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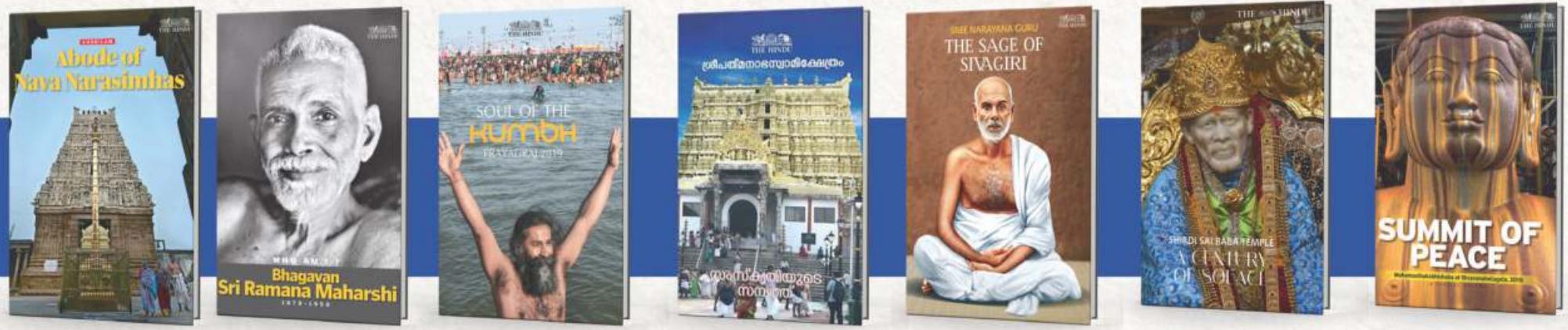
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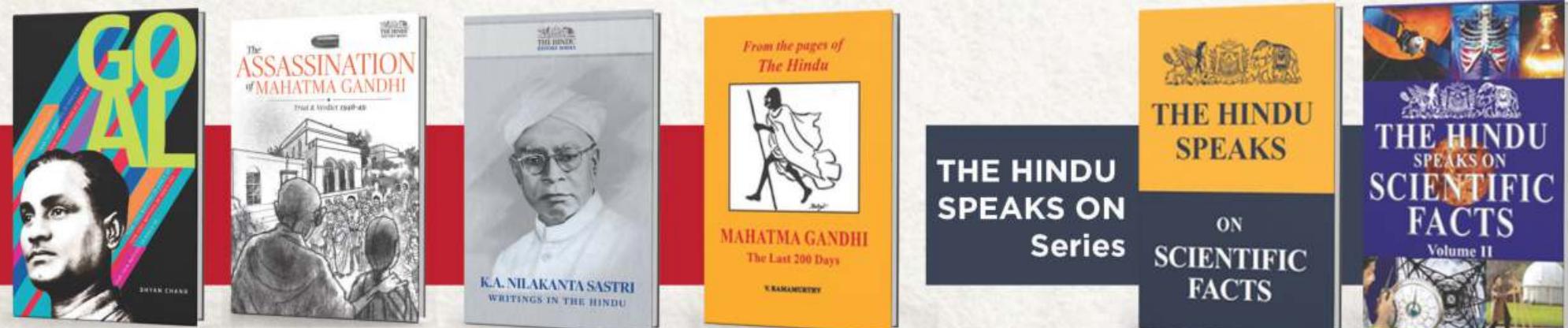
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on Sunday



Trolling of judges is a matter of concern, says Ravi Shankar Prasad
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AAI plan to buy 198 full body scanners hits a roadblock
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U.S. Special Envoy John Kerry to visit India ahead of climate meet
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Buttler's England meets Kohli's India in final ODI today
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NEARBY



President to undergo bypass surgery at AIIMS

NEW DELHI
President Ram Nath Kovind will undergo a heart bypass procedure on Tuesday, according to a statement from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Mr. Kovind, 75, was shifted to AIIMS, Delhi, on Saturday afternoon. Post-investigations, doctors advised him to undergo the procedure.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Delhi govt. issues SOP to protect interfaith couples

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government has issued a standard operating procedure for the protection of interfaith and inter-caste couples from possible harassment. The SOP, issued by the Social Welfare Department, includes setting up of 'special cells' by DCPs of respective districts, round-the-clock helpline to assist such couples and safe houses.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2



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Bengal, Assam record high turnout in first phase of polls

ECI says rate of malfunctioning EVMs was lower than in the past few elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA/ GUWAHATI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday said the first phase of polling in West Bengal and Assam went off peacefully, with 79.79% and 76.89% turnout respectively, as of 5 p.m.

Voting was carried out at 21,825 polling stations in a total of 77 Assembly constituencies in the two States.

A total of 73 lakh voters across 30 Assembly constituencies were entitled to exercise their franchise to decide the fate of 191 candidates in West Bengal.

In Assam, 81 lakh voters in 47 constituencies across 12 districts in eastern and a part of central Assam were to decide the fate of 264 candidates, including 23 women.

Stray violence

There were stray incidents of violence and allegations of electoral malpractice in West Bengal. The ECI deployed 732 companies of Central forces in Bengal on Saturday. In Assam, a total of 11,537 polling booths had been set up and more than 30,000 paramilitary personnel deployed.

The ECI said in a state-



First preference: An elderly Deuri tribal woman is escorted to cast her vote as others await their turn in Jorhat district of Assam on Saturday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

ment that electronic voting machines (EVM) and voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) used for the Phase 1 polls malfunctioned less than in previous polls.

"Non-functioning rate during the poll is lesser than experienced in the last few polls," the EC said.

The EC added that live monitoring and webcasting was carried out for over 50% of the polling stations, including critical and vulnerable booths. The EC said CO-

VID-19 safety protocols like sanitising all polling thermal scanning, and hand sanitizers and face masks were made available at the locations.

The ECI added that it had already made "record seizure of ₹281.28 crore", including cash, liquor and narcotics, in the two States. This amount was over four times higher than the combined seizures of ₹60.91 crore in the 2016 election.

During the day, the ECI's CVG app received 167 complaints of model code of conduct violations in West Bengal, of which 111 were disposed of as of 4.30 p.m., and 582 cases in Assam, out of which 423 were disposed of till 4.30 p.m.

While Assam has two more phases of polling to go, West Bengal has seven phases left. Results will be announced on May 2.

PEACEFUL START ▶ PAGE 10

Over 50% don't wear masks, finds govt. survey

Laxity leading to surge, Health Ministry tells 12 States, UTs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Almost 90% of the COVID-19 deaths in India continue to be in the category of those aged above 45. Internal surveys showed that while 90% people were aware of the importance of masks, only 44% actually wore them, a statement from the Health Ministry said on Saturday, reflecting "laxity" in adhering to strictures, such as wearing masks and avoiding crowding.

These concerns rose to the fore at a meeting chaired by Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan with key officials from 12 States and Union Territories (UTs) as well as Municipal Commissioners and District Collectors of 46 districts that are the most affected by rising cases and



Spreading the word: Health workers urging people in Dharavi, Mumbai, not to celebrate Holi. ■ VIVEK BENDRE (NEW RULES: PAGE 9)

mortality. The States and UTs are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Punjab and Bihar.

Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 36,902. It is followed by Punjab with 3,122 while Chhattisgarh reported 2,665 new cases.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 9

COVID-19 casts a shadow over Haridwar Kumbh Mela

Rules go for a toss at this large congregation

ANUJ KUMAR
HARIDWAR

Holding a pitcher in hand, Aniruddh Pandey, a priest at the Ganga temple at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar, put his finger on one-third of the vessel's body. "This is the size of the Kumbh Mela and our work this year. It is only about *sipahi* (security staff), *safai karmachari* (sanitary worker) and *sad-*



Lost caution: Devotees getting their heads tonsured at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. ■ ANUJ KUMAR

gaz (yard) of *doori* (distance). "What to do, we have to make ends meet?" said Tushar Thakur.

"During the lockdown, we decided that only 10 younger barbers would sit at Har Ki Pauri and they share their income with the rest of the community," he said. "Is the virus not

spreading from rallies in Bengal?" asked one of the *pandas* (priests), who records devotees' visits to Haridwar.

"We have installed a sanitiser machine where *yajmaans* (patrons) are asked to take a bath but there are few takers."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 9

+ Millions depend on Teesta, Hasina tells Modi

Dhaka underlines need to conclude water sharing agreement at bilateral talks during PM's visit



Key demand: PM Narendra Modi with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka on Saturday. ■ ANI

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh on Saturday reiterated that the livelihood of "millions" of its citizens depended on Teesta river and the country should receive a proper share of its waters.

The forceful message on the issue was conveyed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi by his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina during bilateral talks at the end of a two-day visit by the Indian PM.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated Bangladesh's long-pending request for concluding the interim

agreement on the sharing of the waters of Teesta river. She underscored that to alleviate the sufferings and save the livelihoods of millions of people dependent on the Teesta river basin, it is necessary that Bangladesh receives its fair share of the waters, the draft agreement of which has already been agreed upon by both governments in January 2011," declared a joint statement issued at the end of bilateral discussions between the two delegations.

The two leaders also instructed their Ministries of Water Resources to firm up the Framework of Interim

Agreement over the six common rivers – Monu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumi, Dharla and Dudhkumar.

Sharing of water resources has been a contentious issue between the two neighbours because of the number of stakeholders.

The two Prime Ministers also agreed that the incidents of killings along the settled Indo-Bangladesh borders is a matter of concern and instructed their respective border guards to initiate "people-oriented" border management.

The two leaders also instructed their Ministries of Water Resources to firm up the Framework of Interim

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 9

No possibility of lockdown in Delhi, says Health Minister

Wedding gatherings capped at 200 as new cases surge to 1,558

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday said the government is not thinking about imposing a lockdown and urged the people to celebrate Holi inside their homes.

"As of now there is no possibility of another lockdown. We had tried it earlier with not much success. Experts had said that due to its 14-day cycle [of the infection], a 21-day lockdown would stop the spread of the virus but that did not happen. So for me, lockdown is no solution," he said.

The Delhi government on Saturday capped the gatherings at open wedding venues at 200 and at 100 in case of closed spaces; only 50 persons will be allowed at funerals till April 30 given the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, according to an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

The toll in Myanmar has been rising as authorities grow more forceful with their suppression of opposition to the February 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.



A health worker conducting random COVID testing on a visitor near India Gate on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

the Delhi government. The last time more number of cases were reported in a day was on December 15, when the Capital witnessed 1,617 cases.

Ten deaths were reported over 24 hours, pushing the tally to 10,997. A total of 91,703 tests were conducted in a day, the bulletin said.

Of the total cases, 6,38,212 people have recovered and there are 6,625 active cases. The positivity rate was 1.7% on Saturday and the overall positivity till now has been 4.58%, stated the bulletin.

"We have increased the rate of testing with around 85,000-90,000 tests being conducted each day. This is five times more than the country's average testing. Isolation and contact tracing is also being done i.e. 30-40 people being traced for each COVID-positive patient in order to contain it as fast as possible," Mr. Jain said, adding that around 80% of beds in hospitals are vacant.

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Children among victims of Army action



Demonstrators hurling tear gas canisters towards the police in Myanmar. ■ AP

statements that mentioned the killing of civilians on Saturday, including children.

'Indefensible acts' The European Union's delegation to Myanmar said on Twitter, "The killing of unarmed civilians, including children, are indefensible acts."

The toll in Myanmar has been rising as authorities grow more forceful with their suppression of opposition to the February 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The killings drew international condemnation, with multiple diplomatic missions to Myanmar releasing

A count issued by an independent researcher in Yangon, who has been compiling near-real time death tolls, put the total as darkness fell at 93, spread over more than two dozen cities and towns. The online news site *Myanmar Now* said the death toll had reached 91.

Both numbers are higher than all estimates for the previous high on March 14, which ranged in counts from 74 to 90. The Associated Press is unable to independently confirm the death toll.

The killings drew international condemnation, with multiple diplomatic missions to Myanmar releasing

APPEAL REGARDING **SHAB-E-BARAT** In wake of COVID-19



The sacred night of Shab-e-Barat is an occasion for families to pray for and remember their departed family members with reverence.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are requested to remain at home and refrain from any activity which compromises their safety and that of others.

I appeal to all religious leaders, Residents' Welfare Associations and parents to advise families to observe the occasion solemnly, while strictly adhering to COVID appropriate behaviour.

Delhi Police will make elaborate arrangements in public interest to facilitate and ensure observance of COVID protocol by all.

(Anil Baijal)
Lt. Governor, Delhi

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FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112 TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090



THIS YEAR

Celebrate Holi AT HOME

**IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS
NO GATHERING PERMITTED AT PUBLIC PLACES/
GROUNDS/PARKS ETC.**

No public celebrations & gatherings are allowed during Holi

Maintain social distancing of at least 2 yards

Always use face cover /mask and hand sanitizer

Have a Happy and Safe Holi

PLEASE FOLLOW LATEST DDMA GUIDELINES

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Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112 TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

Delhi govt. issues guidelines for protection of interfaith couples

Special cells and round-the-clock helpline will be set up to assist those in distress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the protection of interfaith and intercaste couples from possible harassment and threats in the Capital. Distress calls made by such couples will be kept confidential.

The SOP, issued by the Social Welfare Department, includes setting up of 'special cells' by Deputy Commissioners of Police of respective districts, a round-the-clock helpline to assist such couples and safe houses to provide accommodation to them.

In March 2018, the Supreme Court had directed the government to create a 'special cell' in every district comprising the Superintendent

The couple shall be briefed about the threat to them and in no case will be exposed till the issue is resolved

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

dent of Police, the district social welfare officers and others to receive petition or complaints of harassment and threats to intercaste and interfaith couples.

As part of the initiative, the existing 181 toll-free women's helpline operated by the Delhi Commission for Women will serve to receive complaints from harassed couples. "The telecallers, trained to handle distress calls and already aware about available services, can provide necessary assis-

tance/advice to the couple in distress. If required, they can be further trained to handle such calls," the SOP issued by the social welfare department states.

Provide safe house

After hearing the couple, the DCP of the area concerned, who will head the 'special cell', will bring the facts to the knowledge of the District Magistrate and convey their requirement for stay in a 'safe house'.

Transportation for such couples will also be provided by the police.

Earlier this week, violence had erupted at south-east Delhi's Harijan Basti over an interfaith marriage, following which the police arrested several persons for their alleged involvement in

the incident.

"Adequate security shall be provided to the couple in form of PSO (protective service officer) and the 'safe house' will also be secured by the DCP of the area concerned. The couple shall be briefed about the threat to them and in no case will be exposed till the issue is resolved," the SOP also states.

Strict action

In case the couple doesn't want to stay in the 'safe house', the special cell will provide protection to them at their chosen place of stay. If preliminary enquiry ascertains the authenticity of threats, the DCP concerned will direct an ACP or sub-division police officer to register an FIR against those threatening the couple.

Violators of Holi restrictions will be punished'

Celebrate festival at home, say police

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday said strict action will be taken against those who violate the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) guidelines for Holi celebrations.

No gatherings

Public Relations Officer Chinmoy Biswal said that people cannot gather in public spaces like parks and roads to celebrate the festival.

"We appeal to people to celebrate the festival at home with their families. Those who violate the guidelines will be punished according to the law," he added.

Commissioner of Police S.N. Srivastava also directed

all officers to ensure adherence of DDMA's COVID-19 guidelines.

Traffic violations

Delhi Traffic Police has also made elaborate arrangements to ensure safety of motorists by checking incidents of drunken driving, speeding, reckless driving, red-light jumping, triple riding, driving by minor, driving without helmet, performing stunts on two-wheelers, among others.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Meenu Choudhary said that special checking teams will be deployed at major intersections and vulnerable points to detect and prosecute traffic violations.

Services on all the lines, including the Rapid Metro and Airport Express Line will not be available till 2.30 p.m. "Metro train services will thus, start at 2.30 p.m. from terminal stations on all lines on March 29 and will continue normally thereafter," the DMRC said.

Metro services to start at 2.30 p.m. tomorrow

(NMRC) said that metro services will not be available on the Noida-Greater Noida corridor till 2 p.m.

"Train services on the Aqua Line will begin from 2 p.m. on Holi and train services will be available at a frequency of 15 minutes. Parking facility at the metro stations will also be available from 2 p.m.," the NMRC said.

Currently, five metro stations on the Aqua Line, including Noida Sector 51, Noida Sector 76, Knowledge Park II, Alpha I and Delta I, have parking facilities.



Let's Make This Holi SAFE by STAYING at HOME

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- DRIVE WITHOUT HELMET**
- TRIPLE-RIDE**
- CAUSE NUISANCE ON ROADS**

In the wake of rising Covid cases, Public Gathering on Upcoming Festival like Holi, Shab-e-Barat and Navratri etc. is Not Allowed in Public Places, Roads & Streets.

Wishing You A Safe & Happy Holi

24 Hrs. Traffic Helpline: 1095/25844444

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DELHI

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RISE 18:16	SET 06:08
MONDAY, MAR. 29	
RISE 06:15	SET 18:38
RISE 19:23	SET 06:44
TUESDAY, MAR. 30	
RISE 06:14	SET 18:38
RISE 20:31	SET 07:22

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Safdarjung	35 16
Palam	35 18

Delhi Palam Today
36°C Gradual rise in temperature expected. Day would turn very warm with mainly sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Temperature would rise further. A hot day would prevail with mainly sunny sky.

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THE HINDU

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4 held over septic tank deaths in east Delhi

Govt's sewer machine event was only a publicity stunt: BJP

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Four persons have been arrested in connection with the death of two men while cleaning a septic tank in a banquet hall in east Delhi's Patparganj on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Deepak Yadav said the accused have been identified as Rahul, Amir, Johit and Girish who were arrested on Friday night.

Johir and Girish are directors of the banquet hall while Amir is the general manager and Rahul is a hospitality employee who had allegedly called the workers for the job, the police said.

"Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, has been invoked against Amir, Girish and Johit," an officer said, adding it has not invoked against Rahul as he belongs to the community.

Two waiters, identified as Lokes Kumar and Prem Chand, both residents of Trilokpuri, died inside the septic tank of the banquet hall on Thursday when they were allegedly forced to clean it. Their families claimed that the two were told that they would not be paid for the day's work if they didn't clean the tank.

The police had registered a case under Section 304A of the IPC and Section 9 of Protection of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act.

BJP demands relief
Earlier in the day, the BJP termed the deaths "sad and unfortunate".

Demanding ₹10 lakh each as compensation for the kin of the victims, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

riwal demanding that the practice of manual cleaning of septic tanks be stopped.

"It is regretful that despite tall claims by the AAP government before the elections that manual cleaning of sewers would be eliminated and everything will be done through machines, manual cleaning of septic tanks and sewer lines continues to be carried out, which is shameful and needs to be condemned," Mr. Bidhuri wrote.

The Delhi government, Mr. Bidhuri pointed out, had held a "big show" to showcase machines for sewer cleaning. Despite that, nothing has changed and the event was "only a publicity stunt" to mislead the people.

"The government had also announced that it would provide proper safety kits to the workers involved in this work but that has remained on paper," he alleged.

Jain tells DJB to prioritise cleaning of waterbodies, lakes in Capital

Minister holds review meet, asks Board to report by April 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Water Minister and Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Chairman Satyendar Jain conducted a meeting to review the situation of 600 waterbodies and lakes in Delhi.

He directed officials concerned to give priority to cleaning of the waterbodies and lakes.

The arrangement for treated water, however, should go on in parallel, he instructed. Officials were also told by the Minister to complete the work on time.

To get the desired quantity of water of 10-12MGD to Paschim Vihar lake area and other green belts, the Minister ordered laying of a dedicated pipeline from Keshopur STP to the point of Paschim Vihar lake.

He instructed that the ordnance forest near Shakarpur railway station should be supplied with treated water from Mangolpuri.



Water Minister and DJB Chairman Satyendar Jain.

the incoming 5MGD water from Najafgarh STP using natural wetlands and aeration to BOD 3mg/L.

Instructions were also issued to speed up the work of construction of the lake at Dwarka WTP that was delayed due to various administrative reasons. The lake will be spread over an area of 10-12 acres.

Creation of two lakes

The Minister instructed to create two lakes in addition to the existing lake of 7 acres at Pappankalan STP. Cleaning up of 200 waterbodies and all lakes under the DJB, has been ordered, before the monsoon.

Mr. Jain strictly directed senior officials of the DJB to ensure that no sewerage line should be connected to a strong water drain and no sewage should enter a strong water drain. The DJB has been directed to submit a report on this by April 10.

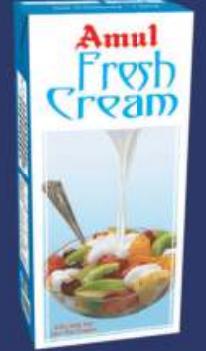
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Net practice



A protesting farmer rests inside a makeshift shelter covered with mosquito nets at the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

COVID positivity lowest in North East district

'Area has a large migratory population'

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI
The North East district in Delhi has recorded the lowest rate of positivity of COVID-19 cases, which is the percentage of positive cases of the total tests conducted, on most days in March, stated official data shared with *The Hindu*.

All 11 districts of the city have shown a gradual increase in positivity, as number of cases has been rising in March, which is currently at a three-month high.

While in North East district lesser number of people are testing positive per 100 tests, compared to other districts, North West, South West and South districts are on the higher side with more people testing positive per 100 tests.

Officials said that the area from where samples are collected, the profile of the people, and other factors can lead to this.

"North East district has been showing low positivity

Communal riots: AAP and BJP spar over compensation

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The AAP on Saturday said that the Delhi government has not only given a compensation of ₹1 crore to the family of Ankit Sharma, an IB official who died during the riots here last year, but has also offered a job to his brother.

"Whenever there is a murder, BJP gives it a communal colour and incites hatred among people, but does nothing to help anyone. The IB comes under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. AAP wants to know what the BJP and the Central government have done for late Ankit Sharma and his family over the last one year," said AAP chief spokesperson Saubhagya Bhattacharya.

The party also said that compensation of around ₹26 crore has been provided to 2,221 citizens who suffered due to the riots, which broke out in February last.

Responding to AAP's allegations, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the BJP stood by the families of all those killed in the riots, including Ankit Sharma, immediately after tragedy struck them.

"We, as a political party, also extended emotional support to all bereaved families, including that of Ankit Sharma, at a time when AAP was standing with Sharma's killer, Councilor Tahir Hussain. Our sister organisations of Sangh Parivar extended material support to all families," Mr. Kapoor said.

For a while now and it is interesting. But we cannot name an exact reason behind the same. A study should be done if we need to find the exact cause," a Delhi government official said.

For instance, on March 24, the lowest positivity of 0.54% was recorded in North East district, while the highest of 3% was in North West, followed by 2.41% in South East district.

Similarly on March 5, the lowest positivity of 0.10% was in North East district, while the highest of 1.34% was in South West district, followed by 0.93% in East.

Doctor's opinion

"In North East district, there is a lot of migratory population and many overcrowded areas. So, a lot of people might have been infected earlier. This might be leading to lesser positive cases now," said Jugal Kishore, head of the community medicine department at Safdarjung Hospital.

While in North East district lesser number of people are testing positive per 100 tests, compared to other districts, North West, South West and South districts are on the higher side with more people testing positive per 100 tests.

Officials said that the area from where samples are collected, the profile of the people, and other factors can lead to this.

"North East district has been showing low positivity



Vaccination centre at the Swami Dayanand Hospital in Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

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For admission to B.Pharm, the eligibility criteria is Physics, Chemistry and Biology or PCM.

The student should have obtained a minimum of 75% aggregate marks in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics/Biology subjects in the 12th class examination, with at least 60% marks in each of the subjects and possess adequate proficiency in English.

Only students appearing for 12th class examinations in 2021 or who have already passed in 2020 are eligible to appear for BITSAT 2021.

Students who are presently studying in BITS at any of its campuses are not eligible.

Admissions will be made based on the merit position of the student's BITSAT 2021 score.

Note:

Students who appear for BITSAT 2021 can also seek admission to the BITS Pilani Dubai campus.

For more details visit: <https://universe.bits-pilani.ac.in/dubai>

Students with a foreign passport and valid SAT scores are also eligible to apply for admissions to Pilani, Goa and Hyderabad campuses under the International Student Admission Scheme. For more details visit: www.bitsadmission.com/ois

Dean, Academic - Undergraduate Studies, BITS Pilani.

Integrated First Degree Programmes

Programmes BITS Pilani campus at P G H D*

B.E. Chemical Engg. • • •

Civil Engg. • • •

Computer Science • • •

Electrical and Electronics Engg. • • •

Electronics and Communication Engg. • • •

Electronics and Instrumentation Engg. • • •

Mechanical Engg. • • •

MATRIMONIAL

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

Assamese

Awadhi

Bengali

Bhojpuri

Bihari

Chhattisgarhi

English

Gujarati

Haryanvi

Hindi

Kannada

Kashmiri

Konkani

Malayalam

Manipuri

Marathi

Marwari

Nepali

Oriya

Parsi

Punjabi

Saurashtra

Sindhi

Tamil

Telugu

Tulu

Urdu

Advocate

Business

Defence

Doctor

Engineer

Finance/ Banking

Government/ Quasi-Govt.

IAS/ Allied Services

Information Technology

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

NRI

Cosmopolitan

Divorcee

Physically Challenged

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

AWADHI

Muslim Doctor Girl PG 26/165 Kanyakumari Seeks Alliance From Matching Professionals 7010905050.

COMPUTER / INFO.TECH.
Tamil/ Telugu Speaking girl, 5'4", MS (CS) US, June 1989, Mudaliar, Non-brahmin, caste no bar,+91-9848624004

COSMOPOLITAN

Ezhava girl Beautiful 5.2-5 Fair Ayilam from thrissur Masters degree from british university now look after her own hospital seeks alliance from same status boys Preferably settle outside kerala.
W App : 6235942353, 9809233008

Groom Needed. Caste no bar. Girl's details - D0B 20th Mar 1990, Birthplace: Sultnpur (UP), Cast: Koti, 5'2", Working in MNC in Hyderabad as SW Engg. Contact No: 7887976659

DIVORCEE

FAIR/ MUDALIAR Girl 30/162, 10th, No issue, seeks suitable groom, caste no bar, Chennai only: 9840353368

SC 36 Tamil Clinical Trials Bangalore Contact - 9006511477

DOCTOR

PADMASALIVAR, 25/ 177 cm/ MS (Doctor)/ 8072555353, 9425028212

PILLA/ MUDALIAR, 29yrs, Kirthiga, Rishabam, Fair, Slim, MS Ortho from Doctor family owning Hospital seeks suitable Doctor Groom. Ct: 9443167170, 94421 51122.

SM 4/ B/FUL Kayastha girl 5'4"/27y MBBS,MD/Path (AIIMS) from Doctors family seeks MD/MS/DM/Mch from Govt. Institute. Caste no bar.

AGE, 27, PG Doctor, Saiva Mudaliar, Vegetarian, joint family. Ashwini Star, seeks Dr or Engineer - Chennai 9176003328

TN SERVICE PG doing M.S. in TN Govt College 27 Years good looking Hindu. Parents seeking alliance from Doctor Grooms. CNB. Ct: 9345839717

✓ Wanted Groom for Dentist (MDS), wanted, tall(165cms), fair, grounded, and content educated brahmin girl of vats gora born on May 31, 1992. contact:for.marriage@gmail.com

ENGLISH

UPPER MIDDLE class and educationally forward Nambiar family from Kannur seeks alliance for their Slim, beautiful and talented daughter 24/160, B.Tech (Amrita Visvavidyalam, Coimbatore) who is working as software engineer at Accenture from handsome, well-settled professional, business Nambiar/Nair family boy. The girl is a nuclear family with one married brother working in a reputed company in Singapore.

Contact : +91-985478926/ 6382983365 (whatapp)

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

PQM for Delhi based bania girl, 5'2"/1993, Lawyer, LLM / Cambridge UK, family in Punjab. Ph: 9501110094

MALAYALAM

✓ BOMBAY- BASED Well-Settled Upper Middleclass Nair Parents seek Suitable Alliance for Daughter, Birth Year May 1991. M.Com MBA Revathy One Dosham, 153 CMS Slim-Built Fair Presently Working with Reputed Corporate Group in Chennai. Will Relocate Post-Marriage. Father Trichur Dist. Mother Malappuram Dist. Own House in Kerala. Prefer Well-Qualified Boys Born and Brought Up Outside Kerala with Traditional Values. Preferred Districts Trichur, Palakkad.

MUDALIAR, 30/166 cm P.G Qualified especially Doctors Pre.

EX-CHIEF MINISTER Grand Daughter Mudaliar, 24 / M.s Rich family. Seeks fair Groom. Ct: 730541610

SC 29Yrs/153cm/wheatish, Mesham/ Brarani, B.E.Tech, working in Central Govt. 5LPAs seeks suitable employed groom. Ct. 9994326921

MUDALIAR, 30/166 cm P.G Qualified Doctor. Bride Working in a Corporate Hospital/Parents Well Educated and Well Placed. Looking for a PG Qualified Doctor from a good well placed family. Ct: 9444368200/ 9940358110

HINDU SC 28 Star chotia, MBA, MNC,Banglore seeks suitable alliance caste no Bar. 9446030562

DHEEVARA ENGINEER girl, Techno Park, 30/170 cm Avittam. Invites alliance from well educated boys Caste no Bar. 8921656299

PROGRESSIVE MINDED Nair Girl from Cochin, Athan, 27/168 cms.Corporate Lawyer,Bangalore. 9847485004

NAIR GIRL 27/154, Revathy, employed Chennai settled, Alliance invited Chennai Nair family. 9500012855

NRI

IT PROFESSIONAL good looking very fair/39/168 Divorcee living with a child in USA seeking groom from USA only

9037935580/+1 6505057926

REPUTED CHENNAI based wealthy, aristocratic Hindu Tamizh, Telugu Business family seeking educated/ business professionals for their mature, never married, 44, 5'5" medical doctor daughter, running family business - divorcees welcome; bio/photos: email: shubhkalyan10@gmail.com

Tamil Girl, Vegetarian, 1988 July born, 50", Thiruvanan, Slim, Wheatish, B.Tech, (NIT, Trichy), MS(USA), SW Engr in California, H1B, in process, seeks S.Indian Hindu unmarried Groom Working on H1B in USA. Canada. Contact :+917539951722, Email: bkp.8588@gmail.com

TAMIL

IT PROFESSIONAL good looking very fair/39/168 Divorcee living with a child in USA seeking groom from USA only

9037935580/+1 6505057926

HINDU SC 28 Star chotia, MBA, MNC,Banglore seeks suitable alliance caste no Bar. 9446030562

HINDU CHETTIAR GIRL 35 Unmarried +2 wealthys seek graduate Govt. Employed middle class Boy, Divorcee. Ct: 705257645

HINDU CHETTIAR GIRL 35 Unmarried +2 wealthys seek graduate Govt. Employed middle class Boy, Divorcee. Ct: 705257645

SC AD Kongu 24 B.Sc MBA Raaga Keerthi Chevai well Well Employed Groom. 9965109064/ 9976609299.

Casto No Bar Chettiar 1977 Nov/MCA/ Fairlyyoung look Chennai seeks. 9443084422. alliancecasto@gmail.com

DVK/27/153/56 MTech, Ph.D, Synopsis Submitted, Intercaze Doctor parentage - Seeks professionally qualified groom, CNB. Ph: 944182514

Tamil Muslim Rowther, MBA 25/162 employed in nationalised Bank seeks suitable match. Ct: 8870173563.

Pillai Mudaliar Hasitham 33/154 MCA upper middle class-chestn seekiong specifically groom. 8202757159

CHRISTIAN NADAR, Lady, Age: 40, Qual: M.Phil, Ph.D. Suitable Alliance. Contact: 9444052121.

AD/CHRISTIAN ICSI 35 yrs/165 cms, 5'9", B.Tech, MBA, Software Engg CTS, 12 L pa seeks employed Bride groom Ct: 9791322674, 9600499695.

38/ 168 AD Innocent divorce working in Australia seek Christian professionals below 40, willing to relocate Australia 9840255028, 9940678431

TAMIL MUSLIM 23/165 MBBS, Fair, Parents seek prof. qualified Groom. Ct: 9804487831

WANTED A Christ realized Spirit filled never married Boy within 37 years of age for a Christ oriented girl aged 35 years. 95351 16520

M.Tech/ Engineer/ Bangalore/ 23years/ Vanniya/ Vanniya looking groom from decent educated family.

Mudaliar, 25, B.Tech, MBA, 162cm, well Settled Family. Seeks Suitable Groom Ct. 7200863646/ 8778514465

TN Govt Doctor, MBBS, Innocent Divorcee 40Yrs/168cm, Christian RC DA Seeks groom without issue. Caste & Religion no bar. 9952039899

ELITE BRIDEGROOM WANTED

FOR A REPUTED FAMILY NADAR GIRL 26, 5'2", FAIR, Studied in Premier Institutions.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR Chennai 06-10-1997, M.Sc, Ph.D. Mudaliar Bride Middle Class Rs. 70,00/- P.M. Wheatish Complexion, Meenam.

Father Seeks alliance from Unmarried 33 to 37 yrs Bachelor Bridgeon.

Tamil Muslim Sunni MD PAED 28 / 154 cm. Seeks doctor or PG Engineer from Tamilnadu. Call: 9884623140

CHRISTIAN BC divorced single mom, 42, 5 Lpa 5 ft, MBA, MNC having own church seeks employed boy/girl afterters college and Hospital Duty Hours / Chimes/Phone(s) 7550245659/ 9940840760

VANNIYAR FAIR, Slim, 24/164, Avilam, BE seeks Groom from well settled family. Ct: 9840023846

HINDU 28/62, MS (CS), U.S. elite family, working US seeks well educated Groom employed in US, good family, clean habits, WApp: 995829995

DEAR/ B/FUL Kayastha girl 5'4"/27y MBBS,MD/Path (AIIMS) from Doctors family seeks MD/MS/DM/Mch from Govt. Institute. Caste no bar.

AGE, 27, PG Doctor, Saiva Mudaliar, Vegetarian, joint family. Ashwini Star, seeks Dr or Engineer - Chennai 9176003328

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Contact : +91-985478926/ 6382983365 (whatapp)

TAMIL

HINDU 31/162 MBBS (MD Bio Final) Sadayan, Father, Salva, Mudaliar, Mother, Nair. Seeks Professionally Qualified especially Doctors Pre.

PG or MD age below 34. Ct: 984243735, 638360239

MUDALIAR (CNB) 24/168 V.Fair, MBBS, MS, doing,Chennai,Elite Family, Groom- Groom— Doctor/Business-Seeker

EX-CHIEF MINISTER Grand Daughter Mudaliar, 24 / M.s Rich family. Seeks fair Groom. Ct: 730541610

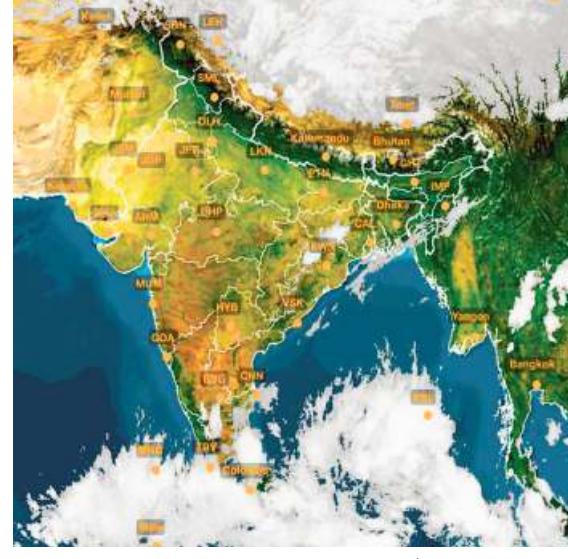
SC AD 29Yrs/153cm/wheatish, Mesham/ Brarani, B.E.Tech, working in Central Govt. 5LPAs seeks suitable employed groom. Ct. 9994326921

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SC AD/PW 30

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm with lightning/hail/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Odisha and Kerala. Heat/severe heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Saurashtra & Kutch

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala36.0	19.8	12.0	Kozhikode35.9	27.7	22.0
Ahmedabad40.2	20.0	12.0	Kurnool39.8	24.9	14.6
Aizawl29.8	13.1	11.0	Lucknow34.6	14.6	12.0
Allahabad37.5	16.4	11.0	Madurai36.6	25.4	18.0
Bengaluru35.0	21.0	12.0	Mangaluru36.4	26.7	18.0
Bhopal36.8	17.0	11.0	Mumbai40.9	22.2	18.0
Bhubaneswar39.2	24.9	12.0	Mysuru35.3	21.2	14.0
Chandigarh33.7	15.6	11.0	New Delhi35.3	16.4	12.0
Chennai34.7	25.8	12.0	Patna35.8	17.6	12.0
Coimbatore36.1	25.0	12.0	Pondicherry33.4	27.6	18.0
Dehradun32.7	14.5	11.0	Pune33.3	24.3	18.0
Gangtok20.8	11.5	11.0	Raipur38.8	19.8	12.0
Goa35.0	27.2	12.0	Ranchi38.6	21.4	12.0
Guwahati35.8	15.9	12.0	Shillong25.6	21.0	12.0
Hubballi37.0	25.0	12.0	Shimla23.5	11.8	12.0
Hyderabad39.0	22.6	12.0	Srinagar22.0	6.6	12.0
Imphal31.6	12.5	12.0	Thiruvananthapuram33.8	25.7	12.0
Jaipur37.3	20.7	12.0	Tiruchi37.0	25.2	12.0
Kochi33.0	27.0	12.0	Vijayawada36.4	25.4	12.0
Kohima26.6	11.8	12.0	Visakhapatnam33.0	26.2	12.0
Kolkata35.9	24.2	12.0				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES SO₂ NO_x CO PM_{2.5} PM₁₀ CODE

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	46	.94	.42	.116	.122	...
Bengaluru	12	.15	.54	.111	.117	...
Chennai	.8	.18	.47	.75	.84	...
Delhi	52	.46	.24	.269	.308	...
Hyderabad	.5	.82	.36	.148	.148	...
Kolkata	34	.82	.26	.182	.150	...
Lucknow	.9	.62	.61	.277	.202	...
Mumbai	18	.65	.96	.339	.206	...
Pune	.6	.101	.62	.163	.124	...
Visakhapatnam	.8	.75	.41	.159	.184	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siliguri, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 378 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala recorded a healthy AQI score of 50

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

At 166, Maharashtra sees highest deaths this year

State records second-highest single-day surge of 35,726 cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Saturday reported 166 COVID-19 deaths, the highest so far this year, and the second-highest single-day surge of 35,726 cases. As many as 14,523 patients were discharged, taking the total tally of recoveries to 23,14,579. The State's active case tally stands at 3,03,475.

Of the 166 deaths, 101 occurred in the last 48 hours, 26 in the last week, and the remaining 39 deaths during a prior period. The latest spike in fatalities is also the highest reported in the State since October 23, when 184 deaths were recorded. The State's death toll has now risen to 54,073. With Saturday's surge, the total case tally has soared to 26,73,461. The State reported 36,902 fresh infections on Friday.

Record spike in Mumbai
Mumbai reported 6,130 new COVID-19 cases, the highest single-day spike in the city since the outbreak of the pandemic, pushing its case tally to 3,91,791. Twelve deaths took the city's toll to 11,645. Neighbouring Thane city reported 939 new cases.

Pune city and neighbouring Pimpri-Chinchwad reported 3,522 and 1,687 new cases, respectively. As many as 1,382 cases were reported in other areas of the Pune district. Nashik city recorded 2,422 cases, taking its tally to 10,08,050. In the rest of Nashik district, 1,068 new cases were reported.



Masked beauty: A man walks past a mural of Marilyn Monroe wearing a mask, in south Mumbai on Saturday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

Navi Mumbai records new high of 770 cases

Civic body imposes fresh restrictions

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBIA

Navi Mumbai reported its highest single-day surge of 770 COVID-19 cases on Saturday, two days after reporting its previous highest spike of 681 cases.

The city's total case tally has now reached 63,056. With four more deaths, the toll has risen

to 1,164, while 267 recoveries pushed the cumulative total to 56,899.

The civic body issued a notice on Saturday prohibiting gatherings of over five people from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. in public places. Public gardens will stay open only from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Those flouting rules will be fined ₹1,000.

In the Marathwada region, Aurangabad city reported 1,040 new cases, while 702 cases were detected in Nanded city. Jalna district, which shares border with Aurangabad, reported

524 new cases. Nagpur city and Nagpur district added 2,675 and 1,066 fresh COVID-19 cases, respectively.

As many as 1,57,311 tests were carried out, taking the total figure to 1,91,92,750.

HC quashes jail superintendent's order rejecting parole to convict

Official asked to take decision based on COVID-19 situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court has quashed an order issued by the superintendent of prisoners of Amravati Central Jail, rejecting a convict's application seeking parole on the grounds of COVID-19.

A Division Bench of Justices Sunil Shukre and Avinash Gharote was hearing a criminal petition filed by Ayyaz Khan Zabaz Khan, who is serving a life sentence for murder. The plea challenged the order rejecting his parole application filed on October 6, 2020.

The court said the superintendent should decide on releasing prisoners after assessing the COVID-19 situation in prisons, measures to ensure social distancing in prisons, the number of COVID-19 inmates, whether they can be placed in isolation, the threat posed to other inmates,

the number of inmates to be released to decongest the prison, the category of prisoners who can be released, and the COVID-19 situation in the locality they are likely to go.

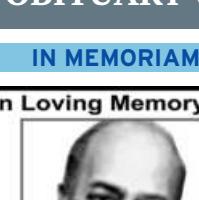
The Bench said it would be permissible for a convicted prisoner to move an application for parole only after the superintendent has considered these factors and arrived at the opinion that there is a need to decongest the prison to curb the spread of COVID-19.

It said, "We are constrained to make the above observations for the reason that an impression has been created that a release on COVID-19 parole, is a matter of right, which it is not."

The Bench set aside the order and sent it back to the authorities suggesting fresh consideration of the convict's application for parole.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

IN MEMORIAM



V.R.G
(Shri. V.R. GOPALAKRISHNAN)
Journalist & Businessman
DOB: 15/04/1932 DOD: 28/03/2015

Lives of great men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime, and, departing, leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time

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Sri Rama Lodge & Cafe & GROUP CONCERN
Kanaka Sarovar Hotels
Kancheepuram / Chennai
SEETHARAMA KALYANA
MANDAPAM, Vadakkancherry

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DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

WANTED FOR SUSPECTED PERSON

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Named: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 27-28 Yrs., Height: About 6', Complexion: Wheatish, Built: Slim, Face: Oval, Wearing: Black colour pant and white dotted full sleeves blue colour shirt has been stolen shape of two small elephant made of silver from shop no. 4625/1, Chawari Bazaar, Ameri Gate, Hauz Qazi, Delhi (Photos CCTV Footage). In this regard E-FIR No. CD-HQ-000027/2021, U/s 379 IPC, dated 19.02.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Hauz Qazi, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the suspected person but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this suspected person please inform the undersigned.**

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-23011334
DP/721/CD/2021
P.S. Hauz Qazi, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23212482 & 23210414

READ
FRONTLINE
EVERY FORTNIGHT

Cong. questions NIA's reluctance to probe Param Bir Singh

Find out his role in disappearance of DVR from Mumbai Police Commissionerate'

STAFF REPORTER

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Congress on Saturday questioned the reluctance of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to interrogate former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh in the Antilia bomb scare case.

The NIA arrested suspended police officer Sachin Vaze on March 13 in connection with the case.



(Clockwise from left) A group of qawwals performing at Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah; visitors at the shrine; dargah committee member Altamash Nizami ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Divine songs lift spirits at Nizamuddin dargah

Despite slashed earnings and thinner crowds at Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah, *qawwals* are happy to resume singing after months of closure

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

After observing silence for over eight months, Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah court yard is back to life again. The pandemic had brought lives of *qawwals* - majority of whom were dependent on the money earned at the dargah from the visitors - to a standstill. *Qawwalis* here resumed in December, slowly and steadily.

The magic of *qawwalis* is often best described by those who listen to them in awe. They say *qawwalis* make them "feel connected to God" and that they often lose control over their tears.

Haznain Nizami (46), a resident of Nizamuddin area, has been a *qawwal* all his life and comes from a family of *qawwals* who have been performing for over 700 years, he says, proud of his lineage. However, the last one year has been tough for all of them - financially and more so, emotionally.

"I stay at a walking distance from the dargah and for a long time, we could not visit it. But once the go-

vernment allowed reopening of religious places, we came to pay obeisance even when the dargah had not opened for public till September first week. It was like a sigh of relief to be able to come here," he said.

Mr. Hasnain said that during the pre-COVID days, he and others from the family, who are part of different groups, used to earn around ₹400-500 per head a day if there were four-five persons performing.

"On a regular day, people would give us about ₹3,000-₹5,000, which we would divide among ourselves. These days, however, we get anything between ₹100-300. There's nothing fixed," he said.

The *qawwals* mark their presence on all days barring any exception and perform 'salaam' in the morning now, but this was not the scene till a few weeks ago. Dargah Committee member Altamash Nizami said that the dargah had opened for public on September 6, but the *qawwali* was then being performed without instruments with bare minimum *qawwals* sitting at a distance.

"There used to be no *mehfil* [gather-



ering]," he said.

Now, Thursdays are houseful, meaning a courtyard full of people - "united in feeling one with the Almighty".

'Artistes deprived'

Talking about the lockdown period, Mohammed Ali Nizami (21), a resident of Daryaganj, said that while there were facilities provided by the State and Central government for most sections of the society, there was nothing for artistes.

"We are artistes and we were dependent on the income from the dargah. We would never go asking for money because our conscience does not allow us. But how could we have managed to get food? Thankfully, the dargah was providing ration and cooked food as well," he said.

Mr. Ali, who has been performing

for the last four years and knew that this was his future, said that they are all used to eating meat, but during the lockdown, they did not have enough money to be able to afford it every day. "It was not easily available as well," he said.

For seven months, Mr. Ali did not even meet his parents and sister who were back in their house in Gwalior and could not come to Delhi because of restrictions.

However, for Mr. Ali, not being able to step inside the Dargah for seven months was more problematic than the financial crisis.

"For us, Mehboob-e-ilahi is more important than our family, parents and loved ones. I remember that my uncle, who lives in Nizamuddin and also performs here, used to come and video-call me but it is different from coming physically. The dargah has been very close to me while I was growing up. I was pining to come," he said.

Mr. Ali recalled how on Amir Khusrao's death anniversary in June, two persons from a *qawwali* group had gone to the dargah and sang a few verses without any instruments and in absence of public. "I felt like crying. It was difficult to see them perform in a deserted courtyard, which otherwise does not have an inch of empty space," he said.

Azam Nizami (23) has his mother, younger brother and sister to take care of after his father passed away around two years ago. He has been performing for the last 11 years, he said. His father was ailing, he recalled. "It was a tough time but God was with us. The dargah helped us and the time has passed," he said.

While some groups, which are more popular than the rest, were able to make some money from online shows, some faced a tough time. As number cases of COVID-19 has been seeing a spike again, these people, who do not want to relive the days of crisis owing to the pandemic, are scared again.

Delhi zoo may get three more tigers for breeding

Ostriches and chinkaras to be added

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi zoo may soon get three tigers from Chennai and Nagpur for "breeding purposes" under an animal exchange programme, officials said on Saturday.

Director Ramesh Pandey said they have proposed to bring a pair of tigers from Gorewada zoo in Nagpur, while another male tiger is likely to be brought from Chennai. A Royal Bengal tiger was brought from Kanpur for breeding proposes

in November last year.

The Delhi zoo is a participating zoo for the 'Conservation Breeding Programme' of the Bengal Tiger.

At present, the Delhi zoo has seven tigers, including five white tigers, he said.

A pair of Sloth Bears from the Nagpur facility is also on the cards," the director said. One pair each of ostriches and chinkaras will arrive from Chandigarh this month. The Delhi zoo is scheduled to reopen for public on April 1.

JNUTA claims incongruity in process of ratifying appointment of new Registrar

'V-C muted two faculty representatives in virtual meeting'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) on Saturday alleged there was incongruity in the process of ratifying Professor Anirban Chakraborti's appointment as the university Registrar by the Executive Council (EC) during its meeting on Friday.

The teachers' body also alleged that JNU Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar during Friday's virtual meeting of the EC chose to mute

two elected faculty representatives throughout the discussion on important agenda matters.

'Manufacturing a row'

The V-C had appointed Mr. Chakraborti, a former Dean of the School of Computational and Integrative Sciences, as Registrar on March 17, following which the JNUTA alleged that there was no EC meeting to deliberate on the matter.

The EC, in a statement after its 294th meeting on Friday,

said a "few faculty members of JNU have tried to manufacture a controversy over an appointment which is otherwise a routine process", and added that the EC has approved the appointment of Mr. Chakraborti as the new Registrar.

In a statement, the JNUTA also sought to know how Mr. Chakraborti was allowed to chair an academic council meeting on March 22, before the ratification of his appointment by the executive council on Friday.



Outside a liquor shop in north Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Residents say new policy will promote alcoholism in youth and that a robust mechanism for age check at points of sale and clubs could be more helpful

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on March 22 announced that the Delhi government has decided to reduce the minimum age for liquor consumption in the city from 25 to 21. While the decision has brought the government under fire from many quarters, it has also won appreciation from others.

Calling it a good move, Subham Aggarwal, 22, a college student, said in many States the drinking age is 18 years. "It's unfair to people of Delhi that the minimum age was 25. Also, having a higher age doesn't actually stop people from drinking," Mr. Aggarwal said.

No verification at pubs
He said that many of the pubs or clubs hardly checked the age of the customers. "I have been

denied alcohol only twice. The rule was only on paper and there were no strict checks happening anyway," he added.

Mr. Aggarwal said that if the government actually wants to sensitise youth, they should organise more programmes to engage with students in schools and colleges.

Fake Aadhaar cards

Rabiya Ali, 24, a student, said that it is a good decision to reduce the age as people under 25 are anyway drinking and even making "fake" Aadhaar cards to get into clubs in the city. "Even I have one. Also, they don't check ID cards at all pubs, but even if they check the fake card will work," Ms. Ali said.

"You can take a photo of your Aadhaar card and edit your date of birth. Most places are fine with a soft copy and it will be fine," she added.

Radhika Shrivastav, director (Health Promotion) at HRIDAY, an NGO, said that they oppose the decision. "As a civil society organisation working with teenagers and young adults, we completely oppose the decision. The younger you are, more likely it is to get addicted," she said.

"I don't see any rationale behind reducing the age bar. No one can say consuming alcohol is healthy. By exposing lakhs of individuals at the age of 21 to 25 to drinking, they are promoting drinking in a way," Ms. Shrivastav said.

Court appoints lawyer to oversee sealing of Pracha's computer

Police probing witness tutoring case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A court here on Saturday appointed a Local Commissioner (LC) and directed the police to coordinate with him a visit to advocate Mehmood Pracha's office to seal his computer in a case of alleged tutoring of a witness in connection with the search warrant against him

tamper with it.

Mr. Pracha is representing some of the accused in cases related to the riots that took place in the national capital in February last year. The court was hearing an appeal by Mr. Pracha against a magistrate court order directing the search warrant against him to be executed.

The sessions court, which stayed till the next date of hearing (April 28) a magistrate court's order directing a search warrant against Mr. Pracha to be executed, gave the directions after Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad did not object to Mr. Pracha's proposal to appoint a Local Commissioner.

Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana directed the Investigating Officer (IO) to go to Mr. Pracha's office and seize and seal the computer. It directed that the procedure be videographed in the presence of advocate Avneet Kaur who was appointed as the LC.

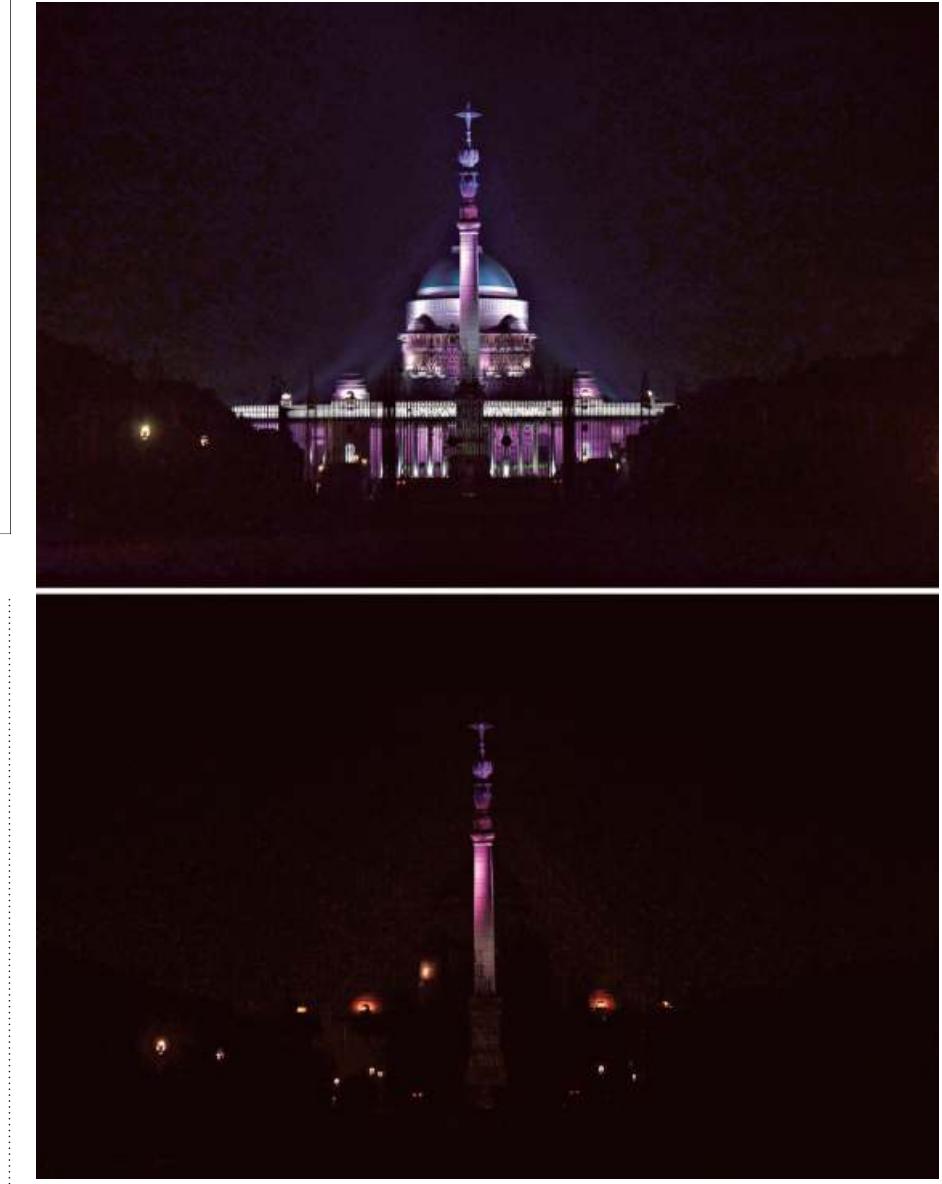
The court, however, added that the computer will remain in Mr. Pracha's custody and directed him not to

tamper with it. During Saturday's hearing, the IO and Mr. Pracha stated that the computer in question has not been tampered with so far by either of them. Mr. Pracha's office was raided by Delhi Police in connection with an FIR alledging that the advocate tutored a witness to initiate a false riot case.

The police said that the victim identified as Priyank Aggarwal said that on Friday when he came back from his clinic, five people, including a woman barged into his house, posing as CBI officials and took away their mobile phones and started searching the house for black money.

They took all the cash and jewellery and asked Mr. Priyank's driver to take them to the clinic in Maurya Enclave. On the way, the driver raised an alarm after which the accused fled. Three of them were arrested but two managed to escape. The accused allegedly told the police that they were inspired by a Bollywood movie.

For a brighter future



Lights out: The Rashtrapati Bhawan before (top) and during Earth Hour Day in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Delhi's decision to lower drinking age met with cheers and jeers

Residents say new policy will promote alcoholism in youth and that a robust mechanism for age check at points of sale and clubs could be more helpful

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on March 22 announced that the Delhi government has decided to reduce the minimum age for liquor consumption in the city from 25 to 21. While the decision has brought the government under fire from many quarters, it has also won appreciation from others.

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No verification at pubs
He said that many of the pubs or clubs hardly checked the age of the customers. "I have been

denied alcohol only twice. The rule was only on paper and there were no strict checks happening anyway," he added.

"In such COVID-19 times, the focus of any government should be promoting healthy behaviour. There have been messages about not consuming tobacco and alcohol and now they have reduced the drinking age. There are contradictions," she added.

Parties criticise
The lowering of minimum age drew attacks from the political parties too.

The Delhi Congress said that the Capital was heading to become a "nashe ki rajdhani" (Capital of intoxication) and the BJP said that the "Kejriwal government is putting revenue and money ahead of the lives of the residents".

The AAP hit back and said that the minimum age is 21 in a few States and even 18 in other States ruled by the BJP. The par-

ty even challenged BJP leaders to increase the minimum age to 25 years in BJP-ruled States and added that the AAP will make it 30 years in Delhi, if the BJP makes it 25 years.

Parents' worry
Beena, mother of a 17-year-old and 12-year-old, said that it is "worrying". "This is going to ruin the lives of a lot of 21-year-olds. It's true that even students in schools are drinking, but this change will make alcohol accessible to them," she said.

Ashok Kumar, 50, whose son is in his early 20s said it is not going to change much. "The ones who want to drink will drink. What if the age was still 25 years and they buy booze for underage people?" he said.

Neelam Ahuja and her husband Vijay Ahuja, 60, also did not approve bringing down the drinking age. "The government should not have done this. Now, youth will have a licence to drink and they'll get hooked to it fast," Ms. Ahuja said.

3 arrested for looting after posing as CBI officers

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three persons were arrested for allegedly posing as CBI officers and looting a doctor's family in north west Delhi's Maurya Enclave, the police said.

DCP (North-West) Usha Rangnani said that the accused have been identified as Bittu (32), Surender (35) and Vibha (35). The looted cash worth over ₹36 lakh, jewellery have been recovered.

The police said that the victim identified as Priyank Aggarwal said that on Friday when he came back from his clinic, five people, including a woman barged into his house, posing as CBI officials and took away their mobile phones and started searching the house for black money.

They took all the cash and jewellery and asked Mr. Priyank's driver to take them to the clinic in Maurya Enclave. On the way, the driver raised an alarm after which the accused fled. Three of them were arrested but two managed to escape. The accused allegedly told the police that they were inspired by a Bollywood movie.

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BKU to burn Bill copies on Holi

Instead of colours, farmers will apply farm soil as tilak, says Rakesh Tikait

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

The Bharatiya Kisan Union said on Saturday that farmers would burn copies of the Bills at the Ghazipur protest site on Holi.

BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait will lead the farmers on Sunday by burning the copies of the Bills. The BKU is leading the protest against the contentious farm laws at the Ghazipur border.

'Not acceptable'
Mr. Tikait appealed to the farmers that during the Holika Dahan, farmers should burn copies of Bills in their villages. "It will help in making the government understand that the Bills are not



Farmers at the Ghazipur border after completing the Kisan Mazdoor Yatra on Saturday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

acceptable to farmers," he said.

He said it is part of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha's pro-

gramme. "On Monday, instead of using colours, farmers will apply farm soil as tilak on the forehead of BKU.

fellow farmers as a tribute to farmers who lost their lives during the protests."

He further said farmers were ready to stay at the protest site till Diwali if the laws were not repealed and a new law, that guarantees the MSP, is not made.

Kisan Mazdoor Yatra

On Saturday, the Kisan Mazdoor Jagriti Yatra that started from Ramraj on March 6 reached the Ghazipur border. Covering 16 districts, the farmers participating in the Yatra have brought soil from different villages of these districts with them. "This soil will be kept at the Ghazipur border," said Dharmendra Malik, media in-charge of BKU.

Bearers of tradition



Tribals in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh beating 'maandal' during the Bhagoriya Fair. The festival starts a week before Holi. ■ A.M. FARUQUI

BJP legislator thrashed by protesters in Punjab

MLA was attacked outside party office; CM condemns incident

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

A BJP legislator was thrashed and his clothes torn allegedly by a group of people anguished over the Centre's farm laws, in Punjab's Malout town in Muktsar Sahib district on Saturday.

Arun Narang, the MLA from Abohar constituency, was on his way to the BJP office to attend an event. As his car reached the office, the group of demonstrators protesting against the contentious farm laws allegedly surrounded him and threw ink on him, said the police.

Mr. Narang and his supporters ran into a shop for protection but the agitated protesters thrashed and tore his clothes as soon as he stepped out of it.

"Mr. Narang was to address a press conference at the party office in Malout. The incident happened outside the office where a few people were sitting and protesting. The protesters thrashed him but the police personnel deployed there evacuated him safely," Superintendent of Police (Investigation) Rajpal Singh told *The Hindu*.

No arrests yet

"No arrests have been made so far but some suspects have been identified. Once the FIR is registered, we will take necessary action. Mr. Narang's medical is yet to be conducted. Two of our police officers sustained injuries," he said.

Chief Minister Amarinder

Singh condemned the incident and warned of strict action against anyone trying to disturb the State's peace by taking the law into their hands.

The Shiromani Akali Dal termed the incident "deplorable" and demanded an impartial inquiry into the incident.

Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal appealed to everyone to exercise restraint. He also accused the State police of failing to do their duty and said the Congress government had failed miserably in maintaining law and order.

BJP State president Ashwani Sharma said, "The State government has totally failed to protect law and order and the Chief Minister should immediately resign."

Akali Dal hits out at Punjab govt. for delaying wheat purchase

Farmers will have to stock their harvest in fields for 10 days'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Saturday hit out at the Congress government in Punjab for delaying the wheat procurement season by ten days to April 10, instead of April 1.

Senior SAD leaders Prem Singh Chandumajra and Daljit Singh Cheema said the

verity fact that the State government had delayed the procurement season was proof that it was playing into the hands of the Central government. "The delay will cause hardship to farmers who will have to stock their harvested crops in the fields for ten days, besides leading to the extension of the procurement season and late sowing of the upcoming pad-

dy crop."

Amid the surge in COVID-19 cases, the Punjab government had announced to start wheat procurement operations from April 10 this year. The decision was taken at a recently held COVID-19 review meeting, presided over by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

Will meet Guv.

Mr. Chandumajra and Mr. Cheema said the SAD would take up the issue with Governor V.P. Singh Badnore on March 30 and demand that the procurement start from April 1. "We will also bring to the Governor's attention that the government has compromised the interests of the State by presiding over a huge paddy procure-

ment scam under which paddy purchased at ₹800 per quintal from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh was brought to Punjab and purchased at ₹1,900 per quintal. This is why against a likely purchase of 164 lakh tonne, the actual paddy purchased in the last season was 218 lakh tonnes," said the leaders at a press conference here.

They alleged that the government was sleeping over the issue of new specifications for procurement of food grains by the Food Corporation of India. "It is clear that the Central government is trying to renege on the payment for food grains on MSP and the State government is becoming a tool in fulfilling this nefarious agenda," they alleged.

Man dies in police custody in U.P.'s Ambedkar Nagar

Special team booked for murder

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Shahbuddin, Ziyauddin's brother, alleged that on March 24 he left home to go to a relative's place but on the way members of the SWAT team picked him up and tortured him causing his death. Ziyauddin was "beaten to death," alleged Shahbuddin in his police complaint, accusing the police team of murder.

An FIR was lodged at Akbarpur police station in Ambedkar Nagar under sections 302 (murder) and 364 (abducting for murder) of the IPC against Devendra Pal Singh, SWAT team in-charge, and unidentified police personnel.

The accused police personnel were also sent to the reserve lines, said the Ambedkar Nagar police. The victim was identified as Ziyauddin of Hazipur Kudrat in Powai area of Azamgarh.

SP Ambedkar Nagar Alok Priyadarshi said on Friday a special police team had picked up Ziyauddin for questioning. During the questioning, Ziyauddin complained of feeling unwell and at 1 a.m. he was admitted to the district hospital where he died, said the officer.

A magisterial and judicial probe has been recommended, said the Ambedkar Nagar police.

GNCTD Amendment Bill is 'murder of democracy': Gehlot

Rajasthan CM also demands withdrawal of electoral bonds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR



Ashok Gehlot. ■ FILE PHOTO

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Saturday described the GNCTD Amendment Bill passed by the Narendra Modi government to curtail the Delhi government's rights as "murder of democracy".

In a tweet, he said abolishing the power of an elected government was against the spirit of democracy and added that the apex court had earlier ruled that the elected government was the real head of Delhi.

"The Modi government wants to run the country in a fascist manner. Electoral malpractices, horse-trading of elected MLAs, and when failing in both, it resorts to passing such a dictatorial Bill on the strength of its majority in the Parliament. This

Mr. Gehlot said the BJP had got 95% share of the electoral bonds in 2017-18

and the RBI Governor had stated that these bonds could lead to money laundering. "The EC filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in 2019 stating that the electoral bonds would end the transparency of donations received by political parties."

While stating that the EC had softened its stand now, Mr. Gehlot affirmed that simply withdrawing the electoral bonds would not serve the purpose. He said the Supreme Court should take the petition to its logical conclusion to ensure transparency in political funding. "Mr. Modi had promised to put the black money to an end. He could neither bring back the black money from abroad nor the demonetisation could reduce it," Mr. Gehlot said.

Mr. Gehlot said the

old fatherless youth from Dhenkanal, had no resources to go for the costly treatment. He was suffering from relapsed B – Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia – one type of blood cancer. His sister donated stem cells.

The BMT, which would have cost around ₹30 lakh and the waiting period would have been at least one year outside Odisha, was

carried out with active support of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his administration," said R.K. Jena, who led the doctors' team during the critical operation.

Landmark treatment

"This landmark BMT will create opportunity for cure of many blood and other diseases like thalassemia, sickle cell disease, aplastic anaemia, various blood cancers and other cancer diseases. Thousands of patients need this procedure and are not able to receive it due to many logistic challenges outside the State," said Dr. Jena.

Availability of such facilities in government institutions would benefit these patients and the overall cost is bound to come down in private institutions, he said.

"The stem cells were col-

lected from the patient's sister and were transfused to the patient on the same day. This prophylaxis will be continuing for few weeks," said the doctors.



राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, हिमाचल प्रदेश



"खुद में वो बदलाव कीजिए
जो आप औरों में देखना चाहते हैं"

- महात्मा गांधी



सुरक्षा की युक्ति
कोरोना से मुक्ति

कोविड अनुलग्न व्यवहारों का पालन करें और
दूसरों को भी इसके लिए प्रोत्साहित करें



मास्क नहीं तो टोकेंगे
कोरोना को हम रोकेंगे

Odisha doctors perform first allogeneic BMT

Bone marrow transplant was done free of cost in SCB Medical College & Hospital

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A cancer patient got a new lease of life after the doctors at Odisha's SCB Medical College & Hospital, Cuttack, performed the first-ever allogeneic bone marrow transplant free of cost on Saturday.

The BMT unit in the Hospital has been extending costly treatment facility to cancer patients free of cost – a first such effort in a State government hospital in the country. Till Saturday, the unit at the SCB Medical College had been conducting only autologous BMT.

In autologous BMT, stem cells of the patient are used for one's cancer treatment while in allogeneic procedure, a donor donates stem cells.

Ahbiram Jena, a 21-year-



The BMT team with the patient. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

old fatherless youth from Dhenkanal, had no resources to go for the costly treatment. He was suffering from relapsed B – Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia – one type of blood cancer. His sister donated stem cells.

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The BMT unit was opened in 2014 with two rooms having all state-of-the-art facilities including stem cell enumeration, stem cell aphaeresis and stem cell storage. This was the first State government hospital with such facilities in the entire country.

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DELI THE HINDU | SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2021

GROUND REALITY

Amphan impact looms over remote Ghoramara

The threat of climate change has been sidelined in the divisive campaign on this tiny island of West Bengal

SUDIPTA DATTA
SHIV SAHAY SINGH
GHORAMARA

Life on the island of Ghoramara revolves around the motorboat, the only link to the mainland. From 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., villagers shuttle between 4-Point and Ghoramara for all their needs.

Ghoramara lies near Sagar Island, which has a population of two lakh people and is the biggest island of the Sunderban archipelago. Sagar also hosts the annual Gangasagar pilgrimage.

Located 150 km south of Kolkata and spread over a shrinking 4.8 sq.km. of land, Ghoramara falls under the Sagar Assembly constituency in South 24-Parganas which goes to the polls on April 1.

Election issues on this sinking and isolated island usually revolve around climate change. But this year, corruption in relief efforts post Cyclone Amphan is the major issue for the residents. Ghoramara bore the brunt of the cyclone which battered south Bengal on May 20 last year.

The impact of the devastating cyclone is still visible on the island located where the Hooghly river meets the Bay of Bengal. Uprooted trees lie uncleared and several homes

lie in ruins while the hungry waters have claimed more land. The local primary school stands dangerously close to the edge of an eroding bank.

On election eve, the villagers wondered how many more years Ghoramara would be able to stay afloat. "Rehabilitation is the only solution," they said.

Discontent over relief

Though most of the villagers said they had received the ₹20,000 offered as a one-time relief by the State government to rebuild homes, some claimed they were yet to get assistance. Other relief promised by the government, including money for their destroyed betel leaf plantations or work under MGNREGA, did not reach the island, they said.

There are 1,200 families on the island, and a voters' list of about 3,500-3,800, said Sareja Bibi, the only BJP gram panchayat member in the four-member panchayat. She is among those who did not get any Amphan relief except for a tarpaulin sheet.

But Ms. Sareja is slightly better off than many other villagers, and managed to replace the tiles on her roof that were blown off by the cyclone, and has also replanted her betel leaf plantation.



In isolation: The motorboat is the only link to the mainland for residents of Ghoramara island, in the Sagar constituency of West Bengal. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

She says the voter list has shrunk because many of the men of the island were away on work, mostly heading to Thrissur in Kerala.

"We get ₹700 a day for a nine-to-five job in construction," said Sheikh Noor Islam, who returned home when special trains were run during the lockdown last year and is actively involved in the election. "We have to work outside because the sale of betel leaves gives us only ₹5,000 a month, excluding the expenses required to nurture it. If we have to build

homes elsewhere, where will the money come from?" he added.

Every house has men who have migrated to other States for work leaving behind the women to take care of children, the betel leaf vines and the paddy crop.

Three sons of Sheikh Abdul Rauf, who has a tailoring job in Kolkata, are in Kerala. "There are no jobs here. We live at the mercy of nature – cyclones, high tides, monsoons," said Mr. Rauf.

The island is not connected to the electricity grid and several homes have installed solar panels. The primary

health centre functions between 11.30 a.m. and 4 p.m. with staff coming to the island via the ferry. Due to the pandemic, schools have been shut but children shoulder their backpacks and keep up with their lessons by taking classes with the few teachers on the island.

But it is not all gloom in Ghoramara. Rojina Khatun, 26, who is part of a self-help group which gives loans to women, said many had benefited from the welfare schemes of the Trinamool Congress government.

Ms. Khatun said, "Some have started a poultry busi-

₹92.66 lakh
average assets per candidate contesting in the second phase (30 seats) in the West Bengal Assembly election. 15% of the candidates are crorepatis

59%
of the candidates contesting in the second phase in West Bengal declared they were graduates or more, while 37% said they were between '5th pass' and '12th pass'



Bengal's daughter
will defeat
Bengal's traitor in his
own backyard at
Nandigram

DEREK O'BRIEN
Trinamool Congress spokesperson

P8

POLL POURRI



Audio clip creates a flutter

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

An audio clip with an alleged conversation between Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader in Nandigram has created a political flutter in West Bengal political circles. In the clip that was made public by the State BJP leadership, the CM is allegedly heard requesting both former CPI(M) and Trinamool followers.

But anger against the administration and a divisive campaign has taken a toll.

"We have been voting for Trinamool all along," said Sheikh Basar, who lives at Bamankhali in Sagar and was in Ghoramara to sell locally prepared ointments. "Instead of giving ₹20,000 to some, Didi should have given ₹1,000 to all... there would not be any discontent."

Upset with the religious divide being created not only in the southernmost tip of Bengal but across the State, he lamented, "Can you look at my face and tell whether I am a Muslim or a Hindu? Why are political parties doing this? Why are people falling for it?"

Assam poll official dies on duty



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

An election official died on duty at the Salkathoni polling booth in Sonari constituency of Charaideo district on Saturday, hours after voting began for the first phase of elections across 47 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats. The official, identified as Tulsi Khanikar, was assigned polling station number 187. District officials said he was rushed to a hospital in Dibrugarh after he collapsed, and his health started deteriorating. But he passed away on the way to the hospital. The 47 seats in the first phase cover 12 districts of eastern Assam.

'Do you want Mahajot or Mahathug?'



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SILCHAR

Rashtriya Janata Dal president Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday asked the people of Assam to choose between Mahajot, the Congress-led grand alliance of 10 parties, and Mahathug (great goon), a term he used for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Addressing a rally for Mukesh Pandey, Congress candidate for the Lakhimpur Assembly constituency in southern Assam's Cachar district, he alluded to the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan that lost the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections narrowly to the Janata Dal (United) and BJP. "We know how they manipulate to win elections, but the five guarantees will see the Mahajot through in Assam," he said.

Himanta is Kansa: Kanhaiya



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MORIGAON

CPI leader Kanhaiya Kumar hit out at the BJP on Saturday calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi "the biggest liar" and comparing the saffron party's top Assam leader Himanta Biswa Sarma with King Kansa, the tyrant ruler of Mathura in the Mahabharata. The former JNU students union president termed Mr. Modi's statement in Bangladesh, where he is on a visit, about going to jail for that country's freedom a "big lie". The Left youth leader questioned whether annually two crore jobs had been created as had been promised.

DATA BYTE

Candidate check: West Bengal Phase-II

A look at the party-wise criminal cases and assets of candidates contesting in the second phase of the West Bengal election on April 1

Party	% of candidates with criminal cases	% of candidates with serious criminal cases
BJP	57	53
CPI(M)	47	40
AITC	27	17
INC	22	22

Party	% of crorepati candidates	Average assets per candidate (₹)
BJP	33	2.31 crore
AITC	37	1.79 crore
INC	22	1.22 crore
CPI(M)	0	29.98 lakh

Name	Party	Constituency	Total assets (₹ cr.)
Bharati Ghosh	BJP	Debra	19.21
Dipankar Jana	BJP	Kakdwip	14.41
Arup Chakraborty	AITC	Taldangra	8.82

Candidates analysed: All India Trinamool Congress (AITC): 30; BJP: 30; CPI(M): 15; INC: 9 Source: ADR

clarifications made and facts shown and proven by the Chief Minister's Office makes it clear that on the issue of people's welfare, on the question of an alternative policy approach, the Opposition is bankrupt. They require such issues to divert people's attention. They are desperate to try and create an issue on which they can mislead people.

The Opposition leader in Kerala has now approached the High Court alleging fraud in the voters' list.

■ The voters' list is prepared by the Election Commission of India and there's a laid down procedure for it. A date is announced by which time anybody who wants to include his/her name on the list should do so. There's a date for raising objection against the inclusion of anyone and once a decision

is taken, the final list is published. While that's the case, why did the Congress not raise the objection then? The State administration has nothing to do with the process.

The BJP and the Congress are seeking to rally the people around Sabarimala.

■ As I said, they are bereft of actual issues. What's there to be a controversy on Sabarimala now? The initial verdict has now been referred to a larger Bench whose remit includes many larger issues. Until the Supreme Court pronounces an opinion on that, nothing can be done.

If your stated aim is to defeat the BJP, isn't the three-

cornered fight leading to a split in anti-BJP votes in West Bengal?

■ In West Bengal, the BJP registered a big gain in the last Lok Sabha elections. Anti-incumbency votes and people's anger against the Trinamool Congress (TMC) government went in favour of the BJP. So, the tactics we adopted in West Bengal are to defeat the BJP and also defeat the TMC so that the anti-incumbency vote does not go to the BJP.

But is the alliance with the ISF secular?

■ They say the ISF leader is a so-called fundamentalist. Here's a person who formed a party known as the Indian Secular Front. The president of the party

is an adivasi. The candidates given by the party include Hindu Brahmins, Dalits, LGBT people and he made the people take a pledge at the mammoth brigade rally stating 'We are Indians, neither Christians, Hindus or Muslims'.

We go by the public position adopted by a party, not by a private individual's faith. Separation of your religion or your faith from politics and government, that's the yardstick of secularism. Why isn't the same yardstick applicable to the BJP and other parties?

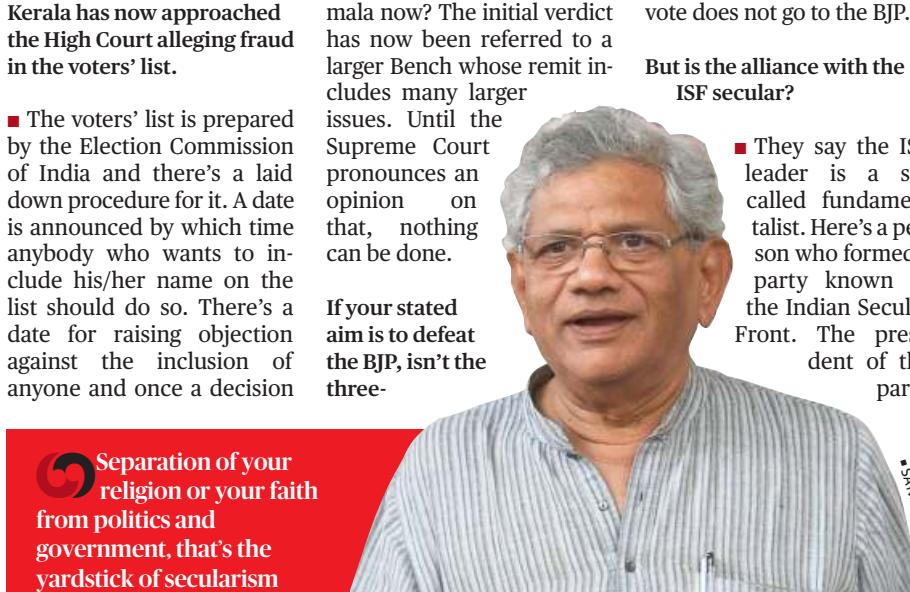
The Union Home Minister says in Assam that they will not implement the CAA. But says in West Bengal and Kerala that they will implement it. Till date, his own Ministry has not framed the rules.

■ The CAA is not a law for them. It is an instrument for deepening communal polarisation.

Their political fortunes are tied up with the consolidation of the Hindutva communal vote bank.

(For full interview, log on to bit.ly/YechuryInterview)

Separation of your religion or your faith from politics and government, that's the yardstick of secularism



INTERVIEW | SITARAM YECHURY

'We are seeking a complete isolation of communal forces'

The strategy used differs from State to State, says CPI(M) general secretary

S. ANANDAN

Defeating the BJP and its allies is the major objective of the CPI (M) and other Left parties in the elections in four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry, says CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, who is campaigning in Kerala for the Left Democratic Front led by his party which is seeking the mandate to retain power. Edited excerpts:

The BJP is flaying the Left for feigning a fight with the Congress in Kerala and aligning with it elsewhere. Isn't that a contradictory stance?

■ It is different from State to State as to how you achieve the objective of defeating the BJP. There's no contradiction in it. In 2004, for instance, the Left won 61 members to the Lok Sabha and 57 of them had defeated Congress candidates and we supported the Manmohan Singh government. The people of Kerala had given us 18 of the 20 MPs from the State knowing full well that after the elections we will support any secular alternative to stop the BJP and the communal forces from forming the government.

■ The government of Kerala acted in the interests of the State and the people amidst adverse circumstances and its work has been appreciated. We are therefore not only seeking a comeback, but a complete isolation of the communal forces and the BJP.

But hasn't a series of allegations put the government on the back foot?

■ On the contrary, all these things have remained allegations for months on end. If there was any merit in them, it would have been established by now. But the fact that these continue to be allegations and that they are still thrown around despite the

CM Yechury Interview

Interview by Sandeep Sanyal

Amid Bangladesh liberation anniversary, role of India, U.S. in 1971 in spotlight

Washington's policy chronicled through a series of memos and taped conversations between then President Richard Nixon and his NSA Henry Kissinger

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

"To all hands, don't squeeze Yahya at this time," wrote the then U.S. President Richard Nixon in his own hand in a memo that crystallised Washington's policy during Bangladesh's liberation war.

The memo, dated April 28, 1971, came a month after Pakistani troops had launched Operation Searchlight that targeted Bangladeshi freedom fighters, the minority Hindu population, teachers, students, and activists brutally, with millions of casualties.

As Bangladesh commemorates 50 years of its Liberation movement, that began with the declaration of Independence by the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on

March 26, 1971, the spotlight also turns to events at the time in India and the United States, that were recounted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka, and through a special remembrance in the U.S. Congress last week.

A few days after the Mujib declaration, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi moved a resolution in Parliament condemning the Pakistani crackdown as "genocide". On April 3, she met Tajuddin Ahmed, Mujib's nominee for PM of the provisional government, and promised support, including an office in Calcutta that belonged to the RAW intelligence agency. Mrs. Gandhi insisted on secrecy, however, until she was able to garner interna-



Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signing a treaty in Dhaka on March 2, 1972. ■ THE HINDU PHOTO ARCHIVES

tional support for the cause. While the U.S. was deadset against India's stand, Mrs. Gandhi found some support in Moscow, and the Indo-Soviet treaty of Peace and Cooperation was signed in August 1971.

During his visit to Dhaka, Mr. Modi described opposi-

tion protests that he had taken part in – against the Soviet treaty and demanding that India recognise Bangladesh immediately.

"I must have been 20 to 22 years old when my colleagues and I did a Satyagraha for the freedom of the people of Bangladesh. I was

arrested and had an opportunity to go to jail in support of Bangladesh's Independence," he said at the special commemoration on Friday.

Back in 1971, far from the public eye, the government's plans for Bangladesh's liberation, the diplomatic outreach and training and arming the Mukti Bahini cadres, were all already under way by August of the year. The Soviet treaty denied India's non-aligned policy, but Soviet naval support and military supplies assisted New Delhi in the war that followed.

Through that time, the U.S. policy was chronicled through a series of memos, and taped conversations between Mr. Nixon and Dr. Kissinger. "I think that in fact, the April 28 memo is

one of the most important documents of the time, because this memo set the course of American policy towards Bangladesh's liberation war," said military historian Srinath Raghavan, who authored the book 1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh.

"It set the U.S. 'tilt' (towards Pakistan) as policy and asked everyone in the U.S. government to fall in line," he added, referring to the fact that Mr. Nixon put the words down in his own hand and then underlined the word "Don't" three times for emphasis.

In a special commemoration in the U.S. Congress last Monday, Representative Sheila Lee Jackson said, "Approximately 2 to 3 million people were killed, over

200,000 women were raped in organised rape camps, and over 10 million people were displaced, most finding refuge in India." Ms. Jackson called for an apology from Pakistan and an acknowledgement from the U.S. of its "solidarity" with Bangladesh.

While many historians have focused on the more sensational comments made by Mr. Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger about India's role and their anger at Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the secret White House Memorandum (Action 27870/April 28, 1971) titled "Policy Options towards Pakistan" is a detailed account of the U.S.'s strategy during the year, that eventually led to it moving its "Seventh fleet" into

the Bay of Bengal in an attempt to deter the Indian Army from advancing towards Dhaka (Dacca) during the two-week war in December 1971.

In the Memo, declassified 30 years later in 2001, Dr. Kissinger proposes three options to Mr. Nixon: to support Pakistani President General Yahya Khan's political and military plans, without sending any ammunition; to remain neutral, and delay all aid, food and military equipment until India-Pakistan tensions were resolved; and to help Gen Yahya to "end the war", establish an autonomous government in East Pakistan, and give control of aid, food shipments and military equipment to West Pakistan.

Largely peaceful start to polls in Bengal, Assam

Highest voting of 82.51% in Purba Medinipur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA/WAHATI

Amid stray incidents of violence and allegations of electoral malpractices, West Bengal recorded a high voting of 79.79% on average in the 30 constituencies that went to the polls in the first phase of Assembly election in the State on Saturday.

As much as 76.89% of the 81,09,815 voters turned out in the first phase of polling that covered 47 Assembly constituencies across 12 districts in eastern and a part of central Assam on Saturday.

The highest voting of about 82.51% in West Bengal's first phase was recorded in Purba Medinipur; Paschim Medinipur recorded 80.12%; Jhargram 80.55% and Bankura 79.9%. Purulia recorded the lowest at 77.07%. Aariz Aftab, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of West Bengal, said that voting was expected to be higher when the final count of votes was ascertained.



Eager crowd: People waiting to vote in the first phase of election in Bankura, West Bengal, and, right, in Jorhat district of Assam on Saturday. ■ ANI & RITU RAJ KONWAR



There were tensions in the Keshri constituency of Paschim Medinipur district from early morning, after a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker, Mangal Soren, was found dead.

CPI(M) candidate from Salboni, Sushanta Ghosh, was heckled in Salboni when he visited a booth.

The vehicle of BJP leader Soumen Adhikari, brother of Suvenu Adhikari, was attacked at Salajpur in Kantia.

At a polling booth in the Majra High Madrasa area of Kanthi, Trinamool supporters alleged that even after pressing the EVM buttons in favour of the party candidate, the VVPAT slips showed votes for the BJP. The CEO said the error was addressed and voting was resumed at the booth.

Assam votes
Tea plantation workers are a deciding factor in 38 of the 47 seats that went to the

polls in Assam on Saturday. The BJP and its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) had in 2016 won 35 of these first phase constituencies. The Congress had won the remaining nine seats.

In Assam, a few electronic voting machines (EVMs) malfunctioned but they were taken care of, officials said.

"Every voter was given a glove to avoid direct contact with the EVMs. Voters were also provided masks and

were sanitised before entering the polling stations," AGP's CEO Nitin Khade said.

The number of voters for every booth was also brought down to a maximum of 1,000 to avoid crowding, he added.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who is contesting in the Majuli Assembly constituency, cast his vote in his home district of Dibrugarh.

One of the most prestigious first phase seats for the BJP is Batalava, central to its campaign against 'land jihad.'

A sentimental first phase seat for the Congress is Titabar that former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi represented.

kakhat), State Congress president and Rajya Sabha member Ripun Bora (Gohpur), his Assam Jatiya Parishad and Rajo Dal counterparts Lurinjyoti Gogoi (Dulaijan and Naharkatiya) and Akhil Gogoi (Sibsagar) respectively.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who is contesting in the Majuli Assembly constituency, cast his vote in his home district of Dibrugarh.

One of the most prestigious first phase seats for the BJP is Batalava, central to its campaign against 'land jihad.'

A sentimental first phase seat for the Congress is Titabar that former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi represented.

Cautious Congress rejigs campaign

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As Assam and Bengal voted in the first phase of the Assembly election on Saturday, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi asked people to vote agains "divisive forces".

"To strengthen democracy, cast your vote against the divisive forces," Mr. Gandhi tweeted as he hit the campaign trail in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala.

Irrespective of the outcome, the Congress is fighting the current round of Assembly elections differently after having learnt its lessons in the previous round.

Unlike Bihar, ticket distribution has been a largely a smooth affair except in Kerala where factionalism has come out in the open, post distribution.

Personal popularity
To paper over such factionalism, Mr. Gandhi, a Lok Sabha member from the State, is using his personal popularity

in the State to attract young voters to the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

The party believes Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's charm has helped in attracting the women tea workers in the tea belt of Upper Assam. To counter the BJP's allegation of resorting to minority appeasement by aligning with Badruddin Ajmal-led All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Ms. Vadra started her Assam campaign with vi-

sits to the Kamakhya shrine and the birthplace of the 15th century Srimanta Sankaradeva.

Of the five States, the Congress is the principal challenger in Kerala and Assam.

While leaders from neighbouring coastal Karnataka have pitched to take the campaign door-to-door in Kerala, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has been a key person in Assam to provide resources for the party's campaign.

Cong. set for landslide win in Assam: Kharge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The signs on the ground indicate the Congress is heading for a landslide victory in Assam, party leader and Rajya Sabha member Mallikarjun Kharge said on Saturday.

Elections were held in 47 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats in the first phase on Saturday. Tea plantation workers, a majority of whom shifted loyalty from the Con-

Request for Proposal Notice

"Selection of an Agency for PR Management & Content Creation"

Directorate of Public Relations invites online proposals from suitable agencies for Selection of an Agency for PR Management & Content Creation.

For detail scope of work and other terms and conditions, please refer the RFP document available at www.mpinfo.org and <https://mptenders.gov.in>. Document fees of Rs 5,000 (Non-refundable) and EMD of Rs 10,00,000 (Ten Lakhs Only) needs to be submitted through online mode through <https://mptenders.gov.in> portal only.

An interested agency who qualifies as per the criteria mentioned in the RFP document may submit their proposals only online through the e-tendering Portal latest by 15/04/2021 till 3 pm.

G-21951

Commissioner
Directorate of Public Relations

TENDER NOTICE					
Adv. No. 68/D3/CE/TTD/2020-21 Tenders invited for the following Four (04) works of TTD Engineering Department					
Sl. No.	NIT No.	Name of the Work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs & Time for Completion	Schedule Download Start Date	Download end date & last date for bid submission
1	406/SE-II/TTD/2020-21	Operation and maintenance of Municipal Solid Waste treatment plant at Tirumala.	RFP 5 years	29.03.2021 05.00 PM	16.04.2021 1.00PM & 3.00PM
2	407/SE-II/TTD/2020-21	Providing Chain link mesh to Outer Security Cordon from Kakulakonda Road Junction to GNC (57th Hair Pin Bend in Kakulakonda Road via Silathoram Road (Phase-III) Tirumala.	910.00	08.04.2021 05.00 PM	23.04.2021 01.00PM & 03.00PM
3	408/SE-II/TTD/2020-21	Improvements to Employees staff Quarters, B - Type, Old C - Type, Old D - Type , New C - Type & New D - Type quarters (Total - 43 Nos.) at Tirumala.	1800.00	15.04.2021 05.00 PM	03.05.2021 01.00PM & 03.00PM
4	409/SE-II/TTD/2020-21	Balance improvement works to the Alipiri footpath from Alipiri to GNC, Tirumala. Civil & Renovation works -Plastering, Paintings, Impervious coat to the newly constructed shelters, improvement to the toilets along the Alipiri footpath and ornamental works to RC columns.	905.00	07.04.2021 05.00 PM	22.04.2021 01.00PM & 03.00PM

Note: For full details log on to the website: <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in/> or <http://www.apeprocurement.gov.in/>
Adv. No. PR4/13928/Adv.No.374/PRO/2021,Dt:27.03.2021

Office of The Additional Chief Engineer, PHED, Region-Kota

Notice Inviting Bid No. 25/2020-21

Bids for "Work of Reorganization of Bada Nayagaon piped water supply scheme in District, Bundi under JMM" are invited from interested bidders upto 06-04-2020, 18:00 Hours. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the website <http://www.e-proc.in/rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in>, and <http://rajwater.gov.in> departmental website.

UBN No. PHE/2021WSOB12062

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Additional Chief Engineer
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NOTICE FOR E-PROCUREMENT

The download end date, last date of bid submission and opening of Techno-commercial and Price E-Bid invited from eligible bidders for the NIT JJS/E(M&P-ZPC)/TN-55(NIB code: JV/2021A0253 and UBN is: JV/2021WLOB00373) floated by this office.

Details regarding download end date, last date of bid submission and tender opening etc. are available at our website www.rajenenergy.com and www.sppr.rajasthan.gov.in. The bidders, in their own interest are requested to read very carefully the tender documents before submitting the bid only through on line website <http://e-proc.rajasthan.gov.in>.

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Covovax trial begins, launch by Sept.: Adar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla on Saturday said the clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccine Covovax have begun in India, and the company hopes to launch it by September.

In August last year, U.S.-based vaccine maker Novavax Inc. had announced a licence agreement with SII for the development and commercialisation of NVX-CoV2373, its COVID-19 vaccine candidate, in low and middle-income countries and India.

"Covovax trials finally begin in India...It has been tested against African and UK variants of #COVID19 and has an overall efficacy of 89%. Hope to launch by September 2021!", Mr. Poonawalla tweeted.

The development and commercialisation agreement between Novavax and SII excludes major upper-middle and high-income countries, for which Novavax continues to retain rights.

AAI's plan to buy body scanners hits roadblock

It withdrew tender bagged by China firm

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The Airports Authority of India's plan to procure 198 body scanners for its airports across the country has hit a roadblock after it had to withdraw a tender bagged by a Chinese company, Nuctech, following the stand-off at the Line of Actual Control last year.

Nuctech is dominant in border-control and security screening technologies globally and is partly owned by the Chinese government and once run by former Chinese President Hu Jintao's son, Hu Haifeng, according to international media reports.

In April 2019, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) – the aviation security watchdog – issued a circular requiring 84 hypersensitive and sensitive airports to install full body scanners within a year to replace walk-through metal detectors. The same year, following a global tender, AAI decided to award the tender to Nuctech.

New proposal soon

"After a government advisory last year barring purchases from bordering countries, we have withdrawn the earlier tender. A new proposal has been sent for seeking financial approval after which a fresh global tender will be floated," according to an official of the

Amid surge in COVID-19 cases, Maharashtra bans gatherings

Govt. issues fresh guidelines; malls, restaurants to remain shut from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Amid a rapid surge in fresh COVID-19 cases, the Maharashtra government on Saturday issued guidelines extending the lockdown in the State till April 15. The government also imposed restrictions on the gathering of five or more people in public places from the midnight of March 27.

The State on Saturday reported 35,726 new cases and 166 deaths, the highest this year.

Under the rules, cinema halls, malls, auditoriums and restaurants will remain shut between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. People will also not be allowed in gardens and on beaches during this period.

However, the government has exempted delivery of food and takeaways in the night hours.

No social, political, cultural and religious gatherings will be allowed. No more than 50 people can attend a



Lockdown returns: Shops are closed in Solapur, Maharashtra, on Saturday during the weekend lockdown imposed by the administration. ■ PTI

wedding, while no more than 20 people can attend a funeral.

Any person found without a mask will be fined ₹500, while those found spitting in public will be fined ₹1,000.

In case of home isolation, local authorities should be informed about it, along with the information of the medical professional who is

treating the patient. A board should be put up on the door for 14 days indicating home isolation. The home quarantine seal should be affixed on the hand. Other home members should avoid going out.

50% strength

All private offices, except medical and essential services, will function at 50% ca-

pacity. The manufacturing sector can run on full capacity but by following all health safety norms on the production floor.

In order to reduce overcrowding at government offices, except for elected representatives, no one else will be allowed. Special passes will be issued in case of meetings.

Gujarat breaks its daily record with 2,276 cases

Sudden spurt in demand for ICU beds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat continues to see a surge in cases as the second wave of the pandemic sweeps through the State. On Saturday, 2,276 cases were recorded, its highest case count since the pandemic broke out in March 2020.

The State is also witness-

ing a rise in mortality. There were five deaths on Saturday. The active cases have jumped to 10,871 and 157 patients are on ventilator sup-

port.

In the main cities of Ah-

medabad, Surat, Vadodara

and Rajkot, more than 70%

of the COVID-19 beds have

been occupied.

"We will continue to witness a rise in cases for the next few weeks," a top doctor from Ahmedabad told *The Hindu*.

He said there is also a

sudden spurt in demand for

ICU beds.

Ahmedabad and Surat re-

corded 600 plus cases on

Saturday. In Ahmedabad,

the leading IIM-A has been

declared a containment zone with more than 35 cases emerging from the business school. "If drastic steps are not taken, then we may run out of hospital beds in both places," a senior medical practitioner said, adding the authorities have been caught napping while the pandemic spread in even rural areas this time.

Negative test report

The government announced that a negative CO-VID-19 RT-PCR test report will be mandatory for those arriving from other States. It must be taken in the previous 72 hours. The order will come into force on April 1.

Earlier, it made negative test report a must only for those coming from neighbouring Maharashtra. "The infection rate is increasing in many States. It is also seen that the prevalence of COVID-19 is high among those who have a travel history," the Health Depart-

ment said.

Custodial torture: NIA orders probe

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A 31-year-old man was allegedly tortured by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Jammu on Friday, his family has claimed. The federal anti-terror probe agency ordered an inquiry on Saturday.

Yugraj Singh, who works for a food delivery app, was called by the NIA for questioning in a narco-terror case on Friday. It is alleged that Mr. Singh was beaten in NIA's custody and was later admitted to a government hospital in Jammu.

Sevak Singh, maternal uncle of the victim and a retired police officer, claimed that his nephew was abused by the officials for wearing a *kirpan* (sword).

The family released a video of Mr. Singh from the hospital which showed severe injuries on his back, legs and hands.

Mr. Singh alleged that they had submitted a complaint but the police were not registering an FIR.

India sends 2 lakh doses of vaccine to UNPKF

Country honours commitment despite move to cut exports in view of domestic situation

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday delivered on its promise of 2,00,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines for the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNPKF) worldwide, sending a shipment bound for Copenhagen.

The cargo of AstraZeneca Covishield vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune was sent despite the government's decision to reduce exports in view of the need for vaccines domestically, honouring a commitment made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at a UNSC meeting in February.

Officials said that the Indian donation, combined with a Chinese commitment for 3,00,000 doses of vaccines would ensure that the entire force of more than two lakh soldiers, which comprises about 91,000 active personnel and 1,11,512 uniformed personnel, re-



Goodwill gesture: The COVID-19 vaccine consignment that was shipped to Copenhagen, Denmark. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ceives the requisite two doses each.

Steadfast supporter

"India is a long-standing and steadfast supporter of peacekeeping and I want to thank the Government and people of India, who have generously donated COVID-19 vaccines to benefit our peacekeeping personnel and enable them to continue their life-saving work in a safe manner," Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations,

said in a statement from New York, thanking the government.

This week, government sources said India would be considering how to "calibrate" its exports, given the vaccine roll-out domestically amid a sudden surge in cases of COVID-19.

In a letter accessed by *The Hindu*, sent in early March, SII CEO Adar Poonawalla informed several countries that there had been several "obstacles" in expanding production, including a fire

at their facilities, and he could not guarantee supplies.

A statement from the GAVI global alliance for vaccines, which is purchasing doses for lower income countries under the COVAX initiative, also confirmed that supplies from India in March and April were uncertain, and that they had thus far received only about a third of the 90 million due by May.

UNICEF also predicted delays from India, citing "export controls", although the government has denied banning vaccine exports.

Speaking at the UNGA on Friday, India's Deputy Permanent Representative Nagaraj Naidu expressed concern about a global vaccine shortage, especially for poorer countries.

"Lack of global cooperation and disparity in the accessibility of vaccines will affect the poorest nations the most," Mr. Naidu said, add-

Amarnath yatra from June 28

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAMMU

The annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave in the Kashmir Valley, which was suspended due to the pandemic in 2020, will start on June 28.

"This year's 56-day yatra shall commence simultaneously on both the routes from 28th June and culminate on Raksha Bandhan, 22nd August," said Nitishwar Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board.

He said the registration of pilgrims would start on April 1 for both the Baltal and the Chandanwari routes in central and south Kashmir. Mr. Kumar said health certificates issued after March 15 would only be valid.

"Persons under the age of 13 years or above the age of 75 years and women who are more than six weeks pregnant would not be registered for the yatra," he said.

Trolling of judges is unfair: Prasad

Vested interests trying to make administration of justice difficult, says CJI Bobde

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday flagged the government's concern over "social media campaigns" conducted against judges for their judicial opinions and judgments.

The Minister, who is also in charge of the Information Technology, Electronics and Communications portfolios, criticised "some people" who file PILs in court, campaign on social media for a particular judgment, and later troll judges when the verdict does not meet their expectations. He termed it "campaign justice".

Judiciary should be free to work in accordance with the rule of law, Mr. Prasad said.

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said judges had become quite used to the PIL route being used for filing frivolous petitions. "The admini-

nistration of justice is often tried to be made difficult by some vested interests. But that is something we as judges have got used to," CJI Bobde said.

They were speaking in Goa at the inaugural function of the new building of the Bombay High Court.

"I am a great supporter of social media. It is empowering. Social media enables people to ask questions, to criticise the Prime Minister, us and all. That is part of a healthy democracy. Therefore, we all encourage that," Mr. Prasad said. But he said there was a "disturbing

trend" on the rise.

"Some people file PILs,

then they start a campaign on social media 'that only this type of judgment is possible in this case'. And, if the judgment does not come in accord with what they perceive to be their right, then they start not only criticising the judges but also trolling judges... You can always criticise a judgment, that's your right, but if you start campaigning against a judge on social media, it is plainly not fair," Mr. Prasad said.

The Law Minister said the smooth transition of the courts to the virtual mode

during the pandemic was a "remarkable achievement". Over 82 lakh cases were heard through videoconference.

Chief Justice Bobde said courthouses would surely shrink in the future with the e-filing of cases. "Though building more courthouses is necessary and important, there was very little emphasis on modernising the existing courthouses. Though the pandemic has posed a lot of problems to access to justice, it has paved the way for modernising the courtroom," he said.

The CJI said he had spent so much time on the Bench in Goa that he is often referred to as a "Goa judge". He drew attention to the fact that Goa is the only State that implements the Uniform Civil Code as envisaged by the framers of the Constitution.

Justice N.V. Ramana

Better judicial infra needed: Justice Ramana

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice N.V. Ramana, on Saturday called for the need to establish a National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation to drastically improve judicial infrastructure across the country. He said the corporation could bring the much-needed "uniformity and standardisation" which could "revolutionise" judicial infrastructure.

The senior Supreme Court judge, who is scheduled to take over as the 48th CJI, was replying to criticism that money is spent on the infrastructure of higher courts while the subordinate judiciary continues to function from stuffy, ill-lit and dingy courtrooms.

"There is a need for the Centre and States to cooperate and create a National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation, as a one-time measure.

sure, to cater to the need for judicial infrastructure in the country. Such a corporation would bring the uniformity and standardisation required to revolutionise judicial infrastructure," Justice Ramana said in his address at the inauguration of a new Bombay High Court building in Goa.

An efficient "judicial infrastructure" means providing equal and free access to justice. This could be realised through a "barrier-free and citizen-friendly environment", Justice Ramana said.

Cryptic call about a crime can't be FIR: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A cryptic phone call vaguely informing of a crime cannot be treated as a First Information Report, the Supreme Court has held in a judgment.

A Bench of Justices L. Narasimha Rao, Hemant Gupta and S. Ravindra Bhat was hearing an appeal filed by a man whose acquittal in a murder case was set aside by

the Bombay High Court.

The trial court convicted two of his co-accused, but let him go. The High Court reversed the decision, prompting him to appeal to the top court.

The accused said the police had received a call about two men on a motorcycle attacking the victim.

However, the FIR was registered later against the three men on the basis of the

accounts given by witnesses and the dying declaration of the victim.

The accused argued in court that the phone call was the original complaint under Section 161 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the police could have doctored the complaint later on.

Complete information

"A cryptic phone call without complete information or

containing part-information about the commission of a cognisable offence cannot always be treated as an FIR," Justice Bhat, who authored the verdict, observed.

Justice Bhat relied on the Supreme Court's judicial precedents which have settled the law that a "mere message or a telephonic message which does not clearly specify the offence, cannot be treated as an FIR".

The injured soldier has been evacuated to 92 Base Hospital and is stable," an Army spokesman said.

China, Iran sign a 25-year 'strategic pact'

The agreement covers 'political, strategic and economic' components and seeks to deepen cooperation

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China and Iran on Saturday signed what was described as a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact", during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's ongoing six-nation tour to West Asia.

The deal, which has been in the works for five years, was signed between Mr. Wang and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif, AFP reported from Tehran. Mr. Wang is visiting Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, the UAE, Bahrain and Oman.

Nuclear deal talks

The agreement comes amid a major push from China to back Iran, which counts on Beijing, its largest trading partner, as it deals with the continuing weight of sanctions re-instated following then U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw



Boosting ties: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, right, and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Tehran. ■ AP

from the Iranian nuclear deal. Earlier this week, China and Russia called for the U.S. to "unconditionally return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as soon as possible and revoke the unilateral sanctions against Iran" as their Foreign Ministers met in China. In this context, they proposed "the establishment of a regional se-

urity dialogue platform to converge a new consensus on resolving the security concerns of countries in the region".

Chinese and U.S. officials also held talks on the Iran nuclear deal on Thursday. Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu, who held a phone conversation with U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley, said that with "new

changes in the Iranian nuclear situation, all parties need to increase the sense of urgency" and "the U.S. side should take concrete actions as soon as possible and both the U.S. and Iran need to meet each other half way for the latter's return to compliance at an early date". He added: "China will continue to play a constructive role in bringing the JCPOA back on track."

Five-point initiative

While details of the new 25-year pact were not immediately available, it includes "political, strategic and economic" components, AFP reported, quoting Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh as saying "this document can be very effective in deepening" relations and would establish a blueprint for "reciprocal investments in the fields of

transport, ports, energy, industry and services".

In Riyadh, Mr. Wang proposed "a five-point initiative on achieving security and stability in the Middle East" advocating "mutual respect, upholding equity and justice, achieving non-proliferation, jointly fostering collective security, and accelerating development cooperation."

He said China was keen to deepen its Belt and Road Initiative in the region, "expanding areas of growth such as high and new technologies", as well as "look forward to early conclusion of a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council"

with China's trade with Arab States reaching \$240 billion last year, establishing it as the region's largest trading partner and a major buyer of crude oil that counts on the region for half of its imports.

Alternative to China's BRI needed, Biden tells Boris

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden said he told British Prime Minister Boris Johnson that democratic countries should provide an alternative to China's infrastructure strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"One of the things I suggested we do is – we talked about China and the competition they're engaging in the Belt and Road Initiative," Mr. Biden said after he landed in Delaware for the weekend. "And I suggested we should have, essentially, a similar initiative coming from the democratic states,

helping those communities around the world," he said.

Mr. Biden had spoken with Mr. Johnson on the phone earlier on Friday. The White House said the two leaders discussed COVID-19 and global health security, climate, China, Iran and the preservation of political stability in Northern Ireland.

Earlier in March, the U.S. and its Quad partners (India, Australia and Japan) had committed to another initiative between democratic states – providing up to one billion vaccines in South East Asia and the Pacific.

Thousands protest in Bangladesh

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

Thousands of people demonstrated in Bangladesh on Saturday, a day after clashes between police and hardline Islamist protesters over a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi left five dead.

The violence, which began Friday at the main mosque in the capital Dhaka, rocked several key districts in the Muslim-majority nation of 168 million, leaving scores injured.

Facebook has been restricted in the country, a company spokesman said.

China sanctions U.S., Canadian individuals

Tit-for-tat measures over Xinjiang

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China announced tit-for-tat sanctions against two Americans, a Canadian and a rights advocacy body late on Saturday, in response to sanctions imposed earlier this week by the two countries over Beijing's treatment of Uighurs.

Two members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Gayle Manchin and Tony Perkins, as well as Canadian MP Michael Chong and a Canadian parliamentary committee on human rights are prohibited from entering mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

At least one million Uighurs and people from other mostly Muslim groups have been held in camps in northwestern Xinjiang, according to rights groups, who accuse authorities of forcibly sterilising women and imposing forced labour.

The European Union, Britain, Canada and the U.S. sanctioned several members of Xinjiang's political and economic hierarchy this week.

SUEZ CANAL

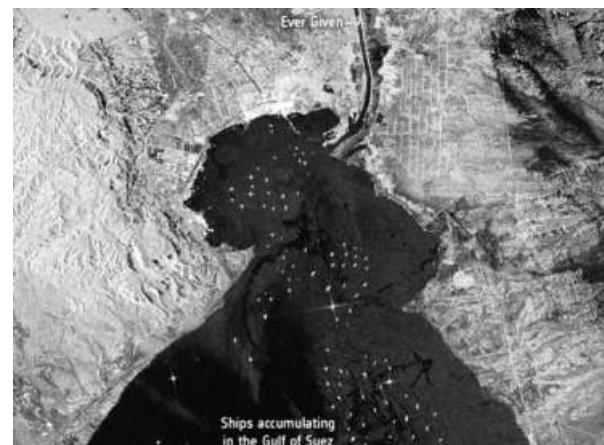
Linking the East with the West

The man-made channel has been a critical artery for global trade since 1869

STANLY JOHNY

The last time the Suez Canal was closed for navigation was in 1967, after the Six-Day War between Israel and Arab nations broke out. Prior to that, the channel had been shut for less than a year during the Suez War of 1956 when Israel, France and Britain invaded Egypt. What wars did in the past was done by a container ship now. M.V. *Ever Given* got stuck in a dust storm and strong winds on March 23 and ran aground in the channel blocking off traffic. The 193-km-long canal across Egypt's Isthmus of Suez connecting the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Red Sea in south – thereby bringing the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean closer – has been a critical artery for global trade since the mid-19th century. If the channel is blocked, ships from Europe will have to sail around the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa to reach Asia, and vice versa. Unsurprisingly, this single incident has turned the global spotlight to this man-made channel connecting two continents.

The idea of linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Erythraean Sea (today's Red Sea) had excited both Egypt's rulers and colonisers from ancient to modern times. Pharaoh Senausret III (1887-1849 BC) built the first canal linking the Erythraean Sea in the south to the Nile river in the north and thereby opening a waterway to the Mediterranean. Pharaoh Necho II, who died in 595 BC, started building another canal from the Nile to the south. It was Persian Emperor Darius I who completed the canal. Over the centuries, the canal would be ignored by leaders particularly as navigation becomes impossible due to silt and reopens by some, in-



cluding Ptolemy II Philadelphus in second century BC. Many geologists believe that the Red Sea receded over the centuries and its coastline moved southward away from the lakes in Suez. This, coupled with persistent accumulations of silt, made it difficult to keep the waterways open. So for centuries, the canal was abandoned by Egypt's rulers – until the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798 as part of his global campaign to weaken the British Empire. He wanted to build a canal across Suez under the French control because he thought it would leave a twin blow to the British. One, it would provide the French a quicker and easier access to the Indian Ocean. Two, by opening a new trade route from Europe to Asia, France could hurt the British who controlled the existing route around the Cape of Good Hope. But a miscalculation in the geological study of the region prompted Napoleon to abandon the project.

Napoleon gave up the project but the idea of the Suez canal outlived the emperor. In the mid-19th century, French diplomat and engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps won permission from Egypt's Ottoman-appointed ruler Said Pasha to start

building the canal. In 1858, Universal Suez Ship Canal Company was formed to execute the project and construction work began a year later. Britain, which controlled the route around the African continent, continued to oppose the project as a new waterway would hurt its interests. But in 1869, the canal was officially opened for traffic. Britain would move from being an adversary of the project to a key beneficiary in six years when the Egyptian government, straddled with financial problems, sold its stake in the canal to London in 1875. Since then, France and Britain operated the canal, until Egypt's socialist President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised it in 1956.

The Suez crisis

On October 29, 1956, three months after Nasser nationalised the canal, Israeli troops attacked the Egyptian Sinai. French and British troops joined in later. The plan was to retake control of the canal and remove Nasser, who was being emboldened by the Soviet support. But the invasion did not go ahead as planned. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev threatened Israel, Britain and France with rocket attacks unless they withdrew troops from the Sinai. U.S.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, partly upset that the British went ahead with the invasion without American approval and partly out of strategic concern that the invasion would play into the hands of the Soviet Union, threatened Britain and others with economic sanctions unless they withdrew the troops. By March 1957, the invading troops were fully withdrawn and Egypt's authority over the canal was recognised. Interestingly, the Suez crisis also marked Great Britain's dwindling influence in West Asia, a region it controlled since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the arrival of the U.S. as the new great power in the region. The canal was closed again during the 1967 war. It would be reopened only in 1975 after Egyptian-Israeli relations started warming following the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power through a coup in 2013, launched an ambitious \$8.5-billion expansion project at the canal in 2014 as part of which a second line was dug along its northern section, allowing two-way traffic. The canal is an important source of revenue for Egypt's battered economy. Last year, Egypt generated \$5.61 billion in revenues from the canal and the authorities expect this to double by 2023. About 19,000 ships passed through the channel in 2020 carrying 1.2 billion tonnes of cargo, according to the Suez Canal Authority. As much as 13% of all maritime trade, from oil to automobiles, pass through the canal every year. So a delay in reopening the channel will have a huge impact on export businesses, commodities, ship and cargo companies and even Egypt's national economy.

PROFILES

ABBAS SIDDIQUI

Perilous pursuits

A cleric seeks to establish his party in an alliance with the Left and the Congress

VARGHESE K. GEORGE

The world of professional religious preachers is more competitive than pious in which the charismatic ones flourish, and the lesser mortals fade. Abbas Siddiqui's Islamic discourses in Bengali pulled in massive crowds in the Muslim localities of south Bengal for years. This year, he himself is a convert. From religious sermons, he has transitioned to political combat. His new outfit, ambitiously named as the Indian Secular Front (ISF), is potentially a political platform for Muslims, who constitute more than one-fourth of the population of West Bengal. As a partner of the Congress-Left alliance in the election, Mr. Abbas's aim is clear – bring down Mamata Banerjee and emerge as a leader of his own standing.

He is the fourth generation descendant of Abu Bakr Siddiqui, a religious reformer whose *mausoleum* at Furfur Sharif in Hooghly district attracts millions of Bengali speaking Muslims from West Bengal, Assam and Bangladesh every year. The pir founded charitable institutes and also encouraged female education.

He died in 1939, and his five sons inherited the reverence that he commanded among the followers. The followers believe he was the 31st descendant of the first Caliph, who had the same name, says Maidul Islam, Assistant Professor at Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata. Of all the current descendants – *pizrada* as they are called – Mr. Abbas emerged as the most popular.

At 35, he has spent nearly two decades as a public speaker, in the age of Internet and social media. His sermons at *jalsas* – local con-

gregations of Muslims – widely circulate on digital platforms. "Public speaking comes naturally to him. He has a rustic communication style, and draws imageries that people easily associate with," said Sabir Ahmed, National Research Coordinator at Pratichi Institute in Kolkata, who has interacted with the cleric. He travels around the catchment area of the sect, which is now restricted to south Bengal and parts of Assam. Communication with Bangladesh is now restricted.

Controversial comments

Popular his speeches are, but they don't sit well with the word "secular" in his party's title. During the Delhi riots of 2020, Mr. Abbas prayed that Allah sends a virus so that "10 to 20 to 50 crore people die in India". He said Trinamool Congress MP Nusrat Jahan was "one who earns showing her body" and suggested that she should be tied to a tree and beaten up.

He lauded the killers of a schoolteacher who had drawn a picture of Prophet Mohammad in France. He apologised for all the statements later, but his explanations have at times been no less incendiary.

For instance, explaining his position on his statement

Kerry to visit India in April ahead of Biden's climate meet

40 leaders have been invited for the April 22-23 summit

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
SUHASINI HAIDAR
WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI

U.S. President Joe Biden will host a virtual 'Leaders Summit on Climate' on April 22 and 23, with 40 world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the run up to this, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry will visit India in early April, sources told *The Hindu*.



John Kerry

COVID notwithstanding, and be able to plot and plan with the leaders of India how we are going to make Glasgow a success," he had said at the (virtual) World Sustainable Development Summit, organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). The former Secretary of State had also said he intends to work "very, very closely" with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Prime Minister Modi and others in India on climate change.

Working with India

Other guests at the climate summit will include President Xi Jinping of China and President Vladimir Putin of Russia, both of whom have a challenging relationship with Mr. Biden. With America's re-entry into the Paris Agreement on climate, the summit seeks to put Mr. Biden's stamp on the fight against climate change, after the U.S. largely took itself out of the international dialogue on climate action when Mr. Trump, a climate-change sceptic, withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement.

The U.S. summit will highlight the urgent need to address climate change and the economic benefit of doing so, the White House said in a statement on Friday. It is also a prelude to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), which will be held in Glasgow in November, the White House said. The statement also sought to link climate action to better paying jobs and advancing the technological frontier – one of the themes of the Biden campaign. Mr. Kerry's visit to India is part of the U.S.'s planning for Glasgow – he had said as much in February. "I look forward to coming to India before too long,

nuary 20).

When asked on Friday if he had invited them, Mr. Biden said, "I haven't yet, but they know they're invited." The two countries were on the list as per the White House statement. The Biden administration, which had an acrimonious diplomatic exchange with Chinese officials on March 18 at their first bilateral engagement, held in Alaska, has said it will cooperate where necessary with China, repeatedly citing climate action as an example.

The long-term strains in the U.S.-Russia ties were reinforced in March when Mr. Biden agreed in an interview that he thought Mr. Putin was a "killer", resulting in Moscow recalling its Ambassador to Washington.

The Summit's guest list is indicative of the priority the administration places on climate action and clean technology. "In his invitation, the President urged leaders to use the Summit as an opportunity to outline how their countries also will contribute to stronger climate ambition," the White House said, adding the U.S. will announce a new "ambitious" 2030 emissions target as its Nationally Determined Contribution – all signatories of the Paris deal are required to update their targets before the Glasgow conference.

Bhutan and Bangladesh are two other South Asian countries that have been invited to the summit. Bangladesh is a low-lying nation and at high risk due to climate change. Some island nations – such as Jamaica and the Marshall Islands – are also on the guest list.

several Hindu candidates, from across castes. "It is a spurious claim that the ISF is not communal. Regardless of all this façade," says Prajapati Bose, an economist and political analyst. Mr. Abbas also accuses Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of playing Muslim communal politics. He believes her schemes such as allowances for clerics damaged the community's interests and created a divided between them and Hindus.

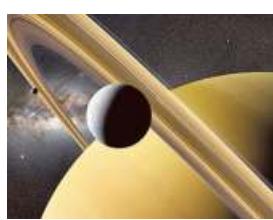
Rift in the family

The *pizradas* of Furfur Sharif were not distant from politics – they supported the national movement and opposed Partition – but were sceptical of direct involvement. In the rift between the Left Front and the peasant communities of West Bengal around 15 years ago was the occasion for a rethink. The Bengali-speaking Muslims are peasants, while the Urdu-speaking ones are largely urban, in West Bengal. It was Ms. Banerjee who drew out Toha Siddiqui, an uncle of Mr. Abbas, in her coalition against the Left Front. Mr. Toha became a fierce critic of the Left Front, meanwhile, cultivating Mr. Abbas.

"There is now chasm in the family and one cannot be sure how this will play out. The religious appeal may not easily convert to political appeal for Abbas," says Mr. Islam.

The followers of the sect are not sure about supporting him in the political field. "Bhaijan (as he is called) should have stayed away from politics. In Bihar, the split in Muslim votes contributed to the victory of the BJP last year," said Sheikh Muhib Rehman, a shopkeeper in Bhangore in South 24 Parganas, a stronghold of the Furfur Sharif.

SNAPSHOTS



Currents on Enceladus
Enceladus, Saturn's moon, its diameter about one-seventh that of our Moon, attracted space scientists when Cassini spacecraft sampled water from its polar regions, making it a rare extraterrestrial spot. A study published in *Nature Geoscience* has found beneath its frozen surface, currents similar to those on the Earth.



An early innovation
The capacity for photosynthesis existed in the earliest of life forms. It is not an innovation that came in a billion years after life originated as was believed. Photosynthesis, using sunlight to make energy and with the formation of oxygen, was thought to arise much later. This study causes a rethink of how life evolves on planets.



Life after death
Researchers studying fresh brain tissue found, in the hours after death, some cells are still active and even increase their activity. The study published in *Scientific Reports* studied gene expression in brain tissue removed during surgery and found that gene expression in glial cells increased. After death, these cells grow and sprout extensions.



Giraffe genes
Giraffe have twice the blood pressure of humans or other mammals to help keep blood flowing through their tall necks. A study in *Science Advances* identifies a gene FGFR1 from a high-quality giraffe genome. Introducing specific mutations in mice, the researchers found they were less liable to strokes on increasing blood pressure.

Will intranasal vaccine give sterilising immunity?

The local mucosal immunity induced will likely reduce infection possibility and might prevent transmission

R. PRASAD

While all COVID-19 vaccines administered through the intramuscular route have been found to reduce the chances of symptomatic disease and death, attempts are being made to develop vaccines that can potentially prevent or at least greatly reduce the chances of being infected and also stop the spread of the virus. Such vaccines are typically administered at the site of infection, and the most efforts are at developing vaccines that can be administered intranasally either as drops or as a spray.

Developed by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, the vaccine has been licensed to Bharat Biotech to carry out human clinical trials, manufacture the vaccine and distribute them in all countries except the U.S., Japan and Europe. Bharat Biotech has already begun the phase-I clinical trials at four sites in India - Hyderabad, Nagpur, Patna and Chennai.

Clinical trial

According to details posted on the U.S. clinical trial registry, the vaccine will be tested on 175 participants as single and double doses in the phase-I trial. There will be three arms - single dose, double dose and placebo. There will be 70 participants each who will get a single dose and double dose (day 0 and 28), and the placebo arm will have 35 participants.

Much like the Oxford vaccine, the intranasal vaccine

has been developed using the vector-based platform and uses a chimpanzee adenovirus (Ad 36) to ferry the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2 virus.

A single dose of the intranasal vaccine has been found to induce robust mucosal immunity, which prevents SARS-CoV-2 infection in the upper and lower respiratory tracts of mice when challenged with the virus a few weeks after vaccination. Robust humoral and cell-mediated immune responses were also seen. In the case of hamsters, a single dose of the vaccine provided "superior protection" of the nasal cavity and upper respiratory tract, which may confer protection against both infection and transmission. Even in the case of rhesus monkeys, a single intranasal dose of the vaccine induced neutralising antibodies and T cell responses and was found to limit or prevent infection in the upper and lower respiratory tract once challenged with the virus.

Even if the vaccine is unlikely to confer sterilising immunity, the local mucosal immunity is likely to reduce the possibility of infection and in all probability might prevent transmission.

"Whether it confers sterilising immunity or not will become clear only during human trials. But it is more likely to reduce infection though the extent of reduction remains to be seen," says immunologist Dr. Satyajit Rath, formerly with the Na-



Relative grade: The oral polio vaccine has to be administered repeatedly to confer continued protection. ■ GETTY IMAGES

tional Institute of Immunology, Delhi and now a visiting faculty at IISER Pune.

"The intranasal vaccine is very unlikely to confer sterilising immunity. So far, only the HPV vaccine has been found to confer sterilising immunity," says virologist Dr. Jacob John, formerly with CMC Vellore. "The vaccine may also not prevent infection but can surely reduce the speed of transmission."

Duration of protection

While Dr. Rath is unsure how long the duration of protection conferred by local mucosal immunity might last and thinks that it might be the same as when the vaccine is administered through intramuscular route, Dr.

John says the local mucosal immunity will be short-lived, perhaps for months to a year.

Dr. John also points out that for diseases where transmission is either by respiratory or faecal-oral route, vaccines administered through the intramuscular route have been equally effective in either preventing infection or disease onset. In contrast, the oral polio vaccine has to be administered repeatedly to confer continued protection.

A typical example is HPV, where sterilising immunity at the site of infection is achieved even though it is an intramuscular vaccine.

"Even if one cell is infected, the process of chronic infection and malignancy con-

tinues. This is the only vaccine that prevents even one cell from getting infected, and it is due to sterilising immunity," says Dr. John.

Case of measles

In the case of measles, which is highly contagious, a vaccinated child can get infected but may not suffer from disease. "Measles spreads only after disease sets in. Since the vaccinated child does not suffer from disease the child does not spread the virus through the nasal route," he explains.

In the case of whooping cough, it's the toxin and not the bacteria *per se* that causes disease. A child can get infected despite being vaccinated intramuscularly, but

Amul



Rajbhog Kulfi
₹20* | 60 mL



Cookie Sub
₹20* | 80 mL



Tricone
Belgian Chocolate
₹40* | 120 mL



Jumbo Cup
Chocolate Brownie
₹30* | 125 mL



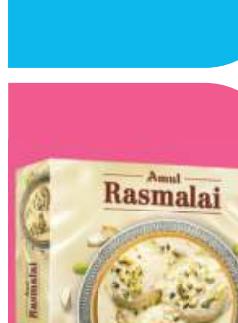
Sundae Strawberry
Magic
₹160* | 1 L



Pan Nawabi
Tub
₹185* | 1 L



Chocolate
Party Pack
₹280* | 2 L



Rasmalai
₹200* | 1500 g

*MRP (incl. of all taxes). Conditions apply.

New species of red algae seen in west, south east Indian coast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Two new species of seaweed have been discovered by a group of marine biologists from Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Named *Hypnea indica* (after India) and *Hypnea bullata* (because of the blisterlike marks on its body - bullate), the seaweeds are part of the genus *Hypnea* or red seaweeds.

They grow in the intertidal regions of the coast, namely the area that is submerged during the high tide and exposed during low tides. The discovery was recorded in the journal *Botanica Marina*.

Adding to the number

The genus *Hypnea* consists of calcareous, erect, branched red seaweeds. "There are 61 species of



Ocean farm: Species of *Hypnea* contain the biomolecule carrageenan, which is widely used in the food industry.

■ FELIX BAST

"Comparison not only included morphology, but also DNA sequences. Such a polyphasic approach combining morphology (traditional) with DNA sequencing (modern) is the gold standard in species discoveries in taxo-

nomy these days," says Dr. Bast.

Chance discovery

The researchers were on a routine survey and collected a large number of species. "Our heuristics involve mak-

ing a checklist of obviously known species (by carefully examining the morphology) and shortlisting unique specimens that do not conform to existing species descriptions. Such unique specimens would be subjected to DNA barcoding to check homology with other sequences worldwide (to reduce the costs)." Dr. Bast explains.

Food industry

Species of *Hypnea* contain the biomolecule carrageenan, which is widely used in the food industry.

As the two species have been found on the west and south east coasts of India, it suggests good prospects for their cultivation which can be put to good use economically.

The study also reports one other species of *Hypnea* for the first time in Indian coasts, *Hypnea nidifica*.

The extensive calcareous deposits on the body that has been observed also provides room for thought. Several recent studies have shown that algae with calcareous mineral deposits are prone for the damage from ocean acidification - an aftermath of climate change.

As carbon dioxide in the atmosphere gets dissolved in ocean waters, the seawater becomes more acidic. Algae like *Hypnea* cannot survive in acidic seawater, hence, the only way to help these species is to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels by adopting sustainable lifestyle choices.

Is the LHC on the brink of discovering new physics?

The latest announcement from CERN hints at the inadequacy of existing theories of elementary particles

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

Once in a way, the world of physics is in a state of upheaval - experiments are carried out that reveal limitations to older, established theories, and new physics is born. In this manner, on March 23, a wave of excitement propagated through the particle physics community when researchers from the LHCb experiment at CERN, situated in the Franco-Swiss border, announced the results of their latest analysis of data.

Verge of discovery

While the findings were not sufficiently strong to be counted as a discovery, CERN scientists were excited enough to reveal that if the anomaly they had detected was confirmed, "It would require a new physical process, such as the existence of new fundamental particles or interactions." Spokesperson for LHCb, Professor Chris Parkes from the University of Manchester and CERN qualified this by saying, "More studies on related processes are under way using the existing LHCb data. We will be excited to see if they strengthen the intriguing hints in the current results."

What was this excitement all about? It is necessary to

delve into the world of elementary particles to understand this.

Particle zoo

Broadly speaking, elementary particles are classified into the particles called baryons - which include protons, neutrons and their anti-particles the antiprotons etc. The "middle mass" particles, roughly speaking, are called the mesons and they include members such as the K and B particles.

You then have the leptons, which include the electron and its cousins the muon and tau particles and the anti-particles. At a still smaller scale, there are tiny particles called quarks and gluons. There are six flavours of quarks: up, down, truth, beauty, charm and strange. They too have antiquarks associated with them.

In this particle zoo, while the baryons are made up of combinations of three quarks, the mesons contain two quarks, more accurately a quark and antiquark pair, and the leptons are truly fundamental and are thought to be indivisible.

Until now it is believed that the electron, muon and tauon and their anti-particles, though they differ in mass,



Current paradigm: It is believed that the electron, muon and tauon behave similarly in particle interactions. ■ CERN

behave similarly in particle interactions.

the beauty quark) into K-meson (which contains the strange quark) and a muon-antimuon pair, and this was compared with the decay of B into K and an electron-antielectron pair.

The expectation is that the ratio of the strengths of these two sets of interactions would be just one. This is because the muons are not essentially different from the electrons as per the Standard Model, the presently accepted theoretical model of all elementary particle interactions. This is called the lepton universality principle.

Anomaly or fluke?

However, what the LHCb has seen is that the ratio is not 1, but it is approximately 0.846. However, the discrepancy is only at the level of 3.1 sigma, which is a measure of the chances that it might be due to a fluke. Scientists

have agreed that in order to declare something a discovery, it should have a significance of 5 sigma or more (which is a much lower chance of a fluke).

Commenting on what would happen if, with analysis of more data, this significance was found to increase, Prof. Rahul Sinha of The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, says, "The standard model will no longer be a complete description of particles and their interactions. It assumes as a starting point that electron, muon and tau interactions are universal and hence of the same strength."

Prof. Rahul Sinha and colleagues have worked on these so-called flavour-changing neutral current penguin decays since the mid 1990s. "These interactions are highly suppressed in the standard model, and they were understood to be important even in the late 1970s," he says.

According to Prof. Sinha, "It was realised by mid-1990s that they are small but not vanishingly small because of the very heavy top quark... In 1996, we realised that the decay b (quark) to s (quark) and lepton-antilepton pair can result in many observables because of the rich kinematics. Hence, we realised that this was great mode to look for new physics. It took several more years before they were observed."

light-reflecting cells (iridocytes) in the skin can take on virtually every colour of the rainbow. The grooves are formed by a cell membrane that folds into nanoscale accordion-like structures called lamellae.

The width of the grooves can be changed - widened or narrowed - at will by the action of "osmotic motor" driven by reflectin proteins. The researchers then found that the reflectin proteins can not only tune the colour but can also tune the brightness using the same mechanism.

Aggregations of the reflectins exert osmotic pressure on the lamellae causing water release from the cells. The release of water in turn collapses the accordion so the thickness in spacing between the folds gets reduced. This causes the light that is reflected to shift progressively from red to green to blue, says a release. At the same time, the membrane's collapse also concentrates the reflectins, causing an increase in their refractive index, amplifying brightness.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

Bigfin Reef Squid ■ GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

the vaccine-induced immunity reduces the chances of disease even when infected, says Dr. John.

In the case of diphtheria, where the infection will be sub-clinical, for the disease to get worse large-scale multiplication of the bacteria on the mucosal surface is needed, which is facilitated by the toxin. When the toxin is not effective due to the presence of toxin antibodies, the growth of the bacteria is compromised and disease onset is prevented.

The biggest advantage that intranasal vaccine offers is the ease of vaccine administration, particularly when the vaccine is administered as drops. There will be no need for trained health workers for intramuscular administration. Just like in the case of oral polio vaccination, the use of a cheap dropper to administer the vaccine to multiple people will make the vaccination drive easy, simple and cost-effective.

If any intranasal vaccine is found to be safe and highly efficacious even against variants, and if the vaccine is available in large quantities, the possibility of administering the vaccine to large populations within a short time to check the spread of the virus may be possible. Dr. John is even optimistic of eradicating the virus if the world comes together to administer an efficacious intranasal vaccine within a short time frame. "It all boils down to a design issue for eradication," he says.



U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin with Acting Afghan Minister of Defence Yasin Zia in Kabul on March 21. ■ AP

The Afghan endgame

What is the U.S. proposal on pulling out troops and how is India involved in peace negotiations?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The story so far: As the May 1 deadline for pulling out all American troops from Afghanistan nears, United States President Joe Biden faces some difficult decisions. The U.S. could abide by the promise made in the U.S.-Taliban agreement signed in February 2020 to withdraw the last of the around 2,500 American marines stationed in Afghanistan, but Mr. Biden has said it would be tough given the levels of violence there. The U.S. could negotiate with the Taliban for an extension of the agreement, offering other incentives like the release of more prisoners and the delisting of sanctioned Taliban terrorists, although the Taliban has thus far rejected that suggestion. The other option is that the U.S. could scrap the 2020 agreement and back the Ashraf Ghani government to continue towards a negotiated settlement, even as U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan to stabilise the security situation.

What is the U.S. likely to do?

During his visit to Delhi last week, U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said an extensive review of the U.S.'s plans for Afghanistan is still under way and that "no decision on the length of stay or troop numbers have been made to this point". At a press conference, Mr. Biden said he did not foresee U.S. troops staying in Afghanistan "for a long time" or until 2022, but that adhering to the May 1 commitment at this point would be "hard". No U.S. troops have been targeted by Taliban militants in the past year, but violence against Afghan civilians, particularly women, journalists, students and activists has gone up manifold, and despite the peace agreement, more than 3,000 civilians were killed in 2020. The U.S. has shown some impatience with the Ghani government as well, believing that it is dragging its feet on intra-

Afghan negotiations that began last year in Doha but have stalled for the moment. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote in a letter, which has been leaked and not denied, that Mr. Ghani must understand the "urgency of [his] tone" as he proposed a new peace plan. The plan proposes that Mr. Ghani step up negotiations with the Taliban for "power-sharing", discuss principles of future governance with the Taliban, and step aside eventually for a "more inclusive" or interim government. The tone of the letter seems to make it clear that the U.S. is not in favour of completely scrapping the 2020 agreement. Therefore, it is most likely to pursue the option of negotiating for an extension of the agreement, according to experts, as it builds other dialogue platforms.

What are those platforms?

Apart from the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, the U.S. revealed this month that it has been part of a "Troika" with Russia and China that have met several times since March 2019 along with Pakistan in search of a regional solution. The extended Troika met last on March 18 in Moscow, where Turkey, Qatar and Afghan and Taliban leaders were also invited. In his letter, Mr. Blinken proposed another mechanism for regional envoys to be led by the United Nations, which would include India and Iran as well. The next round of intra-Afghan Negotiations will be hosted in Istanbul in April, according to Mr. Blinken's proposal.

What is President Ghani's plan?

Mr. Ghani has proposed his own peace plan. The plan was announced by Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar during his visit to Delhi this week, where he reached out for support. It would involve a full ceasefire, inviting the Taliban to participate in early elections in Afghanistan, and then for Mr. Ghani to hand over power to the elected government.

Mr. Atmar told *The Hindu* that the proposal was a "generous" offer from Mr. Ghani, who has completed just a little over a year in his present term as President. He also said no regional talks could be successful if they did not include India, which is a development partner and a stakeholder, and called the Troika meet in Moscow that did not include India, ostensibly due to objections from Pakistan and China, a mistake.

Where does India stand?

India's position has been to back an "Afghan-owned, Afghan-led, Afghan-controlled" peace process, backing the elected government in Kabul, and it has not yet held talks with the Taliban directly. As a result, its option remains to stand with the Ghani government and support the constitution that guarantees a democratic process and rights of women and minorities, over any plan the Taliban might have if they come to power.

At the same time, India has not foreclosed the option of talking to the Taliban if it does join the government in Afghanistan, and, in a first step, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the Doha inauguration of intra-Afghan talks last year. The government has not yet announced a special envoy on Afghanistan who could be a part of the UN-led process for regional countries, but it has made it clear that it seeks to be an integral part of the process, as the outcomes will have a deep impact on India's security matrix as well.

Questions around COVID-19 virus mutants

Is the 'double mutant' strain found in India of greater concern and will it lead to a further rise in infections?

JACOB KOSHY

The story so far: The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), a unit of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reported this week that a unique "double mutant" variant of the novel coronavirus had been found in India. It was reported in about 200 cases in Maharashtra, and some in Delhi and Punjab. The NCDC also said about 771 cases of variants of concern (VOCs) were detected in over 10,000 samples shared by States and Union Territories.

When did mutations start emerging?

The emergence of new mutations in the novel coronavirus is par for the course. Variants pique scientific interest when scientists sequence the genomes of the virus sourced from RT-PCR-positive samples from a diverse population and compare changes in the genetic structure to the original strains from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Often, there are changes in the genetic alphabet that appear to give the virus a better evolutionary advantage in being able to continue spreading in the population. Some of these changes confer a massive advantage and become the dominant variant. Thus, a mutation called D614G in the early stages of the pandemic emerged last year, involving aspartic acid (D) in the 614th position of the amino acid being replaced with glycine (G). This gave the virus a significant advantage in gaining more efficient entry into the body. It emerged that while before March 1, 2020, only 10% of 997 global genome sequences had the mutation, 67% of sequences between March 1 and March 31 and 78% of the sequences between April 1 and May 18 had it.

What are the existing mutant combinations?

As new variants evolve, scientists start assessing if certain combinations of mutations are more likely. A mutation N501Y last year was independently reported in South Africa and Australia, and in the United Kingdom it was correlated with a threefold spike in cases last December, where half the cases carried it. The N501Y allowed the spike protein of the virus to take hold better. The 'UK variant' (B.1.1.7), as it eventually came to be known, had at least 14 key mutations. However, another key mutation, E484K, which helped the virus dodge the immune system more frequently, also began to gain ground. Both these mutations together started to appear frequently in South Africa and were correlated with a large spike. That became the 'South African' variant, B.1.351.

These two variants, along with another called the Brazilian variant (P.1), given their spread, infectivity and ability to somewhat reduce the efficacy of vaccines are the only ones internationally termed as 'Variants of Concern' (VOC).

How significant is the 'double mutant' variant?

The double mutant variant reported by the NCDC has the simultaneous presence of two mutations – E484Q and L452R – that have been independently found in other variants in several countries associated with local outbreaks. The latter mutation has been individually linked to local outbreaks in California, United States, and has been shown to evade monoclonal antibodies (antibodies made in a lab with a niche targeting mechanism) produced in response to COVID-19 infection. It has also been linked to increased infectivity.

The E484Q can escape four kinds of monoclonal antibodies and even some polyclonal antibodies derived from COVID-19 patients' blood serum. So far, nobody knows how the combined presence of these mutations would work. About 10,787 Indian genomes have been sequenced so far and around 200 samples in Maharashtra have been found to contain the variant with the mutation, as do a handful in Delhi and Punjab.

The spike in cases – now over 60,000 a day – particularly in these States has led to the speculation that whether it is due to mutant strains. But not enough has been done to establish that. For that, genome samples from a district or a cluster reporting a spike in cases have to be sequenced and then compared to whether a significant fraction of them has the mutations of interest.

However, experts say the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7) may be of greater concern. As of March 23, the variant had



A health worker conducting a swab test at the Gateway of India in Mumbai on Friday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

The interval between Covishield jabs

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: The Union Health Ministry, based on a recommendation from the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) and the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVC), decided to increase the interval between the two doses of the Covishield vaccine, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), to eight weeks, from the earlier specification of a maximum of six weeks. The Union Health Secretary wrote to all States urging them to follow the new interval span.

Why was the interval increased?

Therapeutics or vaccination for COVID-19 appears to be a work in progress, with new information emerging periodically. The Indian Covishield is AstraZeneca's AZD1222 vaccine developed in collaboration with the University of Oxford. In February, data from three single-blind randomised control trials was published in *The Lancet*. In participants who received two standard doses, after the second dose, efficacy was higher in those with a longer interval between the first dose and second dose (at 12 or more weeks) than in those who had a shorter interval (under six weeks). This was bolstered by immunogenicity data that showed antibody-binding responses were over two-fold higher after an interval of 12 or more weeks, compared with an interval of less than 6 weeks in the 18-55 age group.

This prompted the UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency to suggest a broad interval of 4-12 weeks, while the WHO's recommendation is 8-12 weeks. The increased spacing would also allow more people access to a single dose

Threatening variants emerge from the increased chances for the virus to replicate and reducing opportunities for this continues to be the best defence

spread to a total of 125 countries across all six WHO regions and is the dominant strain in Britain. It has also been reported to have over 60% higher mortality rate, the WHO says. Earlier this week, the NCDC said about 81% of 401 samples sent for genome sequencing from Punjab were found to have the U.K. variant.

"This variant is more likely to contribute to an intense second wave," Jeremy Kamil, a virologist at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center Shreveport, told BBC recently.

What does this mean for public health?

Very little so far. As the NCDC and the Health Ministry

of the vaccine, giving them some measure of protection against COVID-19. In countries that have problems regarding supply of adequate doses of vaccines, this study seemed to support decisions to increase the interval.

NTAGI and NEGVC reportedly considered this data, apart from the SII's bridging study for Covishield in India. The data showed an enhanced efficacy when the interval was increased up to 8 weeks, but no specific benefit was derived after 8 weeks.

What have States done?

States have increased the interval between the prime and booster dose to eight weeks, while allowing people to get the second shot anywhere between the fourth week and the eighth. This pertains only to Covishield, which was given emergency use approval by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) in January. According to government data, Covishield has been the preferred vaccine so far against Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

What benefit does this confer?

With the number of cases increasing steadily, the new spacing policy will allow more people to take at least one dose of the vaccine. While it is believed that India is unlikely to face a scarcity of vaccines with two indigenous manufacturers and a temporary brake on the export of Covishield jabs as a precaution, experts reason that the rising graph, nevertheless, makes it imperative that more people receive at least one dose of the vaccine sooner and have some protection against infection. On the other hand, experts critique the move, believing it might lead to a rash of infections before people get the second dose since the first dose only offers partial protection.

underline, the standard prescription of wearing masks, avoiding potential super-spreading events and getting a vaccine, if eligible, remains the best defence against the virus variants.

Threatening variants emerge from the increased opportunity for the virus to replicate and reducing opportunities for this continues to be the best defence. A consortium of 10 labs in India, called the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG), has been sequencing a proportion of RT-PCR-positive samples and 771 have been found positive for three VOCs – the U.K., South African and Brazilian strains.

The new variant combination in India is yet to be assigned a formal lineage name. Once that is done, there will be studies that seek to establish its frequency and association with spurs in cases. Then there will be studies that will check if the variant causes available vaccines to be less effective, or whether they are linked to severe disease. Based on what they reveal, we may have a 'variant of concern' uniquely associated with India.

Permanent commission for women in Army

Why has the Supreme Court issued fresh directions on the process of evaluation?

DINAKAR PERI

The story so far: The Supreme Court in *Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya* last February directed the government to ensure that women officers in the Army are granted permanent commission (PC) as well as command postings in all services other than combat. Later, questioning the compliance of the Army with the directions in the judgment, around 80 women short service commission officers approached the Supreme Court challenging the arbitrary process, including unjust medical standards, applied to deny permanent commission to women officers. On March 25, the Supreme Court in *Lt. Col. Nitisha vs. Union of India* held that the Army's selective evaluation process discriminated against and disproportionately affected women officers seeking permanent commission.

What did the Supreme Court observe?

A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed that the pattern of evaluation inherently caused economic and psychological harm to women short service commission officers. The judgment, authored by Justice Chandrachud, said the evaluation criteria set by the Army constituted "systemic discrimination" against the petitioners.

The Bench found several deviations in the standards adopted by the Army for evaluating women officers. "This disproportionate impact is attributable to the structural discrimination against women, by dint of which the facially neutral criteria of selective ACR [annual confidential reports] evaluation and fulfilling the medical criteria to be in SHAPE-1 at a belated stage, to secure PC [permanent commission] disproportionately impacts them vis-à-vis their male counterparts," the court said in its judgment. Fitness is assessed under five categories, under the code letter SHAPE that includes psychological including cognitive function abnormalities, hearing, appendages, physical capacity and eyesight.

The court observed that the reliance placed on women



officers' ACRs for determining the grant of permanent commission was unfair.

What is the procedure for granting permanent commission?

In 1992, the Union Government issued a notification making women eligible for appointment as officers in select non-combat branches. In 2008, the government extended the permanent commission to women in two branches – Judge Advocate General (JAG) and Army Educational Corps (AEC).

In a long legal battle for equality, 322 women officers had approached the top court for granting permanent commission, and the Supreme Court delivered its landmark verdict in February 2020. In July 2020, the Defence Ministry issued the government sanction letter, specifying grant of permanent commission to women officers in all streams in which they are presently serving – Army Air Defence (AAD), Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Intelligence Corps.

How did the Army respond to the sanction letter?

Following the sanction letter, the Army constituted a special selection board for screening women officers for grant of permanent commission who joined the service

through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) and Short Service Commission Women (SSCW). Of the 365 optee officers who were considered fit for permanent commission by the Special No. 5 Selection Board, 277 women short service commission officers (WSSCOs) were granted permanent commission after medical scrutiny. However, some petitioners said the process followed was arbitrary and challenged it in the top court.

What are the fresh directives?

The Supreme Court noted that the Army's process of benchmarking women officers against the officers lowest in merit in the corresponding male batch is "irrational and arbitrary", and said this requirement should be removed. All women officers who have fulfilled the cut-off grade of 60% in the Special Selection Board held in September 2020 shall be entitled to the grant of permanent commission, the judgment said, subject to their meeting the prescribed medical criteria and receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance.

"In the spirit of true equality with their male counterparts in the corresponding batches, the WSSCOs must be considered medically fit for grant of PC by reliance on their medical fitness, as recorded in the 5th or 10th year of their service," the court said. Other than "non-optees", the cases of all WSSCOs, including the petitioners who have been rejected on medical grounds, shall be reconsidered within a month and orders for the grant of permanent commission must be issued within two months. Further, the court directed that the method of evaluation of ACRs and the cut-off must be reviewed for future batches to assess a disproportionate impact on WSSCOs who became eligible for the grant of permanent commission in the subsequent years of their service.

Also, for the *Babita Puniya* case, the court held that for officers within the service bracket of 10 to 14 years who have been denied permanent commission, it has allowed them to continue in service till they attain 20 years of pensionable service.

Divestment goal achievable; LIC IPO to fetch ₹1 lakh cr. : CEA

Inflation targeting helped in lowering volatility, level of inflation, he says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Asserting that the disinvestment target of ₹1.75 lakh crore for 2021-22 was 'eminently achievable,' Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) K. V. Subramanian on Saturday said the proposed initial public offering (IPO) by LIC itself could garner ₹1 lakh crore for the government.

He also said targeting of retail inflation by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has helped bring down the volatility and level of inflation.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee has been mandated to maintain annual inflation at 4% until March 31,



Growth engines: India needs several more banks for meeting its growth potential, says the CEA. • KAMAL NARANG

2021, with an upper tolerance of 6% and lower limit of 2%. Speaking at a virtual conference organised by Jana Small Finance Bank, the CEA said the disinvestment

target of ₹1.75 lakh crore for FY22 is actually a carry over of the ₹2.10 lakh crore target set for the current fiscal ending March 31. "Of this, BPCL privatisation and LIC listing

itself were important contributors. There are estimates suggesting ₹75,000-₹80,000 crore or even higher can just come from the privatisation of BPCL. LIC IPO could bring in ₹1 lakh crore approximately," he said. With regard to LIC's IPO, the Centre has already had amendments in the LIC Act passed through Finance Bill 2021 in Parliament.

Mr. Subramanian also emphasised that India needed a lot more banks for meeting its growth potential. He cited the example of the U.S. which, with one-third of India's population, has about 25,000-30,000 banks.

'Global shortage may inflate monitor, flat screen prices'

Stay-at-home economy triggered deficit: Acer's Goyal

MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

A worldwide shortage of monitors, flat TV screens, interactive panels, projector displays and other such devices may push up prices of display products globally by 10-20% in the next three to four months, as per BenQ India.

"A serious shortage of display products is currently being felt across the globe as demand for such products grew at a record high post pandemic," said Rajeev Singh, MD, BenQ India.

"China, the biggest manufacturer of ICs and other key components for display systems was shut for several



months, resulting in a large, pent-up demand and a subsequent supply mismatch in global markets," he added.

• 10-20% rise in prices'
This would eventually lead to a 10% to 20% increase in prices of all electronics and computing display products

globally in the next three to four months, he added. BenQ India is a part of the \$25-billion Taiwanese electronics firm, BenQ Corporation.

Personal computer maker Acer, too, said the industry had been struggling, following a shortage of Integrated Circuits (ICs).

"Global technology supply chains have been grappling with the shortage of components when the 'stay-at-home economy' of the pandemic began fuelling the demand for computers, gaming consoles and other devices" said Sudhir Goel, chief business officer, Acer India.

ATL to buy Essel project for ₹3,370 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Adani Transmission Ltd. (ATL) has signed definitive agreements with Essel InfraProjects Ltd. (EIL) for the acquisition of Warora-Kurnool Transmission Ltd. (WKT) at an enterprise valuation of ₹3,370 crore.

The regulatory approval for substitution of original awardee in the contract by ATL has already been received from Central Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The lenders' consent and other approvals shall be obtained before closure of the transaction, ATL said in a statement.

With this deal, the cumulative network of ATL will reach 17,200 ckt km.

Pandemic spurs demand for second homes, say realtors

Work-from-home, rising safety concerns cited as reasons

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have spurred the demand for weekend and second homes in key markets, according to real estate developers and analysts.



viously lacklustre second-home market," said Santosh Kumar, vice-chairman, Anarock.

He said while short breaks from city life, rental income and/or eventual retirement were the previous aspirations for owning a second

home, COVID-19 has given rise to a more urgent motivation – the relative safety from infection of homes away from the urban hot zones. "For those with the financial means, it is certainly the optimal time for such an acquisition."

He said work-from-home options (WFH), now extensively available across many industries, the rock-bottom and often further negotiable property prices, the lowest home loan interest rates in two decades and significantly-reduced stamp duty and registration rates in some States have helped in creating demand.

Mensa India inducted into global board

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

High IQ society Mensa International has inducted Mensa India into its board of directors.

Gowri Shankar, president of Mensa India, who will join the board of Mensa International, said, "Attainment of Full National Mensa Status will help us

tap funds worldwide and extend the outreach activities of Tribal Mensa and Project Dhruv to other parts of India."

Tribal Mensa and Project Dhruv are initiatives of Mensa India to identify and nurture gifted children among the rural and urban underprivileged population in India.

Chip shortage impacts Stellantis, Nissan, Nio

Automakers announce output cuts

REUTERS

WASHINGTON



Stellantis NV and Chinese electric vehicle maker Nio became the latest carmakers to announce new production cuts as a result of a global semiconductor chip shortage.

Stellantis said it would temporarily halt production at five North American plants next week because of the global microchip shortage. Nissan Motor Co. said it would halt production for two days starting April 1 at its Smyrna Vehicle and Canton Vehicle Assembly Plants and Mexico Aguascalientes plant. Normal production will resume April 6.

Nio, which dominates the

electric vehicle market in China, said it would halt production for five working days at its Hefei plant and cut its first-quarter delivery forecast by as much as 1,000 vehicles.

Chip shortages have cost the global auto industry 1.3 lakh vehicles in lost production, research firm AutoForecast Solutions estimated.

SPORT

Tejaswani, Vijayveer taste success

Abhidnya-Gurpreet pair finishes second in rapid fire pistol

SHOOTING WC

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

There was no dearth of gold and silver for India, but the trap medals continued to elude the host in the shooting World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Saturday.

With only two teams in the 25m rapid fire pistol team event, Tejaswani and Vijayveer Sidhu beat Abhidnya Patil and Gurpreet Singh to claim the gold.

The international federation has introduced a series of team competitions, including mixed events, even though they will not be part of the Olympics.

The lack of entries did not discourage the organisers from conducting these events, if only to gauge their quality and pace of competition.

Pulling ahead

With the addition of gold and silver, India went further ahead of the pack with 13 gold, eight silver and six bronze medals. USA is second with three gold, three silver and a bronze.

Italy won its second gold through its mixed trap team



Crack shots: Vijayveer and Tejaswani with their reward for winning the mixed 25m rapid fire pistol. • KAMESH SRINIVASAN

It's Lagarde vs. Immortality in Indian Derby

MUMBAI: Lagarde and Immortality should fight out the finish of the Kingfisher Ultra Indian Derby (Gr. I), one of the prestigious events of the Indian racing calendar, to be staged at the Mahalaxmi race course on Sunday (March 28). The jockey for Hunting Goddess in Race No. 5 will be declared later.

There will be no false rails. An amount of ₹50,000 will be added to the Win & Place Pool collection of all races of the day.

Patrons permitted

According to a notice issued by the RWTC on Saturday, the club has decided to allow patrons into the race course on Sunday, in accordance with the number of persons permitted by the Government, on a first-come first-served basis.

1. ZAVARAY S PONAWALLA MILLION (2,400m), Cl. III, rated 40 to 66, 2.00 p.m. 1. Arcadia (6) Chouhan 59, 2. Priceless Gold (2) S. John 58.3, Athulya (1) Ajinkya 56.5, 4. Redoubtable (5) Akshay Kumar 52.5, 5. High Priestess (4) Dashrath 51.5 and 6. Justified (3) Zervan 56.

1. ARCADIA, 2. PRICELESS GOLD

2. G.N. WADIA GOLD CUP (Gr.2)

2,400m), (Terms) 4-y-o & over,

2.30: 1. My Opinion (6) A. Imran Khan 60, 2. Psychic Force (4) Akshay Kumar 60, 3. Caprisca (5) C. S.

Zervan 56.

1. ARC DE TRIOMPHE,

2. STOCKBRIDGE, 3. ALFAYIZ

5. B.K. RATTONSEY MEMORIAL

MAIDEN MULTI-MILLION

5. MONET PLATE (2,000m), Cl. II, rated 4 to 30:

1. SAFDAK (Shahrukh) 1, Theash's Peet (Kaviraj) 2, Forever Free (M.S. Deora) 3 and About The Cloud (Santosh) 4. 2, 1-1/4 and 3/4, Im. 00.03s, 353 (w), 19, 23 and 21 (p), SHP: 43, FP: 20, Q: 163, Tanala: 650 and 226. Favourite: Colosseum, Owners: M/S. M. Mirza, Rehanullah Khan, Sunil Anand, M.K. Mohan, Satish G. Kundapur & Adil M. Maslawalla. Trainer: Rehanullah Khan.

2. SONNY BRAR TROPHY (1,600m), Cl. II, rated 60 to 86: BELLATOR (Trevor) 1, Majestic Warrior (J. Chinoy) 2, Bakthawar (Nazil) 3 and Excellent Gold (Kaviraj) 4. 3 and 3/4, Im. 38.46s, ₹11 (w), 10 and 14 (p), SHP: 17, FP: 19, Q: 13, Tanala: 46 and 13. Favourite: Bellator, Owners: M/S. Marthand Singh, James Mathews, P. Prabhakar Reddy & Rama Sesu Eyunni. S.S. Attaollah trains the winner.

1. WASHINGTON IRVINE PLATE (DIV. II), 1,000m), Cl. V, 4-y-o & over, rated 4 to 30:

1. SAFDAK (Shahrukh) 1, Theash's Peet (Kaviraj) 2, Forever Free (M.S. Deora) 3 and About The Cloud (Santosh) 4. 2, 1-1/4 and 3/4, Im. 00.03s, 353 (w), 19, 23 and 21 (p), SHP: 43, FP: 20, Q: 163, Tanala: 650 and 226. Favourite: Colosseum, Owners: M/S. M. Mirza, Rehanullah Khan, Sunil Anand, M.K. Mohan, Satish G. Kundapur & Adil M. Maslawalla. Trainer: Rehanullah Khan.

2. SONNY BRAR TROPHY (1,600m), Cl. II, rated 60 to 86: BELLATOR (Trevor) 1, Majestic Warrior (J. Chinoy) 2, Bakthawar (Nazil) 3 and Excellent Gold (Kaviraj) 4. 3 and 3/4, Im. 38.46s, ₹11 (w), 10 and 14 (p), SHP: 17, FP: 19, Q: 13, Tanala: 46 and 13. Favourite: Bellator, Owners: M/S. Marthand Singh, James Mathews, P. Prabhakar Reddy & Rama Sesu Eyunni. S.S. Attaollah.

3. WASHINGTON IRVINE PLATE (DIV. II), 1,000m), Cl. V, 5-y-o & over, rated 4 to 30: RISING BRAVE (Bakthawar) 1, Dowsal Merchant (Merchant) 2, Seniority (Aniket) 3 and Isinut (Peter) 4. 3, NK and 1-1/4, 59.58s, ₹48 (w), 18, 20 and 18 (p), SHP: 44, FP: 113, Q: 64, Tanala: 3, 548. Favourite: Minx, Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Vijay B. Shirke & Mr. Jay V. Shirke. Trainer: P. Shroff.

7. SPANIARDS INN PLATE (1,600m), Cl. IV, 5-y-o & over, rated 20 to 46:

1. TASMAN (Trevor) 1, Ron (A. Imran Khan) 2, Pride's Angel (C.S. Jodha) 3 and Black Cherry (J. Chinoy) 4. 3-

1/2, 1-1/2 and NK, Im. 36.91s, 788 (w), 36, 44 and 24 (p), SHP: 99, FP: 542, Q: 248, Tanala: 9, 924 and 4,253. Favourite: Black Cherry (J. Chinoy) 5. 7. Roaring Tiger (10) Srinath 57, 7. Sporting Memories (2) S. John 58, 7. Storm Trigger (7) C.S. Jodha 57, 7. Tairnum (7) Sandesh 57, 10. Alluring Silver (8) Chouhan 55.5, 11. Forest Flame (9) Trevor 55.5, 12. Immortality (6) Suraj Narredu 55.5 and 13. Successor (5) J. Chinoy 55.5.

1. AHEAD OF HIS TIME, 2. COLUMBIAN, 3. MOGUL.

6. KINGFISHER ULTRA MILLION (1,600m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o & over, 4.000m, Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46:

1. ANSALDO (I) Antony Raj 57, 2. Ashwa Bravo (3) A. Imran Khan 57, 3. Lagarde (12) Akshay Kumar 57, 4. North Star (4) T.S. Jodha 57, 5. Pissarro (-) 57, 6. Roaring Tiger (10) Srinath 57, 7. Sporting Memories (2) S. John 58, 7. Storm Trigger (7) C.S. Jodha 57, 7. Tairnum (7) Sandesh 57, 10. Alluring Silver (8) Chouhan 55.5, 11. Forest Flame (9) Trevor 55.5, 12. Immortality (6) Suraj Narredu 55.5 and 13. Successor (5) J. Chinoy 55.5.

1. THE SOVEREIGN ORB, 2. MAKHTOOB, 3. TIGRI.

8. MAHALAKSHMI MILLION (1,600m), Cl. IV, rated 20 to 46:

1. Wild Fire (10) Kaviraj 60, 2. Endeavour (1) Srinath 59.5, 3. Fuhrer (4) Trevor 59.5, 4. Shivalli Queen (5) P. Vinod 59.5, 5. Super Girl (11) T.S. Jodha 59.5, 6. Desert Fire (7) J. Chinoy 58.5, 7. Jetfire (4) A. Imran Khan 57.5, 8. De-caprio (6) Vishal Bunde 56.5, 9. Mighty Warrior (12) Bhawani 56, 10. Enigma (8) Chouhan 54.5, 11. Ex-creator (2) A. Prakash 53, 12. Power of Neath (9) Peter 53, 13. Gold Charm (3) M.S. Deora 50.5 and 14. Anoushka (13) Dashrat 54.5.

1. ENIGMA, 2. FUHRER,

3. ENDEAVOUR.

Day's Best: ENIGMA

TV PICKS

India vs England: 3rd ODI, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.
Bahrain Grand Prix: Main race, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 8.25 p.m.
FIFA WC European qualifiers: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m. & 9.30 p.m., Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m., Sony Ten 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 12.15 a.m. (Monday)

IN BRIEF



Tendulkar tests positive

Sachin Tendulkar has tested COVID-19 positive. He recently featured in the Road Safety World Series, an exhibition tournament for veterans, in Raipur. Soon after returning to Mumbai, Tendulkar tested positive.

Sakshi wins trials

KOLKATA
Olympic bronze medallist Sakshi Malik won the women's 65kg selection trials on Saturday to earn a place in the upcoming Asian wrestling championships in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Sakshi booked her berth in a non-Olympic category. Pinki (55kg), Sarita (59kg) and Divya Kakran (72kg) also claimed spots in non-Olympic weights at the trials held in Lucknow.

Daruvala begins well, takes second spot

SAKHRI
India's Jehan Daruvala began his second season in the FIA Formula 2 championship with a second-place finish in the first sprint race of the season here on Saturday. Starting fifth, he gained a place at the start. After 10 laps, he started moving up the order before finishing second.

Karman loses in semis

MONASTIR (TUNISIA)
Suzan Lamens of the Netherlands beat Karman Kaur Thandi 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(5) in the semifinals of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Saturday.

Heavyweight slugfest goes down to the wire

India needs to rethink its batting approach and spin combination if it wants to master England

ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
PUNE

The Test series was alive, albeit technically, until the last match. The T20I series went to a decider. Thanks to Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes' exploits in game two, the ODI series, too, will have a mouthwatering finale, here at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium on Sunday.

India will be keen to recover from the hammering and register a sweep across formats. England, on the other hand, will want to justify its world champion status and also ensure that the tour ends with at least one of the three trophies it aspired to win when it arrived on these shores in January.

If England's top-order – the in-form opening pair of Jason Roy and Bairstow followed by the swashbuckling Stokes at No. 3 – continues to fire, India will be under immense pressure.

Potent combination

The tourists will hope that Mark Wood, rested on Fri-



Need of the hour: Krunal has to improve as a bowler if he has to keep his place. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

day, takes the field come Sunday. Left-arm Reece Topley, after impressing in the second ODI, could form a potent new-ball combination with Wood; Tom Curran could possibly miss out.

In the other camp, India has major concerns with its spin department. In the two games, Kuldeep Yadav and Krunal Pandya have conceded a whopping 283 runs off

35 overs combined, picking up just one wicket. As a result, the pace trio has been put under the pump.

It will therefore be interesting to see whether Yuzvendra Chahal or Washington Sundar, or both, feature in the decider.

Kuldeep has appeared woefully short of confidence, and in a crunch game, Chahal's knack of

picking up wickets during the middle overs may prove handy. And despite Krunal's innings-changing fifty on debut, he has been largely insipid with the ball on the flat pitches here. Could Washington be preferred since he takes the ball away from the left-handers?

As for the batting, given England's swash-bang-clobber approach, India will have

to modify its conventional blueprint of building an innings, especially if it bats first again.

To put the England batsmen under pressure, India will have to optimise the middle overs by taking calculated chances with just four fielders allowed on the boundary, instead of milking the bowling and shifting gears only towards the end.

If India doesn't switch gears in time, it might just watch its home season end on an unwanted note.

The teams (from):

India: Virat Kohli (Capt.), Rohit Sharma (Vice-capt.), Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), K.L. Rahul (wk), Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Krunal Pandya, Washington Sundar, T. Natarajan, Bhuvnesh Kumar, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna and Shardul Thakur.

England: Jos Buttler (Capt. & wk), Jonny Bairstow (wk), Sam Billings (wk), Dawid Malan, Moeen Ali, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Liam Livingstone, Matt Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley and Mark Wood.

Match starts at 1.30 p.m.

MI unveils new jersey

IPL 2020-21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE
Defending champion Mumbai Indians on Saturday unveiled its jersey for the Indian Premier League's forthcoming edition which begins on April 9. The jersey, according to an MI statement, captures the composition of the five basic elements of the universe – earth, water, fire, air and sky – each signifying the essence of the five-time champion.

The jersey is designed by



The new Mumbai Indians' jersey for IPL 2021.

fashion designers Shantanu and Nikhil. Fans can buy an official replica online (thesouldstore.com).

Crawford in final

SPORTS BUREAU

PUNE
Fourth seed Oliver Crawford of the US beat Manish Sureshkumar 6-4, 6-2 in the semifinals of the KIPIT \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Deccan Gymkhana on Saturday.

The results:

Semifinals: Zane Khan bt Jonathan Mridha 6-1, 7-5; Oliver Crawford (USA) bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-4, 6-2.

Doubles: Final: Luca Castrovilli (Sui) & Arjun Kadhe bt Simon Carr (Irl) & Alexander Kotzen (USA) 6-4, 7-5.

Harden on fire as Nets down Pistons

NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

joining the Nets from Houston, helping Brooklyn improve to 31-15.

Meanwhile, Boston's Jayson Tatum scored 34 points and Marcus Smart added 23 to spark the Celtics over host Milwaukee 122-114 after losing 10 of their prior 11 road contests.

The results: Lakers 100 bt Cavaliers 86; Raptors 100 lost to Suns 104; Pistons 111 lost to Nets 113; Timberwolves 107 bt Rockets 101; Pelicans 108 lost to Nuggets 113; Bucks 114 lost Celtics 122.

Sportstar Aces awards: jury explains the process

The 2021 edition of the Sportstar Aces Awards got off to a star-studded start on Saturday with the members of the jury – Sunil Gavaskar, M.M. Somaya, Bhaichung Bhutia, Viswanathan Anand, Anjali Bhagwat and Aparna Popat – sharing the details on the selection process for the awards this year.

"Excellence at the international level and consistency over the decade were the two important factors for us. The conduct of the sportsperson, both on and off the field, was also important," said Somaya.

"You can do brilliantly as an individual but how you contribute to the success of your team is also equally important," Gavaskar weighed in.

"The selection process gave us a chance to relive the wonderful decade and



not obsess about 2020," said Anand.

The awards ceremony, scheduled from April 1 to 4, is being held virtually due to COVID-19.

Scan the QR code to watch the opening episode.



Verstappen claims pole

BAHRAIN GP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SAKHIR



Max Verstappen. ■ AFP

completed a clean sweep of the practice sessions.

The starting grid: Row 1: Verstappen (Red Bull), Hamilton (Mercedes); 2: Bottas (Mercedes), Leclerc (Ferrari); 3: Gasly (AlphaTauri), Ricciardo (McLaren); 4: Norris (McLaren), Sainz Jr. (Ferrari); 5: Alonso (Alpine), Stroll (Aston Martin); 6: Perez (Red Bull), Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo); 7: Tsunoda (AlphaTauri), Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo); 8: Russell (Williams), Ocon (Alpine); 9: Latifi (Williams), Vettel (Aston Martin); 10: Mick Schumacher (Haas), Mazepin (Haas).

North Eastern Railway Notification No.68/2021

It is notified for information of general public that following Special & Puja Special Express trains will run as under -

1. 02527/02528 Rammagar-Chandigarh-Rammagar Puja Special Train (Weekly)

Train No.-02527 Ex. Rammagar on every Monday from 05.04.2021 upto 26.04.2021

Train No.-02528 Ex. Chandigarh on every Monday from 05.04.2021 upto 26.04.2021

02527(Rammagar-Chandigarh) Arr. Dep. ↓ Station ↑ 02528(Chandigarh-Rammagar) Arr. Dep.

Arr.	Dep.	↓ Station ↑	Arr.	Dep.
-	05.35	Rammagar	23.35	-
06.09	06.14	Kashipur	22.52	22.57
06.43	06.45	Pipalsana	22.20	22.22
07.35	07.43	Moradabad	21.45	21.50
09.11	09.13	Najibabad Jn.	20.04	20.06
09.49	09.51	Laksar Jn.	19.18	19.20
10.11	10.13	Roorkee	18.58	19.00
11.00	11.10	Saharanpur Jn.	18.10	18.20
11.36	11.38	Yamunagar Jagadhri	17.34	17.36
12.25	12.35	Ambala Cantt.	16.46	16.55
13.20	-	Chandigarh	-	16.05

Rake Composition- SLR - 02, General Second Class - 04, Second Class Chaircar-05, AC Chaircar- 01= 12 Coaches

2. 05036/05035 Kathgodam-Delhi Jn.-Kathgodam Puja Special Train

Train No.-05036 Ex. Kathgodam from 30.03.2021 upto 30.04.2021

Train No.-05035 Ex. Delhi Jn. from 30.03.2021 upto 30.04.2021

05036(Kathgodam-Delhi Jn.) Arr. Dep. ↓ Station ↑ 05035(Delhi Jn.-Kathgodam) Arr. Dep.

Arr.	Dep.	↓ Station ↑	Arr.	Dep.
-	09.05	Kathgodam	22.45	-
09.19	09.22	Haldwani	22.06	22.11
09.54	09.59	Lalkua Jn.	21.28	21.33
10.15	10.20	Rudrapur City	20.48	20.53
10.37	10.39	Bilaspur Road	20.35	20.37
11.12	11.15	Rampur	20.09	20.12
12.00	12.25	Moradabad	19.00	19.40
12.52	12.54	Amroha	18.18	18.20
14.39	14.41	Ghaziabad	16.42	16.44
15.25	-	Delhi Jn.	-	16.00

Rake Composition- SLR - 02, General Second Class - 03, Second Class Chaircar-09, AC Chaircar - 01= 16 Coaches

3. 05356/05353 Rammagar-Moradabad-Rammagar Puja Special Train

Train No.-05356 Ex. Rammagar from 30.03.2021 upto 30.04.2021

Train No.-05353 Ex. Moradabad from 30.03.2021 upto 30.04.2021

05356(Rammagar-Moradabad) Arr. Dep. ↓ Station ↑ 05353(Moradabad-Rammagar) Arr. Dep.

Arr.	Dep.	↓ Station ↑	Arr.
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