





## SHORT TAKES

**32-year-old man kills pregnant wife in Delhi, arrested**

**New Delhi:** An eight-month pregnant woman was allegedly shot dead by her husband here on Tuesday, police said, adding the accused has been arrested. The incident took place in southeast Delhi's Nizamuddin area. The deceased, Saina (29), who had been jailed in a drug case, was released on bail on Saturday because of her pregnancy, they said. "We received a call about the incident of firing at 10.42 am," deputy commissioner of police (Southeast) R.P. Meena said. One more person, identified as Shahadat, who used to work with Saina, was injured in the incident. "A total of five bullets were fired out of which four hit Saina and one hit Shahadat," Meena said. He further said that both the victims were admitted at Safdarjung hospital where Saina was declared brought dead and Shahadat was undergoing treatment. The accused, Waseem (32), works as a financier and doesn't have any criminal background, police said. — PTI

**Over 1,500 fined for not wearing face mask**

**New Delhi:** Over 1,500 people were booked on Tuesday in Delhi for allegedly not wearing face masks, police said. According to data shared by police, a total of 1,524 challans were issued on Tuesday for mask violation in the national capital, while 117 people were fined for not adhering to the social distancing norms. Four challans were issued for spitting, police said, adding that a total of 1,645 challans were issued on Tuesday. A total of 6,34,299 challans have been issued in the national capital since June 15 last year for violations of anti-Covid guidelines by people, they said. The Delhi Police also distributed 856 face masks to needy people on Tuesday. — PTI

**Doctor, 2 aides held for hoarding Remdesivir**

**Ghaziabad:** A joint team of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) and Kotwali police have arrested three men, including a doctor working in Lucknow's King George's Medical University, for allegedly hoarding Remdesivir injections here, police said on Tuesday. Mohammad Altamash (42), a resident of Delhi's Nizamuddin, had earlier worked at AIIMS Delhi and regularly delivered lectures to medical students in various medical colleges. His two accomplices — Kumail of Kailla Bhatta in Ghaziabad and Jazib Ali of Bara Hindu Rao in Delhi — have been nabbed along with the doctor as the trio were searching for family members who were in dire need of the life-saving injection for Covid-19 patients and charged between ₹30,000 to 40,000 per injection. Altamash was black marketing Remdesivir injections after procuring vials from medical stores on doctors' prescriptions. — PTI

**Never asked for 100-bed facility at 5-star hotel for judges: HC***Delhi govt withdraws order, claims it was issued without CM's knowledge***AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

The Delhi high court on Tuesday said it had never asked for Covid facilities at a five-star hotel and ordered the city government to "immediately withdraw" its decision to assign 100 rooms at Ashoka Hotel exclusively for judges and their families.

"When did we ask for a 100-bed facility at a five-star hotel? We had only said if a judicial officer or a judge or their family is infected, they should get hospital admission. Our concern is with respect to judicial officers in lower judiciary who have to hold court. We have already lost two judicial officers," a furious high court told the Delhi government.

"Why did you cause this sort of a controversy? The perception is that we asked the Delhi government for a special facility. Or that you did it to appease us. You did everything on paper," said the judges, apparently upset at questions raised over luxury Covid facilities set aside for them at a time people are struggling for hospital beds.

The Delhi government on Tuesday issued directions to withdraw an administrative order to set up a 100-room Covid care facility for Delhi high court judges, staff and their families in a five-star hotel, hours after a bench of the court said it had not requested for such a facility.

Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in a late night tweet said that the direction was issued to withdraw the order to set up a Covid care facility for judges at the Ashoka Hotel. "Issued directions to withdraw this order immediately," Sisodia tweeted.

Earlier in the day, Delhi

government sources claiming that the order was issued without knowledge of the chief minister, his deputy or even health minister, said that Sisodia had summoned the file related to the order to examine how it was passed.

The Delhi government said there was no malice behind the move. It was the media that had created the perception, it said, explaining that many hotels in the city had been turned into Covid facilities attached to hospitals. But the explanation did not wash with the court.

"Can you imagine that we can ask for something like this? People are not getting hospitals and we are asking you for beds in luxury hotels! Media is not wrong. Your order is wrong," the high court said. "It is beyond thinking that as an institution we will ask for the facilities to one section? It would be better that you withdraw these orders immediately," it said. At this, the Delhi government said it would.

The high court on Tuesday directed the AAP government to check black marketing of oxygen cylinders and crucial medicines for Covid-19 patients and address the issue of oxygen distribution to hospitals as well as individuals.

It directed the Delhi government to file a report on the number of deaths of Covid-19 patients in hospitals and nursing homes due to shortage of oxygen. The high court also directed the government to take over the plant of an oxygen refiller for not supplying gas to hospitals and allegedly giving it in black market. It made it clear that the same action should be taken with regard to other suppliers who refuse to fall in line.

**Hospital staff attacked after Covid patient dies in Delhi****AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

Family members of a woman, who allegedly died due to Covid-19 after failing to get a bed at Apollo Hospital in south Delhi, attacked the staff of the private healthcare facility on Tuesday, police said. However, they said no complaint has been filed in this regard so far.

The hospital received a woman in a critical condition at the emergency in the early hours of Tuesday. Immediate medical attention appropriate to her condition was given by a team, the hospital's spokesperson said in a statement. "Given the

**PICTURES CIRCULATING** on social media showed blood on the floor, broken doors and furniture strewn around inside the hospital. A purported video clip of the incident showed the hospital staff and some people engaged in a pitch battle, hitting each other with sticks, near the hospital's entry gate.

paucity of beds, the family was advised to shift the patient to another facility with available beds. Unfortunately, the patient died around 8 am, following which her family members resorted to vandalism, destruction of hospital

■ Within a month, Delhi govt will set up 44 oxygen plants at various hospitals: CM

**Delhi govt to import oxygen plants, tankers from Thailand, France: Kejriwal****AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

With Delhi facing a crippling shortage of life-saving oxygen, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday said his government will import 18 cryogenic tankers from Thailand and 21 ready-to-use oxygen plants from France.

He said the situation has improved significantly in the past two days after the chaos witnessed last week due to an oxygen shortage.

Due to a shortage of tankers, the Delhi government was also facing problems in transporting its oxygen quota decided by the Centre, the chief minister said.

Within a month, the Delhi government will set up 44 oxygen plants at various hospitals, including 21 that will be imported from France. The Centre will install eight oxygen plants by April 30. Kejriwal said during an online briefing. He thanked the Centre for providing five oxygen tankers to Delhi.

The Delhi government has urged the Centre to provide Indian Air Force aircraft for bringing oxygen tankers from Bangkok. The tankers will start arriving in Delhi from Wednesday, he stated.

"We are in talks with them and have received a positive response so far," he said. Kejriwal, who had sought the help of chief ministers of other states and the country's top industrialists to resolve the oxygen crisis in the national capital, said "tremendous" cooperation has been received, with many of the contributors wishing not to be named.

"We have received a positive response from many of them. Most of them have placed one condition only that they wish to remain anonymous. This is an example of their nobility and I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to all the governments, industrialists and organisations that are helping us tide over these tough times."

The chief minister said



The first Oxygen Express train for Delhi carrying around 70 tonnes of the life-saving gas reached Delhi Cantt on Tuesday early morning. — PTI

**Record 381 deaths, 24,149 cases in Delhi, positivity rate over 32%**

**New Delhi, April 27:** Delhi logged a record 381 Covid-19 deaths on Tuesday, while the positivity rate stood at 32.72 per cent, according to the latest bulletin issued by the city health department. This is the sixth day on the trot that Delhi has recorded over 300 deaths due to coronavirus.

The capital recorded over 24,149 fresh cases. The cumulative case count stands at 10,72,065, of which over 9.58 lakh have recovered. The death toll due to the viral disease

stands at 15,009, the bulletin said.

It had reported 380 deaths on Monday, 350 on Sunday, 357 deaths on Saturday, 348 on Friday and 306 on Thursday, according to government data.

The national capital had recorded 20,201 cases on Monday, 22,933 on Sunday, 24,103 on Saturday, 24,331 on Friday, 26,169 on Thursday, and 24,638 on Wednesday.

The positivity rate was 35.02 per cent on Monday, 30.21 on Sunday, 32.27 per

cent on Saturday, 32.43 on Friday, 36.24 on Thursday — the highest so far — 31.28 on Wednesday and 32.82 on Tuesday.

A total of 73,811 tests, including over 27,230 rapid-antigen tests, were conducted in the said period, it added.

The tally of active cases in the city was at 98,264. Out of 20,653 beds in city hospitals, only 1,812 are vacant. A total of 54,578 patients are recovering in home isolation, the bulletin said. — PTI

that the number of SOS messages received from hospitals has reduced now as teams of the Centre and the Delhi government spent nights trying to overcome the oxygen shortage.

"Last week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday were particularly critical for Delhi. Oxygen was running low and we were fearful of a major mishap and deaths due to shortage," he said.

Saying that the current Covid-19 wave is extremely dangerous and contagious, he pointed to the growing demand for ICU beds for serious patients.

The Delhi government will add 1,200 ICU beds by May 10, including 500 each associated with LNJP and GTB hospitals and 200 at Radha Soami Satsang Beas Covid centre.

The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has deployed its buses for carrying oxygen. Two DTC depots are providing buses for carrying medical oxygen cylinders to hospitals in emergency situation, said a DTC officer. "There is no fixed number of buses deployed for carrying the cylinders. It depends on requirement. Routine bus services, scaled down in view of the

lockdown, are unaffected because of it," the official said.

DTC managing director Vijay Bidhuri is one of the three senior IAS officers of the Delhi government who have been deputed to ensure smooth supply and distribution of medical liquid oxygen from the manufacturers and suppliers to the hospitals in the city.

He is also in-charge of a control room set up by the Delhi

Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) that works round the clock to redress grievances and complaints from the city hospitals.



Medics and patients at Shehnai banquet hall that has been converted into a Covid-19 facility in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

**3 held for black marketing of oxygen cylinders**

**New Delhi, April 27:** Three men were arrested from south Delhi for allegedly hoarding oxygen, nitrogen cylinders and flow meters and selling them at inflated prices, police said on Tuesday. Mohit (23) is a resident of Jharoda Kalan, Sumit Saini (33) lives in Gurgaon, and Ansar Ahmed (41) is from Shaheen Bagh, Okhla, they said.

"On Monday, police got a tip-off that a person was coming near Ghitorni metro station for selling the oxygen cylinders at high rates. Thereafter, a trap was laid and a car, driven by Mohit, was checked," deputy commissioner of police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

Two oxygen cylinders were found inside the vehicle, police said. The accused revealed that he was selling big oxygen cylinders for ₹50,000 each and the smaller ones for ₹30,000 each, they said. — PTI

**SGRH receives 3.5 tonnes of oxygen**

**New Delhi, April 27:** Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here received 3.5 tonnes of medical oxygen on Tuesday and was in a better situation as compared to the last few days, an official said. The elite healthcare facility in central Delhi had sent multiple SOS messages last week amid a severe shortage of oxygen as the lives of hundreds of patients at the facility hung by a thread.

The hospital said it has 4,500 cubic metres of oxygen in its storage tanks and it may last up to 8:30 pm. The hospital requires a minimum of 11,000 cubic metres of liquid oxygen daily and has a consumption of 10,000 cubic metres per day. — PTI

**Dist court judge dies of Covid, another judge in ICU**

**New Delhi, April 27:** Delhi district court judge Kamran Khan succumbed to coronavirus late on Monday night after being on the ventilator support for a week. In his late 20s, Khan was posted as a metropolitan magistrate in Dwarka district courts complex.

According to advocate Y.P. Singh, president of Dwarka Court Bar Association, the judge was admitted to Venkateshwar Hospital over ten days ago and was put on ventilator when his health deteriorated a few days later.

A judge hearing the cases related to 2020 Delhi riots and Republic Day violence has been admitted in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a hospital here after getting infected with the Covid-19. Additional sessions judge Amitabh Rawat was rushed to the hospital two weeks ago and it took him three days to find a Covid-19 bed in the hospitals, said a district court official.

At first, he was admitted in the general Covid-19 ward but later rushed to the intensive care unit (ICU) after his oxygen levels dipped, a source said.

The health of the judge, who is posted at Karkardooma district court complex, is now stable and is recovering, another court staff said. He said his family members are also infected with the coronavirus.

On April 20, 47-year-old Saket court judge Kovai Venugopal died due to Covid-19 at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital. — PTI

**As death toll spirals, corpses wait in 20-hour queues for last rites**

**New Delhi, April 27:** Under the high tin roof, 50 funeral pyres burned fiercely on Tuesday, the hot air filled with smoke, fine ash, and muted sobs of shell-shocked families.

Nearby, lying unattended on the floor, and in scores of parked vehicles, more corpses awaited their turn, which relatives were told would come 16 to 20 hours later.

Shaking Delhi's spirit and soul, an unimaginable tragedy is unfolding at New Delhi's crematoriums struggling to cope with the deluge of the dead arriving at a frightening pace.

"I have not seen such a bad situation ever before in my life. People are moving with the dead bodies of their loved ones from pillar to post. Almost all Delhi crematoriums are flooded with dead bodies," Vineeta Massey, the owner of Massey Funerals, told a news agency.

By official count, 3,601 people have died this month, of them 2,267 in the last seven days alone in the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic which is terrorising and tormenting the city. In all of

February, the death toll was 57 and in March 117.

As if the trauma of losing a loved one to the virus so suddenly is not enough, there is more grief in store for relatives who are not even able to give them a proper send-off.

They arrive at crematoriums with bodies, only to be turned away. They drive to another facility and yet another, traversing the city with the mortal remains in personal cars or ambulances, desperately seeking a graceful exit for their father, mother, son, or daughter from the material world.

The trauma is no less for the relatives of those who died of non-Covid causes but are being swept up in the collective national tragedy driven by the pandemic.

Aman Arora, a young entrepreneur from West Delhi's Ashok Nagar, lost his father M.L. Arora to a heart attack on Monday afternoon.

"We rushed him to many private hospitals when he started feeling discomfort in his chest but he was not even checked by



A new cremation ground under construction at a park near Sarai Kale Khan in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

the medical staff there. They demanded that we produce a Covid-negative report. He eventually passed away," said Mr Aman.

On Monday afternoon, Mr Aman was told by the staff in West Delhi's Subhash Nagar crematorium to wait until Tuesday

morning to perform the last rites. When Mr Aman realised there was no point in pleading, he arranged for a refrigerator to prevent his father's dead body from decaying.

Manmeet Singh, a 40-year-old assistant professor, also carried his father Gurpal Singh's dead

body in his car to the Subhash Nagar crematorium on Monday afternoon.

But the staff politely told him his father couldn't be cremated because the pyre chambers were already full and the CNG crematorium at the centre could only accommodate two bodies at one time.

It takes about 90 minutes to dispose of one body in a CNG chamber. With no option left, Mr Manmeet left for the MCD crematorium in Pashchim Vihar about six kilometres away and luckily got space with the help of an MCD inspector.

The ground at the crematorium was full of filth and covered with leftovers of the previous cremation. It was muddy and rotten fruits were scattered all over. Plastic bags, sacks, buckets, and mugs littered the ground. But none of that mattered to the relatives. What mattered was enough space to light a pyre.

According to rules, said a senior official at the Delhi health department, if somebody dies of Covid-19 in a hospital, the district administration has to arrange a

hearse van and the hospital is supposed to deploy staff for the disposal of the dead body at the crematorium and graveyard.

But the crush of the dead has made it impossible for hospitals to provide hearses. So, relatives are simply taking the bodies in their vehicles.

"If family members move with the body of their loved ones in their personal vehicles, there are chances of being infected," another government official said.

Ajeet, a staff member at the MCD crematorium, told a news agency that they have created more than 100 extra makeshift chambers in an adjacent space to accommodate the increasing number of dead people—both Covid-19 and natural deaths.

The chaos at the crematoriums has raised questions about the Delhi government's preparedness for the second wave, which chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said has left the healthcare system on the brink of collapse. Many deaths have also been attributed to a severe oxygen shortage for the last 10 days. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## 'Not enough jabs for all above 18 years'

**Mumbai:** Citing shortage of Covid vaccines, Maharashtra has raised a question mark over the implementation of vaccination drive for people above 18 years of age. Maharashtra home minister Rajesh Tope has expressed inability to start the vaccination from May 1 if sufficient doses are not provided. Amid a massive Covid surge in the country, the Centre has allowed vaccination for all 18-plus citizens from May 1. Earlier the inoculation was restricted only for people above 45 years and frontline workers. According to Mr Tope, Maharashtra has 5.71 crore people in the age group of 18-44 years and, for their two-dose vaccine and taking wastage into account, 12 crore doses will be needed. "But if we don't get vaccines, how will we start vaccination from May 1? This is not just our situation, this is a situation every state in India is facing," he said on Tuesday. The Serum Institute (SI) has informed the state that it can supply the 'Covishield' vaccine only after May 20. They have told us that till May 20 their stock is blocked by the central government. Maharashtra needs a week's quota delivered at one time in order to vaccinate a maximum number of people, the health minister said. The state government has sent letters to the SI and Bharat Biotech two days ago, asking about the schedule of vaccine supplies in such large quantities, and is awaiting their reply, Mr Tope added.

## Tejashwi questions O2 shortage in Bihar

**Patna:** Amid the surge in Covid cases, Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday expressed his "anger" for not being able to help people and blamed the state government for the crisis in Bihar. In a tweet, he said that "Never felt so helpless. We are not being able to help people who are suffering due to inadequate medical facilities in the state. Whenever we call hospitals they express their helplessness in providing beds, oxygen, and injection. How to help?" In another tweet, he said that "our party workers have been trying to help people with limited resources but hurdles are being created by the corrupt system in Bihar". According to opposition parties here, many hospitals in Patna and other districts in the state have been discharging patients due to short supply of medical oxygen. A senior Rashtriya Janata Dal leader also said that even government-run hospitals in Patna and other places are also facing an acute shortage of beds and oxygen. Responding to the questions being raised by the people and the opposition parties state health minister Mangal Pandey said that, "The health department is aware of the situation. The district administration is constantly working to restore oxygen supply in government and private hospitals. Refilling work is also going on continuously. At all places, oxygen is being supplied under the supervision of district magistrates".

## ODIA GIRL DEVELOPS A DEVICE FOR ISOLATION ZONES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 27

An 11-year-old girl of Khandagiri area in Odisha's Bhubaneswar, on Tuesday, claimed to have developed a device that helps in carrying out surveillance in Covid-19 containment zones. The girl, Pratibha Pallai, said the innovation can prove handy at a time when the state is battling against the second wave of the pandemic. The application-based device, namely 'Coronavirus Human Detector System,' runs on arduino codes. The user needs to install the application in a computer and then connect the computer to the device. The required radius of the zone desired to be put under surveillance can be set by the user. The system will alert the user with a buzzer on the occasion of someone's trespass into the zone. Pratibha, a Class 6 student of Vikash Residential School here, said she has produced a prototype of the device while it can be produced commercially. An enthusiast in robotics, Pratibha has so far bagged 15 Olympiad awards.

■ Union government starts airlifting cryogenic Oxygen containers ■ Delhi, Maha, Gujarat and UP get medical O2

## India records over 3.23L cases, 2,771 deaths

VINEETA PANDEY  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

As India's corona crisis intensifies, the union government has started airlifting cryogenic Oxygen containers and other emergency material from the world over while several countries have come forward to provide aid to India, which is battered by a ravaging pandemic. The country on Tuesday recorded about 3.23 lakh fresh cases of Covid and 2,771 new deaths amid allegations of under testing and under-reporting of corona-related deaths.

The number of new cases in Maharashtra and Mumbai are showing a decline and Reproduction number (one of the tools to measure the spread of disease) in Maharashtra has dropped to 1.1 compared to 1.7 last month.

In several parts of the country, patients continued to beg and plead for hospital beds and Oxygen while in Delhi some Gurudwaras have started offering "Oxygen Langars" to briefly aid the gasping patient and help



Relatives and family members performing last rites during mass cremation of Covid victims at Swar Rekha Ghat cremation ground in Ranchi on Tuesday. — PTI

improve their Oxygen levels while their families searched for hospitals. While the bad news is that hospital beds and Oxygen cylinders are not easily available, the good news is that Medical Oxygen has started arriving in hospitals in Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Interestingly, amid all this chaos and crisis, Union health min-

ister Harsh Vardhan said that the country is at present "better prepared mentally and physically with more experience to beat the pandemic" as compared to 2020.

The Centre on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah are directly monitoring Oxygen supplies on "a war footing" level. Central government

officials said that to address the shortage of Oxygen tankers in the country, the Union Government has imported 20 cryogenic tankers of 10 MT and 20 MT capacity and allocated them to States.

Besides, Railway's has so far delivered 450 metric tonnes of liquid medical Oxygen to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi in six Oxygen

Express' through 26 tankers covering more than 10,000 km of journey.

Delhi received its first Oxygen Express carrying more than 70 metric tonnes of liquid medical oxygen early morning while 64 MT was sent to Jabalpur and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Two more trains with a total of 7 tankers carrying more than 100 MT were rushed to Lucknow. So far

Railways has delivered 202 MT to UP, 174 MT to Maharashtra and 70 MT to Delhi, and 64 MT to Madhya Pradesh.

As a result, some of the Delhi hospitals have started breathing easy. Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, that last week was sending SOS messages to the government, has received 3.5 tonnes of medical Oxygen and is now in a better situation compared to the last few days. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said 44 Oxygen plants will be set up in the city within a month. "Out of these 8 will be installed by the Central government. The remaining 36 are being installed by the Delhi Government for which 21 plants are coming from France and 15 plants from within the country itself," said Mr Kejriwal. The government has approved a proposal to convert a rest house of the Ajmer Sharif Dargah into a temporary Covid Care Centre. The Railways has deployed 169 Covid care coaches in various States, all equipped with Oxygen cylinders.

## Bodies can't be lying outside crematoriums for hours: HC

SHAHAB ANSARI  
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

Observing that dead bodies of Covid patients cannot be kept lying for hours waiting to be cremated, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday asked the Maharashtra government and the BMC to inform the court about the condition of crematorium across the state including Mumbai.

The court suggested bodies should not be released from the hospital if there is a waiting period at crematoriums. The court also questioned how an individual, BJP MP from Ahmednagar, procured 10,000 vials of Remdesivir injections while companies are supposed to provide this drug to only the Centre.

A division bench of chief justice Dipankar Datta and justice G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a bunch of petitions pertaining to the shortage of Remdesivir injections, oxygen supply, availability of beds and other issues arisen due to Covid.

Justice Kulkarni cited an incident in Maharashtra's Beed district, where 22 bodies of Covid victims were stuffed in an ambulance while being transported to the crematorium. The bench said that in several crematoriums there is a waiting period before bodies are cremated and relatives of the victims are forced to queue outside the crematoriums.

■ Says pricing of vaccine cannot be left to manufacturing companies

## Pilot: Can't allow India to become 'battlefield' for O2 &amp; Remdesivir

**New Delhi, April 27:** Asserting that the second wave of the Covid pandemic must be treated as a national medical emergency, senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Tuesday said the Centre must step up to the plate and not leave the states to fend for themselves as India cannot be allowed to become a "battlefield for oxygen and Remdesivir".

He also urged the BJP-led central government to call an all-party meeting and said that the feedback and inputs would be beneficial in the fight against the pandemic and those must be taken in a positive spirit of saving lives.

With states scrambling to arrange for essentials such as oxygen, Remdesivir injection and ventilators, Mr Pilot said the government should have prepared formula and parameters for it, and distributed the resources accordingly in a transparent manner.

"There is different information coming out over the demand and allocation for oxygen. The government of India should clearly set out three-four parameters — This is the number of active Covid cases, this is the positivity rate, mortality rate, these are the number of beds and this is how we will distribute the oxygen that we have," the former Rajasthan deputy chief minister told PTI.

"States which manufacture oxygen may not need it as much as those that don't. What is happening now in some instances, is that states are inclined to fortify borders as opposed to facilitate passage of oxygen containers. This is not how things should work in a federal structure," he asserted.

Mr Pilot called for trans-



Family members of Covid patients wait outside an oxygen-filling centre to refill their empty cylinders as demand for the gas rises due to spike in coronavirus cases at Naraina in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

parent parameters and criteria for allocation and distribution of essentials such as ventilators, oxygen and Remdesivir.

"Once this is done using an acceptable and a well-determined formula then there won't be criticism and the blame game would stop. Right now there is a knee-jerk reaction. It should be done in a scientific and transparent manner," the former Union minister said.

Noting that India is passing through an extremely precarious phase, Pilot said the government ought to step in and control or mandate the pricing of the vaccines.

"We cannot leave it to companies to decide on the pricing of life-saving vaccines, keeping margins and profits as criteria. India cannot leave it to companies, corporations or individuals to look at investments, returns, margins and

profits etc," he said.

"As a country, we are in desperate need of vaccination. Unless two-thirds of our country is vaccinated in the next few weeks and months we will not be able to break the chain of the virus," Mr Pilot said.

"Everyone is of the opinion that there should be uniform pricing but I wish to go a step further - the pricing itself cannot be left just to the manufacturing companies," he said.

If the government can put price caps on things like airfare between two cities, have MRP on so many products, then why can't they step in to decide on a fair or subsidised price of life-saving vaccines, Mr Pilot asked.

Underlining that India is the world leader in vaccine production, Mr Pilot said it is a tragedy to see the country scrambling to get its own citizens vaccinated. "There is definitely

the marriage after he was tipped off about the function.

However, they were allegedly resisted by the relatives of the bride and groom who were present on the occasion, forcing them to remain mute spectators. A video showing the marriage has gone viral in social media.

"We tried to persuade the relatives of the bride and the groom to stop the marriage function in the interest of the bride and others. But, the bride and groom parties present on the occasion argued that the couple was fulfilling the wishes of their families by tying the knot. Besides, they were in PPE kits to protect the bride and others from getting infected," a senior district officer, who was present on the occasion, told this

newspaper requesting not to be quoted. The groom reportedly tested positive on April 19.

However, the family members of the bride and the groom had decided to go ahead with the marriage plan, scheduled on April 26, in spite of the development. The issue has, however, snowballed into a controversy with the locals pulling up the local administration not taking the couple and others to task for this. The officials, however, were tight-lipped on the incident. When contacted, Ratlam district superintendent of police G. K. Tripathy said, "I am not aware of the development. Let me check it."

Sources, however, said the state government has taken note of it and sought a report from the district administration in this regard.

## CANCELLATION OF TRAIN

It is notified for the information of passengers that due to poor patronization, Railways have decided to cancel the following special train service till further notification :-

Train No. & Name	Cancellation Date w.e.f.
02414 Hazrat Nizamuddin - Madgaon AC Special Express	30.04.2021 to till further advise
02413 Madgaon - Hazrat Nizamuddin AC Special Express	02.05.2021 to till further advise

**Note:** All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

For any kind information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to run following Summer Special fully reserved Trains as per schedule given below:-

09177/09178 Mumbai Central-Bhagalpur- Mumbai Central Special Train					2 Trip
Train No. 09177		STATIONS		Train No. 09178	
ARR.	DEP.			ARR.	DEP.
---	11:05	MUMBAI CENTRAL	▲	05:15	---
16:16	16:18	BARABANKI		22:30	22:32
11:00	---	BHAGALPUR	---	---	06:00

**Days of Run:** 09177 Ex. Mumbai Central on 28.04.2021 and 09178 Ex. Bhagalpur on 01.05.2021.

**Stoppages:** Borivali, Vapi, Valsad, Surat, Vadodara, Godhra, Ratlam, Kota, Sawaimadhopur, Bharatpur, Achnera, Mathura, Kasganj, Farrukhabad, Kanpur Central, Aishbagh, Gonda, Basti, Gorakhpur, Bettiah, Bapudham Motihari, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur Jn., Barauni Jn., Begusarai, Monghyr and Sultanganj Stations.  
**Accommodation:** 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & 2nd Seating Reserved.

01473 Pune-Gorakhpur Jn. Special Train				1 Trip
STATIONS		Train No. 01473		
		ARR.	DEP.	
PUNE		---	20:20	
LUCKNOW		▼	03:15	03:25
GORAKHPUR JN.			09:40	---

**Days of Run:** 01473 Ex. Pune on 28.04.2021.

**Stoppages:** Daund Chord Line, Ahmednagar, Manmad Jn., Bhusaval Jn., Itarsi Jn., Jabalpur, Satna, Banda Jn., Kanpur Central, Gonda and Basti Stations  
**Accommodation:** 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & 2nd Seating Reserved.

01259/01260 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T)-Gorakhpur Jn.- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T) Special Train					2 Trip
Train No. 01259		STATIONS		Train No. 01260	
ARR.	DEP.			ARR.	DEP.
---	05:40	CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI MAHARAJ TERMINUS	↑	23:45	---
08:20	08:30	LUCKNOW		21:10	21:20
14:05	---	GORAKHPUR JN.	---	---	16:15

**Days of Run:** 01259 Ex. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (T) on every Wednesday & Thursday from 28.04.2021 to 06.05.2021 and 01260 Ex. Gorakhpur Jn. on every Thursday & Friday from 29.04.2021 to 07.05.2021.

**Stoppages:** Dadar, Kalyan Jn., Nasik Road, Bhusaval Jn., Itarsi Jn., Bhopal Jn., Bina Jn., Jhansi Jn., Kanpur Central, Gonda Jn. and Basti Stations.

**Accommodation:** 1st AC, 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & Second Seating Reserved.

05786 Katihar Jn.-Delhi Jn. Special Train				1 Trip
STATIONS		Train No. 05786		
		ARR.	DEP.	
KATIHAR JN.		---	09:15	
DELHI JN.		▼	13:15	---

**Days of Run:** 05786 Ex. Katihar on 02.05.2021.

**Stoppages:** Naughachia, Barauni Jn., Hajipur Jn., Chhapra, Ballia, Mau Jn., Ahimanpur, Shahganj Jn., Faizabad Jn., Rudauli Jn., Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly and Moradabad Stations.

**Accommodation:** 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & 2nd Seating Reserved.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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## SEARCH FOR MISSING



Sweety

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely Sweety, D/o Subhash Singh, R/o H.No. 171, Gali No. 05, Pratap Nagar, Mandoli, Delhi, Age: 21 years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: Green Colour Suit -Salwar and White Colour Sandal in her feet has been missing from her home since 09.04.2021. In this regard a vide DD No. 39A, dated 10.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Harsh Vihar, Delhi.

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

E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.nic.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.nic.in)  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax : 011-24368639  
DP/737/NE/2021

SHO  
P.S. Harsh Vihar, Delhi  
Ph.: 011-22342073, 22342074,  
8750870734



SHORT TAKES

EX-PM VAJAPYEE'S NIECE KARUNA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
RAIPUR, APRIL 27

Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's niece Karuna Shukla who played a key role in dethroning Raman Singh government in the 2018 Assembly elections, died of Covid-19 in a private hospital here early on Tuesday morning. She was 70 and is survived by her husband, daughter and son. The senior Congress leader was admitted to the Ramakrishna Hospital in Raipur last week when she tested positive and succumbed to the virus early on Tuesday morning, her family members said. Her last rites were performed in Baloda Bazar in Chhattisgarh.

Late Shukla had begun her political career in BJP and was elected to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly 1993 and to the Lok Sabha from Janjgir in Chhattisgarh in 2004 as BJP candidate. She, however, had fallen out with former chief minister and BJP national vice-president Raman Singh and snapped her 32-year-long ties with BJP in 2014. She later joined Congress.

She was fielded against Singh in Rajnandgaon Assembly seat in Chhattisgarh by Congress in 2018 polls. She, however, had lost the polls.

Late Shukla, a firebrand leader, had played a key role in the return of Congress to power in Chhattisgarh in 2018 Assembly polls after a gap of 15 years.

She had vowed to defeat BJP in Chhattisgarh in the 2018 Assembly poll in Chhattisgarh and campaigned against BJP extensively in Chhattisgarh in the 2018 Assembly elections. She was appointed president of Chhattisgarh state social welfare board when Bhupesh Baghel government came to power in the state.

AFTER HC REBUKE, EC BANS VICTORY RALLIES ON MAY 2

■ Continued from Page 1

Tamil Nadu it was by 56 per cent. The channel claimed the cases had shot up by 215 per cent in Assam, while it was 86 per cent in West Bengal. In Uttar Pradesh, following the recent Kumbh Mela, the Covid-19 cases had seen a staggering rise of 47 per cent. At this point, India is reporting well over three lakh Covid cases and over 2,000 deaths a day.

While Covid-19 cases were on the rise, politicians cutting across party lines continued to address mammoth rallies in the poll-going states. Top leaders ranging from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee and the Left leaders addressed several rallies in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Despite repeated appeals, the EC refused to club the election dates in West Bengal.

While Covid protocols were thrown out of the window, as supporters thronged in their thousands to cheer their leaders, the EC remained a mute spectator. Even as four candidates succumbed to Covid in West Bengal, the election mania went on unperturbed. A couple of days back, the TMC filed a complaint against BJP leaders Dilip Ghosh and actor-politician Mithun Chakraborty for holding rallies attended by over 500 people, which was the limit set by the EC in its Covid protocols. In fact, the Opposition parties had raised eyebrows over this particular EC figure of 500 people. It was alleged the EC came up with the 500 figure only after the BJP claimed it would restrict its rallies to 500 people.

# Bodies of 22 victims stuffed in one ambulance

Medical college dean cites lack of ambulances, managing transportation of patients as reason

**Aurangabad, April 27:** The bodies of 22 Covid-19 victims were stuffed in one ambulance while being taken to a crematorium at Beed in Maharashtra, with the district administration citing lack of medical transport vehicles as the reason for it. The incident took place on Sunday when the bodies, kept in the mortuary of the Swami Ramanand Teerth Rural Government Medical College at Ambajogai in Beed, were being transported for the last rites. "This happened because the hospital administration does not have enough ambulances," said the medical college's Dean, Dr Shivaji Sukre. He said they had five ambulances during the first wave of Covid-19 last year. Out of them, three were later withdrawn and the hospital was now managing

the transportation of Covid-19 patients in two ambulances. "Sometimes, it takes time to trace the relatives of a dead patient. The bodies from the Covid-19 centre at Lokhandi Savargaon village are also sent to our facility as they don't have a cold storage," the official said. He said they wrote to the district administration on March 17 to provide them three more ambulances.

"To avoid the chaos, we have also written to the Ambajogai Municipal Council to conduct the last rites of the victims between 8 am and 10 pm and the bodies will be sent to the crematoriums from the hospital ward itself," he said.

Meanwhile, BJP MLC Suresh Dhas alleged that the hospital and the local civic body were passing the blame on each other.

## Modi's aunt dies of Covid

**Ahmedabad:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aunt Narmadaben Modi who was undergoing treatment for coronavirus infection died at the civil hospital here on Tuesday, the family said. Narmadaben (80) lived in the New Ranip area of the city with her children. "Our aunt Narmadaben was admitted to the civil hospital

some ten days ago after her condition deteriorated following coronavirus infection," said Prahlad Modi, the prime minister's younger brother. "She breathed her last at the hospital today," he told PTI. Her husband Jagjivandas, brother of the prime minister's father Damodardas, had died many years ago, said Prahlad Modi. —PTI

Talking to a TV channel, the legislator from Ashti in Beed said, "There is no control left and the government is not acting swiftly. The state administration has permitted ambulances to be provided from the MLA fund, but the technical sanction for it is given from

Mumbai." Ambajogai Municipal Council's chief officer Ashok Sabale said it was the responsibility of the medical college to transport the bodies to the crematorium on Mandwa road (designated for the last rites of Covid-19 victims). —PTI

# Experts rushed to Bengal to take stock of Covid-19 spread

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

Concerned over the well being of para-military forces deployed for Assembly elections in Bengal, which has seen a sharp increase in rising number of Corona cases, a joint team of medical experts from different forces has been rushed to the state. Nearly 80,000 central police personnel were deployed for an unprecedented eight phase polling in Bengal which comes to an end on

Thursday.

It is expected that once the election process in Bengal is completed with counting on May 2 there could be a sharp rise in Corona cases as the figure was not being correctly reported right now as most the administration was still busy with the elections process.

Since a large number of security personnel of central forces like CRPF, CISF, BSF, SSB and others have been deployed in Bengal from across the country they have become

extremely vulnerable to the Corona outbreak in Bengal.

What is also worrying the Home Ministry is top brass that post the elections all these security personnel will once again be posted back to different areas in India. As a number of the could asymptomatic they could infect and spread the virus in other parts of the country.

Thus home ministry has rushed a team of doctors and para-medics to Bengal which will focus primarily on two issues.

# SC summons medical records of Kerala journo

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

The Supreme Court on Tuesday summoned the medical records of Delhi-based Malayalam journalist Siddiqui Kappan who is in custody in Mathura since October last year.

The top court bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana will hear on Wednesday plea by Kappan's wife Raihanth alleging that he was "chained like an animal to a cot" in a hospital since testing Covid positive on April 21.

The bench also comprising Justice Surya Kant and Justice A.S. Bopanna, issued the directions to the Uttar Pradesh Government and said it would hear the plea of Kappan's wife to "unchain" him and move back to the Mathura jail.

Kappan's wife has made the plea in a letter to Chief Justice Ramana on Saturday.

Kappan was arrested on his way to Hathras to cover the gangrape and death of a Dalit girl in September last year.

In his first sitting after taking over as CJI, Chief Justice Ramana

acted on a letter written to him by Kappan's wife, Raihanth, on Saturday that her husband was chained like an animal at K.M. Medical College in Mathura and not permitted even to go to the toilet.

The UP Police's Special Task Force (STF) filed a charge-sheet against him and seven others in a Mathura court on April 3, accusing them of sedition and attempts to incite violence in the state. Kappan is also facing anti-terror charges under UAPA.

## Assam imposes night curfew

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, APRIL 27

In view of the gradual growth in Covid positive cases, Assam government on Tuesday decided to impose night curfew —from 8 pm to 5 am — across the state with immediate effect, till May 1. Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also announced that the state has received four lakh doses of Covishield and one lakh Covaxin. Informing that now the state has the total stock of 6,57,180 vaccines, the minister in his

social media post said that they are going to step up vaccination drive further.

The state disaster management authority which also reviewed the Covid scenario in its order said, "It has been observed that there has been a rapid increase in the number of active cases of Covid-19 across the state and therefore, it is felt that night curfew needs to be imposed in all districts of the state, except for essential or emergency services as an emergency measure for well-being and safety of the people."

# World rushing oxygen gear..

■ Continued from Page 1

supplies and equipment to help India fight Covid-19. Russia is also expected to send help soon.

A high-level inter-ministerial group under the Centre has "established a procedure" for the immediate clearance of materials being received from foreign nations as assistance, which will ensure the "material would be dispatched promptly to the recipient institutions in various parts of the country in coordination with various government agencies", government sources said Tuesday.

The US is working towards sending India Covid-related supplies related to oxygen generation, supply chains, cylinders, concentrators, including "exploring the provision of field oxygen generation systems, that the US has used in its own field hospitals to provide oxygen for 50 to 100 beds", the sources added. The US has also identified commercial suppliers of Remdesivir that are immediately available as well as rapid diagnostic testing supplies and PPEs to be transferred to India immediately.

Britain is sending 495 oxygen concentrators, 120 non-invasive ventilators and 20 manual ventilators to India this week. Of these, 100 ventilators and 95 oxy-

gen concentrators arrived on Tuesday. France is sending relief material in two phases. The first phase this week will be eight large oxygen generating plants that can be installed quickly, liquid oxygen, and respiratory material - 28 respirators and their consumables and 200 electric syringe pushers, while the second phase next week will comprise five liquid oxygen containers.

Germany will send a mobile oxygen production plant (made available for three months), 120 ventilators, and over 80 million KN95 masks. India's Armed Forces Medical Services is already importing 23 mobile oxygen generation plants from Germany. From the EU, a shipment of urgently needed oxygen, medicine and equipment will be delivered in the coming days through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The offers of support from EU member states include Ireland — 700 oxygen concentrators; one oxygen generator; 365 ventilators; Belgium — 9,000 doses of anti-viral medicine Remdesivir; Romania — 80 oxygen concentrators and 75 oxygen cylinders; Luxembourg — 58 ventilators; Portugal — 5,503 vials of Remdesivir and 20,000 litres of oxygen per week; and Sweden — 120 ventilators.

## FIGHTING SPIRIT ON



Patients at a camp set up by a Sikh religious organisation for free oxygen cylinders for patients, outside a Gurudwara in Kanpur on Tuesday. — PTI



(Top) Health worker move Covid-19 positive patient inside a Coronavirus OPD at a Covid-19 hospital, amid the ongoing surge in Coronavirus cases, in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. — PTI

(Left) Senior citizens wait on wheelchairs to receive a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a Vaccination Centre in Mumbai on Tuesday. — PTI

# ‘Clarify basis for vaccine pricing..

■ Continued from Page 1

Supreme Court reiterated that it did not intend to stop different high courts from taking up Covid-related matters and that it will only concentrate on eliminating systemic problems which require nationwide coordination.

The bench, headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, said it was not supplanting the high courts in dealing with the Covid crisis but would only play a complementary role and could not be a silent spectator at this time.

"There are certain national issues to be dealt with by the Supreme Court. At a time of national crisis, the Supreme Court cannot be a silent spectator. We are not preventing the high courts from hearing. The Supreme Court intends

to play a complementary role," the court said, setting to rest any misgivings that it intended to transfer to itself Covid-related matters being heard by the high courts.

The clarification came during the hearing on the "health emergency" arising from the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The court had taken suo motu cognisance of the worsening Covid-19 situation and gaps in its management, including the shortage of oxygen, supply of medicine and mode and manner of vaccinations.

In the course of the first hearing on April 22, by a bench headed by then Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde (later retired), a "perception" was created that the Supreme Court was intending to transfer to itself Covid-related

matters being dealt by the Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim high courts.

Following a strong negative reaction by a section of senior lawyers, the court had on April 23 clarified it did not intend to interfere with the Covid matters being dealt with by the high courts.

Leaving nothing to doubt that it was dealing with the larger issue of Covid management at the national level, the court reiterated: "It is necessary for us to clarify what is the purpose of issuing notice. The object of these proceedings is not to take over what the high courts are monitoring. The high courts have a valuable role. They are in a better position to monitor."

# Entire system has failed..

■ Continued from Page 1

country, patients continued to beg and plead for hospital beds and oxygen while in Delhi some gurudwaras have started offering

"Oxygen Langars" to briefly aid the gasping patient while their families search for hospitals. While hospital beds and oxygen cylinders are still not easily available, medical oxygen has started arriving in hospitals in Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

While India on Tuesday recorded about 3.23 lakh fresh cases of Covid-19 and 2,771 deaths amid allegations of under testing and under reporting of corona related deaths, Delhi logged a record 381

Covid-19 deaths on Tuesday, while the positivity rate stood at 32.72 per cent.

"Are you aware of black-marketing. Is it a good human gesture?" the bench said on oxygen refilling and issued contempt notices to five suppliers for not appearing in the hearing despite orders, saying "it is not the time to become vultures".

"This is a mess that the state government has been unable to resolve... Set your house in order. Enough is enough. You have the power, take action against those

engaging in black marketing of oxygen cylinders and medicines... If you (Delhi government) are not going to be able to

manage then tell us, we will ask the Central government officer to take over (the refilling unit)... We cannot let people die like this," the court said.

While directing the AAP government to check black marketing of oxygen cylinders and crucial medicines for Covid-19 patients and address the issue of oxygen distribution to hospitals as well as individuals, the high court asked the government to take over an oxygen refiller plant in Dwarka that has not been supplying gas to hospitals but is allegedly giving it in black market, and made it clear that the same action should be taken with regard to other suppliers who refuse to fall in line.



## THE ASIAN AGE

28 APRIL 2021

### EC failed in duty, sharp rebuke by HC welcome

The decision of the Election Commission of India to ban victory processions once the results in the elections to the legislative assemblies of four states and a Union territory are announced justifies the sharp criticism of the Madras high court on the role of the constitutional body in triggering a second wave of pandemic Covid-19 in India. The commission's decision to allow only two persons to accompany the winning candidate to receive the certificate of election from the returning officer also goes with the spirit of the observations and the order of the court which had asked the commission to draw up a programme without which it would be inclined to stop the counting scheduled for May 2.

A bench of the court, comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, while hearing a petition seeking a direction for adherence to a strict protocol on the day of counting, singularly held the commission responsible for the second wave and went to the extent of suggesting that its officials be booked for murder. The court's rebuke of the panel, which stood as a mute spectator of the mammoth rallies which lakhs of people attended in utter disregard of Covid-appropriate protocols, will be welcomed by the people who in their lakhs fall sick every day. The court did not mince its words when it asked the commission whether its members were on a different planet when these rallies were taking place. It also reminded the poll panel of the fact that the fruits of democracy could be enjoyed by citizens only if they are alive. Or, in other words, elections are not for elections' sake, but for the people's sake. The Calcutta high court had also made similar remarks last week, after observing that the commission had failed to implement its own guidelines while conducting elections during the pandemic.

The judges were reflecting the minds of all right-thinking people in this country, or even in the world, who have been petrified by the dance of death the pandemic has let loose in India. It did not demand superior wisdom to understand that

the convergence of lakhs of people at a place to listen to leaders would eventually end up as a superspreader event. The commission had the power to stop them but it looked the other way when leaders, including the country's Prime Minister, took pride in and announced that they have addressed the largest rallies of their lives during these elections. The explanation that it followed up on the procedure it had deployed in Bihar elections hardly wash. That a mishap did not happen is no reason why one should go easy on the rules especially while negotiating the fatal curves an extremely dangerous pandemic leaves behind.

The election process is not over yet but the commission has already entered the dock for failing the people on many occasions in recent times; the vacillations on pandemic rules are just one instance. Its overenthusiasm while taking on the Opposition while going easy on the ruling party is another. It will do well not to invite non-complimentary comments from other constitutional bodies such as courts in future.

### Opinions still matter

Newspapers are in the news these days, including a couple who have forsworn reporting of IPL cricket in the time of the pandemic. *New York Times*, a newspaper of record from the Big Apple, is in focus at the moment for deciding to do away with the term "Op-Ed", or "Opposite Editorial" page, because there seem to be more viewers of newspapers online in America than are consuming the old-fashioned printed version, which still come crackling paper form in the morning with a smell of fresh ink. But the definition of the spatial has changed in the digital age, the old geography skewed by there being no flipping of pages, only scrolling from one page to another.

The "Op-Ed" was much more than a defining physical term at the top of the page. It symbolises a space for the expression of opinions that were often at odds with those of the newspaper editors, who however are free to express themselves, even if anonymously, in editorials on the "Edit" page. A diversity of thought was always considered good for society, however opinionated the reader or viewer himself may be regarding the great societal issues of the day. The more blunt 'Opinion' will probably mark the section that carries a variety and range of opinion that newspapers still invite from thinkers, activists, intellectuals and politicians too, for who can have stronger opinions one way or the other than politicians.

It might appear that the day and age is somewhat perilous for those stating opinions in public space, be it in the Edit and Op-Ed sections of newspapers or in online news and opinion websites or in the more equitable space of social media. As the free and the fair cringe in the face of official India and trolls for opinions expressed without fear or favour, the stating of opinion is far too important to be sacrificed, however tilted the world may seem against honest opinions. The term "Op-Ed" may seem outdated but opinion still matters. But, as the Bard said, what is in a name?

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



## Caring governance vital to save lives & India's future



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

When the newspapers recorded that over 20 Covid-19 patients had died in a leading New Delhi hospital for lack of oxygen, they also reported that India's richest man, Mukesh Ambani, had paid £57 million (₹592 crores) for the Stoke Park estate in England. Another tycoon, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India, had rented a mansion in London's Mayfair for £50,000 a week.

India has always been a land of cruel contrasts. But seldom has the self-seeking cynicism of its ruling class been so grotesquely flaunted. Humanity cannot avert what lawyers call "acts of God", but the devastating second wave might not have struck so ferociously had it not been for the government's triumphalism.

"With made-in-India solutions, we controlled the spread of the virus and improved our health infrastructure", Prime Minister Narendra Modi had boasted. "Our vaccine research and production capacity have given a shield not just to India but to many other countries in the world." The complacency and vanity ignored India's decrepit medical infrastructure.

Monday's official figures of 16,960,172 infections and 192,311 deaths may be a gross understatement. Even without deliberate fudging, there are few means of accurate assessment in India's remote villages, for whose innocent inhabitants all illnesses are just "bemaari", or fever.

Reflecting official Indian priorities, the system virtually ignores both the countryside, where 70 per cent of 1.3 billion Indians live, and the poor who numbered 364 million (28 per cent of the population) in 2019, according to the

United Nations. As studies elsewhere have shown, hypertension, diabetes, respiratory disorders and nutritional deficiency are the highest in lower income groups.

Wallowing in India's cricket victory over England may have been counter-productive. Cricket crowds, religious jamborees like the Kumbh Mela, packed cinema halls and the BJP's resolve to extend its control through elections in five states/UTs contributed to today's crisis. The Covid-19 protocols were completely abandoned and the virus was able to mutate into new vaccine-resistant forms. West Bengal's tenfold rise in infections is being squarely blamed on political rallies.

The BJP's smug pundits should rue the February day when, swept away on the tide of servile sycophancy that is the hallmark of our political culture, they hailed Prime Minister Modi as a visionary who had "defeated" Covid-19. This has become routine adulation. Even in 2018 the party's national executive had passed a resolution applauding his his "visionary and disruptive leadership" (echoing Joseph Schumpeter's theory of "creative destruction") and claiming that his "new confident India" would reach "new heights in each and every field" by 2022. Another eight months to go before that Elysium dawns!

Meanwhile, pictures of the dead and dying, of coronavirus patients gasping for breath on pavements outside hospitals and of cremation fires smouldering night and day have gone viral on the world's television screens.

"I weep for your nation" — messaged Doug Jackson, a journalist from the North of England with whom I had worked 63 years ago and who is now

**Their private jets may fly the Ambanis and the Poonawallas to Geneva or New York for a toothache, but the system by and large gives reasonably good service to the next rank of the wealthy and the politically influential. It neglects all the others.**

an authority on Tiffany glass, the author of *Mosaic: The Story of Joseph Briggs, the English 'Tiffany'*.

"It sounds ghastly", commented Colin Smith, the author of *England's Last War Against France and Singapore Burning*, and once star writer for London's *Observer* newspaper. In that capacity he had trekked to Dhaka from what was then Calcutta during the 1971 Bangladesh war, encountering hordes of fleeing East Bengal refugees who thought him mad for walking in the opposite direction. "Wish London would at least make a gesture and send a squadron of RAF transports heavy with oxygen" Colin Smith added.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has responded since. But tiny Singapore made the unpublicised first gesture with four cryogenic oxygen containers. "We stand with India in its fight against Covid-19", said Singapore's high commission in New Delhi. But whatever Britain — or for that matter any other country — does, the answer lies in Indian hands. Neither another Marshall Plan or PL-480 wheat (or its equivalent) can resolve India's trauma now. India alone can save its own future through more responsible and caring governance.

As the virus shifts to smaller towns and villages or moves down the age scale in a land where 65 per cent of the population is under 35, as vast swathes of people are

felled because only 1.3 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated, the BJP's religion-obsessed caste-ridden bigots must face up to the stark facts. Death and disease do not spare the rich because they are Hindu. Nor is there a quick fix to compensate for the neglect of decades. The situation might well deteriorate before it improves.

Everything in India now is geared for the rich. Their private jets may fly the Ambanis and the Poonawallas to Geneva or New York for a toothache, but the system by and large gives reasonably good service to the next rank of the wealthy and the politically influential. It neglects all the others.

Mandatory online registration for vaccinations is the latest instance of discrimination since it at once creates difficulties for large numbers of the underprivileged. The differential pricing for vaccines, with no cap, to which West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee rightly objects, is equally objectionable for potentially facilitating profiteering. In fact, in reviewing the system, the government cannot overlook the choice between hospitals that exist only to make a profit for the owner and institutions whose main purpose is to serve the public.

Private hospitals, including many old established nursing homes, have the resources and quality. But being now in the hands of businessmen with no vision, many have deteriorated into money-making operations. Government hospitals, on the other hand, are often ill-equipped with poorly trained staff, no public accountability and subject to bureaucratic and political controls.

Choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea cannot be easy. But the vast majority of Indians will remain bereft of adequate medical care without a caring version of John Kenneth Galbraith's "post office socialism".

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

#### LETTERS

#### STOP IPL NOW

The BCCI should bring to a close the IPL spectacle. It is quite indecorous of one to be seen playing cricket when the whole country is in the throes of a pandemic. A number of players like Ravichandran Ashwin and some Australian players have opted out. Sourav Ganguly and the BCCI should bring the IPL to a close. Only if 50 per cent of the profits are donated by BCCI and the IPL sponsors, team owners and broadcasters to fight Covid-19 will it be permissible to continue with the tournament. If Ganguly can bring it about, he will receive many blessings.

S. Kamat  
Alto St Cruz, Goa

#### TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

AFTER BEING rapped by several high courts for allowing political rallies during the Covid-19 pandemic that helped spreading of deadly virus relentlessly, the Election Commission of India on April 27 banned victory processions after the declaration of Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, West Bengal and Kerala Assembly election results on May 2 due to the surge in Covid-19 cases. The damage has been done. The Covid numbers in Bengal have increased by a mind-numbing factor of 30. This is, therefore, a perfect example of too little too late.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

#### CUMMINS' GESTURE

PAT CUMMINS' gesture of donating US \$50,000 had to our PM-Cares Fund should be applauded in no small measure. By his generous act Pat has won the hearts of millions of Indians. This is what humanity is. The BCCI should honour Pat Cummins by naming one of the stands at Eden Gardens since he plays for KKR as Pat Cummins Stand. Will our Bollywood stars emulate Pat Cummins and come forward with their contributions in this hour of need?

Lakshman Sundar  
New Delhi

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



## SHORT TAKES

TANKER SPILLS OIL  
OFF CHINESE PORT  
AFTER COLLISION

**Beijing, April 27:** A tanker spilled oil into the sea off one of China's busiest ports Tuesday after a collision with another vessel, the government and a ship tracking company reported.

The A Symphony collided early Tuesday with a cargo vessel, the Sea Justice, while approaching Qingdao, according to MarineTraffic.com. It was anchored outside Qingdao, southeast of Beijing, the Maritime Safety Administration said. Other ships were told to stay at least 10 nautical miles (18.5 kilometers) away, but the agency gave no details of damage or how much oil leaked.

KABUL BUS CRASH  
KILLS 7, INJURES  
70: OFFICIAL

**Kabul, April 27:** Two buses crashed head-on near Kabul, killing at least seven people and injuring more than 70, an Afghan official said Tuesday.

The traffic accident took place on Monday night, on a highway linking the Afghan capital and southern Kandahar province, according to Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian. The buses were going in opposite directions but the cause of the accident was not immediately known, Arian added. He said the injured were transferred to nearest hospitals for treatment. In a similar accident last week on the same highway, 14 people were killed and 12 were injured. Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, mainly due to poor road conditions and carelessness of drivers on highways.

17 MIGRANTS  
FOUND DEAD OFF  
SPANISH ISLANDS

**Madrid, April 26:** Seventeen people were found dead Monday on a boat drifting off El Hierro in Spain's Canary Islands, the country's maritime service said, as migrant arrivals to the archipelago surge despite the deadly dangers of the crossing.

A Spanish military helicopter airlifted three survivors to a hospital on El Hierro, one of the smallest of the Canary Islands, a spokeswoman for the service said.

"The three had hypothermia but were otherwise in good shape," she told AFP.

A Spanish air force plane first spotted the boat some 265 nautical miles southeast of the island of El Hierro on Monday morning and a search and rescue vessel was deployed to the area.

The migrants on the boat were all sub-Saharan Africans, the spokeswoman said. It was not immediately clear where the boat had embarked from.

Earlier this month four people were found dead in a makeshift boat that was found south of El Hierro, with 23 migrants on board.

PAK LAWMAKER  
ARRESTED IN  
TREASON CASE

**Lahore, April 27:** A Pakistani lawmaker was arrested here on Tuesday on charges of treason.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's close aide Javed Latif was arrested by the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) of Lahore Police after a sessions court rejected his pre-bail petition in the treason case.

According to the FIR, Latif defamed state institutions and passed hateful remarks against them.

He is also accused of talking about dismemberment of Pakistan in case anything happens to Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz.

"If anything happens to PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz, the PML-N will not say Pakistan Khappay (stay united). PPP had made this slogan of Pakistan Khappay after assassination of Benazir Bhutto but the PMLN will not say this if anything happens to Maryam Nawaz," Latif had said in a TV talk show. He was talking in the backdrop of alleged "life threats" being given to Maryam for taking on the military establishment.

On March 20, Latif was booked on charges of treason and a case was registered against the Member of National Assembly (MNA) on the complaint of a private citizen, Jameel Saleem.

## 40 US CEOs form global task force for India

Commit to transport 20,000 oxygen concentrators to India to help the nation fight against Covid-19

**Washington, April 27:** In a show of solidarity, the CEOs of about 40 top American companies have come together to create a first-of-its-kind country-specific global task force to mobilise resources and coordinate efforts to help India fight the battle against Covid-19.

A collective initiative of the US-India Business Council of the US Chamber of Commerce, and the US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum and Business Roundtable, the task force during its meeting here on Monday committed to get 20,000 oxygen concentrators to India in the next few weeks, Deloitte CEO Punit Renjen said.

The new US public-private partnership to provide India critical medical supplies, vaccines, oxygen and other life-saving assistance amid an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases is called the 'Global Task Force on Pandemic Response: Mobilising for India'.

The first-of-its-kind country-specific global task force to address a public health crisis in another country was addressed by US Secretary of State Tony Blinken.

The conversation showed how the United States and India can leverage the expertise and capabilities of the US private sector towards solutions for India's Covid-19 crisis, Blinken said in a tweet.

Observing that the first

China: South Asian FMs meet  
on Covid-19 'open' for India

**Beijing, April 27:** China, which is hosting a meeting of Foreign Ministers of some South Asian countries to deal with the Covid-19 situation, said on Tuesday that the virtual conference is open to all countries in the region, including India. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are invited to the virtual Foreign Ministerial level meeting being hosted on Tuesday by Chinese

● **THE MEETING** is part of China's cooperation with South Asian countries to fight the Covid pandemic.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi. India, Maldives and Bhutan are conspicuously absent from the meeting. Asked why India has not been invited to the meeting, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing that "China follows the spirit of openness and inclusive-

ness". "This meeting is open to South Asian countries, including India. We welcome the participation of all countries," he said.

This meeting is part of China's cooperation with South Asian countries and regional and international cooperation to fight the Coronavirus pandemic, he said. "We follow an open attitude and we are open for the participation of other South Asian countries," Wang said. — PTI

RUSSIA CLAIMS BRAZIL REFUSAL TO  
IMPORT SPUTNIK V JAB 'POLITICAL'

**Moscow, April 27:** The developers of Russia's Sputnik V Coronavirus vaccine on Tuesday criticised Brazil's refusal to import the jab as politically motivated.

Brazilian health regulator Anvisa on Monday denied requests from several states to receive batches of Sputnik V, saying it did not have the data needed to verify the jab's safety and efficacy.

"Anvisa's delays in approving Sputnik V are unfortunately of a political

nature and have nothing to do with access to information or science," the official Sputnik V Twitter account said.

It pointed to a recent US government report that said Washington had tried to persuade Brazil not to use Sputnik. "The US Department of Health, in its 2020 annual report several months ago, publicly stated that the US health attaché 'persuaded Brazil to reject the Russian vaccine against Covid-19,'" the account added. — AFP

EU set to give approval to  
post-Brexit trade deal

**Brussels, April 27:** European Union lawmakers are set to formally ratify the post-Brexit deal between the EU and the United Kingdom amid ongoing tensions between London and Brussels over Northern Ireland trade rules.

The deal, which was finalised on Christmas Eve, already has been ratified by the UK Parliament and conditionally came into force pending the European Parliament's approval. Because of disagreement on how to apply trade rules in Northern Ireland, some EU legislators previously threatened to hold back the ratification vote, but a large majority of lawmakers are in favor of the deal. Results of the vote are set to be announced on Wednesday, almost five years after UK voters decided to withdraw from the bloc.

"This deal is not good because Brexit is not good. The situation is also complicated because we cannot be sure how trustworthy the UK government really is," said Terry Reintke, the vice-president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament. "Still, this agreement can be a starting point reconstructing what we lost due to Brexit."

Top European Union officials and their British counterparts have so far failed to find common ground on implementing the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, which were designed to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland, and to guarantee the integrity of the bloc's single market. In March, the UK government unilaterally

France warns over  
Brexit fishing deal

**Paris, April 27:** France on Tuesday threatened "reprisals" against Britain unless a post-Brexit deal on fishing rights is implemented, the latest sign of cross-Channel tensions over the highly sensitive sector.

French fishermen say they are being prevented from operating in British waters because of difficulties in obtaining licenses.

They began a protest movement last week by blocking trucks bringing fish from Britain to France, saying that only 22 boats out of 120 from the Boulogne-sur-Mer port had obtained a licence for British waters.

"We are asking for the whole deal, nothing but the deal, and for as long as it has not been implemented... we will carry out reprisals in other sectors if it is necessary," French Europe Minister Clement Beaune told the BFM Business channel on Tuesday.

British authorities have contested the French industry's claims, saying last Friday that 87 French boats had received licences for fishing within six to 12 nautical miles from the UK coast.

extended until October a grace period for not conducting checks on goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, a decision that led the EU to start legal action against its former member nation.

In an address to EU law-

makers ahead of Tuesday's ratification vote, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said she shared their concerns on "unilateral actions taken by (the) United Kingdom" but noted some progress in the talks with British officials. — AP

Fishing rights were one of the most complicated questions to negotiate in the Brexit deal agreed between Britain and the European Union for the UK's full departure from the bloc on January 1.

Britain made fishing

rights a key issue in the negotiations, with control over access to its waters seen as a sign of British sovereignty.

Beaune said that French reprisals could be in the form of holding up approvals for British financial service operators to work in the EU.

"The United Kingdom is expecting quite a few authorisations from us for financial services. We won't give any for as long as we don't have guarantees on fishing and other issues," he added.

"It's give-give. Everyone needs to respect their commitments, if not we will be as brutal and difficult as is necessary as a partner," he said.

The British fishing sector has also complained about red tape preventing the export of catches to the European continent. — AFP

## AUSTRALIA

Oz suspends direct  
flights from India

**Melbourne, April 27:** Australia on Tuesday suspended all direct passenger flights from India with immediate effect until May 15 due to the "very significant" spike in Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced.

Morrison, announcing the temporary border closure with India, also launched an immediate support package for the country in its fight against the ongoing Coronavirus crisis. Addressing a press briefing after convening a Cabinet's national security committee meeting, he said that the ban on arrivals from India would be reviewed before May 15.

"Today we agreed, in addition to the measures that I announced after the last National Cabinet meeting, to pause direct passenger flights between India and Australia until the 15th of May," he said. "We recognise that this has been a very significant outbreak in India," Morrison said.

The latest move would affect direct flights into

Sydney and two repatriation flights scheduled to arrive in Darwin. The move could also affect thousands of people, including Australian cricketers currently playing in the Indian Premier League in India.

All indirect flights coming from India via Singapore, Doha, Dubai and Kuala Lumpur have also been paused by their respective governments. Giving details of the relief package, Prime Minister Morrison said that Australia will send a range of goods to India to help as it struggles with a critical shortage of medical supplies.

Australia will send 500 ventilators, as well as 1 million surgical masks, 500,000 protective and surgical masks, goggles and face shields. "We're standing with those Australians in India and recognising those serious difficulties they face. I stress this is an initial package, there'll be more to follow," Morrison said.

— PTI

## BELGIUM

BELGIUM BANS  
ARRIVALS FROM  
INDIA, BRAZIL,  
SOUTH AFRICA

**Brussels, April 27:** Belgium on Tuesday became the latest territory to ban travel from India, Brazil and South Africa, major countries hit by fast-spreading Coronavirus variants.

"Passenger travel by air, train, boat, and bus, including transit traffic, from India, Brazil and South Africa to Belgium will be banned," Prime Minister Alexander de Croo announced in a statement.

"People with Belgian nationality and people who have their main residence in Belgium can return from India, Brazil, and South Africa to Belgium. They are strongly advised not to travel to these countries."

There will be some exceptions to the ban for essential travel by some transport workers and diplomats, but otherwise the ban will be strictly enforced.

— AFP

## Covid recovery discussion



Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi addresses the Italian Senate to present the governments EU-funded pandemic recovery plan, just days before the deadline to submit it to Brussels, in Rome on Tuesday. — AFP

## N-deal talks resume in Vienna

**Berlin, April 27:** World powers were set to resume high level talks in Vienna on Tuesday focused on bringing the United States back into the nuclear deal with Iran, in their first session since comments surfaced from the Iranian foreign minister alleging that Russia once tried to scupper the pact.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has thus far refused to comment on the remarks from Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, made in a seven-hour interview with a think tank associated with the Iranian presidency that leaked over the

weekend. Russia's top representative at the Vienna talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, who has outwardly been one of the most optimistic about the possibility of getting Tehran and Washington to agree to terms for the US to rejoin the 2015 deal, also made no mention of the allegations before the meetings, saying in a tweet only that "the participants will continue negotiations on restoration of the nuclear deal."

Ulyanov is joining representatives from China, Germany, France, and Britain — the other parties to the deal, known as

the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA — for the talks chaired by the European Union. "Participants will continue their discussions in view of a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA and on how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA," the EU delegation said before the talks.

The US is not at the table because it unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then President Donald Trump, who restored and augmented American sanctions in a campaign of "maximum

pressure" to try and force Iran into renegotiating the pact with more concessions. President Joe Biden wants to rejoin the deal, however, and there is a US delegation in Vienna taking part in indirect talks with Iran, with diplomats from the other world powers acting as go-betweens.

The deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The reimposition of American sanctions has left the country's economy reeling, and Tehran has reacted by steadily increasing its violations of the restrictions of the deal. — AP

## LUNAR ODYSSEY

Decision eliminates opportunities for competition, says Bezos' firm

EU lifts immunity  
of Greek lawmaker

**Brussels, April 27:** European Union lawmakers voted on Tuesday to lift the immunity of a Greek far-right member of the EU parliament who has been sentenced to 13 years in prison in Greece for being a leading member of a criminal organisation.

The European Parliament voted 658-24, with 10 abstentions, to remove Ioannis Lagos's parliamentary protection, paving the way for Belgian authorities to extradite him to Greece. Lagos has been living in the Belgian capital, Brussels, since a

Greek court in October convicted him and 17 other former Greek parliament members from the extreme-right Golden Dawn party of leading a criminal organisation, or being members in it.

The other convicted Golden Dawn members are already in jail, except for one who escaped. Golden Dawn was founded as a Neo-Nazi group in the 1980s. It saw a surge in popularity during the 2010-2018 financial crisis, gaining parliamentary representation between 2012 and 2019. — AP

**Washington, April 27:** Blue Origin, the US space company founded by billionaire Jeff Bezos, on Monday filed a protest against NASA's choice of rival SpaceX to build the module that will land the next US astronauts on the Moon.

"NASA has executed a flawed acquisition for the Human Landing System programme and moved the goalposts at the last minute," Blue Origin said in a statement. The decision "eliminates opportunities for competition, significantly narrows the

supply base, and not only delays, but also endangers America's return to the Moon" by 2024 as the US space agency plans, the private space company said.

"Because of that, we've filed a protest with the GAO," or Government Accountability Office, which audits services for Congress.

NASA announced just over a week ago that it had chosen Tesla founder Elon Musk's company to take its astronauts back to the Moon, awarding SpaceX a \$2.9 billion contract to

● **Blue Origin** argued that Nasa had misjudged the risks involved in choosing SpaceX's.

develop the Starship rocket.

But Blue Origin argued that NASA had misjudged the risks involved in choosing SpaceX's "entirely new launch vehicle." "Starship has no flight heritage or validation of performance, and launch vehicle development is notoriously difficult and takes much longer than anticipated," the com-

plaint said.

Prototypes of the rocket are currently being tested in Texas, but recent tests have ended in spectacular explosions. In addition, Blue Origin said, the space agency's decision to award only one winner rather than two, as had been originally set out in the sub-missions process, would leave the project at "high risk" because it lacks a back-up plan.

The decision also "creates a potential monopoly for all future NASA exploration missions because there would not be contin-

uing programs for lunar access other than the SpaceX solution," the protest said.

Blue Origin, which had partnered with three big names in the aerospace industry — Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Draper — to respond to NASA's call for tenders, asked the GAO to press NASA to rescind its decision and "resolicit offers against a revised statement of available funds, and conduct discussions with all eligible offerors under the revised requirements." — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,944.14	1.15
Nifty 50	14,653.00	1.16
S&P 500*	4,188.44	0.02
Dollar (₹)	74.65	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.67	0.30
Euro (₹)	90.07	0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,906.69	0.14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.90	0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.055	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.584	0.014

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

TVS Motor profit rises four-fold to ₹319 cr in Q4

TVS Motor Company posted nearly four-fold increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 319.19 crore for the March quarter, on the back of robust sales in the domestic and international markets. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 81.84 crore a year ago. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 6,131.90 crore from Rs 4,104.71 crore. Total two- and three-wheeler sales stood at 9.28 lakh units in Q4, up 47 per cent.

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■ Bid to avert IL&FS, PNB-like scams Lenders require RBI nod to hire auditor

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, APRIL 27

In a bid to improve the quality of financial reporting of lenders and to prevent IL&FS and Punjab National Bank-like scams, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday made it mandatory for lenders to take its prior approval for the appointment and re-appointment of statutory central auditors (SCAs) and statutory auditors.

The apex bank also mandated that the statutory audit for entities with an asset size of at least Rs 15,000 crore at the end of the previous year should be conducted by a minimum of two audit firms.

All other lenders of lesser size should appoint at least one audit firm to conduct the statutory audit, the apex bank said in its guidelines on appointment of statutory auditors of commercial banks (excluding regional rural banks), primary (urban) co-operative banks (UCBs) and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs). The guidelines will be applicable to commercial banks from financial year 2021-22.

However, UCBs and NBFCs shall have the flexibility to adopt these guidelines from H2 of FY22 so that there is no disruption. The guidelines provide instructions for appointment of SCAs/ SAs, the number of auditors, their eligibility criteria, tenure and rotation, etc. while ensuring the independence of auditors. “The



revised Guidelines being issued will ensure that Statutory Auditors are appointed in a timely, transparent and effective manner,” the RBI said.

Makarand Joshi, founding partner, MMJC and Associates—a corporate compliance firm—said, “Rotation of auditors is heavily relied upon by regulators to ensure that any element of true and fair view cannot be kept under wraps for a fairly long period. The issues in large NBFCs like IL&FS and DHFL witnessed over the past few years has been a wake-up call for the regulator. This is an attempt to improve transparency and reliability. The new norm would mean that management will have to invest time to make a new auditor familiar with working of NBFC or financial institution more frequently.”

Public sector banks have to allot the top 20 branches (to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances) to SCAs to cover a minimum of 15 per cent of the total gross advances

of the bank by SCAs. For other entities—excluding payment banks and core investment companies—SCAs/SAs shall visit and audit at least the top 20 branches/top 20 per cent of the branches of the entities (in case of entities having less than 100 branches), to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances, to cover a minimum 15 per cent of their total gross advances.

Commercial banks (excluding RRBs) and UCBs will be required to take prior approval of RBI (Department of Supervision) for appointment/reappointment of statutory central auditors and statutory auditors, on an annual basis, the banking regulator said.

In order to protect the independence of the auditors, lenders will have to appoint the SCAs/SAs for a continuous period of three years. Commercial banks and UCBs can remove the audit firms during this period only with the prior approval of the department.

Telcos’ gross revenue rises to ₹71,588 cr

New Delhi, April 27: Telecom operators recorded a 12.27 per cent rise in their total revenue at Rs 71,588 crore in the quarter ended December 31, 2020 on a year-on-year basis, according to data published by sector regulator Trai on Tuesday.

The gross revenue of the telecom service providers was Rs 63,764 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

The adjusted gross revenue (AGR) of the service providers, on which the government levies licence fees and other charges, also increased by 16.5 per cent on year-on-year basis to Rs 47,623 crore during the quarter from Rs 40,877 crore in the year-ago quarter.

The licence fee collection of the government increased by 16.49 per cent to Rs 3,809 crore from Rs 3,270 crore on a year-on-year basis.

Reliance Jio reported highest AGR of Rs 17,181.65 crore during the quarter. It was followed by Bharti Airtel with AGR of Rs 11,340.19 crore, Vodafone Idea 6,588.46 crore, BSNL Rs 2,135.17 crore, Tata Teleservices Rs 584.1 crore, MTNL Rs 369.84 crore and rest of the companies posted AGR of less than Rs 100 crore.

Based on AGR of access service provider Trai calculated that average revenue per user in the sector increased to Rs 108.78 from Rs 85.07 on a year-on-year basis. —PTI

Maruti expects second wave to boost car sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, APRIL 27

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Tuesday said a fresh surge in coronavirus cases in the country would strengthen demand for personal mobility, and that lockdowns in some cities had not yet hurt the carmaker's sales or production.

Following a steep fall in car sales last year when the pandemic first hit, Maruti's sales picked up in India over the past two quarters as people opted out of public transport and poured their lockdown-led savings into big-ticket items such as cars.

Still, Maruti's fourth-quarter results took a hit due to rising commodity prices and supply chain disruptions. Maruti has passed on some of the



R.C. Bhargava

costs to customers and already bumped up car prices twice this year.

“With this second pandemic wave the demand for personal transport will, if anything, strengthen, not weaken. Because more and more people will want to have their personal transport,” R.C. Bhargava, chairman at Maruti Suzuki told reporters after Maruti posted a near 10 per cent drop in quarterly profit.

“If the current demand situation continues, April-June should be “decent,” he said.

The carmaker, which sells one out of two bought in the country, reported a 9.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in profit at Rs 1,166 crore for the March 2021 quarter, on the back of weak demand and higher commodity costs but revenue was strong.

The New Delhi-based company reported a profit of Rs 1,291.7 crore in the year-ago period.

Revenue from operations in Q4 FY21 stood at Rs 24,023.7 crore, up 32 per cent from Rs 18,198.7 crore in the year-ago period backed by strong double-digit growth in sales.

Maruti Suzuki sold 4,92,235 vehicles in the March quarter, up 28 per cent YoY.

MARKET SENTIMENTS LOOK UP

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, APRIL 27

The Sensex gained over 500 points for the second day in a row, after the Covid scare seemed to come down due to a drop in fresh daily cases. The Sensex closed 558 points, or 1.15 per cent, up at 48,944 while Nifty-50 rose to 14,653, up 168 points.

The BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices up 1.04 per cent and 1.49 per cent.

The daily Covid cases on Monday was lower at 3.23 lakh compared to around 3.5 lakh on Sunday and Maharashtra also reported lower daily infections at 48,700. The market sentiment also got a boost as help started pouring in from many countries. “Investors’ expectations from earnings outcome by heavyweights, the progress of the vaccination drive and a dip in the Covid cases further boosted sentiments,” said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking.

On Tuesday, FPIs were net sellers by Rs 1,454.75 crore.

RETAIL TRADE COUNTS LOSSES

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 27

Lock-down and restrictions in a few states has caused a business loss of Rs 5 lakh crore to unorganised traders, while the organised retail too estimates around 40 per cent loss in states affected by the second wave.

The Confederation of Indian Traders says curfew and other restrictions has caused a business loss of about Rs 5 lakh crore in the past 25 days nationally. Out of Rs 5 lakh crore, the loss of retail traders is estimated to be about Rs 3.5 lakh crore and wholesale business of Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

Delhi alone recorded a business loss of more than Rs 25,000 crore. The calculations are based on the trader feedback from 14 states, excluding West Bengal, NE, Punjab, Haryana, J&K and Goa.

Interstate trade and loading and unloading activities also are getting affected due to night curfews.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

FC Goa play out yet another draw

Margao: FC Goa conceded an 89th minute goal to squander the chance to become the first Indian club to win a match in the prestigious AFC Champions League (ACL) as they played out a 1-1 draw with Al Rayyan of Qatar here Monday.

Jorge Ortiz gave FC Goa the lead in the third minute of the Group E match but Ali Ferydoon equalised with just a minute left in the regulation time.

The Indian Super League side went out of reckoning for a knock-out berth after Al Wahda of the UAE beat last season runners-up Persepolis FC 1-0 in another Group E match played earlier in the day. — PTI

Boxer injured in Worlds bout, dies

Lausanne, Switzerland: An 18-year-old boxer from Jordan has died after being seriously injured in a bout at the World Youth Championships, the International Boxing Association said on Tuesday. Rashed Al-Swaissat was treated in the ring and then hospitalised after being knocked out in his preliminary-round lightweight fight against Estonian boxer Anton Vinogradov on April 16 in Kielce, Poland. “It is with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Rashed Al-Swaissat of Jordan, who had been admitted to hospital on April 16 further to his fight during the AIBA Youth World Championships,” AIBA said. — AP

Repsol Honda gear up for Spanish GP

Spain: After an emotional return to MotoGP in Portimao, Marc Marquez's rehabilitation continues in Jerez as Pol Espargaro aims to make amends for the previous round. Heading to the iconic Jerez de la Frontera for the Gran Premio Red Bull de España, the MotoGP World Championship is primed for another exciting weekend. The Repsol Honda Team will again be operating at full capacity as Marquez and Espargaro line up together aboard the RC213V. This weekend there will be a fifth Honda on the grid as Stefan Bradl returns to the World Championship as a wildcard.

Correa keeps Lazio in CL hunt Joaquin scores brace to beat AC Milan, Napoli blank Torino to go third

Rome, April 27: Joaquin Correa ensured Lazio kept their hopes of Champions League qualification alive on Monday with a double in a 3-0 win over AC Milan while Napoli jumped up to third thanks to a 2-0 triumph at Torino.

Correa opened the scoring for Lazio with only a minute on the clock at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome and added the second five minutes after the break.

Ciro Immobile struck the third with three minutes left as Lazio moved five points off the Champions League spots with a game in hand on their rivals.

“This was like a final for us, the last chance to stay in with a shout for the top four... It was a clear and dominant victory,” Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi told Sky Sport Italia.

Inzaghi's side sit sixth, behind AC Milan who are level on 66 points with Napoli and Juventus — third and fourth respectively — but have dropped down to fifth after their second straight league defeat.

They are 13 points behind leaders Inter Milan, who can win their first league title since 2010



Lazio's Joaquin Correa (left) vies for the ball with Ante Rebic of AC Milan in their Italian league match at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Monday.

— AP

on Saturday if they beat Crotone and second-placed Atalanta fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday.

Stefano Pioli's Milan, who started the weekend in second place, could have been beaten by a larger margin as Manuel Lazzari

was denied a goal just before the break by the tightest of VAR offside calls and Italy forward Immobile struck the post seven minutes before he scored his 18th league goal of the campaign.

Pioli was however left

frustrated by Correa's second, which was given after a lengthy VAR check following what he felt was a foul from Lucas Leiva on Hakan Calhanoglu.

“I don't understand how it wasn't given as a foul on Calhanoglu, said Pioli.

THE RESULTS	
Torino	0
Napoli (Bakayoko 11, Osimhen 13)	2
Lazio (Correa 2, 51, Immobile 87)	3
AC Milan	0

“He looked at it again and from the replay you cannot say Leiva doesn't catch Calhanoglu and completely miss the ball.”

Napoli moved into third thanks to first-half goals from Tiemoue Bakayoko and Victor Osimhen earlier on Monday.

They could have been further ahead at the break following a dominant opening period in which Piotr Zielinski hit the post and Matteo Politano was unlucky to see his deflected shot slide wide.

Lorenzo Insigne, playing his 300th Serie A match for Napoli, also hit the upright with a curling shot just before the hour mark.

They failed to add to their tally but ran out winners to put pressure on their rivals. — AFP

SOCIEDAD EDGE PAST EIBAR TO KEEP HOLD ON EUROPA SPOT

Madrid, April 27: Alexander Isak scored a first-half winner as Real Sociedad defeated Basque Country rivals Eibar 1-0 to strengthen their hold on fifth place in the Spanish league.

The win left Sociedad three points ahead of sixth-placed Real Betis and four points in front of seventh-placed Villarreal with five rounds remaining. The teams finishing in fifth and sixth places secure a Europa League berth next season.

It was only the second win for Sociedad in their last seven league matches.

It was the fifth consecutive loss for last-placed Eibar, which is winless in 16 straight league games.

● The win left Sociedad three points ahead of sixth-placed Real Betis and four points in front of seventh-placed Villarreal with five rounds remaining.

It stayed seven points from escaping the relegation zone.

Isak scored at Eibar's Ipurua Stadium with a shot from close range in the 26th minute.

Sociedad next visit Huesca, while Eibar host Alavés, another relegation-threatened team. — AP

Iheanacho leads Foxes fightback to sink Palace

Leicester (United Kingdom), April 27: Leicester strengthened their grip on third place in the Premier League as Kelechi Iheanacho's superb strike capped a spirited fightback in Monday's 2-1 win against Crystal Palace.

Brendan Rodgers' side trailed to Wilfried Zaha's first half goal. But Timothy Castagne equalised soon after the interval with his first goal since September. And Nigeria striker Iheanacho sealed Leicester's second successive victory when he scored with a thunder-

ous finish 10 minutes from full-time.

Leicester are four points clear of fourth placed Chelsea and seven ahead of fifth placed West Ham as they bid to qualify for next season's Champions League.

“It was a very important win for us. It was the third game in nine days so a tough schedule,” Rodgers said.

“Going one behind against Palace, they're super organised and tough to break down. I thought the players were outstanding. They kept the calmness and control

and scored two very good goals.”

With five games left, the FA Cup finalists have already matched their total of 62 points from last season.

A late collapse cost the Foxes a place in the Champions League in 2020, but Rodgers' men are firmly on course to make amends thanks to the sparkling form of Iheanacho.

“We spoke about it at the start of the season and put it to bed them. Our performance levels this season have shown that is in the past,” Rodgers said. — AFP

HOCKEY UMPIRE'S MANAGER VIRENDRA DIES OF COVID-19

New Delhi, April 27: Indian hockey umpire's manager Virendra Singh has died of Covid-19 related complications and his demise was mourned by the game's governing body. Singh was 47. He died in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday.

Virendra had officiated in a number of All India tournaments and National Championships.

Mourning his demise, Hockey India president Gyanendro Ningombam said, “We at Hockey India are deeply saddened to learn about the untimely demise of Virendra Singh.”

‘SHOOTER DADI’ CORONA POSTIVE, IN HOSPITAL

Octogenarian shooter Chandro Tomar, nicknamed ‘Shooter Dadi’, has tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted to a hospital due to difficulty in breathing.

The Twitter page of the 89-year-old legendary shooter, hailing from the Baghpatt village in Uttar Pradesh, posted the development. — PTI





● CHENNAI SUPER KINGS ● DELHI CAPITALS ● KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS ● MUMBAI INDIANS ● PUNJAB KINGS ● RAJASTHAN ROYALS ● ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE ● SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

THE ASIAN AGE, NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY, 28 APRIL 2021

pg 8

ORANGE	
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	265
KL Rahul, PBKS	240
Glenn Maxwell, RCB	223
PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, RCB	17
Avesh Khan, DC	12
Rahul Chahar, MI	9

### Off the field



Sunrisers pacer T. Natarajan underwent a knee surgery on Tuesday.

— Twitter

### Franchises focus on mental health now

Despite the withdrawal of four players from the ongoing IPL, the franchises say that there are no major problems concerning mental health of the players.

“Covid is being discussed every single day in meetings and we are aware of the threat. We are trying to bring distraction from it through activities, celebrations of birthdays etc,” a team official said.

Most franchises are quite open with their players, a couple of officials claimed. “This is exactly why these four managed to leave the tournament quickly and without delay. The management is very open. If there is any problem with anyone, we have told them to reach out to us,” said an official of a franchise affected by the departure.

### Lee donates bitcoin worth ₹40 lakh

Inspired by his countryman Pat Cummins’ gesture, former Australian pacer Brett Lee on Tuesday decided to donate one bitcoin (approximately ₹40 lakh) to help India in its fight against the raging COVID-19 pandemic. “It saddens me deeply to see people suffering due to the ongoing pandemic. I feel privileged to be in a position of making a difference and with that in mind, I’d like to donate 1 BTC (Bitcoin) to Crypto Relief to help with the purchase of oxygen supplies for the hospitals across India,” Lee said.

“India has always been like a second home for me. The love and affection that I have got from the people of this country both during my professional career and even after my retirement, holds a special place in my heart.”

### Kuggeleijn signed up as replacement

New Zealand pacer Scott Kuggeleijn was on Tuesday announced as a replacement for Kane Richardson in the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad for the remainder of IPL-14. Along with compatriot Adam Zampa, Australian Richardson quit the tournament midway citing personal reasons. No replacement has been named yet for leg-spinner Zampa.

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# RETURN ASSURANCE

## BCCI guarantees safe return to foreign players

New Delhi/Melbourne, April 27: The BCCI stepped in to assuage apprehensions of foreign cricketers, especially Australians, at the IPL as a second wave of COVID-19 infections battered India, prompting the government Down Under to suspend air travel with the country besides asking players to make their “own arrangements” for return.

The fear of being locked out of their own nation drove the likes of Andrew Tye to take an early flight back to Australia while Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa also exited their franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore’s bio-bubble on Monday.

A day later, Australia announced that it was suspending air travel to and from India till May 15 amid the swirling COVID-19 cases. The BCCI wrote to the foreign players telling them that their safe return home will be its responsibility once the tournament ends on May 30.

“We understand that many of you are apprehensive about how you will get back home once the tournament concludes... We want to apprise you that you have nothing to worry about,” BCCI COO Hemang Amin said in a letter addressed to the players.

“The BCCI will do everything to ensure that you reach your respective destinations seamlessly. The BCCI is monitoring the situation very closely and is working with the gov-



RCB's Glenn Maxwell boards a flight to Ahmedabad.

ernment authorities to make arrangements to get you home once the tournament concludes.

“Be rest assured that the tournament is not over for BCCI till each one of you has reached your home, safe and sound,” he added.

**Aussie PM rules out government assistance**

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison ruled out any government assistance and said that those in the IPL will have to make their own arrangements for return.

“They have travelled there privately. This wasn’t part of an Australian tour. They’re under their

own resources and they’ll be using those resources too, I’m sure, to see them return to Australia in accordance with their own arrangements,” Morrison was quoted as saying by *The Guardian*.

The crisis outside the IPL’s bio-bubble has led to some talk about whether it is appropriate for the league to go on and whether its organisers and participating players should be doing more to express empathy.

Amin lauded the players for carrying on and giving some joy amid the gloom.

“When you all walk out onto the field, you are bringing hope to millions

of people who have tuned in,” he said.

“While you are professionals and will play to win, this time you are also playing for something much more important,” he added.

As of now, the IPL still has 14 Australian players, including big names like Steve Smith (Delhi), David Warner (Sunrisers) and Cummins.

Ricky Ponting (DC) and Simon Katich (RCB) are among the high-profile Australian coaches, while iconic former players such as Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee and Lisa Sthalekar are part of the commentary team. — PTI

### LYNN ASKS CA TO ARRANGE A CHARTER FLIGHT

New Delhi, April 27: Mumbai Indians batsman Chris Lynn has requested Cricket Australia to arrange a chartered flight to take its players home after the IPL is over and revealed that his franchise will get all members of the team vaccinated next week. “I texted back that as Cricket Australia make 10 per cent of every IPL contract was there a chance we could spend that money this year on a charter flight once the tournament is over?” Lynn told *News Corp media*.

“I know there are people worse off than us. But we are going from a really tight bubble and are getting vaccinated next week so hopefully the government will let us get home on a private charter.

“We are not asking for shortcuts and we signed up knowing the risks. But it would be great to get home as soon as the event is over.”

“Obviously India is in chaos at the moment. But we are at least giving people something to smile about by playing the tournament,” Lynn said.

While some Australian players have returned home, their New Zealand counterparts have no such plans. — PTI

## RCB edge Capitals in thriller

Ahmedabad, April 27: Royal Challengers Bangalore edged Delhi Capitals in a last-ball thriller on Tuesday.

In pursuit of RCB’s 171, contrasting half-centuries from Shimron Hetmyer (53 off 25) and Rishabh Pant (58 off 48) took Delhi closer to the finish line. Capitals needed a six off the last ball, but Pant could only manage a four.

Earlier, the ever-reliable AB de Villiers hit an unbeaten 42-ball 75 to power Royal Challengers Bangalore to 171 for five.

It was a collective effort from the Delhi bowlers — Ishant Sharma (1/26), Axar Patel (1/33), Kagiso Rabada (1/38), Amit Mishra (1/27), Avesh Khan (1/24) — who all picked one wicket apiece.

De Villiers, who hit three fours and five sixes, was the top scorer for RCB.

The veteran South African hit 22 runs off the last over bowled by Marcus Stoinis (0/23) that included three sixes.

Rajat Patidar (31) and Glenn Maxwell (25 off 20 balls) also provided valuable contributions.

Put in to bat, Devdutt Padikkal (17) and skipper Virat Kohli (12) were off to a flying start, amassing 30 runs in 3.5 overs. The youngster opened his account with a boundary



RCB's AB de Villiers en route to his half-century against Delhi.

— IPL

off Ishant in the first over. The duo hit five fours. However, that changed as DC bowlers effected back-to-back blows.

Pacer Avesh provided the Capitals with the first breakthrough, dismissing the RCB captain for 12 in the fourth over. In the very next ball, Ishant, playing his first match of the season, got rid of the dangerous Padikkal.

With two new batsmen in the middle, the seasoned speedster went on to bowl a wicket maiden to slow down the proceedings as RCB collected 36 runs for the loss of two wickets in the Powerplay.

Maxwell played a short cameo, smashing two maximums and a boundary but was caught at long on by compatriot Steve Smith of leggie Mishra as RCB reached 68

for three at the halfway mark.

Patidar, who hit 31 off 22 deliveries, and de Villiers steadied the ship by stitching a 54-run stand but all-rounder Axar Patel, who accounted for the Indian in the 15th over.

Barring de Villiers all RCB batsmen were guilty off not capitalising on good starts. — PTI

### SCORECARD

**Royal Challengers Bangalore:** Virat Kohli b Avesh Khan 12, Devdutt Padikkal b Sharma 17, Rajat Patidar c Smith b Patel 31, Glenn Maxwell c Smith b Mishra 25, AB de Villiers (not out) 75, Washington Sundar c & b Rabada 6, Daniel Sams (not out) 3. **Extras (w 2) 2. Total (for five wickets in 20 overs) 171.**

**FOw:** 1-30, 2-30, 3-60, 4-114, 5-139.

**Bowling:** Ishant 4-1-26-1, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-38-1, Avesh Khan 4-0-24-1, Amit Mishra 3-0-27-1, Axar Patel 4-0-33-1, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-23-0.

**Delhi Capitals:** Prithvi Shaw c de Villiers b Patel 21, Shikhar Dhawan c Chahal b Jamieson 6, Steven Smith c de Villiers b Mohammed Siraj 4, Rishabh Pant (not out) 58, Marcus Stoinis c de Villiers b Patel 22, Shimron Hetmyer (not out) 53. **Extras (lb 4, w 2) 6. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 170.**

**FOw:** 1-23, 2-28, 3-47, 4-92.

**Bowling:** Daniel Sams 2-0-15-0, Mohammed Siraj 4-0-44-1, Kyle Jamieson 4-0-32-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-28-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-37-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 2-0-10-0.

## I felt vulnerable in bubble: Zampa

New Delhi, April 27: Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa on Tuesday said he decided to quit the IPL midway as it was the “most vulnerable” bio-bubble he has been a part of and the tournament should have been held in UAE, like last year. Zampa and Kane Richardson, who were part of the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad, are set to fly back home later on Tuesday, having pulled out citing personal reasons.

Speaking to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Zampa said he felt a lot safer in the UAE where the IPL was held last year.

“We’ve been in a few (bubbles) now, and I feel like this is probably the most vulnerable. I just feel like because it’s India, we’re always being told about the hygiene over here and being extra careful... I just felt like it was the most vulnerable.

“The IPL that was held in Dubai six months ago didn’t feel that way at all. I felt like that was extremely safe. Personally, I feel like that would have been a better option originally for this IPL, but obviously, there’s a lot of political stuff that goes into it.

“Obviously there’s the T20 World Cup that’s meant to be happening here later this year. That’s probably going to be the next discussion in the cricket world. Six months is a long time,” said the leg-spinner.

Zampa said a lot of factors contributed to his decision to leave the IPL.

“Obviously the COVID situation over here is pretty dire. I just felt, rocking up to training and stuff, obviously, I wasn’t playing in the team as well, I was going to training and I wasn’t finding the motivation.” — PTI

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	6	5	1	0	10	+0.089
CSK	5	4	1	0	8	+1.612
DC	6	4	2	0	8	+0.269
MI	5	2	3	0	4	-0.032
KKR	6	2	4	0	4	-0.305
PBKS	6	2	4	0	4	-0.608
RR	5	2	3	0	4	-0.681
SRH	5	1	4	0	2	-0.180

## Sunrisers face uphill challenge

New Delhi, April 27: Operating like a well-oiled unit, Chennai Super Kings will start as overwhelming favourites when they clash with struggling Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match, here on Wednesday.

The MS Dhoni-led CSK have bounced back in style after losing the opening match. They are on a roll with four straight wins and will hope that the new venue — Feroze Shah Kotla ground — also favours them.

The three-time champions had an underwhelming 2020 season but the team, packed with seasoned players, is now displaying the efficiency it is known for.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been the driving force behind CSK’s impressive run so far.

His blistering assault on Harshal Patel in the final over shut out RCB on Sunday. He has been among the wickets with his accurate left-arm spin apart from effecting stunning run-outs.

Openers — Faf du Plessis and Ruturaj Gaikwad — have found form while Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu are due for big knocks.

The CSK batters are aware of the Rashid Khan threat but the rest of the SRH attack doesn’t inspire much confidence.

Hyderabad rely heavily on their foreign recruits, led by skipper David Warner, opener Jonny Bairstow, Kiwi great Kane Williamson and Rashid, which is a cause for concern. Their biggest weakness is a fragile batting

### Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 7:30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

### HEAD to HEAD

Matches	14
CSK	10
SRH	4

**FOR THE RECORD**

- David Warner with 199 sixes in 147 innings needs just one more to become the eighth batsman to complete a double century of sixes in IPL.
- Suresh Raina with 4.99 fours in 193 innings needs just one more to become the fourth batsman to complete 500 fours in IPL.

**LAST YEAR’S MATCHES**

- Sunrisers beat CSK by 7 runs at Dubai.
- CSK beat Sunrisers by 20 runs at Dubai.

**STATS:** S. PERVEZ KAISER

order and over-reliance on the top order.

The inability of the team’s Indian middle-order to step up has cost SRH more often than not and the think-tank needs to get the combination right if they have to move out of the last spot on the points table which they currently occupy.

Warner needs to shrug off his poor run and for that he needs to negotiate CSK pacer Deepak Chahar, who has impressive ability to strike upfront, well.

Apart from Chahar, spin all-rounder Jadeja and veteran Imran Tahir form a strong bowling unit. — PTI

## Cancelling IPL will not mitigate the colossal tragedy



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

Should the current IPL season be completed with the second wave of the pandemic hitting India with a sledgehammer blow, or suspended to a later month when the situation is under control?

R. Ashwin, Kane Richardson, Adam Zampa, Andrew Tye, Liam Livingston pulling out of the tournament in the past week has exposed the trauma

and concerns being experienced in the seemingly hassle-free bio-secure bubbles. It is reasonable to believe that the number of such players is not restricted to six.

Human sensibilities and responses in such extraordinary circumstances can’t be simplistically codified. Different players will react differently. For some, ambition, thrill and pride

of playing sport, rewards of fame and money etc may not matter after a point.

Others, however, who may see the same situation differently. Shortly after news filtered through of the players pulling out, Pat Cummins, Australia’s vice-captain, reiterated his commitment to play, and in fact donated \$50,000 to the Prime Minister Cares Fund.

Cummins believed that the tournament provided some relief to the Indian public otherwise besieged by the pandemic. Fellow Aussie, former captain Ricky Ponting holds a similar view. There will be

many in agreement with this point of view too.

This polarisation spills over outside the bio-secure bubbles, in everyday life.

One section of people believes that the IPL’s celebratory and brazenly commercial ethos is out of sync with the havoc being caused by the virus and mocks the tragedy that the country is currently experiencing.

The opposite point of view is that the IPL should not be seen only for its gloss, glamour and clamour, but for the thousands of jobs it provides, apart from the modicum of relief for people from the anguish they are undergo-

ing. The BCCI, meanwhile, has said that it will not call off the tournament. One assumes that this will depend on how the country copes with the pandemic on a daily basis.

Cancelling the IPL will not mitigate the colossal tragedy inflicted by the current Covid tsunami. The tournament is not a super spreader, like multi-phased elections and religious events to which those in authority turned a blind eye despite all warning signals. The IPL is being played without fans, with all precautions taken on health safety procedures.,

However, the BCCI can be

faulted for being insensitive to the attenuating circumstances. With a little imagination, the phenomenal reach of the league could have been exploited for more meaningful messages (with connivance of franchises, players, broadcasters) rather than just regular PR stuff.

A major accusation is that players — especially Indians — have not coughed up money for relief. As high-income earners, they should. Some may have, without making it public who knows. But personal money contribution is not the only thing needed in this dire situation.

In the long build up to matches, 10 minutes dedicated to promoting (through players) how to fight the disease would have gone longer than full page ads in newspapers and mucky, ill-informed stuff on news TV. The Strategic Time Out for instance, would have been ideal for appeals for assistance to the most adversely hit cities, towns. And so on.

The surround sound this season needed sobriety and strong show of altruistic purpose, not the regular brouhaha, which in the prevailing circumstances, has seemed crass, unempathetic, uncaring.