Why can't you get some better work?" I asked, only to be dumbfounded by his reply.

"My illiterate mother is a maid in three houses and does cleaning. I want her to know that, though I read and write, I too do a cleaning job."

Professor Adhikari, a balding, bespectacled man, said he couldn't live in the city, for he had a bedridden daughter in a small-town charitable hospital, but he did not mind the commute. "I am widower," he explained, "and I rent a tiny room next to a club. It is very noisy. The club members never listen to my request to keep the volume down. The three hours I spend on the train is the quietest period I get to study." Embarrassed, I stopped asking him any more questions, and he returned to a book he had already taken out of his cloth bag. As if to reassure me, he warmly said goodbye to me when he left, and even expressed the hope that he would see me again.

Rather different were ebullient Sujit and Romola, brother and sister, who were going for a weekend picnic and wanted me to vacate the window seat for them. I did so readily and was promptly rewarded with scones and pastries from Flury's, a confection titan. As we talked, they revealed that their mother, ill for a while, had passed away six months ago – and, further, their father was set to remarry in eight weeks. I did not have to be a Freud to divine that their high-spirited picnic was, alas, a ruse to avoid a weekend encounter with their father.

My most memorable encounter

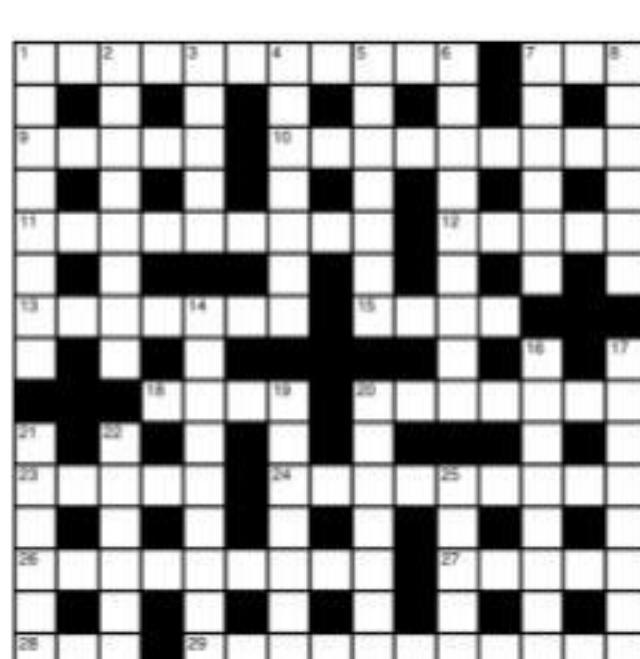
was with an elderly man, indistinguishable in appearance from others of his age and but indistinctly distinguished in his bearing. Eyes riveted on him the moment he entered the train. Before sitting next to me he politely nodded his head, as if to seek my approval. As the train started and I started reading again, he gently coughed and asked, "The book you are reading, isn't in English, is it?" He had noticed the title and I explained that it was a French novel by Marguerite Duras. He then talked of the advantage of knowing a foreign language, citing the unusual reason that the foreigner then does not remain foreign. He asked what I did, and then reciprocated by saying that he was a union leader and politician. He talked frankly of the problems of his double role and narrated how he had embarked on

union activity from a deep sense of injustice to workers. He spoke of the need to balance the fair with the practical, the right with the acceptable. Spellbound, I listened to a masterly analysis of what is and what should be.

Two years later, I was transferred to the company's headquarters in the city and my odyssey in local trains ended. It seemed to me that the phantom train, carrying a vast and varied assortment of interesting people, that had been traversing my life every week, bringing me the exciting savor of worlds unknown, had suddenly lost its way in an impenetrable fog. No more whistles, only the honk of an impatient city car.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and has worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 25 APRIL

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

ACROSS

- 1 Notorious kung-fu exponent playing a concerto (4,7)
- 7 Large bird once seen among Jerusalem Oaks (3)
- 9 Waste pipes clergyman picked up (5)
- 10 Insist VAT is scrapped for those who favour established inhabitants (9)
- 11 High-energy light meal prepared to entertain a European (5,4)
- 12 Run – I'm scared opening Surströmming will produce unpleasant smells (5)
- 13 Fine associated with crime where deliveries are made
- 15 Cut of meat from beast's twisted innards (4)
- 18 Drugs reported to aid peacefulness (4)
- 20 Besides tea houses, where might you encounter The Blues? (7)
- 23 Remain while chap has series of tests (5)
- 24 Wailing singer returns with topless sailor (9)
- 26 Maybe residents of Athens, Greek originally, organise dancing (9)
- 27 Patent, perhaps, on plugs for small computers (5)
- 28 Badger, one caught in empty netting (3)
- 29 Explain a good way to find the right gardening tool? (4,5,2)
- 8 Lend a hand to musician scoring introduction to ballad (6)
- 14 Celebrity autographs reveal Leo and 11 others (4,5)
- 16 One pursuing partisan struggles (8)
- 17 Interrupts pub singer's endless barking (6,2)
- 19 Mimic large bird – teal, perhaps (7)
- 20 Lawyer Morocco unselfishly protects (7)
- 21 Rabbit? Exactly (4,2)
- 22 Cram right into skimpy underwear (6)
- 25 A sharp noise that's echoing (5)

DOWN

- 1 Old West lawman carries personal protection (8)
- 2 Current racket almost overthrown after 50% of income is cut (8)
- 3 President's national barrier (5)
- 4 Grandma impatient for Fabric (7)
- 5 Flawless atrium evenly coated with gemstone (7)
- 6 Computers and such held back in hostile market (9)
- 7 Aerosol merits getting (5)

NO 28301

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



Our effort is to support the growth initiatives. To really ensure that happens, we will try to keep the soft interest rate regime for as long as possible.

DINESH KUMAR KHARA
SBI CHAIRMAN

THUMBNAILS

India's coal import to be subdued: India's coal import is expected to be subdued in coming months on account of various factors like prevailing Covid situation, high coal stock in the system and higher international prices, according to junction. The country's coal import fell 12.62 per cent to 215.92 million tonnes (MT) in FY21 from 247.10 MT in FY20, according to a provisional compilation by junction services, based on monitoring of vessels' positions and data received from shipping companies. PTI

FPIs turn net sellers: Snapping their six-month buying spree, foreign investors turned net sellers in April and pulled out Rs 9,659 crore from Indian equities, spooked by the intense second wave of coronavirus and its fallout on the economy. If the fears of COVID-19 increases among foreign investors, we can witness further redemptions, which can result in some more volatility in the market, Harshad Chetanwala, co-founder MyWealth.com, said. PTI

Kia lines up new model: Bullish on the long-term growth prospects of the Indian car market, South Korean auto maker Kia plans to introduce new models, enhance sales network and also ramp up production capacity to reduce the waiting period on the existing product range, as per senior company officials. PTI

Telecom infra operation: Industry body TAIPA has said that essential telecom infrastructure operations and maintenance activities are by-and-large running smoothly amid pandemic-induced curfews and movement curbs across various states. The telecom tower industry is better prepared to handle the work on ground as many processes and practices are already in place following last year's nationwide lockdown. The association had also reached out to the Centre address some of the issues early on, leading to timely action. PTI

Record exports jump to \$30.21 billion in April

Exports shrank last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

India's exports in April jumped nearly three-folds to \$30.21 billion on account of healthy growth in key sectors including engineering, gems and jewellery, and petroleum products, even as trade deficit widened to \$15.24 billion, according to commerce ministry's preliminary data released on Sunday.

The country's merchandise exports were to the tune of \$10.17 billion in April 2020. Trade deficit in that month was \$6.92 billion.

Imports too rose by over three-folds to \$45.45 billion last month as against \$17.09 billion in April 2020.

"India's merchandise exports in April 2021 were \$30.21 billion, an increase of 197.03 per cent over \$10.17 billion in April 2020 and an increase of 16.03 per cent over \$26.04 billion in April 2019," the ministry said in a statement.

In percentage terms, the



growth rate in exports and imports are at record high, mainly due to base effect.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown last year, exports shrank by a record 60.28 per cent in April 2020.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion. In April 2021, oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.65 billion in April. Gold imports surged to \$6.12 billion during the month under review as against \$2.83 million in April 2020.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive

growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, pharmaceuticals, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals.

Exports of engineering, gems and jewellery, and petroleum products rose multifold to \$5.55 billion, \$3.3 billion, and \$2.12 billion, respectively in April. Gold imports surged to \$6.12 billion during the month under review as against \$2.83 million in April 2020.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive

Major commodity groups of import showing positive growth in April 2021 over the corresponding month of last year include electronic goods, transport equipment, minerals, machinery, textile yarn fabric, vegetable oil and iron, and steel.

Commenting on the numbers, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Sharad Kumar Saraf said that the impressive growth reflects that order booking position of exporters is extremely good and gradual improvement of situation in the country will push growth further.

"Such a growth performance in exports during the first month of 2021-22 augurs well for the sector," he said adding the need of the hour.

Is to soon notify the RoDTEP (remission of duties and taxes on export products) rates to remove uncertainty from the minds of the trade and industry, thereby helping in further forging new contracts with the foreign buyers.

Markets to be guided by Covid-19 situation, macro data: Analysts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Market movement this week will be influenced by updates on the COVID-19 front, macroeconomic data announcement, quarterly earnings and global trends, said analysts.

They also added that state election results are unlikely to have any major impact on the markets and the major determining factor will be the rising COVID-19 cases and how governments (both central and states) are going to address this health crisis.

The ruling Trinamool Congress was ahead of the BJP in the keenly watched state of West Bengal, while the saffron party-led NDA was leading in Assam and the DMK in Tamil Nadu, according to the latest trends for Assembly polls.

In Kerala, the ruling LDF is leading in 88 of the 140 assembly constituencies while the opposition Congress-headed UDF was ahead in 50 segments.

Goejt Financial Services Chief Investment Strategist V K Vijayakumar said, "The election results are unlikely to have any impact on the markets. The news value won't last more than a few hours. The

major determining factor will be the rising COVID-19 cases and how governments (both central and states) are going to address this tragic health crisis."

He added that if the rising COVID-19 case load leads to a major catastrophe and another country-wide lockdown is declared, the market would be hugely impacted. "So, watch out for the COVID-19 counts more than the vote counts."

The counting of votes for the Assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory is being taken up at a time when the country is grappling with a raging COVID-19 pandemic.

Reliance Industries Head Nirali Shah said, "Domestic bourses this week are expected to be influenced by dual factors: Quarterly results and further restrictions on increasing COVID-19 cases." Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Enterprises, CEAT and Adani Power are also among the other important earnings to be announced this week.

Major automobile manufacturers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motor, Tata Motors and Kia on Saturday reported a decline in passenger vehicle sales in April compared to March this year.

462 infra projects show cost overruns worth ₹4.36 lakh cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY



As many as 462 infrastructure projects, each worth Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling more than Rs 4.36 lakh crore, according to a report.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above. Of the 1,737 such projects, 462 reported cost overruns and 557 were delayed.

Total original cost of implementation of the 1,737 projects was Rs 22,33,409.53 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 26,69,435 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,36,239.82 crore (19.53 per cent of original cost), the ministry's latest report for March 2021 said.

According to the report, the cost overrun for completing these 462 projects works out

to be Rs 4,36,239.82 crore. The expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2021 is Rs 13,06,617.54 crore, which is 48.94 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, the report said the number of delayed projects decreases to 412 if the delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion.

Further, for 938 projects nei-

ther the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Out of 557 delayed projects, 114 projects have overall delay in the range of 1-12 months, 131 projects (13-24 months), 190 projects (25-60 months) and 122 projects (61 months and above).

The average time overrun in these 557 delayed projects

is 44.69 months. Reasons for time overruns as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages.

Delay in tie-up for project financing, delay in finalisation of detailed engineering change in scope, delay in tendering, ordering and equipment supply, and law and order problems, among others, are the other reasons, the report said.

The report also cited 'state-wise lockdown due to COVID-19' as a reason for the delay in implementation of these projects.

It has also been observed that project agencies are not reporting revised cost estimates and commissioning schedules for many projects, which suggests that time/cost overrun figures are underreported, it added.

Unsold housing stock dips 2 per cent at 7.05 lakh units

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

share of unsold stock. Both the cities together account for 54 per cent of the total available stock, followed by NCR and Bengaluru with 15 per cent and 10 per cent share, respectively," said Mani Ranagaran, COO of Housing.com and PropTiger.

In terms of inventory overhang, Housing.com and PropTiger Director Research Ankita Sood said the overall inventory increased by 2 per cent at 7.05 lakh units during January-March as compared to the previous quarter and it will take four years for developers to sell these units at current speed, according to a report.

In its report 'Real Insight', housing brokerage firm PropTiger reported that nearly 18 per cent of the total unsold inventory falls in the ready-to-move-in category.

As per the data, unsold housing stock declined to 7,05,344 units during the first quarter of 2021 calendar year across eight cities from 7,18,483 units in the previous quarter.

This was because housing sales across eight major cities stood at 66,176 units while new supply was 53,037 during January-March 2021. Mumbai and Pune continue to hold the maximum

Govt appoints Rabi Sankar as next RBI deputy governor

MUMBAI, 2 MAY

The government has appointed RBI Executive Director T Rabi Sankar as the fourth deputy governor of the central bank.

Sankar fills the vacancy created by the retirement of BP Kanungo on April 2, after completing one-year extension. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on Saturday cleared his appointment for a three-year tenure or till he superannuates, whichever is earlier.

The other three deputy governors are Michael D Patra, who heads the all-important monetary policy department; Mukesh Kumar Jain, the commercial banker-turned-central banker; and Rajeshwar Rao.

Sankar's portfolio may include the departments headed by Kanungo, which included fintech, information technology, payments system and risk monitoring. PTI

RBI to strengthen risk-based supervision of banks, NBFCs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 2 MAY



on the activities/size of the supervised entities (SEs).

"It is intended to review the existing supervisory rating models under CAMELS approach for improved risk capture in forward looking manner and for harmonising the supervisory approach across all SEs," it said.

Annual financial inspection of UCBs and NBFCs is largely based on CAMELS model (Capital Adequacy, Asset Quality, Management, Earnings, Liquidity, and Systems & Control).

The RBI undertakes supervision of SEs with the objective of assessing their financial soundness, solvency, asset quality, governance framework, liquidity, and operational viability, so as to protect depositors' interests and finan-

cial stability.

The Reserve Bank conducts supervision of the banks through offsite monitoring of the banks and an annual inspection of the banks, where applicable.

In case of Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) and NBFCs, it conducts the supervision through a mix offsite monitoring and on-site inspection, where applicable.

A technical advisory group consisting of senior officers of the RBI would examine the documents submitted by the applicants in connection with EOIs.

EOI said the consultant would be required to work in close co-ordination with officers of RBI's Department of Supervision in Mumbai.

M-cap of seven companies jumps

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Seven of the top-10 most-valued companies together added a whopping Rs 1,62,774.49 crore in market valuation last week, with major contribution coming from Reliance Industries Ltd and Bajaj Finance.

Last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark gained 903.91 points or 1.88 percent.

While Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever Limited, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance and State Bank of India emerged as gainers, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank and HCL took losses in their m-cap. PTI

India's fuel sales drop in April on Covid wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The second wave of coronavirus sweeping the nation has pummelled fuel sales in April as local restrictions clamped to curb the spread of infection stifled demand, preliminary data showed.

"At the end of April, overall fuel demand is down by about 7 per cent from pre-Covid level of April 2019," Arun Singh, Director for Marketing and Refineries at Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), said. India was under one of the world's severest lockdowns in April 2020, bringing to a halt almost all economic activity. Fuel sales had halved that month and so comparing current month sale to April 2020 will not

throw a correct interpretation.

Sales of petrol - used in cars and motorcycles - fell to 2.14 million tonnes in April, the lowest since August, according to the preliminary data of state-owned fuel retailers.

Petrol sales in April were 6.3 per cent lower than March 2021 and 4.1 per cent lower than April 2019. Petrol sales in April 2020 were 872,000 tonnes.

Demand for diesel the most used fuel in the country fell to 5.9 million tonnes in April 2021, down 1.7 per cent from the previous month and 9.9 per cent from April 2019. Diesel sales in April 2020 were 2.84 million tonnes.

With airlines continuing to operate at less than capacity, jet fuel (ATF) sales in April were 377,000 tonnes, down 11.5

per cent over March 2021 and 39.1 per cent over April 2019. Jet fuel sales in April 2020 were 5,500 tonnes.

Sales volume of cooking gas LPG fell 3.3 per cent to 2.1 million tonnes in April 2021 when compared with the previous month. The sales were 11.6 per cent higher than 1.88 million tonnes in April 2019.

Indian authorities are scrambling for vaccines, medicines and oxygen as the nation faces its worst health crisis. The number of daily coronavirus cases in India slipped slightly, a day after becoming the first in the world to cross the 4 lakh mark.

India's new coronavirus cases rose by 3,92,488, while deaths from the infection jumped by 3,689 over the past 24 hours.

So far, more than 90 per cent of the eligible workforce, including temporary and contractual employees, above the age of 45 years has been vaccinated, he added.

"We have also established company maintained quarantine centres for our associates at hotspots like Mumbai and Pune and we are providing for complete medical assistance where required, in collaboration with hospitals at all locations," Tripathi said.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor, which has already undertaken scheduled annual maintenance programme across both its plants from April 26 to May 14, noted that the company has set standard processes of disinfecting workplace and common areas on daily basis ensuring safety at all times.

Road ministry notifies changes in vehicle rules

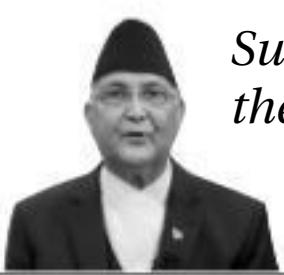
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified certain changes in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 to facilitate the owner of a vehicle for nominating a person in the registration certificate, which would help the motor vehicle to be registered or transferred in the name of the nominee, in case the nominee is mentioned.

According to the notified rules, the owner of a vehicle has to submit proof of the identity of the nominee, in case the nominee is mentioned.

"Where the owner of a motor vehicle dies, the person nominated by the vehicle owner in the certificate of registration or the person

Automakers firm up measures to safeguard workforce



Such a situation has arisen now that the patients cannot be provided care at the hospitals as they are running out of beds.

NEPAL PRIME MINISTER KP SHARMA OLI
DESCRIBING A HARROWING SITUATION WITNESSED IN A KATHMANDU-BASED HOSPITAL

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 03 MAY 2021

09

US, NATO forces start formal Afghan pullout

The final phase of ending America's 'forever war' in Afghanistan after 20 years began with the withdrawal of the last US, NATO troops planned by summer-end

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, 2 MAY

The final phase of ending America's "forever war" in Afghanistan after 20 years formally began Saturday, with the withdrawal of the last US and NATO troops by the end of summer.

President Joe Biden had set 1 May as the official start of the withdrawal of the remaining forces about 2,500-3,500 US troops and about 7,000 NATO soldiers.

Even before Saturday, the herculean task of packing up had begun.

The military has been taking inventory, deciding what is shipped back to the US, what is handed to the Afghan security forces and what is sold as junk in Afghanistan's markets. In recent weeks, the military has been flying out equipment on massive C-17 cargo planes.

The US is estimated to have spent more than \$2 trillion in Afghanistan in the past two decades, according to the Costs of War project at

Brown University, which documents the hidden costs of the US military engagement.

Defense department officials and diplomats said the withdrawal has involved closing smaller bases over the last year.

They said that since Biden announced the end-of-summer withdrawal date in mid-April, only roughly 60 military personnel had left the country.

The US and its NATO allies went into Afghanistan together on 7 October, 2001 to hunt the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks who lived under the protection of the country's Taliban rulers. Two months later, the Taliban had been defeated and al-Qaida fighters and their leader, Osama bin Laden, were on the run.

In his withdrawal announcement last month, Biden said the initial mission was accomplished a decade ago when US Navy SEALS killed bin Laden in his hideout in neighboring Pakistan. Since then, al-Qaida has been degraded, while the terrorist



Zachary Peterson, of Sharpsburg, Georgia, and other US soldiers from Bravo 3/15 Fort Stewart, take part in an overwatch operation in support of Afghan soldiers in Wardak Province, Afghanistan. ■ AGENCIES

threat has "metastasized" into a global phenomenon that is not contained by keeping thousands of troops in one country, he said.

Until now the US and NATO have received no promises from the Taliban that they won't attack troops during the pullout.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the Taliban leadership was still mulling over its strategy

The US military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett tweeted late Saturday that there was some ineffective firing in the area of southern Kandahar air base, one of the US military's largest bases. He also said US forces had conducted "precision strikes" against missiles found aimed at the airfield in Kandahar.

"Kandahar Airfield received ineffective indirect fire this afternoon; no injury to personnel or damage to equipment," he tweeted, without attaching blame.

However, he also posted a video clip of Gen. Austin Miller, head of the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, speaking to an Afghan journalist in which he said "a return to violence would be one senseless and tragic," but that coalition troops "have the military means to respond forcefully to any type of attacks."

The insurgent group continues to accuse Washington of breaching the deal it signed with Biden's predecessor more than a year ago.

In that agreement, the US said it would have all troops out by 1 May.

In a statement Saturday, Taliban military spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said the passing of the 1 May deadline for a "complete withdrawal" "opened the way for (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) mujahidin to take every counteraction it deems appropriate against the occupying forces."

However, he said fighters on the battlefield will wait for a decision from the leadership before launching any attacks and that decision will be based on "the sovereignty, values and higher interests of the country."

Violence has spiked in Afghanistan since the February 2020 deal was signed. Peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government, which were part of the agreement, quickly bogged down.

On Friday, a truck bomb in

eastern Logar province killed 21 people, many of them police and students.

Afghans have paid the highest price since 2001, with 47,245 civilians killed, according to the Costs of War project. Millions more have been displaced inside Afghanistan or have fled to Pakistan, Iran and Europe.

Afghanistan's security forces are expected to come under increasing pressure from the Taliban after the withdrawal if no peace agreement is reached in the interim, according to Afghan watchers.

Since the start of the war they have taken heavy losses, with estimates ranging from 66,000 to 69,000 Afghan troops killed.

The Afghan military has been battered by corruption. The US and NATO pay \$4 billion a year to sustain the force.

Some 300,000 Afghan troops are on the books, although the actual number is believed to be lower.

Commanders have been found to inflate the numbers to collect paychecks of so-called "ghost soldiers," according to

the US watchdog monitoring Washington's spending in Afghanistan.

Still, the Afghan defense ministry and presidential palace in separate statements have said that Afghanistan's security forces are in good shape to defend against Taliban advances.

Last year was the only year US and NATO troops did not suffer a loss.

The Defense Department says 2,442 US troops have been killed and 20,666 wounded since 2001.

It is estimated that over 3,800 US private security contractors have been killed.

The Pentagon does not track their deaths. The conflict also has killed 1,144 personnel from NATO countries.

The Taliban, meanwhile, are at their strongest since being ousted in 2001.

In the Afghan capital and throughout the country, there is a growing fear that chaos will follow the departure of the last foreign troops. After billions of dollars and decades of war, many Afghans wonder at whether it was worth it.

Deadly tanker fire kills 7, injures 14 in Kabul

KABUL, MAY 2

A searing blaze that roared through several fuel tankers on the northern edge of the Afghan capital of Kabul killed seven people and injured 14 others, the Interior Ministry said Sunday.

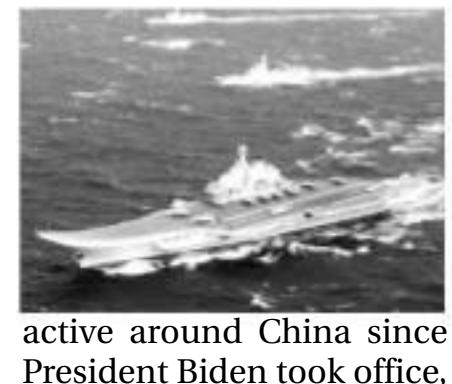
Investigators were combing through the dozens of tankers that lay in smoldering ruins and a gas station caught in the flames that roared through the area late Saturday, said ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

There was no immediate indication of whether it was an accident or sabotage. It came on the same day that the US and NATO officially began the final phase of a withdrawal from Afghanistan, ending a nearly 20-year military engagement.

All 2,500-3,500 American soldiers and about 7,000 NATO allied forces will be out of Afghanistan at the latest by 11 September, the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks in the United States that first brought them into the country. Arian said the fire began when a spark set a fuel tanker ablaze. Several tankers nearby were quickly engulfed, sending giant flames and plumes of smoke into the night sky.

China's carrier group conducts exercises in South China Sea

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 2 MAY



China's Shandong aircraft carrier group has recently conducted routine annual exercises in the South China Sea, the People's Liberation Army said Sunday, after Beijing criticised the US for sending Navy ships into the strategic area.

The Chinese Defence Ministry last week urged the US to restrain its front-line forces in the air and seas near China. US reconnaissance aircraft and warships have become more

active around China since President Biden took office, it said.

The South China Sea is particularly contentious because China's smaller neighbours also have competing claims to one of the world's busiest sea lanes, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. China

In the future, the Chinese navy will continue to hold similar exercises as planned, said Gao.

PRAYER FOR PEACE



People pray in memory of people killed in intense fighting during a border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as they gather in the central square of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. ■ AP

Officials scrutinised as Israel mourns 45 killed at festival

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, 2 MAY



Officials came under growing scrutiny Sunday for ignoring warnings about safety lapses at one of Israel's most visited holy sites, as the country mourned 45 ultra-Orthodox Jews killed in a stampede at a festival there.

The disaster at Mount Meron also heated up the debate over the role of the ultra-Orthodox minority in Israel and the refusal of some of its leaders to acknowledge the authority of the state.

The festival had drawn some 100,000 people, most of them ultra-Orthodox Jews,

after powerful ultra-Orthodox politicians reportedly pressured Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others to lift attendance restrictions.

On Sunday, a group of retired police commissioners called on the prime minister to launch an independent

commission with wide-ranging powers to investigate.

The body would have the authority to probe senior politicians and decision-makers, going beyond a Justice Ministry inquiry now underway that is looking into possible misconduct by police offi-

cials at the site.

The increasingly acrimonious blame game comes during a political power struggle between Netanyahu and former allies-turned-foes bent on toppling him. After inconclusive elections in March, Netanyahu's chances of forming a ruling coalition and staying in power seem to be waning. His ultra-Orthodox political allies would feature prominently in any Netanyahu-led government.

The stampede, the deadliest civil disaster in Israel's history, took place early Friday during a festival called Lag BaOmer on Mount Meron in northern Israel. The site is

believed to be the burial place of prominent second century sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. The annual springtime celebrations are marked by the lighting of large bonfires, singing and dancing.

This year's festivities went ahead despite national coronavirus restrictions that prevent assemblies of more than 500 people outdoors, and longstanding criticism by police and health authorities in recent years about the safety of mass assemblies at the site.

The site is ostensibly managed by the Religious Services Ministry's National Center for Holy Places. Israel

Turkish police say top Islamic State group figure captured

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISTANBUL, 2 MAY

A close aide of killed Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been caught in Istanbul, police said Sunday.

The Afghan national, only identified by the codename Basim, was detained in the Atasehir district on the city's Asian side on Wednesday, according to an Istanbul police statement.

News reports of the joint operation with Turkey's intelligence agency said the suspect had been involved in

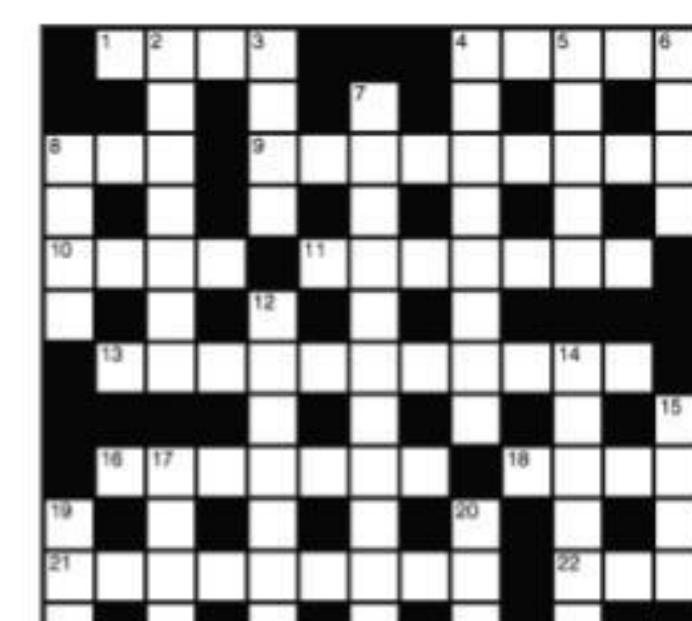
helping hide al-Baghdadi in Syria's Idlib province after the fall of the group in 2019.

Al-Baghdadi was killed in a raid on his Syrian hideout by US special forces in October 2019.

Turkish media published a photograph of a balding, bearded man in a light coat following the arrest and an earlier image, purportedly of the same person, showing a long-haired, heavily bearded man in military fatigues wielding a curved sword. Turkey regularly detains IS suspects, many allegedly planning attacks in the country.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1. Make weary through excess (4)
4. Agitates (5)
5. Cooking vessel (3)
9. Financial obligation (9)
10. Ship's company (4)
11. Width (7)
13. Hollow (11)
16. Full of remorse (7)
18. Foot part (4)
21. Stamp out (9)
22. Appropriate (3)
23. Scope (5)
24. Go away! (4)

DOWN
1. Ether.
2. Portable light (7)
3. Shout (4)
4. Stretchy trousers (3,5)
5. Fool (5)
6. Hebridean island (4)
7. Take responsibility (3,5)
8. Light kiss (4)
12. Calming drug (8)
14. Herb (7)
15. Oversupply (4)
17. Killed (5)
19. Bring up (4)
20. Information (4)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23253230

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 08001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383383, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Air

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

SCRABBLE®

BRAND

G R A M S I

S O R L L T R

C I I S O M

M N R A L I S

D I A Y A L I

RACK 1 RACK 2 RACK 3 RACK 4

Triple Word Score Double Word Score

PAR SCORE 75-85

by JUDD

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

S C U R V Y E F F E T E R A L N B O W F O R T U N E JUDD'S TOTAL 185

RACK 1 = 17 RACK 2 = 36 RACK 3 = 70 RACK 4 = 70

Instructions Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each rack.



We want to get to a position, at the end of June, where we can get life back as close to normal as possible

UK FOREIGN SECRETARY DOMINIC RAAB

WARNING PEOPLE TO REMAIN CAREFUL IN THE LAST LAP OF THE PROCESS

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	26 R
HONG KONG	25	23 R
TOKYO	21	10 H
LONDON	12	7 R
DUBAI	37	28 R
SAN FRANCISCO	22	12 H
NEW YORK	21	16 R
MOSCOW	18	5 R

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

THUMBNAILS



Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate the Orthodox Easter this year on Sunday. Russian President Vladimir Putin attends the Easter service in the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, Russia.

Spain seizes 7 tonnes of hashish: A gang trying to smuggle seven tonnes of hashish into Spain was intercepted in one of the country's largest drug busts this year, Spanish police said on Sunday.

Black bear kills woman: A black bear killed a Colorado woman on Friday in what is just the fourth fatal mauling since records began 60 years ago. The 39-year-old woman was found on Friday night by her boyfriend, who went searching for her.

Chile surpasses 1.2 mn Covid cases: Chile has surpassed 1.2 million cases of Covid-19, Chilean Health Minister Enrique Paris announced on Saturday. In last 24 hours, 6,469 new cases were registered.

Nine arrested in London: Nine people have been arrested after crowds descended in London for Extinction Rebellion (XR), 'Kill the Bill' demonstrations.

IANS

Biden's 'big blunder' creates 'grave situation': N Korea

An official said Biden made 'a big blunder' by characterising North's nuclear arsenal as a threat to US



Commuters watch a TV showing a file image of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Joe Biden during a news program at the Suseo Railway Station in Seoul. ■ AP

North Korea on Sunday warned the United States will face a very grave situation because President Joe Biden made a big blunder in his recent speech by calling the North a security threat and revealing his intent to maintain a hostile policy against it.

Last week, Biden, in his first address to Congress, called North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs serious threats to American and world security and said he'll work with allies to address those problems through diplomacy and stern deterrence.

His statement clearly reflects his intent to keep enforcing the hostile policy toward the DPRK as it had been done by the US for over half a century, Kwon Jong Gun, a senior North Korean Foreign Ministry official, said in a statement.

DPRK stands for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official

name. It is certain that the US chief executive made a big blunder in the light of the present-day viewpoint, Kwon said.

Now that the keynote of the US new DPRK policy has become clear, we will be compelled to press for corresponding measures, and with time the US will find itself in a very grave situation. Kwon

still didn't specify what steps North Korea would take, and his statement could be seen as an effort to apply pressure on the Biden administration as it's shaping up its North Korea policy.

The White House said Friday administration officials had completed a review of US policy toward North Korea, saying Biden plans to veer from

the approaches of his two most recent predecessors as he tries to stop North Korea's nuclear program.

Press secretary Jen Psaki did not detail findings of the review, but suggested the administration would seek a middle ground between Donald Trump's grand bargain and Barack Obama's strategic patience approaches.

Kwon's statement didn't mention Psaki's comments.

After a series of high-profile nuclear and missile tests in 2016-17, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un launched summit diplomacy with Trump on the future of his growing nuclear arsenal.

But that diplomacy remains stalled for about two years over differences in how much sanctions relief North Korea could win in return for limited denuclearization steps.

In January, Kim threatened to enlarge his nuclear arsenal and build more high-tech weapons targeting the US mainland, saying the fate of bilateral ties would depend on whether it abandons its hos-

tile policy.

In March, he conducted short-range ballistic missile tests for the first time in a year, though he still maintains a moratorium on bigger weapons launches.

If Pyongyang agrees to working-level talks, the starting point of negotiations would be a freeze of North Korean testing and development of nuclear capabilities and delivery systems, Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said.

If, on the other hand, Kim shuns diplomacy and opts for provocative tests, Washington will likely expand sanctions enforcement and military exercises with allies.

Also Sunday, an unidentified North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman vowed a strong, separate response to a recent State Department statement that it would push to promote accountability for the Kim regime over its egregious human rights situation.

He called the statement a preparation for all-out showdown with us.

Tehran involved a prisoner swap in exchange for the release of \$7 billion in frozen Iranian funds.

The Americans accepted to pay \$7 billion and swap four Iranians who were active in bypassing sanctions for four American spies who have served part of their sentences, said the official in an on-screen crawl.

The US State Department spokesman Ned Price immediately denied the Iranian TV report.

Reports that a prisoner swap deal has been reached are not true, Price said. As we have said, we always raise the cases of Americans detained or missing in Iran. We will not stop until we are able to reunite them with their families.

Price did not elaborate. Tehran holds four known Americans now in prison. They include Baquer and Siyamak Namazi, environmentalist Morad Tahbaz and Iranian-American businessman Emad Shargi.

State TV also quoted the official as saying a deal had been reached for the United Kingdom to pay 400 million pounds to see the release of British-Iranian woman Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Iran says reaches deals to release prisoners; US denies



ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEHRAN, 2 MAY

Iran will free prisoners with Western ties in Iran in exchange for billions of dollars from the United States and the United Kingdom, state television reported Sunday. The US immediately denied the report, while the UK did not respond.

The state TV report quoted an anonymous official just as Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei began giving what authorities earlier described as an important speech.

However, Khamenei did not immediately discuss any proposed swap amid negotiations in Vienna over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.

The official quoted by Iranian state TV said a deal made between the US and

Germany gives \$6 million to help Libya with vaccination



AGENCIES
TRIPOLI, 2 MAY

cines for the vulnerable, including those in remote areas as well as migrants and refugees.

The fund will also help establish a reliable cold chain in the North African country, boost its coordination capacity, train 6,000 workers and raise public awareness of the benefits and risks of vaccination, the embassy said.

The aid, provided via the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), will help vaccinate 4.8 million people, said the embassy.

The 19-month project will ensure quicker access to vac-

Over 100 million Americans fully vaccinated against Covid

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
WASHINGTON, 2 MAY

More than 100 million adult Americans have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 as of Saturday, according to data of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The fully vaccinated account for 30.5 per cent of the US population. Xinhua reported More than 144 million Americans received at least one Covid-19 shot, accounting for 43.6 per cent of the population, according to the CDC.

About 240 million Covid-19 vaccine shots have been administered across the country by Saturday, while more than 308 million Covid-19 vaccine doses have been distributed, CDC data show. While the overall number

of lives lost to Covid-19 in the US has eclipsed 575,000, deaths have plummeted to an average of about 670 per day from a peak of around 3,400 in mid-January. Over 55 per cent of adults have received at least one dose, up from 30 per cent a month ago.

The vaccine by Pfizer/BioNTech has received emergency use authorisation for people 16 and older, while those by Moderna and Johnson & Johnson are authorised for people 18 and older.

Pfizer has submitted for an amendment to its vaccine's emergency use authorisation by the Food and Drug Administration to extend authorization to people ages 12 to 15, while Moderna says it expects its vaccine to be authorised for people 12 and older this summer.

We don't have any final numbers, but regarding the known more than 50 injured colleagues and more than 250 detentions, it's clear that we were far removed from a peaceful 1 May, Stephan Kelm, Berlin's deputy chief of the police union.

Protesters threw bottles and rocks at officers, and burned garbage containers and wooden pallets in the streets.

There's a nightly curfew in most parts of Germany currently because of the high number of coronavirus infections. But political protests and religious gatherings are exempt from the curfew.

are clear signs that it's not about political expression but that the right to assemble was abused to commit severe crimes."

There's a nightly curfew in most parts of Germany currently because of the high number of coronavirus infections. But political protests and religious gatherings are exempt from the curfew.

Berlin May Day riots: Over 50 police injured, 250 detained

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 2 MAY



numbers, but regarding the known more than 50 injured colleagues and more than 250 detentions, it's clear that we were far removed from a peaceful 1 May, Stephan Kelm, Berlin's deputy chief of the police union.

What happened on April 15 is a tragedy that forever altered too many lives, and only by coming together to grieve, honour, and call for action can we move forward, he said.

The event, held at a city stadium, featured city, state and federal representatives, Indianapolis-area interfaith leaders

and Sikh community members.

As your governor, I stand with you in support of the Sikh community, with each of the families of the victims, with the hundreds of others who are feeling the impact of this tragedy, and with our law enforcement and first responders who face it daily so most of us don't have to, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb said.

"And we stand with this city and the entire community, still reeling from the impact of that terrible day."

"I'm grateful for each person here today to honour lives so tragically lost, to show support for survivors and to extend a comforting hand to the families and friends who were taken from us far too soon," he said.

PRISMATIC



A person, centre left, sits on a bench between rows of tulips at Lakeland Flowers U-pick tulip farm, in Abbotsford, British Columbia. ■ AP

Indiana's Sikh community honours victims of FedEx mass shooting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 2 MAY



Sikhs in the US state of Indiana have held a memorial service to honour the eight people, including four community members, who were killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx facility last month.

Brandon Scott Hole, 19, a former worker at the Indianapolis FedEx facility, killed eight people on April 15 before killing himself.

Four of those killed were Sikhs, including three women.

The memorial service on Saturday was opened with ardas, a Sikh prayer.

We are so thankful to everyone who came together to attend and help put on this important event, said Balwinder Singh, an Indian

and Sikh community members.

As your governor, I stand with you in support of the Sikh community, with each of the families of the victims, with the hundreds of others who are feeling the impact of this tragedy, and with our law enforcement and first responders who face it daily so most of us don't have to, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb said.

"And we stand with this city and the entire community, still reeling from the impact of that terrible day."

"I'm grateful for each person here today to honour lives so tragically lost, to show support for survivors and to extend a comforting hand to the families and friends who were taken from us far too soon," he said.

Black candidate challenges political status quo in Spain

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MADRID, 2 MAY



record that weighs against their chances of getting a residence permit. His image at night when we were on the boat always haunts me, said Serigne Mbaya, who is now a Spanish citizen.

The sole fact that he is dead and I'm alive is because of an unjust law that condemns and punishes us. Some of us make it. Some can spend 20 years in a vicious circle without papers." Mbaya is running on a ticket with the anti-aus-

terity UnitedWe Can party, the junior partner in the country's ruling, Socialist-led coalition. Only a handful of Black people have succeeded in at the top level of Spanish politics.

Equatorial Guinea-born Rita Bosaho, now the director of racial and ethnic diversity at Spain's Equality Ministry, in 2015 became the first Black national lawmaker in four decades of democratic rule. Luc Andr Diouf, who also migrated from Senegal, also

won a seat in Spain's Lower House in 2019.

At a lower, regional level, Mbaya wants to show that Madrid is diverse. That a Black person is running in the lists has surprised many. In that way, this is making many people think," he said.

The party blames the minors a total of 269 people in the region's population of 6.7 million for increased insecurity. Judges have ruled that the billboards fall under free speech. But when Vox is accused by opponents of being racist, the party says its crusade is only against illegal migration and that a racist party wouldn't have a mixed-race spokesman in north-eastern Catalonia's regional parliament.

The ascent of the far-right and the polarization in social media has normalised hate speech in Spain, he said. The Black Lives Matter movement led last year to some of the largest protests against racism seen in Spain.

Two people shot at Wisconsin casino; gunman in custody

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GREEN BAY, 2 MAY

A gunman killed two people at a Wisconsin casino restaurant and seriously wounded a third before he was killed by police late Saturday, in what authorities said appeared to be a targeted attack.

Brown County Sheriff's Lt. Kevin Pawlak said investigators believe the gunman was seeking a specific person he was angry at.

He was targeting a specific victim who was not there, but he decided to still shoot some of the victim's friends or co-workers, it appears.

Neither the gunman nor the shooting victims were immediately identified.

Pawlak wasn't sure if the shooter was a former employee of the restaurant, but said it appears there's some relationship that had to do with employment. Whether or not they all worked there, we're still working on him.

The wounded person was being treated at a Milwaukee hospital, Pawlak said.

The attack happened around 7:30 pm at the Oneida Casino, operated by the Oneida Nation on the western side of Green Bay, with the casino tweeting that an active shooter was on the scene.

Questioning exclusivity of Mt Koubra

Debates and conflicts are raging over attempts to declare the sacred mountain in Manipur as a 'protected site'



THONGKHOLAL HAOKIP

The politics of forest reservation, protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries is nothing new ever since the Indian Forest Act of 1878 was passed. The declaration of certain areas as "reserved" or "protected" forests and wildlife sanctuaries was met with strong opposition from local populations, who are the user communities of such resources. The intense debate on the Act effectively came to an end when the Government of India permitted the involvement of local people in the management of forests and its resources in 1990.

In North-east India, there are special provisions in several clauses under Article 371 of the Constitution that give hill communities the right to manage forests through certain committees and particularly, the autonomous district councils. In recent years, attempts have been made to declare vast swathes of land

as reserved or protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries in Manipur.

The latest effort to declare Mount Koubra as a "protected site" has become a matter of conflict. It is a prayer mountain for peace and prosperity of the state, historically cutting across religious and cultural divides. Human rights activists on social media, who were against the move, have been allegedly arrested by the police without warrants, while those supporting the case with comments inciting communal violence were let off scot-free. One cannot help but say that it seems like a blatant example of majoritarianism in all its nakedness.

Koubra as 'protected site'

A notification was passed by the department of art and culture, Government of Manipur on 8 April for a field visit in order to verify and undertake necessary measurements or demarcation "in connection with the proposal for declaration of the Sacred Site of Lord Koubra and Lai Pukhri

located at the Koubra Hill Range as protected site". That enraged the foothill settlers in Sadar Hills, and the visiting team were blocked by villagers at Saitu-Gamphazol sub-division.

Due to tensions on the issue, two state ministers met leaders of the Committee on Protection and Preservation of Mt Koubra "on behalf of the state government of Manipur". According to the agreement that was reached between them, "there will be no restriction of pilgrimages or worshippers to Mt Koubra" as has been the practice for ages, and to protect the sacredness and sanctity of the mountain "the traditional and present status of Mt Koubra shall be maintained". The committee also resolved to take steps for eradicating illicit cultivation to preserve the ecosystem and biodiversity of Koubra range.

A day later, however, Chief Minister N Biren Singh denied such an agreement had been made with his government.

It all began on 26 November 2020 when a notification was issued by the art and culture department, Government of Manipur, stating that the "Governor of Manipur is contemplating to declare the Sacred Site of Lord Koubra and Lai Pukhri located at Koubra Hill Range as a protected site under Sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the Manipur Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1976 in the interest of the public". It also added that "any interested person may file his/her objection to the declaration of the said site/monument as protected historical site/area under Sub-section (2) of Section 4 of the above Act within two months from the date of issue of the notification".

The objections

Tongmang Haokip, a retired bureaucrat and chief of Saitu village, was the first to file his objection to the state government on 20 January this year. He claimed that the move would amount to an infringement on his rights and privileges as chief over the ownership of the said area, which was allotted to his forefather by the Manipur Darbar Administrator. The land ownership document states that in the Court of President Manipur Darbar Hills Miscellaneous Case Number 969 of 1946-47, "Luntong Chief of Saitu, the petitioner, is granted the right of ownership of land bounded by Koubra Laikha on the North, Kanglatombi Thumkhong to the South, Imphal River to the East covered within milestone from 113 to 116." The document was signed by one Pearson, IPS MBE, dated 1 June 1947, claimed Haokip in his objection letter.

On 28 January, the Tujang Area Chiefs' Organisation also filed their objection citing five reasons. They claimed that an area of land between 111-and-a-half and 112-and-a-half milestones on the Dimapur-Manipur Road had been recognised as the ownership of Ngullen of Tujang in a case filed in 1947 to the office of Mr Pearson. The group pleaded that "the Koubra hill has been a perennial source of livelihood and food security for the Tujang" area. They also claimed that "the said site has historical as well as primal religious traditions and cultural significance for the Kuki community since time immemorial", and as such "Mt Koubra is an integral part of our cultural heritage, ancestral land and identity".

The Committee on Protection and Preservation of Mt Koubra also opposed the move of the state government, particularly the plan for construction of a temple dedicated to a particular religion on the mountain. The Liangmai Naga Council, Eastern Zone and Eastern Liangmai Chief Association also expressed their displeasure over the "thoughtless act" of the Manipur government on its move to declare Mt Koubra as a "protected site". They also lamented that despite the Liangmai Naga people guarding and protecting the Koubra Hills for centuries, the state government has been deliberately ignoring their rights.

Thus, the attempt to declare Mt Koubra as a "protected site" seems to

be a violation of land ownership and a case of deprivation of the livelihood of hill people.

HAC and Manipur government

The Government of Manipur under Biren Singh has reiterated time and again that Koubra Hill Range is a reserved forest. It may be noteworthy that the Hill Area Committee recently made a pertinent decision in this regard. This committee of the Legislative Assembly of the state, consisting of select members of hill areas, has been established under special provisions of the Constitution. It performs its functions under the Manipur Legislative Assembly (Hill Areas Committee) Order, 1972 to "safeguard the interest of the people of the Hill Areas".

The HAC in its meeting on 11 March this year, under the chairmanship of L Leishio, unanimously resolved that "there is a procedural error in the Declaration of Reserved Forest after 1972. Any declaration of Protected Forest, Reserved Forest and Wildlife Sanctuaries on or after 20 June 1972 shall not be enforced by the Department until the approval of the Hill Areas Committee, since it pertains to Scheduled Matters of Article 371C of the Presidential Order of 1972". It also resolved that "Forest Territorial Maps should be made at par with the existing Revenue District Boundaries for administrative convenience".

The resolution of the HAC came at a crucial time. The Manipur government, however, seems to ignore, as it has in the past, the procedural requirements of scheduled matters that affect the hill people.

The way out

The attempt to declare Mt Koubra in the Sadar Hills as a "protected site" by looking at it from a perspective of cultural and religious exclusivity has invited strong opposition, as discussed above. It is in total disregard to minority cultures, and an attempt to legitimise and impose the majority culture and religion using state machinery. The mountain has always been open for trekking and visitors from all religious communities, who have performed their religious rites without any restriction. The Christians use it as a site for fasting, prayer and penance.

As much as the Meiteis and Hindus have attached great importance to Mt Koubra, many communities surrounding the mountain also have cultural and religious significance attached to it. The primordial culture and religion of the Kukis attach great importance to Mt Koubra. Legend has it that a woman from one clan of the Kukis was married to Koubra and till today, it is claimed that she reveals her presence in the form of incessant rainfall whenever that clan has an important ceremony.

All said and done, one feels the cultural and religious significance of the mountain to all communities must be recognised and *status quo* should be maintained for peace and tranquility in Manipur.

The writer is assistant professor, Centre for the study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

PLUS POINTS

Scribe deaths



The North-east lost two journalists within 24 hours last week from Covid-19 complications, increasing the regional tally of coronavirus victims among media persons to seven. India's total toll has already crossed a hundred journalists, whereas the global tally has touched 1,200 across 76 countries since the pandemic broke out in March 2020.

Assam's talented journalist, Aiyushman Dutta (35) succumbed to Covid-19 aggravated ailments on 26 April at a private hospital. The soft-spoken scribe, who used to work for *The Sentinel*, tested positive some days prior. His attending doctors had advised specific drugs, which were not available in Guwahati. A prolific writer, Dutta was also a founder of the Guwahati International Music Festival.

Just a day before that, Tripura's Tanmoy Chakraborty (42) died of post Covid-19 complications at a private hospital in Agartala. The news editor of *DinRaaj* channel, who had also worked earlier at *North East Now*, *News18 Assam/NE*, *InsideNE*, *Daily Desher Katha* etc, was hospitalised for liver-related problems. Chakraborty returned negative for Covid-19 tests but finally succumbed to various health problems.

The region has earlier lost five journalists to Covid-19, namely Jadu Chutia (Moran-based reporter), Dhaneswar Rabha (news correspondent based in Udaguri), Ashim Dutta (senior journalist based in Silchar), Golap Saikia (radio news presenter from Nagaon) and Jitendra Debbarma (camera person associated with a Kokborok language cable television channel named *Chini Khorang* in Tripura).

According to the Geneva-based media rights and safety body Press Emblem Campaign, Brazil continues to be the worst affected country where more than 180 journalists have lost their battles against Covid-19 complications. Peru remains in the second position with more than 140 media casualties ahead of India. Expressing apprehensions that the situation may worsen for the safety of journalists on the ground due to the pandemic, the PEC advocates adequate compensation to the victim families.

-NAVA THAKURIA

DM apologises



West Tripura district magistrate and collector Shailesh Kumar Yadav, who led the raids at two marriage halls in Agartala last Tuesday, apologised for disrupting the ceremonies, says a report in the Guwahati-based *Assam Tribune*. "If anyone got hurt due to my action, I am apologising for that. I have done this for the larger interest of society. I have taken strict action to give a message to people to maintain the government SOP," Yadav told a local television.

As many as 31 people, including 19 women, were detained from a marriage party in Tripura for violating the night curfew and other Standard Operating Procedures enforced to curb the Covid-19 spread. However, in another raid at a marriage party in the city, no detentions were made. Officials said that Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb has asked chief secretary Manoj Kumar to submit a report about the DM's actions in dealing with the marriage ceremonies defying night curfew and the SOPs.

Tripura chief secretary imposed a night curfew in Agartala Municipal Corporation area from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., 22 April onwards. The order said that in closed spaces, a maximum of 50 per cent of the seating or hall capacity should be allowed for any social, cultural, entertainment or political gathering with a ceiling of 100 persons while in open spaces. Higher numbers may be allowed based on the size of the ground with a ceiling of 200 persons.

All the 31 people were subsequently released from the West Agartala police station. Yadav told the media that a section of policemen, who were hand-in-glove with the marriage parties, allowed holding the ceremonies blatantly violating government orders.

Hindering better predictions

Changes in voting patterns during an election often elude pollsters and their simplistic statistics-based models



PRASENJIT BISWAS

Pollsters are predicting a certain pro-incumbency in Assam. One must say, however, that for the last five years, the continuous scare of being decimated, brought on by Citizenship Amendment Act-induced anxieties, created a situation of the minority and majority coming together in Assam. The main plank of campaigning by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party was keeping the religious minority away from Assam's mainstream.

That said, the Hindus of Assam, with their deep ethnic divisions and disenchantment with other linguistic identities, seemingly failed to be consolidated into a single voting bloc. Therefore, it was possible for Hindu-Muslim joint voting patterns in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys for commonly chosen candidates. One feels such a scenario would benefit

the Opposition alliance or the *Mahajot* headed by the Congress Party.

The *Mahajot* must have anticipated such a recombination of voting blocs as they strategically put candidates to reap the benefits of the same and that is sure to go against the concerted campaigns of the ruling coalition. One feels the joint voting by Bengali Hindus and Muslims in a seat like North Karimganj of Barak Valley in favour of the Congress Party's sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly Kamalakshya Deb Purkaysta, who is seeking a third consecutive term, is a case in point.

Similarly, in Upper Assam's Naharkatia, seemingly combined voting by Hindu Bengali and Assamese people, along with the minorities, presents a picture of failed polarisation. If one also takes a tea garden labourer-dominated seat of Upper Assam like Golaghat, *Mahajot*-Congress Party candidate Bitupon Saikia, a sitting BJP MLA who switched sides,

it brings into question the larger pattern of tribal peoples' voting in Assam. The contentious demand for recognition of Scheduled Tribe status to six communities like Maran, Motok, Ahom, Tai, Santhal and others, which the BJP government could not accomplish despite their electoral promise in 2016, must impact their prospects in Upper Assam. Those communities reportedly did strategic voting this time, unlike 2016, which indicates another rift in the BJP's vote bank. Pollsters have not taken into account such politically germane factors for sure.

A look at the ground from above often creates confusion in understanding the behaviour of voting blocs. That is why pollsters have predicted a huge range, incorporating

the magic figure 64 (from 126 seats) for both the BJP alliance and *Mahajot*, clearly reflecting stochastic uncertainty. Such an uncertainty is reflected in BJP state president Ranjit Kumar Das changing his constituency from Sorbhog to Pathacharkuchi, where he is facing Asom Jatiya Parishad strongman Pabinanda Deka. The booth return-survey cannot really predict who will win the critical constituency, which depends on how many votes the *Mahajot* candidate can take away from both the key contestants there.

Pollsters lacked adequate knowledge of ground realities in selecting their questions, understanding historic trends and also factors that would likely change during the election. Such issues could come in the way of gauging voters' moods on the day of polling, as most people do not reveal their preferences and skirt questions. In a broader sense, pollster predictions and their methodologies need to be explained in a more transparent manner so that people do not remain in the dark about how things might work out. As pollsters make use of statistical techniques and adopt a suitable method of calculation, they have to deal with unknown X-factors. The other important thing is one's personal bias, which cannot be eliminated altogether.

The advanced developments in data science that goes towards an accurate prediction seem to have eluded many of the temporary hiring-based surveyors at the ground level. Nevertheless, the political class takes them seriously as they have something to lose if they don't. Interestingly enough, though elections are a game of numbers, they are not only tokens but representative of a deeper grammar of politics, much of which remains elusive to plain and simplistic empirical observation.

As part of a deeper understanding of poll choices by the electorate, one has to delve into the conflicts of choices by various blocs and individuals. The exact amount of rivalry,

competition and trade-off on the ground is something that often denies a precise count. Voting behaviour based on how my perceived other is going to behave, in the context of Assam, assumes differently placed social and cultural identities and their preferences.

As the BJP had to keep its silence on the CAA, it must make a big difference in their appeal to caste Hindu Assamese voters. Indeed religious minorities and caste Assamese Hindus would stand on the same anti-CAA stance and it is likely that the BJP will not garner their votes to the degree of 2016.

In contrast, Bengali Hindus who looked ahead to the CAA were not happy either as many were deemed "D" voters and incarcerated in detention camps. People have not forgotten how many died during the course of the whole National Register of Citizens exercise and also how many are still in detention camps. The biggest detention camp at Matia was also a point of concern.

A large section of Bengali Hindu voters with Assamese Hindus and Bengali Muslims may have coalesced into voting against the ruling party. To stop such a slide, the BJP's chief election manager Himanta Biswa Sarma tried his best by promising no harm to Assamese Hindus or Bengali Hindus. But his tirade against "miyas" and immigrants also created some amount of fear among Bengalis in general, as Bengali Hindus and Muslims are in the same predicament for both the NRC and CAA.

Pollsters did not identify such issues but rather went by rhetorical claptrap. Counting such arbitrary factors to determine voting behaviour remains the primary example of statistical mischief that can introduce an unnatural bias in predictions.

The writer is a philosopher and an independent political analyst based in Shillong. This article was written before the official counting of votes to the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly

the Opposition alliance or the *Mahajot* headed by the Congress Party.

The *Mahajot* must have anticipated such a recombination of voting blocs as they strategically put candidates to reap the benefits of the same and that is sure to go against the concerted campaigns of the ruling coalition.

One feels the joint voting by Bengali Hindus and Muslims in a seat like North Karimganj of Barak Valley in favour of the Congress Party's sitting Member of the Legislative Assembly Kamalakshya Deb Purkaysta, who is seeking a third consecutive term, is a case in point.

Similarly, in Upper Assam's Naharkatia, seemingly combined voting by Hindu Bengali and Assamese people, along with the minorities, presents a picture of failed polarisation. If one also takes a tea garden labourer-dominated seat of Upper Assam like Golaghat, *Mahajot*-Congress Party candidate Bitupon Saikia, a sitting BJP MLA who switched sides,

it brings into question the larger pattern of tribal peoples' voting in Assam. The contentious demand for recognition of Scheduled Tribe status to six communities like Maran, Motok, Ahom, Tai, Santhal and others, which the BJP government could not accomplish despite their electoral promise in 2016, must impact their prospects in Upper Assam. Those communities reportedly did strategic voting this time, unlike 2016, which indicates another rift in the BJP's vote bank. Pollsters have not taken into account such politically germane factors for sure.

A look at the ground from above often creates confusion in understanding the behaviour of voting blocs. That is why pollsters have predicted a huge range, incorporating

the exact amount of rivalry,

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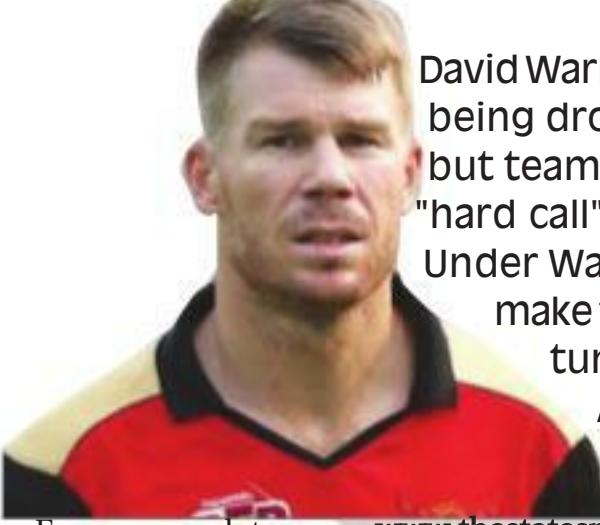
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'HARD CALL'



David Warner (*in photo*) is "shocked and disappointed" after being dropped from the SunRisers Hyderabad playing XI but team's Director of Cricket Tom Moody defended the "hard call", saying someone had to miss out and it's him. Under Warner, SRH lost five out of six games. "We had to make the hard call, somebody has to miss out and unfortunately it's him. He's shocked and disappointed."

"Anyone would be disappointed," Moody said.

For more updates www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Hindustan FC owner DK Bose dies in Delhi: Veteran football administrator and Hindustan FC owner Dilip Kumar Bose died at a local hospital here after battling COVID-19. Bose died at the Indian Spinal Injury Centre at Vasant Kunj, New Delhi on Saturday evening. He was in his early 70s. His father died on April 29, the day Bose was admitted to the hospital. Bose was part of Executive Committee of the then Delhi Soccer Association.

GM Khan dies in Pune: The 1982 Asian Games gold medalist rider Colonel Gulam Mohammad Khan (Retired) died on Saturday in Pune. The renowned rider, 74, had joined the Indian Military Academy in 1973. A year later he was judged the Best Rider of the Academy and awarded Polo and Riding colors.

Saba Karim joins Delhi Capitals: Former India wicketkeeper and national selector Saba Karim was on Sunday appointed Indian Premier League side Delhi Capitals' head of talent search. Karim, till January, was BCCI's General Manager (Cricket Operations).

CIA denies NOC: South Africa batsman Rassie van der Dussen is unlikely to join IPL team Rajasthan Royals after failing to obtain a No Objection Certificate from his country's cricket board. According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, the 32-year-old was not issued the NOC due to an unspecified injury.

DDCA donation: The Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) on Sunday announced it will be donating 100 units each of non-invasive ventilators and oxygen concentrators to the Delhi government for distribution across health-care facilities in the national capital.

Online abuse: Lionel Messi used his social media platform with 200 million followers to call for action against online abuse. The Barcelona forward's message on Saturday coincides with a four-day boycott of social media by soccer leagues, clubs and players in England to protest against online racial abuse and discrimination.

Barca reach WCL final: Barcelona reached the Women's Champions League final after Lieke Martens scored twice in a 2-1 victory over Paris Saint-Germain in the second leg of their semifinal on Sunday. Barca advanced by an aggregate score of 3-2 and will play either Chelsea or Bayern Munich in the final on May 16 in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Kishan Rungta dies of COVID-19: Former BCCI selector and Rajasthan captain Kishan Rungta died of COVID-19 at a hospital in Jaipur. He was 88. The veteran administrator tested positive for the virus last week and died on Saturday. "Former Rajasthan first class cricketer and ex-national selector Kishan Rungta has died of COVID-19," a BCCI source confirmed to PTI.

Atletico eke out win at Elche, Madrid stay 2 points back



Atletico Madrid needed a goal by Marcos Llorente (*in photo*) and a penalty miss by Elche in injury time to grind out a 1-0 win and ensure it stayed at the top of the Spanish league.

Real Madrid stayed two points back after late goals by der Milito and Casemiro defeated a feisty Osasuna 2-0 on Saturday. Other than Llorente's first-half goal, Atletico relied on its defense and almost paid for it in the final moments when Llorente used his arm to disrupt a cross into the box.

But Diego Simeone's side dodged another costly stumble away from home when Elche's Fidel Chaves fired the resulting penalty kick off the left post. It was an obligation to win today, Llorente said after his 12th league goal of the season.

These three points give us a lot of strength for what's

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Agarwal's unbeaten 99 pushes Punjab Kings to 166/6 against DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD, 2 MAY



Stand-in captain Mayank Agarwal's swashy 99 took Punjab Kings to 166 for six against Delhi Capitals in the IPL here on Sunday.

It was a brilliant display of clean hitting from Agarwal who used the straight bat effectively in his crucial knock comprising eights fours and four sixes. Delhi Capitals kept things tight in the powerplay, conceding 39 runs and sending back Prabhadeep Singh (12) and the mighty Chris Gayle (13).

Gayle missed a fast full toss from Rabada after pulling the South African for a massive six.

Agarwal, leading the side in the absence of in-form skipper KL Rahul, steered the innings alongside IPL debutant Dawid Malan (26) as the two shared a 52-run partnership.

Capitals took total control of the game in the 14th over when Axar Patel found the stumps of Malan before Deepak Hooda ran himself out following a mix up with Agarwal at the other end, leaving Punjab at 88 for four.

Agarwal did not get much support from the other end thereafter but he took it upon himself to take the team to a competitive total. Agarwal making a slight room for himself and sending Rabada for a straight six in the penultimate over was one of the best shots of his innings.

He was brutal on Avesh

severe abdomen pain last night and after not responding to medication, he was taken to emergency room for further tests which revealed that he was diagnosed with acute appendicitis," the team said in a statement.

"It will be resolved surgically and for safety measures, he has been transferred to the hospital for the same," it added.

Rahul is expected to operate on Sunday night at the Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai. The team expects him to return to action within a week or 10 days.

"Post his surgery, his recovery will be in a bubble so that he remains in a protected environment (amid the COVID-19 pandemic)," said a BCCI source.

"K L Rahul complained of

SCOREBOARD	
Rajasthan Royals Innings	
Jos Buttler b Sandeep Sharma 124	
Vijay Shankar b Chris Morris 19	
M Samson c Samad b Vijay Shankar 48	
Ryan Parag not out 15	
David Miller not out 7	
Extras: (LB-5, W-8, NB-1) 14	
Total: (3 wkt, 20 Ovrs) 220	
Fall of Wickets: 17-1, 167-2, 209-3.	
Bowler: Bhuvneshwar 4-0-37-0, Sandeep 4-0-50-1, Axar 4-0-24-1, Khaleel 4-0-11-0, Vijay 3-0-42-1, Nabi 1-0-21-0.	
Sunrisers Hyderabad Innings:	
Manish Pandey b Mustafizur 31	
J Bairstow c Rawat b Tewatia 30	
Wicket after the Royals lost	
opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (12) cheaply. While the Englishman hit the ball 11 fours apart from eight maximums, Samson also had four fours and two sixes to his credit.	
SCOREBOARD	
Punjab Kings Innings	
P Singh c Smith b Rabada 12	
Mayank Agarwal not out 99	
Chris Gayle b Rabada 13	
Deepak Hooda run out 1	
S Khan c Hetmyer b Avesh Khan 4	
Chris Jordan c Lalit Yadav b Rabada 2	
Harpreet Brar not out 4	
Extras: 5 (b 0, lb 2, w 3, nb 0, p 0)	
Total: (6 wkt, 20 Ov) 166	
Fall of Wickets: 17-1, 35-2, 87-3, 88-4, 129-5, 143-6	
Bowler: Ishant Sharma 4-0-37-0, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-6-0, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-36-3, Avesh Khan 4-0-39-1, Lalit Yadav 3-0-25-0, Axar Patel 4-0-21-1.	

SCOREBOARD

Rajasthan Royals Innings

Jos Buttler b Sandeep Sharma 124

Vijay Shankar c Miller b Morris 8

Kedar Jadhav b Chris Morris 19

M Nabi c Rawat b Mustafizur 17

A Samad c Rawat b Chris Morris 10

R Khan c Morris b Mustafizur 0

B Kumar not out 14

Sandeep Sharma not out 8

Extras: (LB-1, W-7) 8

Total: (8 wkt, 20 Ovrs) 165

Fall of Wickets: 57-1, 70-2, 85-3, 105-4, 127-5, 142-6, 142-7, 143-8

Bowler: Kartik 4-0-32-1, Mustafizur 4-0-20-3, Cheetan 4-0-38-0, Chris Morris 4-0-29-3, Rahul 4-0-45-1.

Unadkat gives 10% of IPL earnings to fight Covid

NEW DELHI, 2 MAY

Rajasthan Royals' (RR) left-arm fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat has pledged 10 per cent of his Indian Premier League (IPL) match salary to help the country in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a video shared on Saturday, the 29-year-old bowler said, "I am contributing 10% of my IPL salary towards providing essential medical resources for those in need. My family will make sure it reaches the right places."

Unadkat, who led the India Under-19 attack in the 2010 World Cup in New Zealand and has been with RR since 2018, said, "I would like to share something I have been feeling these last couple of weeks. Our country is going through a lot of distress and, for that matter, I know how privileged we are to be in this position to play cricket."

"I also know how painful a personal loss can be and how worrying it can be to witness your close friends fighting for their lives. I've been through both," IANS

opportunity to see us win in 2019 and he passed away. All I want to do is continue to make him proud. Make my family proud," said Pollard.

Asked if he was counting the number of sixes he kept on scoring, the West Indian said, "No I didn't. Actually, I was just watching the scoreboard, knowing that I had to hit sixes in order to win the game."

Pollard, who struck the fastest fifty in this edition of the IPL, taking just 17 balls, said that as a cricketer, they are used to playing such knocks. "As a cricketer you have to evolve and teams come up with different plans and you play around the world and you see different things they use. Playing international cricket as well has helped in terms of a confidence perspective," said the big hitter who had a strike rate of nearly 256 on Saturday.

"All I want to do is make my father and my family proud," said an emotional Pollard after the match on Saturday.

"The last couple of months have been very difficult for me losing a close person, a dear person to my heart who introduced me to cricket. He was here a couple of years ago in the IPL as well. He got the

Star-studded RCB stand in way of KKR revival

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD, 2 MAY



Star-studded Royal Challengers Bangalore would look to get their mojo back when they face struggling Kolkata Knight Riders who need a complete overhaul for their IPL revival here on Monday.

From leading the table with four wins on the trot, the Virat Kohli-led team has slipped to third spot at the halfway stage after suffering two defeats from their last three matches.

In fact, RCB would have lost three in a row if pacer Mohammed Siraj had not defended 14 runs in the final over against Delhi Capitals' explosive duo of Rishabh Pant and Shriman Hetmyer.

The onus would be on their fabled batting lineup of Kohli, AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell to start firing once again and put pressure on the KKR batsmen.

Talented opener Debut Padikkal would also be keen to get back among runs as he has not clicked after his unbeatent 101 against Rajasthan Royals.

Having started the season with much promise under Eoin Morgan, KKR so far have failed to inspire, suffering five defeats in seven matches. They are at the sixth spot in the eight-team table, staring at early elimination for a third season in a row. The biggest letdown for KKR this season has been their top-order batting as the top three Shubman Gill, Nitish

Rana, Rahul Tripathi have failed

to give the team a decent start.

Supremely-talented Gill is struggling in the T20 scheme of things and has failed to convert his starts at the top, while the likes of Nitish Rana and Rahul Tripathi have been patchy.

Head coach Brendon McCullum had questioned their batsmen's "intent" after they posted a below-par 154/6 to go down to Delhi Capitals by seven wickets in their last match.

At the same stage, under Dinesh Karthik in 2020 in UAE, the team had fared a shade better with four wins and three defeats, before he relinquished the captaincy to England World Cup-winning skipper Morgan.

Morgan needs to take

some tough calls with regards to his top-order, something he has stuck to since match number one against Sunrisers Hyderabad this season.

It's a pity that KKR are yet to give an opportunity to new signing Karun Nair who has a strike rate of 155.49 and has two centuries as a T20 opener. They also have uncapped talented batsman Venkatesh Iyer.

The bowling on the other hand has impressed, especially the spin duo of Sunil Narine and Kuldeep Yadav.

Shivam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarthy, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer and Pawan Negi.

RCB: Virat Kohli (C), AB de Villiers (W), Devdutt Padikkal, Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Pavan Deshpande, Shabbaz Ahmed, MS Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Daniel Sams, Harshal Patel, Glenn Maxwell, Sachin Baby, Rajat Patidar, Mohammed Azharuddin, Kyle Jamieson (c), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell.

Match starts: 7.30pm

Substitutes put Inter on brink of Serie A title

AGENCIES

ROME, 2 MAY

A Europa League final in its first season. An almost-certain Serie A trophy in its second year.

Just like at Juventus and Chelsea, Antonio Conte is leaving his mark at Inter Milan.

The Nerazzurri won at last-placed Crotone 2-0 on Saturday to give themselves a chance to clinch the Serie A before the weekend ends.

Inter moved 13 points clear of city rival AC Milan with four games to play. If third-placed Atalanta doesn't win at Sassuolo on Sunday, Inter will seal its first league title since 2010.

What's more, Inter is poised to end a nine-year stranglehold on the Serie A title by Juventus with Conte himself having started the Bianconeri's run.