

WORLD 7

IRAN TESTS ADVANCED
NUCLEAR CENTRIFUGES

MONEY 8

E-COMM TO ACCELERATE INDIA'S
AUTO SECTOR GROWTH: REPORT

SPORT 10

SUNRISERS TO FACE
KKR IN IPL TODAY

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY APRIL 11, 2021; PAGES 12+4 ₹4



sunday pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



Violence mars Bengal polls

4 dead as police open fire on mob attacking booth in Cooch Behar; TMC man kills voter

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Violence peaked in the fourth round of 8-phase Bengal elections claiming five lives in a blood-splattered polling, but a resolute electorate fought off terror in their own way with more than 76 per cent of them casting their votes when reports last came in at 5.30 pm.

While polling percentage for Hooghly was 76.02, it was 75.03 for Howrah. In South 24 Parganas 75.49 per cent of voters cast their votes whereas in Alipurduar the rate was 73.65 per cent. In Cooch Behar that saw maximum violence the polling rate was 79.73 per cent.

Five people on Saturday lost their lives to Central Forces firing and violence perpetrated by alleged hooligans of the Trinamool Congress, police said. While violence was recorded too in other parts of the 44 seats in five districts that went to polls on Saturday all the incidents of death took place in Sitalkuchi block of Cooch Behar district of North Bengal bordering Bangladesh, Bhutan and Assam.

As the ruling Trinamool Congress struggling hard to retain power in the face of rampant corruption and criminalisation blamed the Central Forces and the BJP for the Saturday's loss of lives, the official reports coming from the Election Commission said the Central Forces opened fire in self-defence.

Four persons Hamidul, Manirul and Samilul (three of the same family) died when



Security personnel keep vigil at a polling station after Election Commission orders stopping of the voting exercise at polling station number 126 in Sitalkuchi, where clashes erupted between locals and Central Forces, at Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar district on Saturday

PTI

the Central Forces opened fire to disperse a crowd of 300-400 villagers that had attacked booth number 126, following rumours that a child had been beaten to death by the CISF personnel. Five others too were injured in the firing and had been admitted to the local hospital, sources said.

A fifth person, a first-time voter Ananda Barman was shot dead outside a neighbouring booth also at Sitalkuchi by an alleged Trinamool Congress man a panchayat member, sources said.

Incidentally this is the same block where the convoy of Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh was attacked with bombs, brickbats and rods a couple of days ago barely an hour after a meeting addressed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee where she asked the

people, particularly the women to enforce their voting rights by gheraoing the Central Forces.

Turn on Page 4

Politicians' entry in Cooch Behar banned for 72 hr

New Delhi: The ECI on Saturday banned leaders of all political parties from entering Cooch Behar for the next 72 hours. The order will be implemented by the State Chief Secretary and Director General of Police, the poll panel said directing as well that all campaigning ahead of the fifth phase of elections on April 17 would end in 72 hours — instead of 48 hours — before the polling started.

Turn on Page 4

71 companies of Central paramilitary forces to be deployed in West Bengal

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

After a request from the Election Commission of India (ECI), the Union Home Ministry on Saturday decided to deploy additional 71 companies (7,100 personnel) of the Central paramilitary forces for the conduct of the Assembly polls in West Bengal, with immediate effect. As many as 1,000 companies of the Central paramilitary forces are already deployed there for the conduct of the elections in the State.

"The ECI has requested to deploy additional 71 companies of CAPFs (Central Armed Police Forces)/SAPs (State Armed Police)/IRs (India Reserve) Bns (Battalions) in West Bengal for AE-2021 related duties. In pursuance of the recommendations of the ECI vide order dated April 10, it has been decided to deploy additional 71 coys (companies) of CAPFs.....immediately in the State of West Bengal for Assembly Election-2021 related duties", reads a Union Home Ministry letter faxed on Saturday to the Chief Secretary, Home Secretary and Director General of Police of the State.

The composition of the



TMC candidate Rabin Nath Ghosh, wearing a helmet for safety, interacts with security personnel during 4th phase of West Bengal polls in Cooch Behar on Saturday

PTI

additional deployments of the Central paramilitary forces will include 12 companies of the Central Reserve Police (CRPF), 33 companies of the Border Security Force (BSF), 13 companies of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), four companies of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and nine companies of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

With the deployment of the 71 companies of CAPFs, a total of 1,071 companies CAPFs, SAPs and IR Battalions will be available in West Bengal for election-related duties.

Turn on Page 4

Stick to Covid behaviour or face campaign ban: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After polls in four of the five States are over, the Election Commission has woken up to the threat of coronavirus. Taking a serious view of laxity on part of some political leaders in maintaining Covid-19 safety norms, particularly not wearing face masks, saying candidates and star campaigners can be banned from holding campaign rallies if Covid guidelines issued by it last year are breached.

The Commission has advised political leaders to set an example by maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, etc., and exhorting all the local formations who attend their campaign programmes to follow Covid-19 protocol.

In a letter to leaders of all recognised political parties, the EC said, "It is widely known that in recent weeks, Covid cases are being reported in larger numbers. However, instances of election meetings/campaigns have come to the notice of the commission, where norms of social distancing, wearing of masks have been flouted in disregard to the commission's guidelines."

Pointing to the recent rise in



Covid-19 cases, the EC said instances had come to its notice where norms of social distancing, wearing of masks, etc., have been flouted in disregard to the Commission's guidelines dated August 21, 2020, on Covid-19 safe poll campaigning.

"Instances of star campaigners/political leaders/candidates not observing Covid protocols including non-wearing of masks themselves at the stage or while campaigning have come to notice. By doing so, the political parties and candidates are exposing themselves as well as the public attending such election meetings to the grave danger of infection," noted EC.

The poll panel sought the fullest cooperation from the political parties and candidates in strictest observance of the protocols so that all the

Daily Covid cases cross 1.5L mark, and counting

Maha plans severe curbs; UP, Delhi, TN, Karnataka hit newer peaks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time on Saturday, India recorded more than 1.5 lakh Covid-19 cases as the pandemic marched unchecked across the country. While Maharashtra seemed to stabilise in the range of below 60,000 Covid-19 cases per day, several other States, particularly Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Delhi are recording newer peaks every day.

India on Saturday logged 1,52,397 cases with Maharashtra registering 55,000 plus cases and 309 deaths, Chhattisgarh 14,098 cases and 81 deaths, and Uttar Pradesh 12,748 cases and 46 deaths.

Kerala (6,194 new cases),

Karnataka (6,955) Tamil Nadu

(5,989) and poll-bound West

Bengal reported 4,043 new

cases during the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, stopping short of announcing a full-fledged lockdown in worst Covid 19-hit Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said the State Government would have no alternative but to resort to stern restrictions to break the chain of transmission of the virus in the State.



A medic administers the Covid-19 vaccine dose to a Japanese woman at IMT Industrial Association office at Manesar in Gurugram on Saturday

PTI

Speaking at an all-party meeting called to evolve a strategy to tide over the Covid-19 crisis in the State, the CM said, "Our first priority is to save lives. In a health emergency like the one we are passing through, our priorities are the health and lives of the citizens."

"We may continue our war against Covid-19, but the immediate task is to arrest the rapid spread of the pandemic. During last year's lockdown, people were confined to their homes and it was easy for us to trace the patients and their contacts. Now when everything is open and we are facing practical difficulties, a fact that the Union Government should take note of," he said.

From 9,695 cases a day earlier, India's most populous State Uttar Pradesh on Saturday reported huge jump in infections to touch 12,787 mark, its highest single-day spike of coronavirus infections since the outbreak.

Though the Union Ministry has remained evasive on the query if Mahakumbh can be a "super spreader", health experts have not ruled out further spike in the virus in the State. Meanwhile, with the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossing 10 crore, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday said India is the fastest nation to administer 100 million doses in 85 days.

Turn on Page 4

50 allowed at weddings in Delhi; restaurants, metro occupancy halved

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a surge in the fourth wave of the Covid-19 cases in the national Capital, the Delhi Government on Saturday announced stricter curbs, allowing Delhi Metro and DTC buses to operate only at 50 per cent capacity and limiting the number of guests at weddings at 50, officials said.

The city Government also prohibited all social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural and religious gatherings in view of the rise in Covid-19 cases. Negative RT-PCR report will be required for travellers arriving in the national Capital from Maharashtra by air, the DDMA said, adding those without a report will have to undergo 14-day quarantine.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority said restaurants, bars can operate at 50 per cent occupancy. Delhi Metro, DTC and cluster buses will run at 50 per cent occupancy in view of the rising coronavirus cases, it said.

It said colleges and coaching institutions will remain



closed in Delhi. Not more than 20 people are allowed in funeral gatherings and up to 50 in weddings, it said. Swimming pools will also remain closed except for training of sports persons participating in national and international events.

Earlier in the day, he said imposing lockdown is not an option but some restrictions will be put in place to contain the spread of the virus.

Kejriwal visited the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan hospital on Saturday to take stock of the situation and the facilities provided to the patients in the hospital.

Turn on Page 4

Setback for BJP in Tripura tribal council polls

New Delhi: Tripura's ruling BJP and its ally IPFT (Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura) received a major setback in the Tribal council polls at the hands of Pradyot Deb Burman led newly-floated TIPRA (The Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance).

The new political outfit swept the Tripura Autonomous District Council polls by securing 18 out of 28 seats. The BJP and its ally managed to win only nine seats. An independent candidate won one seat.

The Left front which won the last tribal body election failed to win any seats and so did the Indian National Congress.

Turn on Page 4

India, China agree to defuse LAC stand-off expeditiously

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China have agreed to expeditiously defuse tension at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) by disengagement of troops from the flash points in Eastern Ladakh. The two sides have also agreed to maintain stability on the ground.

These were the highlights of the meeting of the Corps Commanders at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the LAC on Friday. This was the 11th round of talks since the face-offs began in May last year. The meeting lasted for more than 12 hours.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, the Defence Ministry said the two sides had a detailed exchange of views for



the resolution of the remaining issues related to disengagement along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh.

Both sides agreed to resolve outstanding issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with existing agreements and protocols. It was highlighted that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for both sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure restoration of peace.

Both sides agreed that it was important to take guidance

from their "leaders", continue their communication and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of remaining issues at earliest.

The two commanders also agreed to "jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and jointly maintain peace in the border areas."

The reference to border areas obviously meant Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang valley which still remain friction points.

The first breakthrough came in February when the troops of both the armies pulled back from the southern and northern banks of the Pangong Tso (lake) in Ladakh in a smooth and planned manner.

Turn on Page 4

Patriotic fervour at Kumbh spl yajna Balak Yogeshwar Das to start rituals today for the martyrs' souls

GAJENDRA SINGH NEGI ■ HARIDWAR

At Kumbh Mela which is considered as the largest religious gathering in the world, one can witness various saints engaging in different religious activities, rituals and spiritual affairs. However there are some like ascetic Balak Yogeshwar Das, who draw the attention of everyone with his unique approach and Sadhna.

When this correspondent



visited the Shaheed Nagar set up in three acres of land located at Bairagi camp on the banks of the Ganga in Haridwar, Das was busy giving final touches to the preparations. This year the invitations have been sent to families of 450 martyrs which include those who laid down their lives in the 26/11 Mumbai attack, Pulwama attack and Kargil war.

Turn on Page 4



It relieves pain: Kargil war widow

Haridwar: Like numerous others like her, Sharda Bhau of Akhnour in Jammu & Kashmir considers Das responsible for the positive change in her life.

Widow of Havildar Daler Singh Bhau who attained martyrdom in Tololing hills in 1999

during the Kargil war told *The Pioneer* that Das visited her house after the death of her husband and persuaded her to attend the Yajna which was being organised in the town. "The grief gets reduced by sharing and it happened with me."

Turn on Page 4

HOMETHEATRE

BEAR HUG OF FICTIONALISING
A TRUE STORY

THE BIG BULL
Disney+Hotstar
*ing: Abhishek Bachchan, Illeana D'Cruz
Rated: 6/10



If authenticity was not an issue with this fictionalised account of a real person with a fictional name, *The Big Bull* is quite full of moments in a journey that kept the stocks high, the middle class happy with new earnings and the economy in a constant state of perilous botox.

We all know the Harshad Mehta story, have heard and understood insider trading as a term and concept and are now even somewhat repentant about accusing him of being the sole conspirator of a ₹5,000-crore securities scam, a first in Indian history.

He died in custody and courted controversy both in life and death with allegations of induced heart attack never really settling down. He raised the bar of corruption all the way to the Prime Minister and his office and yet paid the price of oiling the loopholes in the banking system, alone.

The film on his amazing journey comes with both bull and bear runs. Some moments would go right through the roof in tickling your emotional quotient and others would make you question why did such an amazing life story need fictionalisation?

Abhishek Bachchan as Hemant Shah, aka Big Bull aka Harshad Mehta, is authentic and seasoned with his performance just as he was while portraying Dhirubhai Ambani in *Guru* which was directed to near perfection by Mani Ratnam. Hemant Shah did not look at all like the real Harshad Mehta played by Abhishek, but then authenticity was never the aim of director Kookie Gulati, playing to the gallery was. This one by Gulati is, thus, a green horn in parts and that's where you feel it is as flabby as Abhishek's pillowed paunch which he sports as unapologetically as he does his beliefs and actions.

Gulati can be faulted for raising compassion for his prime character Hemant Shah without lending adequate

evidence of his singular non-guilt. The system, the corruption in high places and the personal betrayal are all placed on the stock market to prop up this man's innocence, or should we say his personal argument.

All other characters are also real people with fake names, including the journalist who unearthed the scam — Sucheta Dalal being called Meera Rao, his lawyer Ram Jethmalani being renamed Ashok Mirchandani and Harshad Mehta himself being called Hemant Shah. The Prime Minister involved in the allegations made by Mehta was P V Narasimha Rao whose visage is shown for a few seconds without any names, perhaps in the spirit of garbing a true story with deliberate ifs and buts.

All said, what's true is that when this biggest bull of the stock market died in jail in 2001, too much time had passed to make it a lead story. But as he had tipped off the nation in the 1980s, India could never fully recover from the bear hug that was given to the stock market in the face of a crescendo that shifted public money investment from real estate and gold to the stock market. His contribution in that can't be denied, as it can't be contested that he made use of loopholes which the system accorded him and never did break any law, except the law of vertical growth.

Where was the comedy?

HELLO CHARLIE
Amazon Prime Video
*ing: Jackie Shroff, Rajpal Yadav, Aadar Jain, Shhloka Pandit, Elnaaz Norouzi
Rated: 3/10

Bollywood should stop making comedies. Given that the makers only know how to either make slapstick or double meaning films that translate into comedy, it is time that they give up making anything under the genre. But if our filmmakers really want to continue to make rib-tickling movies, it is time that they sit down and watch some Hollywood films just to get an idea on what comedy really is.

And it is definitely not stuffing a man into a gorilla suit and putting him in a cage at the back of a truck to only have another real gorilla let loose that was flying all the way from Uganda. Not only this, director Pankaj

Saraswat then loses a set of incompetent people on the 70 mm screen.

You have Adar Jain aka Charlie who makes blunders in every job. Who in their senses chases a fire truck and insists that they take the delivery of pizzas? It is not funny. It is downright sad. If this is not enough, you have a billionaire trying to escape the long arm of justice in a motorboat all the way to Dubai.

What was Jackie Shroff thinking when he chose to take up this role? One is sure that he is not that hard up that he would want to end up playing a role where a majority of the time he is in a gorilla suit. His Mona baby is no way as good as Ajit's Mona darling. Adar Jain as the bumbling Charlie is too painful to watch as he destroys everything in his path. But he is the hero, so he has to come out looking like one however incredibly brainless the entire 102 minutes of the movie are.

Stay away from this one. — Shalini Saxena



The genius is on show

LEONARDO
SonyLiv Drama Series
Episodes 8
Rated: 7/10

Imagine an artist par excellence who was an expert in Nature, mechanics, anatomy, physics, architecture and weaponry, to name a few, not to mention an even better designer for machines like the bicycle, helicopter, submarine and military tanks much before they were even concepts!

A series on such a clothed genius can be nothing but enervating and *Leonardo* in that context is a thriller, tugger and a puller all rolled into one, well, canvas — a stunning canvas of an artist's life which was full of colours that his brush stroked with eternal brilliance. Illegitimate, unschooled, rebellious and yet one of the foremost Renaissance artists, Leornado's life and times were interesting and so is his story, art and nefarious activities which put him under scrutiny and persecution back in the 15th century.

The series on him, simply called, Leornado captures those times with finesse and keeps up the viewer's longing to continue watching the eight episodes without a break. Sepia shades and smoky environs despicant an underground band of activists and their lives is no mean achievement, but Leonardo is simply tasteful and engaging.

The series takes you through the life of an impossible artist by showing you the stories behind his paintings, his continuous search for perfection and his turbulent relationship with his art as much as his life. Aidan Turner as Leonardo Da Vinci is a natural copy of the real man and he lives his moments with authenticity and elan all through the drama that is well put together by director for six episodes Daneil Percival and rest by Alexis Cahill.

The drama, however, is as close to authenticity as it is to replicating Tuscany, Italy, of those syrupy times when existence was being questioned as were norms. In fact, it looks so real that it could be mistaken for a documentary.

TELLY TALE

MIKA PROPOSES BHOOMI



While the competition will heat up during the upcoming episode of Zee TV's *Indian Pro Music League* with all the teams putting their best foot forward, it seems like Punjab Lions captain Mika Singh will steal the show. Last time around, young comedian Divyansh Trivedi had suggested that Mika Singh get married to Gujarat Rockers' captain Bhoomi Trivedi. While they both had laughed it off, this time around, Mika actually proposed Bhoomi for marriage!

During the shoot of the upcoming episode, the Punjab Lions trio of Mika Singh, Asees Kaur and Rupali Jagga performed on Sajid-Wajid's composition — *Mujhse Shaadi*

Karoge. During the act, Mika surprised one and all when he went up to Bhoomi, brought her on stage and continued his performance, while asking her *Mujhse Shaadi Karoge?* After the act, host Karan Wahi also made Bhoomi and Mika dance together and that's when Mika went down on his knees and asked her once again.

After the act, Mika expressed: "Bhoomi, *ab toh bata do, mujhse shaadi karogi?* Sab log Bhoomi se jude hai, maine socha main bhi Bhoomi se jud jaun. What do you guys think about Bhoomi Singh?" Bhoomi replied: "What do you think about Mika Trivedi? But to be honest, I have come here to find a bride for you, it would be injustice to them." Javed Ali also joked: "This wedding will happen only if Mika leaves Punjab and comes to Gujarat," to which Asees replied: "No, no, *bhabhi* will come to Punjab."

While Mika, Bhoomi and everyone were obviously playing around, viewers will surely like watching the chemistry of these rival captains. You also cannot miss the musical battle between Gujarat Rockers, Bengal Tigers, Delhi Jammers, Mumbai Warriors, UP Dabbanags and Punjab Lions as they go all out to win the fourth super match.

BAFTA AWARDS ON SONYLIV

Lights! Camera! and a lot of Action is about to unfold as we gear up to watch one of the biggest award nights of the year. Celebrating excellence in filmmaking across the globe and bringing an enriching experience for movie lovers, SonyLIV will exclusively stream the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards, 2021 (BAFTA). The prestigious awards night will live stream today at 11:30 pm directly from the Royal Albert Hall in London. BAFTA 2021 will be hosted by Edith Bowman and Dermot O'Leary.

The much-coveted ceremony will see seventeen BAFTA winners being announced along with screening of nominated films and behind-the-scenes footage, which will highlight the creative process that went behind curating these masterpieces. Drumming up the buzz further, BAFTA will also honour Ang Lee with the Fellowship this year. The awards night will witness presenters like Asim Chaudhry, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Sophie Cookson, Phoebe Dynevor, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Cynthia Erivo, Hugh Grant, Richard E. Grant, Tom Hiddleston, Felicity Jones, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, James McAvoy, David Oyelowo, Pedro Pascal, Jonathan Pryce, Rose Byrne, Andra Day, Anna Kendrick and Renée Zellweger from London and Los Angeles, respectively.

With praises pouring in from world over for his incredible performance, young Indian talent Adarsh Gourav has been nominated in the Best Actor in a Leading Role category at BAFTA. Gourav will compete against veteran British actor Anthony Hopkins for *The Father*, French actor Tahar Rahim for *The Mauritanian*, Riz Ahmed for *Sound of Metal*, late Chadwick Boseman for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and Mads Mikkelsen for the Danish language film *Another Round*.

MANASI LEARNS A NEW CRAFT

Hindmata recently released on Eros Now and Actor Manasi Rachhi is glad with the response her character has garnered. The



series is set in a fictitious women's prison called *Hindmata* where Manasi plays the character of Sudha Nath, who is in prison on charges of sedition. Manasi has portrayed various shades of a woman from being a straightforward girl in *Mujhse Fraandship Karoge*, to a tomboy for student of the year, to a fearless hacker for *24 Season 2* and then a lesbian girl who musters courage to come out of the closet for *Its Not That Simple Season 2*. She performs each character with passion and tries to give it her best. She never shies away from honing her talent and learning new things for the character; be it learning to cycle and swim for *SOTY* or learning to sew for *Hindmata*.

Ask Manasi and she quips: "Yes, I learnt to use the sewing machine for the series as we had a few scenes where we needed to stitch garments or at least act so. As you can see in the video, I am not a pro but at the same time I like to learn and have fun while doing the same".

She adds: "Also, for the part where I stand for elections in the prison, I did a lot of referencing. A few scenes needed me to be very driven and vocal about certain issues. So, I saw videos of a lot of women politicians in the parliament and even social activists. I studied their body language during rallies and also how these women expressed themselves in public. This helped me etch out my character with a lot more precision."

‘The script left me in tears’

SONALI KULKARNI, who is all set to host SET's Crime Patrol Satark: Justice Reloaded, tells MUSBA HASHMI what made her come on board the project and her experience

■ What does Justice Reloaded have on offer?

This is a chapter where we are reopening cold cases. It is quite a spine-chilling experience to go through cases that were so challenging and intriguing that they remained unsolved. How the closure finally came about is something that we will be showcasing.

■ What made you come on board the project?

I am an ardent fan of Anup Soni. We are friends. I had worked with him when I was yet to become a professional actor. I was in college and we had done *Badalte Rishite*, the only TV show that I have done. I have watched Anup's work since then, and what he does always generates curiosity. So, *Crime Patrol* and Anup have a strong association for me, and the kind of trust and compassion that he has evoked in people's heart, is something special. Taking up this season of *Crime Patrol* is like taking the baton forward from Anup and I hope that I make him proud. The opportunity came through Rakesh Sarang, and I'm so happy that he thought of me as an anchor.

■ What difference do you aim to make?

It is too early for me to say that I will bring some change, but for now, I can say, I will bring some change visually as a female anchor. I will take some time to even touch the excellence that the team has achieved with Anup. I don't even dream to beat that, but I would love to take inspiration from Anup's seasons and to, at least, create some awareness amongst people by connecting with them the way he had.



IT IS TOO EARLY FOR ME TO SAY THAT I WILL BRING SOME CHANGE, BUT FOR NOW, I CAN SAY, I WILL BRING SOME CHANGE VISUALLY AS A WOMAN ANCHOR



■ There have been many crime-based shows on TV, but only a few managed to leave a mark. *Crime Patrol* is one of them. Why?

The show always tries to tell people to be responsible citizens, and they always fight against blind faith.

I have been one of the strongest activists of Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti. I have worked for around 16 years with Dr Narendra Dabulkar, who has tried to appeal to people that have faith in God and religion, but do not let anyone exploit you emotionally, mentally, economically, physically and sexually. And let no child get abused because we have blind faith. *Crime Patrol* is like a torchlight, which is trying to make us aware and that can be one of the reasons behind its success.

■ Does it, in any way, bother you to host a crime show?

I am overwhelmed while shooting crime patrol. The stories are so intense and while reading the script at times I got tears in my eyes. What we see on news channels or social media platforms is just a glimpse, while in the real world there are a lot more crimes happening which we are not even aware of. The stories are so painful that I wish they were fiction and not reality. When I am back home from the shoot it takes time for me to compose. Not to mention that my respect for the police and judiciary is only growing day by day.

COVID-19

Capital logs 7,897 fresh cases, toll 39

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 7,897 fresh Covid-19 cases on Saturday, while 39 more people died due to the infection, taking the death toll to 11,235. The positivity rate recorded 10.21 per cent on Saturday, according to the health department. The national Capital has seen a massive spike in cases in the last few weeks.

According to the health bulletin, 77,374 tests were conducted on Friday, including 43,473 RT-PCR tests and 33,901 rapid antigen tests.

The number of cumulative positive cases on Saturday stood at 714423. Over 674415 patients have recovered from the virus, the bulletin said.

The number of people under home isolation increased to 13,188 from 15,266 on Thursday while the number of containment zones mounted to 5,236 from 4,768 a day before, the bulletin said.

According to the health department of the Delhi

Government the highest single-day spike in Delhi till date -- 8,593 cases -- was reported on November 11 in 2020, while on November 19, the city had recorded 131 COVID-19 deaths, the highest single-day fatality count till date. On Friday 8,521 cases were reported in Delhi, highest since November 11 last year.

The city had recorded 7,437 cases on Thursday, which was the first time that over 7,000 cases had been reported in a day this year. On the preceding two days, the case count had stood above 5,000.

On November 27 last year, the city had recorded 5,482 cases and 6,224 cases on November 24 and 7,486 on November 18, as per official data.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Wednesday had warned that the new cases "could cross" the last single-day spike record registered in November, given the pace of the spread of infection.

Tenure of senior, junior resident doctors extended for six months

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising cases of Covid-19, the Delhi Government on Saturday ordered to extend the tenure of working senior and junior resident doctors for six months. Besides this, the Government also issued a notice to engage fourth and fifth year MBBS students, interns, BDS doctors, while Medical Superintendents, CDMOs and Directors of Delhi Government hospitals are now authorised to issue oxygen concentrators to discharged covid patients.

The positivity rate recorded 10.21 percent with 7,897 positive cases and 39 deaths in 24 hours.

In a series of tweets, Health Minister Satyendra Jain said, "To combat the rising Covid cases in Delhi & meet the demand of medical personnel, the tenure of presently working SRs/JRs will be extended for 6 months. In addition, candidates will be hired for the vacant

posts." "In order to meet the increased demand for manpower during the ongoing pandemic, all Delhi Govt hospitals are directed to engage 4th & 5th year MBBS students, interns and BDS doctors. The situation demands for all hands on deck, and we hope to fight this surge soon." "During the surge in covid cases, swiftness of the process is a must. In view of the same, in addition to CDMOs, all Medical Superintendents & Directors of Delhi Govt hospitals dedicated for covid, are now authorised to issue oxygen concentrators to discharged covid patients," Jain tweeted.

To deal with tough corona battle, the government has decided to use the medical staff with full potential.

In an order issued by health secretary (special) S M Ali sated: "In view of rising number of COVID cases and in order to augment the medical staff and

meet out the shortage of medical doctors, permission, permissions is hereby granted to the Head of Medical Institutions, to either extend the tenure presently working SRs/JRs, whose tenure is completing soon on March 31, 2020 or completing soon, for a period of six months and/ or recruit SRs/JRs against sanctioned posts from those candidates also who have completed resident tenure as per the residency scheme of Government of India in case of non-availability of fresh candidates doctors.

"To meet the demand of increased manpower, all Directors/ Medical Superintendents/Director of all COVID hospitals of Government of Delhi of NCT authorised to engage 4th and 5th year of MBBS students and interns BDS pass doctors," the order stated.

Delhi government will announce some restrictions to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Centre following city's micro-containment zone model: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the AAP Government's concept of home isolation, creating micro-containment zones and other Covid-19 protocol followed by other States and even the BJP-ruled Centre is reiterating the same, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia Saturday requested the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to cooperate with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and engage in fruitful dialogue for our nation's progress.

"We are happy that the Central Government is following the Covid-19 protocol conceptualised by the Delhi Government. I would recom-



mend Prime Minister Narendra Modiji to please cooperate with the Chief Minister and engage in fruitful dialogue for our nation's progress," said Sisodia.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA ON SATURDAY REQUESTED THE PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI TO COOPERATE WITH DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL AND ENGAGE IN FRUITFUL DIALOGUE FOR THE NATION'S PROGRESS

promised to free public transport for women and in Tamil Nadu, the party has said that they will bring in a model of governance that's similar to what can be seen in Delhi," he said.

Talking about the recent interaction that the Prime Minister held with Chief Ministers on COVID management, Sisodia said, "Even Prime

Minister Narendra Modi has insisted upon the relevance of home isolation and how a strong line of defence it is, in containing COVID. The PM also mentioned the importance of creating micro containment zones across the country."

Sisodia said that Arvind Kejriwal is the only leader in the nation to hold a vision for the aam aadmi. He said that Arvind Kejriwal's model of governance is now being emulated by other political parties. The senior leader said that the electoral campaigns of BJP and Congress were based on the Arvind Kejriwal model of governance.

"Since the BJP was now fol-

lowing the Kejriwal model of governance, he hoped that they would not act as an obstructionist in Delhi Government's initiatives for citizens," he said.

Sisodia also said, "In Assam, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi has promised free electricity. Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has announced free rides for women in public buses despite the fact that there are not enough public buses in Punjab. I have noted that the BJP and the Congress are fighting elections across the country on the foundation of the Kejriwal model of governance. This proves that Kejriwal is the only leader with a vision for the nation," he said.

Civic bodies crackdown on illegal hoardings, banners

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The North and South Delhi Municipal Corporation launched an intensive drive on illegal hoardings and banners in its jurisdiction.

A senior North Corporation official said the corporation's Keshav Puram Zone launched the drive and removed 1250 banners which were mostly of political or social nature.

"Such drives would continue in future also. The citizens are appealed to not indulge in illegal mode of advertising. They

must opt for legal mode/site for advertising their product or campaigning. Otherwise they may have to face action in the form of imprisonment or penalty," he said.

Mayor of North Delhi Jai Prakash said that Delhi is our capital and keeping it clean is our duty. "Sweeping only cannot improve the look of the area but aesthetics need to be maintained for overall improvement in the view/look of the locality. Citizens' contribution is imperative in keeping the city more clean, green and beautiful," he said.

Ex-Cong MLA Anjali joins AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress leader and MLA Anjali Rai joined Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the presence of AAP MLA and national spokesperson Raghav Chadha.

Welcoming her with the party cap and stole, Chadha said

that the AAP is grateful to these two leading change makers who have decided to come onboard with us. He also said that AAP will positively benefit from their years of experience and the work they have done.

Anjali joined the party along with many other volunteers and leaders.

FCI to set up counters in Narela Mandi for sale of wheat at MSP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to facilitate sale of wheat at "Minimum Support Price (MSP)" fixed by the Government, it has been decided to set up counters in Narela Mandi by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) from Monday for registrations, Delhi Agriculture Minister Gopal Rai said on Saturday.

The decision was taken in a joint meeting between the agriculture department, mandi officials, and senior officers of the FCI.

Rai said that he himself went to the Narela Mandi to review whether the counters have been set up and discovered that the FCI counters were not set up. He said that the setting up of counters will help farmers in a way that their time will be saved and they will be

saved from the long and tedious process of registration, and won't be forced to run from pillar to post to sell their crops.

The Minister further said "There was a collective problem of the lack of counters at various Mandis and to solve the problem, a meeting was held. This was especially important as the farmers at the Narela Mandi were complaining and were facing problems because of the absence of FCI counters there."

Commenting upon the statement given by opposition member Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Rai stated, "Opposition senior leader Ramvir Singh Bidhuri falsely claimed that counters have already been set-up in Narela Mandi. I request him that being a senior opposition member; he must properly investigate the matter and then make statements.

Here comes the opportunity you have been waiting for...

DDA ANNOUNCES MEGA (12th Phase) E-AUCTION of plots/built-up units

For the first time E-auction for Group Housing Plots

PRIME COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, INDUSTRIAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND MANY MORE PROPERTIES			
07	Group Housing Plots (Freehold)	27	Industrial Plots (Freehold)
76	Institutional Plots (Leasehold)	36	Residential Plots (Freehold)
33	Commercial Plots (Freehold)	18	Function Sites (License Fee Basis)
25	Expandable Housing Scheme Plots - EHS (Freehold)	24	Kiosk Units (License Fee Basis)
06	Restaurant Units (License Fee Basis)	125	Built-up Shops/Units (Freehold)

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

13.04.2021 (Tuesday) Opening of Helpdesk and commencement of E-Registration on portal	6 PM on 15.05.2021 (Saturday) Closing Time of E-Registration & online EMD Submission	18.05.2021 (Tuesday) Online Bidding for Residential (36), Institutional (76) & Function Sites (18)	19.05.2021 (Wednesday) Online Bidding for Industrial (27) & Group Housing (07) Properties & Built up shops (125)	20.05.2021 (Thursday) Online Bidding for Commercial (33), EHS Plots (25), Kiosks (24) & Restaurants (06)
--	---	---	---	---

For details about plots/properties and procedure, kindly visit our e-auction website www.ddaeaauction.co.in or click the e-auction link available on our site www.dda.org.in and download the same through "E-AUCTION OF PROPERTIES" link available at home page of e-auction portal. Intending bidders may register themselves / their firms online at the above site through "REGISTER WITH US" link. Kindly note that digital signature of all the intending bidders are mandatory to participate in e-auctioning of DDA. A help-desk has been opened at the Nagrik Suvidha Kendra, Ground Floor, 'D' Block, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi which will start from 13.04.2021 to assist the intending bidders in the ongoing process of e-auction. For obtaining digital signatures and registration / training of prospective bidders and for any other clarification on e-auction process, please contact our help-desk no. 011-49424365 / 8800991846 / 8800378610 from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm (all working days) or at: ddaauction@etenderwizard.com

Neeraj Bharti, Commissioner (LD)

For further details contact: Commissioner (LD), Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Laying foundation for a better tomorrow

Visit DDA's website - www.dda.org.in or dial Toll Free No. 1800110332

[f ddaofficial](#) | [official_dda](#)

Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana

Adopt 4-T Mantras to Break the Chain, Together We Fight Corona Strain

4-T Mantras
Testing
Tracking
Tracing
Treatment

About 30,000 RT-PCR COVID-19 tests Daily

Till now more than 24.5 lakh vaccine doses have been given in Haryana

Strict action for not wearing mask

Mega vaccination on every Monday and Tuesday

#LargestVaccineDrive

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

www.prharyana.gov.in | [@Cmohry](#) | [@DiprHaryana](#)

10 killed, 40 hurt in UP as truck falls into gorge

PTI ■ LUCKNOW/ETAWAH

Ten people were killed and 40 injured as a truck on which they were travelling fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge in UP's Etawah district on Saturday, police said.

"The incident took place in the Barhpura police station area after the driver of the vehicle lost control over it," Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Prashant Kumar

Prasad told PTI, adding that the accident took place in a ravine area.

A police PRO said, "The number of people who have died stands at 10. The injured have been admitted to the Etawah district hospital. Depending upon the seriousness of the cases, the injured will be shifted to higher centres for medical treatment."

Meanwhile, Etawah SSP Brijesh Kumar Singh said the

accident took place around 4 pm on the Udi Chakarnagar road.

"The truck was going from Agra to a Kalika Devi temple located in the Lakhna area of Etawah to offer a flag when the driver of the truck lost control over it and it fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge," Singh said, adding that 10 people died on the spot. He said the 40 injured included 13 women and an equal number of children.

Plea in SC seeks transfer of petition on Uniform Civil Code

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking transfer of a petition on Uniform Civil Code issue, pending in the Delhi High Court, to the apex court to avoid multiplicity of litigations.

The plea filed by advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay noted that five PILs seeking uniform laws on minimum marriage age, divorce grounds, maintenance, alimony, adoption-guardianship and succession-inheritance are pending in the Supreme Court.

It said that implementing the Uniform Civil Code for all citizens on the lines of the Indian Penal Code will free the people of the country from hundreds of complex and outdated laws.

The petition filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey has also sought a direction to the Centre to constitute a Judicial Commission or Expert Committee to draft the Uniform Civil Code within three months while considering the best practices of all personal laws and civil laws of the developed countries and international conventions.

"A gender-neutral, religion-neutral law will apply to all Indians, whether Hindu or

Muslim, Zoroastrian or Christian, in relation to the will, charity, divinity, guardianship, sharing of custody, etc. The gender-based discrepancy in the religion caste and sect will end.

"A comprehensive unified gender-neutral and religion-neutral law will be passed at the national level and will be equally applicable to all citizens," the plea said adding that it will not only promote fraternity and national integration but also secure gender justice and dignity of women. The plea stated that the "Uniform Civil Code or Indian Civil Code" has always been seen as a "spectacle of religious appeasement".

The Supreme Court or high court cannot ask the government to implement Article 44 of the Constitution but can direct the Centre to constitute a committee to prepare a draft of the Uniform Civil Code, the plea said.

"The Supreme Court and High Court may direct the Centre to constitute a Judicial Commission or Expert Committee to study the Uniform Civil Code of the developed countries and the laws applicable in India

and make public a draft of the 'Indian Civil Code', combining the good of all, and public discussion could begin on this subject," it said.

Eligible family members vaccinated can apply for extra rebate in property tax: North Delhi mayor

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The owner of a residential house and his or her eligible family members who have received anti-coronavirus vaccine can apply to avail additional rebate in payment of property tax, North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said on Saturday. The mayor said a circular was issued on Friday in anticipation of approval of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

Such owners will have to furnish copies of vaccination certificates of all members to avail the scheme, which is applicable with immediate effect, the circular said

"According to the circular, owners or taxpayers of residential properties only, will have special incentive of getting a further rebate of 5 per cent in payment of property tax, over and above the 15 per cent rebate enjoyed on timely payment of the annual tax if they are eligible for vaccination and vaccinated, and so are their eligible family members," he said.

Such owners will have to furnish copies of vaccination certificates of all members to avail the scheme, which is applicable with immediate effect, the circular said.

It is available only till June 30, the mayor said.

Raj Govt says ₹500 each released for 33L families hit hard by coronavirus

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The Rajasthan Government Saturday said it has released an installment of Rs 500 each to 33 lakh families hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

"In this year's budget, it was announced to give Rs 1,000 to these families in two installments. First installment has been released," Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said in a tweet.

The State Government had provided a financial assistance of Rs 3,500 in three installments last year to 33 lakh helpless, destitute and laborers' families affected by the coronavirus, he said.

He said the State Government is with the people in this time of crisis. "The funds have been deposited in

the bank accounts of families. Those who do not have bank accounts, have been provided the relief amount in cash. In this difficult phase of Covid, the State Government stands fully with the common people," he said.

Gehlot also spoke about an online meeting Congress President Sonia Gandhi held earlier in the day with the chief ministers and ministers of the party-ruled states.

"The Congress president has rightly said that mass gathering of people in elections, religious events, has accelerated the transmission of Covid-19. For this, we are all responsible to some extent. We need to accept this responsibility, keep the national interest above self-interest," he said.

Delhi man kills wife on suspicion that she was having an affair

New Delhi: A 40-year-old man was arrested for killing his wife on Saturday on the suspicion of her having an affair with another person here, police said. The accused, Harish Mehta, who worked with a marriage bureau, hails from Rajkot in Gujarat. He met Neelu through a matrimonial site and got married to her recently, they said.

Neelu worked at a government hospital and Mehta wanted her to quit her job and look after the house. However, she continued working, police said. Mehta suspected that she was having an affair with another man and after some days, she left his house and started staying

with her parents, they said. Police said Mehta planned to kill his wife. On Saturday afternoon, when she was returning home after work, he stabbed her with a knife in the Budh Vihar area, they said. A video of the incident also surfaced online.

The woman was seen lying on a road's side in a pool of blood. Her husband tried to escape from the spot with the blood stained knife in his hand, but was chased by police, an officer said. The woman was taken to the Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where doctors declared her as brought dead, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Pranav Tayal said. **PTI**

Daily Covid cases cross...

From page 1

As the cases are on the upward mode, demand for ramping up vaccination drive is also being felt to protect the people from being infected.

However, in view of shortage of vaccines as has been reported by various States in the country, experts have suggested the Government to not depend on the two manufacturers

— Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech which have been providing Covishield and Covaxin respectively.

Sputnik V has demonstrated an efficacy rate of 91.6 per cent in the interim analysis of the phase 3 clinical trials, which included data on 19,866 volunteers in Russia, who received both the first and second dose of the vaccine.

"Sputnik V vaccine has already been approved by several countries across North and South America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa, Mexico and Egypt. There is no harm in giving it approval here and meet the shortage amid the third wave," said Dr Rahul Bhargava,

hematologist from Fortis Hospital in Gurugram, Haryana.

Similarly, US company Pfizer too had sought approval from the top drug regulator in the country, but its case was not considered with the government stating that it needs deep freezers for vaccines which is not available in India.

However experts feel that Pfizer vaccine can be made available in the urban areas where hospitals have such facilities and those who want it can pay and at least get themselves vaccinated. Experts said that the total production capacity of the manufacturers of Covishield and Covaxin, is roughly 24 lakh vaccines a day. The current demand is 37 lakh vaccines a day. The daily shortage is already huge and is probably getting concealed by some past inventory stocks of Covishield. The gap will become more acute in the weeks ahead because production capacity increase will take time, even if it is already underway. SII has already sought around Rs 3000 crore for ramping up the production.

'Tika Utsav' from today; aim to vaccinate maximum eligible people

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 'Tika Utsav' or vaccine festival will be marked in the country from April 11-14 at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an aim to inoculate maximum number of eligible people against the coronavirus amid a surge in cases.

Several States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are gearing up with appeals being made to eligible people to get themselves vaccinated during the duration of the 'Tika Utsav'.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also issued an appeal to people to get vaccinated in large numbers during the 'Tika Utsav'.

On Saturday, the health ministry said that India is the fastest nation to administer 100 million doses in 85 days.

The US took 89 days to administer 10 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccine, while China took 102 days to cross the same number, it said.

The Prime Minister's Office also tweeted a chart showing India as the fastest country to reach this vaccination milestone, calling it "strengthening efforts to ensure a healthy and Covid-19 free India".

In his interaction with chief ministers to discuss the Covid-19 situation and the ongoing vaccination drive on Thursday,

Prime Minister Modi had urged them to focus on vaccinating all those who are above 45 years in age in high caseload districts. "Sometimes, it helps in changing the atmosphere. The birth anniversary of Jyotiba Phule is on April 11 and on April 14, there is the birth anniversary of Baba Saheb. Can we organise a 'Tika Utsav: or vaccine festival and create an atmosphere of 'Tika Utsav'?" he had said.

"We should vaccinate as many eligible people through a special campaign and decide on zero wastage. If there is zero wastage in four days during 'Tika Utsav', it will also increase our vaccination capacity," Modi had asserted.

He has also called for making optimum utilisation of vaccination capacity. "Let's see how we can mobilise things from April 11 to 14 and there will be satisfaction of achievement. It will greatly help in changing the situation. I have also told the Indian Government to provide as many vaccine doses as possible," he said. This should be our endeavour to vaccinate maximum eligible people during the 'Tika Utsav', Modi had asserted.

The daily count of positive cases reached new record highs in the last few days despite having dipped to about 20,000 a few weeks back.

November after which the cases had become so few in Delhi that health system and agencies began to lax."

"It is imperative that medical staff gain their momentum again and begin to function in the same efficient manner that they did earlier to contain the spread of the virus. During the last wave, all 2000 were declared as COVID beds. Right now, we have declared 1500 as COVID beds, 500 are still non-COVID.

Kejriwal further said that OPD services will also be ended at the hospital if the situation demands. "All 2000 beds will be made available for COVID patients. Whatever is required by the hospitals from our end, will be provided. We sincerely hope and pray to God that no one falls prey to the disease but in the scenario

71 companies of...

From page 1

The break-up of the entire deployment of 1,071 companies of the Central Forces includes 253 companies of the CRPF, 217 companies of the BSF, 149 companies of CISF, 171 companies of SSB, 110 companies of ITBP and 55 Companies of the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

In addition to this, the component of the SAPs/IR Battalion includes 30 companies from Uttar Pradesh, 20 companies from Madhya Pradesh, eight companies from Arunachal Pradesh, five companies from Sikkim, 10 companies from Manipur, 12 companies from Jharkhand, 14 companies from Nagaland, five companies from Mizoram and 12 companies from Bihar. These forces will also be detailed for counting duties and

guarding EVMs.

"The State government is requested to work out the detailed deployment plan, in consultation with the respective CAPFs and Chief Force Coordinator. The movement and deployment of CAPFs shall be coordinated by CRPF," said the letter. Inspector General of South Bengal Frontier Headquarter Ashwini Kumar Singh has been re-nominated as Force Coordinator/ State Nodal Officer for deployment of forces during Assembly Election-2021 in West Bengal, it further said. In view of the Covid-19 situation, the Union Home Ministry also directed the State government to organise necessary transportation, logistics and accommodation as per the government guidelines on the issue.

Toll plaza staff attacked in Jhalawar, furniture, windowpanes damaged
PTI ■ KOTA (RAJ)

A group of men allegedly attacked employees of a toll plaza in Rajasthan's Jhalawar following an argument besides damaging furniture and windowpanes, according to police.

The incident took place on the Teendhar-Bakani highway near Ekwas village of the district on Friday evening.

Three employees at the toll plaza were injured in the incident, police said, adding that they have lodged a case against 12 people, of which one has been arrested.

Asnawar police station SHO Kalyan Singh said an altercation had taken place over the toll amount between employees of the Ekwas toll plaza and a resident of Jhalawar city, identified as Hariom Gurjar (27), who was travelling by car on Friday evening.

Gurjar immediately called his brother Bajranglal, a supplier of coal to a power plant in Baran district. He turned up there with nine to 10 men wielding sticks and irons rods.

They attacked the toll plaza staff and damaged its furniture and windowpanes, the SHO said.

They also stole Rs 12,000-13,000 from the cash box, he said. Three toll plaza employees sustained injuries. Two of them were discharged after primary treatment while the third worker with a fracture is undergoing treatment at a private hospital, the SHO said.

Politicians'...

From page 1

Incidentally, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who had condemned the firing that killed 4 persons and injured five others. Earlier said that she would visit the bereaved family at Sitalkuchi block in Cooch Behar on Sunday. She also directed a CID investigation into the firing before demanding Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation alleging it was under his instruction that the central forces had fired at the villagers killing 4 of them. Condemning the ECI decision senior TMC leader Saugato Roy said that the order itself smacked of prejudicial attitude of the poll panel. "As the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had planned to meet the bereaved family members on Sunday... But the ECI which is acting at the instance of the BJP stopped her from doing so. It was her duty as the Chief Minister to stand by

It relieves pain...

From page 1

I attended the Yagya and found that I am not the only one who is in misery. The Yagya gives a sense of inner peace to me," she said. The ascetic even encouraged Sharda Bhaui to join politics after seeing her inclination. In the last year's BDC elections Sharda won with a record margin in Akhnour.

Stick...

From page 1

They must push all their supporters in the beginning of a rally, meeting, or a campaign to wear masks and use sanitizers, and put in place crowd-control measures as per social distancing norms, according to the letter.

"Political parties, leaders, campaigners, candidates, existing or aspiring policymakers are expected to be torch-bearers for the campaign against COVID and hence, are expected to not only set an example by maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and following prescribed protocols but also by exhorting all the local formations who attend programmes to follow COVID protocols," the letter read.

On Thursday, the Delhi High Court had sought responses from the commission and the central government on the use of masks during poll campaigns.

As per Covid guidelines issued in view of Bihar polls last year, EC had asked parties and candidates concerned to ensure that all Covid-related requirements like face masks, sanitizers, thermal scanning etc. are fulfilled. It had then added that non-compliance of instructions during the period of public interface would attract action under the Disaster Management Act and Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code.

Arhtiyas in Punjab withdraw strike, wheat procurement kicks off

PTI ■ LUDHIANA/CHANDIGARH

A few hours after going on a State-wide strike against the Centre's direction to the state government to transfer the minimum support price of farmers' crops directly to their bank accounts, arhtiyas in Punjab on Saturday withdrew their strike.

The arhtiyas or commission agents withdrew their strike after Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh assured them that they would remain an integral part of the procurement system.

Earlier during the day, around 40,000 arhtiyas across the state had gone on strike to protest against the direct benefit transfer (DBT) of the minimum support price (MSP) to farmers for their crops, bypassing them. The decision to call off the strike was taken by arhtiyas after their leader Vijay Kalra, under the banner of the Federation of Arhtiya Association of Punjab, held a

meeting with Punjab Food Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu in Ludhiana.

After the commission agents announced the rollback of the strike, wheat procurement kicked off in the state.

In Chandigarh, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered various steps to ensure arhtiyas' continued involvement in the process.

The state Food Department has amended the procurement software so that the arhtiyas will continue to be involved in the process of release of payments to farmers, albeit in a modified manner with farmers getting their payments in their bank accounts within 48 hours, as mandated by the state government, an official statement said. A senior Food Department official said the commission agents will come to know how much payment is being released to farmers who are linked to them.

Patriotic fervour...

From page 1

"I got the idea of a special Yagya for the martyrs after the martyrdom of Major Ajay Singh Jasrothiya. The pain of his family motivated me to do something for the martyrs," he said. "If these young men can offer their lives for the country why cannot we offer oblation of rice, ghee and things in the Yagya for them," he added.

The ascetic who has many Ashrams in the country and commands a considerable following worldwide said that initially it was difficult for him to convince the families of the martyrs for the Yagya. "I personally visited the martyrs' families in all parts of the country and persuaded them. Gradually they accepted the idea and started attending the Yagya. During the Yagya the family members share their

grief. In some cases the families have entered into matrimonial associations also," he said.

The Havan Kunds have been prepared on the bank of the Ganga and with a massive 60 feet entrance gate of the site where Yagya would be offered by more than 500 priests and the relatives of the martyrs. At the apex of the whole makeshift structure a large pole with tricolour is placed. The pictures and portraits of the martyrs including the freedom fighters would be placed everywhere in the Shaheed Nagar before the start of the Yagya. Arrangements for the comfortable stay of the family members of the martyrs have also been made. Das' Ashram even pays for the travel expenses of the families of the martyrs for the Yagya.

Setback for BJP in Tripura...

From page 1

The 30-member Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council governs two-thirds of the state's territory..

Elections to 28 of the 30 seats were held on April 6 and the remaining two seats will be nominated by the governor as per the state government's advice.

A total of 157 candidates are in the fray in the elections held in 1,244 polling stations, in which 85.14 percent of the 8.65 lakh voters exercised their franchise amid stray incidents of violence.

The tribal council election was scheduled to be held on May 17 last year, but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. **PNS**

From page 1

Quoting reports filed by observers Pratap M and Sharad Laxman to the ECI, local police officers said a quick response team of the Central Forces that was escorting a group of 50-60 voters — who had been stopped from voting by alleged TMC men — to the booth chased away an armed crowd that had assembled around the way. In the melee a child fell down and received some injuries.

Soon as rumours spread about CISF firing a large armed crowd of 300-400 people raided the booth. "Even women with hand-made weapons used by them at home were seen attacking the booth," the local SP said. As bombs were hurled the central forces resorted to blank fire to disperse the crowd.

As they would not relent they "opened fire," leading to the deaths. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was addressing a rally in Siliguri during the same time, said he was "deeply hurt" by the incident.

"I will urge the Election Commission to take strict action against the accused. I extend my condolences to the bereaved families," Modi added.

However the TMC held the BJP responsible for the incident saying "when TMC workers went to enquire why people were not being allowed to vote, BJP miscreants launched an attack creating an atmosphere of chaos, following which CRPF open fired leading to five TMC workers losing their lives."

Condemning Home Minister for the Saturday's incident and demanding his resignation Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called for a state-wide protest by her party men. She said she would visit the spot on Sunday "as I cannot go there today because of model code of conduct."

She said "I will go to Cooch Behar tomorrow and then on Monday the TMC workers would organize protests throughout the State where the polls have taken place and also where they are yet to be

conducted."

The Chief Minister ordered a CID investigation into the case while CPI(M) politburo member condemning the deaths demanded judicial inquiry into the firing.

There were reports of skirmishes with BJP leaders Babul Supriyo being heckled at Tollygunge in South Kolkata when he went to

inquire about false votes being polled by the TMC men. At Chinsurah in

Hooghly BJP MP and candidate Locket Chatterjee was heckled and her car damaged when she went to challenge people casting false votes. At

Kasba BJP candidate Indranil Khan was heckled by the TMC men whereas at Jadavpur a red chilli powder was poured in the eyes of a CPI(M)

polling agent. In the evening the vehicles of the dummy candidate of

BJP nominee Vaishali Dalmiya was shattered, sources said.

Centre created Covid jab shortage: Sonia



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Saturday blamed the Centre for “mis-managing the situation” of corona pandemic by exporting vaccines. “The Government allowed a shortage to be created in India,” Sonia said at a virtual meeting with the Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States to review their efforts to fight Covid-19, including the availability of vaccines and access to medicines and ventilators.

Sonia advised the Chief Minister to focus on testing, tracking and vaccination. “Covid is surging and as the principal Opposition party, it’s our responsibility to raise issues and push the Government to move away from PR tactics and act in the interest of the people. Therefore, there must be transparency. Governments must reveal the actual numbers of infections and deaths across States, whether Congress-ruled or otherwise,” she said.

During the interaction, she took on the Centre and said vaccines should be provided to



Indians first and then the Government should think about exporting it to other countries. “We must focus on India’s vaccination drive first and foremost, then only export vaccines and gift them to other countries. We must stress on responsible behaviour adhering to all laws and Covid regulations without exception,” Sonia said in the wake of Centre exporting vaccines to several countries.

Asserting that all parties are united in the fight against Covid-19, the Congress chief said, “Cooperation with States respecting federalism and in turn, for us to be constructive and cooperate with the Government in its efforts to fight the pandemic is equally important. We are all united in this fight.”

She also blamed mass gatherings during election rallies and religious events for the spike in cases. “Mass gatherings for elections and religious events have accelerated Covid for which all of us are responsible to some extent. We need to accept this responsibility and keep the interest of the

nation above our own.”

Pushing for strict action to be taken to control the corona graph, Sonia Gandhi said, “In our states, we need to take strict measures to ensure that the pandemic doesn’t go out of control and ensure testing at large scale, preparation of adequate facilities, setting up temporary ones. We must make all efforts to support those who face the brunt of reduced economic activity as the restrictions become harder and more stringent.”

Taking about the economic situation in the country due to the coronavirus pandemic, Sonia Gandhi asked the State Government to look for the impact of government schemes so far and the next course of action which could be helpful. “Various packages had been announced by the Central government to help MSMEs and stimulate the economy. What impact have these packages had and what more should the Government be doing to deal with the continuing crisis? Do you see economic recovery happening in the manner that is being officially claimed?”

Allegation to incite voters against Central forces unfounded: Didi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defending her controversial remarks over the Central forces’ alleged partisan role in the ongoing State Assembly polls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said there was no attempt to threaten, incite or influence the electorate against the force and any allegations to the contrary were unfounded’ and ‘denied’. Responding to the Election Commission’s notice Mamata said she has the highest regard for the Central forces and ‘commend and laud their contributions to the safety and the security of the country’.



The EC had on Thursday issued a notice to Mamata for her provocative remarks against Central forces

“In my speech, I had only called upon the voters, specifically voters who are women to protect (democratically by gherao) if and when somebody (including CAPF) created any obstruction in their right to vote,” Mamata said adding that gherao is one of the democratic ways of registering public protest.

“Be it noted that multi-dimensional word gherao has been a legitimate entry in the political lexicon of West Bengal since late 1960s...,” she said. In recent years, the word has been used to connote peaceful satyagraha against authorities by silent victims of the situation, she added.

Mamata also urged the poll body to rescind its notice, contending she has not violated the model code or the various sections of the Indian Penal Code. She claimed that a girl was allegedly molested by an unidentified CRPF personnel in the early hours of April 6 at Ramnagar, under Tarakeswar police station and the matter was reported to the

BJP releases Kishor’s video claiming ‘Modi’s popularity’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid polling for 44 Assembly Seats in West Bengal, a controversy broke out on Saturday as BJP IT Cell head Amit Malviya released an audio clip where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s election strategist Prashant Kishor is purportedly heard saying “PM Modi, Mamata equally popular” in the State.

Malviya, who is also BJP’s deputy-in-charge of Bengal, tweeted four audio clips of what he said was parts of a conversation between Kishor and a group of journalists on the Clubhouse app.

Malviya quoted Kishor as saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s appeal, anti-incumbency against the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC), “Muslim appeasement” of political parties in Bengal over the years and the Dalit vote would likely work favour of the BJP.

Kishor’s rejected the interpretation with ‘selective quotes’ and accused the BJP of “distorted use of parts of the conversation”, and asked the party to release the “full conversation”.

The controversy came on the day 44 of West Bengal’s total 294 seats were voting in the fourth round of an eight-phase polling process.

In the first tweet by Malviya, Kishor could be heard purportedly saying “...Polarisation, Modi, Hindi-speaking people,

SC (Scheduled Castes) — these are the factors.” Former minister Suwendu Adhikari leaving the TMC, or Kishor coming in as the TMC strategist were not the issues of significance at all, he said.

“Modi is popular here, the Hindi-speaking people have over 1 crore votes, Dalits account for 27% (of the population) — and they are fully backing the BJP. Plus, there is of course polarisation,” Kishor said.

“Matusas will be predominantly voting for the BJP but not as unitedly as they did in the Lok Sabha (elections in 2019). I still think 75% of the Matusas will vote for the BJP and 25% for the TMC,” Kishor purportedly said.

“Even our surveys on who will form the Government shows the BJP coming to power. This is because the BJP supporters are claiming the party will form the Government. Of the people voting for the Left — 10-15% — about two-third think the BJP will form the Government. So, the majority view you are hearing is that the BJP is coming to power,” Kishor said.

He said the perception, mostly among people from outside the state, that the BJP did not have workers on the ground in Bengal was not true. “They could be imported from the Left, but they are dedicatedly working for the BJP today,” he said, adding that the Left voters would like to see Banerjee lose.

When asked who was voting for the TMC, Kishor also purportedly clarified that he meant to say “50-55% Hindus are voting for the BJP”.

In the second clip, he said the major problem “we have to accept is that for 20 years there have been efforts to appease the minority”. For example, in Bengal the predominant belief was whoever got the Muslim vote would the elections, he said.

“The entire political ecosystem — be it of the Congress, Left or of Didi (as Banerjee is popularly known as) — has been thinking about that (getting Muslim votes). The first time, Hindus are thinking that they are seeing a chance... There is some element that the BJP is exploiting. And that element is coming from blatant misuse of minority policies by some of these parties... We can’t deny that...,” he said.

In the third clip, Kishor said the Hindi-speaking people in Bengal were Modi’s core voters in Bengal. “Plus, the anti-incumbency is against the state government, not against the Centre.”

“If we do a survey of leaders, Modi and Mamata are equally popular (in Bengal) — which is a very big thing,” he said. “Bengal has not seen a BJP rule. That is a factor. The people who have not seen it (BJP rule) for 30-35 years think they (the BJP) will do something hitherto undone. They want to taste the laddoo they have not yet,” he said.

Assam polls: EC orders repolling in 4 booths on April 20



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Saturday ordered re-polling on April 20 in four polling booths including Haflong constituency of Assam where 181 votes were cast even though 90 people were eligible to exercise their franchise. The Commission has declared the votes cast at these polling stations on April 1 as void.

In a massive breach of conduct, a polling booth station at 107(A)-Khotlir LP School under Haflong Assembly constituency, located in Assam’s Dima Hasao district, where 181 votes were cast even though 90 people were eligible to exercise their franchise. The presiding and first polling officer in their statements had admitted that they had allowed the voters registered at the main polling station at 107-Mouldam LP School to cast their votes at the auxiliary polling station. The Haflong constituency has witnessed 74 percent polling.

The ECI order said, repolling will be held at Ratabari (SC) constituency’s polling station number 149 at Indira M V School, after an electronic voting machine (EVM) was found in a car belonging to the wife of a BJP candidate. A magisterial probe was ordered by Karimganj district Deputy Commissioner and Returning Officer to enquire as to why a polling team in Assam carried a polled EVM in a vehicle owned by the wife of BJP candidate and sitting MLA Krishnendu Paul.

Repolling has also been ordered in Sonai constituency’s 463- Madhya Dhanehori LP School polling booth where at least three persons were injured in an incident of firing, following which the state’s deputy speaker and BJP candidate Aminul Haque Laskar was questioned by the police and five police personnel attached to him were suspended. According to the reports, the clash broke out between two groups among after there was alleged mismanagement at Madhya Dhanehari polling station.

Tomar urges agitating farmers to call off strike amid Covid surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday appealed to the farmers protesting at Delhi borders to call off their long-running agitation in view of second wave of Covid-19 cases, saying the Government is ready for a discussion whenever they come with a concrete proposal. Tomar expressed concerns about the farmers’ health and wellbeing as India witnessed a record surge of over 1.45 lakh coronavirus cases on Saturday.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting against the three new agri-marketing laws for nearly five months now, braving the raging pandemic. There has been no headway in the logjam over the issue since January 22, when the 11th and the last round of formal talks happened between the Central government and the protesting farmer unions.

“Now in the second wave of pandemic, the entire nation and the world is following COVID-19 protocols. Even protesting farmers should follow the protocols. Their life is important for us,” Tomar said.

“In the current COVID-19 situation, I urge them (agitating farmers) to call off their protest. The government is ready for a discussion whenever they come with a proposal,” he said.

Stating that there is no “dissatisfaction” among the farming community across the country over the new farm



laws, the minister said many farm bodies in fact are in the favour these legislations, while some are opposing them.

“Ours is a democratic country, be it farmers or citizens, if they have any doubt, the government believes it is its responsibility to clear doubts and find a solution,” he said. The minister said the three laws were not drafted all of a sudden, but there was a long discussion in the past and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken it forward, he said.

He said that normally any protest continues if the government is not ready for talks. But this government has held with open heart 11 rounds of discussion with representatives of protesting farm unions, yet their agitation did not stop, he said.

In these meetings, the gov-

Covid recovered patients not coming forward to donate plasma: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With more and more Covid-19 patients landing into intensive care units, there is a serious shortage of Convalescent plasma, antiviral drug Remdesivir, and Tocilizumab injection being prescribed by doctors for treatment— even as scientific evidence on their efficacy is awaited.

Though the World Health Organization (WHO) does not recommend these drugs and therapies for patients hospitalised with Covid-19, in India medical experts have been using these treatments on an experimental basis for moderately to severely ill patients.

Vasu Goel, a resident of Murad Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, said he had been trying hard for the last two days to get plasma for his grandfather who is admitted to JP Hospital in Noida for Covid treatment.

“I have not lost hope, yet,” he said.

However, Vivek Jain from Kab Welfare Foundation, who had been coordinating with plasma donors to reach out to the needy this time too like last year, said that he has been getting several requests every day for the past few weeks. While the demand is rising, he pointed out, Covid-19 recovered patients were not coming forward to donate the plasma and help those in need.

He echoed the views of Dr

SK Sarin, head of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, which houses the city’s first plasma bank. Dr Sarin too recently pointed out that the number of donors was not enough.

“If the pandemic continues unabated, we would need donors who have recovered to come and donate but we would not deny anyone in need of plasma. People should come forward to donate plasma,” he said.

Delhi along with a few other States like Maharashtra had last year set up plasma banks to meet the demand which was at its peak.

Experts say those who are infected now will recover in the next two weeks, after which they will be eligible to donate plasma.

Amid states grappling with stretched Covid facilities and vaccine shortage, there are also reports of shortage of anti-viral drug Remdesivir that is used to treat Covid patients, in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

In some cities, the drug is being sold in black markets, leaving the patients and their relatives at the receiving end. In some cases that highlight the limited options available to physicians treating Covid-19, doctors are recommending tocilizumab injection too. The doctors believe that the drug reduces inflammation that causes Covid-19 patients to become severely ill, particularly in their lungs.

It said that a person, who is compelled to beg due to certain circumstances, cannot be faulted for his actions.

The plea has claimed that “The Abolition of Begging and Rehabilitation of Beggars Bill 2018” was introduced in Lok Sabha but “till date, this bill is not passed and is wedged in length parliamentary procedures, that has resulted in thousands of poor facing more hardships because of present arbitrary statutes”.

The petition has sought directions to declare as “illegal and void” all provisions, except some sections, of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, Punjab Prevention of Beggary Act, 1971, Haryana Prevention of Begging Act, 1971 and Bihar Prevention of Begging Act 1951.

It has also sought to declare all other similar Acts prevailing in any part of the country as illegal.

CRPF staff’s special children to get school bus facility

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In a major relief to CRPF personnel parenting specially-abled and autistic children, the Union Home Ministry has cleared a proposal for the provision of a school bus facility to such children to transport them to special school or institution irrespective of the minimum number of such children in a camp.

In an order issued earlier this month, the Union Home Ministry conveyed the clearance of the proposal to the effect.

A Ministry letter with the subject title as “Wellbeing of Specially Abled and Autistic Children of employees of CRPF in Government Vehicles to School/Institutions,” it said the CRPF proposal dated February 24 has been approved.

“It case of autistic/specially abled children, it has been decided that school bus facility may be provided irrespective of the strength (number) of such children in a camp,” reads the communication.

According to an earlier order dated April 5, 1999 on the issue, the provision of mandatory requirement of number of children as five for Gazetted Officers and non-Gazetted Officers or 12 for the children of all other ranks for free of cost school bus facility was reconsidered for the latest order doing away with the requirement of the number children in a camp for availing such facility, it said.

“This amendment is being issued subject to the condition that no new vehicles would be authorised and CRPF should manage this facility within available resources,” added the letter.

“The move will go a long way in mental succour for parents of specially-abled or autistic children as they need to attend special schools or institutions as part of their educational course. The removal of the fetters of a number of such children in a camp will mean that even a single such child of either officers or those from other ranks will be entitled to free school bus transport. The facility is also expected to help such parents concentrate on their core duties,” a senior official said.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is the world’s biggest paramilitary force with an operational strength of 3.25 lakh personnel. It is the designated Central force for anti-Naxal operations, counter-terror role, and anti-insurgency operations with significant deployments in Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast, and Naxal-hit States.

SC asks Centre, four States to respond on plea seeking repeal of provisions criminalising begging

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre and four States, including Maharashtra and Gujarat, to file their response within three weeks on a plea seeking a direction to repeal the provisions criminalising begging.

A bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and R Subhash Reddy noted in its order that though a notice was issued on the plea on February 10 this year, only Bihar has so far filed its response in the matter.

“Although notice has been issued on February 10, 2021, a reply has been filed by the respondent - state of Bihar - only and other respondents have not yet filed their reply.

sions of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which treats begging as an offence cannot sustain constitutional scrutiny.

“The provisions of the statutes criminalising the act of begging put people in a situation to make an unreasonable choice between committing a crime or not committing one and starving, which goes against the very spirit of the Constitution and violates Article 21 i.e. Right to Life,” said the plea, filed through advocate H K Chaturvedi.

Referring to the Census 2011, the plea has said that the total number of beggars in India is 4,13,670 and the number has increased from the last census.



It said that the government has the mandate to provide social security to everyone and ensure that all have basic facilities, as embedded in the Directives Principles of State Policy in the

Constitution.

“However, the presence of beggars is evidence that the State has failed to provide these basic facilities to all its citizens, thus instead of working on its failure and examin-

ing what made people beg, criminalising the act of begging is irrational and against the approach of a socialist nation as embedded in the preamble of our Constitution,” the plea has claimed.

HAWALA TRANSACTION

Kerala Speaker questioned by Customs for four hours

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala experienced the Kignominy of watching a high level team of Customs interrogating P Sreeramakrishnan, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in connection with hawala transaction.

A team of Customs officials led by a superintendent called on Sreeramakrishnan at his official bungalow in Thiruvananthapuram late Friday evening and grilled him for four hours about his involvement in the hawala transaction. The currency notes in US dollars were transported to West Asia with the blessings of the then UAE Consul General in Thiruvananthapuram.

The Consul General left the country the moment the gold from UAE smuggled through the diplomatic channel in the airport at the capital city was seized by the Customs officials much against the pressure exerted by the Chief Minister's Office.

The interrogation of Sreeramakrishnan was based on the statement given by Swapna Suresh, one of the king-

pins of the gold smuggling racket, who had worked as the liaison officer at the UAE Consulate. Swapna and Sarith, her close accomplice, had told the Customs that Sreeramakrishnan had handed over a bag printed with initials SRK printed on it and bundles of currency notes to be handed over to the Consulate General officials.

Swapna in her statement to the Customs reportedly told that she had intimate relations with Sreeramakrishnan who is known in party circles as dandy. She had quoted Sreeramakriahnan as telling that, he would not do anything "free of cost" and would extract the price from Swapna herself. According to Swapna, the Speaker had held meetings with the ruler of Sharjah during the latter's royal visit to Kerala and it was she who arranged the one-to-one meeting between the two.

Sreeramakrishnan had invested heavily in some of the West Asian countries in education sector and had plans to open a network of international public schools and colleges in

the oil rich Gulf kingdoms. Adding insult to injury was Swapna's charge that the Speaker had invited her for a "personal meeting" to an apartment which he claimed as his personal hide-out in the capital city.

Speaker tests +ve for Covid-19 after Vijayan, Chandy

Thiruvananthapuram: Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan on Saturday tested positive for Covid-19. In a Facebook post, Sreeramakrishnan said he has tested positive for the infection and was under observation at his official residence here. He also requested all those who had come in contact with him in recent days to quarantine themselves. Customs officials recorded the statement of the speaker in the dollar smuggling case on Friday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and senior Congress leader Oommen Chandy have also tested positive for the virus and have been hospitalised. **PTI**

MUSLIM LEAGUE WORKER MURDER

One of the suspects found dead in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The murder of Manzoor, the Muslim League activist allegedly by CPI(M) workers last Tuesday took a curious turn as Ratheesh (38) one of the suspects was found dead in Kozhikode late Friday evening.

The Police was after Ratheesh , who was one of the suspects in the murder of Manzoor. He was found hanging in an empty compound in Valayam area of the district. The police on Saturday too into custody two CPI(M) workers allegedly involved in the murder.

But K Sudhakaran, MP, told media that the death of Ratheshsh. "It has to be ascertained whether Ratheesh was killed and then hanged by the perpetrators to make it look like a suicide," said Sudhakaran.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said the police have lost credibility in the backdrop of the case. "We want an IPS level officer to supervise the investigation. Till date we have seen the police working overtime to cover up all evidences to save the CPI(M) activists who were involved in the case," said Chennithala.

P K Kunhalikutty, leader of Muslim League said the investigation should be carried out by a central agency as the police in Kerala have been a failure in this case.

Shinoz, a Marxist worker have been arrested by the police in connection with the murder. According to a member of the investigating team, the police have come across many crucial evidence after examining the phone calls made and received by Shinoz.

Manzoor, hailing from a village in Kannur district, was murdered by the CPI(M) workers to settle old scores, it is reliably learnt.

Centre discriminated against Maha in supplying PPE kits, N95 masks: Cong's Chavan

'Modi Govt politically biased in supply of jabs to Maha as well'

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid a fierce controversy between Maharashtra and the Centre over the discrimination in making available Covid-19 vaccine to it, former Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Prithiviraj Chavan on Saturday alleged that the Narendra Modi Government was "lop-sided" and "politically biased" towards the State even in the supply of critical medical equipment like PPE kits, N95 masks and ventilators.

"Maharashtra has the highest COVID-19 caseload, but as the state Health Minister says we are facing step-motherly treatment from the Govt of India in the supply of vaccines, according to the State Health Minister. This is not only limited to the distribution of vaccines but also quantities of the critical medical equipment supplied to the state," Chavan said.

Quoting a reply by the Government of Indian to a question in the Lok Sabha on the quantities of critical medical equipment supplied to each state as of February 10, 2021, Chavan said: "Gujarat got 9623 numbers of N95 masks per thousand Covid-19 patients as compared to

Maharashtra, which got 1560 masks per thousand patients. Even UP got 3916 N95 masks, more than twice that of Maharashtra".

"As far as PPE kits are concerned, Gujarat got 4951 kits per thousand, UP got 2446 kits while Maharashtra got just 223 kits," Chavan said.

As far as ventilators are concerned, Gujarat was given 13 ventilators per 1000 patients, UP got 7 while Maharashtra got only 2 ventilators per thousand Covid-19 patients. Kerala got even less than Maharashtra on a per thousand patient basis," he said.

"As per the Lok Sabha reply, in all the categories, Gujarat was given the lion's share of the supply of medical equipment which is disproportionate to the caseload," Chavan said.

Slamming Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the discrimination shown towards the non-BJP ruled states in the distribution of vaccines and critical medical equipment, Chavan said: "What is this if not discrimination based on politics? The Prime Minister seems to be forgetting that he is the PM of the entire country and not just Gujarat, UP and other BJP ruled states".

CPM backs

Jaleel, rules out his resignation

KOCHI: The ruling CPI(M) buried all inner party rivalries and came out unanimously in support of K T Jaleel, Kerala's Higher Education Minister, whom the Lok Ayukta declared on Friday of committing impropriety.

Cyriac Joseph, Lok Ayukta and Harun-ul- Rasheed, his deputy ruled on Friday that Jaleel was guilty of nepotism and abuse of power in the appointment of K T Adeenb (a close relation of the minister) as general manager of Kerala State Minorities development Finance Corporation Ltd.

The Lok Ayukta also ruled that Jaleel's continuation as minister is untenable and asked the chief minister to remove him from office. "Jaleel violated the oath of office and showed favouritism by tweaking the qualifications to favour his relative."

It was in November 2018, the Muslim Youth League, disclosed details about the "illegal" appointment of Adeenb as general manager of the public sector enterprises. Within days Adeenb quit the post but the matter was raised before the Lok Ayukta through a public interest litigation.

Though the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau informed the High Court that the allegation was political in nature , the Lok Ayukta found the charges to be true and hence the present ruling.

Jaleel, a former leader of the banned SIMI, has been in controversy since the beginning of 2020 in connection with the gold smuggling scam through UAE Consulate and his close liaison with Swapna Suresh, the king-pin of the racket. Recordings of the minister's private phone calls with the controversial lady had made headlines and steamy reports during the last one year.

While the Congress-led opposition demanded the sacking of Jaleel from the council of ministers, the CPI(M) leadership came out in support of the beleaguered minister on Saturday. Kerala's Minister for Culture A K Balan, told media persons that there was no need for Jaleel to resign following the observations of Lok Ayukta. "Jaleel is a good administrator and minister. The Lok Ayukta ruling is because of ignorance and there is no need for him to resign," said A K Balan.

A Vijayaraghavan, party general secretary and Marxist intellectual, said that Jalle had proved his innocence and nobody in this world could doubt him. "He is one of the best ministers in Kerala Government and he faces the maximum opposition from Sangh Parivar," said Vijayaraghavan. **PNS**

ALL PARTY-MEETING ON COVID-19

Maha CM hints at more restrictions in State

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Stopping short of announcing a full-fledged lockdown in worst Covid 19-hit Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said here on Saturday that the State Government would have no alternative but to resort to stern restrictions to break the chain of transmission of the virus in the state.

Speaking at an all-party meeting called to evolve a strategy to tide over the Covid-19 crisis in the state, the chief minister said: "Our first priority is to save lives. In a health emergency like the one we are passing through, our priorities are the health and lives of the citizens".

"We may continue our war against Covid-19, but the immediate task is to arrest the rapid spread of the pandemic. During last year's lockdown, people were confined to their homes and it was easy for us to trace the patients and their contacts. Now when everything is open and we are facing practical difficulties, a fact that the Union government should take note of," the chief minister said.

Uddhav said that the Covid-19 situation was worsening every day. "We are acting

according to the advice we are receiving from the task force appointed for the purpose. On one hand, we have to consider the sentiments of the people (about deciding on lockdown), while on the other Corona crisis is becoming more and more severe day by day. Under the circumstances, we will have to fight the virus for some more time, before we win the war"

Uddhav said that while imposing stern restrictions, the state government would take all precautions that its restrictions would not affect the livelihood of poor and working classes. "All the same time, we are looking at ways to stop the rapid spread of Covid-19 in the state... If we do not take a decision on imposing lockdown today, then we will get to see a situation where lockdown becomes inevitable," he said.

Stressing on the need for administering vaccines to youngsters, Uddhav said: "There is a need to intensify the vaccination campaign. For instance, the United Kingdom imposed strict lockdown for two months. During that period, the UK went in for a massive vaccination programme and made their people safe. There is a dire need for vaccinating the younger generation. Pfizer has planned for vac-

cination of teenagers in the age group of 12 to 15 years".

Alluding to the suggestions made by leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP, Uddhav said: "The Leader of the Opposition has made good suggestions. We will take serious cognisance of his suggestions like increased availability of Remdesivir injections, giving instructions to laboratories for expeditious release of Covid-19 test reports and streamlining of the system to make available Oxygen cylinders to hospitals".

Apart from the chief minister and Fadnavis, the prominent others who were present at the joint party meeting were: deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, senior MVA ministers Ashok Chavan, Balasaheb Thorat, Dilip Walse Patil, Eknath Shinde, Jayant Patil, Rajesh Tope, Amit Deshmukh, State Congress President Nana Patole, leader of the Opposition in the State Council Pravin Darekar and State BJP president Chandrakant Patil.

The chief minister appealed to the Opposition leaders to extend their co-operation to the state government for the stern decisions that it intends to take in the coming days.

Maha logs 55,411 fresh cases, 309 deaths in 24 hrs

Mumbai: With no let up in the rapid spread of Covid-19, Maharashtra on Saturday logged 55,411 fresh pandemic cases, while 309 more people succumbed to the pandemic in various parts of the State.

A day after an alarming 58,993 people tested positive for Coronavirus and the virus claimed 301 more lives in the state, the number of infections came down by 3,582 as compared to Friday, the daily death tally went up by eight to touch a Covid toll of 309.

With 55,411 fresh cases, the total infections climbed from 32,88,540 to 33,43,951. Similarly, with 301 new deaths, the total Covid-19 toll rose from 57,329 to 57,538.

As 53,005 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 27,38,153 The recovery rate in the state dropped from 81.96 per cent to 82.18 per cent.

Meanwhile, the number of "active cases" total cases in the state increased from to 5,34,603 to 5,36,682 The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.74 per cent to 1.72 per cent.

While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,02,115 "active cases" in the state, Mumbai stood second with 89,707 active cases, followed by Thane (71,061), Nagpur (56,598), Nashik (32,881), Aurangabad (16385), Ahmednagar (17,679), Nanded (12,249), Jalgaon (8957), Amaravati (3691) and Akola (3056).

Of the 2,18,51,235 samples sent to laboratories, 33,43,951 have tested positive (15.3 per cent) for COVID-19 until Saturday. Currently, 30, 41,080 people are in home quarantine while 25,297 people are in institutional quarantine.

Andhra's active Covid-19 cases race past 18K-mark

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh on Saturday reported 18,666 active Covid cases, while 3,309 fresh infections pushed the state's tally to over 9.21 lakh, health officials said.

Meanwhile, 1,053 more persons have recovered in the last 24 hours, raising the total number of recoveries to over 8.95 lakh.

Chittoor district reported the highest number of cases at 740, followed by Guntur (527), Visakhapatnam (391), Kurnool (296), Srikakulam (279) and Krishna (278).

East Godavari's tally has crossed 1.25 lakh, the highest among all the districts of the state, while the positive rate dropped to 5.9 per cent, which is still higher than the national average of 5.17 per cent.

Meanwhile, 12 more persons have succumbed to the virus in the past 24 hours, pushing the toll to 7,291. **IANS**

Experts discuss cooperation between BRICS and Africa

New Delhi: On April 10,

experts and diplomats gathered online to discuss the cooperation opportunities of BRICS and Africa celebrating 15th anniversary of BRICS. The event was organized despite the new restrictions introduced in Delhi by the BRICS International Forum and its partners.

One of the important initiatives was proposed by Minister of State Jal Shakti Shri Ratanlal Kataria, whose speech was dedicated to the drinking water supply problem relevant for many citizens of both - BRICS and African - countries.

Ved Bushan, representing Delhi Police Mahasangh, has emphasized that technical innovation can help to combat the major challenges the countries are facing now.

Experts agree that not only growing economies, but also having similar backgrounds



allow BRICS countries and African ones be partners and establish mutually beneficial relations. The world has been changing rapidly lately, shifting to a more polycentric model. This implies stepping away from the patterns and institutions, including neocolonial ones, that have been ensuring hegemony and dominance of EU, UK and USA in Africa. One of the most important stages in the process of shaping economic models in Africa was the Cotonou trade agreement.

DIVERSION/PARTIALLY CANCELLATION AND RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS DUE TO TRAFFIC BLOCK

In order to upgrade the infrastructure, Varanasi Division of Railway will undertake the Construction of Limited Height Subway (LHS). To execute this work Traffic Block will be taken from 13.04.2021 to 27.04.2021. Consequently following trains will be Diverted/ Partially Cancellation and Rescheduled on date shown against each:-

DIVERSION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Name	Diverted Via	Date (from the Originating Station)
01061 Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Jaynagar Express Special	Via Aunrihar Jn.-Indara Jn.-Phephna-Chhapra instead of Varanasi Jn.-Aunrihar Jn.-Chhapra	12.04.2021 & 26.04.2021
04005 Sitamarhi-Anand Vihar Terminal Express Spl.	Via Varanasi Jn.-Janghai Jn.-Prayagraj instead of Varanasi Jn.-Madhosingh-Prayagraj	19.04.2021
02792 Danapur-Secunderabad Jn. Express Express	Via Varanasi Jn.-Janghai Jn.-Prayagraj instead of Varanasi Jn.-Madhosingh-Prayagraj	19.04.2021
05160 Durg-Chhapra Special	Via Janghai Jn.-Jaunpur Jn.-Aunrihar Jn. instead of Janghai Jn.-Varanasi Jn.-Aunrihar Jn.	21.04.2021

PARTIALLY CANCELLATION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short Origin from	Partially Cancelled between Station	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
05008 Lucknow Jn.-Varanasi Exp. Spl.	at Mau Jn.	Mau Jn.-Varanasi City	21.04.2021
05007 Varanasi City-Lucknow Jn. Exp. Spl.	from Mau Jn.	Varanasi City-Mau Jn.	22.04.2021
05138 Prayagraj Rambag-Mau Jn. Express Special	at Mau Jn.	Varanasi City-Mau Jn.	22.04.2021
05137 Mau Jn.-Prayagraj Rambag Express Special	from Mau Jn.	Mau Jn.-Varanasi City	22.04.2021

RESCHEDULE OF TRAINS	
Train No. 02334 Prayagraj-Howrah Jn. Express Special will be rescheduled for 60 minutes from Prayagraj on 19.04.2021	

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

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

Visit RailMadad website:-
www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
Download RailMadad app.

RailMadad Helpline No. : 139
Please join us on   

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Your Convenience - Our Concern
Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

PUBLIC NOTICE

Take NOTICE that 1 Share Certificate No. 89 for 50 shares bearing dist. nos. 20434557 - 20434566 of Old Name: Hinduja Venture Ltd. New Name:- NXTDIGITAL LIMITED, having its Registered Office at 49/50, 11 Centre, 12th Road, M I D C, Anandher (East), Mumbai, Maharashtra, 400093 registered in the name(s) of BIMAL KUMAR JAIN, has been lost. I have applied to the Company for issue of duplicate share certificate in lieu of the above. Objections if any, can be lodged with the Company at the above address or with their Registrars, KFin Technologies Pvt. Ltd.: Kavya Selenium Tower B, Plot 31-32, Gachibowli, Financial District, Nanakramguda, Serilingampally, Mandal, Hyderabad,Telangana-500032, in writing, within 7 days of this Notice.

BIMAL KUMAR JAIN
C-391 BLOCK-C,V.O.N.A
VIHAR DELHI 110092

Place : Delhi
Date:10-04-2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Mr. Vishal Chadha is no longer a part of Carlo.in (Searchglass Automotives Private Limited) directly or indirectly as the management has found him to carry malpractices using the company's name and is not authorised to transact or carry forward any business on the company's behalf.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to all concern that Smt Santhosh W/o Late Sh. Lakshmi, Virgin S/o Late Sh. Lakshmi, Sachin S/o Late Sh. Lakshmi, Rajendra S/o Late Rampant, Smt. Dhanno W/o Late Sh. Rampal R/o Village Garhi Shahdara, Noida Dist:- G.B. Nagar U.P. who is the original allottee of Plot No. SH-129, Block-SH, Sector-145, (Area 64.79 sqmt) Noida (U.P.) had sold the said property on General power of attorney basis to the following person(s). General power of attorney was executed on in favour of Ravinder Kumar S/o Sh. Rajpal Singh R/o A-25, Senior Citizen Home Complex, Sector -P/4, Greater Noida G.B. Nagar (U.P) which is registered and the agreement to sell was not registered or not executed. Because the agreement to sell is not registered or no agreement to sell executed, so it is informed to all concern that the said property SH-129, Block-SH, Sector-145, (Area 64.79 sqmt) Noida (U.P.) is going to be transferred in favour of Mayank Chauhan S/o Mahesh Singh Chauhan R/o B-4, Sector-33, Noida GB Nagar(U.P.) if any one has/have any objection helshs may file his/her objection along with the said property in the Residential (Plot) Department of the Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Mayank Chauhan

UJVN LIMITED

H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone: 0135-2763508, 2763808 Fax: 0135- 2763808
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

RO No. 276 **Corrigendum/Time Extension Notice-I** Date: 09.04.2021

Name of Work: Design, Engineering, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of remote terminal unit (RTU) & Power line carrier Communication (PLCC) with accessories.

In reference to e-Tender No. 07/E.E.(Gen.)/RPS/Kg/2020-21 invited by this office it is to inform that Corrigendum has been uploaded on e-procurement portal. Please quote your bids accordingly. For further details kindly log on to <http://uktenders.gov.in>. All other terms & conditions of tender shall remain unchanged.

Due to above reasons, dates of the aforesaid tender are extended as below-

- Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal-15-04-2021 up to 18:00 Hrs.
- Last date of submission of original documents-16-04-2021 up to 17:00 Hrs
- Date of opening of bid on the website-17-04-2021 at 16.00 Hrs

Executive Engineer (Gen)

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

हरिशचन्द्र माथुर

राजस्थान राज्य लोक प्रशासन संस्थान
जवाहर लाल नेहरू मार्ग, जयपुर-302017 (राजस्थान)
ईपीसीएफ़्स: 0141-5162542 फ़ोन: 141-2706556
फ़ैक्स: 0141-2705420, 2702542 ईमेल: hcmripa@rajasthan.gov.in

क्रमांक: 115(1)C/MS/2019-2016-18 दिनांक 7/4/21

बोली आमंत्रण सूचना

प्रबन्ध अख्ययन केंद्र, हठवन्मा रोड, जयपुर सेजीव कार्यालय जोधपुर, बीकानेर, उदयपुर व कोटा में निम्न सामग्री की खरीद व स्थापना हेतु ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र	वैकल्पिक संख्या	विवरण	निविदा मूल्य	निविदा तिथि विवरण	निविदा राशि
1.	एक	लेस्कर्टॉप, पीसीडी, लेजर प्रिंटर, स्कैनर्स व माइक्रोसॉफ्ट ऑफिस (MS Office)	राशि रुपये 400 /- एवं RISL- Fees राशि रुपये 1,000 /-	दिनांक 07.04.2021 से 10.05.2021 (12-00 PM तक) वी-डिड दिनांक 12.04.2021 को 3.30 PM	अनुमानित राशि रुपये एक करोड़ एवं पांच लाख मात्र
2.	दो	इनटीमेंटेंड डिजिटल पोडियम मय आवश्यक उपकरण एवं सामग्री	हठवन्मा रोड संस्थान के नेहरू भवन को कार्यालय नं०-114		

निविदा की विस्तृत सूचना विभागीय वेबसाइट hcmripa@rajasthan.gov.in व राज्य लोक उपयान पोर्टल <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> पर देखी जा सकती है।
UBN Code: OT52122GLOB080003

भारतीय हस्ता /- पंजीकृत

DIRC/3860/2021

Myanmar junta attacks again

AP ■ YANGON

Security forces in Myanmar cracked down heavily again on anti-coup protesters even as the military downplayed reports of state violence.

Reports on online news outlets and social media on Friday said at least four people were killed in Bago, about 100 kilometers northeast of Yangon, in an attack by government troops and police that began before dawn and continued sporadically until after dark. The Bago Weekly Journal Online said a source at the city's main hospital, whom it didn't name, believed about 10 people had been killed.

It was the third attack this week involving the massive use of deadly force by security forces to try to crush active opposition to the February 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

On Wednesday, attacks were launched on opponents of military rule in the towns of Kalay and Taze in the country's north. In both places, at least 11 people — possibly including some bystanders — were reported killed. Security forces



Children flash the three-fingered symbol of resistance as they join an anti-coup protest in Yangon on Saturday

AP

were accused of using heavy weapons in their attacks, including rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. The allegations could not be independently confirmed by *The Associated Press*.

Some of the protesters used homemade weapons, especially in Kalay, where defenders

called themselves a "civil army," and some were equipped with rudimentary hunting rifles.

Most protests in cities and town around the country have been nonviolent, with demonstrators espousing civil disobedience.

Violence by security forces was also reported Friday in sev-

eral other areas, including Loikaw, the capital of Kayah sate in the east, where live ammunition was employed, according to numerous social media posts.

At least 614 protesters and bystanders have been killed by security forces through Thursday, according to the

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests.

At a news conference in the capital, Naypyitaw, a spokesman for the ruling junta defended the actions of the security forces.

Brig. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, when asked about reports that automatic weapons have been fired at protesters, replied that if that were the case, 500 people would have been killed in just a few hours.

He challenged the death toll issued by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners and said the Government's tally was 248. He also said 16 policemen had been killed.

Asked about air strikes carried out by Government jets on territory held by guerrillas from the Karen ethnic minority in eastern Myanmar, which reportedly killed at least 14 civilians, Zaw Min Tun said the aerial raids allowed more exact targeting than ground attacks which would have caused more deaths. Supporters of the Karen charge that the army is carrying out a ground offensive as well, including the use of artillery.

Iran tests advanced nuclear centrifuges

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran said on Saturday it has begun mechanical tests on its newest advanced nuclear centrifuge, even as the five world powers that remain in a foundering 2015 nuclear deal with Iran attempt to bring the US back into the agreement.

Iran's IR-9 centrifuge, when operational, would have the ability to separate uranium isotopes more quickly than the current centrifuges being used, thereby enriching uranium at a faster pace. The announcement carried on state TV came on Iran's annual Nuclear Day.

The IR-9's output is 50 times quicker than the first Iranian centrifuge, the IR-1. Iran's nuclear program is also developing IR-8 centrifuges.

Since January, Iran has begun enriching uranium at up to 20% purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels, though Iran's leadership insists the country has no desire to develop a nuclear weapon. Former US President Donald Trump pulled the US



In this photo released by the official website of the office of the Iranian Presidency, President Hassan Rouhani, second right, listens to head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Ali Akbar Salehi while visiting an exhibition of Iran's new nuclear achievements in Tehran, Iran on Saturday

AP

out of the nuclear accord in 2018, accusing Iran of failing to live up to the agreement, opting for what he called a maximum-pressure campaign of stepped-up US sanctions and other tough actions.

Iran responded by intensifying its enrichment of uranium and building centrifuges in

plain violation of the accord, while insisting that its nuclear development is for civilian not military purposes. Israel maintains Iran still maintains the ambition of developing nuclear weapons, pointing to Tehran's ballistic missile program and research into other technologies.

12 hurt as hardline Islamist attack devotees inside mosque in B'desh

Dhaka: Activists of a hardline Islamist group attacked devotees inside a mosque in northern Bangladesh, injuring at least 12 persons, according to a media report. The incident took place on Friday at the mosque in the Gaibandha district when self-proclaimed Hefazat-e-Islam activists snatched the mic from the Imam and preached about the organisation, Dhaka Tribune reported.

They attacked the devotees who tried to intervene, Imam Motlob Uddin said. At least 12 men were injured in the attack, the report said. A case is being filed at Sundarganj Police Station. Officer in Charge Bulbul Islam said: "Disagreements over the mosque's committee is the reason for this untoward incident."

PTI

Two Christian nurses booked under blasphemy charges in Pak

Lahore: Two Christian nurses have been booked under blasphemy charges in Pakistan's Punjab province following a complaint by hospital authorities, police said, as people staged demonstrations against the duo demanding strict action against them.

According to police, an FIR has been registered against the two nurses, Mariyum Lal and Newish Arooj, working in District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, Faisalabad, on Friday.

The nurses are accused of removing the stickers inscribed with Islamic verses from the wall of a hospital ward where psychiatric patients are being treated.

PTI

Djibouti says longtime Prez Ismail on way to winning 5th term

Mogadishu: Djibouti's government says longtime President Ismail Omar Guelleh has overwhelmingly won a fifth term, citing provisional results. Home Affairs Minister Mumin Ahmed Sheikh told reporters overnight that Guelleh has received more than 98% of the 177,391 votes cast in the Horn of Africa nation, defeating his sole rival, businessman Zakaria Ismail Farah. Other opposition boycotted Friday's vote. The final results are expected to be announced later Saturday by the electoral commission.

"Thank you for your confidence!" the president tweeted overnight. "Let's continue together!"

AP

Harry expected to fly in for funeral of grandfather

London: The rift in the royal ranks after an explosive interview by Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle is to be set aside as reports suggest that the Duke of Sussex is keen to fly to the UK to attend grandfather Prince Philip's funeral.

Harry was close to his grandfather and, according to media reports, he is keen to be by the side of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, as she mourns the passing of her husband of 73 years. Harry, who is now based in California, is unlikely to be joined by Meghan, who is heavily pregnant with their second baby. "He will, of course, be there, no matter how difficult relations are between the Sussexes and the family," a source was quoted as saying in *'The Daily Telegraph'*.

AP

Gun salutes honour Prince Philip

UK enters 8 day mourning

PTI ■ LONDON

Gun salutes in all capitals of the United Kingdom as well as aboard some Royal Navy ships on Saturday honoured Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away aged 99 at Windsor Castle on Friday.

The 41 rounds fired in London, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh at a rate of one shot per minute from midday local time on Saturday mark the start of an eight-day national mourning period.

"The tradition of Gun Salutes being fired throughout



Members of the 104th Regiment Royal Artillery fire a 41-round gun salute in the grounds of Cardiff Castle in Cardiff on Saturday

AP

the country to mark significant national events dates back to at least the 18th century, and there are historical records of salutes taking place as early as

the 14th century when guns and ammunition began to be adopted more widely," a statement on the royal website read. "Similar gun salutes were

fired to mark the death of Queen Victoria in 1901," it notes. They also honour the Duke's strong military links, having served with the Royal Navy in World War II.

"His Royal Highness has been a great friend, inspiration and role model for the armed forces and he will be sorely missed," said General Sir Nick Carter, the UK's Chief of the Defence Staff.

"The Duke of Edinburgh served among us during the Second World War, and he remained devoted to the Royal Navy and the armed forces as a whole. A life well lived, His Royal Highness leaves us with a legacy of indomitable spirit, steadfastness and an unshakable sense of duty. From all of us who serve today and who have served, thank you," he said.

US unveils new rules for Govt contacts with Taiwan

Washington: The State Department has unveiled new rules for US government contacts with Taiwan that are likely anger China but appear to reimpose some restrictions that had been lifted by the Trump administration.

The department announced the changed policy in a statement that said the Biden administration intends to "liberalize" the rules to reflect the "deepening unofficial relationship" between the US and Taiwan. However, the revised guidelines don't include all the changes put in place by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the waning days of the Trump administration.

Pompeo had lifted virtually all restrictions on contacts with Taiwan, including allowing Taiwanese military officers to wear uniforms and display

the Taiwanese flag at meetings with US officials. Friday's changes were silent on those matters, although the rules do continue to permit US officials to meet their Taiwanese counterparts in federal buildings.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and opposes any attempt to treat the island as an independent country. China had condemned Pompeo's easing of the restrictions that had been in place since the US recognised Beijing and dropped formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979.

"These new guidelines will continue the U.S. Government's longstanding practice of providing clarity throughout the US executive branch of how to implement our one China policy," the department said.

AP

Earthquake in Indonesia's Java, Bali kills at least 6

Malang: A strong earthquake killed at least six people and damaged buildings on Indonesia's main island of Java and shook the tourist hotspot of Bali, officials said Saturday. No tsunami warnings were posted. The US Geological Survey said the magnitude 6.0 quake struck off the island's southern coast at 2:00 p.m. Local time (0700 GMT). It was centered 45 kilometres south of Sumberpucung town of Malang District in East Java province, at a depth of 82 kilometres (51 miles).

Rahmat Triyono, the head of Indonesia's earthquake and tsunami center, said in a statement the undersea earthquake did not have the potential to cause a tsunami.

AP

Stalled at first jab: Vaccine shortages hit poor countries

AP ■ LONDON

As many as 60 countries, including some of the world's poorest, might be stalled at the first shots of their coronavirus vaccinations because nearly all deliveries through the global programme intended to help them are blocked until as late as June.

COVAX, the global initiative to provide vaccines to countries lacking the clout to negotiate for scarce supplies on their own, has in the past week shipped more than 25,000 doses to low-income countries only twice on any given day. Deliveries have all but halted since Monday.

During the past two weeks, according to data compiled daily by UNICEF, fewer than 2 million COVAX doses in total

were cleared for shipment to 92 countries in the developing world — the same amount injected in Britain alone.

On Friday, the head of the World Health Organization slammed the "shocking imbalance" in global COVID-19 vaccination. WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that while one in four people in rich countries had received a vaccine, only one in 500 people in poorer countries had gotten a dose.

The vaccine shortage stems mostly from India's decision to stop exporting vaccines from its Serum Institute factory, which produces the overwhelming majority of the AstraZeneca doses that COVAX counted on to supply around a third of the global population at a time coron-

avirus is spiking worldwide.

COVAX will only ship vaccines cleared by WHO, and countries are increasingly impatient. Supplies are dwindling in some of the first countries to receive COVAX shipments, and the expected delivery of second doses in the 12-week window currently recommended is now in doubt. In a statement, the vaccine alliance known as GAVI told The Associated Press that 60 countries are affected by the delays.

In vaccination tents set up at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, many of those who arrived for their first jabs were uneasy about when the second would arrive.

"My fear if I don't get the second dose, my immune system is going to be weak, hence I might die," said Oscar Odinga, a civil servant.

Pakistan OK's emergency use of third Chinese vax despite low efficacy rate

Islamabad: Pakistan has approved the emergency use of the third Chinese vaccine, despite its low efficacy rate, as the country struggled to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) on Thursday granted Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) to CoronaVac, developed by Chinese company Sinovac Biotech, officials said on Saturday.

"This is the third Chinese vaccine allowed to be used in Pakistan," a DRAP official said, adding that the country now has five approved COVID vaccines.

Pakistan has already granted the EUA to China's two-dose Sinopharm and single-dose Convidecia vaccine developed by the Cansino Biologicals Inc. UK's AstraZeneca and Russian Sputnik V vaccines have also been approved by the DRAP.

PTI

Saudi Arabia executes 3 soldiers for 'high treason'

Dubai: Saudi Arabia executed three soldiers Saturday it accused of committing "high treason," without elaborating on which enemy the kingdom believed the men aided.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency identified the men as soldiers working in the Defence Ministry. It did not elaborate on how the men aided the kingdom's enemies. Saudi Arabia is fighting Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The kingdom also views Iran as a regional archrival.

The kingdom said the three men were convicted in court and a later royal order served as a death warrant. Saudi Arabia carried out the world's third most executions in 2019, according to figures from Amnesty International. The kingdom followed China and Iran, respectively.

AP

Egyptian archaeologist reveals details of ancient city



A man covers a skeleton in a 3,000-year-old lost city in Luxor province, Egypt on Saturday

AP

Cairo: Egypt's best-known archaeologist on Saturday revealed further details on a Pharaonic city recently found in the southern province of Luxor. Zahi Hawass said that archaeologists found brick houses, artifacts, and tools from pharaonic times at the site of the 3,000-year-old lost city. It dates back to Amenhotep III of the 18th dynasty, whose reign is considered a golden era for ancient Egypt.

"This is really a large city that was lost... The inscription that found inside here says that this city was called: 'The dazzling Aten,'" Hawass told

reporters at the site. Archaeologists started excavating in the area last year, searching for the mortuary temple of boy King Tutankhamun. However, within weeks they found mud brick formations that eventually turned out to be a well-served large city.

City walls and even rooms filled with ovens, storage pottery, and utensils used in daily life are said to be present. Archeologists also found human remains that were visible to reporters and visitors on Saturday.

AP

Iran enforces 10-day lockdown amid fourth wave of pandemic

Tehran: Iran on Saturday began a 10-day lockdown amid a fourth wave of coronavirus infections, state TV reported, as the country struggled to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Iran's coronavirus task force, charged with determining virus restrictions, ordered most shops closed and offices restricted to one-third capacity in cities declared as "red zones."

AP



JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Indira Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302004

No.: JDA/EE&TA to Dir.Engg.-I/2021-22/D-35

Date : 09.04.2021

NOTICE INVITING BID

NIB No.: EE & TA to Dir. Engg.-I/25/2021-22

Bids are invited for works given below in various zones as per details given :-

S. No.	UBN No.	Cost of Work (Lacs)	A&F	Nature of Work	Last Date
1.	UBN : JDA2122WSOB00022	266.00	219/2020-21	EE-11 Road Renewal	03.05.2021

Details are available at Procurement Portal website www.sppp.rajabsthan.gov.in, www.eproc.rajabsthan.gov.in and www.jda.urban.rajabsthan.gov.in

Executive Engineer & TA to Dir. Engg.-I
Raj. Sanwad/C/2021-22/434

कार्यालय नगर निगम हल्द्वानी - काठगोदाम

पत्रांक: 63 / P.W.L ई-निविदा सूचना दिनांक 09.04.2021

नगर निगम हल्द्वानी-काठगोदाम क्षेत्रांतर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्या हेतु पुनः ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा के संबंध में समस्त शर्तें एवं सूचनाएं <http://www.uktendres.gov.in> पर दिनांक 12.04.2021 को अपराह्न 2.00 बजे से दिनांक 24.04.2021 को अपराह्न 2.00 बजे तक उपलब्ध रहेंगी।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम	अनुमानित लागत (रु. लाख में)	कार्य की परीक्षण राशि (रु. लाख में)	निविदा फॉर्म का मूल्य	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	निविदा की शैली
1.	नगर निगम क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत 20 पार्कों के सौन्दर्यीकरण एवं तत्संबंधित कार्य	166.68	3.50	5000+18% GST	06 माह	06 माह

(डा. जोगेन्द्र सिंह रोतेला)
महापौर
नगर निगम हल्द्वानी

(सी.एस.मन्तोल्या)
नगर आयुक्त
नगर निगम हल्द्वानी


राजस्थान राज्य पथ परिवहन निगम
मुख्यालय जयपुर

परिवहन मार्ग, जयपुर-302001 टेलीफोन : 0141-2374652 ईमेल : pro.rsrtc@rajasthan.gov.in
क्रमांक: विज्ञापन संख्या 05/2021-22 दिनांक : 08.04.2021

ई-बोली सूचना

निगम द्वारा निम्न कार्य हेतु ई-बोली को माध्यम से निष्पत्ति प्रपत्र में ऑनलाइन बोलियाँ आमंत्रित की जाती है। बोली से संबंधित विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट www.rsrtc.rajasthan.gov.in एवं <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> व स्टेट पोर्टल (SPPP) पर देखा जा सकता है।

क्र.सं.	ई-बोली सूचना संख्या	कार्य
1.	01/2021-22	निगम की बसों को माध्यम से लघु पार्सल सेवा संचालन करने हेतु सोल लाइसेंस नियुक्ति का सुनहरा अवसर प्रदान करते हुए लघु पार्सल एवं सामान्य वस्तुओं के परिवहन हेतु निष्पत्ति प्रपत्र में ई-बोली प्रक्रिया द्वारा ऑनलाइन बोली आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्यकारी निदेशक (प्रशासन)

राज. संवाच/सी/2021-22/404

WESTERN RAILWAY

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. S/14/2021 Date 09.04.2021

S.N.	Short Description of Item	Quantity	T.O.D.
277	Stop valve hand wheel for tank wagons	453 Nos.	19.04.2021
278	Set of Air Brake Pipes	100 Set	23.04.2021
279	Application Form for Reservation	20000000 Nos.	30.04.2021
280	IR-DRDO Bio-toilet tanks	30 Set	30.04.2021
281	Air Brake Hose Coupling for Brake Pipe	3000 Nos	30.04.2021
282	Body Side Lower Panel of Lavatory	1350 Nos.	30.04.2021
283	Air Brake Hose Coupling	2600 Nos.	30.04.2021
284	Disposable HIV Protection Kit	5000 Nos.	30.04.2021
285	Liquid Oxygen for Medical use	477000 CUM	03.05.2021
286	Pipe 32 N.B.	30 Nos.	03.05.2021
287	Set of Air Brake Pipes	700 Set	03.05.2021
288	Compreg packing	10400 Nos.	03.05.2021

Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in.

0013

For Principal Chief Materials Manager

Like us on : [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

Follow us on : twitter.com/WesternRly

E-comm to accelerate India's auto sector growth: Report

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Strong acceptance of e-commerce and digitisation is expected to accelerate the growth of India's auto sector, advisory firm Grant Thornton Bharat said.

Accordingly, India's automobile market is estimated to grow more than '2.3X' from \$222 billion currently to \$512 billion by 2026.

Notably, the analysis by Allied Market Research, Market Line, Reserve Bank of India and Grant Thornton Bharat showed that e-commerce portals focused on the automobile market, such as Droom, Cardekho, and Olx have put consumers and the user experience in the spotlight helping the manufacturers attract more users.

Besides, the growing base of internet and smartphone users will further boost the digital transformation, and lead to an increase in expanding the market size of the e-commerce portals.

"The strong emergence and acceptance of the online channel have provided an impetus to seamless solutions, price discovery, transparency,



digital real-time payments along with certification on the quality of the vehicle for the consumers in the auto sector," said Rahul Kapur, Partner, Growth at Grant Thornton Bharat.

According to the analysis report, since last year, Maruti Suzuki saw a five-fold increase in sales through digital means which now stand at 20 per cent of their total sales.

"These changes in consumer's buying and research preferences signal a shift for the auto sector, as Covid19 played a big part in the online channel gaining traction."

Technology-enabled innovations like secure digital

payments, hyper-logical logistics, analytics-driven customer engagement, increasing consumer awareness and digital advertisements are likely to support the growth going forward."

As per the report, other factors such as rising middle class and young population with increasing disposable incomes will contribute towards growing the sector.

Furthermore, ease of owning a vehicle through the availability of multiple financing options as well as reduction in vehicle ownership tenure due to regulatory rules in some states, cited the report as other growth inducing factors.

Petrol, diesel prices remain unchanged

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Saturday with oil marketing companies continuing on the pause mode and keeping petrol and diesel prices static for 11th consecutive day.

Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at previous days level of Rs 90.56 and Rs 80.87 a litre, respectively, in the capital.

Petrol and diesel fell by 22 paisa and 23 paisa per litre respectively last week on Tuesday in wake global softening of oil prices. OMC have decided to pause price revision as they want to watch the crude price movement that has now fallen to around \$62.5 a barrel from remaining above this level in much of the last week.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel price remain static on Saturday but its retail levels varied depending on the level of local levies on respective states.

In Mumbai, petrol continues to be priced at Rs 96.98 a litre and diesel at Rs 87.96 a litre. Premium petrol, howev-



er, continues to remain over Rs 100 a litre in the city as is the case with several cities across the country.

The OMCs went on price cut for the first time this year on two consecutive days - March 24 and 25 after keeping oil prices steady for past 24 days. It again reduced the price on March 30.

Thereafter, fuel prices have remained unchanged.

Earlier, petrol and diesel prices increased 26 times in 2021 with the two auto fuels increasing by Rs 7.46 and Rs 7.60 per litre, respectively, so far this year.

Officials in public sector oil companies said that retail price may rise again if crude and product prices pick up but for now it will fall or remain static for few more days.

Petrol pumps closed in Rajasthan as dealers demand rollback of VAT on fuel

PTI ■ JAIPUR

People faced difficulty across the state due to a one-day strike called by Rajasthan Petroleum Dealers Association of fuel stations on Saturday with the demand of a rollback in VAT on fuel in the state.

Around 7,000 petrol pumps remained closed in the state due to the strike.

However, fuel pumps that are company owned and company operated were open for the public.

Association president Suneet Bagai said diesel and petrol sales remained closed on the day.

"The State Government increased VAT during the coronavirus pandemic and generated extra revenue.

The sales volume in the state has declined by 34 per cent because the fuel prices are comparatively low in neighbouring states," he said.

The association has already submitted a memorandum of demands and we would go on an indefinite strike from April 25 if there is no positive decision by the Government, Bagai said.

Mid and small caps best performers, gold slumps in 1st quarter

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Mid and small cap stocks are the best performing asset class for the quarter ending March 2021 while gold is the worst performer.

Mid and small cap stocks delivered returns of 14 per cent in the quarter while gold under-performed with negative 11 per cent returns. Gold is the biggest under-performer for the first three months of 2021 vs. the other asset classes. Gold prices are down by 11 per cent in rupees and 10 per cent in US Dollar in the last three months. Apart from 'Risk on' trade, rising bond yields are now short term negative for the gold prices

As per Axis Securities, gold proved to be one of the best performing asset classes in 2020. In the last 10 years, Nifty outperformed the Emerging market in five years and developed market in four years.

The performance of small-caps is highly volatile versus other asset classes. Small-cap ranked at the bottom in 2018 and 2019 and recovered sharply in 2020, outperforming the other asset classes in the first quarter of 2021.

NIFTY50 delivered a healthy 15 per cent return which was significantly better than the 2019 return of 12 per cent. While NIFTY Midcap 100 and Nifty Smallcap 100 delivered 22 per cent and 21 per cent returns respectively in 2020, the returns for mid and small-cap indices were negative in 2019.

"We expect the broad-based rally of 2020 to continue well into 2021 (already visible in Q1 2021) as we believe a strong earnings revival across the board is on the cards. A lower interest rate environment and higher fiscal spending will continue to support the equity markets," Axis Securities said.

It said that asset allocation and sector rotation will be key to generate out-performance in 2021. An equity market is likely to be the best performing asset class for the next one to two years.

It said that trading at a 10 per cent premium to large caps From a valuation perspective, the midcaps look attractive vs. large caps.

Historically, during the bull phase of 2017, midcaps were trading at a 45 per cent premium to large caps. The recent spate of IPOs and their success clearly indicates the appetite for mid and small-cap stocks, the report said.

Since November 2020, small and midcaps are picking up steam and they should deliver solid returns in 2021 as economic uncertainties will reduce and volatility will decline.

The report said that top 10 stocks domination is dwin-



dling in the market. Since December 2017, Nifty has delivered a return of 40 per cent. Out of which, the top 10 stocks by free-float market cap have delivered a stellar return of 58 per cent while the remaining 40 stocks had delivered only 17 per cent. This divergence has started narrowing in recent months. Based on the top 10 stocks, the adjusted Nifty value works out to 16,647 while the remaining 40 would lead NIFTY to just 12,354.

This indicates Nifty is better valued beyond the top 10 names. Long term risk rewards are better in the next 40 names vs. the top 10, the report said.

Broader rally since November and broad-based market performance was seen in the month of March despite higher volatility signifying intact overall risk appetite towards mid and small stocks. Stocks ranking from 101-200 rallied by 2 per cent in March, and 98 per cent in the last year which is superior to the large-cap performance.

Stronger FII flows since November continue to drive the momentum FIIs are net buyers; FIIs have added \$7.8 billion while DIIs have pulled out \$3.1 billion from the Indian equity market in the last 3 months.

Since Jan 2020, FIIs have bought a massive amount of \$30.9 billion while the DIIs have sold \$8.6 billion from the Indian equity market.

Highest ever FII inflows seen in the current financial year: \$37 billion, higher than FY10/11/13 levels.

The fiscal year ended on a strong note for the equity markets with all the sectors delivering positive returns.

The report said metals and IT registered the strongest gains while FMCG grew the slowest. Autos and Realty also delivered solid returns during the fiscal.

While FY21 was strong which was aided by cheap valuations and a low base, March performance was a mixed bag. The high beta sectors such as BFSI witnessed a profit booking while defensives such as FMCG and Pharma registered marginal gains.

The report said now the investors are betting higher on riskier assets like equity. Sentiments are improving further with increasing optimism driven by vaccine development and faster than expected economic recovery.

Strong bounce back witnessed for toll road assets: ICRA

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India's toll roads are likely to witness a 14-15 per cent growth in collections in FY22, ratings agency ICRA said in a report. Accordingly, this growth will be achieved on a low base following an estimated decrease of 5-7 per cent in FY21. "Road traffic has witnessed

a marked improvement in H2 FY2021 after subdued traffic witnessed in the initial months, post resumption of tolling from April 20, 2020.

This has been driven by increased movement of both - passenger and commercial vehicles, resulting in growth of around 10 per cent on a YoY basis."

China slaps record USD 2.78 billion fine on Alibaba over anti-competitive tactics

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's antitrust regulators on Saturday slapped a record fine of USD 2.78 billion on Alibaba Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company, for abusing its dominant market position as Beijing tightened the screws on the country's tech giants.

Closing a months-long investigation that began last Christmas eve, China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) slapped a fine of 18.23 billion yuan (USD 2.78 billion) on Alibaba, headed by the country's top billionaire Jack Ma, setting a precedent for the ruling Communist Party to use the anti-monopoly rules to regulate tech giants.

The SAMR said that it had made an administrative penalty decision under China's anti-monopoly law, ordering Alibaba Group to stop illegal activities and imposing a fine of 4 per cent on its 2019 domestic sales of 455.71 billion yuan, totalling 18.23 billion yuan.

The market regulator concluded the four-month investigation, alleging that Alibaba has been abusing its market dominance since 2015 by prohibiting merchants from opening stores or participating in promotional activities on other competitive platforms, state-

The move is a new setback for Alibaba and its billionaire founder Ma following a November decision by regulators to suspend the stock market

run CGTN TV reported.

The SAMR said that Alibaba's "pick one out of two" requirement restricted competition among online retail platforms and infringed the legitimate rights of the merchants, at the same time hurt consumers' interests.

The move is a new setback for Alibaba and its billionaire founder Ma following a November decision by regulators to suspend the stock market debut of Ant Group, a finance platform spun off from the e-commerce giant.

Ma, one of China's most prominent entrepreneurs, disappeared temporarily from public view after criticizing regulators in a speech in November. That was followed days later by the Ant Group suspension.

In a statement on Saturday, the company said "Alibaba accepts the penalty with sincerity and will ensure its compliance with determination."

It pledged to strengthen its operations in accordance with the law, step up the building of a compliance system, and bet-

ter fulfill its social responsibilities, the CGTN report said.

It also vowed to introduce a series of measures to lower platform operating thresholds and reduce platform operating costs to create a more transparent and efficient platform environment for businesses, the report said.

The fine sends a clear message to the world that China will crackdown harshly on any monopolistic behaviour if Big Tech companies such as Alibaba breach the law with their monopolistic business models, said Zhai Wei, executive director of the Competition Law Research Centre at East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai.

"This is the biggest impact, way more important than the penalty," Zhai told the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post owned by Jack Ma.

He said small businesses which previously had to pick sides among Big Tech companies may benefit from the implementation of anti-monopoly law.

"The space for their free development has obviously been maintained and expanded," he said.

Observers say the fine shows China intends to move against internet platforms that it thinks are too big and aimed at serving warning to them.

JioMart activity scaling up

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

JioMart activity is scaling up as per a report by JP Morgan research which found brisk online activity across stores and formats it visited in Mumbai in the last week of March that could have been nudged further by rising Covid-19 cases.

"We found the delivery infrastructure to be a mix of bike-based delivery executives, similar to e-commerce/food O2O, and van-based batched delivery that peers use (e.g., Bigbasket, DMart, Grofers). Our conversations suggest that there has been an evolution from bikes to largely vans at several stores, reflecting higher value, and heavier and more complex orders delivered with

greater efficiency. Bike-based delivery ensures short turnaround times for lighter, low-value orders, improving customer experience," JP Morgan said.

The note said most delivery staff identified themselves as being from JioMart or Grab (a delivery firm acquired by Jio in 2018), although few were JioMart or Grab branding, and the vans and drivers were largely outsourced.

This is unlike the branded fleets maintained by peers (Bigbasket, DMart Ready, Swiggy) that provide free publicity.

The report notes that the current infrastructure can support \$8-11 billion in annual gross merchandise value (GMV).

IFC proposes \$50mn debt finance for Thar Surya solar power project



IAN S ■ CHENNAI

International Finance Corporation (IFC) plans to debt finance the construction of Thar Surya 1 Pvt Ltd's 300 MW solar power project in Bikaner, Rajasthan by \$50 million.

Apart from lending \$50 million, IFC will also mobilise \$100 million debt through parallel lenders.

According to IFC, the total solar power project cost is estimated at \$200 million.

The solar power project is sponsored by Enel Green Power India, one of the step-down subsidiaries of Enel Green Power S.p.A., an existing IFC client.

Enel Green Power is one of the largest renewable energy developer in the world with 49 GW installed capacity across wind, solar, geothermal and hydropower projects, and with presence in 28 countries.

Enel Green Power is a subsidiary of Enel S.p.A., Italy.

The solar power generation project was awarded by Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).

The power generated by Thar Surya will be sold to SECI under 25 year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA).

Rewa: A view of the Ultra Mega Solar Power project in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from New Delhi via video conferencing on July 10, 2020. Union Power Minister RK Singh and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

The 750-MW solar project is said to be Asia's biggest. The Rs 4,000-crore project has three units of 250 MW each at a solar park spread over 1,500 hectares developed by Rewa Ultr.

India's OEMs accelerating shift towards EVs: HDFC Securities

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India's automobile OEMs are accelerating their shift towards EVs by investing in startups and enhancing collaborations, HDFC Securities said.

"Along with developing electric products in-house, OEMs are open to collaborations, to reduce the speed-to-market as well as maintain capital efficiency," HDFC Securities said in a report.

"Part suppliers are attempting to be segment agnostic, developing components for ICE, hybrid and EV products."

Further, the report cited that other OEMs are adopting different methods towards electrification such as investing in startups and ramping up production of EVs in their portfolios. Besides, it said that passenger vehicle OEMs such as Maruti are expected to introduce hybrid models, which will enable the company to transition towards EVs in the medium term (FY25-30).

"However, as we look further ahead i.e. beyond 2030, the outlook becomes cloudy as the longer-term threat from BEVs and the resultant competitive dynamics will impact the traditional business models in different manners."

Apple likely to use 120Hz ProMotion display in 'iPhone 13' lineup

IAN S ■ SAN FRANCISCO

The next-gen iPhone 13 Pro lineup will reportedly come with 120Hz ProMotion display for the first time. According to AppleInsider, low-temperature polycrystalline oxide (LTPO) displays have been rumoured for the iPhone for about two years.

However, the report claims that the displays will finally arrive on the iPhone, granting the device a 120Hz refresh display for the first time. Citing "industry sources," supply chain monitor DigiTimes claims that Samsung and LG are converting iPhone-only production lines to LTPO tech production.

The report claims that this migration will end shortly, allowing both to provide the screens to Apple in time for use in 2021. Apple is said to be using the displays in its higher-end "iPhone 13" likely in the so-called "iPhone 13 Pro" and "iPhone 13 Pro Max". Display panel orders for lower-end "iPhone 13" models are expected to be filled by OLED suppliers LG Display and BOE.

Apple was reportedly working on a battery-saving technology for LTPO thin-film transistors prior to release of the iPhone 12.

SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

Northern Railway will run following summer special express trains as per the programme mentioned below:-

04074 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express Train		2 Trip
STATIONS ↓	Train No. 04074	
	Arr.	Dep.
New Delhi	--	23:15
Kanpur Central	05:25	05:30
Aishbagh	06:50	07:00
Badshahnagar	07:25	07:28
Gorakhpur	11:45	11:55
Deoria Sadar	12:55	12:57
Siwan Jn.	13:58	14:00
Chhapra	15:15	15:25
Sonpur Jn.	16:30	16:35
Hajipur Jn.	16:50	16:55
Muzaffarpur Jn.	17:45	17:50
Samastipur	19:10	19:40
Darbhanga Jn.	21:00	--

Days of Run: 04074 Ex New Delhi from 11.04.2021 (Sunday) & 15.04.2021 (Thursday)
Accommodation: Sleeper, Reserved 2nd seating, Chair Car

04076 New Delhi - Darbhanga Jn. Special Express Train		1 Trip
STATIONS ↓	Train No. 04076	
	Arr.	Dep.
New Delhi	--	23:15
Kanpur Central	05:25	05:30
Aishbagh	06:50	07:00
Badshahnagar	07:25	07:28
Gorakhpur	11:45	11:55
Deoria Sadar	12:55	12:57
Siwan Jn.	13:58	14:00
Chhapra	15:15	15:25
Sonpur Jn.	16:30	16:35
Hajipur Jn.	16:50	16:55
Muzaffarpur Jn.	17:45	17:50
Samastipur	19:10	19:40
Darbhanga Jn.	21:00	--

Days of Run: 04076 Ex New Delhi from 13.04.2021 (Tuesday)
Accommodation: Sleeper, Reserved 2nd seating

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

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

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Visit RailMadad website:- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

Download RailMadad app.

Please join us on

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Always at your service

Visit us at : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

Serving Customers with a Smile

JUST PLAY

Augmented Reality toys are the new entrants in the market justifying extra play time on ground of contributing to child learning. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with experts to tell you more

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, only a few would have believed in it. However, the current education world has turned more into a playground for the kids, where they frolic with toys while learning on the way. The latest entrant to enhance the learning process is the much-talked about AR technology, which is revolutionising the way education is perceived.

Dolls and guns are slowly being relegated to the kids' cupboards. Gone are the days when kids used to run away at the mere mention of study time. Now, parents are engaging children with meaningful play hours where they get educated without them even realising it. Educational toys are the biggest category in the toy industry and are also the fastest growing among all other categories. Here comes the new kid on the block — AR toys. With the arrival of smart AR-toys, the world has become your child's oyster. They can make playtime productive, learn through stories, and travel the world without actually leaving home. With the increasing number of kids, parents, and educators alike who use AR-toys regularly, one thing's clear. AR-powered learning toys are the next big thing in education, and by the looks of it, they're here to stay.

The pandemic has also led the majority of parents (62%) to see that devices and technology can be used as educational tools, as per the Morning Consult, a market research company. "The reasons for the rise of AR toys are manifold. Children in their formative years are bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. Sadly, their short attention span is no secret. They lose interest in games as quickly as they gain it. While traditional games might be exciting for a few days, they might not be able to hold the children's attention for long," says Vivek Goyal, Co-Founder & CEO of PlayShifu. It is no mean feat that PlayShifu toys are currently bringing joy to children across 35 countries.

When engaging the kids at home, it's essential to introduce them to toys that yield a different experience each time. Predictable games often lose their sheen quickly, leaving the children disinterested. Going gaga over the latest fad, and the fact that these toys have helped in enhancing her daughter's concentration, Gurugram's Kusum, mother of four-year-old Nia, says, "The normal toys got boring after a while as most of them needed my assistance too and some of them were closed-end toys. Most striking change has been in her concentration span since these toys are interactive, interesting, and lead to questions and exploration."

A lot more parents are picking up educational toys, now more than ever. They are investing in products that offer learning opportunities for their children. But, these investments are fruitful only when the children themselves find the toy exciting enough. "Our primary focus is to achieve that balance and create physical experiences that are both fun and educational. Our games thrive on creative storytelling, animated characters and innovative interactions that make learning a delight. There's no greater joy than to see a child learning while playing — and not being able to tell the difference," adds Goyal.

HOW THESE TOYS WORK

The link between the real (or physical) and the digital (or virtual) world, augmented reality is an interactive experience that blends both worlds. In gaming, AR bridges the gap between the physical toy and the smartphone or tablet. For instance, some games need you to use your smartphone to scan a real-world object to move ahead in the story. If the real-world object is a flashcard of a tiger, the smartphone presents interactive image, video or a 3D figure of the animal on the screen. In some games, the goal might be to find hidden objects by scanning your actual surroundings with your smartphone.

"The prospect of bringing an object to life is fascinating and exciting. If the topic at hand is how animals live in their natural habitat, AR can teach it through 3D models. Younger children can listen to the sounds the animal makes and understand its eating habits, all through stories and simple games. Meanwhile, older children can learn about the food chain and complex ecosystems, through interactive and informative games,"



UNLIKE VIDEO GAMES AND APPS, AR TOYS HELP MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT WITH TACTILE PLAY. HOWEVER, OVER DEPENDENCE CAN AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS IN CHILDREN. PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO A SCREEN MAY IMPACT THEIR CONCENTRATION LEVELS AND MAKE THEM WITHDRAW — PRAKRITI PODDAR, GLOBAL HEAD FOR MENTAL HEALTH, ROUND GLASS

informs Goyal.

AR makes it possible to explore multiple avenues of learning and present various pieces of information in a visual, easy-to-understand manner. Where a regular map tells you about countries and capitals, an AR-powered globe takes learning to a whole new level. It not only teaches geography, but also introduces you to various cultures, cuisines, monuments, and animals—all at the touch of a button. By marrying tactical play and digital storytelling, AR toys bring together the best of both worlds. Various digital elements like audio, video, images, and 3D content, merge with physical components of the toy, thereby making learning a unique and inclusive process. The AR technology also helps the child interact with the world around them and creates two-way interactivity, where the child feels like they have control over what they're learning.

Moreover, AR creates a system of instant feedback that motivates the child to learn more and be more accurate. Most AR toys provide a progress report or graph, which is a personalised evaluation of your child's learning curve and

progress. This report can be monitored and tracked from time-to-time.

A GROWING INDUSTRY

Tech-enabled toys are on the rise worldwide. In the US alone, tech-enabled toy segment grew by 36 per cent when the overall toy industry was almost stagnant. This segment in India is growing even more. In the coming years, we see this growth trend continuing.

There are a handful of companies working in this industry. "Consumers in this segment do not buy the tech for the wow factor, but for the lasting impact and use case. Sooner or later, every company in this industry will create meaningful experiences that have a more significant objective, built on a base of AR/VR technology," says Goyal.

BANE OR BOON

Since kids are fond of play-based learning and augmented reality toys help to enhance life-skills in children. These AR toys and games help improve their digital aptitude as well as their cognitive skills. They have been at the forefront of combining education and entertainment

for kids. Various research also says that creative thinking in the brain develops majorly during the early ages of the kids' lives. Kids draw, tell stories, sing, dance, and write without any specific training because a child's brain is free to learn and imagine things rather than being logical about it.

"It's still not the same as that of self-learning but is probably the next best thing and definitely better than passively watching TV screens and tablets and mobiles. Augmented reality toys improve the child's imagination power as they get to draw, paint, write and tell stories the way they want. Moreover, these toys are kid-friendly and safe to operate as they don't have any live wires or sharp ends," says Dr Rohit Arora, Head of Neonatology & Pediatric, Miracles Mediclinic, Gurugram. He says that for an early age tech-savvy kids, AR toys provide something extra to boost their brain development. "Interactive AR toys can help them understand information at their comfort level and retain it for long. These toys are engaging, experimental and immersive from a child's perspective," adds Dr Arora.

However, experts warn that AR games can have a harmful impact on kids' eyesight. There is a threat of drifting away from reality as they might not get in-person interaction as much. These toys can be addictive for kids, and they can create confusion in young minds.

"Unlike video games and apps, AR toys aid in motor skill development with tactile play. However, being too dependent on AR toys can affect the development of social skills in young children. Disproportionate exposure to screens can affect their concentration levels and can make them withdrawn," says Prakriti Poddar, Global Head for Mental Health at Round Glass, Managing Trustee Poddar Foundation.

Assessing the impact of screen time on the emotional health of children, the World Health Organisation recommends no screen time for babies under two and no more than one hour of screen time a day for those aged two to four. "Excessive screen time can reduce the child's capability to rely on themselves, especially in times of crisis or strain, and reduce concentration, focus, and the feeling of empathy," she adds.

WONDER KITS FOR YOUR TINY TOTS

From teaching art to coding, brands are ready to walk an extra mile and teach children in the most engaging way possible. The AR toys are set to become a game changer in the industry, if not more. Here are a few options that one can choose from:

KANO

Appropriate for kids aged six and older, the Kano PC kit is no less than a personal laptop for kids. The DIY tablet is the ideal destination

for learning art, science along with coding. Consisting of hardware components, the kit needs to fit the parts to create a functional Windows 10 tablet that comes with a MicroSD card slot and detachable keyboard. Once completed, the kid can share their projects with the Kano community on Kano World online.

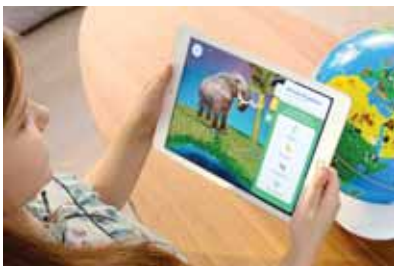
LITTLEBITS

It provides you the experience of an e-

classroom. Its coding kit is its signature product and is ideal for kids from Class III to Class VIII who wish to step into the coding arena at an early age. The Steam+ kit extends curriculum-aligned material while engaging the kids in an analytical thinking process. It offers activities, innovations for maker spaces, libraries, camps, clubs, etc.

WONDER WORKSHOP

The platform aims to build future innovators



and is an innovative product for kids aged six and above. The platform showcases the in-app puzzle library, standard-based lessons along with robotic challenges. Their application, Wonder for Dash & Dot Robots extends learning about robotics in a fun way. It is a coding tool that enables the kid to play and explore robotics all by themselves and offers 300 plus challenges that teach kids about robotics programming and building. With the help of this kids can create their own

machinery, feed in their desired mechanisms and play the challenges.

OSMO

The brand offers electronic toys that are compatible with iPad or Amazon Fire tablets. The kit consists of numbers, shapes, coding instructions, puzzles, drawing, business aptitude and likewise learning features that allows the kid to explore various fields and learn independently.

On the “one player to watch out for” in the tournament, she put her weight behind Hardik Pandya. “He will have a fantastic tournament. He had one in Dubai too and, this time, he will do even better,” she concluded.

Dallas double Leeds win

Bielsa pips Guardiola as 10-man Leeds shock Man City

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester City suffered just a fourth Premier League defeat of the season as 10-man Leeds United shocked the runaway leaders thanks to Stuart Dallas's double in a 2-1 win at the Etihad on Saturday.

Dallas opened the scoring three minutes before half-time, but hope of a famous win for Marcelo Bielsa's men seemed to have disappeared when captain Liam Cooper was shown a straight red card in first-half stoppage time.

The visitors withstood a City bombardment until Ferran Torres equalised 14 minutes from time.

But Leeds still summoned the energy to pose a threat on the counter-attack and gained their reward when Dallas slotted below Ederson.

Bielsa's first win in five meetings against Pep Guardiola propels Leeds to ninth in their first season back in the English top flight for 16 years.

Guardiola paid for heavily rotating his side with Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final, second leg, against Borussia Dortmund clearly his priority.

City still enjoy a 14-point lead at the top of the Premier League and need just 11 points from their remaining six matches to guarantee a third title in four years.

But Manchester United could close the gap to eight points should the Red Devils win their two games in hand, the first of which is away to Tottenham on Sunday.

NO DE BRUYNE

City noticeably missed Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan, Riyad Mahrez, Phil Foden and Ruben Dias, who



Leeds United's Stuart Dallas, right, reacts after scoring his team's second goal against Manchester City at Etihad Stadium

were among the stars left on the bench by Guardiola.

Raheem Sterling's presence in what was largely a second string side is a reflection of how the England international has fallen down the pecking order in the past few weeks.

Sterling did not even get on as a substitute in the first leg against Dortmund and did little to further his case for selection in midweek by slicing a great chance wide from Ferdinandinho's cut-back.

Leeds had wasted a number of promising attacks with their final ball, but found the finishing touch on 43 minutes.

Patrick Bamford teed up Dallas to strike low in off the inside the post.

The visitors' joy was short-lived. Just four minutes later they were a man down.

Cooper played the ball first before crashing into Gabriel Jesus, but referee Andre Marriner upgraded a yellow card shown to the Leeds' captain to a red after reviewing the incident on the pitch-side

screen.

Bamford was immediately sacrificed for more defensive cover in Pascal Struijk as Leeds battered down the hatches.

City were camped inside the Leeds half for almost the entire second-half, but were largely reduced to long-range efforts as Illan Meslier saved from Oleksandr Zinchenko, Ferdinandinho and Joao Cancelo.

Gundogan and Foden were introduced to bring more spark to City's attack, but De Bruyne was surprisingly left in reserve for the full 90 minutes.

Torres finally made City's dominance pay with a first-time finish after Ferdinandinho picked out Silva inside the area.

Yet, Leeds still went in search of a winner.

Raphinha outpaced Ferdinandinho, but was denied by a brilliant tackle by Brazilian compatriot Ederson.

Leeds' approach was rewarded in stoppage time when Dallas galloped clear down the middle of a vacant City defence to slot home.



PSG's Kylian Mbappe, second, right, celebrates with teammate Pablo Sarabia, second left, after he scores goal against Strasbourg

Parisians keep pressure on Lille

AFP ■ STRASBOURG

Kylian Mbappe's goal set Paris Saint-Germain on their way to a 4-1 win at Strasbourg on Saturday as Mauricio Pochettino's side moved back to within three points of leaders Lille in the Ligue 1 title race.

Pablo Sarabia and Moise Kean also scored in the first half while Leandro Paredes netted the fourth from a free-kick as PSG made short work of a trip to Alsace that fell in between the two legs of their Champions League quarter-final tie against Bayern Munich.

Youngster Moise Sahi pulled a goal back for Strasbourg but the defending champions bounced back from losing at home to Lille last weekend and closed the gap on the leaders after they triumphed 2-0 at Metz on Friday.

Mbappe opened the scoring in the 16th minute, collecting a Paredes pass and cutting

into the box from the left before placing his shot through the legs of goalkeeper Matz Sels from a tight angle.

It was Mbappe's 21st Ligue 1 goal of the season and his 33rd in all competitions in 39 games.

Sarabia was handed a rare start and the Spaniard took advantage to make it 2-0 before the half-hour mark, controlling a Danilo Pereira pass on the edge of the box and slotting low into the corner.

Italian striker Kean added another on the stroke of half-time, firing home first-time from Mbappe's pass for his 18th goal since signing on loan from Everton.

Malian youngster Sahi pulled one back for Strasbourg within moments of coming on for just his second Ligue 1 appearance shortly after the hour mark, but Argentina midfielder Paredes secured PSG's victory from a 79th-minute free-kick given for a foul on Mbappe.

Anshu, Sonam qualify for Tokyo

PTI ■ ALMATY

India's young wrestlers Anshu Malik and Sonam Malik produced impressive performances in the Asian Olympic Qualifiers here on Saturday to qualify for the Tokyo Games.

Anshu, 19, and Sonam, 18, making a steady transition from the junior to the senior circuit, joined senior pro Vinesh Phogat (53kg) in making the Olympics cut. India now have three women wrestlers, who will now fight for glory at the Summer Games. Vinesh had qualified through the 2019 World Championship.

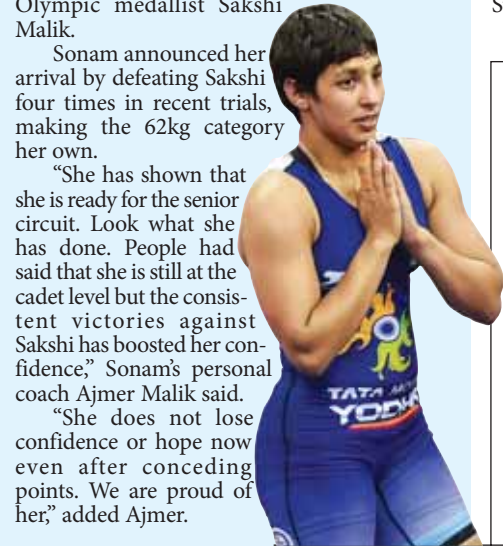
Overall, India now have seven wrestlers who have qualified for the upcoming Games. Among men, Bajrang Punia (65kg), Ravi Dahiya (57kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg) have qualified in the men's free style event.

While Anshu was dominant in 57kg competition, Sonam's resilience eventually helped her secure the quota and shut the door on Rio Olympic medallist Sakshi Malik.

Sonam announced her arrival by defeating Sakshi four times in recent trials, making the 62kg category her own.

"She has shown that she is ready for the senior circuit. Look what she has done. People had said that she is still at the cadet level but the consistent victories against Sakshi has boosted her confidence," Sonam's personal coach Ajmer Malik said.

"She does not lose confidence or hope now even after conceding points. We are proud of her," added Ajmer.



Bayern worries grow before CL

AFP ■ MUNICH

Depleted Bayern Munich were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Union Berlin in the Bundesliga on Saturday, three days before their crunch Champions League return leg at Paris Saint-Germain.

Teenager Jamal Musiala beat three defenders to give injury-hit Bayern the lead midway through the first half at the Allianz Arena only for Marcus Ingvartsen to equalise for Union four minutes from time.

"That is very annoying," Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer told Sky after the late equaliser. "We played well over long stretches and would have deserved the victory."

In Paris on Tuesday, European champions Bayern need to overturn a 3-2 first-leg defeat and started reserve team players Tiago Dantas, on a season-long loan from Benfica, as well as Josip Stanisic against Union.

The club world champions have



nine players sidelined, including injured top-scorer Robert Lewandowski and winger Serge Gnabry, who is quarantined after testing positive for Covid-19.

Musiala showed great footwork to pick his way through the Union defence for the opening goal midway through the second-half, only for Ingvartsen to

beat Stanisic and grab the visitors' equaliser.

Off the field, tensions are brewing between sports director Hasan Salihamidzic and coach Hansi Flick, who has Neuer's backing.

"I think Hansi Flick is the right coach for us," added Neuer.

Pak take early lead

AFP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Mohammad Rizwan took inspiration from teammate Fakhar Zaman and steered Pakistan to their highest winning run chase as they beat South Africa by four wickets in the first T20 International at the Wanderers Stadium on Saturday.

Rizwan made an unbeaten 74 as Pakistan chased down a target of 189 with one ball to spare. Their previous highest T20 chase was 188 against Australia in Harare in 2018.

Rizwan said the pitch was tricky at the start of the chase but he and captain Babar Azam got the side off to a quick start before Babar was out with the total on 41 in the fifth over.

He was then joined by Fakhar, who scored an astonishing 193 not out in the second ODI on the same ground six days earlier.

Fakhar made 27 off 19 balls before he was caught on the boundary off left-arm spinner Tabraiz Shamsi, who took two for 29.

But Rizwan said he modelled his innings on the way Fakhar played in the One-Day game.

"Fakhar's innings was on my mind today, the way he played on this surface," said Rizwan.

"I was taking my time



knowing I could score later on."

With a succession of power hitters in the side, Rizwan said he got a message from his team's dug-out that he must keep batting until the end.

Rizwan, who scored only 42 runs in three innings in Pakistan's 2-1 One-Day series win, was back in the form which earned him man of the series awards in both Test and T20 series against South Africa in Pakistan earlier in the year. He hit nine fours and two sixes.

The match swung in the last four overs of the two innings.

South Africa could score only 29 in their last four overs, while Pakistan thrashed 52 off the last 3.5 overs.

The home draw trims Bayern's lead at the top of the Bundesliga table to five points ahead of second-placed RB Leipzig, who romped to a 4-1 win at Werder Bremen.

Leipzig dominated throughout and raced into a 3-0 lead as Dani Olmo gave them the lead before Alexander Soerloth netted twice.

Although Milot Rashica pulled a goal back for Bremen, Marcel Sabitzer finished a move for the visitors to make it 4-1 midway through the second-half.

The sides meet again in Bremen on April 30 in the German Cup semi-finals.

Eintracht Frankfurt took another key step towards reaching the Champions League for the first time with a thrilling 4-3 win at home to Wolfsburg.

Borussia Moenchengladbach earned a 2-2 draw at Hertha Berlin despite playing 77 minutes a man down after goalkeeper Yann Sommer was shown an early red card for fouling Jhon Cordoba.

SINGLES

WATFORD CLOSER TO PL RETURN

LONDON: Ismaila Sarr scored twice as Watford defeated Reading 2-0 on Friday to edge closer to a return to the Premier League. Watford, relegated from the top flight last season, stay second, five points behind leaders Norwich. Crucially, they have an imposing 12-point lead over third-place Brentford. Reading remains in the final play-off spot in sixth place but are in danger of being overtaken by Bournemouth, who now have two games in hand.

IKEE MISSES OLYMPIC SPOT

TOKYO: Leukaemia survivor Rikako Ikee completed a clean sweep of four wins at Japan's Olympic swimming trials on Saturday — but missed out on an individual place at the Tokyo Games. Ikee, who only resumed training in March last year after being diagnosed with cancer in February 2019, won both the 50m butterfly and 50m freestyle to add to the two victories she claimed earlier this week. But her time of 24.84 sec in the 50m freestyle was not enough to earn her an individual berth at the Games.

RINJU INAUGURATES KISCE FOR ROWING

SRINAGAR: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday inaugurated the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE) for rowing at the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council Water Sports Academy here. At present, the KISCE will focus on rowing and will be provided a first-time grant of ₹145.16 lakh and an annual recurring grant of ₹96.17 lakh.

ATK SIGN COLACO FROM HYDERABAD FC

HYDERABAD: Indian Super League side ATK Mohun Bagan has signed forward Liston Colaco from Hyderabad FC for the highest-ever transfer fee for an Indian player. Hyderabad FC and ATK Mohun Bagan agreed to the transfer for an undisclosed fee, the club said on Saturday. The 22-year-old will join the Mariners with effect from June 1.

ROMA KHANNA RESIGNS

NEW DELHI: Roma Khanna on Saturday stepped down as the Tournament Director of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup and AFC Women's Asian Cup, to be held in India in 2022, citing personal reasons. Khanna had spearheaded the bid for the U-17 World Cup back in 2019, and was later appointed as the Tournament Director for the Local Organising Committee. She also successfully led the bid for AFC Women's Asian Cup, which India is set to host next year in January.

HANS WOMEN FC WIN DELHI FOOTBALL LEAGUE

NEW DELHI: Hans Women FC emerged as the champions of the Football Delhi league after defeating Hops FC by a solitary goal here on Saturday. In the closely contested final match held at Dr Ambedkar Stadium, Anushka Samuel scored the winning goal. Hero of the match in the final game was Deepika Venkatesh while Aveka Singh was declared the Golden Boot winner with 27 goals scored in eight matches.

2021 ASPIRE YOUNG ACHIEVERS ANNOUNCED

MILAN: Celebrating the spirit of awe-inspiring achievements by the young, in art, culture and sportsmanship, Aspire Circle on Thursday announced the 2021 Aspire Young Achiever Awards for three young trailblazers, Harshita Tater (National Gold medallist para athlete and an aspiring doctor), Suhana Narjany (National champion TT player) and Tanshu (paralympic speed skater) for their outstanding feats in their respective domains. The young achievers identified by Aspire Circle this year, include trailblazers and national heroes from humble backgrounds, often before their peak performance. The awards will be presented online to the three young achievers during the annual ARC 2021 on Sunday.

Badosa ousts No 1 Barty



AFP ■ MIAMI

World number one Ashleigh Barty crashed out of the Charleston WTA quarter-finals on Friday, beaten in straight sets by 71st-ranked Spaniard Paula Badosa.

Badosa fired seven aces — three more than Barty — and saved 12 of 14 break points she faced on the way to a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

It's the biggest win of Badosa's career, the Spaniard having notched her first top-20 victory when she beat fifth-seeded Belinda Bencic in the 2nd round.

"I'm still a little bit shocked," Badosa admitted in a post-match TV interview, adding that when Barty's final forehand reeled out of court "I was, like, 'What just hap-

pened?"

"But I'm quite happy with my match, the way that I managed my nerves. It was quite important because sometimes these matches are tough to close."

In the semi-finals Badosa will face Russia's Veronika Kudermetova, the 15th seed, for a spot in the championship final.

Badosa, a former French Open junior champion, is the lowest-ranked player to beat Barty since September 2019.

In other matches, Tunisia's Ons Jabeur defeated American Coco Gauff 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) to book a semi-final meeting with Danka Kovinic of Montenegro, a 6-7 (2/7), 7-5, 6-1 winner over Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva.



‘I like the darker side of people’

■ **What is Bisaat about?**

Bisaat is a chessboard of relationships, betrayal, deceit, lies and most importantly murder. While a murder mystery is generally devoid of deep relationships, *Bisaat* also has some fabulous take on the relationships that are on the darker side. This is what interested me even more to direct this series.

Talktime

VIKRAM BHATT

The director known for his slick thrillers and murder mysteries is back with yet another whodunnit. Bhatt speaks with Musba Hashmi about Bisaat, all set to release on MX Player on April 15, explaining why he got interested in making the series, how he took 50 days to shoot and one thing he can't compromise on the sets

■ **Can you talk me through the shooting process?**

The shoot was to get over in 35 days and I took 50 days to shoot it. I think my company was conspiring to throw me out as a director. But, we ended up doing a fabulous job. I had a great cast to start with, Omkar, Sandeepa, Leena Jumani, Jia Mustafa and Coral Bhamra, all are good actors. But, I had some characters in my mind and I wanted the actors to be those people. It took a bit to bring that about. But, once we achieved that, we had a lot of fun playing with the characters and the story.

■ **Why the delay?**

I am slower than most directors. It takes me longer. You can't blame me. I am a film director. I am used to shooting 125 minutes and you ask me to shoot 400 minutes in 35 days. I can't be a Xerox machine. Also, I wanted the show to be nothing short of sparkling and I am proud to say that it is.

■ **Did the response you got for the delay bother you?**

I don't get bothered when I am making a movie. You need to make it properly, not that you have to throw caution to the wind, but you need time.

I AM SLOWER THAN MOST DIRECTORS. HENCE, THE DELAY. YOU CAN'T BLAME ME. I AM A FILM DIRECTOR. I AM USED TO SHOOTING 125 MINUTES AND YOU ASK ME TO SHOOT 400 MINUTES IN 35 DAYS. I CAN'T BE A XEROX MACHINE. ALSO, I WANTED THE SERIES TO BE NOTHING SHORT OF SPARKLING

■ **What kind of stories attract you?**

People think I like horror, murder or thriller. But there is something deeper in that. I like the darker side of the people. All of us are two people, there's one person that we show to the world and the other that we keep private. I like to tell stories about this private person. That's where my interest lies. As storytellers you can decide whether you want to tell stories of these kinds of people or those kinds. That's what attracted me to *Bisaat*, it's about the dark side of the people — dark motives. There's a line: You are what you hide. You are what you Google also, but the first one is true too.

■ **Does that mean thriller as a genre doesn't attract you?**

Yes, not at all. I have done comedy like *Awaarapan* also, but that is for a laugh once in a while. But where ever there's a dark side of the human nature, it attracts me more.

■ **Does it not bother you?**

The dark side of the person is the honest side of the person, why get bothered about it. The dark side is also the spiritual side, by the way. Why? It's a different discussion.

■ **What has been your most challenging project?**

No one would trust me, if I say this.

But, it is *Bisaat*. A director syncs the entire story. When one takes a shot, for everybody on the set it's a scene, but I have to keep a watch on from where the characters are coming, where they will move and everything else. And when I started making the series, I thought it is so long and how will I maintain the emotional connect of the characters and how will I be able to send chills down the spine. So, I made a notepad on just the emotional moves of the characters and before every scene I had to go through it. And for a filmmaker who shoots two hours, it is easy to keep notes, but for this, I had maintain the combinations of relationships. That is what the biggest challenge I had faced — to make a comprehensive and cohesive piece of writing and directing of 400 minutes is a tough task.

■ **What is that one thing you can't compromise on while being on the sets?**

Coffee. My cappuccino machine has to be there.

■ **What next?**

A huge pipeline for MX player actually. We are in the process of doing *Anamika* with Sunny Leone, I am directing it. There's *Maya 4*, which my daughter is directing and *Twisted 4*. I want to have four hits with this platform, that's the ultimate aim.

MUSBA HASHMI catches up with HYDROMAN aka JAYDEEP GOHIL, India's first underwater dancer, who is setting the stage on water with his dance moves and is all set to feature in &flix's music video *Awesome In Disguise*

NO TIME TO BREATHE



Hydroman aka Jaydeep Gohil

Superheroes are, at all times, expected to have super powers that can help them go on a rescue trail and protect the world from the eye of the evil. However, not all superheroes are born with magical powers, some develop it over time.

The latest edition to your list of favourite superheroes can be Hydroman. Who is he, you ask? A Marvel or a Bollywood character? None of these. Jaydeep Gohil, a 26-year-old Rajkot-based mechanical engineer, has taken the Internet by storm through his underwater stunts and dance moves. To cut it short, he rules water. Hence, the name.

For Gohil, it started with a passion for swimming. At five, he was introduced to bathing at river banks. Since then, water became his friend. However, the passion took a backseat when dance came on his cards.

It was only one fine day, when his father, on a lighter vein, asked him to couple his dance with water. No matter how vague an idea it was, it got Gohil thinking.

"That's when I thought why not dance underwater. I began researching on the art

form. I wanted to seek inspiration from some international artists as well. However, to my surprise, I realised that there was no one who was doing it," Gohil tells you.

This left Gohil with no option but to take to trial and error. He decided to reach out to a local swimming pool and implement his thoughts.

"Initially, it was difficult to understand where to begin from. Gradually, I started choreographing songs and practice them underwater. I continued doing it until I realised the need of a mirror to keep a watch on my moves," he says.

Without having to guess, what happened next — Gohil had his practice tank set-up in his home. This gave him more time to practice while also helping him to see his moves.

The another problem in the pipeline was that it was only him who knew what he was doing down the water. The task was to showcase the art to the world.

"I decided to buy a camera.

I take breaks to breathe, but they can't be obvious. We can't let the audience know that I am going up the tank to breathe. This will make them lose attention. I modify the steps to make it look natural and in sync



The next thing that I needed was a tripod. To not put too much of financial pressure on my family, I decided to make one myself and my father's workshop," Gohil explains.

However, even the camera didn't help much, because Gohil was unable to shoot himself properly — sometimes he went out of frame, while the other he was cropped.

The next thing that Gohil could think of was a glass tank. As easy it may sound to have one, Gohil had to take no for an answer from my architects, until one, finally, agreed.

"Many people told us that it wasn't possible and that it will break into pieces if I went there. But I didn't stop trying. Finally, my father's friend said that he can help. With instructions from designer's in Dubai we were finally able to have one. Made from 24 mm glass, it was like a dream for me," he says.

Now, the glass tank travels everywhere with Gohil. It needs a crane for its placements.

While this was all about Gohil's journey, what one may

be excited to read about is how he manages to pull it off. There is no rocket science behind it.

"I am one of the few people who, at ease, can pull this off. My forelimbs are larger than my body. It helps me to maintain my balance while swimming. Not to mention, water is my comfort zone. When people find it impossible, I often think to myself 'why do they feel like that? It's easy,' he tells you.

Most of Gohil's performances are five-minute long. He can manage to stay in water for three-and-a-half minutes without much motion. But during his performance, he makes sure to take frequent breaks for oxygen. "These breaks can't be obvious. We can't let the audience know that I am going up the tank to breathe. This will make them lose attention. I modify the steps to make it look natural. Take for example, if I am taking a flip, I will go up breathe and then come down. This is all in sync," he explains.

Gohil's art was sufficient to

take him to India's Got Talent, while also giving him a chance to share his watery stage with Akshay Kumar on the show. This followed by all the name and fame. However, it was short lived.

"There was a time when I had no work for six months. People started forgetting me. It made me question my survival in the field. I was disheartened and asked my father if I could join him at his workshop. He told me to focus on my craft," he says.

This did affect Gohil, but not for long. He utilised the time to amp up his craft and come up with better concepts.

If you think this is the end of the twists and turns in his life. There is more.

"In 2016, I was called for an show in Chennai for the India's first and largest walk-through aquarium. It may sound beautiful to you. But, here's a catch. I had to perform with 10 sharks in the aquarium. This, at first, sounded unreal. But then, they explained that I have to wear a wet suit, the one that their staff wears when they go to feed them and it will go well," Gohil tells you.

During the practice sessions in that aquarium with 10 not-so-friendly companions, Gohil had a narrow escape.

"The basic thing that we should know is to not touch the sharks at all. If you did, it will, for sure, bite you and it it got to taste your blood, you should be prepared to say goodbye. I didn't realise, and while dancing, my hand was about to touch a shark. My cameraperson who was shooting this from outside the aquarium had a mini heartattack. He immediately signalled me to stop and come out. When I did, he showed me the footage of the blunder that I was about to do," Gohil recalls.

That definitely left Gohil with a strong urge to leave the show and go back, but he knew it wasn't a professional thing to do. "I completed it and gradually my fear too went away. I did four 15-minute shows in a day, for six days," Gohil, who is featuring in &flix's music video *Awesome In Disguise* in collaboration with the leading multilingual pop-folk band 'When Chai Met Toast', tells you.

Gohil is nothing but happy and excited to be a part of the video and to see his work getting more recognition.



'Composing for Big B and AB has been an amazing experience'

Composer GOURAV DASGUPTA, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about this latest single, composing for Big B and Abhishek Bachchan, and working with Emraan Hashmi

■ **What is Saiyyonee about and what was the best compliment you received?**

The single is the beginning and revival of many things personal and professional at my end. After nearly five years of Gourav-Roshin, this is my first solo venture. I had the same anxiety I had when I did my first film *Dus Kahaaniyaan* with Sanjay Gupta. The single is my first release with Sony Music. Sameerji's (Anjaan) poetry is one of the strongest pillars of this song. The video feat with Asim Riaz and Shivaleeka Oberoi and directed by Kookie Gulati has done wonders. The best compliment I've got is that people feel they are finally getting to hear the real Gourov.

■ **Tell us about your tracks in movies Chehre.**

The movie has a larger-than-life track, *Rangdariya*. It's the only song in the film and was an honour to be amidst legends like (Amitabh) Bacchan *saab* and Emraan (Hashmi). There was a lot of pressure as the music and Emraan went hand in hand and we needed a song that could hit the ball out of the park for him and me.

■ **What is your favourite song from The Big Bull?**

It is *Ishq Namaaza* followed by *Hawaan ke sheher mein*. Kookie Gulati the director fought against a lot of odds to have these songs in his film as he personally believed that these songs had the potential to be iconic and when Ajay Devgn sir heard them, he immediately gave a go ahead. Though the film is an OTT release, I am keeping my fingers crossed and hope that the music reaches out to all the audiences.

■ **And what about the music in Hello Charlie?**

Gypsy guitar is a quirky and beautiful love song. This was everyone's most favourite song, I am told. However, the song has been chopped from the film and will be now promoted only as a promotional track. This movie too is an OTT release. In fact, they forgot to put Shellee (lyricist) and my name in the credits. Extremely disappointed and heartbroken as Excel is supposed to be a production house which respects musicians. But such is the life of an artist.

■ **You have composed the tracks for Big B (For Chehre) and Abhishek Bachchan (For Big Bull). Any anecdotes you would like to share?**

It was an honour and a thrill when Emraan told me that Bacchan *saab* heard *Rangdariya* and said that it's one of the best songs he's heard in the decade. I jumped with joy like a kid. It made my day. Working with Abhishek B was amazing as well. He is so funny, down to earth and has an immense knowledge about music. In between shoots, Kookie, AB and I used to sit, jam and ideate on many new things. That's how *Hawaan ke sheher*, my second track in *The Big Bull* was conceived. I'm extremely proud of the work I've done for them.

■ **Emraan Hashmi movies are known for superhit soundtracks. What was his reaction after listening to the track?**

He is a musician who isn't a musician. You can't fool him with a mediocre melody. Luckily we were already working on some music for another film and he was familiar with my soundscape. It's no mean feat to score for him. This was a dream come true. I'm hoping there's more to come.

■ **How did it feel to have three films releasing on the same date — April 9, 2021?**

Chehre, for now has been postponed. It's surreal especially since my last release *Jawaani Jaaneman* seems ages ago due to the lockdown. It's the same feeling I had when I arrived in this city a decade back with pennies in my pocket and dreams in my eyes. I pray the audience accepts and loves Gourav Dasgupta as they had done in the past.

■ **What are your future projects?**

There are quite a few in the pipeline. But don't want to jinx them by talking about them. Once they are ready for release people will get to know about them.

Story of American dreams. Struggle & sacrifice

DANISH RENZU, a Kashmiri director and screenwriter, tells MUSBA HASHMI about the inspiration behind *The Illegal*, which is playing on Amazon Prime Video, as also his journey to becoming an independent filmmaker

Every film starts with a mere thought which turns into a story. But behind this single thought, there is a lot of inspiration that one needs. For *The Illegal*, director Danish Renzu's inspiration was from his own experiences of working in the US.

By living the American dream — from being a student to working a couple of jobs — he has seen it all. But it's not what people think it is, there's much more. A lot of struggle and sacrifice by immigrants.

"While being in the US, I have met a lot of fellow immigrants and the one thing that was common was that they all made sacrifices in order to take care of their families back home. So, *The Illegal* is the story of these individuals who might have not been able to make it big, but had the courage to not give up. My experience coupled with the experiences of people I met there, is weaved into this film," Renzu explains. The process of documenting the experiences in a movie wasn't tough for Renzu, because he had bril-

liant actors who were able to justify their roles.

"Suraj (Sharma) did a great job. He connected with the character, Hassan, since he is also an immigrant, is from Delhi and has lived in the US. Even his age matched with that of the character. There were so many factors that contributed in bringing that authenticity to the character. Hence, it wasn't that difficult to bring it all together since I had good talent on board," he says. Not to mention, Suraj was Renzu's first and obvious choice.

While we all know how hard it is for actors to make a place for themselves in the industry, but it is rare that we talk about how equally challenging, if not more, it is for the filmmakers as well.

Renzu, who started back in 2015, says it was a career switch for him from engineering to filmmaking. "It was a territory that I didn't know much about before I signed for it. My films have been independently produced by me. It's been a learning experience for



Danish Renzu, director-screenwriter

me to make a film from the scratch," he says. The good side is that there was no pressure on him from anyone. He was independent to tell the kind of sto-

ries he wanted to. "However, the tough part is to put it all together.

The post-production work, the release, it takes time because you have to go through a lot of film festival journeys. There's travel involved, you have to wait for things," Renzu explains.

The film was originally slated to release last year but because of the pandemic it got postponed. But for Renzu, even the waiting time was something to remember. "It was difficult, but worth it," he says.

What, of course, did trouble Renzu was the fact that he was leaving a stable job to charter unknown waters.

"I did feel like quitting every second time. But then, remembering my nine to five job, I realised that I wasn't meant for it. Besides, filmmaking is such a beautiful job. There's so much you can do when you are making a film. Even though there are times when you feel like things are not working for you, but then the experience itself gives you the motivation to keep on working," he says.



A rare Jugalbandi
A book that provides the political account of Vajpayee & Advani, and steers through the major events of right-wing politics

2



4

Controlling monkey mind
Pursuing *Dhyana*, with focus on Lord Hanuman, would inspire the seeker to imbibe his spirit

I'm afraid of everything. But maybe when you're afraid of everything, it sort of seems like you're scared of nothing
— Natalie Portman



Street artist and co-founder St+art India, Hanif Kureshi, Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity, Serendipity Arts Foundation and the Corporation of the City of Panaji join hands to paint Goa's dry waste sorting stations and turn them into works of art. NAVNEET MENDIRATTA speaks to the artist

You just cannot miss the beautiful mural painted in colours of Goa as you drive past the busy road in Dona Paula, Panjim, Goa. It's an unusual canvas. Painted in bright hues, mostly blue, this work of public art is painted on Goa's dry waste sorting stations, making for an attractive selfie point.

Called Goa Glitch, this mural is a joint initiative of Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity, Serendipity Arts Foundation, the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) and St+art India co-founder Hanif Kureshi. The idea being to tap into the imaginative spirit of those passing by. The mural features geometric visuals in beautiful hues of the Bombay Sapphire blue, representing the spirit of adventure and the openness of Goa, and bringing to life the endless coastlines, and the expansive blue skies of the city.

"The mural is about exploiting the colours of Goa, like a glitch," says Kureshi in a candid conversation post the unveiling of the mural. "I visualised it as glitching of the colours of Goan skies — in summer, monsoon, winter, morning, afternoon and noon... Different shades of blue that could also be interpreted as colours of water, more specifically the ocean. It's like the glitch of both skies and the ocean and that's why Goa Glitch," he says.

Kureshi has been working with Serendipity Arts for the last four years or since it started. In the first edition, Kureshi participated as an artist and then from the next edition onwards he worked as a curator, where he brought in St+art India and put together street art editions in Panjim. Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity platform aims to revive and enable creative self-expression amongst the audience. For over three decades, the

brand has collaborated with designers, artists, architects, and individuals from outside the creative industry to create artworks that reawaken creative potential.

"Each mural has a story. It's interesting when you work on the street, you find that there are so many stories that are waiting to be told. As for this, I am kind of familiar with Panjim's landscape and whenever a new structure comes up, we look at it as a possible canvas," he shares. This, or shall we say, these canvasses have been particularly interesting. "Not many are aware that these new structures are actually dry waste sorting stations. This is where CCP segregates the waste of dry kind such as paper, plastic, sharp objects, glass, steel and metal. These sheds play a very important role in the whole recycling scheme of things. Our idea was to bring attention to the process and promote recycling. We wanted to give it a new life and make it not look like a dustbin. And we thought what better than art to get the conversation started," he says, speaking of the collaboration.

Considering Dona Paula is one of the busiest public areas in Goa, the mural highlights the artist's message on the importance of sustainability and recycling very effectively. In India, Goa is one of the cities that recycles 80% of their waste with a strong model created for waste management and sustainability. In addition to stirring creativity among the community, the collaboration builds awareness for environmental sustainability and encourages people to be more conscious of their actions, he shares. Besides this shed, Kureshi is collaborating to paint at least three more in a year.

An alumni of Baroda School of Art, Kureshi started painting on streets in 2008. He began with Graffiti and gradually moved on to the world of street art which he says, he finds "more free". "The difference between Graffiti and Street Art, you could say, is the sense of style. While Graffiti can

NOT MANY ARE AWARE THAT THESE NEW STRUCTURES ARE ACTUALLY DRY WASTE SORTING STATIONS. THIS IS WHERE CCP SEGREGATES THE WASTE OF DRY KIND SUCH AS PAPER, PLASTIC, SHARP OBJECTS, GLASS, STEEL AND METAL. THESE SHEDS PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE WHOLE RECYCLING SCHEME OF THINGS. OUR IDEA WAS TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE PROCESS AND PROMOTE RECYCLING

be likened to vandalism, Street Art is more positively thought out and refined. So, yes, you could say that I sought an expression that is more positive and would provoke people to think," he shares.

From getting German street artist, Hendrick ECB to paint the 150 ft mural of Mahatma Gandhi at the Police Headquarters in New Delhi, as part of the St+Art Delhi street art festival in January 2014 to commemorate the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation, to putting together Street Art festival in Shahpur Jat and Hauz Khas in Delhi, the entire process evoked the idea on gentrification in the city. "The awareness regarding the street art grew as we moved towards Lodhi Colony and worked with the government properties. However, working at a central location like Lodhi Colony, we realised that there is no room for gentrification there. We have been doing similar work in Chennai and Mumbai," he shares.

While Kureshi shares that the response and reception to street art has grown in the past decade, the element of planning in the urban-scape continues to elude in the country. "There's no urban planning element to street art as of now. And that's why, I feel, it becomes more important for art to cover up for all that is not planned," he avers. Delhi's Lodhi Colony perhaps is a case in point but then there is a catch. "Maybe at some point, Lodhi Colony will be demolished and there would be high rises instead. But I still feel the art that found place there would leave a lasting impact. I think about the children growing up in Lodhi Colony and their imagination and what they would like think about art and perhaps, choosing art as a career option," he says.

On the subject of Street Art versus vandalism, Kureshi has a take: "There is a thin line between vandalism and street art. Personally, when I set out to do graffiti, I could have gone on to become a rebel. More so in principle, as there is a school that produces rebels and is more of a breeding ground where you adopt a bottom down approach. Street art, on the other hand, takes a top down approach where you get on the ground with more voices on the street to inspire more people to express themselves. You can be vocal about issues with the same amount of rights which any other company has in terms of putting in money and making an ad and

putting on the face. If carried out properly, with requisite permissions, even the people start owning street art. That's when the real change takes place."

This is also not the first time that Kureshi has lent his creativity to a cause. Kureshi has recently partnered with Art For Change, a virtual art challenge and exhibition, as one of the jury members. The initiative aims to change the narrative by turning the focus away from the victim and putting the spotlight on the perpetrator. Organised by Gordon Thomas Honeywell-GA & Ogilvy India in partnership with UN Women India, Girl Up (UN Foundation), reputed academic institutions like National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi (NIFT) and Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune (SIMB), this initiative seeks to unleash the power of creativity to transform the way our society deals with survivors of rape & sexual violence, shifting the accountability from the survivor to the perpetrator.

"Art for Change is a project all about violence against women, which includes domestic abuse. It is about inviting ideas about how we can change the situation so the project moves people to act instead of being mute spectators," he says.

Besides Delhi, Kureshi has been working a lot in Chennai. "We did a district called Kannagi Art District. I find cities in south India to be much more welcoming than the cities in north India. The art culture is there and people understand and respect the art as well as the artist," he shares.

Similarly, Kureshi-led St+art has worked on creating Mahim Art district in Mumbai; Ukkadam Art District in Coimbatore and Maqtha Art District in Hyderabad. "Different cities have different styles. So in Maqtha, which is predominantly a Muslim district, we try not to paint portraits. The focus is to be more abstract in that space, trying to be more sensitive to the surrounds. It is also about encouraging people to own the art and the space," he shares.

Ask him about the dream city to paint, Kureshi says: "We are okay with the metros that we are painting. There really is no dream city as such in our mind. The idea, however, is to go to cities where people are excited and reach out to the grassroots of India. For that is where the real artist would love to leave their mark.

CHINA’S GAME ON NORTH KOREA

China has spread its tentacles across almost all corners of the world. With North Korea, China has employed a unique strategy both to support stability and to have a grip over the nuclear gear of this mysterious land.

Successive Chinese leaders have maintained three distinct strategies towards North Korea: first, not to provoke a war; second, to maintain the status quo; and finally, no to nuclear arsenal.

Succinctly, China is North Korea’s all-weather friend. Thus, though Beijing ostensibly condemns North Korea’s nuclear developments, it avowedly opposes harsh global sanctions on that mysterious nation. And China’s strategy is aimed at addressing two major critical concerns: to obviate massive refugee influx across 870-mile border area that it shares with North Korea and prevent an immediate collapse of the Kim rule.

The relationship between China and North Korea can aptly be described through this Chinese proverb: “Chun wang chi han” (If the lips are gone, teeth will be cold). It rightly indicates that both the countries are intimately interdependent. Beijing’s support for Pyongyang dates back to the historic 1950-53 Korean War. Those were the days, China under Chairman Mao, was more than eager to aid its northern Communist ally North Korea, against the capitalist South Korea. Its support to North Korea continues irrespective of whoever comes to power in Pyongyang.

Kim Il-sung from 1948-94, Kim Jon-il (1994-2011) and now Kim Jong-un since 2011 till date, China has been offering both political and economic support to various regimes of Kims.

On record, China is North Korea’s biggest trade partner till date. In fact, from 2000-2020, the bilateral trade between both the nations have increased almost ten-fold. Even amid tougher international trade

sanctions against North Korea, the long China-North Korea border is still open for established trade routes in commodities such as mobile phones, silkworms, fuel, seafood, etc.

Much beyond these regular economic activities, China has established a high-speed railway link between its border cities like Dandong and Shenyang so as to boost trade with North Korea. Both the nations have also opened a cargo and container shipping route to enhance the supply of coal from North Korea to China. China also offers aid to North Korea primarily in food and energy sectors.

Besides China, the US, Japan and South Korea provided more than 75 per cent of the food aid to North Korea since 1995. The country’s severe famine was caused by heavy floods and droughts that took lives of more than million people in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the country has not been able to come out of this prolonged food crisis till date. Thus, Pyongyang is fully dependent on China and its goodwill.

As per the estimates revealed by the UN agencies, more than 43 per cent of the country’s population is malnourished. Though Kim Jong-un is focusing on rapid economic development, the country has not been able to attract any foreign investment because of severe international sanctions. Its only hope is China and the country is looking for robust economic ties with the former.

However, China’s continued support to Pyongyang came under severe strain when the latter tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006. Subsequently, Beijing had to back a UN Security Council Resolution No. 1718 that led to the imposition of severe sanctions against North Korea. And for the first time, the international community witnessed transition of China’s tactics from sustained diplomatic support to outright punishment towards its Northern



Communist neighbour.

When in November 2017, Kim again tested a missile, Beijing called on Pyongyang to restrict all actions that create tensions in the Korean Peninsula. These all clearly

demonstrate that China is wary of North Korea’s belligerent moves that may militate against the mutual interests of both the countries.

Beijing has played the role of a powerbroker during all

high-profile global negotiations on North Korea. After two crucial summits between then US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, international policy makers have so far

focused mainly on denuclearisation steps, immediate measures towards peace in the Korean peninsula and finally, corresponding sanctions relief.

However, Pyongyang has been becoming an Asian tinder box. Kim’s madness and clandestine nuclear programme could turn the entire Korean peninsula into a serious war zone of the continent.

Probably, China knows best how to tackle Kim dynasty. But then at times some foundational questions arise as to whether North Korea is a strategic liability or an opportunity for China. The Communist leaders in Beijing must have realised the fact that its northern neighbour is to be tamed and to be used for all possible gains both domestically and internationally.

The world brands North Korea as a pariah state, but Beijing takes the Kim regime otherwise. Though apparently China has backed the UN sanctions against North Korea over its incessant efforts to become a formidable nuclear state, its financial and trade support directly and effectively facilitated Kim’s nuclear machine for long. This has also helped North Korean economically survive so far. Further, these Chinese efforts are indirectly dashed the hopes of the reunification of both the Koreas.

The US is literally pressuring North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme. Washington says once it is done, there could be a guarantee of trade, diplomatic relations, aid and normalisation of ties with the rogue state. Though the US and China both are interested in denuclearising North Korea, their approaches to the same goal are completely different. America wants China to use its economic leverage to pressure or convince Kim to abandon it nuclear ambition. Thus Washington officials look at China as a part of the solution but unfortunately Beijing is fast becoming part of the Korean conundrum only. For Xi, the

Chinese President, who is now a life-time leader, wants to use North Korea to win brownie points at the domestic front. US President Joe Biden is fully aware that only China can maintain stability in the region if not solve the Korean puzzle for now. Certainly, Beijing will use this opportunity to turn in his favour other vital issues that are constantly pestering Xi, like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and South China Sea.

What is the problem with Kim? Kim wants to sustain his family rule. And for him, the nuclear button is the only guarantee for him to maintain both his hereditary regime and to threaten the neighbours and the world. Despite the leverage over North Korea, China and South Korea have failed to bring Kim to a negotiating table. Kim is totally against bringing reforms in his country. As such reform measures might bring down the curtain on his rule. The elites in North Korea know very well that its central problems lie within, not outside. Thus, they, along with Kim, ensure no reform takes place, in order to solidify their control over its impoverished populace.

Clearly, hollow summitry will not work with Kim. He demands serious negotiations on the nuclear front. It is better for Biden to extend grand gestures the way Trump did. At times, Beijing’s bosses have displayed stern attitudes towards Kim Jong-un. But Western nations, particularly, America will never ever believe the intentions of China. Because nowhere Chinese leadership has indicated its commitment towards implementing even the limited trade restrictions over this reclusive nation. And the whole world knows that only China keeps North Korea going and precisely surviving against all odds. Many in the West have accused China of circumventing global sanctions against North Korea.

(The writer an expert on international affairs)

Though the US and China both have voiced concern over North Korea’s nuclear ambition, their approaches to the same goal are distinctly different. America wants China to use its economic leverage to pressure Kim to abandon nuclear ambitions. However, China under Xi, is willing to do only what suits its interests



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

No Olympic participation: Kim’s message for Biden

North Korea has become the world’s first country to drop out of the Tokyo Olympics, ostensibly because coronavirus has spread its deadly tentacles. It is true that the rogue nation is extremely sensitive about Covid-19, knowing that a widespread outbreak in a country with an already battered health system could be disaster.

However, North Korea also has previously used big sporting events to set up diplomacy with the United States meant to win it much-needed sanctions relief in return for nuclear disarmament pledges. Some see pulling out of the Olympics as the North sending Washington a message.

Purportedly, there is legitimate coronavirus fears. A state-run website has claimed that North Korea’s Olympic Committee has decided not to take part in the Tokyo Games slated to begin in July “to protect players from the world public health crisis caused by Covid-19.”

North Korea has previously boycotted Olympics and other international sports events for political reasons or failed to appear when none of its athletes or teams qualified. But this is the first time North Korea has pulled out of a major international sports event citing an infectious disease, according to Seoul’s Unification Ministry.

Pyongyang has developed a reputation for withdrawing from talks with Seoul and Washington before returning at the last minute to boost its bargaining power. But given that the country has been on high alert over Covid-19, experts say there is little chance that it will



In this Feb. 15, 2019, file photo, North Korea’s Olympic Committee President and Sports Minister Kim Il Guk, left, and South Korean Sports Minister Do Jong-hwan attend a meeting with the IOC for their bid to co-host the 2032 Summer Olympics, at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland

reverse its Olympics decision.

North Korea has shown “a coronavirus-related neurosis since it declared an emergency anti-virus system in January last year,” said Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul’s Ewha

Womans University.

Park said it is highly unlikely that North Korea will secure enough vaccines for its 26 million people or report major progress in its anti-virus fight by July.

North Korean officials

know how disastrous a major virus outbreak would be in a nation with public healthcare infrastructure that has been in a shambles for decades. North Korea has so far taken some of the world’s most draconian anti-virus steps, including a 15-



month-long closure of its international borders and the departure of foreign nationals.

North Korea still officially claims to be coronavirus free, an assertion many foreign experts dispute.

North Korea’s decision to skip the Olympics shows that it “thinks contact with foreigners is the most dangerous thing now,” said Seo Yu-Seok at the Seoul-based Institute of North Korean Studies.

However, there is certainly a message for US President Joe Biden. The North Korean announcement, three months before the Games begin, could signal that Pyongyang is rejecting a repeated push by Seoul to use the Olympics to create a mood for dialogue. It could also show a determination to boost pressure on the new US administration of President Biden.

North Korea is sending the message that it wants to deal directly with the US now rather than using the Olympics as a venue to reach out to Washington for talks, said Kwak Gil Sup, head of One

Korea Center, a website specialising in North Korea affairs.

Now-deadlocked nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington began in 2018 after a reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula following North Korea’s participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Games in the South earlier that year.

During those Olympics, athletes from the Koreas marched together under a single unification flag during the opening ceremony and formed the Korea’s first-ever joint team in women’s ice hockey. Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, became the first member of the North’s ruling family to visit South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

There’s been little progress in nuclear talks the past two years. North Korea recently fired two ballistic missiles into the sea in the first such weapons tests in a year. Kim Yo Jong has warned Washington not to “cause a stink” and called South Korea’s president “a parrot raised by America.”

Experts say North Korea eventually wants talks with the Biden Administration to win sanctions relief and achieve better ties because its economy has been devastated by the pandemic, US-led sanctions and natural disasters last year.

Analyst Seo said North Korea likely wasn’t sure about the benefits of attending the Tokyo Games because Biden has made it clear that he won’t engage in made-for-TV summits with Kim Jong Un like his predecessor Donald Trump did.

“They knew that they would return home empty-handed from Tokyo,” Seo said.

But North Korea’s domestic difficulties may push it to pursue talks with the United States soon. Seo said North Korea could perform big weapons tests, such as an intercontinental ballistic missile launch, in coming months if it’s not satisfied with the Biden Government’s North Korea policy review expected to be completed soon.

(With inputs from AP)

