

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2021



NATION | 3

Devendra Fadnavis's 22-year-old kin gets vaccine, stirs row



SPORT | 8

7 more Indians boxers in semifinals of Youth World Championship

TABLOID | 16

Audiences want a different heroism: Ayushmann Khurrana



www.asianage.com

RNI No. 57290/94, Regd No: DL-SW-05/4189/15-17

Vol. 28 No. 64 | 16 PAGES | ₹5.00



Shikhar Dhawan (45 runs) and Amit Mishra (four wickets) helped Delhi Capitals beat Mumbai Indians by six wickets in an IPL game in Chennai on Tuesday. — *IPL*

SC clears way for ad-hoc judges to be appointed to HCs

New Delhi: Terminating pendency of around 57 lakh cases in high courts as “docket explosion”, the Supreme Court Tuesday activated a “dormant” constitutional provision to pave way for appointment of retired high court judges as ad-hoc ones for a period of two to three years to clear backlog and came out with guidelines to regulate appointments. ■ [More on Page 3](#)

ICSE Class 10 board exams cancelled

New Delhi: The ICSE Class 10 board examination has been cancelled due to the “worsening situation” of the coronavirus pandemic, the board said today days after it had made the exam optional. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) board had just days ago postponed its Class 10 and 12 examinations after a nationwide Covid surge and requests from parents and students made them rethink. ■ [More on Page 2](#)

Chad President killed after 30 yrs in power

N'Djamena: Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled the central African nation for more than three decades, died Tuesday of wounds suffered on the battlefield during a fight against rebels, the military announced on national television and radio. — *AP* ■ [More on Page 6](#)

COUNTERPOINT



This is not what I meant when I said stock essentials...

WEATHER

Max: 33°C
Min: 20°C
RH: 32%
Rain: 20%

Forecast: Cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Navami till 12.30 am
Star: Pushyami till 7.55 am
Variyam: 8.52 pm To 10.29 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.49 am To 12.40 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.50 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.48 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.44 PM
MOONSET TODAY 2.01 AM

Delhi gasps for oxygen, Kejriwal pleads for help

Centre says no shortage, Delhi HC asks govt to divert oxygen from industry to hospitals

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

As Delhi reeled under grief and anxiety with rising cases of Covid-19 and social media sites flooded with SOS messages from people seeking assistance in getting a hospital bed, oxygen cylinders or medicines, the Delhi government made a fervent plea to the Centre to provide medical oxygen saying the city is facing an acute shortage with most hospitals having oxygen left for only 8 to 24 hours.

“Serious oxygen crisis persists in Delhi. I again urge the Centre to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi. Some hospitals are left with just a few hours of oxygen,” the chief minister tweeted on Tuesday, the first day of the six-day lockdown.

The Centre, however, maintained in an affidavit to the Delhi high court and in the Prime Minister’s televised address on Tuesday evening that there was no shortage of oxygen.

A two-judge bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli rejected the Centre’s claim, which said there was no gap in oxygen supply to Delhi and that industrial use of oxygen was banned with effect from April 22, and suggested reduction in steel and petroleum production to divert oxygen to Covid-19 patients. It said economic interests cannot override human

Serious oxygen crisis persists in the national capital. I again urge the Central government to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi. Some of the hospitals are left with just a few hours of oxygen

— Arvind Kejriwal
— CM, Delhi

Shortage is now... Look into taking some oxygen from steel and petroleum industries. They have big pockets and big lobbies, but tell them if they have to cut production, then they can cut production. Lives have to be saved.

— Delhi HC

Delhi CM goes into Isolation after wife tests corona +ve

NEW DELHI, APRIL 20: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal’s wife tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday.

The chief minister’s wife Sunita Kejriwal has tested positive and is under home isolation, a Delhi government official said.

Mr Kejriwal has also quarantined himself, he added.

Last year, around June, Mr Kejriwal had reported to have Covid-19 symptoms, but tested negative

lives. “Shortage is now. You have to do it (ban) now. Look into taking some oxygen from steel and petroleum industries. They have big pockets and big lobbies, but tell them if they have to cut

for coronavirus. Earlier, the 51 year-old leader was suffering from fever for a past few days and he went on self-isolation on Monday in anticipation of contracting the virus.

Meanwhile, appealing to people to stay at home during the six-day lockdown in Delhi amid the spiralling Covid crisis, Mr Kejriwal on Tuesday said the decision was taken in view of their health and safety. — *PTI* ■ [More on Page 2](#)

production, then they can cut production. Lives have to be saved,” the bench said.

The court cited the example of a Central government counsel whose father was admitted in

■ [Turn to Page 4](#)

Weekend curfew in UP after SC stays HC lockdown order

Night curfew in areas with 500+ cases

PARMOD KUMAR with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW, APRIL 20

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Allahabad high court’s order directing a lockdown in five Uttar Pradesh cities — Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Gorakhpur.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian passed the stay order on a plea by the UP government against Monday’s high court order.

Soon after that, the Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday imposed a weekend curfew across the entire state and a night curfew on weekdays in all dis-

tricts having more than 500 Covid-19 cases. While the night curfew in these districts will be effective from 8 pm to 7 am next day starting Tuesday, the weekend curfew will be enforced from Friday 8 pm to Monday 7 am, with all non-essential activities restricted.

These decisions, aimed at breaking the transmission chain of the virus, were taken at a meeting chaired by CM Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow. The night curfew was imposed earlier in Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar), Allahabad, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Bareilly and Muzaffarnagar districts and the Lucknow Municipal Corporation area.

The action by the UP ■ [Turn to Page 4](#)

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

In a speech closely watched by both the United States and India Tuesday, Chinese President Xi Jinping opposed both a “new Cold War” and “bossing others around”, saying “big countries should behave in a manner befitting their status and with a greater sense of responsibility” and “we must not let the rules set by one or a few countries be imposed on

others”. He said: “However strong it may grow, China will never seek hegemony, expansion, or a sphere of influence, nor will China ever engage in an arms race”. Batting for the Belt and Road Initiative, Mr Xi said: “Chinese businesses have already started joint vaccine production in BRI nations like Indonesia, Pakistan, UAE, Malaysia, Brazil and Turkey”.

In veiled references to the US and India while delivering the keynote address at “Boao Forum



A doctor drags an oxygen cylinder at CWG village Covid-19 care centre near Akshardham in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— *PTI*

■ 2.59L cases in 1 day; next 3 weeks may be critical: Centre

PM vows all-out govt effort as oxygen, meds run short

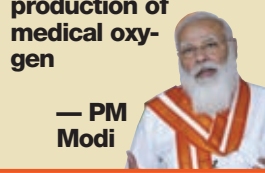
VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

On a day when India’s capital was staring at acute shortage of oxygen to breathe life into its citizens infected with Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a special address to the nation, tried to infuse confidence in people saying the Centre is making efforts to meet the huge demand for medical oxygen.

“For some weeks, the situation was in control. Now the second wave has come like a hurricane. I am aware of the hardships you are facing. I

There is a huge demand for oxygen. The Centre along with the state governments is trying to ensure availability to all who need oxygen and we are also ramping up production of medical oxygen

— PM Modi



extend my condolences to those who have lost a

loved one. The challenge is big but we must cross this with determination and preparedness... There is a huge demand for oxygen. The Centre along with the state governments is trying to ensure availability to all who need oxygen and we are also ramping up production of medical oxygen,” the PM said.

India on Tuesday reported 2.59 lakh new cases of Covid-19 and 1,761 deaths.

With a war-like situation out there, people have been pleading on social media for hospital

■ [Turn to Page 4](#)

Didi: Centre is evading its responsibility on vaccines

‘No assurance on quality, stable supply or price’

Kolkata, April 20: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hitting out at the Centre’s new vaccine policy and terming it “hollow, without substance and a regrettable show” of evasion of responsibility.

In her second letter to Mr Modi within two days, Ms Banerjee wrote, “I am informed that the Central government has announced the much-delayed ‘universal’ vaccine policy on 19th April, 2021, which appears to be hollow, without substance and a regrettable show of evasion of responsibility by the Central government at the time of crisis. You may kindly recollect my letter dated 24th February, 2021, wherein I had requested your intervention to allow our state to purchase vaccines directly with state resources and give free



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during an election campaign rally for state Assembly polls in Murshidabad district on Tuesday.

— *ASIAN AGE*

vaccination to people of the state. No response was received from your end.” “Now when the number of cases in the second wave of Covid are... the Centre has chosen to tactically indulge in empty rhetoric and shy away from its responsibility for making available vac-

cines to the people of the country. The announcement does address major issues like ensuring quality, efficacy, stable flow of supply of required number vaccines by the manufacturers and also the price at which vaccines are to be by the states,” she said. — *PTI*



Supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a banned Islamist party, chant slogans during a protest on the arrest of their party leader Saad Rizvi in Pakistan on Tuesday.

— *AP*

SHORT TAKES

AAP, BJP spar over collection of garbage

New Delhi: The AAP on Monday claimed that the BJP-ruled municipal corporation is not clearing the garbage accumulating outside the houses of Covid-19 patients under home isolation, an allegation refuted by the saffron party. Addressing a press conference, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Durgesh Pathak said more than 37,000 people in Delhi are under home isolation. "Due to mismanagement of cleaning the biomedical waste, there is a massive risk of spread of the virus and the BJP will be solely responsible for this," said Mr Pathak. He requested Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta to form a team and ensure timely collection and disposal of waste generated in the homes of the Covid-19 patients. Reacting to this, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it is "sad" that Mr Pathak is pinning the blame on the MCDs during this crucial Covid-19 period. "All the three MCDs, for the last one year, have been regularly working to collect bio-garbage from the homes of all Covid-19 patients under home isolation. In fact, during the current spread last week, the MCDs even issued centralised phone numbers for the people to call the Covid garbage collection service," Mr Kapoor said. "The blame game of Pathak is an insult to the hard-working sanitary workers who are risking their own safety moving from home-to-home of Covid-19 patients to collect garbage," Mr Kapoor said. — PTI

Man arrested with 1,502 kg marijuana

New Delhi: A 35-year-old man was arrested with 1,502 kg of marijuana in Delhi, police said on Tuesday. The accused has been identified as Aas Mohammad, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, they said. Police received information regarding the delivery of a huge consignment of marijuana. Thereafter, a trap was laid on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday on Mathura Road and Mohammad was arrested, a senior police officer said. During the search of his vehicle, 43 plastic bags containing 1,502 kg of marijuana were recovered. They were concealed behind bananas, the officer said. During interrogation, Mohammad revealed that he had procured the marijuana from the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border in Visakhapatnam, the police said. — PTI



A yellow footed green pigeon rests atop a bunch of Gulmohar flowers in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

AIIMS docs demand action against comedian Sunil Pal

New Delhi, April 20: The AIIMS Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) has written to Union home minister Amit Shah demanding the strictest steps for the "derogatory and obnoxious" comments by comedian Sunil Pal in an entertainment channel against doctors working in COVID management and treatment.

Terming Pal's comments "blunt lies", the doctors' body said dissemination of those will be extremely dangerous in these times and relegate the faith of patients in the healthcare system.

In the letter, the RDA said frontline healthcare workers and other countrymen are facing the wrath of Covid-19 and everyone is trying their best to alleviate the suffering caused by the recent surge of infections. "It breaks the heart of all those who have endeared so much, doctors and non-doctors alike when their intentions are questioned and maleficence is spread by denigrating words. "The recent monologue by



Sunil Pal

comedian Sunil Pal circulated on NBT entertainment channel has pinched the weary nerves of all doctors who have jumped back into this war, often selflessly, and is definitely bound to affect their morale and grit," the RDA said.

The doctor's association termed the comedian's monologue "nefarious, ill-hearted and ill-conceived". "His blatant accusations of fraudulent deeds of doctors, comparing doctors to evil creatures of the society and spreading lies about Covid-19 when the whole country is fighting against it, is beyond logic."

Describing doctors as "soldiers" in this battle against the pandemic, the RDA said,

■ 1,100 deaths in city in last 6 days, positivity mounts to 32.82%

Record 277 Covid-19 deaths, 28,395 cases in Delhi in 24 hrs

New Delhi, April 20: A record 28,395 coronavirus cases and 277 deaths marked the aggravation of the pandemic situation in Delhi on Tuesday as the positivity rate shot up to 32.82 per cent — meaning every third sample came out positive — amid a "serious oxygen crisis" unfolding in the city.

The city also faced acute shortage of ICU beds as the Delhi government warned that there will be an outrage if sufficient quantity of medical oxygen does not reach health facilities by Wednesday morning. It said oxygen is available only for the next 8-12 hours in most hospitals treating Covid-19 patients.

Only 30 ICU beds for Covid patients were available in hospitals across Delhi at 10 pm, according to government data.

The national capital has reported 1,100 deaths due to the deadly virus in the last six days.

On Monday, Delhi had recorded 23,686 cases with a positivity rate of 26.12 per cent and 240 fatalities. It had witnessed 25,462 cases with a positivity rate of 29.74 per cent on Sunday, while the day before 24,375 COVID-19 infections and 167 fatalities were reported.

The city had witnessed 161 deaths on Sunday, 167 on Saturday, 141 on Friday and 112 on Thursday.

With the fresh cases, the national capital's cumulative tally has risen to 9,05,541. The death toll

Kejriwal goes into self-quarantine

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has gone into self-quarantine after developing sore throat and fever, officials said on Monday. The 51-year-old chief minister, who is also a diabetic, was feeling unwell since Sunday afternoon.

"As the chief minister is unwell, he has gone into self-isolation. He has sore throat and cough. He will get himself tested for Covid-19 tomorrow,"

stands at 12,638, according to the latest health bulletin.

A total of 86,526 tests, including 56,724 RT-PCR ones, were conducted the previous day, it said.

So far, over 8.07 lakh patients have recovered in Delhi, the bulletin said, adding the number of active cases in the city increased to 85,575 from 76,887 the day before.

The number of people under home isolation increased to 40,124 from 37,337 on Monday, while that of containment zones mounted to 17,151 from 15,039 the day before, it said.

Only 2,426 Covid-19 beds are available at hospitals in Delhi at present, health minister Satyendar Jain said on Tuesday, assuring that the city government was increasing the number of beds for coron-



Arvind Kejriwal

deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said during an online media briefing. Earlier officials said Kejriwal has also developed mild fever.

On Sunday morning, the CM held a cabinet meeting at his official residence which was attended by many ministers, including Sisodia, Environment Minister Gopal Rai, Health Minister Satyendar Jain, officials said.

avir patients at a fast pace. The details of the available beds can be found on the Delhi Corona app, he told reporters here.

Jain said the Delhi government was making efforts to increase the number of beds, and approximately 1,000-1,500 beds are being added every day.

"There were about 6,000 beds on April 8, which has been increased to close to 19,000 as of Tuesday. The Delhi government has increased beds more than three times in the last 10-12 days," he said.

"Today Covid-19 hospitals have 18,923 beds, and out of that, 2,426 are available. Beds are being increased in many centres by attaching them to hospitals," Jain added.

The Delhi health minister said Covid-19 beds

have also been added to several other centres, including the Commonwealth Games Village.

"We are increasing the number of beds by associating them with all the hospitals of the state government," he said.

The minister further said the Delhi government has appealed to the Centre to allow remdesivir drug to be supplied by all companies so that its shortage can be mitigated.

"There is a shortage of remdesivir in the entire country. We probably have 12 to 14 companies in the country for this. If the central government allows all these to manufacture, then its shortage will end. Strict action will be taken against whoever indulges in black-marketing of these," Jain added.

Speaking about rising Covid-19 cases, the minister said Delhi was conducting five times more tests than the average in the country.

He said the city government would prepare extensively for vaccination by increasing the number of inoculation centres. There are already more than 500 such centres in Delhi, Jain added.

Jain also claimed that if the Centre allowed the city government to open vaccination centres in schools and community centres in the national capital, it will be able to complete the inoculation drive at a steadier rate.

— PTI

Sisodia urges Centre to be 'active, sensitive' over supply of oxygen

New Delhi, April 20: Amid fear of oxygen shortage for coronavirus patients, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday said the Centre should be "sensitive and active" in handling the situation so that there is no clamour among states over its supply.

Mr Sisodia, who is also the nodal minister for Covid-19 management in the national capital, said he is getting SOS calls on oxygen shortage from all hospitals. He also alleged that people involved in supplying oxygen are being stopped in different states.

"Getting SOS calls on shortage of oxygen from all hospitals. People involved in supplying oxygen are being stopped at different states. To ensure that there is no 'jungle raj' among states over supply of oxygen, the Central government should be very sensitive and active in handling the situation," he tweeted in Hindi.

Sisodia said that major Delhi government-run hospitals like DDU, Burari, Ambekar, Deep Chandu Bandhu, Sanjay Gandhi and Acharya Bikshu have oxygen supply for the next 8-12 hours only.

According to him, oxygen stock status for several private hospitals -- B L Kapoor, Batra, Venkateshwar, Gangaram and Max (Patparganj) -- was only for 4-18 hours.

"In most hospitals in Delhi, oxygen is available for the next 8 to 12 hours only. We have been demanding for the one week to increase the oxygen supply quota to Delhi,



Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia addresses the media in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

which the central government has to do. If oxygen does not reach the hospitals in sufficient quantity by tomorrow morning, there will be an outcry," Sisodia tweeted in Hindi.

Hospitals in Delhi have been grappling with the depleting supply of medical oxygen amid spiralling Covid-19 cases. On Monday, the city recorded 240 coronavirus-related deaths, the highest since the pandemic began over a year ago and 23,686 cases with a positivity rate of 26.12 per cent. The city has reported 823 deaths due to the deadly virus in a matter of five days.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday urged the Centre to provide medical oxygen to Delhi, saying some hospitals are going to run out of it in a few hours. He had, on Sunday, termed the shortage of oxygen for coronavirus patients an "emergency."

"Serious oxygen crisis persists in Delhi. I again urge the Centre to urgently provide oxygen to Delhi. Some hospitals are left with just a few hours

In most hospitals in Delhi, oxygen is available for the next 8 to 12 hours only. We have been demanding for the one week to increase the oxygen supply quota to Delhi, which the central government has to do. If oxygen does not reach the hospitals in sufficient quantity by tomorrow morning, there will be an outcry.

— Manish Sisodia, Delhi Dy CM

Oxygen Stock status -Delhi

(As on 20 April 2021 @ 6pm)

Major Government Hospitals :

DDU Hospital : 12 Hrs
Burari Hospital : 8 Hrs
Ambekar Hospital : 24 Hrs
Acharya Bikshu hospital : 10-12 Hrs
Deep Chand Bandhu : 8 Hrs
Sanjay Gandhi Hospital : 12 Hrs
LUAP hospital : 12 Hrs
Baba Saheb Ambekar hospital : 8-10 Hrs

Major Private Hospitals :

B L Kapoor : 8-10 Hrs
Batra : 8-9 Hrs
Venkateshwar : 4 Hrs
Stephane's : 12-15 Hrs
Gangaram : 10-18 Hrs
Holy Family : 24 Hrs
Max patparganj : 8-10 Hrs
Bajaj : 48 Hrs
Shree Agrasen : 48 Hrs
Maharaja Agrasen : 15 Hrs

of oxygen," the chief minister tweeted.

The Delhi government had on Monday set up a 24-member committee to ensure "rational" use of oxygen for treatment of Covid-19 patients. — PTI

Cops create green corridor for tankers carrying oxygen

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Delhi Police on Tuesday created a green corridor for two tankers carrying 19,500 litres of liquid oxygen from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana borders to a Covid-19 hospital in outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar area.

Police said that the tankers had to urgently reach Sri Action Balaji Hospital, where oxygen levels had reached a critical point, but were stuck in a traffic jam.

According to Sudhanshu Dharma, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, the police received information around 11.30 PM on Monday and immediately teams were rushed to ensure smooth passage for the containers.

"A dedicated corridor was provided by Outer district police for two oxygen tankers carrying 19,500 litres of liquid oxygen from the UP and Haryana borders. The containers had to reach

all-Covid Action Balaji Hospital. The two tankers were escorted by Delhi police vehicles," said the additional DCP.

"Meanwhile, 25 oxygen cylinders were arranged through the cooperation of medical superintendents of Sanjay Gandhi, Bhagwan Mahavir, Maharaja Agrasen and Jaipur Golden hospitals," he said.

Dr Sunil Sumbil, medical superintendent of Sri Balaji Action Hospital thanked the Delhi Police for its efforts.

"The oxygen levels at our facility had reached a critical point. The vehicles carrying liquid oxygen could not reach on time as they were stuck in a traffic jam. We immediately informed the police and they rushed their teams. They created a green corridor and both vehicles reached on time," said Dr Sumbil.

If the tankers had not reached in time, the lives of Covid-19 patients would have been in danger, he said.



Migrants wait to board trains to their native places at New Delhi railway station on Tuesday. — PTI

we were scared for our lives. We reached Jaunpur after travelling in a truck. We came back around two months ago.

"On Monday, we told our employer that we are leaving for Jaunpur and requested him for some money. He only gave ₹500 to us each. It's not going to be the same this year, nobody will help," Mr Siroj said, who works along with his four friends from Jaunpur at a factory in North Delhi's Anand Parbat area.

Dharamvir Singh, a native of Akbarpur near

Lucknow, was looking for a bus to his hometown. He, however, had different reasons to go home.

"I work as a carpenter in West Delhi's Subhash Nagar. I have to go to my hometown as my sister is getting married next week. Earlier, I was planning to go there this week-end. But after the lockdown was announced by the government, my family told me to come as soon as possible. I somehow reached Anand Vihar to board a bus till Lucknow," he said.

"I hope the situation does not deteriorate as I have to return to earn my livelihood. We will be again out of work and there will again be a crisis," he added.

At Kaushambi bus stand, a bus conductor said they have instructions that there should not be many passengers inside the bus and that they have to maintain social distancing.

Deepak Kumar, an e-rickshaw driver at Dilshad Garden, said he is not leaving from his hometown now but he is having trouble making ends meet as he is not getting many passengers.

Noida: 8 more Covid deaths, 640 cases

Noida, April 20: Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar on Tuesday recorded eight more fatalities linked to Covid-19, pushing the death toll to 114, while the district added 640 new cases that took its infection tally to 31,597, official data showed.

The district's active caseload reached 3,765 from 3,386 the previous day, according to the figures released by the Uttar Pradesh Health Department for a 24-hour period.

On the brighter side, 255 patients got discharged during the period with the overall recoveries reaching 27,718 in the district, the fifth highest in the state, it showed.

Gautam Buddh Nagar now has a death toll of 114 with a mortality rate of 0.36 per cent. The recovery rate of patients reached 87.72 per cent, the statistics showed. — PTI

Delhi lockdown day-1: All roads largely empty, except those taken by migrants

New Delhi, April 20: Roads in Delhi remained largely empty on Tuesday with people staying home on the first day of mini lockdown imposed to check the surging Covid 19 cases, but scores of migrant workers headed to interstate bus terminals to leave for their hometowns, apprehending the curbs may be extended beyond April 26.

As the authorities got down to handle the situation, Lt Governor Anil Bajjal appealed to the migrant workers to stay back, assuring them the government will take care of all their needs including food and shelter.

Principal Secretary (Home) and Special Commissioner of Police have been appointed nodal officers to deal with the situation.

Appealing people to stay at home during the lockdown, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday said the decision was taken in view of their health and



Vehicles seen on road despite lockdown in New Delhi on Tuesday. — G.N. JHA

safety. "The lockdown in Delhi has started today. This decision has been taken in view of your health and safety. Kindly cooperate with the government and stay home to keep safe from the infection," Kejriwal tweeted.

The lockdown follows a weekend curfew imposed on Friday night. Earlier, the government had also enforced night curfew from

10 pm to 5 am, but the surging number of coronavirus cases remained unabated.

Delhi Police said the movement on the first day of lockdown was hassle-free, however, some people were channelling for stepping out of the homes unnecessarily.

At several areas in the city, police made announcement through loudspeakers, informing people

about the lockdown announced by the government and asking resident to follow all coronavirus guidelines issued by the government.

A senior police officer said that people in emergency were facilitated and those who were roaming without a valid reason were fined. They were also sensitised by police regarding the guidelines on Covid-19.

Delhi Police personnel and senior officers from the districts were on ground 24x7 to enforce the lockdown, a senior police officer said.

With only essential services allowed during the lockdown, private offices and other establishments like shops, malls, weekly markets, manufacturing units, educational and coaching institutes, cinema halls, restaurants, bars, public parks, were closed giving a deserted look to the city. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

UNIFORM RULES
SET FOR CRIMINAL
CASES IN INDIAAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

The Supreme Court on Tuesday laid down rules to streamline handling of the criminal cases uniformly across the country and directed the High Courts to incorporate them in their rules within six months. The

12-page "Draft Criminal Rules on Practice, 2021" as finalized by the bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde comprising Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice S. R. Narayana, also prescribes various formats for dealing with the cases. The top court has laid down the need for expeditious trial and continuous day-to-day examination of all witnesses until all in attendance are examined, fixing dates for recording evidence

immediately after framing the charge, and the court recording reasons for any adjournment or postponement. The rules specify the process of investigations, photos and videography of post mortem, spot panchnama, supply of documents, including statements of witness, to every accused, presiding officer personally framing the charges, recording of evidence on computers in the court in the trial, deposition of witnesses in a prescribed format and how to refer accused, witnesses, exhibits and material after framing of the charges. They also lay down the details to be provided in every judgment, numbering each paragraph, and indicate the offences in case of conviction, release of persons in case of acquittal.

Left worker killed
in clash with TMC

Berhampore: A Left Front worker was killed while ten others were injured during a violent clash between the CPI(M) and Congress supporters, on one side, and the Trinamul Congress activists at Hariharpara in Murshidabad of West Bengal, a day before chief minister Mamata Banerjee visited the district for her Assembly election campaign. The victim — Abul Kasem Ali (37) — belonged to the CPI(M). On Monday night the workers of the Congress and CPI(M), the two allies of the Sanjukta Morcha, workers had assembled after attending their poll meeting at Khoshalpur village in Raipur area. A group of TMC workers chanted slogan "Khela Hobe" at them leading to an altercation between the two sides, which however turned violent. Bombs and bullets flew freely during the clash. Ali and ten other injured were rushed admitted at Murshidabad Medical College Hospital. Ali, who was hit by a bomb, was declared brought dead there.

Form panel to curb
river pollution: HC

Chennai: The Madras high court on Tuesday directed the Tamil Nadu government to constitute an expert body to ensure that rivers, their waterways and water bodies in the state do not get polluted either by discharge of effluents by industries or by sewage. The first bench of chief justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave a direction to this effect while passing further interim orders on a public interest writ petition from one Dhanasekaran, who prayed for a direction to clean river Amaravathi and remove encroachments on its waterways. The river water was so polluted that the same was not fit for irrigation or drinking by humans and animals.

— PTI

DMK MLA acquitted
of unlawful assembly

Chennai: A special court for cases against MPs and MLAs on Tuesday acquitted a DMK legislator and four others in a 2017 case of alleged unlawful assembly. The charge against Anna Nagar MLA MK Mohan and others was that they had made an unlawful assembly and prevented the public servants from discharging their official duty in front of a ration shop to register their protest against the alleged hike in the prices of ration supplies. Holding that the case against the accused was not made out, the special court presiding officer Alicia acquitted them. — PTI

Covid-19 rise: Rajnath asks
armed forces to help statesPAWAN BALI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Rajnath Singh

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday asked the armed forces to be in close contact with the state governments and be ready to provide any required assistance on Covid-19 situation.

Mr Singh held a virtual meeting to review the preparedness of ministry of defence and armed forces to deal with the recent spike in Covid-19 cases across the country.

He urged the defence PSUs, Ordnance Factory Board and DRDO to work on war footing to provide oxygen cylinders and extra beds to civil administration and state governments at the earliest.

Defence minister also delegated the emergency powers of procurement so that critical needs are procured. Defence secretary Dr Ajay Kumar, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, Navy Chief Admiral Karambir Singh, Army Chief General M.M. Naravane, Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) Surg Vice Admiral Rajat Datta, and Chairman Defence Research and Development Organisation Dr G. Satheesh Reddy among others attended the meeting via video-conferencing.

Defence minister suggested to utilise the services of vaccinated retired armed forces personnel to assist the civil administration and state governments to deal with the current situation. During the meeting, Mr Singh also discussed ways to contain the spread of Covid-19 among the Armed Forces personnel and the officers and staff working in the ministry of defence. He focused on Covid appropriate behaviour at the work place, stressing on the need to strictly follow all the Covid protocols such as wearing of masks at all times and maintaining physical distancing.

Mr Singh was briefed about the measures taken by AFMS, DRDO, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and other organisations of ministry of defence such as National Cadet Corps (NCC) in providing aid to the civil administration in this

hour of crisis.

Defence minister was informed by DRDO chairman that a Covid-19 facility, developed by DRDO, has again been made functional in New Delhi and efforts are being made to soon increase the number of beds from 250 to 500. Dr Reddy informed the meeting that the ESIC Hospital, which was converted to Covid hospital in Patna, has started functioning with 500 beds. He informed that work is on war footing to set up a 450-bed hospital in Lucknow, 750-bed hospital in Varanasi and 900-bed hospital in Ahmedabad.

Defence minister was also informed that based on the on-board Oxygen Generation Technology developed for LCA Tejas, a 1000 litre per minute capacity oxygen generation plants technology has been given to the industry and the Uttar Pradesh government has placed order of five such plants with the industry. Dr Reddy informed Mr Singh that more plants can be supplied by the industry to cater to the hospital requirements. He further said SpO2 (Blood Oxygen Saturation) based supplemental oxygen delivery system developed for soldiers posted at extreme high-altitude areas can be used for Covid patients as their conditions become similar.

Covid forces
PM to cancel
visit to EuropeAGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cancelled proposed plans to visit Portugal next month for the India-European Union (EU) Leaders' Meeting due to the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic that is battering India. The meeting will now be held in Virtual format on May 8.

PM Modi was expected to visit France too in addition to Portugal. However, the proposed visit was never officially announced as visits are usually announced closer to the date of departure. Due to this, there has been no formal cancellation.

But in a brief statement on the India-EU meeting, the MEA said, "In view of the Covid-19 situation, it has been decided, in consultation with the EU and Portuguese leadership, to hold the India-EU Leaders' Meeting in a virtual format on 8 May 2021."

Rahul calls govt's
vaccination drive
'discriminatory'AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Congress leader Mr Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday attacked the Centre yet again, this time calling its vaccine strategy one of "discrimination, not distribution". He questioned why 18 to 45-year-olds will not get free vaccine. "No free vaccines for 18-45 yr olds. Middlemen brought in without price controls. No vaccine guarantee for weaker sections. GOI's Vaccine Discrimination - Not Distribution Strategy," he said in a tweet. His attack comes a day after the Centre announced the "liberalised and accelerated phase 3 strategy" of Covid-19 vaccination that will come into force on May 1 and will allow the entire population above the age of 18 years to get vaccinated.

Congress leader Mr P Chidambaram also slammed the government over its revised vaccine policy. Mr Chidambaram has stated that the new vaccine policy is "heartless" and



Rahul Gandhi

Centre is getting them. He slammed the Centre for not adding any provision of compulsory licensing to its vaccine policy in order to help domestic vaccine manufacturers. He further added, "By liberalising the price of vaccine & not fixing a price for states at the same rate as available to Union Government, the government is paving the way to unhealthy price bidding & profiteering. States with limited resources will be at a considerable disadvantage." He claimed, "States already way down by shrinking GST revenues, lower tax devolution, reduced grants-in-aid & increased borrowing would've to bear this added burden. Meanwhile, nobody knows where the thousands of crores of rupees collected under PM CARES being deployed,"



Relatives mourn the death of their family members from Covid-19 outside a covid ward at the National Medical College Hospital in Kolkata on Tuesday.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Record cases, vaccine shortage in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 20

With the second wave of Covid posing a serious threat, Kerala recorded the biggest single day spike on Tuesday with 19,577 new cases taking the total number active cases in the state to 1,18,673.

Nine of the 14 districts have reported a daily spike in cases ranging from 3000 to 1000. The state reported 28 deaths

taking the death toll to 4978.

During the last 24 hours, 1,12,221 samples were tested in Kerala and the test positivity rate was as high as 17.45. Of the new cases reported on Tuesday, 17,839 got infected through contact while 397 came from outside the state.

Among the districts, Ernakulam continued to report the highest number of cases. On Tuesday Ernakulam reported 3212 cases followed by

Kozhikode — 2341, Malappuram — 1945, Thrissur — 1868, Kottayam — 1510, Thiruvananthapuram — 1490, Kannur — 1360, Alappuzha 1347 and Palakkad — 1109.

As of now 2.89 lakh people are under observation across the state including 2.75 lakh under home/institutional quarantine. With the huge spike in cases, the health care infrastructure has come under huge pressure.

Tamil Nadu tightens screw to avoid vaccine wastage

T. SUDHEESH
CHENNAI, APRIL 20

As a result of high Covid-19 vaccine wastage being reported in the state, the health department has now launched strict district and site-wise review to avoid wastage of vaccine doses. A RTI reply revealed that Tamil Nadu, with 12 per cent, topped the table of States that had reported the highest vaccine wastage till April 11.

According to health

department data, the state inoculated a total of 48.07 lakh doses till April 19. Health secretary J. Radhakrishnan told this newspaper that there was high wastage of vaccines in the state as vaccination centres were not getting enough people to finish the final vial which has at least 10 doses.

"It was difficult for the last set to be quantified with 4,000 vaccine centres across the state. So it became an issue. We are now very strict and started

reviewing district and site wise to reduce it," he said. The health minister Dr Vijay Bhasker explained that it was not possible to keep people waiting for hours for the numbers to

fill up for the final vial and that wastage became higher owing to this.

The state kickstarted its vaccine drive on January 16. As per the RTI reply, apart from Tamil Nadu, Haryana (9.74 per cent), Punjab (8.12), Manipur (7.8) and Telangana (7.55) topped the list of states with vaccine wastage. Over 44 lakh doses were wasted out of 10 crore doses used by states till April 11.

For the last few days, many districts in the state

had reported a shortage of vaccines. Many states including Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi had demanded delivery for more doses of vaccines as they were running out of stock. The demand could intensify with vaccinations being opened to all above 18 from May 1. Dr Rex Sarguman, president, Tamil Nadu Health Development Association, said that it happened due to lack of planning and implementation by the authorities.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Himanshi

Her physical description is as under:-

Sex: Female, **Age:** 18 years, **01 month** **Height:** 5' ft., **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Suit-Salwar and chappal in foot.

Any person is having information or clue about this missing child may kindly inform to the following telephones nos.:-

SHO
Website: http://cbi.nic.in **P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi**
E-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in **Ph. No.:** 011-29051917, 29052304
Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641 **Mob. No.:** 8750870832
Fax No.: 011-24368639 **DP/486/SD/2021**

| KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD. | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Kerala) THIRUVANANTHAPURAM TELE: 0471-2945646, 2945650 FAX: 2945647 website: www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, e-mail: etenders_xp@kmscl.kerala.gov.in CIN No. U24233KL2007500291614 | | | | |
| No. KMSCL/EP/5930/2021 Dated: 20.04.2021 | | | | |
| e-TENDER NOTICE (Running Contract) | | | | |
| Online bids are invited for the supply and installation of the following equipment for various Government healthcare institutions across Kerala | | | | |
| Sl. No. | Tender No. | Description | Online Pre-Bid Meeting | Last date of Bid submission |
| 1. | T398/2021 | Medicine Rack, Medium and Low Duty Rack, Crash cart Various Types, Sterilizer-Variety Types, Air Conditioner - Various Types, Hospital Furniture various types, Multi functional Couch, OT Table (Ophthalmic) With Chair, Fire Extinguisher - Various Type, Fully Loaded Dental Chair Electrically Operated, Oxygen Generator - Various Types, Medical Gas pipeline System | 27.04.2021 11.00 a.m. | 10.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 2. | T399/2021 | Anaesthesia Workstation Various types, Ventilator Various types, Mobile XGMA X-Ray Machine, Point Of Care ABG Machine, ENT Operating Microscope Model B, Oxygen Cylinder (B) With Trolley, Vertical Autoclave - Various Type, Fully Automated Horizontal Autoclave Model B (Double Door), CGMA MACHINE, Insulin Pump with Integrated CGMS | 28.04.2021 11.00 a.m. | 14.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 3. | T400/2021 | High Speed Lathe with Suction, Plating system for midface Trauma and Mandible, Vacuum Cleaner, Paediatric bed, GC With FID/NPD and ECD Detector, Subcutaneous Bilirubinometer, Binocular Microscope - Various Type, Centrifuge - Brushless Type-8 wells, Semiautomatic Coagulation Analyser, Hot Air Oven Various Type, Incubator Lab - Various Type, Dialysis Consumables, Water Bath Large | 29.04.2021 11.00 a.m. | 15.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 4. | T401/2021 | Reagent Rental Contract - Fully Automated Immuno Hematology Analyser Model B | 26.04.2021 11.00 a.m. | 15.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 5. | T402 (R)/2021 | Test kit for new born screening programme (Immunofluorescence Method) | 26.04.2021 11.00 a.m. | 03.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 6. | T403(R)/2021 | Reagent Rental Contract - Fully Automated Immuno Hematology Analyser, SPET CT Scanner Implant Kit Physio Dispenser Ultrasonic Scalp, Microwave Oven, Bar code Reader and Printer, Submarine Horizontal Gel Electrophoresis, Piezo Electric Surgery System, Diesel Operated Ride on Sweeping Machine, Mini Ride on Scrubbing Machine, SICS Set, Materials for the setting up of LMB fitting centre, Digital Dental X-ray Unit (Pediatric), T-Piece Resuscitator, Gonioscope With 4 Mirror, Infantometer, Air Oxygen Blender, ECG Machine Single channel, Neonatal Cooler, Automated CPR System Various types, Endotracheal Pressure Monitor, Hand Held Color Doppler, ICP Monitoring System, Perkins Hand Held Tonometer, Prisms and Cambridge Crowding Cards and TNO Set, Vacuum Pressure Pump, Intra Osseous Gun, Homogeniser, Lab Blender, Vertical Horizontal Shaker | N.A. | 03.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| 7. | T404(R)/2021 | Green Laser with Slit Lamp and Indirect Delivery System (Multispot), Flexible Intubating Endoscope, Video Intubating Bronchoscope Model B, Oven with Windows and vacuum machine with accessories Type B, Dialysis consumables (Introducer Set), Generator 20 KVA, Sample Homogeniser 5L, 10L, Polarimeter, Tympnometer, Setting up of IVF center on turnkey basis, OT Table fully automatic, Trauma Accessories, ENT and Ophthalmic Examination Head, Auscultation Trainer, AV Fistula, Platelet Aggregometer, Portable Ventilator for ALS Ambulance, Laser unit (Dental), Pulse oximeter Baby & Adult, Biosafety Cabinet Various types, Point of Care Ultrasound with echo probe, Old acoustic Emission Screeners Type B, Laminar Flow Cabinet, Live 3D(4D) Echocardiography system, Transport Ventilator | N.A. | 03.05.2021 05.00 p.m. |
| State Public Sector undertakings and MSMEs registered in the State or registered outside the state satisfying the policy of Government of India are exempted from remittance of tender document cost and EMD subject to the submission of valid documents, provided all the offered products are manufactured by them. Tender documents and all other information related to tender and bidding process can be downloaded from the website www.etenders.kerala.gov.in SD/- Managing Director (Tender Inviting Authority) | | | | |

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE
APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(SEE SECTION 82 Cr.Pc.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person **Neeraj Kumar S/o Ram Singh R/o H.No. 642, Gali No. 15, Jeevan Park, Siraspur, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 745/2016, u/s 279/337 IPC at PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi** and it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused person **Neeraj Kumar**, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Neeraj Kumar**, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that said **Neeraj Kumar of FIR No. 745/2016, u/s 279/337 IPC at PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **05.10.2021**.

By order
Vaibhav Mehta
Metropolitan Magistrate-05
Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/952/ON/2021

SHORT TAKES

FAROOQ, OMAR
TEST NEGATIVE
FOR COVID-19AGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah have tested negative for the Covid-19, about two weeks after testing positive for the virus. The sources close to the Abdullahs said that results of the father-son duo came out to be negative on RT-PCR on Tuesday.

Junior Abdullah had tested positive for Covid-19, a couple of days after his father was discharged from a Srinagar hospital where he was treated for the virus for five days. Farooq who is the president of National Conference was discharged from the hospital despite his second test coming positive as doctors were of the opinion that he could recover at home since all his parameters were fine.

Two days later, Omar had tweeted on April 9, "For a year I did my best to dodge this damn virus but it's finally caught up with me. I tested positive for Covid-19 this afternoon. I'm completely asymptomatic. Based on medical advice I'm self-isolating at home & monitoring my parameters like oxygen saturation levels etc (sic)".

J&K TEENAGER
REPATRIATED
FROM PAKISTANAGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

A 17-year-old youth from Jammu and Kashmir who went missing in September 2020 has been repatriated by Pakistani border guards and handed over to the Indian authorities.

The official sources said that the teenager Muhammad Sayeed Ganai, a resident of Tarbal village of Gurez area of J&K's northern Bandipore district, was repatriated by Pakistan Rangers through a crossing point (crossing bridge over Kishanganga River) in Teetwal sector of the Line of Control (LoC) in neighbouring Kupwara district on Tuesday.

After the two sides established contact on their hotline and discussed the modalities for the repatriation, Ganai was handed over to the Indian authorities at a brief meet held in the middle of the bridge in presence of the concerned executive magistrate, the area Army commanders of both sides, the Station House Officer Karnah and some local administration officials at Teetwal.

Ganai went missing from his home in September 2020. Later it was learnt that he had crossed the LoC inadvertently and was with the PoK authorities.

Weekend curfew in
UP after SC stays
HC lockdown order

■ Continued From Page 1

government came hours after the Supreme Court stayed the Allahabad high court's order which directed a week-long lockdown in the five cities that were to last till April 26.

Having ordered an interim stay of the high court's lockdown order, the Supreme Court, however, directed the UP government to immediately inform the high court within a week on the steps it had taken and will take in future to check the spiralling Covid-19 cases.

"Until further orders, there shall be an interim stay of the order passed by the high court. However, the petitioner (the state government) shall immediately report to the high court about the steps it has taken and proposes to take in the immediate future within a period of one week in view of the current pandemic."

The court appointed senior lawyer P.S. Narasimha as amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter. This came after solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the court that the high court passed the lockdown order in suo motu proceedings, thus there is no one to receive the notice issued by the top court on an appeal by the UP government.

Mr Mehta told the court the UP government has issued several directions to contain the spread of Covid-19 and was taking adequate precautions on their own. He further told the court the directions issued by the high court were as rigorous as a lockdown, though the high court observed that "they are nowhere close to a complete lockdown". The Supreme Court has posted the matter for a further hearing after two weeks.

Maharashtra govt likely to impose
15-day total lockdown from today

Despite night curfew and Section 144 in force, state reports 62,097 new cases, 519 deaths

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, APRIL 20

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government is planning to impose a "complete lockdown" for 15 days in order to contain the coronavirus infections in Maharashtra. The decision is likely to be announced on Wednesday.

Despite imposing the night curfew and Section 144 in daytime, the numbers of the patients have been increasing.

In the meeting held on Tuesday, most of the Maharashtra cabinet ministers insisted for "complete lockdown", said a government official. The public transport including suburban trains and BEST buses may be operational for the essential services personnel.

Maharashtra on Tuesday reported 62,097 new cases taking a total number of active cases to 6,83,856. While 519 new deaths were reported.

Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Aslam Shaikh told this newspaper, "It will be a complete lockdown excluding outstation trains and flights for the next 15 days."

He said that the suburban trains and BEST buses would remain operational for government employees, who are working in essential services and offices.

Public health minister Rajesh Tope also confirmed that the cabinet has advised the CM to impose complete lockdown. Mr Tope also clarified that the lockdown similar to the one imposed during the first surge of Covid is needed to be imposed to deal with the present situation. Mr Tope said that the chief minister would himself announce the lockdown on Wednesday evening.

The state government on Tuesday tightened curbs in the state. Shops selling groceries, vegetables, fruit, dairy products, and all types of food, including meat and poultry, will be open between 7 am and 11am, an order by the state government said. The new curbs will be effective from Tuesday itself. The disaster management unit (DMU) of the relief and rehabilitation department issued an order in this regard.

Meanwhile, the Bombay high court on Tuesday sought responses from the Central and Maharashtra governments in a plea alleging improper management of Covid medical treatment in the state. The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday. Acknowledging that the petition raised "serious issues of public importance", the court directed the respondents to come prepared with instructions on the next date of hearing.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni sought to know from the petitioner if all the respondents were served the copy of the petition and adjourned the hearing till Thursday.

PM vows all-out govt effort
as oxygen, meds run short

■ Continued From Page 1
beds, medicine, plasma and oxygen. Thousands are in hospitals and an equal number of them are struggling to get a hospital bed.

Exhausted doctors and nurses too are getting infected as additional load on the already weak Indian healthcare system is now shaking the entire eco-system.

Indian armed forces have called their retired doctors to help deal with the pandemic but that is not enough. Despite claims by the government of availability of medicines, the fact remains that even basic medicines needed for Covid infection are missing from chemist shops.

Several states including Delhi, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh are facing shortage of oxygen and putting pressure on the Union government to



Migrants board a train as they travel to their native places, amid a surge in coronavirus cases countrywide, in Kanpur on Tuesday.

— PTI

J&K announces fresh tough measures

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday extended night curfew in all 20 districts of the Union Territory (UT) besides announcing a slew of other tough measures in view of an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases. However, Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, P.K. Pole said that the government has no plan to impose fresh lockdown in the Valley as the administration is following the mantra of "Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi."

Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday reported 2,030 new Covid-19 cases which is the highest ever single day spike in the Union Territory, so far.

Meanwhile, the authorities in J&K and Ladakh have informed the Union government that the surge in the Covid-19 positive cases in the twin UTs is a result of inbound travellers as many of them have turned out to be the carriers of the asymptomatic transmission of virus.

The J&K Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha, announced the government's decision that only 50 per cent shops and other businesses will remain open on an alternate basis within the municipal and urban body limits in the UT from Thursday. He tweeted, "Only 50% shops in market complexes / bazaars / malls within the municipal limits / urban local body limits shall be open on an alternate basis through a rotation system,"



A woman waits to register her name for Covid-19 test in Srinagar on Tuesday.

— PTI

he tweeted.

Sinha said that the magistrates of all districts have been told to devise a mechanism to implement the order, preferably in consultation with local market associations. He said that curfew from 10 pm to 6 am in force for the two weeks in eight districts has been extended to all twenty districts of the UT. "Corona Curfew at night shall be extended to all municipal / urban local body limits of all 20 districts of J&K. It was already in force in eight districts earlier; from 10 pm to 6 am," he said in another tweet.

Responding to fresh restrictions, the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) rolled out a new market timing to sup-

plement the government's efforts. Arun Gupta, president of the JCCI, said that after holding consultations with various traders' bodies of the winter capital, it has been decided that all kinds of business establishments will remain closed on Sundays. He also said that all types of shops in the city will remain open from 10 am to 7 pm except restaurants and other eateries which shall close at 9 pm instead. "This is a crucial time and we all need to extend our best possible cooperation to the government for fighting Coronavirus," he said.

However, the J&K Transporters Welfare Forum (TWF) has called for a strike over fresh government order which

allows only 50 per cent passenger movement in public transport vehicles. TS Wazir, president of the forum, said this diktat was issued without consulting transporters. "With only 50 per cent passengers on board, we won't be able to even earn the money for fuelling purposes," he said adding that the government should either hike passenger fare by 50 per cent or the transporters will go for a strike from Wednesday.

The administrations of J&K and Ladakh have while sharing the inputs during a review meeting of the Centre that the number of positive cases has risen in their respective UTs exponentially due to inbound travellers.

PDP: RELEASE
PRISONERS FOR
SAKE OF COVID
AND RAMZANAGE CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

People's Democratic Party (PDP) headed by former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday scolded the Jammu and Kashmir government for what it alleged is inhuman and illegal incarceration of some of its senior party leaders and other political prisoners of the Union Territory.

"They continue to languish in various jails in and outside of Kashmir without any rhyme and reason," the party said in a statement.

PDP general secretary Ghulam Nabi Lone Hanjura in a statement here accused the Union Territory authorities of being inhumane and devoid of any empathy and said, "Notwithstanding the fact that the detention of top party leaders including Mohammad Sartaj Madni and Naem Akhter is illegal in the first place, the government has given up even on the basic pretence of empathy and humanism when it comes to political prisoners of J&K even in the holy month of Ramzan."

US travel
advisory...

■ Continued From Page 1

India, get fully vaccinated before travel. All travellers should wear a mask, stay 6 feet from others, avoid crowds, and wash their hands," it said. The number of active coronavirus cases surpassed the 20-lakh mark in India as the country continued to record a mammoth surge in daily cases of the coronavirus disease.

The nationwide tally of Covid cases mounted to 1,53,21,089 with a record single-day rise of 2,59,170 coronavirus infections, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

The state department announced that it would begin to update its travel advisories to more closely align with those from the CDC. The update comes as the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, which has now claimed more than 3 million lives worldwide.

— PTI

Delhi gasps for oxygen...

■ Continued From Page 1
hospital and was on oxygen support, but due to its scarcity, oxygen was being provided at a reduced pressure to him to conserve it. "Can you ask him to hold on till April 22?" the court asked. It said if nothing was done, then "we are heading for a bigger disaster".

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia said on Tuesday many hospitals in Delhi have between 8 to 12 hours of oxygen stock left while some have stock left for 48 hours and sounded an alert. "Most of the Delhi hospitals have oxygen left for only 8 to 12 hours. We have been demanding an increase in the oxygen supply quota for Delhi for the past one week which the Centre has to do. If adequate oxygen is not supplied to hospitals by tomorrow morning, an outcry will be created," Mr Sisodia tweeted.

He attached a list of Delhi's 18 private and government hospitals with the oxygen supply they had left. LNJP had 12 hours of

oxygen left, Ganga Ram 16-18 hours, Max Patparganj, 8-10 hours.

Ganga Ram has 485 Covid beds, of which 475 are occupied. Around 120 patients are currently in the ICU. Its chairman Dr D.S. Rana said, "6,000 cubic meters of it is left, which at the rate of current consumption will last till 1 am. Need urgent replenishment."

Mr Kejriwal, who is in isolation after his wife tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday, had on Sunday termed the shortage of oxygen for coronavirus patients an "emergency". He also wrote to Union minister of commerce and industries Piyush Goyal, seeking his intervention in the matter.

But on Tuesday the Union ministry of health, represented by additional solicitor general Chetan Sharma, told the Delhi high court that there has been an inordinate increase of 133 per cent in the projected medical oxygen required in Delhi as on April 20 — from the initial

ROW ERUPTS
AS FADNAVIS'
NEPHEW GETS
COVID VACCINESONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, APRIL 20

A major controversy erupted on Tuesday after former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis's 22-year-old nephew Tanmay Fadnavis posted his photo while taking Covid vaccine on social media. The Shiv Sena and the Congress raised a question on Tanmay Fadnavis's vaccination and blamed the BJP leader for it. Mr Fadnavis said that Tanmay is his distant relative and not a family member. It is wrong if he has taken the vaccine without being eligible for it, the BJP leader said.

According to reports, Tanmay was inoculated with his first dose at Mumbai's Seven Hills Hospital while the second dose was given at National Cancer Institute in Nagpur. The moment he posted his second jab's photo on Instagram, questions were raised about how Tanmay, who was not eligible, got the vaccines at time when the eligible people are struggling to get the vaccines. Soon, the controversial photo was removed from Instagram.

ASSAM ORDERS
CLOSURE OF
GROCERY SHOPS,
SHOPPING MALLSMANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, APRIL 20

A day after reviewing the situation, Assam government on Tuesday issued new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to contain the escalating Covid situation and directed closure of grocery shops, shopping malls and other establishments by 6 pm from Tuesday.

Making face mask compulsory in all public places, Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua told reporters that they would be reviewing the situation in next three days. "If situation continues to escalate, we may impose more restrictions," said the chief secretary requesting the people to show Covid appropriate behaviour.

Besides increasing tests across the state, the chief secretary said that they have stock of more than five lakh vaccines. "We have taken steps to intensify the vaccination drive and the health department has already prepared a roadmap to complete the vaccination," he said.

The state administration in its new SOP said that shop owners shall ensure a minimum six feet distance among customers and shall not allow more than five persons inside the shop. In addition, shop owners should compulsorily keep sanitisers and hand wash in their shops, it added.

estimate of 300 metric tonnes, it's gone up to 700 metric tonnes.

The ministry said all the states, including Delhi, have to rationalise the use of oxygen and prohibit abnormal usage and administering oxygen to the patients who do not clinically require the same.

"States have to undertake oxygen consumption monitoring in hospitals including private hospitals and to undertake facility-wise/hospital-wise oxygen inventory mapping and advance planning for timely replenishment so that supply can be efficiently managed," it submitted.

The court asked the Centre whether oxygen supplied to industries can be diverted for Covid-19 patients, saying, "Industries can wait. Patients cannot. Human lives are at stake... If the lockdown continues then everything would come to a halt and therefore, what would be the need for steel, petrol and diesel during such a situation."

THE ASIAN AGE

21 APRIL 2021

Vaccination: Set realistic targets, don't pass buck

The Union government's decision to open up vaccination against Covid-19 for all those aged above 18 is a welcome step but the decision to halve its procurement of vaccines and let the state governments and private players do the rest of the job throws up uncomfortable questions. The demand for relaxing eligibility conditions for vaccination was voiced by many state governments, and was raised in the letter former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi the other day. The decision makes more than 98 crore of the 136 crore Indians eligible for vaccination; inoculating them all would be a major step for the nation to return to business as usual.

The Centre needs to explain how its decision to let the vaccine manufacturers sell 50 per cent of the production to state governments and private players will make its vaccination targets more achievable. It seems to have little planning to augment production in a drastic way in a short period of time: Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, in his uncharacteristically distasteful reply to Dr Singh, was silent on the former Prime Minister's practical suggestion to use the compulsory licensing route to do so. In effect, all that the Centre has done is to liberalise the sale of half of the production of the vaccine at a time when the nation is facing an acute shortage of it. The Centre refused to pay heed to the call of the two manufacturers for more financial aid all these days, and when it did, it also gave them a chance to make super profits. It's ad-hocism at its worst.

The Centre refused to pay heed to the call of the two manufacturers for more financial aid all these days, and when it did, it also gave them a chance to make super profits

This is not the first time the Centre has been found wanting in the fight against the pandemic: From the Prime Minister's assurance last year to the nation that we shall defeat the virus in 21 days to launching the "world's largest vaccination programme" with little planning on this New Year Day, ad-hocism and chest-thumping have been its hallmark. And the data on the milestones India has covered reflects that of a poor performer: we do not talk about flattening the curve at all, and have inoculated fully only one per cent of the population in the last four months. It's incomprehensible that the health minister jeered at Dr Singh's suggestion to look at the percentage, instead of the absolute number of doses.

It is time that the Centre sets achievable targets and works hard towards them, coordinating the efforts of all the stakeholders. It must rescind the decision to earmark half of the vaccine produced locally to the channel other than its own; it is in effect handing over the responsibility of making the vaccine available to the larger chunk of the population to the state governments while still holding all the purse strings, including those of the PM-Cares Fund. The government must also explore all options, including easy imports and compulsory licensing, to jack up availability of the vaccines. Impulsive decision making and chest-thumping can hardly replace careful planning and resolute action.

Man's Ingenuity on Mars

When Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their motor-operated plane in 1903 it was airborne for 12 seconds only. When Neil Armstrong took his first step on the moon in 1969 it was a small one for man but it represented a giant leap for mankind. So too with *Ingenuity*, just 48 centimetres tall and weighing 1.8 kg and which was airborne for exactly 39 seconds after climbing to only three metres above the rugged Martian surface. But such a short flight on another planet — where the atmosphere of mostly carbon dioxide is thin (about a hundredth of that on Earth) and there is no air to push against — is symbolic of a technological breakthrough that comes only once in a few generations. *Ingenuity* needed a heater and thermostat to be kept warm to withstand up to the minus 100 degrees Celsius temperatures of Martian nights.

The short flight opens up exciting possibilities for the future of space exploration; which need not be limited to a rover on wheels needing a surface to move on. *Ingenuity's* chief engineer Dr Bob Balaram, an alumnus of IIT Madras, believes such flight capabilities could evolve and help explore the moons of Saturn in the future. Helicopters and fleets of drones with heavier payloads can spot the most interesting terrain for rovers to move to and explore. The conquest of technology might even lead to the designing of helicopters that can one day fly even in the rarefied atmosphere around Mount Everest.

A comparison, however bizarre, may help bring out the extent of man's ingenuity in handling the complexities of remote-controlling the helicopter's flight on Mars when you consider the failure just the other day of a self-driving Tesla car, running at high speed and not negotiating a turn on the road to crash into a tree and kill two occupants. The *Perseverance* rover was only 60 metres away recording the historic flight but just imagine the capabilities of flying machines that can capture images at close quarters of worlds millions of miles away from earth. Such breakthroughs may encourage men who envisage colonising planets in the solar system to dream on.

THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY

Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

The Asian Age office is located at: New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



'Hindu politics' by Opp. is a sign of BJP's New India



Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

What is common to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav? Besides the latter being a joint recipient of her letter, written last month to 15 Opposition stalwarts asking them to join forces to fight assaults on India's constitutional federalism, both have also recently publicly displayed their Hindu identities.

Mr Yadav's efforts at projecting his Hindu identity was unfortunately followed by his testing Covid positive, possibly because he had bathed at Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela and met with a Hindu seer, who was perhaps infected with the coronavirus. Ms Banerjee demonstrated that she was not a lesser Hindu than her adversary-in-chief, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when she recited the *Chandi Path* to launch her campaign in Nandigram several weeks ago.

Ms Banerjee, as well as Mr Yadav, in ways more than one, embody the majority of India's Opposition leaders who have since 2014, taken recourse to startling innovations to wear their hitherto invisible Hindu birthmarks on their sleeves. Rahul Gandhi's efforts to publicly display being a Dattatreya Brahmin in the run-up to the Gujarat Assembly polls are widely known and were commented upon adequately.

Alongside widely embracing their religious identity, the (Hindu) Opposition leaders now mask past commitment and efforts at increasing the political representation of religious minorities, especially Muslims. They also no longer promise minority-specific development programmes with the same gusto as they once did. Some years ago, Sonia

Gandhi had bemoaned that her party suffered electorally due to its "prominority" image.

The contagion of over-anxious display of one's Hindu identity is in complete contrast to the unanimity in the political class, at dawn of the republic in 1950, that India's majority community was obligated to make the religious minorities, especially the Muslims, feel secure, respected and instil in them the belief that the majority was sensitive to their faith and tradition.

The chief minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, drew strength from this unspoken agreement when he mocked Prime Minister Modi for his refusal to wear a skull cap offered by a Muslim cleric in 2011. It is useful to recall Nitish Kumar's didactic advice: "In a country as diverse as ours, symbols must be respected. In order to maintain harmony with everyone, sometimes one has to wear a cap and sometimes one needs to sport a *tilak*."

Barely eight years after this taunt, the fortunes have reversed. Mr Kumar is now a much-diminished executor of Mr Modi's policies, albeit with a baulk at times on matters related to hard Hindutva. The Prime Minister has also successfully politically coerced his opponents to become mindful of the ways of the "New India", where being merely sensitive towards the concerns of religious minorities is deemed a political handicap, or perilous.

The Opposition parties are driven by their assessment that in the people's perception, whatever may be shortcomings of Prime Minister Modi and his government's deliveries, he has one most important "accomplishment" beneath his belt — that he has "fixed" Muslims. The Opposition parties are driven by their perception of

In more states than one, the Opposition to the BJP is its veritable B-team. Take the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party for instance in Delhi.

majoritarian elation and are now unwilling to risk loss of support among Hindus. In more states than one, the Opposition to the BJP is its veritable B-team. Take the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party for instance in Delhi.

This explains Akhilesh Yadav's conscious decision to refrain from critiquing Hindu nationalistic politics in recent years, especially after 2017, the way his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Samajwadi patriarch, did three decades ago when he pledged in October 1990 not to allow even a single "bird to flutter" over Ayodhya's skies on the day of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's promised commencement of the "kar seva" at the disputed site. The impression that there has a complete reversal is the outlook of large sections of Hindus towards Muslims is reflected in several of Mamata Banerjee's decisions too, most visibly in the significantly lesser number of Muslims she has nominated as candidates in these elections.

Ms Banerjee and Mr Yadav have another commonality. Prashant Kishor and his brand of ideological agnosticism is part of their campaign to return to power, the former's currently and Mr Yadav's in 2017. Since his advent in India's political space as an electoral strategist, first for Mr Modi and later for others, Mr Kishor has preached that political commitment to ideas and policies is redundant. Winning polls, he asserts, is all about reading the data right, an effective communication strategy and making the right moves at opportune moments. His philosophy enables him to move to one "client" party from another. Mr Kishor's belief in post-ideology pol-

itics is reflected in the weakened commitment to political beliefs of Ms Banerjee, Mr Yadav and several others.

His influence was visible in Ms Banerjee's letter to the Opposition leaders. It was an unambiguous effort at opening a door for a post-poll pact with the Congress while staking claim to a national role in the event of the Trinamul Congress returning to power in West Bengal. But Ms Banerjee chose not to criticise the BJP's corrosive ideology. Instead, she used the passage of the law that clipped the powers of the Delhi government and held it as evidence of the ruling side's objective of establishing "one party authoritarian rule in India".

Ms Banerjee's letter was silent on the abrogation of Article 370 and taking away Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, a precursor to the law clipping the Delhi government's powers. The letter listed the reasons why the Opposition parties must forge a common cause. But none of these were ideological. Ms Banerjee limited herself to listing instances showing that the BJP consistently undermines India's federal character; hang-handed governors, using investigative agencies to target political opponents, limiting fiscal independence of states, dissolution of consultative bodies, worsening Centre-state relations and so on.

Mamata Banerjee has not sought allies among the Opposition parties to protect India from a majoritarian onslaught. Instead, it is a call to unite to safeguard its federal character and autonomy. Although people in more than one hundred seats are still to vote, the letter is the final proof of the BJP winning this round politically. Whether it has secured West Bengal electorally too shall be known only on May 2.

The writer is an author and journalist based in the Delhi-NCR region. His books include *The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right* and *Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times. He tweets at @NilanjanUdwin*.

LETTERS

PIE IN THE SKY

This refers to "Vaccine for all above 18 yrs of age to begin from May 1" (April 20). The Centre's belated move to inoculate all above 18 years is a very ambitious one but one that appears to be a pie in the sky. Given that current vaccination centres are either running out or running low on vaccines, how it shall cope with the additional demand in the foreseeable future is anybody's guess. It is akin to building castles in the air. The Centre ought to spell out explicitly the tangible blueprint for ensuring availability of the jab pan-India. It should not be the scenario of "all dressed up and nowhere to go".

Deepak Singhal
Noida

WRITING ON THE WALL

THE MUCH-VAUNTED aim of the central government to provide affordable and accessible universal health coverage to all our countrymen by 2022 now looks like a distant mirage. The onset of the second wave of the Covid pandemic has laid bare the glaring inadequacies in our wobbly healthcare infrastructure, which is literally on the verge of a major breakdown. The ever-widening chasm between promise and performance on the healthcare front does not bode well for a "Swastha Bharat". Budgetary allocation on the health sector warrants a quantum leap, for mere lip service won't suffice.

Amit Banerjee
Mumbai

BACK TO BASICS

THE PRIME MINISTER had been going to town about India's performance in containing the pandemic. But now his big talk has been exposed. Many countries are advising its citizens to avoid visiting India. The United States tops the list. It is time the government stopped focussing on optics and concentrated on the basics of welfare and governance. It is back to the basics now!

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

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

Sanjay Kumar



Bengal lesson: Drawbacks of a multi-phase state election

After various incidents of violence in the first four phases of voting in West Bengal, the Election Commission of India ordered the election campaign to end 72 hours before the fifth phase of polling. This order of bringing the campaign to an end, 24 earlier than the mandated 48 hours is an indication of EC not being in full command. The EC tried to send out a message of being tough by putting a 24-hour ban on Mamata Banerjee's campaign and another 48-hour bar on that by BJP leader Rahul Sinha, and issuing notices to BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari. These steps are welcome, but it can't possibly evade the question — why in spite of an eight-phase election, on grounds that it was necessary so that polling took place in a free and fair manner, has it not been able to curb violence in the earlier phases that resulted in the death of a few people?

The multi-phase election and few days of gap between different phases is aimed at facilitating move-

ment of security forces from one location/district to another as an adequate number of forces are needed to be deployed at each polling booth for a free and fair election. But visuals from the ground especially at booths where violent incident took place clearly indicated that though security forces were deployed inside the polling booths, they were hardly seen outside them. It is a well-known fact that violence mostly take place outside the polling booth and hardly inside. The question that the EC actually needs to answer is this, was planning an eight-phase poll spread over a month, and during a pandemic too boot, wrong, after all? While there are advantages to holding a phased election, were there also challenges that it failed to take into account? Equally, was not deploying security forces outside polling stations in spite of visible signs of tension in many villages due to shortage? It so happened that more than 1,000 companies of central forces were deployed in West

Bengal at the time.

As noted above, the huge gap between the different phases of polling in the 2021 West Bengal Legislative Assembly election was kept to facilitate comfortable movement of security forces between locations. The EC did the right thing following this protocol. However, it failed to assess that these days could also be used by anti-social elements for movement from one place to another. Thus, questions should also be asked for the rationale behind the eight-phase election. Why could the election not be planned over fewer phases?

Even though there is no data on the number of violent incidents in different phases, there is a general sense that violent incidents have increased in the later phases of the election compared to the earlier phases of voting. As we have noted before, a multiple-phase election does help in movement of security forces ultimately resulting in deployment of an adequate number at each polling station, but at the

same time, spread over a month, it provides an opportunity for escalating violence, as workers of different parties fighting against each other get time to settle scores, right from one phase on to the next. Election in one phase could minimise this possibility, as they would not otherwise get the opportunity to organise themselves. Whatever violence takes place would then only be spontaneous. There may be some other disadvantages, but a single-day polling can certainly help in reducing the duration of tension between party workers.

A multi-phase election results in a very long period of election campaign. The campaign comes to an end 48 hours before the polling only in those constituencies where voting is scheduled to take place. There is no restriction on campaigning in constituencies where voting is scheduled at a later date. It has now almost become a rule that senior leaders of political parties will address rallies in constituencies where voting is to take

place on a later date on the same day that voting is in progress in some other constituency. It has also become customary for these leaders to accuse leaders of their rival parties of their involvement in violent incidents in their speeches delivered during these rallies. This only raises the tempers of party workers that at times trigger violence in the said constituency on the voting day. A single-phase election or polling over fewer phases will certainly restrict the campaign period that will only help in keeping the political temperatures down, ultimately leading to less violence on the polling day.

Elections are due to be held in many states next year, Uttar Pradesh being a large one. Possibly, EC would think about a phased election. While so doing, it should keep the West Bengal lesson in mind.

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political analyst. The views expressed here are personal.

IN BRIEF

Cops shoot man with 'handgun'

Dallas, April 20: Dallas police officers shot and killed a man Monday who pointed at them what turned out to be a replica handgun, authorities said.

Police responded about 4 p.m. Monday after receiving a call about a man walking along a residential street about one mile north of the US 75-Interstate 635 interchange. The man pointed at arriving officers what appeared to be a handgun before fleeing on foot. Shortly thereafter, officers responded to a report of an armed man stealing from a drug store. They tracked the man as he crossed all lanes of Interstate 635 on foot just west of US 75, then shot and killed him.

Dubai princess: UN seeks info

Geneva, April 20: Independent experts working with the UN human rights office on Tuesday called on the United Arab Emirates' government to provide more details about the fate of a daughter of Dubai's powerful ruler who has claimed she was taken hostage.

The experts called for the immediate release of Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed Al Maktoum, who turned up in videos broadcast by the BBC two months ago in which she questioned whether she would survive.

They expressed concerns about alleged rights violations she has faced, and possible threats to her life.

40,000 displaced in Mozambique

Johannesburg, April 20: Some 40,000 displaced and urgently needing food, work suspended on a multi-billion-dollar gas investment, and scores of dead still being counted.

The damage caused by Mozambique's extremist rebels on the town of Palma continues to be assessed.

Four weeks after the rebels launched a three-pronged attack, which lasted at least five days, Mozambican police and relief agencies are working to help the thousands uprooted by the violence and restore the town to daily life.

Although the fighting has ended, Palma does not appear to be completely secure.

Egypt fires top railway official

Cairo, April 20: Egypt's transportation minister on Tuesday said he sacked the country's top railway official, following three train accidents in less than a month that left at least 29 people dead and some 320 injured.

The firing of Asharf Raslan, head of the railway authority, was part of a wide ranging overhaul of the rundown railway system's leadership amid public outcry over repeated train crashes.

Raslan, who headed the railway authority since July 2018, was replaced Mustafa Abuel-Makarm, the office of Transportation Minister Kamal el-Wazir said in a statement.

The changes included the main departments of the railway authority that manages train traffic in the Arab world's most populous country.

CHAD PRESIDENT KILLED AFTER 30 YEARS IN POWER

N'Djamena, April 20: Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled the central African nation for more than three decades, was killed Tuesday on the battlefield in a fight against rebels, the military announced on national television and radio.

The stunning announcement came just hours after electoral officials had declared Deby the winner of the April 11 presidential election, paving the way for him to stay in power for six more years.

The circumstances of Deby's death could not immediately be independently confirmed due to the remote location of the battlefield. It was not known why the president would have visited the frontlines in northern Chad or participated in ongoing clashes with the rebels who opposed his rule.

Deby, a former army commander-in-chief, first came to power in 1990 when his rebel forces overthrew then-President Hissene Habre, who was later convicted of human rights abuses at an international tribunal in Senegal.

Over the years Deby had survived numerous armed rebellions and managed to stay in power until this latest insurgency led by a group calling itself the Front for Change and Concord in Chad.

WH mum on lifting vax raw material India export ban

The Serum Institute of India has urged President Biden to lift the embargo

Washington, April 20: The White House on Monday did not respond to questions on the request by Serum Institute of India to lift export ban on certain raw materials needed for ramping up production of Covid-19 vaccine. The question in this regard was asked twice on Monday — once during the morning White House briefing on Covid-19 and later during the daily news conference by White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki.

The Serum Institute of India has been saying that the Biden administration is blocking exports of raw materials that it needs to make Covid vaccines, and the Serum Institute has also urged President Biden to lift that embargo. So I wanted to ask which raw materials are at issue here? And do you have any plans to address Serum's concerns? asked a reporter during the morning news conference by the White House Covid-19 Response Team.

Both Dr Anthony Fauci, Director at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Dr Andy Slavitt, the White House Covid-19 response senior advisor said they had no answer.

I don't I'm sorry. We could

Avoid travelling to India, US to citizens over Covid spike

Washington, April 20: The US has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, even if they are fully vaccinated as there is a 'very high level' of Covid-19 in the country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) on Monday released travel recommendations by destination. It uses science-based Travel Health Notices to alert travellers to health threats around the world and advise on

how to protect themselves.

The CDC has a 4-level system for COVID-19 and in that India is placed in Level 4: Very high level of Covid-19.

In the note Monday, the department noted that "the Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented risks to travellers."

The CDC has urged Americans to avoid all travel to India.

Travellers should avoid all travel to India. Because

of the current situation in India even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading Covid-19 variants and should avoid all travel to India, the CDC said in a statement.

"Because of the current situation in India even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 variants and should avoid all travel to India.

— PTI

NEWLY FOUND INSECT NAMED AFTER CORONA

Pristina (Kosovo), April 20: Kosovar biologist Halil Ibrahim believes the virus restrictions haven't all been bad — he completed his research, raised public awareness of pollution of river basins and named a newly discovered insect after the virus. He had spent years working on a research report on a caddisfly species found in Kosovo's western Bjeshket e Nemuna national park.

— AP

J&J virus vaccine manufacturing halted at plant that ruined doses

Washington, April 20: The US Food and Drug Administration requested that production of the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine be halted at a factory that previously reportedly ruined about 15 million doses of the shot.

The pharmaceutical giant told *AFP* at the end of March it had identified a

batch of doses at a plant in Baltimore run by Emergent BioSolutions "that did not meet quality standards," but did not confirm the specific number affected. The *New York Times* later reported the batch consisted of about 15 million doses.

Emergent BioSolutions said in a regulatory Secur-

ities and Exchange Commission filing on Monday that the FDA had requested a pause on April 16 in production of the single-shot vaccine pending an inspection at the Baltimore, Maryland facility.

Johnson & Johnson had said it was sending experts to the site to oversee vaccine production. — *AFP*,

DON'T MEDDLE IN OTHER'S AFFAIRS: XI

Beijing, April 20: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday hit out at the United States, saying there should be no "bossing" and "meddling" in the internal affairs of other countries as Beijing is increasingly coming under pressure from Washington and its allies over issues of human rights violations, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

"Bossing others around or meddling in others' internal affairs would not get one any support. We must advocate peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, which are common values of humanity, and encourage exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations to promote the progress of human civilisation," Xi said, without directly referring to the United States.

"What we need in today's world is justice, not hegemony," he said.

— PTI

French cops protest



Police officers hold flags during a demonstration called by French National Police Union Alliance PN to protest against the verdict in the appeal trial of 13 people for the attack in 2016 of a police vehicle in Viry-Chatillon with Molotov cocktails, in Montpellier on Tuesday.

— *AFP*

French envoy ouster plea in Pak parl

Islamabad, April 20: A resolution was tabled in the lower house of the Parliament on Tuesday for the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan over the issue of blasphemous cartoons being published in the European country. Amjad Ali Khan of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party presided the resolution in the National Assembly with Speaker Asad Qaiser in the chair.

Technically, it was not an official document as it was moved by a member in his private capacity but it was accepted for discussion. The resolution condemned

the publication of blasphemous caricatures by French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in September last year and expressed regret over the French's president "encouragement of the elements hurting the sentiments of the hundreds of millions of Muslims in the name of freedom of expression".

"The House condemns the publication of insulting sketches by the controversial French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and Muslims around the world had also expressed outrage at the publication of the sketches," it added.

It stated that a debate should be held in the Hou-

se on the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan over the issue of caricatures. "This House also demands that the state should decide matters of international relations and no person, group or party can exert unnecessary illegal pressure," according to the resolution.

It also said that all European countries in general and France in particular should be made aware of the seriousness of this issue of blasphemy. The resolution said that the issue should be raised collectively on international forums.

— PTI

REINSTATE TRAVEL BAN TO KEEP U.S. SAFE FROM ISLAMIC TERROR: TRUMP

Washington, April 20: Former US President Donald Trump has urged his successor Joe Biden to reinstate the travel ban on certain Muslim countries in order to keep the country safe from radical Islamic terrorism.

If Joe Biden wants to keep our country safe from radical Islamic terrorism, he should reinstate the foreign country travel ban and all of the vetting requirements on those seeking admission

that go with it, along with the refugee restrictions I successfully put in place, Trump said in a statement on Monday.

Terrorists operate all over the world and recruit online. To keep terrorism and extremism out of our country, we need to have smart, commonsense rules in place so we don't repeat the many immigration mistakes made by European and the USA prior to Trump,' said the former US president.

— PTI

US: SC likely to bar some 'green card' applicants

Washington, April 20: The Supreme Court appeared ready Monday to prevent thousands of people living in the US for humanitarian reasons from applying to become permanent residents.

The justices seemed favourable, in arguments via telephone, to the case made by the Biden administration that federal immigration law prohibits people who entered the country illegally and now have Temporary Protected Status from seeking "green cards" to remain in the country permanently.

The designation applies to people who come from countries ravaged by war or disaster; protects them from deportation and allows them to work legally.

The case pits the administration against immigrant groups that contend federal law is more forgiving for the 400,000 people who are TPS recipients. Many have lived in the US for many years, given birth to American citizens and have put down roots in this country,

their advocates say.

The Justice Department says it is maintaining a position held consistently for 30 years by administrations of both parties.

President Joe Biden supports changing the law to put TPS recipients, among other immigrants, on a path to citizenship. Legislation that would allow people who are here for humanitarian reasons to adjust their immigration status has passed the House, but faces uncertainty in prospects in the Senate. Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the court should be "careful about tinkering with the immigration statutes as written," especially when Congress could act. "But just kind of big picture, why should we jump in here when Congress is very focused on immigration?" Kavanaugh asked.

The case turns on whether people who entered the country illegally and were given humanitarian protections were ever "admitted" into the US under immigration law.

— AP

Floyd death case against ex-cop goes to the jury

Minneapolis, April 20: The murder case against former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd has gone to the jury. Twelve jurors — six of them white, six Black or multiracial — are beginning deliberations in a city on edge against another round of unrest.

During closing arguments Monday, prosecutors contended that Chauvin squeezed the life out of Floyd by pinning his knee against Floyd's neck last May, ignoring bystanders, his own training and common sense.

The defence argued that the now-fired white officer acted reasonably and that the 46-year-old Black man died of an underlying heart condition and illegal drug use.

Officer Derek Chauvin "had to know" he was squeezing the life out of George Floyd as the Black man cried over and over that he couldn't breathe and finally fell silent, a prosecutor told the jury Monday during closing arguments at Chauvin's murder trial.

"Use your common sense. Believe your eyes. What you saw, you saw," Steve Schleicher said, referring to the excruciating bystander video of Floyd pinned to the pavement with Chauvin's knee on or close to his neck last May for up to 9 minutes, 29 seconds, as bystanders yelled at the white officer to get off.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson countered by arguing that Chauvin did what any "reasonable" police officer would have done after finding himself in a "dynamic" and "fluid" situation involving a large man struggling with three officers.

As Nelson began speaking, the now-fired Chauvin removed his Covid-19 mask in front of the jury for one of the very few

times during the trial.

The dueling arguments got underway with Minneapolis on edge after Floyd's death last spring set off protests in the city and across the United States that at times turned violent.

The defence contends not only that Chauvin acted reasonably but that the 46-year-old Floyd died of heart disease and illegal drug use, not Chauvin's actions.

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell had the final word, offering the state's rebuttal argument.

The prosecutor, who is PoC, said that the questions about the use of force and cause of death are "so simple that a child can understand it."

"In fact, a child did understand it, when the 9-year-old girl said, 'Get off of him,'" Blackwell said, referring to a young witness who objected to what she saw. "That's how simple it was. 'Get off of him.' Common sense."

Under the law, police are given certain latitude to use force, and their actions are supposed to be judged according to what a "reasonable officer" in the same situation would have done — a point the defence stressed repeatedly. Nelson noted that officers who first went to the corner store where Floyd allegedly tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill already were struggling with Floyd when Chauvin arrived as backup.

The attorney also noted that the first two officers on the scene were rookies and that police had been told that Floyd might be on drugs.

A reasonable police officer understands the intensity of the struggle," Nelson said, saying that Chauvin's body-worn camera and his police badge were knocked off his chest.

— AP

2-MINUTE | SILENCE

Special security cover to all churches in island nation

Lanka Easter attack 2nd anniv today

Colombo, April 20: Sri Lanka's Catholic church will observe a two-minute silence on Wednesday morning to mark the second anniversary of the deadly Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 that killed 258 people, including 11 Indians. Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, has requested people to observe a two-minute silence at 8.45 am on Wednesday in memory of the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks.

Nine suicide bombers belonging to local Islamist extremist group National

Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing 258 people, including 11 Indians.

Cardinal Ranjith said that two main memorial services would be held at the St Anthony's Church in Colombo and the St Sebastian's Church in Negombo the two of the three churches devastated by the suicide attacks two years ago.

Cardinal Ranjith, who will be presiding the

memorial service at the St Anthony's Church, said that it was at 8.45 am on April 21, 2019 when the first suicide bomber targeted a church.

The police said there will be a special security cover to all churches throughout the island nation.

All provincial police stations have been directed to provide appropriate security tomorrow during the memorial events, police spokesman senior deputy inspector general Ajith Rohana said.

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL) has also

called upon all Sri Lankans to support and join the call of the Archbishop of Colombo in observing the two-minute silence.

We also call upon Muslims to make supplications for these victims in this holy month of Ramadan, said the MCSL statement issued by Vice President Hilmy Ahmed.

It also urged the Government to hasten a thorough investigation on the Easter Sunday attacks and bring the real perpetrators to justice without relying on anecdotal evidence. The Muslim community

condemns the suicide bombers as Islam totally forbids killing of innocents even during a war; hence the Muslim community denied an Islamic funeral for the suicide bombers, the statement added.

The MCSL said the Muslim community has been targeted by some in a hate campaign for the carnage of a few who called themselves Muslims.

Cardinal Ranjith has vowed to take drastic action if the real culprits were not dealt with by the second anniversary of the attacks on April 21. — *PTI*

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|--------|
| Sensex | 47705.80 | -0.51 |
| Nifty 50 | 14296.40 | -0.44 |
| S&P 500* | 4,135.25 | -0.67 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.89 | -0.01 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 104.71 | -0.60 |
| Euro (₹) | 90.31 | -0.18 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 46,756*305 | 0.65 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 66.35 | -1.04 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.074 | 0.00 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 1.585 | -0.014 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

HERO MOTOCORP TO SUSPEND OPS AT ALL PLANTS FROM 22ND

Two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp said it is temporarily stopping operations at all its manufacturing facilities across the country, including its Global Parts Centre (GPC), in the wake of a surge in Covid-19 cases. The firm has six manufacturing units located at Dharuhera and Gurugram, Haryana; Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh; Haridwar in Uttarakhand; Neemrana in Rajasthan, and Halol in Gujarat with a capacity of 90 lakh units.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Move part of efforts to boost supply Govt mulls duty cut on oxygen

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Anticipating a shortage of oxygen from the sharp spike in Covid-19 cases in many states, the government may encourage private companies to import oxygen to boost ramped up domestic supply. Besides, it is also expected that the Centre may relax the total import duty—which includes integrated GST—on medical oxygen by at least 10-12 per cent to boost private trade, a government source said.

The government move came soon after its decision on Monday to open vaccinations for all above 18 years of age from May 1.

A senior government official said, "We are closely looking into the development on oxygen supply and demand. If needed, we will allow private firms to import it with some duty relaxation. They may get a waiver of a minimum 10-12 per customs duty on oxygen if they intend to import."

As per industry estimation, the demand for the much sought-after liquid medical oxygen (LMO) has jumped manifold amidst the second wave of Covid-19. "During the first wave of Covid-19 last year, the demand for LMO increased four times to 2,800 tonnes per day. Further, with the second wave, the demand has gone up to more than 5,000 TPD," an industry source said.

When asked about the likelihood of pricing control on oxygen, the official



STOP INDUSTRIAL USE OF OXYGEN: HC

New Delhi, April 20: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said that economic interests cannot override human lives, and in view of hospitals in the national capital running low on oxygen, the Centre should immediately implement the ban on industrial use of oxygen instead of waiting till April 22.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said oxygen supply of various hospitals will run out in 4-8 hours and in such a situation there was no justification in implementing the ban from April 22 as the need was now.

The court directed the Centre to forthwith implement the ban and divert the oxygen to hospitals.

The court also issued notice to INOX Air Products, which pro-

duces oxygen, as to why contempt action be not initiated against it for not complying with court orders to supply oxygen and directed the presence of the company's MD on the next date of hearing on April 22.

The court also sought the presence of the Uttar Pradesh government on the next date.

The direction came after senior advocate Rahul Mehra told the bench that INOX did not supply oxygen as directed by the court claiming that doing so would lead to a law and order situation in UP from where the supply was to come.

The court also directed the Centre to issue appropriate orders and also meet the representatives of the steel and petrochemical industries to divert some portion of their oxygen. —PTI

said the government is looking into all aspects of oxygen requirement.

"In order to save the lives of people now we are trying our best to meet the

demand and boost supply. About the pricing, I think they could also be given the freedom to set pricing of their own," the official added.

BHARAT BIOTECH TO BOOST VACCINE OUTPUT

CHRIS KAY APRIL 20

Bharat Biotech International Ltd will ramp up production of its Covid-19 shot to about 700 million doses on an annual basis as the country struggles to contain a fresh and virulent coronavirus wave.

The planned expansion comes after the government last week gave the firm a Rs 65-crore grant. New Delhi has pushed Bharat Biotech to double its output by June and churn out 100 million doses of its inactivated Covaxin shot per month by September.

"Inactivated vaccines, while highly safe, are extremely complex and expensive to manufacture, resulting in lower yields compared to live virus vaccines," the firm said. —Bloomberg

DBS, StanChart weigh bids for Citi consumer business

ANSHUMAN DAGA, NUPUR ANAND & SUMEET CHATTERJEE APRIL 20

DBS Group, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), OCBC and Standard Chartered are set to bid for parts of Citigroup's consumer business in Asia, people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The sale process will start within a couple of weeks, they added, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media.

The move comes after Citi said it would exit from its consumer franchises in 13 markets, 10 of which are in Asia, as it refocuses on its more lucrative institutional and wealth management businesses in these markets.

Potential bids from the regional banks and StanChart, which makes most of its profit in Asia, underscores their growing



appetite for businesses like credit cards and mortgages in a push to lock in long-term income growth.

The businesses Citi is exiting had \$82 billion in assets and were allocated \$7 billion in tangible common equity last year.

As Citi is not giving up its banking licences in most of the markets it is exiting, the sale of the consumer banking portfolios and branches will only appeal to lenders with existing presence in these countries, the people said.

Representatives at MUFG and StanChart, and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, which the sources said was another potential bidder, declined to com-

ment. "DBS has always been open to exploring sensible bolt-on opportunities in markets where we have a consumer banking franchise," Southeast Asia's biggest lender said.

In 2016, DBS bought ANZ's sprawling India consumer business, comprising retail deposits, mortgages and credit cards, and its Taiwan business would be among the most valuable parts of its Asian consumer portfolio, the sources said.

DBS, the only big foreign bank with a fully owned Indian subsidiary, is eyeing Citi's India business, which is also set to attract StanChart and Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank, the sources said. SBI Cards and Payment Services is also weighing a bid for Citi's credit card portfolio. —Reuters

Container shortage eases but freight rates still high

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 20

While the hurdles in container availability, which troubled exporters for several months at a stretch, have eased, the freight charges are still ruling high, and are still 40 to 50 per cent higher than last year. Container shortage and demand issues had dragged down the consolidated cargo traffic at government-run ports to a three-year low in FY21.

The government on Tuesday claimed that the shortage of containers

has been eased in the country. Around 58 per cent additional exports were handled in March and around one lakh empty containers were repositioned on Indian ports from across the world by the shipping lines. The Container Shipping Lines Association (India) said it has increased availability by more than 17-18 per cent compared to March 2019.

India is also targeting to manufacture containers domestically. State-run Concor has already issued an order of 2,000 contain-

ers to BHEL and Braithwaite. Discussions have been initiated with steel manufacturers, for producing corten steel in India at competitive prices, and railway wagon manufacturers like BHEL, DCM-Hyundai and Balmer & Lawrie to set up production lines for manufacturing containers.

Though containers are now available, exporters complain that freight charges are still high. Compared to last year levels, freight charges are 40 to 50 per cent higher, said A Shaktivel, chairman of

the Apparel Export Promotion Council. Some exporters suspect shipping lines have formed a cartel and are controlling the rates.

Meanwhile, the total consolidated cargo traffic handled at the government-run ports—both major and non-major ports—in FY21 dropped to a three-year low and was 5.3 per cent lower than in FY20. In volume terms, the total cargo managed at 1,248 million tonnes was 70 million tonnes lower than in FY20 and 34 million tonnes less than FY19.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Achinta finishes 2nd at Asian meet

Tashkent: Indian weightlifter Achinta Sheuli finished second in the 73kg group B competition at the Asian Championship here on Tuesday. The Commonwealth Championship gold medalist lifted 309kg — 139kg in snatch followed by 170kg in clean and jerk. The Indian had the best snatch lift (139kg) in the four-man field. However, he failed to lift 174kg in his final clean and jerk attempt which would have seen him top the group. Kazakhstan's Sairamkez Akmoloda 310kg (130kg+180kg) finished first in the group. Achinta's final standing will be determined after the end of the group A proceedings. —PTI

No request for pre-Oly vaccines

Tokyo: Tokyo 2020 organising committee said on Tuesday that they received no request from athletes to vaccinate them before the opening of the Olympic games. The vaccine rollout in Japan has been very slow with less than 1 per cent vaccinated, causing concern about the postponed Tokyo Olympics that are scheduled to open in just over three months. Naoko Takahashi, chairperson, Athletes' Committee, Tokyo 2020 said during a press conference that while athletes have questions about the Covid-19 vaccinations, they were not about whether athletes can get them or not. —AP

Curry too hot for Philadelphia

Los Angeles: Steph Curry extended his scoring streak with an electrifying 49-point display as the Golden State Warriors upset the Philadelphia 76ers 107-96 on Monday. Curry, who scored 47 points in a defeat to Boston on Saturday, bagged his 11th straight game with 30 points or more to give the Warriors a crucial victory in their fight for a playoff berth. It was another spellbinding performance from the Warriors talisman, who is fast becoming the frontrunner for this season's NBA Most Valuable Player award with an average of 31.4 points per game. Curry's 49 points included 10 three-pointers. —AFP

No change in WTC final dates

ICC confident big game will go ahead as planned despite India being 'red-flagged'

Dubai, April 20: The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand will go ahead as planned in Southampton from June 18, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has assured after Britain added India to its travel 'red list' following a massive surge in Covid-19 caseload.

India's entry into the "red list" effectively bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents arriving back home.

However, the ICC expressed confidence in staging the WTC final in a bio-secure environment.

"The ECB and other members have demonstrated how we can stage

international cricket safely in the middle of a pandemic and we are confident that we can continue to do that and that the WTC Final will go ahead as planned in June in the UK," said the ICC in a statement on Monday night.

"We are currently discussing with the UK Government the impact of countries being on the red list," it added.

A BCCI source said that it's difficult to say anything at this point in time and the Board is hoping that India will not be in the 'red list' by the time the team leaves for UK in early June for the WTC final.

"We still don't know how the situation will pan out in June. The travel related

● India's entry into the British "red list" effectively bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents arriving back home.

SOPs are always dynamic as per Covid situation. When India leaves for UK at the start of June, it might be that the country is not in red list which requires 10 days of hard quarantine.

"But, if it is needed, it would be done. The situation is too fluid right now," the source said on condi-

tions of anonymity.

Media reports in the UK said that in case it is required, the Rose Bowl in Southampton and its on-site hotel could be cleared for 'red list' arrivals by reverting to the full bio-secure set up that saw it successfully stage international fixtures last season.

"We are currently discussing with the government the impact of countries being on the 'red list'. By working collaboratively we demonstrated how we can stage international cricket safely in the middle of a pandemic and hope to be able to do so again this year," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by 'Guardian' newspaper.

The Indian women's

cricket team is also scheduled to tour UK in June while the men's team is to play five Tests in England starting August 4.

There is also concern about how the inclusion of India in the 'red list' will impact the England and New Zealand cricketers who are currently playing in the IPL and intend to fly to the UK for the two-match Test series between the two countries that starts at the Lord's on June 2. The IPL will conclude on May 30 with the summit clash scheduled in Ahmedabad. India has reported 2,59,170 new positive cases in last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge, taking the country's Covid-19 caseload past the 1.5 crore mark. —PTI

SA captains fear ICC suspension

Johannesburg, April 20: The ICC on Tuesday said it will not intervene in the governance crisis engulfing South African cricket till the country's board asks for it, after the three national team captains expressed concerns over possible suspension by the game's global governing body.

The three skippers Dean Elgar, Temba Bavuma and Dane van Niekerk have signed a joint statement expressing their concerns before the ICC statement came as a relief.

"The ICC encourages Members to work with governments to resolve issues. Not all government intervention is problematic and for the ICC to get involved it requires a formal complaint from our Members that it is unwanted," the apex body said in a statement.

"Should that happen we will evaluate the situation based on the facts provided and plan an appropriate course of action."

An ICC source said that Cricket South Africa (CSA) hasn't yet reached a



Dean Elgar Temba Bavuma Dane van Niekerk

situation that demands the apex body's intervention.

"ICC doesn't want to press the panic button yet and want them to solve the issue themselves," the source said.

Earlier, the players feared if the current impasse is not resolved soon, South Africa may not be able to take part in the ICC T20 World Cup, to be held in India in October-November. —PTI

FIFA vows 'consequences' for Super League clubs

Montreux (Switzerland), April 20: FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Tuesday warned that clubs involved in the European Super League could face "consequences", as the backlash built against the deeply divisive plans.

Infantino leant his support to European football's governing body as it attempts to quash an initiative that threatens its prized Champions League and the health of domestic competitions such as England's Premier League.

"It is our task to protect the European sport model, so if some elect to go their own way then they must live with the consequences of their choices," Infantino said at UEFA's congress in Switzerland.

"They are responsible for their choices."

Twelve powerful clubs — six from England, and three each from Spain and Italy — have signed up for the Super League, which offers guaranteed spots for its founding members and billions of dollars in



payments. Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are the English clubs involved, together with Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid from Spain and Italian trio Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan.

Currently, teams have to qualify for the Champions League each year through their national competitions, and face a lengthy group phase before reaching the high-profile latter stages.

The Super League would guarantee a spot for its

founding members every year, removing the uncertainty of qualification and the accompanying risks to revenue. The breakup plan prompted a furious reaction from fans and officials, with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin saying on Monday it was motivated by "greediness, selfishness and narcissism", and Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp saying its closed nature was "not right".

On Tuesday, Ceferin implored club owners, particularly those of Premier League teams, to row back on the plans. —AFP

YOUTH WORLD | CHAMPIONSHIP

Indian boxers book seven semis berths

New Delhi, April 20: Babyrojisana Chanu outclassed defending European champion Alexas Kubicka as seven Indian boxers stormed into the semi-finals at the youth world championships for men and women in Kielce, Poland.

Along with Chanu (51kg), Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Sanamacha Chanu (75kg), Ankit Narwal (64kg), Vishal Gupta (91kg), Bishwamitra Chongtham (49kg) and Sachin (56kg) assured themselves of at least a bronze by advancing to the last-four stage on Day 7 of competitions.

With the confirmation of seven more medals, the 20-member Indian contingent is now assured of 11 medals from the ongoing championship.

Earlier on Day 6, Vinka, Alfya, Gitika and Poonam had advanced to the semi-finals.

In a clash between two strong gold contenders in women's 51kg category, Asian youth champion Chanu put up a strong tactical performance.

She did not allow her Polish opponent Kubicka to score any point, blanking her 5-0. The Manipuri boxer will now take on Lucia Ayari of Italy.



Babyrojisana Chanu celebrates after winning her quarterfinal bout.

Later, Arundhati outpunched Ukraine's Anna Sezko 5-0 while Sanamacha sent Russian Margarita Zueva packing with referee stopping the contest in the second round.

In the men's category, Asian junior champion Bishwamitra and Asian youth championship silver medalist Narwal also lived up to expectations and notched up easy 5-0 victories against Serbian Omer Ametovic and Brazil's Ezequiel Da Cruz respectively.

Manish (75kg) and Sumit (69kg) were the only two Indian boxers who suffered defeats in the quarterfinals. —PTI

WBC INDIA CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT IS SET NEXT MONTH

New Delhi, April 20: In what is being billed as a game changer for professional boxing in the country, the World Boxing Council (WBC) has endorsed the Indian Championship fight between Chandni Mehra and Suman Kumari on May 1 in Jalandhar.

The fight for the Lightweight 140lb belt is scheduled to take place as part of the LZ Promotions India Unleashed-Fight Night — the country's first ever Professional USA boxing event, according to a release.

Chandni and Suman have been India's No. 1 fighters in lightweight and featherweight categories and now will be challenging each other in this milestone-bout, aiming to become the first-ever WBC India champion across both men and women categories.

The WBC is one of the four major organisations that sanctions professional boxing bouts globally.

This is the first time ever that India will be hosting a title card sanctioned by the global body and contested by the two female fighters. —PTI

