

**WORLD 7**  
MYANMAR DEATH TOLL  
EDGES UP TO 550

**MONEY 8**  
NO TRADE WITH INDIA UNDER  
CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES: IMRAN

**SPORT 10**  
AXAR PATEL TESTS  
COVID POSITIVE



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# India's daily Covid count close to 2020 peak

## 92,994 new coronavirus cases, 514 deaths reported in 24 hours

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

India recorded 92,994 new coronavirus cases and 514 deaths in the last 24 hours on Saturday, the highest in six months. With this rate of growth, India could cross 1 lakh mark in the next three-four days. The previous Covid-19 daily count peak was around 98,000 in September.

Eight States, including Maharashtra, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh, have witnessed a steep rise in daily infections, accounting for 81.42 per cent of the total caseload.

Ten districts — Pune, Mumbai, Nagpur, Thane, Nashik, Bengaluru Urban, Aurangabad, Delhi, Ahmednagar and Nanded — account for 50 per cent of the total active caseload of the country.

The death toll at 514 in a day has been the highest since October 21. The jump in cases reported on Saturday was the highest since September 20 last year when 92,605 new infections were recorded in a



Passengers wearing masks wait for transportation at a bus station in Jammu on Saturday

span of 24 hours. Corresponding to the rapid surge in cases, the number of active cases too have registered a steady increase for the 24th day in a row with the tally reaching 6,87,433, which is 5.32 per cent of the total infections. The recovery rate has further dropped to 93.36 per cent, the data stated.

The active caseload was the lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and comprised 1.25 per cent of the total infections. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,16,27,122, while the case fatality rate has dropped to 1.32 per cent, the Health Ministry data stated.

Eight States which witnessed a steep rise in daily new Covid-19 cases are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh. In a day, there has been a net rise of 44,213 active cases.

Maharashtra has shown a nine-fold jump, the maximum increase in the number of

active cases in the last two months. In percentage terms, Punjab has reported the maximum increase in active cases. Five States — Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Punjab — cumulatively account for 77.3 per cent of the total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for 59.36 per cent of the total active caseload of the country.

Six States accounted for 85.85 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (277) followed by Punjab with 49 daily deaths.

However, 13 States/UTs have not reported any Covid-

## Islamic scholar dies week after testing +ve, taking job

**PTI ■ PATNA**

Renowned Islamic scholar and former general secretary of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIM-PLB) Wali Rahmani died here on Saturday, less than a week after being admitted to a private hospital upon testing positive for Covid-19.

The 78-year-old hailed from Munger district in Bihar and had once served as a member of the state legislative council. According to Dr Abdul A Hai, one of the directors of the hospital where Rahmani was admitted, he breathed his last in the morning. "He was admitted three-four days back. He had received the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine less than a week before testing positive.

It takes two weeks after the second jab for the vaccine to be really effective", he said.

## Odisha clamps night curfew on 10 dists from tomorrow

**Bhubaneswar:** With the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the State, the Odisha Government on Saturday announced that night curfew would be imposed in 10 districts with effect from April 5.

Night curfew to be implemented in Sundergarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nawarangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri from April 5.

## Delhi records 3.5K cases for 2nd day in row

**New Delhi:** Delhi recorded over 3,567 coronavirus cases for the second consecutive day on Saturday, while the positivity rate rose to 4.48 per cent, said the Health Department.

With the new infections, the number of cumulative cases rose to 6,72,381, while 10 more deaths took the toll to 11,060. The city had reported 3,594 cases on Friday, the highest daily count this year.

## Class I-VIII students promoted sans exams in Maharashtra

**IX-XII exams after April 15**

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

As a fallout of the Covid-19 wave in the State, the Maharashtra Government on Saturday announced that all State Board students from standard I and VIII would be promoted to the next class without any examination.

State Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad tweeted, "In view of the ongoing situation due to #Covid-19, all State Board students across Maharashtra from Class I to VIII will be promoted to the next class without any examinations. A decision regarding students of Class IX and XII will soon be taken."

Speaking separately to the media, Varsha said the examinations for Class IX and XII will be conducted after April 15. She said teachers, except the ones for Class X could work from home. "The examination for two subjects of Class X is yet to be held. The exam will take place as per schedule. The SSC Board will take a call on this," said Varsha.

Her decision to cancel all the State Board examinations from Class I to VIII came on a day when Maharashtra recorded an all time record of 49,447 fresh cases and 277 fresh deaths.

A day after the State logged a staggering 47,827 infections and 202 deaths, the Covid-19 situation worsened with 49,447 cases, while the daily pandemic toll rose to 277.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Himanta says sorry, EC cuts ban to 24 hrs

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Election Commission (EC) on Saturday reduced the 48-hour campaign ban imposed on Assam Minister and BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma to 24 hours after he tendered an "unconditional apology" and assured the poll panel that he will abide by the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct.

Meanwhile, the poll body transferred his brother and Goalpara Superintendent of Police Sushanta Biswa Sarma from the district.

Himanta was on Friday barred from campaigning-related activities till April 4 for allegedly making threatening remarks against Bodoland People's Front (BPF) chief Hagrama Mohilary. Canvassing for the third and final phase of Assam Assembly elections comes to an end on the evening of April 4. The final phase of polling will be held on April 6.

In his representation to the Election Commission on Saturday, Sarma pleaded to the EC to reduce the ban to 24 hours on the ground that his own constituency was set to go to polls on Tuesday. The EC order said, Sarma requested the poll panel to "accept my sincere regret and assurance of abiding MCC in future, and, be further pleased to reduce the period of debarment from election campaign from 48 hours to 24 hours. As to the effect that permission may be granted for holding any public meetings, public processions, public rallies, road shows by a concerned district administration authorities, where you are expected or likely to participate."

*Continued on Page 2*

## Concede defeat Didi, it's khela shesh, says Modi

**BJP staring at their defeat, playing mind game: TMC**

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ HOOGHLY**

Pushing the ongoing mind game with Mamata Banerjee a notch higher, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday advised her to contest from Varanasi for a passage to the Lok Sabha. There is a ship that goes from Haldia to Varanasi. She is welcome to contest from Varanasi but there the people have a big heart... as big as that of the people of Bengal... she will not be called an 'outsider' there."

Taking a dig at the Chief Minister for often getting irritated by Jai Shri Ram slogans, he also reminded that "the people of Varanasi wear 'tilaks' and often chant Jai Shri Ram... so what will happen to Didi if she is among such people... will she get angry at them?"

The Chief Minister has often courted controversy challenging people shouting Jai Shri Ram at her presence.

Attacking Mamata for using Singur as a political ladder to win power in Bengal Modi said, "Singur (movement against the Tata Nano factory) was used for political ascendency... after the political purpose was achieved this area was left in the darkness... today there is neither any industry in Singur nor any job. The people of this place have been left on their fate."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a rally at Haripal the adjacent constituency of Singur in Hooghly district.

*Continued on Page 2*



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a supporter during an election rally in Hooghly district on Saturday

## Naxals kill 5 jawans in fierce gunfight

**Maoists suffer huge loss in Bijapur fighting: DIG**

**STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR**

Five security personnel were killed and 12 others injured on Saturday in a three-hour gunbattle with Naxalites in a forested patch along the border between Bijapur and Sukma districts in Chhattisgarh, police said.

The body of a woman Maoist was also recovered from the spot, a police officer said. A senior officer claimed the Maoists have suffered a "huge loss" in the fighting.

"Teams of security forces, over 2,000 in number, launched a major anti-Naxalite operation from Bijapur and Sukma districts in South Bastar's forests which is considered a Maoist stronghold on Friday night," Deputy Inspector General (Anti-Naxalite operations) OP Pal told the media.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action), the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and the Special Task Force (STF) were involved in the operation launched from five places — Tarrem, Usoor and Pamed (Bijapur) and Minpa and Narsapuram (Sukma).

"Around 12 pm on Saturday, an encounter broke out between the patrolling team from Tarrem and ultras of PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerrilla Army) battalion of Maoists near Jonaguda village in the Jagargunda police station area (in Sukma)," Pal said.

The gunfight lasted for about three hours. As per information received so far, five security personnel have been killed and 12 others injured, he said. "Of the martyred personnel, one belonged to the CoBRA unit and two each are from DRG and the 'Bastariya' battalion of the CRPF," he said.

A woman Naxalite was gunned down in the encounter. "Reinforcements were rushed to the spot and an operation is on to evacuate the injured jawans as well as the bodies from the forest through helicopters," he said.

Director General of Police DM Awasthi, Task Force Commander of IAF's Anti-Naxal Task Force (ANTF) and senior police officials monitored the rescue operation. On March 23, five DRG personnel were killed when Naxalites blew up a bus carrying security personnel in Narayanpur.



Pal told the media.

## ECl in Kerala puts ban on Kottikalasham

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Election Commission (EC) has put a dampener on the customary crowded and noisy culmination to poll campaigns in Kerala. Amid surge of Covid-19 cases, the poll body has banned the "Kottikalasham" ahead of the April 6 Assembly polls. The EC had communicated the ban to Chief Electoral Officer Teeka Ram Meena on Friday. Meena has requested the poll body to ban it to minimise the threat of Covid 19.

*Continued on Page 2*

## RaGa slammed for prodding US to speak on India's affairs

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has triggered fresh controversy after he sought the views of the United States on the state of freedom and democracy in India. Rahul has come under severe attack from the BJP and other quarters, including former foreign secretaries, for seeking the engagement of a third party in India's domestic matters.

Rahul has been holding virtual interactions with professors of various US universities in the recent past and current controversy erupted following his interaction with the former US diplomat and Harvard Kennedy School Professor Nicholas Burns.

During the conversation, Burns proposed that democratic countries such as India and the US should come together to take on China and other non-democratic forces.

Rahul said that he doesn't hear anything from the US establishment about what's happening in India.

"If you are saying partnership of democracies, I mean what is your view on what is going on here... I fundamentally believe that America is a profound idea. The idea of freedom the way it is encapsulated in your Constitution is a very powerful idea but you have got to defend that idea. That is the real question," said Rahul in the virtual conference held on Friday evening.

*Continued on Page 2*



Rahul said that he doesn't hear anything from the US establishment about what's happening in India.

**HOMETHEATRE**

**A tad boring**



**THE FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER (E3)**  
**Disney+Hotstar**  
**\*ing: Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Wyatt Russell, Erin Kellyman, Danny Ramirez, Emily VanCamp**  
**Rated: 5.5/10**

After the stunning action in episode two, one would have expected that things would only get better, at least in terms of action. That is what Avengers is all about — one brilliant action to jaw-dropping action in another.

Well, episode 3 takes a breather and slows its pace and get down to telling one the story of the Flag Smashers and their ideology how things were better during the Blip — when half the population was disappearing due to Thanos' snap.

But not all is lost here. There are a few characters that come into the screen. One, there is Sharon, former SHIELD agent and then there is Zemo, the Sokovian terrorist responsible for the Avengers' breakup in *Captain America: Civil War*. Yes, he is out of the jail and thinks of himself as the hero rather than a villain.

Then there is Captain America. Like in the previous prequel where he doesn't have much to do, here too he steps in for a few seconds only to disappear and let the Falcon and Winter Soldier take centre stage with the Flag Smashers going about on their way even if it means killing a few people and blowing up a building.

Once again, the six-part mini-series leaves at juncture which promises to have lots of action in the remaining episodes.

—Shalini Sakseena

**Poignant & brilliant**

**CONCRETE COWBOY**

**Netflix**  
**\*ing: Idris Elba, Caleb McLaughlin, Jharrel Jerome, Byron Bowers, Lorraine Toussaint**  
**Rated: 6/10**

Directed by Ricky Staub this movie is based on the novel *Ghetto Cowboy* by Greg Neri — a fictionalised story about the Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club and African-American horseriding culture in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US.

While an average Indian may not be able to relate to the story itself, it does remind one of our very own Hindi movie *Naya Daur* starring Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala, a film where the *tongawallahs'* livelihood gets taken over by the bus.

The good part is that despite not knowing the history of these cowboys, (read cow hands, that's how they started) the absolute brilliant performance by Idris Elba and the others will keep one glued to this till the very end even though we do know how things are going to end for these people.

Though the movie is not exactly Western, it does give us a glimpse of what life was for these people in the glorious past when there were far more riding clubs but got lost in urbanisation of the city. It is the climax where one can see and feel the pride these people must have felt as they ride down the street. This is probably the reason why the filmmakers chose to tell this story via a film rather than making a documentary.

—Shalini Sakseena



**'I learnt discipline on Bhabhiji...'**

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with ANANG DESAI, known for playing Babuji in *Khichdi*, who is all set to play Anita's father in &TV's *Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hai*, about his role and what made him say yes

**■ What is your role in Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hai about?**

I play Danny Sharma, Anita's father. He is a rich businessman settled in America and is visiting her daughter after about 12 years. He is disciplined, strong headed person and had disapproved Anita's marriage with Vibhuti Mishra. The story will revolve around how things happen between the trio, but in a lighter vein.

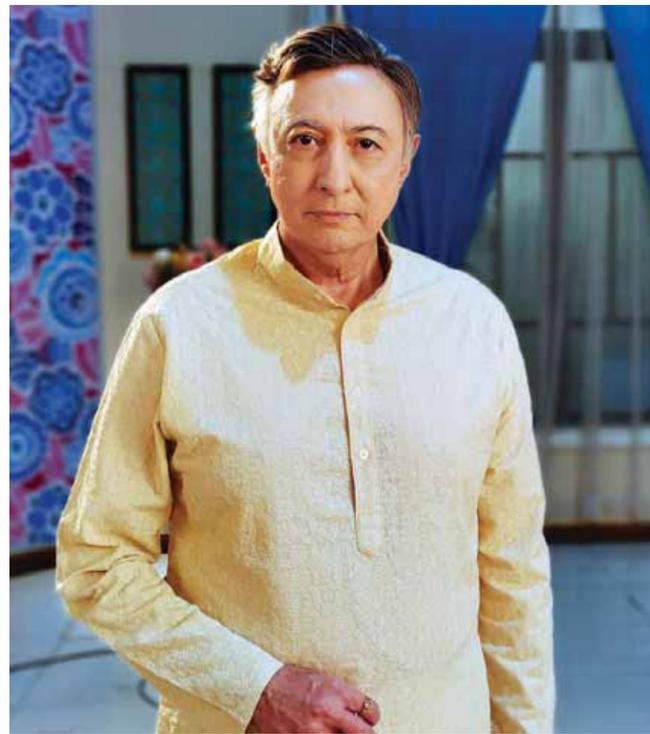
**■ What made you take up the role?**

It's an interesting character. When the role was offered to me, there was no chance of saying a no. The show is so popular and the character, of course, is exciting. The script is fabulous and all my co-actors are excellent. All these factors prompted me to take up the role.

**■ A lesson that you learnt on the sets of the show.**

The most important thing that I have learnt is discipline. It's a disciplined set with all protocols set in place. Everything on the sets is to the point. Our director Rajan Waghmare is also clear with his thoughts and he gives clear directions to the team. This is one of the reasons why all the characters have come alive.

**■ Babu ji from Khichdi has been an iconic character. Can you travel back in time to tell us how did that show happen with**



**you?**  
 In 2002, Aatish Kapadia and JD Majethia, the makers of the show, offered me the role. They thought that I fit in the role. When they narrated the first episode, I was blown away with the script. The way those characters were written spoke of brilliance. I feel fortunate that I took

up such a remarkable role.

**■ What are some of the challenges that you face when you do comedy?**

Comedy is a difficult genre and all the actors have to be fine tuned with the script given to them. Timing is also important. To maintain the timing and deliver exactly what we

think is a task. But as trained actors we know how to tackle such situations.

**■ How do you see your journey in the industry?**

I see my journey with a lot of gratitude. I have played some landmark roles and have got a lot of love and affection from the viewers.

**TELLY TALE**

**DEATH MYSTERY**

Zee TV's *Kundali Bhagya* has offered many interesting twists to its viewers ever since its inception. All the drama in Karan (Dheeraj Dhoopar) and Preeti's (Shradha Arya) lives has surely kept the audience at the edge of their seats over the past few months. However, the show recently witnessed a dramatic twist when Prithvi (Sanjay Gagnani) made a comeback with plans to cause havoc in the Luthra family by trying to marry Kritika (Twinkle Vasisht). Amidst all the wedding drama, the show saw another twist with the evil Akshay (Naveen Sharma) returning to make it double the trouble for our beloved Preeti during their Holi celebrations.

While Akshay had returned to trouble Karan and Preeti, however, in a strange twist, Akshay will now be declared dead. The traumatising news will sweep the Luthras off their feet, especially when they'll learn that the police are suspecting one of the family members as the culprit. But that's not the end of it! The show is set to witness one twist after the other in the upcoming episodes.

Talking about his re-entry and the upcoming twists, Naveen Sharma revealed, "I've started shooting for the show once again since a week now and it's great to return on the sets. While I knew the creative team was going to call me back because they had already spoken to me about the track forward, they brought back Akshay earlier as the character and was well appreciated by the audience. I've never played such an evil character before, but it's been quite a fun and challenging journey. Akshay returns during Holi with a revenge plan. He wants to trouble the Luthras by blackmailing Kritika about the pictures and videos that he has of them, so much so that it will start majorly affecting her.

In a surprising twist, Prithvi comes to know my plan and while I am scared that

he'll tell everyone to gain their trust, he doesn't and joins hands with me. However, the tale will turn on its head when a murder mystery regarding my death will begin. I am sure the audience will be at the edge of their seats as the police will try to solve the case and find the culprit, but what they might uncover will really shock one and all and I am damn excited to see everyone's reaction."

**TIME TO UP YOUR IMAGINATION**

Grab your DIY kit and get ready to welcome the new season of *Imagine That* in a brand new avatar with brand new hosts on April 18, 2021. After an immensely successful first season, Disney Channel has announced the second season of its marquee show which will be hosted by actor Vishal Malhotra and also introduce audiences to a new Do-It-Yourself (DIY) artist — Simran Kumar Puri. Redefining the importance and joy of upcycling by harnessing the power of creativity and imagination, the second season will continue to encourage kids to think beyond the ordinary and be imaginative through an entirely new format.

Committed to entertaining fans with content that can stimulate their creative minds, the new season will showcase bring in a new interactive set; different themes of Do-It-Yourself craft that will instil the importance of upcycling and utility in kids. From Megastatic art installations made from recycled materials to two-minute art and craft challenges and a magical mystery box that will pop up every episode, the second season promises a whole bunch of fresh and repurposed art, reaching out to kids in a wholesome, fulfilling manner.

"Disney is my second home. I have worked on some of my most memorable shows with Disney and it's exciting to be back with the second season of *Imagine That* after a very successful first season. I get to be a friend to a new generation of fans again as we, Simran and I, take our viewers to a whole new world of DIYs with a fresh format

and inspire them to nurture their creativity," said Vishal Malhotra.

**BRAHMARAKSHAS 2 BIDS ADIEU**



The second season of Zee TV's immensely successful weekend thriller, *Brahmarakshas* is all set to see an intriguing twist as the show bids adieu to its ardent fans on April 4, 2021.

The season that narrated the fresh and intriguing adventures of the *Brahmarakshas* and his mission to achieve immortality has been enthralling and captivating viewers ever since the first episode. While Pearl and Nikki's scintillating chemistry garnered much adoration from the viewers, the extended ensemble that included the likes of Chetan Hansraj, Manish Khanna, Rohit Chaudhary, Vaidehi Nair, amongst others were also equally loved.

While reminiscing all the memories and moments of this season, the entire cast and crew bid a heartfelt farewell to each other on the last day.

Looking back at the journey, Nikki Sharma shared, "I am thankful to all our fans for showering us with their immense love and admiration. While the show comes to an end, it will always be special as it gave me my first lead role and it was indeed like my baby. I have also had the chance to meet some wonderful people on the sets, who have given me so much to learn and take back."

**'I work with honesty & dedication'**

PARAM SINGH, who plays Ahaan Veer Malhotra in SET's latest offering *Ishq Par Zor Nahi*, tells MUSBA HASHMI about his character, how Sadda Haq became a hit and that he doesn't believe in calling people to ask for work

**■ What is your role about?**

I play Ahaan Veer Malhotra, a businessman. He is modern in his outlook, but from the inside he is still old school. He is a family man and lives in a joint family. He wants to settle and get married to a girl who is a homemaker. He believes that women are supposed to stay back home and run the house and that a man's job is to go out and earn a living. The reason why he is like that will be revealed in the story gradually.

**■ Will the character's mindset ever change?**

That depends on the writing. However, I am positive it will, but when, where and how that will be revealed later. To add to what I had said before, he isn't a negative person, it's just that he has a different mindset and believes it to be right. He is good person otherwise.

**■ What made you come on board the project?**

My last show got over in February, last year. I was initially planning to take a sabbatical from TV. Then COVID happened and the break got extended. In June, I was offered *Namak Issaq Ka*, which is still on air and right after that I got Ahaan. SET is known for its unique and progressive shows and I wanted to work with them. Having said that, Ahaan is not modern, but the reason that I haven't played such a character before made me take up the role. It was like a challenge for me because I am not like the character in any way.

**■ Sadda Haq was a hit. How did the show happen with you?**

I did an advertisement for Channel V. The team saw me there and I was offered the show. Back then, I didn't have an idea that the show will be such a rage. It ran for two and a half years and became the No 1 show. And I can only be grateful for that. Whatever I am today, I owe it to that show. After that I did many shows, some of them resonated with the audience while others not, but my goal and approach was to work with full honesty without thinking about the results. That is what all actors do. There are times when things just don't work out in this field, it is a part and parcel of acting. Had it not been that, every actor and every production house would have been Number 1. Hence, it is a trial and error business. You have to think from your heart and go for it. But for *Ishq Par Zor Nahi*, I am hopeful that the audience will love it.

**■ What did you take back home from the sets?**



**I have been lucky that things were easy for me. I don't have struggle stories to tell. I loved acting and had the passion for it. This can be one of the reasons why things went smoothly**

I have spent 1000 days on the sets. There is so much that I learnt. My foundation was built there, though I have done acting courses and theatre as well, but that show taught me the little nuances of playing a character. Acting is a kind of job where you not only give something, but also take back things. You learn to be honest in front of the camera. You have the freedom to show what you feel, while in real life one always hold himself back thinking of the repercussions. Above all, I have learnt to be hardworking, creative, honest and how is it like to work in a healthy and happy atmosphere.

**■ How did acting happen?**

I was an introvert throughout my childhood and acting was never on cards so to say. When I was eight, I started listening to Jagjit Singh's *ghazals*. I watched *Casablanca* when I was nine. I was mesmerized by it. But I was too shy to talk about it. When I grew up, I started taking part in college plays and got good feedback from people. But I always thought that if you want to be an actor, you have to love acting and not just take it up because of the name and fame. I went to London to pursue MBA and came back only to become an actor. I took professional training, worked in ads and that's how it all started. Now, I can say that I love my job.

**■ How easy or difficult was it to enter the field?**

I have been lucky that things were easy for me. I was born and brought up in Mumbai. I have given 50 auditions. I don't have struggle stories to tell. I loved acting and had the passion for it. This can be one of the reasons why things went smoothly. There is no rocket science behind this. I just took the opportunities I got and worked with honesty. Apart from that I don't have any approach. I don't know how to call people and ask for work, I haven't done it. I worked and got work.

**Plan Your Day**

**Treat your tummy**

**Venue:** The Tummy Section, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi  
**When:** Every Friday & Sunday

**Time:** 12 pm to 11:30 pm

With all the love that TTS has gained over the years, it is no surprise to see that these guys have come up with their new swanky outlet in Malviya Nagar.

The fun part is that this king of Shawario opened up this outlet amidst the pandemic, meaning that Delhiites were still gobbling up their favorite shawarios from TTD during the lockdown and that really worked wonders for the brand.

The outlet is adorned with pleasant pastels and clean décor. Now that we are all going out again, we say you take a walk through this beautiful outlet and click a 1,000 selfies for your feed!



**Freshly brewed**

**Venue:** CAD, 32nd Milestone, Part 2, NH 8, Sector 15, Gurgaon  
**Time:** 12 pm to 12 am  
**Cost:** ₹18.00 plus taxes (for two)

Known for its name and the fresh brews, Ctrl Alt Delete or CAD is back in action in full swing. The bar that combined technology with entertainment, made its way to the hearts of Delhiites in a jiffy and we can't really blame them.

Located in sector 15 Gurgaon, the tech bar has recently come up with a new fresh menu to give y'all the much-needed fresh start. Their sumptuous menu has dishes like Baked Irani Chicken, Onion Green Chilli Garlic Bread, Mutton Seekh Curry with Green Chilli Lachha Paratha, Amritsari Kulchas, Basil Pesto Lachha Paratha, Fried Garlic Naan, Hari Mirch ka Salan and Steam Masala Edamame.

They've really focused on coming out with a unique range of assorted pieces of bread since Delhiites love North Indian more than any other cuisine. Add a bottle of fresh beer with a piping hot plate of butter chicken and garlic naan, and fall in love with the summer season!

# Capital logs 3,567 Covid +ve, 10 deaths in 24 hrs

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 3,567 fresh Covid-19 cases on Saturday, while ten more people died due to the infection, taking the death toll to 11,060. The positivity rate also had mounted to 4.48 per cent from 4.11 per cent a day before amid a massive surge in cases in the span of the last few weeks.

According to the health bulletin issued by the health department of the Delhi Government, the number of active cases rose to 12,647 from 11,994 a day before. A total of 79,617 tests, including 57,296 RT-PCR tests, were conducted a day ago, the bulletin said.

The number of people under home isolation rose to 6,569 from 6,106 a day ago. The

containment zones rose to 2,618 from 2,338 on Friday, it said.

With the new infections, the number of cumulative cases rose to 6,72,381. The city had reported 3,594 cases on Friday, the highest daily count this year. Delhi had reported 2,790 cases on Thursday, 1,819 on Wednesday, 992 on Tuesday, 1,904 cases on Monday and 1,881 cases on Sunday. It had reported 1,538 cases on Saturday, 1,534 cases last Friday, 1,515 cases last Thursday, 1,254 cases a day before that and 1,101 cases last Tuesday, when it had crossed the 1,000-mark for the first time since December 24.

The number of cumulative cases as on January 1 had stood at over 6.25 lakh and the total fatalities were 10,557. The number of daily cases had

started to come down in February. On February 26, the month's highest daily count of 256 cases was recorded.

However, the daily cases began to rise again in March and have been steadily increasing since then.

Kejriwal had said on Friday that Delhi is encountering the fourth wave of COVID-19 infection but there is no need of imposing lockdown.

The chief minister urged the Centre to allow states to undertake mass-level vaccination. He had also suggested that the Centre should lift the age bar of 45 years for vaccination to pave the way for mass-level inoculation. Kejriwal also appealed to the people to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and regularly wash hands to prevent the spread of the virus.

# Sisodia gets 1st dose of Covid vaccine shot

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia along with his family took the first Covid-19 vaccine on Saturday at the Azad Medical College and said the Centre should allow the vaccination without age restrictions. Sisodia also thanked doctors and scientists after being administered the vaccine and said the whole nation today is thankful to them as they emerged to find solutions to help the entire nation and the world in these unprecedented times.

"Got vaccinated with my family today @HospitalLok! Thankful to our brilliant scientists, medical teams & everyone who worked tirelessly for making vaccines for us. Centre Govt should provide vaccine for all without

age restrictions. Let's fight #Covid together!" Sisodia tweeted.

He also appealed to all the citizens of Delhi who are over the age of 45 to get a Covid vaccine, saying it is the only way for us to fight this virus.

The Deputy Chief Minister further said, "I request the Government of India to increase the supply of Covid-19 vaccine in Delhi and begin the vaccination drive for citizens below the age of 45 to stop the spread of the virus."

"The only way to fight and overcome this virus is by vaccinating people of all ages. We aim to vaccinate all the citizens of Delhi by 3rd or 4th May, once the Delhi Government receives a good number of Covid-19 vaccine doses by the Central Government," he added.



Presently, people aged 45 years and above are being administered Covid-19 vaccines. Last month, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal took the jab along with his parents at the government-run LNJP Hospital.

# AAP accuses South civic body of raising parking rates; BJP denies allegation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) accused the BJP-ruled South Corporation of tabling proposal to increase the surface-level parking rates in the House meeting and demanded to repeal the recommendation. However, the BJP denied the claim, saying that there is no such proposal to increase parking rates.

Senior AAP leader and MLA from Kalkaji Constituency of South Delhi Atishi said that the BJP ruled SDMC and its standing committee has proposed to increase the surface-level parking rates by 100 per cent that is from Rs 20 to Rs 40 per hour.

The AAP leader said that the BJP ruled authority is pulling all the strings to rob the hard-earned money of the citizens ahead of the MCD elections of 2022. "The BJP is well aware of the fact that they will be wiped out from the forthcoming elections since the citizens of Delhi are evidently disappointed with their work and the many such unnecessary taxation policies that they are implementing to extract money from the people of Delhi."

"The standing Committee of SDMC has released a proposal to increase the surface parking rates by an appalling rate of 100 per cent. This means, when people like us visit any marketplaces, malls, or metro stations, we will have to pay double than that of the existing parking rates if this is notified and approved," she said. Responding to Atishi, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor accused the AAP leader of misleading people as parking charges have not been increased by the corporation.

Parking on roads is a menace in Delhi as apart from creating jams, it often causes street fights.

# 500 shanties gutted in Gurugram fire

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

A major fire broke out at Nathupur village in Gurugram here in the intervening night of Friday and Saturday.

The fire engulfed 700 huts of which 500 shanties were completely gutted.

The cause of the fire is suspected to be electrical short-circuit. Fire personnel evacuated residents from the huts and it took them about five hours to control the fire. No casualties or injuries have been reported.

According to the fire officials they received the fire incident call at around 2.08 am.

They suspected that the fire incident took place due to illegal electric supply which cause electric short-circuit in the area and it spread rapidly to other huts. Soon the entire area was engulfed in flames. The residents left their valuables behind and ran at the safe places to save their lives.

IS Kashyap, assistant divisional fire safety officer said, around 15 fire tenders were reached the place and brought the situation under control in five hours. Fifteen fire-tenders from Sector-29 fire station, Udyog Vihar fire station, Sector-37 fire station, Bhim Nagar fire station and from the DLF were rushed to the spot.

"Teams of several fire personnels were deployed in the fire-fighting and evacuation operations. Most probably the incident was caused by an electric short-circuit," Kashyap said.

"There was some property loss to residents but no death or injuries were caused. The residents are daily wage labourers working at building construction sites," he said.

"Timely rescue operation led by the fire personnels saved hundreds of lives. It is expected that hundreds of people having living in illegal huts erected by local residents on a 4-5-acre land at Nathupur village for the last several years. These two story huts are covered with plastic covers, tarpaulin sheets, wood and bamboo. These materials were another reason for the fire to spread across the area very rapidly," Kashyap added.

# Part of St Stephen's campus out of bounds as 15 test Covid +ve

NEW DELHI: The St Stephen's College campus' "inner perimeter" has been rendered out of bounds after 13 resident students and two staffers tested Covid-19 positive, according to a notice issued by the institute's principal.

The notice, issued on Friday, said necessary and stringent measures have been put in place by the dean's office to ensure isolation and social distancing for "all residents".

The dean of residence-cum-college chaplain and mass steward (security officer), both of whom have tested positive for the coronavirus, had taken a group of students, including hostellers, of the Delhi college for an educational trip to Dalhousie in Himachal Pradesh in the last week of March.

"The inner perimeter of the college is out of bounds for all, unless specific clearance is given by the principal on a case by case basis. The outer perimeter of the college may be accessed by those with relevant and regular work after due process at the security counter," the notice read.

"Faculty who are scheduled to come to college may defer their coming till a notification informs them of an improvement in the condition," it read.

On Friday, St Stephen's College governing body member Nandita Narain wrote to the college's principal, John Varghese, asking several questions related to the reports of students testing COVID-19 positive and the Dalhousie trip.

In the letter, Narain also asked whether the college administration took permission from the University of Delhi and the state government for the trip or opening hostels and allowing

"over 200" students to return in the last few months.

"Why was this trip organised by the college officials in the times of COVID pandemic? Was the trip authorised by the principal? Was the consent of parents of the students taken for going on this trip? Was the permission of the University of Delhi and the state government taken for organising such a trip in pandemic times?" the governing body member asked.

In his reply, Varghese, besides confirming the positive test reports of the students and the staff members, said the trip in question was authorised by him and that the consent of students' parents was also taken for the same.

"As for the other questions, I shall answer them when I have a little more time to spare. You will agree that handling the situation is the priority now. Please be informed that the Dean's Office is aware of the situation and necessary steps have already been taken in consultation with medical and civic authorities," he wrote to Narain.

The national capital has been seeing a surge in cases. Delhi recorded 3,594 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Friday, the highest daily count this year while 14 more people died due to the coronavirus infection, taking the toll to 11,050, according to the health department. The positivity rate also mounted to 4.11 per cent from 3.57 per cent a day before, amid a massive surge in cases in the span of the last few weeks.

In Himachal Pradesh, the cumulative cases stand at 60,026 and active cases at 3,338, while the death toll is 1,056, according to the Union Health Ministry. **PTI**

# Ensure optimal visibility of force, follow safety norms: City top cop

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With view of the surge in Covid-19 cases, Delhi Police Commissioner SN Shrivastava in weekly law and order meeting on Saturday instructed his officers to ensure optimal visibility of the force and follow safety guidelines.

A crime review meeting was held by the Delhi Police chief with senior officers of the force through a video-conference to discuss the law-and-order situation and take stock of the action taken against incidents of crime and criminals.

The CP also reviewed Covid-19 prosecution and status of vaccination in different districts and units.

"Crime against women, kidnapping and POCSO cases were analysed along with other cases registered and their disposal. Appraisal of action plan vis-a-vis targets for each police

station was also conducted and district heads were directed to closely monitor the same," said Anil Mittal, the Additional Public Relation Officer (APRO) of Delhi Police.

"Ongoing process of listing of criminals and strategy to keep vigil on them were discussed along with action plan to keep tab on criminals released on bails. All were directed to keep an eye on criminals whose bail or parole periods are nearing close," said Mittal.

The CP also examined status of complaints in the Integrated Complaints Management System and directed for speedy disposal of complaints.

"Status of usage of e Beat Book was reviewed and concerned were directed to encourage the Constabulary to use optimal technology for quick and effective results. Performance of DIUs was examined along with that of districts Cyber Cells," said Mittal.



# BJP committed to protect sentiments of Ayyappa devotees: Lekhi

Kerala Assembly elections for 140 seats are due on April 6. If the ongoing West Bengal elections grabbed all the eyeballs, Kerala with 54.7 per cent Hindus, 26.6 per cent Muslims and 18.4 per cent Christians is the big challenge for the BJP to come to power. From Sabarimala sentiments to the entry of Metro man E Sreedharan, Kerala has seen changes. In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer's* Principal Correspondent **Sapna Singh**, Member of Parliament from New Delhi constituency, Meenakshi Lekhi, who is in Kerala for the election campaign, spoke on various issues.



fares even marginally, it may cut Congress and the Left votes. Assembly election is a golden opportunity for the BJP to escalate their vote share from 10-15 per cent to at least 20-25%, what is the party's strategy?

Historically BJP is increasing vote share with every election and on the other side the vote share of communists and Congress is declining elections after elections. In line with that trend, BJP will definitely increase its vote share in the Assembly elections.

In 2016, the BJP opened its account. This time around, there are a few key constituencies like Konni and Malampuzha, where they hope to register victories. Do you think that Kerala's politics are on the cusp of change?

Until the 2016 election, there was a perception that BJP couldn't open its account in Kerala Assembly. In fact, such misconception was propagated by communists and Congress. Much before, there were many chances for BJP to open the account in Assembly. Perhaps, in such situations, the unholy nexus of Congress and communists worked together with the support of Jihadis to ensure defeat of the BJP candidates. They used a cross-vote methodology to ensure the defeat of BJP candidates, thereby cheating people's mandate. One of the best example for that was the defeat of current BJP State president K Surendran in Manjeswaram assembly constituency in 2016 election. He lost the election for just 87 votes and if we analyse the election result and voting pattern, we could easily understand as to how the unholy nexus ensured defeat of the BJP.

There is a wave of Pinarayi factor in Kerala, how BJP's central leadership plays a crucial role when Pinarayi claims 'Co-Le-B' alliance is unholy?

There is no such wave of Pinarayi factor. We have witnessed the same during the last Lok Sabha polls and representation of Kerala communists in Indian parliament has been reduced to just one. In reality, 'Co-Ca-Ji' unholy alliance has always been in existence to defeat BJP and also common purpose and interests like corrupt practices. Behind the scenes, the unholy nexus of Communist and Congress enjoys the support of Jihadi elements.

Congress and Communists are blatantly having public alliances across the country except Kerala. Comrade Sitaram Yechuri is campaigning for Congress candidates and vice versa in all other States in India except Kerala. Same Yechuri and his team are reaching Kerala and criticising Congress. Their 'Co-Ca-Ji' unholy nexus has fielded candidates in line with their appeasement politics, where BJP has high chances of winnability.

This time around, there seems to be a pro-BJP sentiment among the Christian community and Church-

based voters, how this may alter the political equations.

Kerala church and their communities are really worried about their daughters. The cases of Love Jihad are cumulative in Kerala daily and many victims are from those communities. Many incidents of young girls were transported to Syria reported from Kerala. Also missing cases of girls from the State are not resolved yet. This is over and above the fact that members from the two communities share identical nationalistic vision.

In Tripunithura, Sabarimala takes centre stage, will this help BJP?

Sabarimala sentiments will be definitely reflected in forthcoming polls across the State, not only in Tripunithura. Millions of devotees across the state are waiting to give an apt reply to communists and others, who tried to hurt their sentiments. We will witness the defeat of scores of candidates whoever was in forefront to attack the sentiments of Ayyappa devotees.

Metro man E Sreedharan recently filed his nomination papers as a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate in the Palakkad Assembly constituency of Kerala. Visits of Central lead-

ers are frequently ahead of elections be it Indian National Congress's Rahul Gandhi or Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, as PM Modi is BJP's face, do you think Sreedharan's candidature will make a difference or BJP will project him as Chief Minister face for the State.

BJP never highlighted him as CM candidate for Kerala but we always highlight him as 'an icon of development'. His entry has elevated the position party in the State. CM always gets decided after MLAs choose someone as one so the possibility of him being the CM is as much a possibility as any other MLA from BJP.

**हरिद्वार महाकुंभ 2021**

**WELCOME TO KUMBH CITY HARIDWAR**

- Registration is mandatory while entering into the kumbh city Haridwar till 30th April 2021.
- For registration health certificate, photo id and RT-PCR negative report (test done 72 hour prior to the time of arrival to Uttarakhand state) is mandatory.
- Without registration shatter will not be provided in Kumbh Mela area Haridwar.
- Kindly follow the latest covid-19 guidelines (SOP) issued by Govt of India.
- Non-compliance of covid-19 guidelines(SOP) issued by Govt of India will lead to penal action.

**For Registration Use the Below Mention Websites**

www.haridwarkumbhmela2021.com  
www.haridwarkumbhpolice2021.com  
www.dsclservices.org.in/kumbh/

**Kumbh Helpline no. 1902**

It is being said, if the BJP

# 7.4 cr Covid jabs administered till now: Ministry

**New Delhi:** The cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 7.44 crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday.

A total of 7,44,42,267 vaccine doses have been given, according to a provisional report till 8 pm. These include 89,53,552 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose and 53,06,671 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 96,19,289 frontline workers (FLWs) who have received the first dose and 40,18,526 FLWs who have taken the second dose. Besides, 4,57,78,875 and 7,65,354 beneficiaries aged more than 45 have been administered the first and second dose respectively.

Total 13,00,146 vaccine doses were given till 8 pm on Saturday, the seventy-eighth day of nationwide COVID-19 vaccination. Out of which 11,86,621 beneficiaries were vaccinated for 1st dose and 1,13,525 beneficiaries received 2nd dose of the vaccine as per the provisional report, the ministry said adding final reports would be completed for the day by late night.

Besides, 11,23,851 and 78,012 beneficiaries aged above 45 have been given the first and second dose on April 3. The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers getting inoculated and vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2.

The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 for those over 60 years of age and for people aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions. India launched a vaccination for all people aged more than 45 from April 1.

# 11.8K challaned for flouting Covid norms in 10 days, says Delhi Police

**New Delhi:** Cracking the whip against the violators of coronavirus-related protocols, the Delhi Police issued 11,800 challans for not following the face mask rule and 125 for not maintain social distancing in the last two weeks amid a recent spike in the cases.

According to data shared by the Delhi Police, a total of 5,78,324 challans have been issued since June 15 till Friday, including 5,36,256 for not wearing face masks and 38,631 for not maintaining social distancing. A total of 2,720 challans were issued to people for not wearing face masks from March 10 to March 19, which translates to an average of 272 challans per day. Thirty-three challans have been issued in the same period for violating social distancing, the Delhi Police data said.

However, the number of challans for face mask violations increased to 11,800 and those issued for not violating social distancing norms rose to 125 from March 20 to Friday. In the last two weeks, police on an average challaned 842 people per day for not wearing masks, it said.

Recently, Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal directed authorities in the national capital to intensify the enforcement of COVID rules to check the spread of the coronavirus.

# Municipal Commissioners, DMs can earmark Covid beds in Guj pvt hospitals

**Ahmedabad:** Amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Saturday empowered district collectors and municipal commissioners to reserve beds in private hospitals for treatment of the infected patients.

Announcing the decision during a review tour of Vadodra, state Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel said the expenses incurred on patients on such beds would be paid by the government.

"The state government has taken a decision to give powers to municipal commissioners and district collectors to reserve private hospital beds for coronavirus patients," Patel, who also holds the health portfolio, told reporters.

Patel, who during his tour met district and civic officials, said circuit houses in Vadodra would be converted into COVID care centres for asymptomatic patients who live in slums, chawls or small houses where effective isolation may not be possible.

"We have also decided to form a committee of expert doctors to check if patients admitted in private hospitals really require such admission or whether they have been given beds despite being asymptomatic. Such (asymptomatic) patients will be discharged and those who really require beds will be admitted in hospitals," Patel said.

There was no shortage of Remdesivir, a medicine known to be effective in treating the infection, and 50,000 vials had been ordered, he informed.

Gujarat, on Friday, reported 2640 cases, the highest single-day addition, as well as 11 deaths.

# Odisha to clamp night curfew in 10 districts from tomorrow

**Bhubaneswar:** With the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the state, the Odisha Government on Saturday announced that night curfew would be imposed in 10 districts with effect from April 5, an official order said. For the interest of general public and to prevent transmission of infection, the government has decided imposition of night curfew in the districts of Sundergarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nawarangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri from April 5, an order signed by Chief Secretary S C Mohapatra said.

All shops, commercial establishments, offices, institutions and movement of individuals will remain closed/prohibited between 10 pm to 5 am, except for essential activities, the order said.

It said that district collectors/ municipal commissioners will issue orders for their respective jurisdictions under appropriate provisions of law, such as under Section 144 of CrPc and ensure strict compliance. The district collectors may impose any further restrictions or allow such activities which they feel appropriate considering the local situation, the order said.

Municipal employees, police, government officials on duty, doctors, paramedical staff (govt and private), ambulances and emergency health staff are exempted from the purview of the night curfew, the official said, adding that emergency workers of utilities such as electricity, fire services, telecom, water, railways, airport and transport services also can make movements.

# 'Vaccinate all 45 + in Punjab in April'

**Chandigarh:** Punjab Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan on Saturday directed the health department to vaccinate all persons above 45 years of age within this month aimed at containing the further spread of the second wave of COVID-19 in the state. She directed the administrative secretary in-charge of each district to oversee the planning and response system.

Chairing a meeting to review the COVID vaccination and management in the state here, the chief secretary directed all deputy commissioners, police commissioners and district police chiefs to focus on reducing the mortality rate and make efforts to increase the contact tracing, testing as well as to enhance the vaccination drive exponentially to take Punjab out of the present critical situation.

Mahajan stressed that the COVID norms should be strictly enforced to contain the number of cases, which increased exponentially in the past week in Punjab, according to an official statement.

She expressed concern on the reports that the majority of people were still not wearing masks at social, political and religious gatherings, which could turn the COVID situation more disastrous in the state. Mahajan was informed that approximately 10 lakh people have been inoculated so far and the state's plans were to vaccinate 32 lakh citizens in the coming two weeks. She instructed the state machinery to increase testing capacity to 60,000 tests per day

# Kerala records 2,541 cases, 12 deaths

**PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

**K**erala reported 2,541 new COVID-19 cases and 12 deaths on Saturday, pushing the caseload to 11,32,431 and death toll to 4,658.

According to the state health department, 1,660 people recuperated from the disease today, taking the tally to 11,00,186.

Currently, there are 27,274 people under treatment and 1,42,761 under observation of which 4,306 are in isolation wards of various hospitals, a release said.

Currently there are 357 hotspots in the state.

The state tested 44,779 samples in the last 24 hours and the test positivity rate was 5.67 per cent.

The state has till now tested 1,33,09,773 samples.

Kozhikode reported the most number of cases on Saturday--568, followed by Ernakulam with 268 and Kannur (264).

"Out of those found infected today, 108 reached the state from outside, while 2,261 contracted the disease through their contacts and 11 health workers are also among the infected," the release said.

# Karnataka reports over 4,000 new Covid cases

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka registered 4,373 fresh Covid-19 cases including 3,002 cases from Bengaluru Urban alone and 19 related fatalities, taking the total caseload to 10.10 lakh and the toll to 12,610, the health department said on Saturday.

The health bulletin said that on a positive note the day also saw 1,959 patients getting discharged after recovery.

Cumulatively 10,10,602 Covid-19 positive cases have been confirmed in the state since March 8, 2020, which includes 12,610 deaths and 9,61,359 discharges, the bulletin stated.

The virus claimed 19 lives, including six each in Bengaluru and Mysuru, three in Hassan, two in Mandya and one each in Tumakuru and Kalaburagi.

As the epi-centre of the infection in the state, Bengaluru reported 3,002 fresh cases on Friday, taking its Covid tally to 4,44,244, including 26,544 active cases, while 4,13,058 patients recovered till date, with 1,052 during the day.

"Out of 36,614 active cases, 36,287 patients are stable and in isolation at designated hospitals, while 327 are in Intensive Care Units (ICUs). Bengaluru Urban and Mysuru each accounted for six deaths, Hassan (3), Mandya (2), and one each from Kalaburagi and Tumakuru.

Bengaluru Urban district tops the list of positive cases, with a total of 4,44,244, followed by Mysuru 56,264 and Ballari 39,913.

Among discharges too, Bengaluru Urban was on top with 4,13,058, followed by Mysuru 54,331 and Ballari 38,969. A total of over 2,17,69,721 samples have been tested so far, out of which 1,23,830 were on Friday alone.

"Positivity rate for the day rose to 3.53 per cent while the case fatality rate was 0.43 per cent across the state on Friday," added the bulletin.

# Cong leader demands permanent campus for Himachal Central varsity

**Dharamsala (HP):** A State-level Congress leader on Saturday sought to know why the Central University of Himachal Pradesh was operating from a temporary campus despite being allotted land by the state government.

He said the BJP-ruled State Government should clarify its stand on the matter.

"If the BJP Government fails to clear the air on the matter, people will give it a befitting reply in the Dharamsala municipal polls on April 7," Congress state spokesperson Rajesh Sharma said in a statement. The Congress leader said the BJP should explain why it could not ensure permanent campus for the university despite ruling the state for three years.

He added that activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the BJP's youth wing, have been protesting since the past seven weeks over the absence of permanent campus of the varsity.

"Why is the varsity still running from the building of other departments in Dharamsala? The

# 6 killed after a drunk man set his relative's house afire in Karnataka after tiff with wife

**Kodagu (Karnataka):** Six persons, including four children, were set on fire by a man in an inebriated state over a tiff with his wife in the wee hours of Saturday at Ponnampet in Kodagu district in Karnataka, the police said. All six died.

According to the police, the accused Yeravara Bhoja aged around 50 years, is absconding after the incident. The incident took place in Mugutageri village of Ponnampet in Virajpete Taluk.

While his brother-in-law Yeravara Manju was living at the residence of Kolera Vasanta situated near the Kaanur road in Mugutageri village. Some 5-6 members of the family had visited his house and had stayed there, it is learned.

The police said that Bhoja is an estate labourer who used to have frequent fights after consuming alcohol with his wife, Babi. "Fed up of his chronic alcoholism and frequent fights that invariably ended up in beating her up, she had deserted him and shifted to her brother's house who too is labourer working in a coffee estate. This had infuriated Bhoja further despite his persuasion, she had refused to stay with him anymore," the police explained.

The police added that on Friday too he tried to persuade her but when she refused he returned home and got drunk and at around 2:00 am he poured petrol on his brother-in-law's house and set it on a blaze.

"With the help of neighbours, his brother in law was able to save four members but other six persons - Babi, 45 years, Seeta, 45 years, Prathana, 6 years, where charred to death, while Prakash, 6 years, Vishwas, 7 years and Vishwas, 7 years were succumbed to injuries in hospital," the police said.

# 2 LeT terrorists' aides arrested in J&K

**Srinagar:** The Jammu and Kashmir police have solved a grenade throwing case and arrested two terrorist associates of LeT, officials said on Saturday.

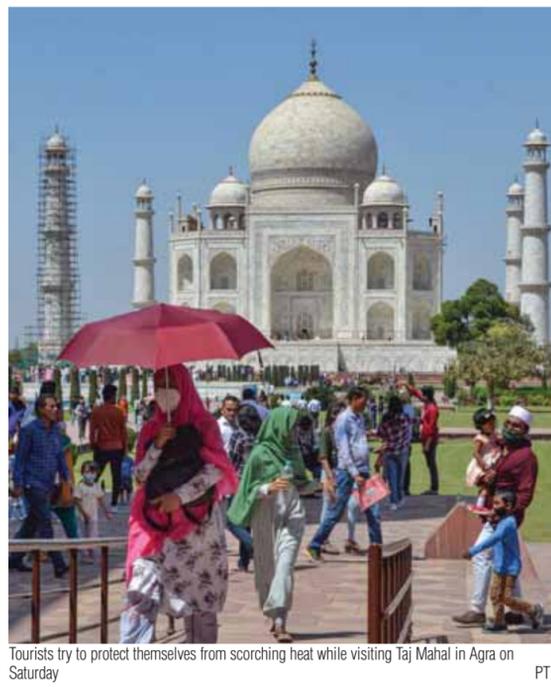
Police said on Dec 12, 2020 unknown terrorists hurled a hand grenade towards Police Post Bus Stand which missed the intended target and exploded outside gate of the police post, resulting in injuries to three civilians.

Accordingly a case was registered by the police and investigation was set into motion.

Police said during the course of investigation two suspects Mohd Asif Najar and Sahil Rashid Bhat resident of Green Town Sopore were apprehended. "During questioning they confessed that they are working for LeT outfit as over ground workers and had thrown the Grenade on Police Post Bus Stand on the directions of LeT terrorists," police said.

"The duo also confessed that they were desirous to join the terrorist ranks but before that a hand Grenade was handed over to them with the directions to throw it on any security force/ Police establishments in Sopore area, which they finally threw on Police Post Bus Stand." Police said both have been formally arrested on April 1 in the instant case and are presently on Police remand.

Police said further investigations are on.



Tourists try to protect themselves from scorching heat while visiting Taj Mahal in Agra on Saturday

# Woman stripped naked, beaten up by in-laws for dowry in Odisha

**Kendrapara:** A 24-year-old woman was on Saturday allegedly stripped naked and beaten up by in-laws in Odisha's Kendrapara district, and the footage of the incident has gone viral on social media for failing to meet dowry demand.

The woman's uncle has filed a complaint with the local police station, following which a probe has been launched in the matter, police said.

# Concede defeat Didi...

**From Page 1**

Referring to the Chief Minister's repeated allegations about a "partisan Election Commission", the Prime Minister said that one who talked of Khela Hobey (game is in the offing) but pointed fingers at the umpire (ECI) it should be considered that "it is Khela Shesh (game is over) for that person."

Referring to the Chief Minister's claim that the BJP was paying people to join its rallies in large number, Modi said that her statements insulted the self-respecting people of Bengal. "Didi is saying that the people are taking cash to attend BJP rallies," but she has forgotten that "Bengalis are self-respecting people who could not be purchased by the mighty British even... Didi, you have insulted the people of Bengal with this statement... they will give you a befitting reply"

The Chief Minister who was addressing a rally about 50 km away in Howrah hit back asking the people to remain on guard against the saffron forces who would divide Bengal. "BJP wants to divide Bengal... These people want to end Bengal, its language, its culture," Banerjee said requesting the minority brothers and sisters not to allow their vote to be divided between the TMC and the Indian Secular Front floated by Abbas Siddique.

"There is a party from Hyderabad funded by the BJP... that

party has joined hands with a person in Bengal and jointly are trying to divide the minority votes to help the BJP... please don't allow your vote to be divided," she said.

On the repeated claims by the BJP leadership that the party was on its way to victory Banerjee said that her party was winning in Bengal and asked her supporters to remain prepared for the victory ahead. "We are winning comfortably in Nandigram comfortably. So remain prepared for the victory ahead," she said.

Meanwhile, in a related development the Trinamool Congress has raised the issue of EVM tampering. Senior TMC leader Yashwant Sinha on Saturday said that his party was concerned about an incident (in Assam) of EVM being changed by the BJP to ensure victory. He also referred to the alleged "mind game" being played by the BJP leadership to pep up the supporters at a time when the party was staring a defeat. "We have information that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda met in the late night on Friday to assess the situation in Bengal... they have reports that the BJP has not done well in the earlier two rounds of elections so they have decided to add more spice to their process of lying to the people so that the party workers remained enthused and motivated, Sinha said.

# RaGa slammed for prodding...

**From Page 1**

Reacting to Rahul Gandhi's statement, BJP spokesman Sambit Patra hit out at him saying that no amount of ranting and crying is going to help him.

"No amount of your ranting & crying is going to help Mr Gandhi, for by now the world is aware of your capabilities...they know it's not about democracy it's about your failed leadership! Almost akin to Mr Mani Shankar's cry for help in Pakistan," Patra said on Twitter. Rahul's former party colleague and Congress spokesperson now in BJP fold Tom Vaddakan took potshots and said how will a dynast understand the democratic system. Rahul Gandhi also alleged a wholesale capture of India's institutional framework by the BJP. He claimed that this has changed the paradigm in which Opposition parties operate post-2014.

"To fight elections, I need institutional structures, I need a judicial system that protects me, I need a media that is reasonably free, I need financial parity, I need a set of institutional structures that allow me to operate as a political party. I do not have them," Rahul Gandhi claimed.

The Congress leader also received a heavy backlash on Twitter. Former Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said, "Astonished he should goad the US to take adverse note of the state of democracy in India, take such hallowed view of American democracy while decrying our own and implicitly suggest India not worthy of an invitation to the summit of democracies Biden proposes. And what game Nick Burns is playing?"

Naming Rahul Gandhi as a "dynastic scion" and calling his remarks "disgusting", investor Harsh Gupta Madhusudan said that PM Narendra Modi had become the Prime Minister "despite the express opposition of foreign especially western powers" and "because the people of India wanted him to lead".

# Hemanta says sorry, EC cuts ban to 24 hrs

**From Page 1**

The Congress had approached the EC demanding action against Sarma for his remark that Mohiary would be sent to jail through central probe agency NIA if he does "extremism" with rebel leader M Batha.

The BPF is an ally of the Congress in Assam. It was previously with the BJP.

In another development, the EC has passed an order transferring his brother Sushanta Biswa Sarma, who is the Superintendent of Police, Goalpara, which will go to the poll on April 6.

The order said that Sarma shall be transferred to some suitable post in the State headquarters and IPS officer Veera Venakata Rakesh Reddy shall be posted with immediate effect as the new SP of Goalpara district.

# Class I-VIII students promoted sans exams in Maharashtra

**From Page 1**

With 49,477 fresh cases, the total infections in Maharashtra climbed from 29,04,076 to 29,53,523. Similarly, with 277 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 55,379 to 55,656.

As 37,821 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 24,95,315.

The recovery rate in the state dropped from 84.62 per cent to 84.49 per cent.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state increased from 3,89,832 to 4,01,172.

The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.91 per cent to 1.88 per cent.

There are a maximum of 73,599 "active" cases in Pune, followed by Mumbai (60,846) Nagpur (52,408), Thane (48,660), Nashik (31,512), Aurangabad (14,302), Jalgaon (7,641), Amaravati (3,440) and Akola (3,821).

With 19 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 11,727 to 11,754, while the infected cases went up further by an alarming 9108 cases to trigger a jump in the infections from 4,32,367 to 4,41,475.

Pune district -- which continues to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra -- on Friday saw the total number of cases increase from 553413 to 5,64,286, while the total number of deaths in Pune rose from 8373 to 8425.

Thane district remained in the third spot -- after Pune and Mumbai -- after the total number of infections rose from 3,49,355 to 3,54,846 while the total deaths climbed from 6087 to 6111.

Of the 2,03,43,135 samples sent to laboratories, 29,53,523 have tested positive (14.52 per cent) for COVID-19 until Saturday.

Currently, 21,57,135 people are in home quarantine while 18,994 people are in institutional quarantine.

# ED seizes ₹350 crore in money laundering cases

Earlier this week, the agency had attached assets worth ₹152.48 crore of the Unitech Group



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Enforcement said it has attached movable and immovable properties worth over ₹350 crore in 10 separate cases of money laundering. The attachments include properties worth ₹197.34 crore of real estate company Unitech, worth ₹73 crore in coal block cases of two firms—Visa Power Ltd. and Vini Iron & Steel Udyog Ltd and over ₹67.06 crore in four cases of banking frauds by business entities.

In the Unitech case, the ED has attached 10 properties, including a resort each in Sikkim (Gangtok) and Kerala (Alappuzha), under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). "The registered value of these immovable properties is ₹197.34 crore and these immovable properties are owned by the various entities of Carnoustie Group," the ED said.

"The Unitech Group had diverted proceeds of crime to the tune of ₹325 crore to Carnoustie Group and in turn, the entities of Carnoustie Group purchased several immovable properties from these funds," the ED said in a

statement.

Earlier this week, the agency had similarly attached assets worth ₹152.48 crore of the Unitech Group.

A criminal case was registered under various sections of the PMLA against the Unitech Group and its promoters over allegations that the owners—Sanjay Chandra and Ajay Chandra—illegally diverted over ₹2,000 crore to Cyprus and Cayman Island.

Recently, the agency had also searched 35 premises in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) and Mumbai as part of a probe in the case.

This apart, the agency's money laundering investigation has revealed that Visa Power Ltd was awarded Fatehpur Coal Block and Fatehpur East Coal Block in 2007 by misrepresenting the capacity of its end use power plant to be of 1000 MW and network of the principal company Vida Minmetal AG, Switzerland.

"By the end of FY (financial year) 2014, before the cancellation of Coal Block in September, total capital infused in the company was more than ₹200 crore. Further, it was found that the capital infused is under the garb of

## Trinamool leaders' assets worth ₹3 crore attached in Saradha Chit Fund case

The ED on Saturday said it has attached assets worth ₹3 crore of TMC leader and CEO of beleaguered Saradha Media Group Kunal Ghosh, party MPs Satabdi Roy and Debjani Mukherjee in connection with a money laundering probe in the Saradha Chit Fund case. So far, prop-

erties having market value of more than ₹600 crore have been provisionally attached during investigation under PMLA in this case.

Ghosh, who is out on bail in the case, was suspended from the TMC in 2013 for alleged anti-party activities. The ED has questioned him and others in this case.

coal block allocation. The entire fund has been used for project development including purchase of land at Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

During investigation, properties having market value of ₹71.81 crore have been identified and investigation has revealed that the same have been acquired by proceeds of crime.

Provisional Attachment order has been issued worth ₹72 Crore (approximately)," the ED said in a statement. In the case of Vini Iron & Steel Udyog Ltd, the PMLA probe was initiated on the basis of a CBI FIR for alleged irregularity in allocation of Rajasthan East Coal Block. Money laundering investigation in this case revealed that Vijay Joshi laundered ₹4.35 crore through a maze of companies for acquiring shares of Vini Iron & Steel Udyog Ltd from the earlier promoters. After transfer of shares in

favour of Vijay Joshi, Rajasthan East Coal Block was allocated to this Company. Incidentally, Vijay Joshi was also an accused in the case of Madhu Koda, being tried at the Special Court at Ranchi.

Two fixed deposits amounting to ₹90 Lakh in the name of Vini Iron & Steel Udyog Ltd, which are kept as lien with PNB, Ranchi, have also been attached, the agency said.

In four cases of banking frauds by business entities, the ED has attached movable and immovable assets worth over ₹67.06 crore.

Meanwhile, the ED has also attached movable and immovable properties worth over ₹6.27 crore in two separate cases of scheduled offence of Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Asset) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 against Sundru Bhagwandas Hiranandani and RP Mansinghka.

# UK variant led to Covid surge in Punjab

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A senior scientist from Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB), a lab of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has indicated that the UK variant of coronavirus found in Punjab is a potential threat due to its efficiency in spreading, while the double mutant found in Maharashtra is a matter of concern, but not a cause to create panic.

Rakesh Misra, director of the CSIR-CCMB, said that the UK variant has contributed to the surge in cases in Punjab.

"Somebody had travelled from the UK to Punjab, possibly in a group, and then people from this group would have gone to several places in Punjab, which has contributed to the surge," said Misra.

When asked why the UK variant has not been found majorly in cases in the neighbouring States of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, Misra said that may be those infected with the UK variant in Punjab have not travelled to places outside the state, or there has not been a super spreader event so far.

However, it is a matter of time and there is a possibility that cases may show up later, Misra told a news agency.

The double mutant found in Maharashtra in 15-20 per cent Covid samples sent for genome sequencing is a combination of two mutations -- E484Q and L452R -- the CSIR-CCMB Director said.

The L452R was found in patients in California, where experts believed that it led to higher spread of Covid-19 as it was a more infectious strain, while the E484Q has been found in Maharashtra.

# 9 potential treatments in containing coronavirus identified, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A team of researchers has identified nine potential new Covid-19 treatments, including three — the transplant-rejection drug cyclosporine, the cancer drug dacomitinib, and the antibiotic salinomycin — that were already approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treating other diseases.

The study, published in the journal Cell Reports, screened thousands of existing drugs and drug-like molecules for their ability to inhibit the replication of the Covid-19-causing coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

"Our discoveries here suggest new avenues for therapeutic interventions against Covid-19, and also underscore the importance of testing candidate drugs in respiratory cells," said researcher Sara Cherry from the University of Pennsylvania.

For the study, the researchers assembled a library

of 3,059 compounds, including about 1,000 FDA-approved drugs and more than 2,000 drug-like molecules that have shown activity against defined biological targets.

They then tested all of these for their ability to significantly inhibit SARS-CoV-2 replication in infected cells, without causing much toxicity.

Initially, they performed antiviral screens using cell types they could grow easily in the lab and infect with SARS-CoV-2, namely African Green Monkey kidney cells, and a cell line derived from human liver cells.

With these screens, they identified and validated several compounds that worked in the monkey kidney cells, and 23 that worked in the human liver cells. Hydroxychloroquine, which is used as a malaria drug, and remdesivir, were effective in both cell types.

Since SARS-CoV-2 is mainly a respiratory virus and is thought to initiate infections

via airway-lining cells, the researchers sought a respiratory cell type that they could infect experimentally with the virus.

They eventually identified a suitable cell line, Calu-3, that is derived from human airway-lining cells.

They used these respiratory-derived cells to test the antiviral compounds identified through the human liver cell screen, and found that only nine had activity in the new cells. The nine did not include hydroxychloroquine.

The nine antivirals active in respiratory cells did include salinomycin, a veterinary antibiotic that is also being investigated as an anticancer drug; the kinase enzyme inhibitor dacomitinib, an anticancer drug; bemcentinib, another kinase inhibitor now being tested against cancers; the antihistamine drug ebastine; and cyclosporine, an immune suppressing drug commonly used to prevent the immune rejection of transplanted organs.

Also, the E484Q shares similarities with the variants found in Brazil and South Africa and it has resistance to vaccines from Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca.

Mishra said the double mutant found in Maharashtra is certainly a matter of concern, but there should not be any panic now.

He added that 452R was found in California and it was considered to be more infectious, but we do not know what changes it has undergone so far. Also, the E484Q has not been studied well in India.

He clarified that, for example, if a double mutant is found in 50 per cent of cases in some pockets, then what is the cause for the other 50 per cent cases in the same pockets?

"At this stage, we cannot link double mutants to the surge in cases in Maharashtra," said Mishra.

He added that both vaccines, AstraZeneca and Covaxin, are working well against the Punjab variant and the double mutant found in Maharashtra.

Mishra emphasised that people should continue to follow Covid appropriate behaviour — wearing masks, social distancing and hand sanitisation — to control the spread of the virus.

# Media reports about bonded labourers found in Punjab misleading, says MHA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Saturday termed as "distorted" and "misleading" media reports linking its letter to the Punjab Government on the plight of 58 "bonded labourers" rescued in the State to the farmers' agitation and said no motive should be ascribed to a routine communication over law and order issues.

The Ministry said a section of media has erroneously reported that the Ministry has written the letter to Punjab levelling "grave charges" against the farmers of the State.

"These news reports are misleading and present a distorted and highly editorialised opinion of a simple observation about a socioeconomic problem emerging from four sensitive border districts of Punjab over a period of two years, which has been brought

to the attention of this ministry by the concerned Central Armed Police Force," the home ministry said in a statement.

The home ministry said, "Firstly, no motive can be ascribed to a letter issued by this ministry to a particular state or states as this is part of routine communication over law and order issues".

The ministry said the letter has also been forwarded to the Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour and Employment with a request to carry out a sensitisation exercise in all states to check the duping of vulnerable victims at the hands of unscrupulous elements.

"Secondly, some of the news reports about the letter have juxtaposed in a totally unrelated context to conclude that the MHA has framed 'grave charges' against the farmers of Punjab and has also connected this with the

ongoing farmers' agitation," the statement said.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting on the borders of Delhi against three central agri laws since late November, with the deadlock persisting even after several rounds of talks.

The home ministry said the letter clearly and only states that "human trafficking syndicates" hire such labourers and they are "exploited, paid poorly and meted out inhuman treatment" besides luring them with drugs to extract more labour, affecting their "physical and mental health".

"Keeping in view the multi-dimensional and overwhelming enormity of the problem, this ministry has only requested the state government(s) to take suitable measures to address this serious problem," the statement said.

# Espionage case: SC panel submits report in ISRO scientist harassment

New Delhi: A high-level probe panel appointed by the Supreme Court to take erring cops to task for causing "tremendous harassment" and "immeasurable anguish" to ISRO scientist Dr Nambi Narayanan in the 1994 espionage case has submitted its report to the apex court, sources said on Saturday.

The SC had on September 14, 2018 appointed the three-member panel headed by its former judge D K Jain while directing the Kerala government to cough up Rs 50 lakh compensation for compelling Narayanan to undergo "immense humiliation".

The scientist was arrested when the Congress was heading the government in Kerala. The panel, after investigation, submitted its report in a sealed cover to the apex court recently.

The CBI, in its probe, had held that the then top police officials in Kerala were



responsible for Narayanan's illegal arrest.

The case also had its political fallout, with a section in the Congress targeting the then Chief Minister late K Karunakaran over the issue, that eventually led to his resignation. Over a period of almost two-and-a-half years,

ing two Maldivian women.

The 79-year-old former scientist, who was given a clean chit by the CBI, maintained that the Kerala Police had "fabricated" the case and the technology he was accused to have stolen and sold in the 1994 case did not even exist at that time.

Narayanan had approached the apex court against a Kerala High Court judgement that said "no action needed to be taken" against former DGP Siby Mathews, who was then heading the SIT probe team, two retired superintendents of police, K K Joshua and S Vijayan, and the then Deputy Director, Intelligence Bureau, R B Shree Kumar, who were later held responsible by the CBI for the scientist's illegal arrest.

The CBI, while giving a clean chit to the scientist, had said that Siby Mathews had left "the entire investigation to IB surrendering his duties" and ordered indiscriminate arrest of the scientist and others without adequate evidence. PTI

# Won't stop until farm laws junked, says Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With stones allegedly pelted at the convoy of farmer leader Rakesh Tikait in Rajasthan's Alwar district, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said "we will take on the Sangh (RSS) together" and not stop until the farm laws are repealed.

Police in the stone pelting case have detained a student leader, who the Bhartiya Kisan Union claimed, belonged to the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the BJP, and accused the party of being behind the attack.

"Their Sangh teaches them to attack, while non-violent satyagraha makes the farmers fearless," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

"We will take on Sangh together — we will only stop until the three anti-agriculture and anti-national laws are repealed," the former Congress chief said.

Hundreds of farmers have been camping at Delhi's border points at Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri since November last year demanding that the Centre repeal the three contentious farm laws.

# Cong raps EC for Biswa ban cut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shortly after the Election Commission reduced the campaigning ban on Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Congress on Saturday hit out at the electoral watchdog saying it is a dark day for Parliamentary democracy and history will not pardon the panel.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it was deplorable that the EC could not sustain its own order and accused the poll body of buckling under pressure of the Modi government by reducing the ban on Sarma from 48 hours to 24 hours.

The Election Commission had on Friday banned Sarma from all modes of campaigning for 48 hours for allegedly making threatening remarks against Bodoland People's Front (BPF) chief Hagrama Mohilary but reduced it to 24 hours this evening after the minister tendered an unconditional apology and assured the poll panel that he will abide by the provisions of the model code.

"A dark day for Parliamentary democracy. ECI doesn't even have the guts to sustain its own order. Deplorable that EC buckles under Modi Government's pressure and reverses its own order of ban on Sh. Himanta Biswa Sarma. History will neither pardon ECI nor BJP for



this sin," Surjewala said on Twitter.

Questioning the EC, he asked why did it make this change of heart and why it did not seek the comments of the complainant. The Congress had complained to the EC against Sarma and demanded action against him for giving threats to Mohilary. "Will the ECI tell - Was this somersault taken suo moto or on a fresh plea by BJP/Himanta Sarma? If yes, why did EC then not call upon the complainant, BPF and Congress? If no, why this vexatious change of heart," Surjewala asked. "Does it now give a license to issue threat with impunity," he further

asked.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra alleged that the EC seems to have torn down the page of "impartiality" from its rulebook. "While we were awaiting strict action from the Election Commission in the case in which an EVM was found in the BJP leader's car, but another move of the Commission seems to suggest that it has torn down the page of impartiality from its rulebook," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

"After all, under what pressure was the ban on BJP leader, who was giving threats, reduced from 48 hours to 24 hours," she asked. Another

Congress leader Jaiveer Shergill said "By 'relaxing' the ban on Himanta Biswa Sarma, the EC itself has given the proof that they are involved in 'fixing' the election for BJP." "The EC must explain why sudden change of heart? Who in BJP called up to threaten them? EC shamelessly becoming BJP co-conspirator in hijacking democracy," he alleged.

After the EC reduced the ban, Sarma became eligible to campaign from the evening. Canvassing for the third and final phase of Assam assembly elections comes to an end on the evening of April 4. The final phase of polling will be held on April 6.

# Rly employees worked with grit during Covid outbreak: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday penned a letter to around 13 lakh rail employees, thanking them for their work during the coronavirus crisis.

He said the last year was unlike anything that was experienced before.

"While the loss of our own would never be forgotten, it was the grit, determination and resolve of Rail Parivaar which had emerged victorious in the wake of the unprecedented pandemic," he said.

Goyal said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Railway family" devoted itself to the service of the nation. "While the world came to a standstill, railwaymen never took a day off, and worked even harder at a great personal risk to keep the wheels of the economy moving," he said.

The minister added that due to the commitment of all, the railways could ensure uninterrupted supply of essential goods, be it coal for power plants, fertilizer for farmers or foodgrains for the consumers across the country.

"With your sheer willpower and resilience, we turned this crisis into an opportunity," he wrote.



Goyal said 4,621 Shramik Specials were run to unite families and carry more than 63 lakh stranded citizens. "Despite limitations during the lockdown, 370 major safety and infrastructure works were completed. Kisan Rail Services became the medium to connect our 'Annadatas' directly with bigger markets. You, through your service, made this possible and in turn touched the hearts and lives of lakhs of people," the Railway minister said.

"It is a matter of immense pride for me that the railways, with its exemplary work, has spearheaded the economic recovery," he said, adding 1,233 million tonnes of originating freight has been loaded, "which is the best ever for any year". He also said 6,015 RKM

(Route Kilometer) of rail electrification work has been achieved in the last financial year. "As they say, records are meant to be broken and no one does it better than the Indian Railways," the minister said.

Goyal added that now, the railways has become a customer-centric and is taking numerous steps for improving its speed as well as operational efficiency.

"This is visible as the average speed of freight trains has almost doubled to 44 Kmph and punctuality of the passenger trains has been maintained at a level of 96 per cent. There have been zero passenger fatalities and a drastic reduction in number of consequential train accidents in last two years," he said in the letter.

# 22% Bengal poll contestants hold criminal past: ADR

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Twenty-two per cent of the 372 candidates in the fourth phase of the West Bengal Assembly polls have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms. The West Bengal Election Watch and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 372 out of 373 candidates who are contesting in the polls to be held on April 10. Records of Independent candidate Bishnu Chowdhuri from Saptagram constituency could not be analysed due to incomplete affidavit available on the ECI website at the time of making this report, the ADR said.

"Out of 372 candidates analysed, 81 (22 per cent) candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves and 65 (17 per cent) have declared serious criminal cases against themselves," the report said.

# Slippers, microphones hurled at Speaker

## Odisha Assembly

**Bhubaneswar:** Slippers, microphones and documents crumpled up into balls flew like missiles in the Odisha Assembly on Saturday, as BJP members raged over the passage of a bill without discussion, provoking the Speaker to suspend three of them and order their immediate exit from the chamber. BJP members were up in arms against Speaker S N Patro after the House passed the Odisha Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill within minutes without any discussion. Congress MLAs, too, were livid as the chair had turned down their notice for a discussion on alleged corruption in mining activities. Hardly had the Bill been passed in the pre-lunch session when opposition BJP members

were on their feet, shouting at the Speaker. Soon they began flinging slippers, microphones and paper balls that shot over the opposition benches and landed near the Speaker's podium, plunging the assembly into chaos and leading to adjournment till lunch. When the House reassembled, the Speaker Patro announced suspension of BJP deputy leader in the House B C Sethi, Mohan Majhi, the party's whip, and MLA J N Mishra for the duration of the entire session and asked them to leave immediately. The BJP has 22 MLAs in the 147-member Odisha assembly.

The action followed after Patro, Parliamentary Affairs Minister B K Arukha, Government Chief Whip Pramila Mallick, Leader of the Opposition P K Naik and Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra watched a video of the incident. The errant MLAs, however, remained defiant and staged a sit-in near Mahatma Gandhi's statue on the premises. "Our members were suspended without giving them an opportunity to present their point of view. Our dharna will continue till tomorrow," Leader of the Opposition P K Naik of the BJP told reporters.

Suspended MLAs Mishra and Majhi said they had no regrets for hurling slippers and other objects at the Speaker's podium. "We were not given an opportunity to speak. We have done no wrong. The objects thrown by MLAs did not land even close to the Speaker's podium," Majhi said. Mishra accused the Speaker of working in a partisan manner "like a BJD member", and blamed the chair for the fracas. "I don't care about suspension. I have been working for the people and will continue to do so. This suspension cannot stop me from performing my duty as people's representative," he declared nonchalantly. Government's Chief Whip

Pramila Mallick alleged the errant BJP MLAs acted the way they did to "remain in news". Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra dubbed the incident as unfortunate but voiced displeasure over the Speaker rejecting his party's notice for a discussion on illegal mining activities. "It is also unfortunate that bills are passed in the House without discussion. Bills should not be passed when the House is not in order," he said. Sethi said the BJP members were protesting against the Speaker as he did not allow Leader of the Opposition P K Naik to speak. "We also wanted a discussion on illegal mining activities and farmers issues. But the Speaker did not allow it. Is it democratic?" he said. **PTI**

# Ex-chairman of J&K Bank arrested by ACB

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU**

Parvez Ahmad Nengroo, ex-chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Bank has been arrested by Anti Corruption Bureau in connection with investigation of case FIR 14/2020 of PS ACB Srinagar. According to a statement issued by the Anti Corruption Bureau, "The case pertains to illegal allotment of tenders by Jammu and Kashmir Bank regarding housekeeping, to a Mumbai based Company i.e, M/S SILA Solutions Pvt. Ltd by not following proper tendering norms as provided in the contract to the said firm despite



not falling into the criteria of any such allotment". The statement further said, "due to not following the proper tendering processes, improper ATM cleaning, undue addi-

tion of the Management Fee and other omissions and commissions detected during the course of investigation, the J&K Bank has suffered losses worth crores of rupees from the date of award of contract". Besides this case, charge sheets in connection with FIR 10/2019 of PS ACB Srinagar have already been produced before the Anti Corruption Court against Parvez Ahmad Nengroo. It is pertinent to mention here that on account of illegal appointments in JK bank, the bank suffered a loss of more than Rs. 250 crore on account of salary paid to these illegal employees over the period.

# Votes for development in Domjur! Voters undecided who did it

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ DOMJUR/HOWRAH**

Old Laloo Mian breaks down like a child — as soon as he gets a sympathetic pat on his shoulder — not only because he finds it difficult to make the both ends meet but because he does not know where to go after BJP comes to power because "they will push us to Bangladesh." His wrinkled face and bare rickety torso evokes concern. Date line: Pakuria, a tiny village in Domjur constituency, bordering Howrah and East Midnapore district from where BJP's turncoat number two Rajib Banerjee a former Minister in Mamata Banerjee cabinet is contesting on a safe-rickety ticket. "Babu I swear by my Allah! We have been residents here for more than a hundred years ... not a relative of us have any acquaintance in that country... My food will be a haram if I tell a lie," he cries out. When told that he has nothing to fear till he has the documents with him he looks blankly. Babu we

don't have job cards in place then how can we keep the other documents properly in this tiny shanty? When asked whether he had received adequate supplies during Amphan he says "see here the entire roof and everything were blown away but not a farthing came from the panchayat (read Government)." Even then he would not vote for the BJP for obvious reasons. But "babu I would prefer the Laal Party (Left) but they are supporting Bhajijaan (ISF) ... winning or losing I will support that party." He is as uncomplicated and candid as an humble villager should be. Cut to Nana Panchayat where a former CPI(M) man says he would support Rajib Banerjee because "he has done considerable work for this area. He has brought drinking water pipeline to Pakuria which is likely to come here too, he has worked on sewerage system so that "we have less mosquito bites today ... I don't mind his joining the BJP. I am still a

Left supporter but I will back him." Bikash Dhara a bargadar (share-cropper) remembers how "Jyoti Basu did a great job by giving us livelihood, he gave us land ... in the Left rule things were peaceful ... there was no Hindu-Muslim ... but today Mamata didi and Modi have divided us. We are scared to go to the Muslim locality not because they are hostile because we get uncanny feeling ... this is all mental we know but that is the situation now... I cannot tell my son not to work for the either party because he has been purchased by one of them." Who has purchased whom he would not say. "There is definitely a refrain that Buddha Babu is not there ... there is definitely a refrain that why we brought him down but still we have no choice and we will have to chose a lesser evil between this too," says Shankar Bauri of Pakuria. He means TMC and BJP. He however says that Banerjee as a minister did a great job making concrete roads "as far as up to your door

steps." But local TMC leader Subhas says "it is not Rajib Banerjee but it is the work of Mamata Banerjee. Had the Chief Minister not helped him would he have been able to do this work? So vote will come in the name of Mamata Didi." However a bunch of daily wagers at a by-lane at Nanna murmurs: "only the EVM will talk." When asked why one of them asks about the chances of BJP coming to power. When told that it has good chances of winning he says "we have job cards for 100-days work but we get 2-3 days only. The entire lock down we got no work... only those who have either more number of voters in their houses or who paid cash got work... they only gave us some rice and we had to collect plants from the bushes to cook with rice and eat." His wife Soma (name changed) says "my husband and a few people went jointly to ask for jobs and see what they did to them (she pulls up her husband's banyan ... see

these scars for yourself ... they beat them up mercilessly ... only when we caught their feet that they were relieved or else they would be murdered that day and no one would get a trace of their corpse." And what was Rajib Banerjee as a Minister doing then? "They would not let us go to him. If they got a wind of us going to him then they would bump us off." She says how most of the 200 booths in the last Assembly elections were captured by TMC adding quickly however that "we were fortunate that Rajib Babu is not like his followers... he has some mercy." Whom would they bump off this time round? They look bewildered and tentative. "Sir we don't have a choice ... We would have preferred the Laal Party but they are too weak ... so we will have to choose between these two ... Let us see," says Anima an undecided voter. Wonder whether the "undecided" clan poses the biggest threat to the ruler and challenger this time round from Domjur.

# Eight cattle slaughterers, beef traders arrested after shootout: Police

**Bulandshahr:** The Bulandshahr police on Saturday arrested eight members of a gang allegedly involved in lifting cattle and slaughtering them for selling beef and recovered several illegal arms from them. The arrests were made by a joint team of Jahangirabad Police station and the district Crime Branch from Rivada village in the Arnia police station area after an early-hour gunbattle in which two members of the gang, including its leader Akbar, was injured. Akbar, involved in trampling a police constable to death in 2010 under the wheels of his cattle-laden mini truck at a police barricade on being asked to stop for checking, was arrested along with his accomplice Mehndi Hasan, Bulandshahr SP Santosh Singh said. The incident in which constable Mahendra Singh was trampled to death had taken place at Chola traffic intersection under Kotwali police station area, the SP recalled. Arrested after suffering gunshot wounds in the exchange of fire, the two were

sent to a hospital for treatment, said Singh, adding, six other members of the gang were arrested during subsequent raids at various places. The police team also recovered five country-made pistols and several live cartridges, along with a cow and several cattle slaughtering equipment from them, the police superintendent said. Two of the gang members managed to escape, he added. This inter-district gang was involved in lifting cattle, including stray ones, and then slaughtering them to sell their beef, the SP said. There are 14 criminal cases, including those of murder, attempt to murder and cow slaughtering, are lodged against Akbar and Hasan, in various police stations of Bulandshahr and Aligarh districts, the SP said. Singh identified other arrested gangsters as Aashu, Salman, Bundu and Daroga, all residents of Arania and Tyyeb of Kotawali Dehat area with eight criminal cases lodged against Aashu, two against Salman and one each against Billu and Bundu. **PTI**

# Village priest, planning to fight panchayat polls, goes missing: Police

**Muzaffarnagar:** A 60-year-old priest, planning to fight the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Panchayat elections, has gone missing from his village temple in the Muzaffarnagar district, police said on Saturday. They said the matter is also being investigated from the angle if he was abducted by his rivals. Muzaffarnagar Superintendent of Police (Rural) A K Shrivastava said priest Baba Hari Giri Maharaj of Shiv Temple in Sarnawali village under the Phugana police station area has gone missing since Saturday morning. He was in the temple last night but was nowhere to be found on Saturday morning, he said, adding the police have registered a "missing person" case and are investigating it. Deputy Superintendent of Police Sharad Chandra Sharma told PTI that the priest was also planning to file his nomination for the post of village head (gram Pradhan) in the upcoming panchayat elections. The police are also trying to ascertain if he was abducted due to his intention to fight the elections. **PTI**

# Sahada bypoll: In viral video & letter, BJP rebel alleges he withdrew nomination after threats

**Jaipur:** A day after BJP rebel Ladulal Pitliya withdrew nomination as an independent candidate in the Sahada assembly bypoll, a video clip and a letter circulating on social media suggest he pulled out of the elections as "the BJP was mounting pressure" on him, and his family was being harassed. An audio clip has also surfaced online in which he is purportedly repeating his allegations, and requesting Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to provide protection to his family. While Pitliya remained unavailable for comment despite repeated attempts, the BJP described the letter "a conspiracy" by Congress leaders. In his purported handwritten letter to Gehlot, Pitliya has alleged that his family has been facing problems and threats after he filed his nomination as an independent candidate from Sahada. He alleged he was threatened to withdraw his nomination.

In the video clip that has gone viral on social media, he is heard saying, "I filed nomination as an independent only to serve the Sahada assembly constituency and I have withdrawn the nomination as my family was under some pressure. I will keep working in Sahada assembly constituency." The bypoll to the seat was necessitated by the demise of sitting Congress MLA Kailash Trivedi. The Congress has fielded Trivedi's wife Gayatri Devi. Pitliya had rebelled against the BJP during the 2018 state elections after he was denied a party ticket. The BJP lost the seat in the 2018 polls. Pitliya was denied the BJP ticket for this bypoll as well after which he had filed his nomination as an independent. However, he withdrew his paper suddenly on Friday. After he pulled out of the polls, the BJP in a statement had said Friday the party respects him and he will be given a deserving responsibility. **PTI**

# J&K Lt-Guv inaugurates power projects worth ₹118.91 crore at Baramulla

**Jammu:** In a major push to strengthen the power infrastructure in the Union Territory, Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha Saturday e-inaugurated 17 Power Projects worth Rs. 118.91 crore at Delina, Baramulla. Speaking on the occasion, the Lt Governor observed that the inauguration of new projects is another step towards developing better Power Distribution and efficient Power Transmission system in the region. To realize the vision of making J&K Power surplus, Rs 54,000 Crore worth power projects have been approved which would generate 3500 Megawatt in three to four years, the Lt Governor observed. The Lt Governor underscored that determined efforts are being made to reach out to

all the unconnected habitations, besides providing 24x7 quality electricity to the people of J&K. He added that the Government is taking many short terms, medium term, and long term measures to provide the people with quality power supply round the clock in the coming two years. Power sector now has an increased Budget of Rs 120 Cr, taking the total to Rs 2728 cr. New projects are being completed and added to the existing grid. Several bottlenecks causing delays in the timely completion of augmentation and restoration works of various power projects and creating power crisis in the winter season are being identified and subsequently eliminated, the Lt Governor maintained. Responsibilities are being

fixed and experts from power sector were roped in to provide vital inputs for mitigation of power related issues, he added. Addressing the welfare issues of the field functionaries, the Lt Governor said that social security is being provided to the field functionaries of PDD who are prone to vulnerability. Meanwhile, Baseer Ahmad Khan, Advisor to Lt Governor gave a brief scenario of the power sector and highlighted the measures taken by the department to augment the power infrastructure in the UT. Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary, Power Development Department and Information Department; Bhupinder Kumar, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla; Chief Engineers; senior officers and other concerned functionaries were present on the occasion. **PNS**

**Central Coalfields Limited**  
A Miniratna Company  
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"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd. [www.coalindia.in/respective](http://www.coalindia.in/respective) Subsidiary Company (CCL, [www.centralcoalfields.in](http://www.centralcoalfields.in)), CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> in addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal <https://gem.gov.in>"

# Girl sets herself ablaze after repeated molestation by minor, dies: Police

**Hamirpur (UP):** A 15-year-old girl who had set herself ablaze in a village under Sumerpur police station area after allegedly being molested by a boy, succumbed to her injuries in a Kanpur hospital on Saturday, police said. The girl had been rushed to the Kanpur hospital for specialised treatment as she had received severe burn injuries on Tuesday, they said. **PTI**

# J&K L-G launches plantation programme to boost fruit yield

**Jammu:** Manoj Sinha, Lt Governor, Jammu and Kashmir, presided over a function on Saturday to inaugurate the High Density Plantation programme in Jammu & Kashmir in collaboration with NAFED to boost the production of Apples, Walnuts, Cherries and other horticulture crops over next six years with investment of Rs 1700 crores. The programme will be implemented in close associa-



tion with Banks for credit support and Empanelled Agencies for supply of inputs like dwarfing root stock, planting material, trellis system, anti-hail net, micro-irrigation etc.

**कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता, लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड रायपुर (छ.ग.) ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना**

निविदा प्रथम 'A' में एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से जल जीवन मिशन के रेगुलेशन नलजल प्रदाय योजनागत निर्माण कार्य की ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

एन.आई.टी. क्रमांक दिनांक / रिस्टम टेंडर क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)
231/28.03.21, 75137	विकासखंड तिलदा के ग्राम जंजीगीरा	51.87
232/28.03.21, 75138	विकासखंड तिलदा के ग्राम सिरी	81.82
233/28.03.21, 75139	विकासखंड तिलदा के ग्राम मांठ	101.89
234/28.03.21, 75140	विकासखंड आरंग के ग्राम कुकरा	49.96
235/28.03.21, 75141	विकासखंड आरंग के ग्राम सुनगी	43.00
236/28.03.21, 75142	विकासखंड आरंग के ग्राम बरौदा	97.25
237/28.03.21, 75143	विकासखंड आरंग के ग्राम कोरौली	108.88

नोट:- उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्य की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञापित, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> अथवा विभागीय वेबसाइट <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> में दिनांक 04.04.2021 से देखी जा सकती है। एवं निविदा अचलनोट करने की अंतिम तिथि 18.04.2021 होगी।

हरता / - कार्यपालन अभियंता, लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

R.O. No.:- 60039/11  
R.O. Date:- 03/04/2021

# Labourer's daughter raped by brick kiln owner's brother-in-law in Aligarh

**PRADEEP SAXENAN ■ ALIGARH**

The teenager daughter of a Scheduled Caste labourer was raped by the kiln owner's brother-in-law at a brick kiln located in Gorai area in Iglas tehsil. When the father complained, he was beaten up and got injured. The SSP conducted an immediate investigation after taking cognizance of a complaint made on the IGRS portal by a trade union of Bihar. As soon as the case is confirmed by Gorai Chowki Incharge, the teenager has been sent for medical examination by filing a report on the victim's father's statement. It is not the first time that laborer's daughters are raped in Aligarh, there are many more such cases are pending. It may be recalled that Bhatta Parsol case

where 13 women were gang raped is still pending in court. The main reason being is that the contractors bring the laborers and made them work as bonded laborers and the women of their families are made prey of sexual harrasment. Kanta Prasad, the brother-in-law of the kiln owner, works on a brick kiln. The laborers, work with the family, doing brick work. Kanta Prasad called and raped the minor daughter of a Scheduled Caste laborer in his office on the pretext of giving her water. After leaving the office, the victim informed the family members. When the father complained, the accused beat him and he was injured. After this, the victim informed the leader of a labor organization in her area about the incident.

# Special court extends Vaze's remand till Apr 7 as NIA seizes one more car

**TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI**

A special court on Saturday remanded arrested Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze in the extended custody of NIA till April 7 in the two cases of SUV recovery and businessman Mansukh Hiran's alleged murder, even as the investigators seized another high-end car allegedly used by Vaze. Vaze was produced before the Special NIA Court after his remand ended. The NIA roofer for the extension of his custody by a week, saying that its investigations were in final stages and it required the accused for further investigation. While hearing the NIA's plea seeking the extension of Vaze's custody, the Special NIA court asked the central investigating agency to extend any medical assistance required by the incarcerated police officer and directed it submit the latter's health status report. Vaze was produced before the Special NIA Court after his remand ended. The NIA roofer for the extension of his custody by a week, saying that its investigations were in final stages and it required the accused for further investigation. While arguing for the extension of Vaze's custody, Additional Solicitor-General Anil Singh, representing the NIA, told the court that the investigators had found several incriminating pieces of evidence like a DVR of CCTV

**While hearing the NIA's plea seeking the extension of Vaze's custody, the Special NIA court asked the central investigating agency to extend any medical assistance required by the incarcerated police officer and directed it submit the latter's health status report**

ber of high-end cars seized by the NIA has gone up to seven. Earlier, the cars seized by the investigating agency include: Mitsubishi Outlander, a Scorpio, Innova, Prado and two Mercedes Benz. The investigators suspect that some of seized vehicles had been used to carry out reconnaissance of the site near Ambani's residence where a Scorpio laden with 20 gelatin sticks was recovered on February 25. Vaze, a key accused in the SUV planting case, was initially booked under sections 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing +counterfeit seal) and 506-2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. The NIA later invoked sections 16 (Punishment for Terror act) and 18 (Punishment for conspiracy etc) of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) against Vaze. Apart from the SUV recovery case, the NIA is also investigating the alleged Manshukh Hiran murder case.

**कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल**  
केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला ( मैके.शाखा )  
निविदा सूचना

क्र.181/के.कर्म./2021

भोपाल, दिनांक 03.04.2021

नगर निगम भोपाल केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला के द्वारा विभिन्न प्रकार के वाहन किराये पर लिये जाने हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	सामान का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत	धरोहर राशि	निविदा फार्म का मूल्य	प्रदाय अवधि
1.	2021_UAD_138116_1	जे.सी.बी. मशीन (3dx या 76 एच पी) या समकक्ष डम्पर (8-10 क्यू मीटर क्षमता) या समकक्ष एवं लेवलर ट्रैक्टर या समकक्ष, टाटा ट्रक-407 या समकक्ष, टाटा मैजिक या समकक्ष, ई-रिक्शा या समकक्ष, ट्रैक्टर ट्राली हार्ड ड्रिलिंग व सादा एवं इन्वोला क्रिस्टो की किराये पर लेने यावत।	16950000/-	169500/-	12500/-	आवश्यकतानुसार

BID SUBMISSION END DATE- 30.04.2021 TIME- 15:00 PM  
BID OPENING DATE- 01.05.2021 TIME- 15:00 PM

निविदा से संबंधित अन्य विस्तृत जानकारी वेबसाइट [mptenders.gov.in](https://mptenders.gov.in) पर देखी एवं केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला (मैकेनिकल) से कार्यालयीन समय में प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

उपायुक्त परिवहन शाखा नगर निगम भोपाल

क्र.14/021/022

# Myanmar death toll edges up to 550

## Access to mobile networks and all wireless remained blocked

AP ■ YANGON

Security forces in central Myanmar opened fire on anti-coup protesters on Saturday, killing at least two people according to local media. A human rights group said mounting violence since the February 1 military takeover has killed at least 550 civilians.

Of those, 46 were children, according to Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Some 2,751 people have been detained or sentenced, the group said.

Threats of lethal violence and arrests of protesters have failed to suppress daily demonstrations across Myanmar demanding the military step down and reinstate the democratically elected Government. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in the Southeast Asian country.

Government forces fired at demonstrators in central Myanmar on Saturday, killing at least two people, the Myanmar Now news service reported. One video posted on social media showed a group of protesters carrying away a young man with what appeared to be a serious head wound, as



Anti-coup protesters line in formation with homemade air rifles during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday

gunfire sounded. His condition wasn't immediately known.

At least seven people were injured in the shooting, two of whom sustained severe wounds and were taken into custody by soldiers, Myanmar Now said, citing a member of a local rescue team.

Late Friday, armed plainclothes police took five people into custody after they spoke with a CNN reporter in a market in Yangon, the country's largest city, local media reported citing witnesses. The arrests occurred in three separate incidents.

Two women reportedly shouted for help as they were being arrested, Myanmar Now reported. One police officer, who was carrying a gun, asked if "anyone dared to help them," a witness told the news service. "They pointed their pistols at everyone — at passersby and

at people in the store," a witness said of two police officers, who forcibly took away two other women in the market.

Meanwhile, the Karen National Union representing the ethnic minority rebel group that has been fighting the government for decades condemned "non-stop bombings and airstrikes" against villages and "unarmed civilians" in their homeland along the border with Thailand.

"The attacks have caused the death of many people including children and students, and the destruction of schools, residential homes, and villages. These terrorist acts are clearly a flagrant violation of local and international laws," the group said in a statement.

In areas controlled by the Karen, more than a dozen civilians have been killed and over 20,000 displaced since March 27, according to the Free Burma Rangers, a relief agency operating in the region.

About 3,000 Karen fled to Thailand, but many have returned under unclear circumstances. Thai authorities said they went back voluntarily, but aid groups say they are not safe and many are hiding in

the jungle and in caves on the Myanmar side of the border.

More than a dozen minority groups have sought greater autonomy from the central government for decades, sometimes through armed struggle. Several of the major groups — including the Kachin, the Karen and the Rakhine Arakan Army — have denounced the coup and said they will defend protesters in their territories.

After weeks of overnight cutoffs of internet access, Myanmar's military on Friday shut all links apart from those using fibreoptic cable, which was working at drastically reduced speeds. Access to mobile networks and all wireless — the less costly options used by most people in the developing country — remained blocked on Saturday.

Myanmar languished for five decades under strict military rule, which led to international isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country.

# Biden lifts Trump sanctions on int'l court officials

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Friday lifted sanctions that Donald Trump had imposed on two top officials of the International Criminal Court, undoing one of the past administration's more aggressive moves targeting international institutions and officials.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement stressed that the United States still strongly disagreed with some actions by the court, which is a standing body based at The Hague in the Netherlands, charged with handling genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The United States is not one of the about 120 member countries of the court.

"We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Blinken wrote.

The removal of the sanctions was the latest signal that the Biden administration is intent on returning to the multilateral fold. The Trump administration had unapologetically removed the United



States from numerous international institutions and agreements and harshly criticized others, including the ICC, deeming them flawed and working against American interests.

Since Biden took office, his administration has rejoined the World Health Organization, re-engaged with the UN Human Rights Council, returned to the Paris climate accord and on Friday started talks aimed at returning to the Iran nuclear deal. Trump had pulled out of all five.

The court was created to hold accountable perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity in cases where adequate judicial systems were not available.

# Bangladesh to impose 7-day lockdown amid spike in Covid cases

PTI ■ DHAKA

The Bangladesh government on Saturday decided to impose a week-long nationwide lockdown from Monday as Covid-19 cases and deaths surged across the country.

Road Transport Minister Obaidul Quader made the announcement at a media briefing in Dhaka on Saturday as the country recorded 58 coronavirus deaths and 5,683 new cases overnight, third highest in terms of both fatality and infection since the pandemic broke out in March last year.

"The government is going to enforce a nationwide lock-

down from Monday initially for a week as the spread of coronavirus increases," Quader, also the general secretary of the ruling Awami League, said.

State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain in a separate briefing said an official handout would be issued detailing measures to be taken under the lockdown order.

He said the government might extend the restriction if the situation continue to be worsened but emergency services, kitchen markets and industrial units would remain beyond the restriction but operate strictly maintaining health guidelines.

# US Secy of State speaks with Daniel Pearl's family, assures them of justice

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has spoken with the family of slain American journalist Daniel Pearl, and assured them that the US government remains committed to pursuing justice and accountability for those involved in his kidnapping and murder in Pakistan.

Pearl, the 38-year-old South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal, was abducted and beheaded while he was in Pakistan investigating a story in 2002 on the links between the country's powerful spy agency ISI and al-Qaeda.

"Blinken spoke with members of the family of Daniel Pearl and their representatives today to assure them that the US government remains committed to pursuing justice and

accountability for those involved in Daniel's kidnapping and murder," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Friday.

Last week, Pakistan's Supreme Court criticised the prosecution for its failure to prove the guilt of British-born al-Qaeda terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the main accused in the sensational kidnapping and murder of Pearl in 2002.

His murder took place three years after Sheikh, along with Jaish-e-Mohammad chief (JeM) Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, was released by India in 1999 and given safe passage to Afghanistan in exchange for the nearly 150 passengers of hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814.

The beheading of the American journalist in 2002

had grabbed international headlines

Sheikh and his three aides - Fahad Naseem, Sheikh Adil and Salman Saqib - were convicted and sentenced in the abduction and murder case of Pearl in Karachi in 2002.

The Sindh High Court on April 2, 2020 commuted the death sentence of Sheikh convicted of kidnapping and murdering US journalist Pearl in 2002 to seven years and acquitted three others who were serving life terms in the case - almost two decades after they were found guilty and jailed.

The Supreme Court on January 28 ordered authorities to release the accused while issuing a split order.

It ordered that three others, who had been sentenced to life in prison for their part in Pearl's kidnapping and death, also be freed.

# Aiming big, US Prez is looking to restore faith in Govt

AP ■ WASHINGTON

As President Joe Biden preaches patience but acts with urgency, his vision of the powers of the Oval Office is quickly taking shape, modelled after Democratic predecessors who dramatically expanded the reach of government to confront generational crises.

In a recent meeting with historians and in private conversations with advisers, Biden looked to the examples set by Presidents Franklin D Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson as he aims to use the levers of executive authority to create opportunities and break down barriers.

Unlike Roosevelt and Johnson, who enjoyed formidable Democratic majorities in Congress, Biden has had to operate with a no-margin-for-error edge in fiercely partisan Washington. Born soon after Roosevelt's New Deal and hav-

ing first run for office in the shadow of Johnson's Great Society, Biden has long believed in government as an instrument for good. Now, with the COVID-19 public health pandemic and the economic carnage it wrought, that philosophy is being put to a fundamental test and Biden's place in history is in the balance.

He has chosen momentous action over incremental, willing to cast aside visions of a bipartisan Washington in favour of tangible results Biden insists are resonating with Republican voters, if not their elected officials.

"The president was clear about the crisis of democracy and aware of the factors and forces that may try to undermine the American experiment if we are not careful to protect it," said historian Michael Eric Dyson, who attended the recent session.

# Lanka tightens church security ahead of Easter

Colombo: Security at churches across Sri Lanka have been beefed up ahead of Easter, police said on Saturday, ahead of the second anniversary of the April 2019 coordinated attacks on tourists and minority Christian community in the country in which 270 people, including 11 Indians, were killed.

The security personnel include 9,350 police officials and 2,542 troops from the tri forces (Army, Navy and Air Force), he said. Rohana said some 111 churches in the western coastal town of Negombo would be provided security, along with 107 churches in the neighbouring coastal town of Chilaw and some 98 churches in the eastern town of Batticaloa.

The St Sebastian's Church at Negombo's Katuwapiyaya was the worst-hit in the Easter Sunday blasts.

# Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan resume talks on big dam amid tensions

Cairo: A new round of talks between three African nations began Saturday, officials said, aimed at resolving a yearslong dispute over a giant dam Ethiopia is building on the Nile River's main tributary.

The three-day talks are taking place in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the current chair of the African Union. The AU is mediating the negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Cairo wants the negotiations to eventually lead to a legally binding agreement over the operation and filling of the dam's massive reservoir.

Foreign and irrigation ministers of the three nations were

attending the talks, along with experts from the African Union, according to Ethiopia's Irrigation Minister Seleshi Bekele.

A Sudanese diplomat said experts from the three countries and the African Union met Saturday, ahead of ministers who would meet Sunday and Monday. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to brief media.

Sudan said it would take part in the Kinshasa round with an aim of agreeing on a "negotiating approach" to ensure the talks would be constructive. That would include an Egyptian-backed Sudanese proposal to include the US, European Union and United Nations as mediators along with the AU, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

# Man with pole trashes Asian-owned store in US

Charlotte: An Asian-owned convenience store in Charlotte, North Carolina, has been trashed by a man who wielded a metal pole and yelled racial slurs, according to police and a son of the store's owners.

The Charlotte Observer reports that the incident occurred Tuesday at a business named Plaza Sundries, which is near the Charlotte Transit Center.

Surveillance footage shows a man pulling a merchandise rack to the floor and swinging a street sign post into the glass on the refrigerators.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police said a company that's responsible for security at the transit centre arrested Xavier Rashee Woody-Silas.

# Germany faces 'crisis of trust' in pandemic: Prez

AP ■ FRANKFURT (GERMANY)

Germany's president says the country is enduring a "crisis of trust" and urged people to "pull together" as they weather a second Easter amid pandemic restrictions and dissatisfaction over the government's response.

In the text of an address to be broadcast Saturday, Frank-Walter Steinmeier conceded that "there were mistakes" regarding testing, digital solutions and vaccinations.

"Trust — in a democracy it rests on a very fragile understanding between citizens and the state: You, state, do your part, I, citizen, do mine," he said. "I know that you, the citizens, are doing your part in this historic crisis. You have done much and you have gone without much."

"Your expectation for those in government is, Get it together," Steinmeier said the coun-

try had swung from self-satisfaction over lower infection numbers in the early stage of the pandemic to excessive pessimism today. He urged Germans to "pull together" and put aside "constant indignation over others or over people in high places."

He said that vaccine deliveries would increase sharply in the coming weeks, Europe was building up its production capacities, and general practitioners would join the vaccination effort in addition to large vaccine centers.

"The truth is, we're not world champion, but we're not a failure either," he said.

Germany, along with the European Union as a whole, has lagged behind the U.S. and the U.K. In the speed of its vaccination effort amid slower procurement of vaccines and complaints about excessive bureaucracy and paperwork.

# France urges Iran to avoid nuclear escalation ahead of talks

Paris: France's top diplomat spoke with his Iranian counterpart Saturday and urged Iran to be "constructive" and avoid further nuclear escalation ahead of talks next week aimed at trying to salvage a global accord curbing the Iranian nuclear programme.

The United States and Iran said Friday they will begin indirect negotiations next week, in one of the first signs of progress in efforts to try to get both countries back into compliance with the 2015 accord. Then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the accord in 2018, and Iran has been steadily violating its restrictions ever since.

Diplomats from Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and Iran will take part in Tuesday's EU-brokered talks in Vienna.

# South Korean FM meets Chinese counterpart

AP ■ HONG KONG

South Korea's foreign minister met his Chinese counterpart in the southern Chinese city of Xiamen on Saturday, as Seoul seeks to improve ties with its top trading partner even as US-China relations remain strained.

Ahead of the trip, South Korea's newly appointed Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong told reporters that he expected North Korea to be a key issue in talks with Wang Yi.

In his opening statement, Wang said China and South Korea will "seek a process for a political resolution of the Korean Peninsula issue," as part of pursuing policies for permanent peace amid North

Korea's nuclear standoff with Washington.

Chung said both China and South Korea share the goal of "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula.

He said South Korea asks China "to continue serving a constructive role in the stable management of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and achieving substantial progress in the Korean Peninsula peace process."

The Foreign Ministry in Seoul said the meeting started at around noon.

South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper speculated that China's decision to host Chung in Xiamen, a city close to the self-ruled island of Taiwan.

# Births among endangered right whales highest since 2015

AP ■ SAVANNAH, GA.

North Atlantic right whales gave birth over the winter in greater numbers than scientists have seen since 2015, an encouraging sign for researchers who became alarmed three years ago when the critically endangered species produced no known offspring at all.

Survey teams spotted 17 newborn right whale calves swimming with their mothers offshore between Florida and North Carolina from December through March. One of those calves soon died after being hit a boat, a reminder of the high death rate for right whales that experts fear is outpacing births.

The overall calf count equals the combined total for the previous three years. That



This photo provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources shows a North Atlantic right whale mother and calf in waters near Wassaw Island, Ga.

includes the dismal 2018 calving season, when scientists saw zero right whale births for the first time in three decades. Still, researchers say greater numbers are needed in the coming years for North Atlantic right whales to

rebound from an estimated population that's dwindled to about 360.

"What we are seeing is what we hope will be the beginning of an upward climb in calving that's going to continue for the next few years," said

Clay George, a wildlife biologist who oversees right whale surveys for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. "They need to be producing about two dozen calves per year for the population to stabilize and continue to grow again."

Right whales migrate each winter to the warmer Atlantic waters off the Southeastern U.S. to give birth. Trained spotters fly over the coastline almost daily during the calving season, scanning the water for mothers with newborns.

Survey flights over Georgia and Florida ended Wednesday on the last day of March, typically the season's end. Spotters will monitor waters off the Carolinas through April 15, hoping to pick up any over-looked newborns as the whales head north to their feeding

grounds. This season's calf count matches the 17 births recorded in 2015. Right whale experts consider that number fairly average, considering the record is 39 births confirmed in 2009.

Scientists suspect a calving slump in recent years may have been caused by a shortage of zooplankton to feed right whales in the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy off Nova Scotia. They say the uptick in births this season could be a result of whales being healthier after shifting to waters with more abundant food sources.

"It's a somewhat hopeful sign that they are starting to adjust to this new regime where females are in good enough condition to give birth," said Philip Hamilton, a right whale researcher at the New England Aquarium in Boston.

# GLOBE TROTTER

## AL-SHABAB ATTACK 2 SOMALI ARMY BASES

Mogadishu: Simultaneous large explosions were heard in and around two Somali army bases on Saturday, with the military confirming at least nine of its people killed but asserting "heavy losses" among the attackers. The al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility.

## COUPLE TRIED TO TRAVEL BY SHIP TO JOIN ISIS

New York: A newlywed husband and wife who expressed interest in fighting for the Islamic State group were arrested at a port near New York City as they attempted to board a cargo ship that an undercover law enforcement officer said would take them to Yemen.

## UKRAINE HITS DAILY HIGH OF 20,000 VIRUS CASES

Kyiv: Ukraine recorded a new daily high of more than 20,000 coronavirus cases. Health Minister Maxim Stepanov says 20,341 new infections were registered in the previous day.

## EGYPT PARADES ROYAL 22 MUMMIES

Cairo: Egypt is launching a gala parade on Saturday celebrating the transport of 22 of its prized royal mummies from central Cairo to their new resting place in a massive new museum further south in the capital. The ceremony, designed to showcase the country's rich heritage, will snake along the Nile corniche from the Egyptian Museum overlooking Tahrir Square.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it is known to all, my client Shillesh Sharma S/O Late Shri Amba Prasad Sharma and Mrs. Anita Sharma W/o Shillesh Sharma, Residents of B-82, Sector-36, Noida-201303, Dist Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, with sound mind and in full conscious have disowned / debarred their son Manu Sharma, his wife Arti Sharma and their son Sanat Sharma and any of their future children from all of their own earned moveable and immovable properties due to their behaviour. If anybody deals with them in any manner, will do so as per their own risk and responsibility and my client will not be responsible / liable, in any manner, for any kind of act/action done by them. S. K. Gupta (Advocate) Ch. No. D-209, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-32

## WESTERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Tender Notice No. & Date : BCT-MCC-STR-2020 Dated: 20.03.2021. In the said tender the following details of NIT is revised and may be read as Time and Date for closure of submission of e-Tender Document, earlier 15.00 hrs. on 19.04.2021 to be read as 15.00 hrs. on 27.04.2021 and Date & time of opening of e-tender, earlier 15.30 hrs. on 19.04.2021 to be read as 15.30 hrs. on 27.04.2021. All other conditions of the NIT published earlier shall remain unchanged. Note: Please visit our website www.ireps.gov.in to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. 0783 Like us on : facebook.com/WesternRly

# Surge in commodity prices to impact India's economy: Ind-Ra

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Further surge in global commodity prices will have serious implications for India's economy which is still struggling to come out of the Covid-19 impact, ratings agency Ind-Ra said.

As per Ind-Ra, a higher retail inflation not accompanied by a commensurate increase in wage growth will adversely impact the consumption demand and in turn investment revival in the economy.

"Though a spike in global agricultural commodity prices could benefit India, it may not move the needle favourably because India, despite the world's biggest exporter of Basmati rice, exported just \$6.59 billion worth of cereals



and imported vegetable oil and pulses worth \$9.66 billion and \$1.44 billion, respectively, in FY20."

"On the other hand, India's import bill on oil, coal and nonferrous metals was \$129.86 billion, \$22.45 billion and \$13.14 billion, respectively."

According to the agency, a faster-than-expected recovery in demand, the stimulus measures announced by the US, the roll out of Covid-19 vaccine

and ultra-low interest rates are fuelling the surge in commodity prices.

Consequently, energy commodity prices over the past six months have increased by 55.4 per cent, the increase in non-energy commodity prices is 19.3 per cent. Among the major non-energy subgroups, agricultural commodities rose by 16 per cent, fertilisers 30.2 per cent and metals and minerals by 25.1 per cent.

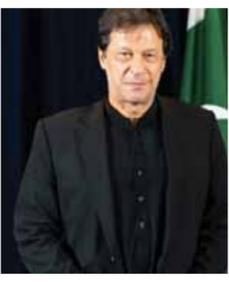
# No trade with India under current circumstances: Pak PM Khan

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan decided that Pakistan cannot go ahead with any trade with India under the current circumstances after holding consultations with key members of his Cabinet on importing cotton and sugar from the neighbouring country, a media report said on Saturday.

The prime minister after consultations on Friday instructed the Ministry of Commerce and his economic team to immediately take steps to facilitate the relevant sectors, value added, apparel and sugar, by finding alternative cheap sources of import of the needed commodities, the Dawn newspaper quoted sources as saying.

Various proposals have been presented to the



Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) which considers these suggestions from an economic ew.

After considering by the ECC, its decisions are presented to the Cabinet for ratification and final approval, the report said.

In the present case, a proposal was presented to the ECC to allow the import of cot-

ton, cotton yarn and sugar from India keeping in view domestic requirements, it said.

With regards to the ECC decision to allow import of sugar, cotton and cotton yarn from India, Khan held consultations with key members of his Cabinet on Friday and decided that Pakistan could not go ahead with any trade with India under the current circumstances, it said.

The ECC had decided on commercial grounds to recommend these imports for the Cabinet's consideration.

While the decision was not on the formal agenda of the Cabinet meeting, the issue was brought up by Cabinet members and the prime minister instructed that the ECC's decision be deferred and immediately reviewed, the report said.

# Individual loan business continues to improve in January-March: HDFC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mortgage lender HDFC Ltd on Saturday said the company's individual loan business continued to exhibit improvement in the January-March quarter 2021 and loans worth Rs 7,503 crore were assigned to its banking subsidiary.

"The individual loan business continued to see strong improvements during the quarter ended March 31, 2021.

"During the quarter, pursuant to the buyback option embedded in the home loan arrangement between the Corporation and HDFC Bank, the Corporation assigned loans to the bank amounting to Rs 7,503 crore," HDFC said in a regulatory filing.

In the year ago same quar-



ter ended March 2020, such loan assigned to HDFC Bank stood at Rs 5,479 crore.

The individual loans sold in the preceding 12 months (April-March) amounted to Rs 18,980 crore (previous year Rs 24,127 crore), it said.

Besides, the Corporation's gross income from dividend for the March quarter was Rs 110 crore as against Rs 2 crore in the year-ago quarter.

# Gas producers continue to bleed as Govt-dictated prices remain low, says Icra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Natural gas production remains a loss-making proposition for most fields for the Indian upstream producers as government-dictated gas price remains at its lowest level, rating agency Icra has said.

The domestic gas price notified at USD 1.79 per million British thermal unit for the six months beginning April 1 remains the lowest since the institution of the modified Rangarajan formula.

Additionally, the ceiling on price for gas produced from deep water, ultra deepwater, high temperature and high-pressure fields has also been announced at USD 3.62 per mmBtu for April-September 2021-22 which is 10.8 per cent lower than the price ceiling of USD 4.06 for October-March 2020-21 which would dampen the development of such projects. "While this is unfavourable for domestic producers, it will benefit gas consumers. The consumers will also benefit in the long run from the expectations of continued supply overhang," Icra said commenting on the gas price notified by the government earlier this week.

As per an Icra note, at such low gas prices, gas production remains a loss-making proposition for most fields for the Indian upstream producers notwithstanding some decline

in oil field services/equipment costs.

However, the depreciation of Indian Rupee against US dollar, would aid the realisations of the gas producers but only to an extent.

Sabyasachi Majumdar, Senior Vice-President & Group Head, Corporate Sector Ratings, Icra, said, "Going forward, the supply glut is expected to keep prices of domestic gas low in the near to medium term leading to poor returns even as domestic gas producers such as ONGC and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)-BP ramp up gas production significantly."

The absence of a floor and sustained low prices as has been seen in the past few years post implementation of the modified Rangarajan formula make exploration and production unviable even for benign geologies, Icra noted.

"Accordingly, low natural gas prices remain negative for the upstream sector adversely impacting revenues, profitability and cash accruals and the incumbents have petitioned the Government of India to provide a floor price for gas prices." Spot LNG prices had breached USD 30 per mmBtu in February 2021 due to increase in oil prices, unplanned outages at export facilities in several countries, multiple cold waves, high shipping rates and delays in the Panama canal.

# Govt allows further operational flexibility to GST filers

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Government has allowed further flexibility to tax filers operating under the Quarterly Return Filing and Monthly Payment of Taxes (QRMP) scheme of GST.

These tax filers will now be permitted to declare invoices pertaining to movement of goods and services in their quarterly return form GSTR 1 to be filed in the last month of each quarter.

As per an advisory issued by the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), the taxpayer must ensure that any saved but not Filed/Submitted IFF (Invoice Furnishing Facility) records for the first two months of the quarter i.e.

month of Jan-2021 or Feb-2021 must be deleted using RESET button before filing GSTR-1 for Jan-Mar-2021 quarter.

The advisory added that the deleted records should be added in GSTR-1 for Jan-Mar-2021 quarter after deleting the saved records from IFF.

In future this may not be required as invoices already saved in any of the months on the quarter may be either deleted/moved to quarterly GSTR-1 by a functionality to be introduced shortly.

The advisory also said that any submitted but not filed IFF for the month of Jan-2021 or Feb-2021 must be filed before filing GSTR-1 for Jan-Mar-2021 quarter.

issued for filing quarterly GSTR-1 for January - March 2021 under QRMP scheme.

The taxpayers under QRMP scheme have a facility to file Invoice Furnishing Facility (IFF) in first two months of the quarter and file Form GSTR-1 in third month of the quarter. As IFF is an optional facility it cannot be filed after the end date (13th of the month succeeding the IFF period).

The document saved in IFF, where taxpayer has not filed by the end date, cannot be filed anymore.

Hence taxpayers have been asked to declare such document in the GSTR-1 for the quarter.

# Govt defers mandatory implementation of transparent accounting software use by year

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to businesses across the spectrum, the Government has extended deadline for mandatory adoption of accounting software having audit trail of each and every transaction and having feature to store logs of edits.

As per a new notification by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), implementation of mandatory use of accounting software having Audit Trail as provided under proviso to Rule 3 of the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014 has been deferred till March 31, 2022.

The changes were earlier proposed to be implemented from April 1, 2021. But after

**The changes were earlier proposed to be implemented from April 1, 2021**

receiving several representations from various stakeholders expressing their inability to make quick changes in accounting software, the government decided to give one more year to businesses to prepare for new accounting system that aims to check manipulation and ensure utmost transparency in recording transactions.

The new MCA notification (Rule 3(1) of the Companies [Accounts] Rules, 2014) now

reads: the books of account and other relevant books and papers maintained in electronic mode shall remain accessible in India so as to be usable for subsequent reference.

Provided that for the financial year commencing on or after the 1st day of April, 2022, every company which uses accounting software for maintaining its books of account, shall use only such accounting software which has a feature of recording audit trail of each and every transaction, creating an edit log of each change made in books of account along with the date when such changes were made and ensuring that the audit trail cannot be disabled.

## SEARCH FOR MISSING



General Public is hereby informed that one female namely **Mariya Messy, D/o Victor Messy, R/o E-57, Sujan Singh Park, near Gurudwara, Khan Market, New Delhi, Age: About 35 years, Height: 4', Face: Oval, Complexion: Fair, Built: Normal, Wearing: Red colour suit - salwar and sandal in her feet, has been missing since**

**20.03.2021** from the area of P.S. Tuglak Road, Delhi. In this regards a case **DD No. 43-A Dated 23.03.2021** has been registered at P.S. Tuglak Road, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this female please inform undersigned.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>  
E-mail id - [cbi@gov.in](mailto:cbi@gov.in)  
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax No. 011-24368639  
DP/256/ND/2021

SHO

PS Tuglak Road, Delhi

## BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - II, DELHI

4TH FLOOR JEEVAN TARA BUILDING PARLIAMENT STREET NEW DELHI - 110001  
OA NO 182/2020 DATE: 20.03.2021

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK APPLICANT VERSUS M/S ERA INFRA ENGINEERING LTD. & ORS. RESPONDENT

- M/s. Alivita Realtors Pvt. Ltd. (Mortgagor & Guarantor)  
B-165, Flat No. D, Ground Floor, New Ashok Nagar, New Delhi - 96  
Also at: 130, 1st Floor, Masjid Moth, South Extension Part-II, New Delhi - 49
- M/s. Dev Rishabh Estate Pvt. Ltd. (Mortgagor & Guarantor)  
B-165, Flat No. D, Ground Floor, New Ashok Nagar, New Delhi  
Also at: 130, 1st Floor, Masjid Moth, South Extension Part-II, New Delhi - 49
- M/s. Jiffy Realtors Pvt. Ltd. (Mortgagor & Guarantor)  
B-164 Flat No. D, Ground Floor, New Ashok Nagar, New Delhi-96
- M/s. Demas Developers Pvt. Ltd. (Mortgagor & Guarantor)  
B-165 Flat No. D, Ground Floor, New Ashok Nagar, New Delhi - 96
- M/s. Lead Financial Services  
101, Sitaram Mansion, Josthi Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi - 05
- M/s. Zedek Realtors Pvt. Ltd. (Corporate Guarantor)  
1107, Indraprakash Building 21, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi - 01  
Also At: 370-371/2, 3rd Floor, Sahi Hospital Road, Jangpura Bhopal, New Delhi - 14
- M/s. Paulo Realtech Pvt. Ltd.  
House No. 130, 1st Floor, Masjid Moth, South Extension Part-II, New Delhi - 49,  
Also At: 370-371/2, 3rd Floor, Sahi Hospital Road, Jang Pura Bhopal, New Delhi - 14

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs 1091.94,59,730/- (RUPEE ONE THOUSAND NINETY ONE CRORE NINETY FOUR LAKH FIFTY NINE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY ONLY) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **05.05.2021 at 10.30 A.M.** Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

By order of the Tribunal For Registrar, DRT-II, New Delhi

# Polluting coal to remain predominant fuel in India's energy basket

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the country pushes for its expansion of the renewable energy projects, coal is set to remain as the predominant fuel in India's energy mix in foreseeable future.

As per the 19th Electric Power Survey, out of the all India power generation installed capacity of 6,19,066 MW by the end of 2026-27, coal based projects would have a high 40 per cent share at around 2,38,150 MW.

However, this level of environmentally polluting coal-based capacity is a big fall from current levels where coal plants accounts for more than 50 per cent of installed capacity of roughly around 3,40,000

MW. What is heartening to see that the government power survey clearly indicating bid addition in renewable capacity in the country that is set to become the largest energy provider to the country over next five years. So, renewable capacity is set to increase from current levels of just about 1,00,000 MW to over 2,75,000 MW by 2026-27. This is much more than coal capacity.

The all India power generation installed capacity by the end of 2026-27 is estimated to be 6,19,066 MW which includes 2,38,150 MW Coal, 25,735 MW Gas, 63,301 MW Hydro, 16,880 MW Nuclear and 2,75,000 MW Renewable Energy Sources to fully meet.

# Food fortification to eradicate hidden hunger

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai: A worldwide shift to combat hidden hunger needs to be launched by processing food in a way that micronutrient shortages are adequately addressed, opined experts in a webinar.

"Food fortification is seen as a viable, scientifically proven, WHO approved & cost-effective strategy to address the problem of malnutrition," said Vivek Chandra, CEO, LT Foods & Co-Chair, National Food Processing council, ASSOCHAM. While, Vikram Kelkar, Group Managing Director, Hexagon Nutrition, said, "The inclusion of exercise, healthy diet, use of over-the-counter medications, and dietary supplements is becoming a way of life."

# US Labour Dept seeks public input on determining H-1B wage levels

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US Department of Labor has sought feedback from the public in the next 60 days on determining the wage levels for the employment of various immigrants and non-immigrants, including those on the H-1B visas, the most sought-after work visa among Indian professionals.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows the US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

In a federal notification published on Friday, the US Department of Labor urged the public to respond to its request in the next 60 days. The request by the department's Employment and Training Administration follows a prior announcement by the department proposing an 18-month delay in the effective date of a final rule changing on calculating the prevailing wage levels for certain immigrants and non-immigrant workers. Published in January 2021, the final rule affects employers seeking to employ foreign workers on a permanent or temporary basis through certain immigrant visas or through H-1B, H-1B1 and E-3 non-immigrant visas.

# Engineering exports jump 70% in March

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major rebound of trade since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, exports of engineering goods from the country recorded an impressive 70.28 per cent growth in March.

India's total merchandise exports during this period were \$34 billion as compared to \$21.49 billion in March 2020 registering a jump of 58.23 per cent.

The monthly growth is the best-ever performance so far. The sudden jump in outbound shipments offers hope of a sustained growth in the sector in the coming months on the back of vaccine roll-out and containment of virus spread.

With major economies of the world including India taking steps to boost demand and enhance business activities, international trade could reach pre-Covid level sooner than expected.

"The strong growth in exports of engineering goods in the month of March suggests a bright outlook for the sector but one needs to be cautious before arriving at any conclusion on the basis of short term surge," said EEPIC India Chairman Mahesh Desai.

# India Inc in China concerned over China's Covid-19 travel restrictions

PTI ■ BEIJING

The CEOs of a host of Indian businesses and industries in China have expressed concern over the continuing COVID-19 related visa and travel restrictions being pursued by Beijing which they say are hampering their activities.

They expressed their concern during their interaction with the Indian Ambassador to China, Vikram Misri.

Misri, who is on a visit to Shanghai, inaugurated on Friday the Amrut Mahotsav festival, marking the 75 years of India's independence. "Inaugurated India@75 #AmrutMahotsav in #Shanghai. A soulful rendition of #Upanishad & #Gita, melodious Sitar/Tabla performance, #Deshbhakti songs, films on musical traditions of #Varanasi & #VaccineMaitri marked the occasion," Misri tweeted.

He also interacted with a group of CEOs and representatives of the Indian businesses based in and around Shanghai, the business hub of China.

Over 30 officials representing eight sectors such as textiles, pharma, electronics, manufacturing, chemicals and IT etc attended the meeting with Misri.

"Interacted with the Indian industry representatives based in Shanghai. Business leaders representing various sectors including #IT, #Pharma, #textiles, #engineering, #Manufacturing, #foodprocessing, #banking etc participated in discussions," Misri said in another tweet.

In their interaction with Misri, the CEOs stated they were experiencing difficulties in operations, mostly on account of travel and visa restrictions being maintained by China as part of its COVID-19 measures, official sources here told PTI.

Misri assured them the Indian Embassy will continue to engage with

the Chinese government on the issues related to the travel restrictions, the sources said. Travel between India and China has been halted since Beijing imposed travel restrictions in November last year and suspended the visas and resident permits held by Indian citizens.

These restrictions left over 23,000 Indian students and hundreds of Indian businessmen, employees and their families stranded in India.

**CORRIGENDUM**

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Notices under SARFAESI Act for Loan Account No. **LBDEL00002376035**, Name of the Borrower **SAKET SATYAM** property address **FLAT NO 32, LG BLOCK B-18, PKT 5, SEC-35, 2ND FLOOR, ROHINI, DELHI** was published as Symbolic Publication Notice under section 13(4) in newspaper **THE PIONEER (English)** dated **September 30, 2020**. We wish to mention that inadvertently and unintentionally a typographical error has occurred in the said publication and demand notice date was mentioned as **January 31, 2020** instead of **January 30, 2020**. We therefore, request you to please read the same as dated **January 30, 2020**. All other details mentioned in the said Notice dated will remain same. We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to you in this regard.

Date: April 03, 2021  
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR**

Office of the Executive Engineer Water Supply Master Plan Division, Srinagar

Fax-Phone :- 0194-2401904, E-mail ID: [xenwsm@gmail.com](mailto:xenwsm@gmail.com)

**Subject :- CANCELLATION NOTICE**

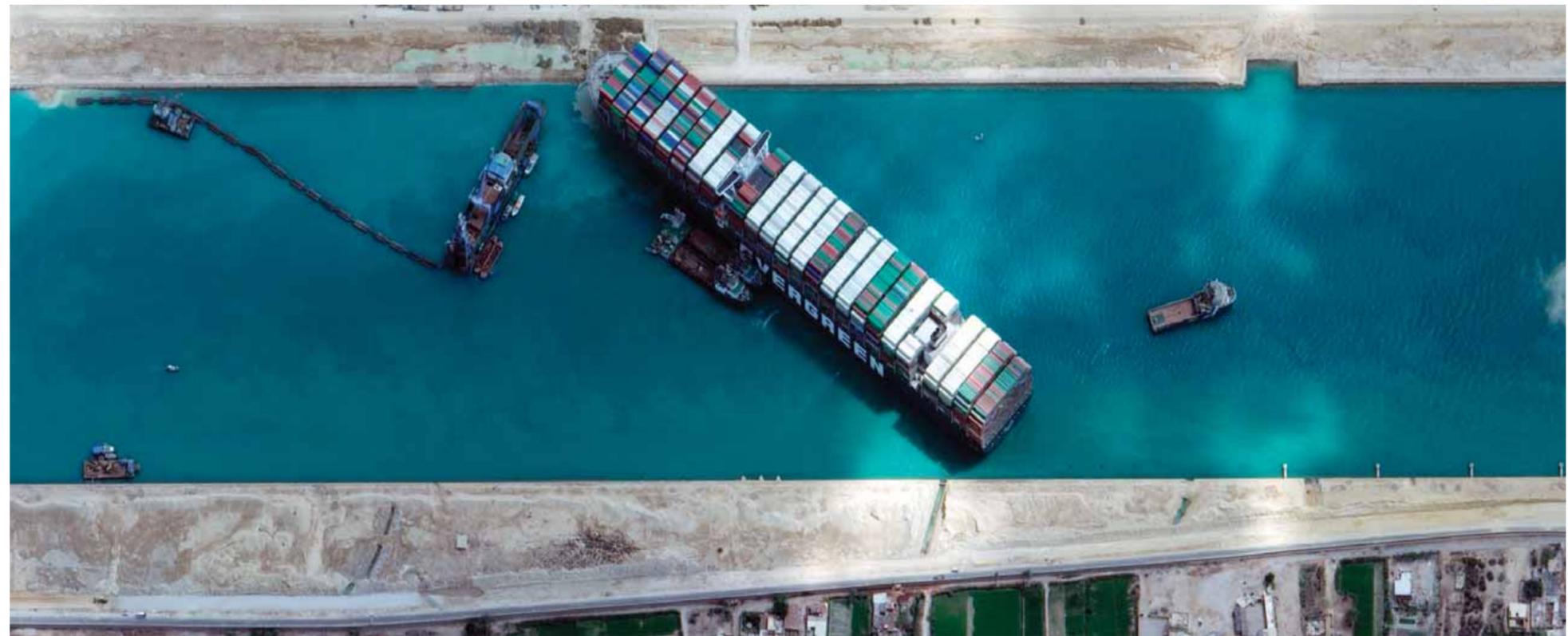
As per directions of Worthy Chief Engineer Jal Shakti Kashmir (PHE) Department Srinagar's communication No. JSD/DB/33269-70 dated 31-03-2021 the work namely "Design (Including Geotechnical Analysis Soil Investigation) construction, successful testing and commissioning including trial run for 06 months Of 5.5MGD (25MLD) rapid sand W.T.P comprising of intake chamber , 02 no Clariflocculator with flash mixers, filter house, Raw water main, Delivery main, clear water sumps, backwash tank with all electro Mechanical, instruments installation as a composite unit to be constructed at Alesteng" With Tender ID2021\_PHE\_120550\_1 put to tenders vide this office Fresh e-NIT No.46/WSMP of 03/2021 Dated:- 15-03-2021 issued under endorsement No. 11649-11670 dated 15-03-2021 is hereby cancelled ab-initio.

Sd/- Executive Engineer  
Water Supply Master Plan Division, Srinagar

No. DIPK-100/21  
Dated: 03-04-2021

# SUEZ CHOKEPOINT

On March 23, 2021, global business took a billion-dollar hit after the goods ship Ever Given beached diagonally causing a complete traffic jam. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with experts to bring you a report on what may have caused the ship to get stuck, the legalities involved and the fate of the crew on board, 25 of whom are Indians



Ever Given, one of the world's largest ships, was stuck in the Suez Canal causing a traffic jam so bad that resulted in a huge loss of business

Photos: AP

Many of us might have come across the image of, what looked like a still from an animated action movie, a ship blocking a canal, not a random one, but the Suez Canal — an artificial sea-level waterway in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea through the Isthmus of Suez and dividing Africa and Asia. The blockage, however, might not sound much of a deal to you, but the six-day long traffic jam caused by it was disastrous enough that it resulted in a loss of not less than \$13 billion.

The incident is big enough that even Google has a different take on it. When you search Suez Canal on the search engine, you will see a GIF of ships sailing through easily. Not sure whether this was updated after the blockage was cleared or before, it is interesting enough to get a special mention.

The picture kept memers on their toes, who, without wasting much time, started coming up with hilarious tweets and posts. So much so, that such a humongous blockage turned meme material within minutes.

If you wonder, what has been the size of Ever Given, one of the world's largest ships operated by Evergreen Marine Corp, it is 400 metre long, double the size of the Statue of Liberty. To give you more analogies, the size of the container ship is five football fields long and as high as the Eiffel Tower.

With that being said, there are reports that suggest that the ship was moving at a fast speed and that can be one of the reasons behind this unfortunate blockage which left this huge beauty stuck in a diagonal position. But Captain Kamal Chadha, MD, Marex Media Pvt Ltd, has a different take on it.

"On either sides of the canal is a flat land, a desert. So, the wind can blow at a fast pace. When such a huge ship packed with containers is in a narrow channel like this canal, no matter what the speed is, it is difficult to steer; it is not a car, of course. There will be friction between the ship's surface and the water because it is gliding on water. In such a case, maneuvering a ship can be tough and has to be done carefully. In such a situation, one cannot lower down the speed below a certain level because otherwise it will not manoeuvre. You need speed to move. Now the exact status of the speed can't be assumed until we have all the details," he tells you.

Many safety agencies and other



**THE CREW WILL BE SAFE, UNLESS IT IS IN SOME WAY PROVED THAT THE CREW WAS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN DOING SOMETHING ON PURPOSE THAT LED TO THE ACCIDENT. THERE MIGHT BE A CAUSE OF NEGLIGENCE THAT MAY HAPPEN. BUT, IN THIS CASE, THE CREW WILL GO WITH THE SHIP AND THEIR PROTECTION AND INDEMNITY (P&I) INSURANCE AND THE P&I CLUB ARE THERE FOR THEIR PROTECTION**  
— CAPTAIN KAMAL CHADHA, MD, MAREX MEDIA PVT LTD

authorities are up and running. The company also is conducting their inquiries internally not to play the blame game, but in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such an incident.

Not to forget, there are many people who were in attendance on the ship. On the bridge, from where the ship is commanded, there is a Captain, officers, pilot, a man who is steering the ship and down below are the engineers who are monitoring the working of the engine. "It is not one man who is taking the ship through, it's a complex process. There are authorities who keep an eye on the operations of the ship. As for the canal, there is one ship behind the other. Hence, it is a planned and carefully executed operation. For years, nothing happened, but then in one go such an incident occurred. The reason why people are doing guess work for the time being is that there is not enough information available. However, the bottomline is, it is an accident and will be investigated thoroughly. It is too early to draw conclusions," he explains.

The commercial losses, he says, are a point to discuss. For the ship itself, the authorities have to find out all the damages that might have happened to the ship. Then, there was a delay in the ship reaching its destination and due to this, some goods might have been perished.

Also, the ship was hired by a company, there will be losses on that side as well. "Moreover, there are a lot of consequential losses. First of all, the Suez Canal authorities might have lost a lot of money. There can be losses of about \$30 million per day, but it's a wild guess. But, overall, experts believe the industry stands to lose \$13 billion in these six days. However, I am positive the losses are much higher," he asserts.

Such an incident, without a second thought, invites legalities. Since there are a lot of people involved, it is matter of time and proper inquiry that will suggest who is to blame here.

"There are various parties involved. First of all there is the Suez Canal authority, then there are ship managers and the charterers, people who hired the ship. Mind you, that most of these parties must have insured themselves against accidents and consequential damages. Hence, the insurers will also be involved in this situation because directly or indirectly, the brunt of this would be shared by the insurance company. Also, there are re-insurances, they are the ones who further insures the insurance companies. It can continue to extend. Not only the companies, there will be individuals who have the right to make a claim of recovers or whatever in case of the legalities. Fortunately, there is no loss

of life or environmental damage that has been reported, otherwise it would have made things more difficult. We can only wait and see where the blame gets pinned," he says.

Among all the hustle and bustle of the incident, the less talked about fact is what happens to the crew that was on board. Will they continue to work or will their services be held back?

"The crew will be safe, unless it is in some way proved that the crew was directly involved in doing something on purpose that led to the accident. There might be a cause of negligence that may happen. But, in this case, the crew will go with the ship and their Protection and Indemnity (P&I) insurance and the P&I club are there for their protection. I don't foresee any difficulty for them because the most important question is were lives lost? The answer is no. Was there environmental damage that happened? The answer is no, again. Generally, beyond these two points, there is no need to hold the crew back. One can have an inquiry, but with that being said, the crew will proceed with their services. Also, as far as I perceive there are no criminal charges applicable in this case and hence, no reasonable approach that requires to hold the crew back," Chadha explains.

With all the speculations rolling in, Captain Nalin Pandey, CMD, Pentagon

Marine Services Pvt Ltd and a member of the Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers and Agents, says that one has to wait for an official announcement to come in as to what exactly happened that left the vessel in such a position.

Having said that, one of the many reasons of the blockage that are being speculated is that there was a sandstorm and the wind force pushes the ship in the opposite direction. "Since there are no reports of machine failure whatsoever and the crew was well-qualified, we cannot roll out the sandstorm factor. I don't want to speculate other things and can't blame the crew for the accident since they are competent enough and the chances of this are very less," Pandey says and tells you that there were about 400 ships that were left stranded, however the exact numbers are yet to be confirmed.

There were ships coming in from both the sides and some were even about 50 miles away from the canal, all stranded.

As for the losses, he says, it has to be borne by the ship owners. "There is no loss as such for the Suez Canal, because if the accident didn't happen, they would have passed a week earlier and now a week later. But eventually, the vessels passed the canal and must have given the taxes. See this as if you have parked your car ahead of a toll plaza. You are waiting there for half an hour, but after that you will eventually have to go through the toll plaza and give your tax. So the Suez Canal didn't lose anything instead they did more business by supplying the stuck vegetables to their destinations. The Egypt didn't have much to lose, but the cargo owners and the ships that were in the waiting line was losing on money," he tells you.

The silver lining in the grey clouds was that the ship, finally, was freed on Monday. It was nothing, but the usual operations that were implemented. "Tugs dredgers and a digger were called from around the world. Some of the weight was reduced; however, not much weight shedding was required because of the high tides that helped in refloating the vessel. What, however, might have caused the delay, is the time taken for the dredgers to reach the canal and get mobilised. Also, because the crew's safety was paramount, the plan had to be carefully assessed by the authorities and then implemented. All this takes time. Since they were able to refloat it in a week or so, full credit goes to them," he says.

## 'Risk factors are high today due to heavy costs of operation'

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with KRA NARASIAH, a marine engineer, maritime historian and an award-winning author, on what the opening of the Suez Canal meant for the shipping industry and that there is a proposal by Israel to construct similar canal called Ben Gurion Canal



**What were the challenges that shipping faced before the Suez Canal opened?**

One of the biggest challenge was that all the traffic was from India to Europe and the ships had to go around the Cape of Good Hope (Africa). Opening of the canal on Nov 25, 1869 saved sailing days of 23 days for a steam vessel and the distance of

3,800 nautical miles (7,000 km). It took 10 years for the canal to be built.

**How did the maritime industry change once it opened?**

The effect on the economy was excellent as fuel cost reduced considerably. More ships started using the canal and maritime trade benefitted. More importantly, Indian tea trade saw

a great increase and flourished.

**How did the opening of the Canal affect India and how it started trading?**

Almost 50 ships traverse through the canal daily and an annual throughput of 300 million tonnes is handled through this canal.

**Why is the Suez Canal important globally?**

There are three marine choke points and Suez is one of them. Other two being the Panama Canal and Malacca Strait.

**Do you think that the recent blockage by Ever Given will lead to the shipping industry looking for alternative routes given the losses?**

I don't think that the industry will look for alternatives. Though

there is a proposal of Israel to construct another canal East of this; it is parallel to it and called Ben Gurion Canal. But it will take some years. However, this shutdown was for a very short time compared with the closure from 1967 to 1975 for eight long years and some ships were stuck inside and could not sail out.

**Should the shipping industry**

**put so much importance on one canal?**

Well, when the canal was closed for eight long years due to political reasons, ships did go round the Cape of Good Hope. I sailed round the Cape a number of times back then.

**Do you think it is a wake-up call for those who have set up business to rely on supply**

**chains with little room for error?**

There are incidences like this and human errors cannot be ruled out. Risk factors are high today due to heavy costs of operation.

**Was what happened a lesson that the shipping industry had to learn?**

Shippers keep learning. We have so many road accidents — what have we learnt from them?

# BCCI keen to host IPL in Mumbai

## Axar, 10 Wankhede ground staff, 6 event managers' test Covid positive; Hyderabad, Indore among stand-by venues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The BCCI is bullish about holding the 10 IPL games in Mumbai between April 10-25 despite an enormous spike in Covid-19 cases in the city, saying creating a bio-bubble at an alternative venue would not be feasible at a short notice.

Delhi Capitals' Axar Patel, 10 members of the ground staff at Wankhede stadium and six event managers, deployed by the BCCI, have added to the growing list of positive cases in the Indian Premier League, starting April 9.

Hyderabad and Indore have been kept as stand-by venues for the IPL in case the Covid-19 situation spirals out of control but as of now, the BCCI is confident about holding the games in Mumbai.

"Yes, Hyderabad is one of the stand-by venues but for all practical purposes, we are still not thinking about shifting games from Mumbai. It will be difficult to create another bio-bubble at such short notice," a senior BCCI official said on Saturday.

The organisers are worried about the growing number cases at the Wankhede stadium. The number was 8 till Friday evening but now it's 10.

If that wasn't enough, around six members of the event management team have also tested positive for Covid-19 and have been sent to isolation.

"Yes, it was 8 positive cases yesterday (Friday) as far as ground-staff are concerned. Today (Saturday) two more positive cases have emerged and all 10 have been sent back home and are isolated.

"We are bringing fresh ground-staff from the Mumbai CA ground in Kandivali for preparations. Also 6 to 7 event management staff hired by BCCI have also tested positive," a senior Mumbai Cricket Association official said.

In the afternoon, Delhi Capitals issued a statement that their spin all-rounder Axar Patel has been shifted to a Covid-19 isolation facility after



testing positive.

"Delhi Capitals all-rounder Axar Patel has tested positive for Covid-19. He had checked into the team hotel in Mumbai on March 28, 2021, with a negative report. His report from the second Covid-19 test, came positive," the DC statement said.

"He is currently in isolation at a designated medical care facility. The Delhi Capitals medical team is in constant touch with Axar and ensuring his safety and well-being."

With addition of 47,000 cases on Friday, Maharashtra is looking at a potential situation of a mini-lockdown as indicated by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

When a senior BCCI official was asked about the situation, he admitted that BCCI is indeed concerned but are hopeful of pulling off matches.

"Look, even if there is a lock-

down, the teams are in bio-bubble and also it's a closed-door event. So we are still confident that IPL games in Mumbai will be held as per schedule with Delhi Capitals playing Chennai Super Kings on April 10 on the second day of the tournament.

"But Hyderabad and Indore are there on stand-by in case the situation goes out of hand. But if there is lockdown, it is even more easier to hold the games as the crowd factor even around the venue and other paces is taken care of," the office bearer said.

As of now, none of the teams currently in Mumbai — Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals, Punjab Kings — have access to Wankhede.

"Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings for example are taking turns to train at the Brabourne Stadium and Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC)

ground. KKR is training in Navi Mumbai at the DY Patil before they leave for Chennai," the official informed.

It is expected that BCCI's medical unit will enhance the testing rate due to the surge of cases in the state.

The event management and operations of IPL till last year, was handled by the IMG but from this year, the board is handling the event on its own.

"We have enough back-up staff to handle as we had factored in that the situation in Mumbai is grim at the moment. But yes, we are closely monitoring the situation," the official added.

Meanwhile, a positive case has also emerged from Chennai Super Kings' media content team. The member isn't a part of the bio-bubble. The team's training schedule remains unaffected.

## Axar to miss CSK clash

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India all-rounder Axar Patel, who made his Test debut against England in the recently concluded four-match series is set to miss last year's runner-up Delhi Capitals opening Indian Premier League game against Chennai Super Kings on April 10 at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai due to Covid-19 related quarantine protocols.

Patel has tested positive for Covid-19 and has been kept in isolation, the Delhi Capitals said on Saturday.

As per IPL protocol, Patel will have to serve a mandatory 10-day quarantine period and has to return two negative RT-PCR results on the final two days to return to action.

And since his quarantine period will be over on April 12, Axar will not be available for DC's opening game against CSK on April 10.

He might miss the second game too on April 15 against Rajasthan Royals.

As per the BCCI SOP, the player, who tests Covid-19 positive, has to undergo a set of tests.

During the 10-day isolation, the individual will undergo an RT-PCR test on Day 9 and Day 10. Provided, both the test results from Day 9 and Day 10 are negative, and he/she does not have any symptoms for more than 24 hours, the individual will be permitted to re-enter the bio-secure environment.

After recovery, players must undergo a cardiac screening before resuming any team activities, according to the protocol.

## CSK have got almost all bases covered: Hussey

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey on Saturday said the three-time champions have got all its bases covered and is looking to start afresh after a forgettable outing last year.

In the 2020 edition, CSK finished seventh in the points table and failed to qualify for the play-offs for the first time in the league's history.

"I feel we have a very balanced squad that has most bases covered and with depth in most areas. The guys are in really good spirits and have been preparing extremely well," he was quoted as saying by CSK website.

Hussey said CSK had a very balanced squad, adding the new recruits Moen Ali, Krishnaappa Gowtham and Robin Uthappa were "excellent additions."

"I think they are all excellent additions. Moen is an excellent all-rounder, Robin has a lot of experience and has been a quality performer in the past and Gowtham has some genuine talent that we can look to develop further," Hussey said.

CSK picked up six players including Ali and Gowtham at the February auction after buying top-order batsman Uthappa in a trade with Rajasthan Royals.

Hussey said a good start in the forthcoming IPL would be nice because the players will then relax and play their best cricket with confidence.

"A good start would be nice because the players will then relax and hopefully play their best cricket with confidence, otherwise the pressure can build up on everyone involved," the former Australia batsman said.

Hussey said playing a block of matches would help the players settle and build confidence early in the tournament.

"I think playing a block of matches in Mumbai will help the players settle and build confidence early in the tournament," he added.

"The conditions at Wankhede are generally very good for both batsmen and bowlers, so hopefully we can start well and players can feel good about their games," he said.

The Super Kings are currently training in Mumbai where they play their first five matches of the 2021 edition beginning with a game against Delhi Capitals on April 10.

They had a camp in Chepauk too which was attended by MS Dhoni, before they arrive Mumbai.



# Ganguly obsessed with match-winner Pant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly says he is "obsessed" with Rishabh Pant's game and calls the swashbuckling India wicketkeeper-batsman "an absolute match-winner."

The former India captain added that he loves watching the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma bat.

"There are some fantastic players and I think as President of the Board I should not say who is my favourite player. All are favourite to me but I enjoy Kohli, I enjoy Rohit Sharma," Ganguly said during an interactive session organised by Classplus.

"I am obsessed with Rishabh Pant because I think he is just an absolute match-winner. Jasprit Bumrah is good, Mohammed Shami is



good, I like Shardul Thakur a lot because he has got the courage and guts.

"There is immense cricketing talent in India. When (Sunil) Gavaskar was there people used to think what will happen after him, then came (Sachin) Tendulkar, (Rahul) Dravid, Anil Kumble. When Tendulkar, Dravid left, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant took over," he said.

"There is so much talent for cricket in India that I think it will produce world beaters in every generation."

Ganguly, who was picked for India's tour of Australia in 1992 but didn't get a single game, recalled how that experience Down Under and the hard work that followed in the subsequent years made him a better cricketer.

"I consider my 1992 series as a failure. To be honest I didn't get much opportunities to

play and I came back from the tour of Australia, but I was young. That (series) actually helped me to become a better cricketer.

"I came back stronger mentally. I was not fitter, I understood what International cricket was all about. I started to train myself over the period of 3-4 years not just physically but mentally also on how to handle the pressure," he recalled.

"My series in Australia in 1992 actually helped me become a better cricketer. When I went to England in 1996, I was much stronger. I knew what it takes to score runs in International level.

"I had another four years of domestic cricket under my belt where I kept scoring runs. Those four years I think was a blessing in disguise for me. Failures makes you better cricketer."



## Rana joins KKR practice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kolkata Knight Riders middle-order batsman Nitish Rana joined his teammates at the practice session in Navi Mumbai on Friday after his Covid-19 test reports returned negative for the second successive day.

The 27-year-old Delhi lad had 12 days of extended quarantine after he tested positive for Covid-19 on March 22, a day after his arrival in Mumbai.

Following the guidelines set by the BCCI, Rana stayed alone in his room until he returned two negative results on the 11th and 12th days.

"Finally I am out now and I'm feeling absolutely fine. It was day one of my practice and I batted a bit as well. I'm happy to join my KKR team-mates today," Rana said in a video posted by KKR.

"Please take precautions



and don't take this thing lightly. You never know what will happen next, so please take care of yourself and your family. Stay safe," he added.

Rana scored 352 runs in 14 matches during last year's IPL which was held in UAE.

While in the recently-concluded Vijay Hazare Trophy, he was the top-run getter for Delhi with 398 runs in seven matches at an average of 66.33.

## Disappointed to not finish off the game: Imam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan opening batsman Imam-ul-Haq made 70 runs in the first One Day International against South Africa in Centurion on Friday and laid foundation of his side's three-wicket win over the hosts by adding 177 runs for the second wicket with skipper Babar Azam, who notched his 13th ODI hundred in 73 innings.

But the star batsman is disappointed with himself for not being able to finish the game, which became a nail-bitter by the end.

Chasing 274, Men in Green were sitting comfortably at 186/1. But Anrich Nortje's introduction reduced them to 203/5 in the 38th over.

"You know there's this pandemic bringing everyone down these days and so we thought we'd entertain people a little," Imam said after the game.

However he admitted that his and Babar's inability to keep their stand going and



Pakistan's captain Babar Azam, left, celebrates with teammate Imam-ul-Haq after scoring century against South Africa in 1st ODI at Centurion Park

meetings, it gets discussed, that if your top three get set in white-ball, then in other teams they don't just make 100, they get 150," Imam was quoted saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"That is what we're trying to do, like Babar Azam and I were set today, we should finish the game. We were playing an ODI after a long time. We want to learn from our mistakes and turn these 70s and 80s into matchwinning knocks and turn a win like this into a seven or six-wicket win," he added.

Talking about his own performance, Imam said: "To be honest, I'm very disappointed in not finishing the game. I've been waiting one and a half years since my last hundred (against Bangladesh in 2019 ICC World Cup). I haven't had that many opportunities in the last year. You don't always get what you want, but I've got two more games to make up for it."

South Africa and Pakistan will now lock horns in the second ODI on Sunday.

## SL end tour on high

AP ■ NORTH SOUND

A century opening partnership between Lahiru Thirimanne and captain Dimuth Karunaratne helped Sri Lanka bat throughout the final day to draw the second Test against the West Indies and the two-match series.

Sri Lanka entered the final day on Friday 347 runs behind the West Indies after trailing by

376 when the home team declared its second innings on Thursday at 280-4.

Karunaratne made 75 and Thirimanne 39 in a 101-run opening stand. When they were out, Oshada Fernando and Dinesh Chandimal combined to bat Sri Lanka to 193-2 when stumps were drawn early.

Fernando was 66 not out and Chandimal 10 not out in an innings which lasted 82 minutes.

# Tuchel tastes 1st defeat

## West Brom hit Chelsea for 5 at Bridge after Thiago Silva sees red

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel suffered the first defeat of his reign as struggling West Bromwich Albion took advantage of Thiago Silva's red card to earn a stunning 5-2 win on Saturday.

Tuchel had overseen a 14-match unbeaten run in all competitions since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

But that impressive start came to an embarrassing end as West Brom ran riot at Stamford Bridge.

Christian Pulisic put Chelsea ahead early in the first half, only for Brazil defender Thiago to get his marching orders moments later for a second booking.

That proved the turning point as Albion's Matheus Pereira struck twice in first half stoppage-time.

Mbaye Diagne grabbed West Brom's third goal and Callum Robinson netted twice to leave Tuchel shell-shocked.

Mason Mount's reply was no consolation as Chelsea's bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish in the Premier League suffered a significant blow. The Blues, beaten for the first time in 10 league games, remain fourth for now, but both West Ham and Tottenham would go above them if they win on Monday and Sunday respectively.

After conceding just two goals in Tuchel's reign, with seven consecutive clean-sheets since the defence was last breached at Southampton in February, this was a rude awakening for Chelsea.

For the first time since 2011 against Arsenal, Chelsea conceded five goals at home in the league.

It was the worst possible



West Bromwich Albion's Matheus Pereira, center, celebrates scoring West Brom's first goal against Chelsea

©WBA

preparation for their Champions League quarter-final first leg against Porto on Wednesday.

West Brom remain second bottom but their first league win at Chelsea since 1978 gives them a glimmer of hope in the fight to avoid relegation.

Sam Allardyce's team are seven points from safety with eight games left.

Thiago was making his first Chelsea start since February 4 after recovering from a thigh problem, but he was completely out of touch on his return.

### OMINOUS SIGNS

The early signs were ominous when Jorginho's wayward pass was intercepted by Pereira on the edge of the Chelsea penalty area, forcing Thiago into a cynical foul that earned him a yellow card.

Despite their sloppy start, Tuchel's men took the lead in the 27th minute.

Marcos Alonso's 25-yard free-kick cannoned back off the post and Pulisic was first to react as he alertly steered his shot past Sam Johnstone from close-range.

But Thiago gifted Albion a lifeline two minutes later when he jumped into a rash two-footed foul on Okay Yokuslu.

The 36-year-old could have no complaints about his first dismissal since he saw red while playing for PSG in 2013.

In keeping with their erratic display, Chelsea were punished for some dismal defending in first half stoppage-time.

A long punt forward by Johnstone should have been dealt with easily, but Kurt Zouma allowed Pereira to run behind him and guide a superb

lob over the exposed Edouard Mendy.

Suddenly incapable of getting out of their own half, Chelsea fell behind with virtually the last kick of the half.

James surrendered possession and Diagne found Pereira, who danced through the shambolic Chelsea defence before guiding cool low finish past Mendy from 10 yards.

Chelsea nearly drew level immediately when Johnstone made a hash of James' cross, forcing Semi Ajayi to turn Alonso's shot onto the post.

Mount, on as a half-time substitute, nearly caught out Johnstone with a clever free-kick, but Chelsea suffered a hammer blow in the 63rd minute.

A flowing move from the visitors ended with Robinson running onto Darnell Furlong's cross to smash a superb volley past Mendy from 12 yards.

Chelsea were in tatters and West Brom compounded their misery with a superb 68th minute break that featured a flurry of deft passes before Diagne slotted home.

Mount reduced the deficit with a close-range finish from Timo Werner's pass in the 71st minute. But Tuchel's misery was complete in stoppage-time when Robinson struck again with a dinked finish.

"We cannot lose our heads now and take away the trust we have in these players," Tuchel said. "This is my responsibility. I trusted this line-up and I still think the line-up was strong enough now in this game.

"We were rusty, we were sloppy in the build-up in our own half and made many unforced errors."

### LEEDS WIN

Leeds pushed bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United closer to relegation with a 2-1 win against their Yorkshire rivals at Elland Road.

Jack Harrison put Leeds ahead with a 12th minute tap-in from Raphinha's cross.

The Blades equalised in first half stoppage-time, with Ben Osborn nudging Oli McBurnie's deflected shot over the line despite Luke Ayling's attempt to block.

In the 49th minute, Blades defender Phil Jagielka turned Harrison's cross into his own net, leaving the visitors 14 points from safety with only eight games left.

## Neymar sent off as PSG lose

AFP ■ PARIS

Neymar was sent off late on as a limping Jonathan David scored the only goal to give Lille a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in their Ligue 1 title showdown on Saturday, a result that moves them three points clear at the top of the table.

Canadian striker David was struggling with an ankle injury when he fired home in the 20th minute.

He was forced off soon after and came out on crutches to watch the second half with heavy strapping where he had been caught by Idrissa Gana Gueye.

Without him Lille held on to beat PSG in the capital for the first time in a quarter of a century, with a frustrating afternoon for the hosts summed up when Neymar was sent off at the death.

The Brazilian and Lille defender Tiago Djalo were both shown second yellow cards and dismissed following an incident off the ball.

The result sees Lille take a big step towards a first title in a decade, just before the Qatari takeover of PSG which changed

the face of French football.

It would be a remarkable achievement for the club from France's far north to pip the Parisians, who have won seven of the last eight league crowns and face Bayern away in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final in midweek.

However Christophe Galtier's Lille are three points clear of PSG with seven games left, with Monaco another point behind in third after beating Metz 4-0. Lyon are contenders too. They can reclaim third spot and go level on points with PSG by beating Lens.

Mauricio Pochettino's PSG had been fancied to go on and ease to another league title after winning 4-2 away in Lyon just before the recent international break, but this result raises doubts about their credentials.

Earlier a Cesc Fabregas penalty set Monaco on their way to a crushing 4-0 win over Metz that keeps the principality side right in the running for the Ligue 1 title.

Kevin Volland also scored before a brace by substitute Wissam Ben Yedder for Monaco, with all the goals coming in the second half at the Stade Louis II.

## Real see off Eibar ahead of Liverpool, Barca tests

AFP ■ MADRID

A patched-up Real Madrid began a crucial week by beating Eibar 2-0 on Saturday to increase the pressure on Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga.

With Liverpool to come in the Champions League on Tuesday and a Clasico against Barcelona next weekend, Madrid welcomed a comfortable win thanks to goals from Marco Asensio and Karim Benzema.

Victory means Atletico's advantage over Zinedine Zidane's side is reduced to three points before they play away at Sevilla on Sunday night.

Barcelona, who are four points off the top, host Real Valladolid on Monday.

Zidane picked a makeshift starting line-up but not by choice, with Raphael Varane and Toni Kroos both on the bench, the latter after returning early from international duty due to a muscle problem.

Sergio Ramos, Dani Carvajal and Eden Hazard were all injured and left out completely.

None of those three are expected to return against



Liverpool at Valdebebas in midweek but a hesitant Eibar performance offered Zidane the chance to take off the likes of Luka Modric, Benzema and Asensio in the second half.

Benzema will be essential to Madrid's hopes of reaching the semi-finals, and of beating Barcelona too, after the Frenchman made it 11 goals in his last 10 games.

He looked refreshed, with his exclusion from the national team continuing to be of benefit to Real Madrid.

But Asensio was arguably the star of the show, his lively display in the front three likely to earn him a starting spot in the trio of crunch games now to come.

Eibar, who stay 19th, would have suffered a heavier defeat were it not for three goals being chalked off for offside.

Elsewhere, Gerard Moreno scored a hat trick in Villarreal's 3-0 win at Granada, taking the Spain striker's tally to 19 goals in the league this campaign.

## Milan, Juve drop more points

AFP ■ MILAN

Norwegian midfielder Jens Petter Hauge snatched a late equaliser to salvage a point for AC Milan whose poor home run continued with a 1-1 draw against 10-man Sampdoria on Saturday.

Milan are five points behind leaders Inter who travel to Bologna later on Saturday, with their city rivals also having a game in hand.

"Milan have complicated lives for themselves," said coach Stefano Pioli whose side have not won at home in almost two months.

"When mentally you can't get into the game right away then the difficulties of the match increase. Today we paid dearly because we didn't win."

Sampdoria had dominated the first half an hour with Milan staying in the game thanks to saves from goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, who denied Manolo Gabbiadini early and a Morten Thorsby header.

And the hosts were on the back foot after a foolish Theo Hernandez pass across midfield after 57 minutes allowed veteran Fabio Quagliarella to pounce and lob from a distance over Donnarumma who was out of his goal.

It was the 38-year-old Quagliarella's 10th goal this campaign, reaching double figures for the fifth consecutive league season, with his 174 Serie A goals making him the top scorer active in the Italian top flight.

Claudio Ranieri's side went a man down just after their goal with Adrien Silva sent off after picking up a second



yellow card for a foul on Samu Castillejo.

Ante Rebic came off the bench for the hosts and threatened with Hakan Calhanoglu denied by Sampdoria goalkeeper Emil Audero before Hauge broke through beating the rival defence and curling the ball into the corner.

The hosts missed a chance for a late winner with Zlatan Ibrahimovic sending through for Franck Kessie who rattled the woodwork.

Milan's push for a first league title

since 2011 has been hit by their poor home form with just two wins out of eight home games in the league in 2021.

### DRAW IN TURIN DERBY

Juventus have failed to make their dominance pay as Torino earned a point in the 2-2 draw.

Juventus started the match brightly, and had a great chance early on when Cristiano Ronaldo headed down to Federico Chiesa, but off-balance he fired well off target.

The Italian puts things right shortly afterwards however, after he plays it into Alvaro Morata and sprints forwards towards goal, and after receiving the one-two carries the ball past the defenders and into the box before nutmegging the goalkeeper.

Our lead didn't last a quarter of an hour however as Tony Sanabria leapt in the box on the loose ball after Wojciech Szczesny failed to hold onto the ball as he dived low to save.

We went into the break frustrated knowing we had the better chances of the match, but that went from bad to worse after the restart.

That man Sanabria once again took advantage of another mistake, this time by Dejan Kulusevski, whose failed pass was latched onto to run in behind the defence and score, although Szczesny again should have done better.

We tried to attack in numbers, and the home side were allowing us to come at them, and we looked like we were going to go on for all three points after scoring late on.

Cristiano Ronaldo made it 2-2 after latching onto Chiellini's effort with just over 10 minutes left on the clock, and it was all one-way traffic from this point onwards.

With the game ending at 2-2 however, all eyes will be on Andrea Pirlo with some reports claiming that his job is on the line. They currently sit fourth in the division with fear of missing out on the Champions League, which will certainly not be good enough.

## Dortmund left stunned at home Sinner enters Miami final

AFP ■ DORTMUND

A late goal from Portuguese striker Andre Silva left Borussia Dortmund's Champions League hopes hanging by a thread on Saturday as they fell to a 2-1 home defeat against Bundesliga top-six rivals Eintracht Frankfurt.

Silva's 87th minute header condemned Dortmund to a 10th defeat of the season, leaving them seven points adrift of Frankfurt and the Champions League qualification places with just seven games to go.

Failure to finish in the top four would be disastrous for Germany's second-biggest club, who face a fight to hold on to coveted key players such as Erling Braut Haaland and Jadon



Sancho in the next transfer window.

They missed a chance to close the gap as high-fliers Frankfurt pulled off a smash-

and-grab win.

Frankfurt took the lead through a freakish own goal on 11 minutes, as Nico Schulz sent a looping header into his own

net after a cross from Filip Kostic.

Kevin Trapp denied Haaland with a smart save ten minutes later before Mats Hummels hooked the ball in at a corner to level the scores on the stroke of half time.

Frankfurt's Stefan Ilsanker had a headed goal ruled out for offside just after the hour-mark, but the guests restored the lead on the counter-attack in the dying minutes, Silva heading in from close range after another Kostic cross.

Frankfurt are seven points clear of fifth place and four points off third-place Wolfsburg, who beat Cologne 1-0 thanks to a second-half goal from Josip Brekalo. Dortmund are level on points with Bayer

Leverkusen, who eased to a 2-1 win over bottom club Schalke in their first game under new coach Hannes Wolf.

Defeat pushed crisis-hit giants Schalke closer to a first relegation in over three decades.

Two brutal counter-attack goals from Ruben Vargas and Andre Hahn gave Augsburg a 2-1 win over Hoffenheim, despite a brilliant late half-volley from Robert Skov.

In the relegation fight, Mainz' recent revival was halted by a 1-1 draw at home to fellow strugglers Arminia Bielefeld.

Bielefeld's Andreas Voglsammer struck 15 minutes from time to cancel out Daniel Brosinski's penalty and keep second-from-bottom Bielefeld within a point of safety.

AFP ■ MIAMI

Italian teen Jannik Sinner rallied past Spanish seventh seed Roberto Bautista Agut at the Miami Open on Friday to book a meeting with Hubert Hurkacz in the biggest final of his young career.

Sinner, who reached last year's French Open quarter-finals, defeated Bautista 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to become only the fourth teen to reach the men's final in the 36-year history of the ATP Miami Masters.

Poland's Hurkacz, seeded 26th, won his second straight match over a top 10 player, beating Russian fourth seed Andrey Rublev 6-3, 6-4.

Coming off a quarter-final win over second-seeded



Stefanos Tsitsipas, Hurkacz became the first player to take a set off Rublev at the tournament.

It's the first time he has earned two top 10 wins in the same tournament.

Sinner, 19 and playing only his third Masters 1000, joined 1990 champion Andre Agassi, 2005 runner-up Rafael Nadal and 2007 winner Novak Djokovic as Miami teen finalists.



# 'D Company is a trailer of my upcoming series'

■ Can you talk us through the process of shooting D Company?

The challenge was to match old Bombay. No matter how good a place was or how much resemblance it shared with the city back in the 70s, there was something artificial in it. Hence, I sent across about 12 people who can look around and can figure out a place that resembles the city 40

years back. Some parts were found in Goa, the others in Hyderabad and so on. The other challenge was to put the mechanism in place. Dawood Ibrahim has become a mythological character in our head and it was a challenge to understand his mindset which he had back then. There were a lot of psychological aspects involved. However, having said that it was exciting. But, due to the rise in COVID cases once again, the release date has been postponed for now.

**The challenge was to match old Bombay. No matter how good a place was, there was something artificial in it. Hence, I sent across about 12 people who can look around and can figure out a place that resembles the city 40 years back**

## Talktime

RAM GOPAL VARMA

Known for making experimental films like Shool, Sarkar and Satya, Varma is considered one of the pioneers of new-age Indian cinema.

Musba Hashmi speaks with the director about D Company, his fascination for the underworld and challenges of making such films

■ You said there will be an eight-season series after the movie as well. What made you disclose it all?

This movie is just a trailer of what the series has to offer. The D Company is not just about Dawood Ibrahim, it's much more complex and deep than that. That is what I have tried to show in this movie. I have touched upon the lives of other members of the group, their mindset and what made them enter this world. For the whole series, we have shot

about 80 hours, spread over 35 years of the underworld.

■ Not many directors touch upon this topic. Why are you so attracted to it?

I have always been fascinated by the underworld since I entered the city. I wanted to understand what goes in the mind of these people because, at the end, they are humans too. This made me take up this subject and make movies that in some way or the other touch upon the lives of the members of the underworld.

■ When you make such movies, you are experiencing crime closely in a way. Did it bother you?

Not at all. Like I said, this is something that fascinates me. Not that we don't come across crimes in real life. We do and we just forget about it. I make movies, it is my job and I take it that way. I don't let anything take over me.

■ How do you manage to stay relevant?

The moment I stepped into this industry, my goal was clear — to make

movies that interests the audience and, in some way or the other, resonate with them. I look for real stories that are not much talked about and I work on them. This is something that may have helped me in staying relevant. However, I have never thought about it. It was not as if I have some master plan in place to stay relevant. It is just my love for my work that helps.

■ When one chases stories, he reaches a level of frustration. Did it happen with you?

Yes, of course. You face ups and downs in everything you do. There were times when things didn't go my way and I was frustrated, but then I knew it will pass. I don't know how to give up on things. Sooner or later, things definitely fall in place, I believe.

■ 12 'O' Clock and Disha Encounter is also in the pipeline. Can you talk about that?

I will when the time comes. But, at the moment I am focusing on the release of D Company. Once we will make the official announcements, we will talk about it.

# Tea story dip by dip

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks with Assamese duo, UPAMANYU BORKAKOTY and ANSHUMAN BHARALI, about how they came up with the idea of the world's first bagless teas

What do two childhood friends do when they put their heads together and think of a business idea that can be sustainable and cost-effective? The world's first bagless tea hits the market. One may want to do a double check about the bagless tea and wonder how one can see the tea leaves with no bag but the truth is that only did the duo — Upamanyu Borkakoty and Anshuman Bharali — make their idea work but also launched these bagless teas on November 18, 2020.

Borkakoty, who looks after the marketing and product research, tells you that the idea to do business that dealt with tea was two-fold.

"We had tried a few business ideas once I went back to Assam with Bharali. We live in a small place, Sivasagar. Back in 2015, Bharali and I were into lenses. But the sourcing and to get that to Assam was logistically a nightmare not to mention that it was not cost-effective. We wanted to do something that was available locally and what better product than tea. Of course, it took us time to research and that is how The Tea Leaf Theory was born. The aim was to create tea masters and crafters from tea growers who used to make a living by selling green leaves to large tea manufacturers," Borkakoty says.

But the duo was clear about one thing. They wanted to work with only organic growers as such farmers were losing out on the revenue due to less produce. "We wanted to support and promote the marginalised tea farmers across Assam and Darjeeling. We wanted good produce and achieved specialty. In the November of 2016, we started with a global online store. While we got good feedback, we were told they were not exceptional. We went to China and Taiwan to explore the variety of teas. We found they were far more superior. The sample we got with us was shown to the tea growers. They were blown away with the quality. That is when we started to research more," Bharali recounts.

The gap in the market that existed needed to be filled. All the tea boutiques wanted to show what kind of tea this region could produce, main-



Anshuman Bharali and Upamanyu Borkakoty



ly from Assam. However, the boutiques couldn't reach out to the growers. That is when Borkakoty and Bharali stepped in. Instead of doing B2C business they changed it to B2B.

"We shut our online store in 2017 and started focusing on B2B model and became a sourcing for rare teas for the boutiques. Slowly, we realised that the Indian consumer was losing out on these beautiful teas. The consumer only had to make a shift in brewing technique — how to move from traditional way of drinking tea to specialty teas? That is when we came up with the idea of whole leaf tea. This is like a gold standard for tea production since few gardens produce tea from two leaves and the bud," Bharali tells you, who looks after the operations, finance and IT.



**There is a way to have these special teas. Just like one would brew an orthodox tea, these bagless teas need to be brewed for five minutes and the tea is ready. One is advised not to add milk or sugar**

From here, was born the idea of how to present to the world how two leaves and the bud tea tastes like to the Indian market. The challenge was to ensure that the leaf retained this shape on how it was plucked. What the team did, the leaf lost its shape. As long as the leaf was in its raw form, the tea was delicious but the minute it was packed, the taste changed.

"First, the leaves broke. Second, tea leaves are extremely hydrophobic in nature. As soon as they come in contact with air, they absorb moisture and flavour goes down. We decided to pack it on our own. We took two leaves and the bud, tied it with a string, compressed it with a machine into a cylindrical shape so that the leaves don't break. We are working on the process of making the whole process

even more efficient. Given that we are not using bags to put the leaves, we are reducing carbon foot printing. We pack the leaves at the source. This retains the flavour. At present, the sachet has a thin layer of plastic to restrict the air from entering. But soon our packing will be 100 per cent biodegradable or eco-friendly," Borkakoty says.

Not all is easy. The teas are hand-crafted at present. The duo is trying to make their operation semi-automatic to ease the work of the employees and to make the process more scalable.

"We are getting a good response from the market and need to improve upon the process. We also want to make it easier for the farmer whom we adopt a contract manufacturer so that training him becomes an easy process. The cost of one tea string ranges between ₹24 to ₹28. We sell our tea in a box that has 16 sachets. The best part is that one can make three cups of tea from one string," Borkakoty says.

Of course, there is a way to have these special teas. Just like one would brew an orthodox tea, these bagless teas need to be brewed for five minutes and the tea is ready. One is advised not to add any milk or sugar.

"Even in orthodox teas, one doesn't add milk or sugar. The same holds true here as well. These teas need to be enjoyed without milk or sugar. One can, if needed, add sugar," Bharali explains.

The one thing that the team didn't have to tell people to buy these teas. The Insta influencers gave them a lot of support. These people started recommending them. Another plus that worked for them was word of mouth publicity. So much so that they have been sold out on two flavours.

"The product itself is a treat for the eyes. When you see the leaves unfurl when hot water is poured in a glass cup, it looks so beautiful and tempting. Then there are the flavours — green tea (Silky Green), green tea with tulsi (Dirty Detox), white tea (Silky White) and orthodox Assam black tea with tulsi (Killer Immunity)," Borkakoty says.

# 'Music is an inward journey for me'

SUMEET ANAND PANDEY, who performed at the HCL's Baithak, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about how he left his corporate job to become a professional Dhrupadiya



■ What made you say yes to the concert?

Saying yes was not a tough to make. They are an established platform; I have been watching their work for some time now. In Delhi-NCR, they do various festivals. I am familiar with the kind of work they do; the kind of artists they have been bringing in to their fold — classical as well as contemporary. As an artist, on would really look forward to be part of it. When it came to me, I was happy.

■ Are online performances going to be another option for artists in the future?

Everything has pros and cons. The same is true for performing online. It is up to us, (artists) how we use it to further the cause of music and arts. When lockdown happened last year, none of us knew how to deal with the situation and there was a learning curve — whether they were going online from their living home or using their mobiles to broadcast, within a few months people realised that they needed to find to deal with it. That's when organised festivals started to happen. In hindsight, it seems to have been the right thing to do. If one takes care of the audio quality, since we are talking about performing arts, technical aspect is important. However, much hard work has gone into the preparation and in your riyaz, if you don't present it well, it doesn't work for the audience. But the pros is that they can watch it later and your reach is wider.

■ Was this the first time you performed for them?

Yes. I loved being on this platform. It is beautiful to be associated with them. As an audience, I have attended some of their concerts. What I like is that they present different kind of music. They have a great reach and this is just a important for all the artists. Dhrupad is oldest style but not the most popular. It needs the kind of platform where it can reach to lakhs which this platform ensures.

■ How strange was it to be online with no live audience?

Interestingly, the answer to this question has changed for me in the last 10-12 months. When the lockdown happened, I was also experimenting. Initially, one couldn't even have artists come over. I did a few concerts where I was all by myself playing the tanpura and broadcasting from my living room or my mobile. To be honest, I didn't enjoy it. After one or two, I stopped. If it was a lecture or a demonstration, I could do but not a performance. But when we could have people over and I could have other artists with me, musically I felt things were in place. For me, music is something where I connect with myself and not just the audience. When I perform, I was often in my own world and when I sing, my eyes are closed and can do alaaap for half-an-hour. It doesn't bother me much whether the audience was there or not. For live performance, one gets daad then and there; online you get thumbs up.

■ You left your corporate job to pursue music full-time. How did that happen?

It happened organically. I started my professional career sometime in 2007-08. I come from a musical family, so I learnt music from both my grandfathers for more than 10-12 years and then graduation and MBA. Later, I met my guru Pandit Abhay Narayan Mallick and realised that if I wanted to take up Dhrupad professionally, I would have to devote more time led me to make some hard choices and took the plunge.

## CLOUD KITCHENS ARE THE FUTURE

Shalini Saksena ■ NEW DELHI

There is a popular adage amongst chefs: You eat with your eyes first. However tasty a dish maybe but if it doesn't look appetising enough, no one is going to eat it. Hence, chefs the world over pay so much attention and details to how to present dishes. Unfortunately, this saying falls flat when we order for a delivery. Most eating joints that deliver don't spend a lot on how they package the food. A few plastic containers and foil to wrap the rotis is the standard packing.

But, one take-out delivery in the Capital ensures that one definitely eats with one's eyes. The packet in which the food is delivered is pretty and colourful. Looking at the box, it gives a sneak peek into what is to come in terms of taste.

Manav Deep Singh, co-founder, The Masala Story



Mutton biryani; non-veg platter

tells you that the packaging has been designed by a company in Bengaluru. "We have a company that works for us out of Bengaluru. We are an eco-friendly brand and use zero plastic. We are using recycled paper to pack our food," Singh

says. Go for mutton biryani, garlic naan, mutton korma, and tandoori non-vegetarian platter. The platter has four meat tikkas — fish, chicken malai tikka, chicken tikka and mutton seekh kebab. Ordering



tandoori dishes home is a bit tricky, it does get a bit cold taking away the taste but given the way it is packed, it does manage to retain the flavour. If one is a mutton fan, mutton biryani is worth a try. The mutton is tender; falling off the bone with a perfect blend of spices.

There is a reason why Singh decided to go with North Indian cuisine. He found a gap between Indian cuisine delivery brands and wanted to fill it.

"It is the not first preferred cuisine when one is a teenager or a couple due to the

messiness that comes while opening it. People know that it comes in a plastic box and will have oil around. There is a perception around Indian food and that is why people prefer to order pizzas, pastas and salads — eat out of the box foods," Singh says.

The aim, he tells you is to offer food in a packet that can be placed on to the table, open the handis and serve from it. Also, every dish that one opens will have the name of the person who has ordered it. For example: If one ordered a butter paneer and a butter chicken, it will read: Hi Shalini, enjoy your butter chicken.

The cloud kitchen, a concept of delivery only restaurant with no physical space, no dine-in space or takeaway counter, opened just before the lockdown in March 2020.

"It was because of this concept, packaging, the quality of food and safety measures

(our staff undergoes tests regularly) played in our favour during the lockdown. People were and are ordering food from reputed brands when it comes to hygiene. So much so that we went from unit one to unit six in this last year. The latest to join is the unit in Noida," Singh tells you.

He says that cloud kitchens that are organised and trusted brands are the future. "There was time, pre-COVID-19 times, when we were accessing some nice restaurants. Cloud kitchens that opened because two friends got together or two-three family members pooled in funds because such kitchens were doing well are not going to survive this wind. Restaurants that are from organised branded and following hygiene protocol are the ones that will move forward," Singh says.

To order, download The Masala Story app.

Only the really young are fearless, have the optimism, the romanticism to take unimaginable risks  
— Olivia Wilde



FROM THE INSIDE

## What exists beneath

Universe comprises of 14 lokas, where each loka represents a particular range of consciousness, call it perceived reality

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## Decoding Indian symbolism

Symbolic imagery is a working tool in contextual meditation. Without explaining their educative import, the lesson on *Dhyana* will be incomplete

Augment your workforce with digital technologies to unlock the value of human capital, writes ANKUR DHINGRA, as he shares tips to successfully manage remote employees

# THE NEW-AGE HUMAN REMOTE

With the current COVID-19 protocols in place worldwide and most organisations opting for the work-from-home or 'remote' office set-ups — the workplace dynamics have changed. From being 100% in the office to 100% remote and every possible combination within; organisations across verticals are looking for ways to not only stay productive but also to unlock the value of human capital in the current permutation or combination that the organisation has outlined for its workforce.

Bound by 'social distancing' and 'government mandated lockdowns', it has become imperative for companies to recognise relevant trends early to be able to effectively manage employees remotely and incorporate them in the right manner into business operations.

While monitoring and evaluation tools focus mainly on activity tracking and outcome harvesting, an effective enterprise operations management platform can help organisations unlock the true value of human capital. Organisations use different tools for everything from online and offline data collection, aggregation and analysis to reporting. While this method works and is effective in smaller organisations, however, it can get cumbersome when running multiple projects across different locations. Here's a quick checklist of the must-have features when choosing a platform to manage a newly remote workforce:

### WORK TIME

With the employees working remotely, managing a distributed workforce has caught many organisations unaware. Employees are also struggling to live up to the expectations, improve or manage productivity levels while ensuring time efficiency and maintaining work-life balance.

- The tool that a company uses must provide complete work pattern analysis across teams, processes and locations. It will not only bring transparency into operations but, help business owners identify and bridge the gaps.

- Give insight into activities on and away from the system. It will not only help you isolate time leakages and gaps but will also give you an opportunity to groom your employees by providing them with the best training, and the ability to counsel them if they are facing any challenges or issues.

- Don't know who's working on which project? Optimum resources utilisation is important to maintain the projects in top shape and cash bells ringing. Effective Operations management tools are useful in digging deeper into resource utilization trends to ensure better resource leveling and planning.

- Similarly, look for features and functionality to take sneak-peek into employee productivity, schedule compliance, break schedule, etc.

### WORK OUTPUT

Being online 24x7 does not guarantee productivity. You need to have a mechanism in place to drive productivity outcomes.

- Ask for a comprehensive analysis of employee effort vs. outcome.

- Intuitive dashboards are a great way to identify, understand and resolve process and performance gaps.

- Time and motion studies powered-by comprehensive analysis on employee effort.

- A module that can easily categorise and segment staff across different teams and multiple locations according to the requirements.

- Ease of integration with any other third-party workflow management software/Service



desk/help desk/CRM or any such kind of tool that has a transaction repository.

### WORKFLOW MANAGEMENT

When teams are working remotely, it becomes important than ever to channelise the work-flow of a project while directing the course from A to Z. A robust workflow management tool can help guide the flood of different project tasks with different deadlines and requirements while improving throughput and AHT or average handling time.

- Establishing workflow taking up too much of your time? Bringing in an operations management tool should have the essential capabilities to set up workflows according to the project requirements and allocate tasks by utilising inbuilt adaptors.

- Managing the work effectively is yet another challenge of remote working. Thus it is important to enable managers to capture real-time activity being carried out on each task, thus helping to remove any bottlenecks.

- Check out if the tool can record transactions based on predefined rules while identifying hidden opportunities for desktop automation and process improvement.

- Ask for a management tool that empowers you through better planning and forecasting the workload.

### ADVANCED ANALYTICS

For any organisation, analytics is a vital part of managing workforce productivity while driving business performance. With insights derived from data analytics, important relationships and patterns can be established to plug in leakages due to low employee productivity, higher overhead costs, and poor customer service.

- The tool should be able to provide real-time performance data to establish realistic and effective organisational benchmarks and targets.

- Classification of incidental, value adding, and non-value adding activities within the organisation is another task that enterprise operation management software should be able to do.

- Look out for features that help in keeping a track of utilisation of resources, operating systems, and infrastructure available in order to streamline operations.

These are the times calling for tapping the true potential of human capital and digital investments

While it gets hard to understand employee behavior when they work remotely, investing them in the right way, and right direction can

“WHEN TEAMS ARE WORKING REMOTELY, IT BECOMES IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO CHANNELISE THE WORK-FLOW OF A PROJECT WHILE DIRECTING THE COURSE FROM A TO Z. A ROBUST WORKFLOW MANAGEMENT TOOL CAN HELP GUIDE THE FLOOD OF DIFFERENT PROJECT TASKS WITH DIFFERENT DEADLINES AND REQUIREMENTS WHILE IMPROVING THROUGHPUT AND AHT OR AVERAGE HANDLING TIME”



help steer clear the challenges. Some points that should be kept in mind are:

- **Promote self-improvement:** Personal growth of the employees accelerates organisational growth. Providing employees with self-improvement dashboards can be a great way for overall growth. When the employees self-analyse their weaknesses and strengths, work gaps get easier to fill. The employees get a better and deep understanding of where they lack. Self-analyzing is the key to self-growth.

- **Focusing on work-time:** Analysing work gaps, productivity levels and setting utilisation benchmarks drives employee potential in the right direction. To increase employee productivity, the organisations can measure schedule compliance, identify work gaps and time leakages. Deploying an enterprise grade operations management tool that optimise overtime of the employees brings transparency.

- **Center work-output:** Establishing an effective mechanism in place to evaluate the work outputs help maintain the balance. A thorough analysis of work input and work output drives productivity betterment. An organisation can improve profitability with accurate analysis of process and performance gaps. Software providing end-to-end analysis of employee productivity levels helps the organisation get an extensive view of their performance.

- **Real-time visibility:** Utilising intuitive tools provide an operational transparency in the organisation that can manage the workflow. Accessing real-time visibility to manage employees' work performance accelerates their productivity levels. The managers get to align the workforce with the work tasks suiting their capabilities with the help of an efficient software. Real-time visibility enables the managers to foresee the challenges and prepare accordingly.

- **Eliminate the waste tasks:** With the advanced analytics, an organisation can work on lean initiatives and asset optimisation. Utilising the software to identify the loopholes in customer service, employee productivity and expected business cost can help review the working process. A regular follow-up of the work-activities is imperative to streamline the resources and eliminate non-incidental activities.

- **Reduce operational cost:** Accessing tangible insights on asset optimisation by software help the organisation to reduce capital and operational cost. With an asset optimisation dashboard, the organisation is able to analyse the accurate utilisation of company assets. With

an operation management platform in the organisation, pruning of unproductive and extra systems gets easy. This minimises extra operational cost and clears the space for productive applications.

- **Promote extensive reporting:** The workforce can filter the information that is provided to the managers. To avoid any work delays or passing incomplete information, the organisation should be actively responsive on employee productivity. Screen recording or screen capturing with the help of software help the managers to get real-time view of what is being done. This ensures transparency in the organisation and lets managers understand employee capabilities firsthand. Getting in-depth analysis of where employee lacks, helps managers alter their training process accordingly.

- **Be attentive towards workload analysis:** The managers should understand that overburdening an employee can deteriorate their work performance. With the help of automated software, the manager can get virtual workload distribution analytics. The operation management platform enables the organisation to understand utilisation levels of the employees and delegate the workload accordingly.

- **Classify employee output based on different attributes:** The organisation cannot expect the same results from all their employees. With the help of softwares, the organisation need classify employee outputs based on attributes like location, work tenure, position and level of expectations. An employee on the executive level cannot contribute the same as the senior manager. Understanding the same can improve satisfaction level of the managers.

- **Equitable Load balancing:** It is important working remotely doesn't mean that there are pockets of teams that are underutilised and pockets that are over worked. Balancing workload appropriately and ensuring equitable distribution of work with visibility is a key focus area for enterprises as they think about a post COVID-19 operations model.

It is important to have a real time view of how teams are engaged, and to give insights into the workload distribution across different teams. Having a robust measurement platform that provides insights across all levels of the enterprise is critical for future success in a distributed workplace.

The writer is CEO, ProHance photo, an enterprise operations management platform that helps organisations to unlock the value of human capital



# WHAT EXISTS BENEATH

Universe is said to be comprised of 14 lokas, where each loka represents a particular range of consciousness, call it perceived reality, writes Hingori

The 14-storey building of the Milky Way can also be called the 'lokas'. Each loka represents or reflects a particular range of consciousness, call it perceived reality.

The 7 upper lokas are domains of light extending from the spine to the crown of the head, then from Earth to Sun, Sun to the North Star or *Dhruv Tara* and from there beyond. The lower lokas are called *talas* — domains of limited light or partial darkness.

Gurudev once showed me, during a state of *dhyaan*, a crimson fire burning inside me at and around my navel, resembling that of a *yaqya*. The fire I saw could possibly be the sun illuminating from my spine to head with the subtle aura of light.

The *Puranas* describe these lokas to be pairs starting from both the head as well as the centre of the body in the microcosm, differentiated by the subtleness of consciousness.

Each different loka represents a different set of *gunas* or qualities, reflecting the state of consciousness. One can, however, change those qualities to move to a different loka.

Let us step down from the seventh floor of the 14-storey building of this universe and see what the lower lokas or talas have to offer.

The Sixth Floor, '*Atala*', of this 14-storeyed building — the universe, lies just below Earth. A world of lesser qualifications than ours, it takes one deeper into delusion and ignorance. Fear and lust are governing emotions. It is a corrective world like all the lower

planes and only those who overcome these inferior emotions to develop self-confidence, self-discipline, self-control can be reborn on Earth. The average *guna* mix here, has a predominance of *rajas*.

Those who have qualities of nobility and style are perfect inmates of *Atala*. Intellectuals with selfish attitudes, senior 'I, me and myself' corporate executives, shrewd businessmen, people clever but not wise, corrupt doctors earning commissions by making patient's bear unnecessary expenses. People with extra marital affairs, those indulging in sexual fantasising, make a good fit here, depending on the intensity of their *rajas* qualities combined with *tamas* and a fair amount of *sattvik* ones too.

*Vitalaloka* is the 5th floor and the second level of lower lokas. The *Guna* mix, I conjecture, is about 20% *Sattva*, 40% *Rajas* and 40% *Tamas*. The ignorance levels are higher. Warriors, awarded marines, scientists all with negative ambitions and qualities, dishonest businessman, politically minded corporate executives, self-centred beings, violent people both physically and mentally; in short, people with lower self-opinions belong here.

Depending on *guna* mix, this could include people with riches on earth, great social standing, well educated with maybe degrees from even Harvard or Stanford. People who do charity for social status, priests who are corrupt, government officers who insist on bribes get visas to these lower lokas very easily.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH AND BUILT A RESOLVE TO CHANGE, THAT YOU GET AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REBIRTH ON THE BHULOKA OR EARTH. THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE TRUE FOR MOST OF THE LOKAS AND FOR MOVEMENT FROM ONE TO THE OTHER, EITHER UPWARDS OR DOWNWARDS

These lokas are not ugly places, but just darker in light, in concept and in consciousness.

*Lokas* like *Sutala* or *Vitala* also contain residents who may be pious and dogmatic including mean religious leaders, yogis, priests, sportsman and women celebrities, presidents and chieftains with one common factor — lower self-opinions and perceived negative *samskars*. The Guilty!

People in lokas at the level of *Sutala* though ignorant, more sense attracted, more *tamas* still have the desire for hopping on to the ladders and working towards self-improvement. They self-reflect on being demonic and less positive. They believe that they have a lot to do to reverse their descent.

*Talatala* the 4th Floor or *Mahatala* the 3rd floor are not necessarily uncomfortable but darkness prevails in greater measure. Pseudo agnostics, self-realised sinners, terrorists, Tinker, Tailor, soldier, sailor can all qualify in a manner of speaking.

After self-corrections and improvement in their *guna* mix they can get a chance to take rebirth on Earth as a corrective opportunity but lead a life of suffering, ill health, financial problems, social dissatisfaction in an almost 'Why me' existence to clear out their karmic debt. It is a slow progress involving multiple births to climb the ladder to higher lokas.

*Rasatala* and *Patala*, the 2nd and 1st floors respectively, are the lowest lokas of existence. *Tamas* of the negative kind is the dominating *Guna*.

With delusion and ignorance at peak, self-reflection is not a concept in this loka. Dissatisfaction and misery abound. People believe that a wretched existence is all there is to expect.

Liberation is a far cry and both behaviour and perception are animalistic. Qualities of refinement hardly exist. Living in the pits is not a pun, it's literal. It's like living in the shadows with the power off. The Plugs are hatred, jealousy, supreme guilt, envy, sorrow, basest emotions, worst attitudes and demonic nature. Great conquerors like Hitler, Napoleon, terrorists who murder freely, professional killers are allotted these realms.

There are two points to ponder:

- Is the misery here eternal?
- How does one escape from these to better places?

It is believed that it is only when you have suffered enough and built a resolve to change, that you get an opportunity for rebirth on the *Bhuloka* or Earth. This is supposed to be true for most of the lokas and for movement from one to the other, either upwards or downwards.

That is why people of this plane of existence reflect the *gunas* of various different lokas. The conditioning and qualifications show and form the trends of their thinking. However as this is the *Karma loka*, there is opportunity to go against your nature and qualify for the better. Divine beings from higher lokas, take birth to serve their lower loka entities. They manipulate a change in their *gunas* through example setting, motivation, counselling and sharing their *gyan*.

In our next article, let's talk about what lies above!

The writer is the author of Hingori Sutras series of spiritual books



HIDDENSOULS  
PRAMOD PATHAK



## A goodness movement

Newspaper stories these days are depressing. Reading them, we realise that humans are still where they were in the stone age days. Psychologists rightly conclude that you can take the man out of Stone Age but you cannot take Stone Age out of man. Progress does not seem to be the law of life as said by Robert Browning. How long will man take to become man? Why we, the humans, are still not graduating into humans. While the stories of barbarism, aggression and violence of the present times are as distressing as of the past, our claims of being a civilised society appears hollow. We need to ponder why despite so much of knowledge and education, propositions of devilish nature still remain attractive. The animal in man fails to change. The lessons that we were taught have hardly made any impact in those few thousand odd years we have been learning them. Lessons on morality and ethics just remain a subject for essay writing as people seem to believe that honesty is not the best policy. Lying is a sin, greed is the root cause of all evil and pride comes before a fall are all cliches that makes little sense. Everyday people see people dying yet they want to live till eternity. And this desire is behind most problems as people indulge in all kinds of deeds and misdeeds to seek unreasonable security. Security that would make them survive even if the whole world perishes. No one wants to believe that permanence is an illusory goal in this transient world. In fact this question was rather very succinctly dealt with in the famous *Yaksha-Yudhishtira* dialogue in the *Vana Parva* of the *Mahabharata* while the *Pandavas* were in exile. When *Dharmaraj* posing as *Yaksha* asks *Yudhishtira* what is the greatest surprise, the reply that the senior *Pandava* gave explains the greatest paradox of human life. *Yudhishtira* says that the greatest surprise in this world is that though human beings are mortal and see people dying everyday yet they think they will not die. This desire is what perpetuates evil in this world. The main cause of this desire is the ego that gives all sorts of false pretensions to human beings. It makes a millionaire crave to become a billionaire and a billionaire aspiring for becoming a trillionaire. Resorting to all kinds of dirty tricks to fulfil their dreams people ultimately catch up with their nemesis as providence spares none. Even the *Corona* pandemic failed to dampen the spirits of those people who fail to realise that the last journey has to be performed free from all encumbrances as life is a zero balance account. This piece is not intended to paint a scary picture but to make realise that in the end it is the goodness that prevails. There is need to find out an approach to help make this world a better place to live for all. To create a new kind of movement to change mankind to become what he was destined to become — the most glorious of all the creations of nature. To become the man whom God created in his own image. Awakening the soul should be the idea behind the goodness movement. And this can be done by applying the same tools that marketers use to create a consumer movement. Man essentially wants to be good but he should understand what good being good is. This is what is required.

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## CONDITION YOUR MIND

It is up to us how we quantify our positive thought processes and start acting around the same by taking the plunge, says SAMRIDH SETH

As much we dread to be unproductive and from being inline continuing the same, we most often find ourselves in a pool of sweat, contemplating what consequences could our negative thoughts lead to, without really acting the other way around to avert it in any possible way. While there are certain innately conditioning aspects to this, the external environment also has a deep and long-lasting impact on the conditioning of our minds in such a manner.

Firstly, the uncertainty induced by the pandemic has posed serious implications with the work-life balance lines blurring. Unpredictable future, possible unemployment, prospective illness due to the virus, economic crisis and its impact on us individually, among many other thoughts kept clouding on our minds while being caught amid the pandemic.

While the external influence i.e. the pandemic has certainly halted our minds from thinking constructively; innately, procrastination has rather been an age-old dampener inhibiting our ability to reach our goals in time. As both of external and internal thoughts of failures keep sprouting, we can certainly take the reins in our hands when it comes to conditioning our mind to remain more goal-oriented than a deep thinking one with possibilities of failures.

We react prospectively and deduce results basis what we visualise as a possible outcome and that is where we can bar



any misleading thoughts from stemming within our minds in the first place. The foremost thing to do to keep failures at bay, one can engage in wise visualisation techniques to feel committed to the family, workplace, external society and most important with their own self.

To remain goal-oriented doesn't mean to achieve things in a particular way in a set time frame, but to explore many ways to achieve the goal efficiently within the time frame. This leads us to think constructively, looking at various avenues to how to excel, be it a daily chore at home or a task at the workplace that you were facing trouble with to date.

The key to reprogramming our memory structure is giving

up on the thought of the outcome. Be in the moment, do the best you can for the activity that you are doing and let the action create the outcome. This leaves no room for complacency. If one worries about what will happen with the things they are doing, they will never reach the maximum potential for what they could have possibly done.

Secondly, one needs to focus on creating a memory palace. This is a memorable building to one. It could be their homes or building associated with the topic. Imagine each room or area in this place as the different topics they are working on. Compartmentalising our thoughts in a particular way helps us to reach concrete solutions through a clear mindset

and not unnecessary thoughts that cloud our minds unnecessarily. This gradually diminishes any emotional and mental fatigue from within and makes us feel lighter and more problem-solving rather than thinking of how messy our life is.

Uncertainty stems from our past failures. Failures keep happening all the time but there's always a silver lining to the grey clouds. In the real sense, failures are always a learning in disguise. It is only up to us how we quantify our positive thought processes and start acting around the same by taking the plunge rather than pummeling about the possible failures. The way of life!

The writer is the author of book, Past Dwellers

## Duties and assurances

If we wish for fulfillment of our desires, then we must perform all our duties and responsibilities well, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

As human beings, we are always expected to be dutiful. This starts quite early. What are children's duties? These are mainly five. They must maintain their health by proper eating, adequate exercises/physical activities, sufficient sleep and of course the right entertainment/hobbies. They must inculcate good *samskars*. After all, we are the topmost species. Surely, the elders of the family must practise them — a duty for them. Children must try to reach their potential in studies as well as in their natural abilities. And they must learn house-keeping, which the pandemic has made essential for everyone. Sounds great but how do you motivate children to do all these. What assurances can you give them that doing these are what will be the best for them?

The answer is to link their desires with these duties. If they wish fulfillment of their desires, then they must do all these duties. This is the way it works. We have to help them to identify their desires, which in technical terms are called deep desires. The consequences of such desires and decisions are ours, that is good and bad.

In adulthood, the duties are more or less well defined. One must try to maintain one's health the best way possible. Lord Krishna has guided in the verse # 6.17 of the *Bhagavad Gita*. One must be able to maintain self the best way possible. Lord Krishna has spoken about maintenance very specifically in the *Gita*, because it is very important, as we know already. The right direction of life is next. Unless one is on the right track, one is not likely to end up in the right place. This knowledge comes from God, because only He knows the big picture about all of us. The fourth duty is to become peaceful whatever it takes. This will lead to happiness and



security Here again, generous help from God is required. Just as we can assure children about fulfillment of their desires, we can do so for adults. The elderly have well defined duties. The first duty is also regarding health, more so in old age, because the human body ages and does not have the same flexibility or toleration as in the younger age. Wise persons switch mostly to activities in the mode of goodness, especially in the matters of eating and entertainment. If the health is not good, the old age becomes quite painful, literally so. The second duty is to recheck the direction of life. By now it must have been clear whether the direction is proper or not. If it is not, time has come to seriously reset it. God can help, therefore, a good connection with God must be established, sooner the better. Do as many spiritual activities as your nature permits, and slowly increase them. One needs lot of help in old age, in which God

has the main role. As mentioned earlier, peace, happiness and security can come from God only. Maintenance, if not already secured, should be ensured. There is no bar in doing so, if it is a necessity. If a connection with God is well established, He will give all necessary guidance about duties, because He knows what is good for us. If one can do all of the above, he or she is not only assured for the rest of the life but can look forward to an excellent next birth also.

In conclusion, I can safely state that the Cosmic Design is perfect. If one follows its rules, i.e. does all the relevant duties related to one's desires, which must be according to "dharma", then, one can be rest assured that one will live a very fruitful life. There shouldn't be any doubt about it, because God ensured it. After all, it is His creation.

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# World cottons on to forced labour in China

Once again Xinjiang has grabbed headlines with President Xi Jinping and his regime facing a new international backlash from both the governments and civil society organisations over its human rights violations and growing aggression towards Uyghur Muslims.

It is reported by various media houses that China is forcing nearly 5,70,000 Uyghur Muslims and other minorities of its Western Province to pick cotton by hand. But it is said that the actual overall figure is several hundred thousand higher. The core problem is that it is being done in the name of employment and their vocational training.

However, this episode of cotton trade has ignited global reaction with governments and big businesses calling for a ban on cotton imports from the Xinjiang region.

This province produces 85 per cent of China's cotton and it contributes about 20 per cent of it to the global supply chain. Interestingly, Xinjiang also houses the country's 11 million Uyghurs, who have been facing persecution and in large concentration camps built by the Communist State in the garb of vocational education and employment.

The Centre for Global Policy, a Washington-based think tank, in one of its recent reports says that it was very likely that a major share of cotton from Xinjiang was "tainted with forced labour". Adrian Zenz, the author of the report said it was clear that the work scheme "involved a very high risk of forced labour". The report also highlighted that the pickers, including some released from internment camps, were subjected to intrusive Government surveillance and political indoctrination sessions. In the beginning of December 2020, the US administration banned importing cotton from the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), a powerful

quasi-military organisation. The reason cited was involvement of forced labour from detained Uyghurs.

Now the question is which are the companies that are mainly purchasing these cottons for their high-end brands. Will they comply with the requests and demands made by the human rights organisations and many Governments to stay away from using these tainted cottons? International clothing giants such as H&M from Sweden, Zara, Adidas and Nike that use Xinjiang cotton for their clothes are urged not to use them as they are produced by forced labour of the Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities.

In fact, a year ago the global non-profit Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) issued notices to companies like the H&M not to use cotton from Xinjiang over forced labour concerns.

By now, the H&M fashion chain has tried to regain the trust of the Chinese market. A statement released by the company stressed the importance of the Chinese market. Also, the Swedish company said it is working on strategies for material sourcing. It highlighted that it wanted to be a responsible buyer both in China and elsewhere in the world. H&M said, "By working together with stakeholders and partners, we believe we can take steps in our joint efforts to develop the fashion industry as well as serve our customers, and act in a respectful way".

However, the irony is that the company is not directly referring to the current crisis that has emerged from Xinjiang cotton. It is well understood that the commitment and renewed trust come after it is facing a storm of criticism from Chinese customers and Government officials over its decision to not source cotton from Xinjiang.

However, the company began gaining attention in China only after the US, Britain, Canada and the



European Union imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities over the alleged human rights abuse. And some other multinational companies like Nike and Adidas released similar corporate statements in 2020. However, many Chinese netizens commented that apology and sincerity from these clothing brands have not been seen so far towards China and its huge customer base.

As a result of this, tainted cotton controversy, companies like H&M have reported an expected business loss in the first quarter of this year amounting up to US\$ 122 million, from December to February season.

It seems China is fast losing control of the Uyghur narrative. Both human rights agencies and various foreign Governments are exposing

China's years of exploitation of the residents of Xinjiang Province.

According to an estimate presented by the UN, nearly one million Uyghurs have been detained in mass prison camps in this region. All of these people are constantly going through torture, forced labour and mass sterilisation as claimed by the American Government.

Meanwhile, China has accused the Western nations, particularly the US, for engaging in a campaign to destabilise the country. Its Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin dismissed the allegations of employing forced labour in Xinjiang cotton. He stated that "helping people of all ethnic groups secure stable employment is entirely different from forced labour".

He also added that nearly

three million people had been lifted out of poverty in Xinjiang. Now it is indicated that the efforts undertaken by the Chinese Government is to support Uyghurs getting employment.

And broadly these measures will directly support massive poverty alleviation programmes of the Central Government in Beijing. Further, Weng also said that all ethnic groups in Xinjiang Province were free to choose their own occupation. It implies that there is no restriction on the residents of the province, and they can take up any profession they want. But the ground reality is starkly different. Xinjiang has become a fortress. Beijing is not taking any chances while countering Uyghur extremism, mainly emerging radical Muslim groups. That is why it is taking

absolute preventive measures to quell any kind of hardcore Islamic groups across the region.

In the past in 2014, attackers armed with knives left 31 people dead and 141 injured at a railway station in Kunming in the Yunnan Province. Then in the same year in May, two SUVs drove into a busy street market in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang. The occupants of the vehicles threw explosives over the crowd, leaving 43 dead and over 90 injured. However, no single group claimed responsibility, but the perpetrators were simply identified by the Chinese State as Uyghurs.

Thus China's claim of it being a victim of international terrorism has come true. But these incidents have indicated an escalation of organised violence. Today, the problem is

that no independent investigation of such terror claims is possible in Xinjiang. Because there is severe restriction on reporting in Xinjiang.

Another serious obstacle is that a Uyghur national talking to foreigners can have serious consequences. What can be rightly concluded from these attacks is that it is all about local anger against Beijing. And this is triggering the conflicts and resentments against the Central Government and its policies. The Uyghurs just have developed enough hatred against the Xi regime for organising entrenched re-education camps across Xinjiang.

Thus, the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities are being restricted from exercising their basic rights in their own homeland.

What has now come to light is horrible. Even the international media in 2018 and in 2019 indicated that "the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) is used not only for picking out targets for detention as described in May 2019 Human Rights Watch Report, but also to provide data for Xinjiang's larger Government information system that powers a range of Government functions. This suggests that authorities are increasingly sharing personal information across Government agencies.

China's greed and aggression will not take it anywhere. Its plan to capture the whole planet is just a utopia of sort. Very soon, many of the nations, particularly in Africa, Latin America and in Asia will realise the danger of the Chinese debt trap. It is high time for US President Joe Biden to act. Instead of eulogising liberal ethos and blaming Trump for all the ills of America, Washington must be committed to stop China's long aggressive march.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)

**China is forcing nearly 5,70,000 Uyghur Muslims and other minorities into forced labour. This episode of coercing Xinjiang Muslims to pick cotton by hand has spurred a global reaction with Governments and big businesses calling for a ban on cotton imports from China**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# What's behind France's anti-separatism law?

The beheading of Samuel Paty and brutal murders in Nice cathedral of other French nationals by radical Islamists, President Emmanuel Macron's poignant defense of liberty and France's republican values, his pictures stamped over by shoes in some Muslim nations are unforgettable occurrences.

Attacks followed in Germany and Austria too. The caricature of Prophet Mohammed has snowballed into a clash of civilisation in Europe, with blood and gore on both sides.

To decide which side is right is difficult: liberty holds a sacred place in the French history, culture and value system — the nation underwent a revolution for it; while followers of Islam believe it forbidden to pictorially depict Prophet Mohammed, worse so when done provocatively.

American political scientist Samuel Huntington stated, unlike ideological conflicts, cultural questions involve yes or no — zero sum choice, as they have deep historical and emotional meanings attached to them, which can't be negotiated.

Most of Europe's migrants for past decades have been Muslims, due to reasons like proximity, demographic boom in Islamic states, decreasing population of Europe, better economic opportunities, political instability and violence in West Asia and North African (WANA) region.

Three decades ago, Huntington prophesied of the dangerous conflict between the West and Islam, in his famous work.

### Huntington on conflict between West and Islam

Huntington stated that there are fundamental conflicts between the value system of the West and Islam, due to which a societal cold war is raging in Europe, which will come to a clash in the early decades of the 21st century.

The intense conflict would manifest itself between groups belonging to these two civilisations within a

state, or between neighbouring states belonging to these, and Europe will be at the forefront of this turmoil.

The reasons for the clash are permanent as well as immediate. He wrote that the problem of the West is not only with violent Islamist extremists but Islam itself, so demonstrates the 1,400 years of history.

Their historical dynamics display that they have always been engaged in a deadly combat for power, land and souls. The universalistic nature and the missionary character of both the religions pit them against each other. Both have starkly different versions of what is right and wrong. Failure of liberal democracy to hold in Islamic nations is a repeated phenomenon — the reason, opposition of Islamic culture to Western liberal concepts.

Also, Muslims find it difficult to assimilate and integrate in the Western culture. While the Western system is based on separation of Church and Caesar (State); Islam is a vision of a perfect society, a way of life with intellectual, cultural, political and social ramifications.

There's no division of state and society in Muslim countries. For the West, the nation state has been an apex of political loyalty, in Islam the main focus of loyalty is ummah, the religious community at large. Idea of nation state is incompatible with the sovereignty of Allah.

Organisation of Islamic Conference is the only interstate organisation of its kind, no such organisation exists for any other religion. Same radical Islamic fighters fight in the name of Islam from Africa to Europe. Religious students from all over the world go to study in WANA, International Islamic conferences, international movement of ulemas, funding from WANA nation for spreading Islamic ideology in the world are examples of this phenomenon.

From 1970s, Islamic resurgence is encompassing the Islamic world with increased recommitment to Islamic values and religiosity by the



Protesters are seen at a march against Islamophobia in Paris

File photo

people as well as the governments which is also responsible for increased militancy.

Huntington says, it's the product of the modernisation and urbanisation in these societies which created alienation and identity crises, to which Islam offered a solution. A reason why youngsters, educated, intellectuals — especially the first generation to get higher education and urban migrants — throng towards Islamisation as Islam offers them a dignified identity. Mass of revolutionary Islam is a product of modern society.

The cause of renewed tension between Islam and the West in the 21st century are: the demographic boom in Islamic nations, with high

unemployment levels, the youth forming recruits for Islamist causes, giving rise to problems from migrant crises to militancy and border conflicts; Islamic resurgence; Western imposition of its values and institutions on the Muslim world; collapse of Communism removing the common enemy.

Muslims fear the threat Western power poses to their society and beliefs. Even the Islamic allies of the West find their culture decadent and materialistic.

Similarly, western nations see Muslim migrants as a threat to their culture.

### France's anti-separatism Bill

France is home to the largest

population of Muslims in Europe, so it comes as no surprise that the clash is playing out most vigorously there. France's anti-separatism Bill, which is about to become a law, is based on Huntington's analysis. What's novel is, it attempts not only to target Islamist extremism, but also Islamist separatism — defined by Macron, as an ideology that aims to build a parallel society in France, where religious rules override civil laws, and undermine the values of French Republic: liberty, equality, fraternity and laïcité (France's strict separation of religion and state).

The law targets the political, social and intellectual aspects of Islam, ensuring precedence to France's republican values, limiting

Islam to only the religious sphere.

It attempts to shift the principal loyalty from ummah to the French Republic, phrased by Macron as liberating Islam from foreign influences.

It makes it easier for the Government to shut down mosques, associations and schools found criticising France's republican values. Religious institutions and mosques are required to sign a pledge to respect the republican values for receiving state subsidies; and they need to declare foreign funding beyond a prescribed limit. It criminalises anyone putting pressure on public service providers to deviate from France's secular values in the name of an ideology or religious extremism.

It outlaws virginity certificates and refusal of women examination by male doctor. Homeschooling is allowed only on official authorisation on the ground of health and handicap.

### Will it work?

The Bill faces opposition from Muslims community and Left-wing Opposition, which claim it to be unfair targeting and stigmatising of the Muslim community which will lead to its alienation — a fear which is not misplaced.

Huntington's theory suffers from the same problem that any such theories do: generalisation. While the theory might apply to a section however small or big, certainly there exist devout Muslims whose prime loyalties are reserved for the state, for example the Muslim soldiers of France, and many others like them.

Only time will tell if France's anti-separatism law will find a solution to the problem of conflict between its republican values and Islamic customs and beliefs, or it will backfire; in either case, it will pave the path for many other nations, to follow or learn what not to do.

(The author is a public policy analyst and a lawyer.)

**Only time will tell if France's anti-separatism law will find a solution to the problem of conflict between its republican values and Islamic customs and beliefs, or it will backfire**



SONAL SHUKLA



ONE IS NEVER AFRAID OF THE UNKNOWN; ONE IS AFRAID OF THE KNOWN COMING TO AN END —JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

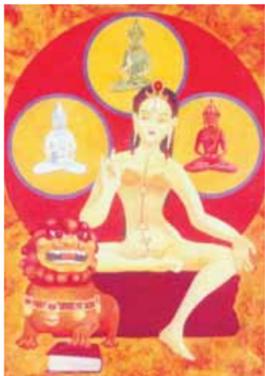
MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week your health needs attention. You are low on energy. Physical and mental blocks could slow your pace. Take preventive measures. This week your career is on an upswing and you will feel encouraged and charged. Promotion, recognition, and acknowledgement are on the card. Those in business, their goodwill will increase in the market as they come out with some brilliant ideas. On the personal front, your irritation and frustration are reflected in the relationships as well. The week will bring mixed emotions in relationships. You are not in the mood of compromising and live on your conditions. Initially, your loved ones may be offensive but gradually they will realize the depth of your ideas.

**Lucky number 11**  
**Lucky colour** Pastel Blue  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Take care as water-borne diseases could trouble. Moderate changes are required in your lifestyle. Watch what you eat. Digestion, acidity, gastric problems are likely. Avoid excess tea, coffee and spicy food. Professionally, you will be a little impulsive at work. Push yourself to the limit. Mix your theoretical thinking with a practical approach. If things don't work out, avoid criticising others and finding faults in them. All you have to do is work sincerely and intelligently. On the personal front, domestic issues will draw your attention. Reschedule your timings so that you can pay attention to the people who matter. Do not mix your personal life with professional life. Avoid any emotional trauma in your relationships.

**Lucky number 20**  
**Lucky colour** Off-White  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

Re-inventing your old traditions will work for you well. You may connect with your childhood friend and share experiences accumulated over the times. Spiritually, ritual of any kind can be helpful to you. On the career front, with your determination and will power you can achieve what seemed unattainable earlier. An outburst of creative spark comes to you unexpectedly and it will commence the journey of a new creative vision. However, it could be premature to discuss the details of your plans for the future today. On your relationship front, you are high-spirited and chirpy and could win the heart of your loved one. If you're currently in a romantic relationship you may need to be refocused toward the future.

**Lucky number 9**  
**Lucky colour** Red  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week you have to take some actions to improve your health condition. Every action makes a difference. Be positive. Read more spiritual books and interact with those who come from belief systems other than your own. You will benefit a lot from it. On the career front, you are likely to get in a situation to choose work. Before taking any decision, analyse all the available information. It's possible that what you initially considered as a bad thing will turn out to work in your favour. Be cautious about mixing business with personal life. A committed relationship will get strengthened and balanced. Give some space to your partner and at the same time, make sure that you are doing your fair share of giving to the relationship.

**Lucky number 1**  
**Lucky colour** Indigo  
**Lucky day** Friday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

You are playful and full of energy this week. Use your creativity and imagination to envision a new future for yourself, and then make it a reality. Your health will be good. Take all prevention & precautions for your benefits. On the career front, you work with a belief in yourself and this confidence will win the favour of your superiors. Luckily, you are in tune with your values and traditions. Positive results may delay but you need to have patience. Your calm and positive approach will fetch you stability and make a mark for yourself in the future. Relationship-wise, you are outspoken and very straight forward in expression. Give some space to your partner and avoid any kind of conflicting perspective in a close relationship.

**Lucky number 12**  
**Lucky colour** Yellow  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week you will enjoy good health. You feel enlightened to contribute your share of happiness, wealth or information for the benefit of others. You will be involved in your community. You have a strong desire to help others and make the world a better place. On the career front, you have energy and want to show the world your talents. Written communication needs attention. Be gentle and soft in your approach and expression. This week you will reflect sharpness in your mental abilities. You participate in various activities. On the personal front, action and discussion are necessary to elevate your love life. The company of innovative people will fill you with positive thoughts. Go ahead and connect with the person you have been thinking about.

**Lucky number 17**  
**Lucky colour** Silver  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

A need to bring change in your diet and exercise routine is important. You may join a group or institution. Take the advice of a nutritionist and exercise under the guidance of a trainer. On the career front, work with your mind rather than the heart. You will get sentimental on small issues and this won't be to your benefit. You are flexible and casual in professional matters, there is a need for a firm stand. A female may be helpful in lending mental and emotional support. You are likely to be more inclined to pursue creative projects that act as a form of self-expression like art, music, drama and poetry. Those in the literary world will achieve excellence. On the relationship front, you need to work together to get through any rough spots and to work on the bonding.

**Lucky number 16**  
**Lucky colour** White  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You are a carefree and like to enjoy every moment of your life. Physically and mentally, you are very active. The abundance of energy will not allow you to sit idle, no matter how busy you are both professionally and personally. This is the right time to utilise this energy in creative pursuits. Career-wise, not everything is smooth in your professional and financial prospects in life. Disappointment with the job is likely. You may plan to change your job. It is advised not to take a hasty decision. Personal life is peaceful. You constructively use your authority and power. In a love relationship, your partner may likely experience boredom in your company or vice versa. Find ways to smooth your relationship by bringing moderate change in your style.

**Lucky number 7**  
**Lucky colour** Brown  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

To be fit, ensure you are eating at regular intervals and doing physical exercises. Money, career is important to you at this moment, and health somehow is left behind. If you are not serious then you could invite many health issues and make a big hole in the pocket. Nonetheless, relax and spend some time in entertainment and rejuvenating yourself. Professionally, sudden reversals can happen now. The energy of this time will take you towards arguments. You may feel humiliated, undervalued in the hands of your colleagues and superiors. If you feel your job is unrewarding, give serious thought to make a change. You deserve to be happy. Those in a relationship will have greater moments of life in the company of each other.

**Lucky number 13**  
**Lucky colour** Rose Gold  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week you will be enthusiastic. You may feel that that the spotlight is on you. Your overall health remains good. You may go on a long drive for change. It is also possible that you contact people from different places. Enjoy and have fun. On the career front, you will get the opportunity to kick start your career. Students need to prepare well in advance to stay in tune with their curriculum. You have the skills, intelligence but need the correct guidance to improve them and prepare for a brighter future. Research related work is on the card. You will have the ability to influence your near and dear ones. Relationships may suffer if you don't have control over your verbal communication.

**Lucky number 19**  
**Lucky colour** Golden  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

Your health & creativity is good. It is a period of great insight. There may be a break-through moment where conscious understanding suddenly reaches its peak. This is a perfect time to clear away the haze that kept you from seeing the inner truth. Avoid anger, aggression and rush as these can affect your health. You will feel rich financially and professionally. Money inflow will be good. Investments done in past will pay rich dividends. You appreciate what is now available to you, knowing that the difficulties are over. You also know that with confidence, self-discipline and patience, you can complete any task. On the personal front, your intuitive sense is providing you with useful and helpful information and is helping you to get in touch with your subconscious mind.

**Lucky number 8**  
**Lucky colour** Camel Brown  
**Lucky day** Friday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week tension over small issues is indicated. You are in an unusual mood, worldly pleasures and activities are no more your agenda. You want isolation and relaxation. You need privacy to deal with your current situation. However, enthusiasm and creativity is indicated. On the work front, work seems to be somewhat complicated, but you are determined to achieve the set targets. You may have to make a tough choice with regards to money or even in love. Don't sacrifice your integrity for money. Money can't buy your self-esteem and your spiritual well-being. Your dreams and the desire to manifest those dreams in the material world will come true this week. You are full of hopes and enthusiasm.

**Lucky number 3**  
**Lucky colour** Peach  
**Lucky day** Saturday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Decoding Indian symbolism

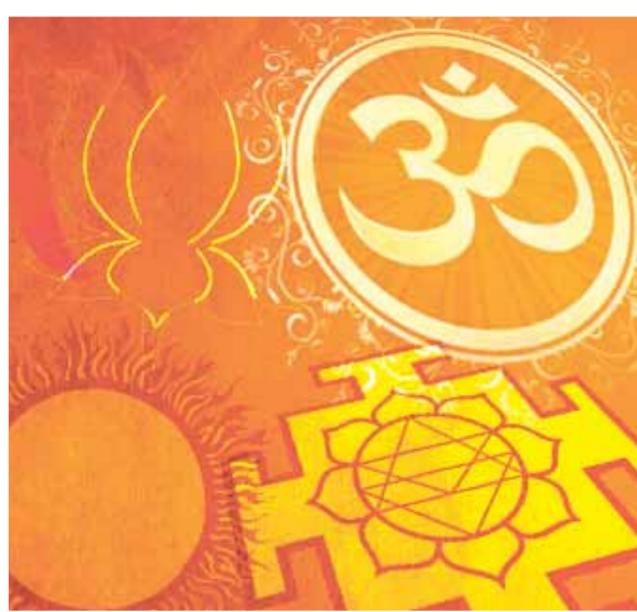
In response to a discussion on Contextual Meditation, many readers raised two questions. First, they asked a detailing on the educative import of Indian symbolism. Second, "Vedanta subscribes to a formless and attribute-less God. Then how comes, the concept of form God came into circulation? Don't you think they are contradictory?"

For answer, excerpts from my book: "God or No God, Awareness enriches life" becomes imperative. Symbolic imagery is a working tool in Contextual Meditation. So, without explaining their educative import, the lesson on *Dhyana* will be incomplete. But, *Vedanta* hypothesises a singular formless and attribute-less Primal-Source where from the creation chain took off. Majority of the belief driven people, however, keep visiting temples, having different deities (form-God) in the sanctum sanctorum, seeking boon for fulfilment of their desires. They are so much revered that a specific date is dedicated to each of them in the annular calendar for special remembrance.

How can both the concepts simultaneously hold ground? Seemingly, it is difficult to reconcile. A deep reflection on the two concepts, however, will reveal that

they serve two different purposes their respective ways. *Vedanta* refers to that eternal reality to which the whole manifest world is rooted. The form-God concept, on the other hand, has a purposeful contextual relevance. Every symbolic imagery carries valued educative import vital to orderly human conduct. Say, for instance, the imagery of Goddess Saraswati offers lessons on how to pursue the learning process so as to acquire wisdom. Lord Ganapati's image sets the terms of becoming worldly wise. Goddess Durga offers lessons in how to overcome dual propensity evident in energies driving us. Remember, energy is like a double-edged sword, carrying equal potential of being judiciously employed towards productive applications or being misdirected towards destructive ends.

Bear in mind: Ancient India's learned masters were communicators *par excellence*. They could say a great deal through imageries and story lines associated with them in simplistic terms, overriding all linguistic and intellectual barriers. And they must have had strong artistic sense also to have intuitively conceived these imageries of practical relevance. In order that these imageries find immediate



appeal of emotionally oriented people of the yesterdays, the seers would have accorded them with the status of deity — form-God. The divine element having been added to the imagery would call for focusing attention on them in a prayer mode. In prayer mode, one would be inclined to put in one's heart, and thereby one's whole, to find immediate connect with the imagery in focus. You then, don't need any description in words.

It is difficult to trace the history of such an age-old concept. But then, it is difficult to digest that the learned masters, fully conversant with the Vedic perception, would blindly accept the form-God concept in a belief driven mode. There is no reference to form-Gods in in *Vedanta* — Upanishads — the founding stone of Indian Philosophy. Yet, if they have introduced it in our social/religious system, the purpose would have been to educate human beings on the general conduct rules of life. It appears that over a period of time, the form-God concept acquired belief-driven dimension, which a large majority accepted as truth.

Ancient India's realised masters were quite aware of unique character of each being, necessarily at variance with the rest.

With such an individual-centric attitudinal trend in play, the world with all its enormity, diversity, and complexity, turns out to be a natural breeding ground of conflict of interests. Left to itself, the world will be always full of chaos. To overcome this human limitation, the elders must have felt the need for inducing a sense of civility and sanity in all and sundry. Accordingly, they would have felt the need to offer lessons in the general conduct rules of life, purposely so as to ensure orderly run of the societal order. And what better than using well-crafted imageries as the medium of communication, as it naturally draws attention of all, and therefore, finds immediate connect.

Repeated self-reflection on the said imageries may help easily absorb the inlaid educative import that may influence our thought process, which in turn, may spontaneously find reflection in our day-to-day conduct. The educative import of the imagery in focus, thus, acquires great contextual relevance, especially for the *dhyana* process.

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