

OPINION 6
END OF AN ERA FOR AN AVIATION MARVEL

WORLD 8
CHINA, US TO COOPERATE ON CLIMATE

SPORT 12
RCB BEAT KKR IN IPL

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

*Late City Vol. 31 Issue 107
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, MONDAY APRIL 19, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

I TRY TO
KEEP IT REAL:
ALAYA F
10 VIVACITY



World's 33% daily Covid cases from India

Country reports over 2.7L cases and 1,600 deaths during last 24 hrs; India is better placed when it comes to daily death ratio

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Out of every third Covid-19 infection globally on daily basis, one is now from India. The grim statistic underlines the fact that India's situation is far worse than the rest of the world, which is now recovering from the onset of the deadly second wave. The country reported 2,74,944 cases and 1,620 deaths during the last 24 hours by Sunday midnight.

On Saturday, globally a total of 7.84 lakh new infections were reported, out of which India alone contributed 2.60 lakh cases. The US and Brazil, the two others worst-affected countries, added 63,000 and 65,000 fresh cases respectively.

However, India is better placed when it came to the daily death count. Out of a total of 11,596 deaths reported globally on Saturday, India added only 1,495. Brazil is seeing the worst death count. The country reported 2,865 deaths even as its total fresh cases were nearly four times less than India. On the other hand, the US recorded 738 deaths on Saturday.

India's daily count continued to be led by Maharashtra which reported 68,631 cases and 503 deaths on Sunday, followed by Uttar Pradesh which reported 30,566 new cases and 127 deaths.

National Capital Delhi reported 25,462 new cases, Karnataka 19,067, Chhattisgarh 12,345, Kerala



A Covid-19 patient wearing oxygen mask waits inside an autorickshaw to be attended and admitted to a dedicated Covid-19 Government hospital in Ahmedabad on Saturday

18,257 cases, Tamil Nadu 10,527, Rajasthan 10,514, Gujarat 10,340 cases. Reports from Uttar Pradesh said a life is lost to Covid every 11 minutes as 129 people died due to corona infection despite the imposition of night curfew and weekend lockdown. State additional Chief Secretary Health Amit Mohan Prasad said here on Sunday there are 1,91,457 active cases in the State.

Lucknow recorded the highest number of 5,551 new infections in the State. In the last 24 hours, 22 people have

died in Lucknow while there are 47,700 active cases. A total of 2,011, new infections were reported in Varanasi. Ten people have died here in the last 24 hours.

Kanpur overtook Prayagraj on Sunday. Here 1,839 new infected have been found while eight people have died. The graph of death is increasing in Prayagraj too. Here 15 people have died in the last 24 hours and 1,711 new cases have been found.

New infections are increasing unexpectedly in Ghazipur

and Jhansi. A total of 954 cases have been reported in Jhansi, 858 in Bareilly and 814 in Ghazipur, 782 in Meerut, 781 in Gorakhpur, 700 in Gautam Budh Nagar, 590 in Lakhimpur Kheri, 566 in Unnao, 511 in Jaunpur, 486 in Sultanpur and 440 in Agra.

Prasad said in view of the fast-growing infection in the State, instructions have been given to construct a 200 bedded Covid hospitals in the big cities as well as in small districts.

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Battling second wave, Maha fears 3rd wave: Aaditya

Under-reporting won't help, says Jr Thackeray

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even before Maharashtra stamps out the deadly second wave of the Covid-19, the State is apprehending a third wave, too. Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Sunday said a third wave of Covid-19 was likely soon, though it cannot be determined now if it will be as strong as or weaker than the second wave.

He also said even if vaccination did not help right away, it will help prepare for the future. "Every decision the State is taking today is based on the task force we created last year...as per science and medical facts, not by politics," Thackeray, the Maharashtra Tourism and Environment Minister, Aaditya said at the NDTV Solutions Summit. "We have come to the genuine belief that under-reporting is not going to help...Now we are preparing for the third wave. We have five lakh beds, 70 per cent of them oxygenated," he said.

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People wait to receive vaccine for Covid-19 at a vaccination centre in Mumbai on Sunday

Pioneer's veteran journalist Tavishi dies of Covid-19

Lucknow: The Political editor of The Pioneer, Tavishi Srivastva, died of Covid-19 on Sunday. She was 73. Tavishi was admitted to the Covid hospital of the KGMU on Sunday morning after she reported breathlessness and fever. She was shifted to ICU in the evening after her condition deteriorated and at night she succumbed to Covid.

She started her career as freelancer with The Pioneer and later climbed the ladder of success through her hard work. Her column Ulta Pradesh in Sunday Edition of Agenda was quite popular. Political leaders, social activists and journalists consoled her death.



Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES:	1,50,57,767 (+2,74,944)
DEATHS:	1,78,793 (+1,620)
RECOVERED:	1,29,48,848 (+1,43,701)
ACTIVE:	19,23,877
MAHARASHTRA:	38,39,338
KERALA:	12,39,425
KARNATAKA:	11,61,065
TAMIL NADU:	9,91,451
DELHI:	8,53,460 (+25,462)

CAPSULE

JEE MAINS ENTRANCE EXAM POSTPONED

New Delhi: Engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains scheduled to be held from April 27-30 has been postponed in view of the Covid-19 situation. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced.

BRIBERY CASE INVOLVING DGMS OFFICIAL: 2 NABBED

New Delhi: The CBI apprehended two men in connection with a ₹72-lakh bribery case allegedly involving Arvind Kumar, Deputy Director General at the Directorate General of Mines Safety, for influencing members of interview board to ensure qualification of favoured candidates, officials said.

BANGLADESH ISLAMIST HARDLINE LEADER HELD

Dhaka: An influential hardline cleric of an Islamist group was arrested in Bangladesh on charges of instigating deadly violence in country.

Reserve 7K beds for Covid patients, Kejriwal to Centre

Delhi records over 25K new Covid cases, 161 deaths in a day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of rising coronavirus cases in the national Capital with the city logging over 25,000 new Covid-19 cases, 161 deaths in a day, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has written to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and appealed to the Centre to reserve at least 7,000 beds for Covid patients.

The Central Government hospitals have around 10,000 beds in Delhi out of which 1,800 are Covid beds.

He said he spoke to Home Minister Amit Shah earlier in the day and informed him of the dire need of beds and oxygen in Delhi. Kejriwal said he had also informed Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan of the same on Saturday.

The CM said apart from the Commonwealth Games Complex, Yamuna Sports Complex, Radha Soami Satsang Beas, beds are being set up in some Delhi schools. He added that within 2-3 days, the Delhi government will set up more than 6,000 oxygen beds and will arrange more high flow oxygen beds in the city.

Continued on Page 2



A family receives a body of a relative, who died of Covid-19, outside a mortuary in New Delhi on Sunday

4 airlines booked for not checking Maha fliers' report; FIR against 2 hospitals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has lodged an FIR against four airlines for failing to check the Covid-19 test reports of all passengers travelling to the national capital from Maharashtra.

The order has reportedly been issued by the Kejriwal-led Delhi Government for taking action against Indigo, Vistara, SpiceJet and Air Asia. The proceedings will be held under the Disaster Management Act (DDMA), 2005. Also, FIR filed against two private hospitals for showing inaccurate data regarding beds on corona app.

New symptoms starkly different, say experts

Gastrointestinal issues, nausea, loose stool, dry mouth were uncommon during first Covid phase

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Covid-19 cases continue to spread like wildfire in India, health experts have said the second wave of the deadly virus is proving lethal to the younger people who are showing entirely different symptoms such as dry mouth, gastrointestinal issues, nausea, loose stools, red eyes and headache.

Besides, the double mutant of the coronavirus which can't be detected by the Covid-19 RTPCR test has symptoms such as sore throat and fatigue. At the same time, a majority of symptom of the disease remain the same in the second wave, including fever, chills, body ache, loss of smell and taste, and loss of breath or respiratory complications.

Other symptoms which



People stand in a queue for Covid-19 testing in Ghaziabad on Sunday

were not very common among Covid-19 patients in India last year, are being reported with greater frequencies. These symptoms are pink eyes, loose motions, and hearing impairment. For instance, studies have pointed out that if you have a prickly, itchy throat, or if you feel some swelling, it can be indicators of a sore throat, which is one of the most common symptoms of Covid-19

infection. "This symptom has been seen in over 52 per cent of cases globally. It is better to start taking precautions," said Dr GS Grewal from SAS Grewal Multi-Super Speciality Hospital in Ludhiana.

Experts the UK have pointed out that a lot of Covid-19 patients are reporting weakness as one of the initial signs of infection.

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Antibody against Covid doesn't protect youth from reinfection: Study

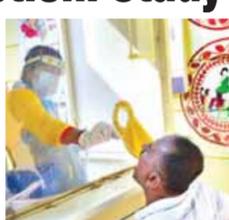
'They should get vaccine whenever possible to boost immune responses'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Antibodies induced by SARS-CoV-2 infection are shown to largely protective, but they do not completely protect against reinfection in young people, a longitudinal, a prospective study published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine has said.

"Our findings indicate that reinfection by SARS-CoV-2 in healthy young adults is common" said Stuart Sealton, MD, the Sara B and Seth M Glickenhaupt Professor of Neurology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and senior author of the paper.

"Despite a prior Covid-19 infection, young people can catch the virus again and may still transmit it to others. This is



an important point to know and remember as vaccine rollouts continue. Young people should get the vaccine whenever possible since vaccination is necessary to boost immune responses, prevent reinfection, and reduce transmission," he added.

The study, conducted between May and November 2020, revealed that around 10 percent (19 out of 189) of participants who were previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 (seropositive) became reinfected, compared with new infections in 50 percent (1,079 out of 2,247) of participants who had not been previously infected (seronegative).

Continued on Page 2

Rahul suspends WB rallies, Cong attacks Modi over Covid handling

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday unleashed a well-calibrated move to corner the Modi Government over its handling of the Covid-19 situation.

In an apparent effort to show the mirror to Prime Minister Narendra Modi whose Assembly elections rallies in West Bengal is seeing huge gatherings, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi suspended his election rallies in the State due to the pandemic surge. At the same time, former Finance Minister Chidambaram also took a swipe at Modi for his poll preoccupation.

Rahul said he will be suspending his remaining engagements in West Bengal due to the Covid-19 surge and urged all political leaders to "think



about the consequences of holding large public rallies". "In view of the Covid situation, I am suspending all my public rallies in West Bengal. I would advise all political leaders to think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the

current circumstances," Rahul wrote on Twitter.

His announcement comes a day after the country saw its highest single-day spike of over 2.61 lakh Covid-19 cases and the numbers of active cases surpassed the 18 lakh mark.

Despite the surge in daily Covid-19 cases, election campaigning in West Bengal continues to be in full swing. On Sunday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah too held multiple rallies and roadshows in the state. Similarly, Modi, who is the face of BJP's West Bengal campaign, held multiple rallies in the state on Saturday.

At a rally in Asansol, Modi had said he was "elated" to see the large crowd that had gathered on the ground.

Let States define category of frontline workers for job priority: MS to PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday wrote to PM Narendra Modi suggesting several ways to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. Singh highlighted the need for augmenting vaccination drive and clarity on how the supply of vaccine will be distributed across States based on a transparent formula. "We must resist the temptation to look at absolute numbers vaccinated and instead focus on the percentage of population vaccinated," Singh wrote.

The former PM said the States should be given some flexibility to define categories of frontline workers who can be



vaccinated even if they are below 45 years of age. For example, States may want to designate school teachers, bus, three-wheeler and taxi drivers, municipal and panchayat staff possibly as frontline workers. They can then be vaccinated even if they are below 45, Singh wrote to Modi.

Continued on Page 2

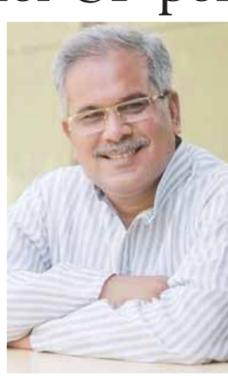
After Assam trial, Cong to rope in Baghel for UP poll campaign

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With a "good" feedback about the performance of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in the just-concluded Assam Assembly polls, the results of which are awaited, the Congress High Command is now considering to utilise his political and election management acumen in Uttar Pradesh that goes to polls early next year.

When the Congress roped in Baghel to take charge of Assam Assembly poll, the party was nowhere in the race. But three months down the line, he turned the Assam election into a cliff-hanger.

AICC sources said Baghel's name is being discussed for larger responsibilities in the



longer run. "Whatever the outcome on May 2, even the Assam State unit has given a respectable feedback about Baghel and his team to the top leaders of the party," a senior

AICC leader said.

While Baghel is back to his State following the conclusion of the polls in the North Eastern State after creating a buzz that the Congress-led Mahajot alliance is on a stronger wicket in Assam, AICC leaders are keen on giving him a similar responsibility in Uttar Pradesh. A decision is to be taken soon in this regard, the leader added.

Baghel's decision-making team in Assam comprised his political secretary Vinod Verma, his media adviser Ruchir Garg, and Raipur MLA Vikas Upadhyay. Parliamentary Affairs adviser to the CM Rajesh Tiwari formed the core advisory group for the Assam poll preparations.

Continued on Page 2

COVID-19 UP records highest single-day rise of 30,596 cases, 129 fatalities

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh registered the highest single-day rise in Covid-19 cases as well as fatality count, with the disease claiming 129 more lives, while 30,596 fresh cases pushed its tally to 8,51,620.

Briefing reporters here, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said in the last 24 hours, 30,596 fresh Covid-19 cases were reported from the state, while 9,041 patients recovered from the disease.

A total of 6,50,333 COVID-19 patients have so far recovered from the disease in the state, he added.

With the 129 fresh fatalities, the death toll due to the viral disease rose to 9,830, the official said.

Of the 129 fresh COVID-19 deaths, 22 fatalities were reported from Lucknow, followed by 15 from Allahabad, 10 from Varanasi, eight from Kanpur, six from Etawah, five from Mathura and four each from Bareilly, Moradabad, Rae Bareilly and Gonda.

Of the fresh cases,

Lucknow reported 5,551 cases followed by 2,011 from Varanasi, 1,839 from Kanpur and 1,711 from Allahabad.

The count of active COVID-19 patients in the state stands at 1,91,457, he added.

Prasad also informed that over 3.82 crore samples have so far been tested in the state, including over 2.36 lakh in the last 24 hours. Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel spoke to district magistrates of Lucknow, Allahabad, Varanasi and Kanpur over phone on the prevailing situation. She was informed about the preventive measures and treatment being given to patients, the Raj Bhavan said in a statement on Sunday.

The Governor said use of mask should be made mandatory for everyone, and violators should be sternly dealt with.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also asked Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna to monitor the current situation of oxygen supply and its projected use in the next 15 days. **PTI**

3,000 Remdesivir injections seized from HP's Baddi, 6 arrested

Chandigarh: Three thousand injections of Remdesivir were seized and six people arrested for allegedly trying to sell the medicine used in the treatment of Covid-19 without any licence or permit, said the Chandigarh Police on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of police raided a local hotel here and apprehended five persons for trying to strike an illegal deal, said police. Three accused belonged to Kerala while one each from Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, they said.

A pharma unit was also raided in Himachal Pradesh's Baddi and police seized 3,000 Remdesivir injections from there, an official statement said.

Police said a director of the unit was also arrested.

A case under relevant sections of the IPC, the Essential Commodity Act and the Drugs and Cosmetics Act was registered in this regard. **PTI**

Delhi Govt files FIR against 4 carriers for failing to check Covid reports of Maha returnees

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government approached police on Sunday to lodge FIRs against four airlines for failing to check RT-PCR test reports of passengers arriving from Maharashtra, officials said.

These complaints against Vistara, Indigo, SpiceJet and Air Asia have been filed under the Disaster Management Act, they said.

In view of the increasing number of COVID-19 patients, the Delhi government had last week ordered that a negative RT-PCR test report not older than 72 hours prior to undertaking the journey shall be compulsory for all people arriving from Maharashtra by air.

Passengers found without a negative report will have to remain in quarantine for 14 days.

"It has been observed that a large number of passengers took flights from Maharashtra to Delhi without a valid RT-PCR report. The Delhi government has written to the SHO of Indira Gandhi

International Airport to lodge FIRs against Indigo, SpiceJet, Vistara and Air Asia," a senior Delhi government official said.

Delhi police officials said they have received the complaint.

"We are looking into the matter. No FIR has been registered yet," a police official said.

When contacted, an Air Asia spokesperson said, "AirAsia India confirms that we are in compliance with guidelines and protocols issued by the respective regulatory bodies. We would also like to clarify that we have not received any information from any authority on this matter."

"IndiGo has not received any FIR against it as is being reported in certain media channels," a representative of IndiGo said.

There was no response from Vistara and SpiceJet authorities.

The decision to mandatorily ask for COVID negative report from passengers from Maharashtra was taken following the exponential rise in COVID-19 cases in the city.

Maha logs highest-ever 503 deaths, 68,631 new Covid infections

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

As the Covid-19 crisis worsened in the State on Sunday, Maharashtra recorded the highest-ever 503 Covid-19 triggered deaths and an all time-high of 68,631 infections.

A day after the State logged an all-time high of 67,123 infections and second highest-ever daily Covid toll of 419, the situation deteriorated further in Maharashtra as the state witnessed record number of deaths and infections in the state.

With 503 deaths reported on Sunday, the state notched a highest-ever toll ever since the pandemic broke out in the state in March-April last year. The State had earlier recorded the highest toll (424) on October 2, 2020.

Similarly, with 68,631 infections, the state surpassed the highest-ever daily caseload of 67,123 recorded on Saturday.

With 403 new deaths and 68,631 infections, the total number of deaths in the state

climbed to 60,473, while the total number of infections in the state rose from 37,70,707 to 38,39,338.

As 45,654 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 31,06,828. The recovery rate in the state for the first time in several days dropped from 81.18 per cent to 80.92 per cent. The total "active cases" total cases in the state rose from 6,47,933 to 6,70,388. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.59 per cent to 1.58 per cent.

With 53 fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 12,301 to 12,354, while the infected cases went up by 8468 to trigger a jump in the infections from 5,71,018 to 5,79,486. While Pune accounted for a maximum 1,22,486 "active cases" in the state, Thane stood second with 86,732. **PTI**

Delhi's Chandni Chowk market to remain shut till April 25

New Delhi: Delhi's Chandni Chowk market will remain shut till April 25 in view of the exponential rise in Covid-19 cases, the traders association announced on Sunday.

The Delhi Kirana Committee of Khari Baoli Market and the Chemical Merchant Association of Tilak Bazaar also announced closure of markets till April 21.

"Today Chandni Chowk Sarv Vyapar Mandal in an emergency meeting with its members has decided to request its members to keep their establishment closed till April 25 in light of very serious condition of the virus spreading at a very large volumes. We will take a decision after assessing the condition on next Sunday," Chandni Chowk traders body president Sanjay Bhargava said in a statement.

"The most alarming aspect is the galloping positivity rate and shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, ventilators and medicines and other medical facilities in use of the epidemic," he added. **PTI**

Over 6K people vaccinated at crop mandis in Punjab

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

More than 6,000 people have been vaccinated against Covid-19 at 'mandis' in Punjab during the ongoing procurement of crops, according to an official statement on Sunday.

In addition to putting in place adequate Covid-19 protocols at the 154 mandis (wholesale markets), the state government has started special camps to inoculate all stakeholders and has so far vaccinated more than 6,000 eligible persons.

BJP, Cong lash at each other over oxygen tanker worship by MP Min

Indore: The ruling BJP and Congress on Sunday lashed out at each other after a video went viral of a state minister and his supporters breaking coconuts and a priest chanting prayers in front of a tanker transporting oxygen from neighbouring Gujarat.

A sharp spike in Covid-19 cases across MP has given rise to a reported shortage of medical oxygen.

In videos being circulated on social media, MP PWD minister Tulsiram Silawat and his supporters can be seen offering prayers in front of the tanker in Indore, and posing in

front of the vehicle for media photographs.

"When the tanker, which started from Jamnagar in Gujarat, reached Chandan Nagar Chowk on Saturday night, it was stopped for an hour by Silawat for puja path to quench their thirst for media coverage. They repeated the act when the vehicle reached a filling station," MP Congress spokesperson Neelabh Shukla alleged.

"They did this nautanki when there is an acute shortage of oxygen in hospitals and serious patients are gasping for breath," he added. **PTI**

NSA to be invoked against 3 held in UP for black-marketing of Remdesivir

Kanpur (UP): The stringent National Security Act (NSA) will be invoked against three people, including two medical representatives, who were arrested on Thursday for alleged black-marketing of Remdesivir injections amid a spike in Covid-19 infections.

Kanpur Police Commissioner Asim Arun said smuggling and selling of the drug required for COVID-19 treatment "is a crime against humanity. The decision to slap the stringent NSA against the accused persons has been taken." The formalities for slapping the NSA must be completed before the accused could seek bail from court, Arun said.

The three people were arrested here on Thursday for alleged black-marketing of Remdesivir injections. **PTI**

U'khand: 20 patients escape from Covid care centre

New Tehri: Hoodwinking the authorities, 20 patients escaped from a Covid care centre at Narendra Nagar here, officials said here on Sunday.

The matter came to light when doctors visited the wards at the centres on Saturday night for a regular check-up, Chief Medical Superintendent Niraj Rai said. Thirty-eight people were being treated there, of which 20 were found missing, said Chief Medical Officer Suman Arya. Two of those who escaped belonged to Uttarakhand while the rest were from outside the state, she said. **PTI**

Battling...

From page 1

In Mumbai, meanwhile, after a mid-night drama at the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) Police station in north-central Mumbai over the detention of a director of a pharmaceutical company for allegedly hoarding 60,000 Remdesivir vials, State Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil on Sunday indicated that the state the government might initiate action against leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis

and other BJP leaders for "interfering" in the investigations by the police.

Hours after a major controversy broke out over Fadnavis and other State BJP leaders' visit to the BKC Police station shortly before midnight ostensibly to "enquire" about the detention of the director of Bruck Pharma, the State Home Minister confirmed that he had taken cognizance of the incident at the police station and hinted at the possibility of initiating action against Fadnavis and other BJP.

Antibody...

From page 1

While seronegative study participants had a five times greater risk of infection than seropositive participants, the study showed that seropositive people are still at risk of reinfection.

The study population consisted of 3,249 predominantly male, 18-20-year-old Marine recruits who, upon arrival at a Marine-supervised two-week quarantine prior to entering basic training, were assessed for baseline SARS-CoV-2 IgG seropositivity.

After appropriate exclusions, including participants with a positive PCR during quarantine, the study team performed three bi-weekly PCR tests in both seronegative and seropositive groups once recruits left quarantine and entered basic training.

Recruits who tested positive for a new second COVID-19 infection during the study were isolated and the study team followed up with addi-

tional testing. Levels of neutralising antibodies were also taken from subsequently infected seropositive and selected seropositive participants who were not reinfected during the study period.

To understand why these reinfections occurred, the authors studied the reinfected and not infected participants' antibody responses.

They found that, among the seropositive group, participants who became reinfected had lower antibody levels against the SARS-CoV-2 virus than those who did not become reinfected. In addition, in the seropositive group, neutralising antibodies were less common (neutralising antibodies were detected in 45 (83%) of 54 uninfected, and in six (32%) of 19 reinfected participants during the six weeks of observation). In the study, most new Covid-19 cases were asymptomatic - 84% (16 out of 19 participants) in the seropositive group vs 68% (732 out of 1,079 participants) in the seronegative group - or had mild symptoms and none were hospitalised.

New symptoms...

From page 1

Many individuals have reported signs of fatigue and weakness before being tested positive for the virus while doctors have said that many individuals who have been tested positive for Covid-19 have been experiencing severe body, joint, and muscle pain.

The main reason for muscle and body aches is myalgia, which is a result of the coronavirus attacking important muscle fibres and tissue linings in your body. In some cases, patients are reporting extreme chills and unusual cold that could be a sign of virus infection. Fever and chills are common symptoms in the case of the mutant virus.

Also, nausea and vomiting are now being looked at as signs of Covid-19 infection in its early stages while many people have reported that they have been experiencing neurological symptoms of the Covid-19 infection like dizziness, fatigue, malaise, and nausea.

One of the faculty of genetic epidemiology at King's College London, Professor Tim

World's...

From page 1

The situation in Kerala has also become alarming as the Department of Health on Sunday diagnosed 18,257 persons with Covid-19. The State has 1.23 million Covid-19 patients as of Sunday evening, according to a press release issued by the Health Department of Kerala. The day also saw 25 persons succumbing to the pandemic taking the death toll to date to 4,929.

Details released by the State administration belied the claims made by Chief Minister and Health Minister that everything was under control in Kerala. "Today's data proves that the Government has lost control and direction of the preventive mechanism in the State. Since day one the Kerala Government failed to convince the people to regulate and alter the lifestyle to check the spread of the pandemic. Wearing masks and maintaining social distance alone would not prevent Covid 19," said Dr B Rajeev, a physician specializing in the Indian System of Medicine to control the pandemic.

A Government physician told The Pioneer that the health department was manipulating figures to suit the convenience of the political masters. "Though the release says Ernakulam district has 2,835 patients as on Sunday evening,

the district had registered more than 3,000 cases by 11 am itself," said the doctor.

Both Dr. Rajeev and the Government physicians were more bothered about the post-Covid syndrome which is expected to hit the people in the 15 to 45 age group. "They are the ones that sustain the nation. If they suffer any physiological changes because of Covid-29, we are in for major trouble, economically and socially," said both the doctors.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu too continued to test increased cases on Sunday. The State diagnosed 10,723 new cases on Sunday while 42 fatalities were registered in the State. The administration tightened the restrictions and regulations to take Covid-19 head-on. A release by the Government of Tamil Nadu said the entire State would be put under curfew from 10 pm to 4 am. No vehicles will be allowed during the curfew hours.

While Sundays would see total lockdown, tourism operations have been suspended fully in hill stations like Nilgiris, Kodaikkal and Yercaud. Only on-line classes are allowed in colleges and universities.

While the Government postponed the 12th Board Examination, parks, beaches, museums will remain out of bound for all till further orders.

After Assam trial...

From page 1

The appointment of Tiwari as AICC secretary for Uttar Pradesh recently is being seen as a step in this direction.

A senior Congress leader said the experiment of deputing a Chief Minister to oversee the poll campaign in another state has been a success. He attributed it to be the brainchild of former party chief Rahul Gandhi.

Congress came to power in Chhattisgarh in 2018 by defeating the Raman Singh-led BJP Government after 10 years. With its former stalwart Ajit Jogi out of its camp, Baghel emerged as the high command's choice for chief ministership piping others like TS Singh Deo to the post.

Assembly elections in UP are due in January 2022 and the Congress is planning to go all out in the State which has always played a major role in national politics for any political party. Ahead of the General elections 2019, Priyanka Gandhi came into the active politics of Congress and was handed over the charge of Uttar Pradesh by the then AICC chief Rahul Gandhi and their mother UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi. However, that

didn't improve the Congress' prospects.

Baghel's strategy to get Priyanka address meetings in Upper Assam to woo the tea growers is being seen as a very good move. Priyanka campaigned extensively in the north eastern State. Another strategy to announce Rs 2000 per month to support all home-makers too seemed to have worked well for the campaign, sources said.

Baghel and his team camped in Assam for over two months to oversee the poll preparations and he himself addressed several public meetings and conducted roadshows. Pockets where Rahul and Priyanka could not reach, Baghel dedicated more time and also ensured that the Central leaders are there to meet as many voters as they could.

"Rather than trumpeting through audio systems, Baghel's team ensured to communicate the Congress' agenda in person to voters and families. It was to counter the large popularity of Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his direct public connect in the NE States," said the senior leader.

Reserve 7K...

From page 1

Kejriwal said, "In the last 24 hours, approximately 25,500 cases of COVID have come up. Before that, we had around 24,000 cases and before that we had 19,500 cases. Currently, the cases are increasing rapidly. Another concern is that in the last 24 hours, the positivity rate has increased to 30 per cent. This is despite the fact that it was around 24 per cent the day before."

"We have noted that the number of available beds reserved for COVID is reducing at a fast rate in the city. A large number of patients are being admitted to hospitals and we are falling short of ICU beds. In Delhi, we are now left with less than 100 ICU beds. We are falling short of oxygen as well. Last night, a private hospital told us that the shortage was so severe that they just about managed to prevent a tragedy. We have been in touch with the Centre, and have asked for aid, which we are getting; and for that, we'd like to thank them," he said.

"The Delhi government will be able to create more than 6,000 oxygen beds in the next 2-3 days. There is a limit under which we can increase the number of ICU beds. It has been noted that maximum patients require high flow oxygen. Hence, we are trying to provide high flow oxygen in hospitals so that more such beds can be set up," he said.

The Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to the Centre for the 500 ICU beds set up by DRDO and stated that if this number were to increase to 1,000.

Rahul suspends WB rallies...

From page 1

Backing Rahul Gandhi, former Finance Minister P Chidambaram accusing Modi of showing "shocking callousness" by addressing rallies in West Bengal "instead of staying in Delhi" to handle the Covid pandemic situation.

"Thank you Prime Minister for sparing a little time for Covid amidst the urgent war to conquer WEST BENGAL and annex it to the BJP's empire," Chidambaram said on Twitter reacting to PM's urgent meeting to review COVID situation a day earlier.

In another tweet, Chidambaram said while "no vaccine" boards hang on the doors of most hospitals, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan claims that "there is no shortage in the supply of vaccines".

The former Union Minister alleged the Central Government which assumed all powers and authority failed to ensure adequate production and supply of COVID-19 vaccines. The spread of the infection can only be contained with massive vaccination, he noted. **PTI**

Let States define category of frontline workers for...

From page 1

"There are many things we must do to fight the epidemic but a big part of this effort must be ramping up the vaccination programme. I have some suggestions in this regard. In making them I want to emphasise that I am putting them forward for your kind consideration in a spirit of constructive cooperation in which I have always believed and acted upon," Singh

wrote. The former PM said the Government should indicate how the expected supply of the vaccine will be distributed across States based on a transparent formula. The Central Government could retain 10 per cent for distribution based on emergency needs, but other than that, States should have a clear signal of likely availability so that they can plan their

rollout, Singh suggested.

The former PM also said the States should be given some flexibility to define categories of frontline workers who can be vaccinated even if they are below 45 years of age. For example, States may want to designate school teachers, bus, three-wheeler and taxi drivers, municipal and panchayat staff possibly as frontline workers. They can then be vaccinated even if they are below 45, Singh wrote to Modi.

"In addition, I believe this is the time to invoke the compulsory licensing provisions in the law, so that a number of companies are able to produce the vaccines under a licence. This, I recall, had happened earlier in the case of medicines to deal with the HIV/AIDS disease. As far as Covid-19 is concerned, I have read that Israel has already invoked the compulsory licensing provision and there is an overwhelming case for India to do so as well quickly," the former PM said.

Stressing on several points, the former PM finally mentioned that currently, India has vaccinated only a small fraction of its population. "I am certain that with the right policy design, we can do much better and very quickly."

Singh concluded the letter hoping that the Government will "accept these suggestions immediately and act on them promptly."

Public Notice

I Anshu Bharti, S/o R.K. Bharti do hereby notify that W.E.F. 20/10/2016 I have retired from the Partnership Firm of M/S Softline Bar & Restaurants, G-19, 20 Community Centre, First Floor, Vikaspuri, New Delhi -110018 & hence not liable in any manner for the said firm. **Anshu Bharti**

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RO No. 296 Time Extension Notice-III Date: 17.04.2021

The dates of "e-Tender No 27-er/EE(G)/CPH/2020-21" Supply of Slip Ring complete with all accessories of 63 MVA, generator at Chibro Power House due to unavoidable circumstances invited by Executive Engineer (G) Chibro Power House is extended as follows.

Last date of submission of bid in the portal: 26-04-2021 up to 14:00
Last date of submission of hard copy: 27-04-2021 from 17:00 Hrs.
Date of opening of the bid Part-I on website: 29-04-2021 from 10:00
All other condition shall be same as previous. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"

EE (G), Chibro

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

FIGHT AGAINST CORONA

Centre, City Govt, MCDs must work together to contain surge: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The surge in Covid-19 cases can be contained only when the Centre, Delhi Government and Municipal Corporations work together, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in a high-level meeting held with the three commissioners and mayors of municipal corporations to discuss the Covid situation in the national Capital.

The Chief Minister appealed to all three MCDs to ensure more beds and also assured them to provide all the requisite support. Kejriwal said that the Delhi Government is preparing beds on a large scale in Yamuna Sports Complex and Commonwealth Game Village.

In the meeting that held over video conferencing at the Delhi Secretariat, he requested all three MCDs to give maximum medical infrastructure and manpower so that we can use them properly.

In the meeting, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Health Minister Satyendar Jain and Delhi chief secretary were also present.

"We were handling estimated 100-150 corona positive cases per day until mid-March. However, the report that was released yesterday disclosed about 24,000 cases per day within 24hrs. The number 24,000 is an extremely overwhelming one irrespective of how efficient the system is. For the world and the country, this may be the 2nd wave, but for Delhi, this is our 4th wave. The first wave was in June last year, the second wave was in September, the third wave in November and now the fourth wave in 2021," he said.

He said, "Even when the first wave had hit us, I had said that this is such a huge crisis, no government, no party, no state, no one single institution could imagine tackling it on its own. We have to come together

and pool in all our resources to overcome it. In the first wave itself, the coordination between the Centre, the Delhi government and the MCD were brilliant."

"We were able to set aside our differences and work effectively for the people of Delhi. Even today, we have the full support of the Centre and while this is the first official meeting with the three Commissioners of the Municipal Corporations of Delhi and the Mayors, we have been conducting regular officer level meetings for coordination of efforts. The aim of the three governments is the same, to save the lives of the people and control the pandemic," he said.

"The cases are increasing at fast pace and beds are limited. It is natural that if such big numbers continue to ping in a time might come when beds will not be available. If such pace continues then within the next 2-3 days, we will be facing a shortage of beds. A shortage in other facilities will also be there. In a way, this situation is a race against time. If within the next 2-3 days, the situation improves then we will be able to manage," he said.

However, if it continues to deteriorate in this manner then it will become very difficult for us to cope, he said. "The health system will reach a point of collapse where beds, oxygen and ventilators will not be able to cope with the overwhelming demand of the situation," he added.

Kejriwal further said, "I would like to thank the three MCD Commissioners for offering their services wholeheartedly and more importantly for the way the MCD has handled crematoriums.

Standing Committee Chairperson in North MCD Jay Prakash informed to arrange for 400 beds and South Corporation's Mayor Anamika

Acute shortage of oxygen in city: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that Delhi is battling an acute shortage of oxygen as it fights to check the spread of Covid-19 disease. In a tweet, he declared that oxygen has become an emergency in the national Capital.

"Del facing acute shortage of oxygen. In view of sharply increasing cases, Del needs much more than normal supply. Rather than increasing supply, our normal supply has been sharply reduced and Delhi's quota has been diverted to other states. OXYGEN HAS BECOME AN EMERGENCY IN DEL," Kejriwal tweeted.

He said the current number of fresh cases is extremely overwhelming compared to mid-March when 100-150 covid-19 cases were being reported daily. "If this pace continues then within the next two to three days, we will face a shortage of beds and other facilities," he said. He also urged Indian Railways to arrange up to 5,000 beds in view of the rising cases. In his response, Northern Railways deployed 50isolation coaches, each having two oxygen cylinders, at ShakurBasti railway station and 25 facilities will be placed at Anand Vihar by Monday.

has also made available the Poonima Sethi Multi Speciality Hospital.

"We are right now preparing beds in Yamuna complex in the commonwealth village but need doctors and nurses to monitor patients. If MCDs is able to spare its medical staff for the next 20-25 days and help us overcome this wave, it would be a great help," he said.

CM writes to Piyush Goyal for regular supply of 700 MT/day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an emergency situation in Delhi, when beds and oxygen to Covid-19 patients emerged as a challenge, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal for ensuring uninterrupted supply of 700 MT supply of oxygen on daily basis and restoration of supply of 140 MT of oxygen by M/S INOX to Delhi for effectively management the Covid-19 situation.

In his letter to Goyal, CM Kejriwal wrote national Capital Territory Of Delhi has witnessed a very sharp increase in COVID-19 cases leading to a very large number of serious patients getting admitted to various private and Government hospitals. This has led to a huge jump in demand for medical oxygen. On the basis of standard formula prescribed by Govt. of India, a minimum requirement of 700 MT of Oxygen has been projected to your Ministry.

"The same was communicated to the Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Promotion of

Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, vide letter dated 17/04/2021. A quick response in the matter is still awaited. Further, the output of M/s INOX, one of the major suppliers to various hospitals of Delhi, has been largely diverted to other States. At this critical juncture, it will not be possible for hospitals to enter into the contractual arrangements with the new suppliers who have now been assigned to Delhi. This disruption is already starting to cause critical shortage across major hospitals," the letter stated.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Satyendar Jain along with Nodal Officer Manish Sisodia visited DRDO facility to take a stock on corona bed management there.

"To tackle the Covid situation in Delhi, hospital beds for Covid-19 under continuous escalation, "979 normal oxygen supported Covid beds have been added. Additional 219 ICU beds with ventilators and 696 ICU beds without ventilators have been increased," he tweeted with DGHS order mentioning the names of hospitals.

Railways fully geared up to transport Liquid Medical Oxygen, O2 cylinders

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railways is fully geared up to transport Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) and oxygen cylinders across the key corridors.

Considering that the availability of oxygen is a key element in the treatment of certain medical conditions in the Covid infection, Railways immediately explored the technical feasibility of transportation of LMO. LMO has to be transported through 'Roll On Roll Off' (RO RO) service with road tankers placed on flat wagons.

It may be noted that Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra state governments had approached Ministry of Railways to explore whether Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) tankers could be moved by Railways.

Due to restrictions of height of Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and Over Head Equipment (OHE) at certain locations, out of the various specifications of road tankers, the model of road tanker T 1618 with height of 3320 mm was found feasible to be placed on flat wagons (DBKM) with height of 1290 mm, the railways said in a statement.



In order to ensure that all parameters of transportation are tested, trials were conducted at various locations. "This DBKM wagon was placed at Kalamboli goods shed in Mumbai on April 15 and a T 1618 tanker loaded with LMO was also brought here. Joint measurements were taken by representatives of Industry and Railways," he said.

In order to enable commercial booking and freight payment for RO RO movement of LMO in cryogenic tankers, Ministry of Railways has brought out a circular on April 16 providing all the necessary details and guidance on the matter.

On April 17, a meeting was held between Railway Board officials along with State Transport Commissioners and representatives of industry on the subject of "Issues related to transportation of Liquid Medical Oxygen."

It was decided that the tankers would be organized by Transport Commissioner,

Maharashtra. These empty tankers would be moved from Kalamboli/Boisar, Railway stations in and near Mumbai, and sent to Vizag and Jamshedpur/Rourkela/Bokaro, for loading of liquid medical oxygen tankers from there.

In pursuance of the above decision, instructions have been issued to Zonal Railways to ensure readiness to receive the trailers and load them back. Ramps have to be built at Vizag, Angul and Bhalai and the existing ramp at Kalamboli is to be strengthened. The Kalamboli ramp would be made ready by April 19. On April 18, a trial was organised at Boisar (Western Railway) where a loaded tanker was placed on a flat DBKM and all the required measurements were taken.

Railways have already placed DBKM wagons at Kalamboli and at other locations in expectation of movement of tankers to various locations. Railways are awaiting advice from Maharashtra to move the tankers.

Tentatively a movement plan has been made for dispatching 10 empty tankers on April 19. Transport Secretary (Maharashtra) has assured to provide the tankers, it said.

Gurugram's deaths toll due to Covid-19 reaches 378

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM :

Haryana reported 2,401 fresh Covid-19 cases on Sunday, with two more deaths. The death toll due to Covid-19 in Gurugram has now reached 378, health officials said on Sunday.

Gurugram, which has the highest number of coronavirus deaths among other districts in Haryana now have 81,725 patients out of which 69,151 have recuperated from their illness.

Gurugram now has 12,196 active cases and 11,423 of them are in home isolation, officials added.

The health department said out of 378 deaths 291 died due to comorbidities and the remaining 87 without comorbidities.

Virender Yadav, Civil

Surgeon of Gurugram, said that the administration has intensified contact tracing in containment zones.

"Covid testing has been increased in the district to prevent the spread of corona infection. The department is sampling more than 10,000 tests a day. This includes both types-Rapid Antigen Test and RTPCR Test. Those patients have been done on propriety. Patients are being treated based on their symptoms," Yadav said.

"We have initiated door to door screening in these zones to identify suspects. We are using the rapid antigen kit to test suspects," he said.

"We are offering free of charge tests in the city and have also appealed to residents who are having symptoms to reach these centres for testing," he added.

Winning elections, collecting votes BJP's only concern, says AAP Min

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the Centre of focusing on winning elections instead of controlling Covid-19, senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Leader and MLA from Rajinder Nagar Constituency of Delhi Raghav Chadha said on Sunday that the BJP is evidently preaching the slogan-"Na Doori Na Davai, Bas Vote Ke Liye Dhillai hi Dhillai".

Highlighting the worrisome Covid-19 situation, Chadha mentioned that while India has breached the two lakh mark the BJP is focussing on conducting gigantic rallies with huge crowds in West Bengal.

"Winning elections and collecting votes is their sole motive and the BJP has nothing to do with the people of India and their lives," he said. He also claimed that In West Bengal, the BJP is promising a 'double-engine sarkaar' while not giving even a 'single engine'

to COVID management.

Chadha further said that the Delhi government is working relentlessly round-the-clock to contain the outbreak of covid-19 and putting our own lives at risk to save the lives of people of Delhi and their families too. All our party workers, MLAs, and the entire government are shedding its blood and sweat to fight the pandemic. However, an extremely grim and disappointing picture is also being witnessed amongst us, he said.

"While on one hand the pandemic has claimed thousands of lives is infecting lakhs of people each day on the other hand, in the assembly elections of West Bengal and Assam, the BJP under the leadership of Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is busy conducting gigantic rallies and road-shows that could be potential super-spreader events with their massive crowds," he said.

"With the pace at which people are contracting the virus and mortality ratio increasing each day, the speed with which the BJP is campaigning in these states has also been on an ever-increasing momentum. The star-campaigners, including PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have been rapidly campaigning and electioneering non-stop," he added.

"The BJP must stand together with the people of India in fighting the pandemic. The way in which these crowds are emerging in rallies and road-shows which are a contributor to super-spreader events is extremely disappointing. This poses greater questions in the minds of people: is the BJP-led centre not concerned even a little bit about the lives of people of India? The pace at which people are contracting the virus is directly proportional to the speed at which these rallies by the BJP are increasing," he added.

Fire station to come up at Sector-92 in Manesar

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM :

Along pending demand for the construction of a fire station under the newly formed Municipal Corporation of Manesar (MCM) has been approved in the board meeting recently chaired by the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

With this development, the preparations to establish a new fire station has been started by the fire officials. Once established it will benefit nearby sectors to facilitate as the fire ten-

ders will be able to reach the spot as soon as possible in case of fire incidents.

For this project, The Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) will give two and a half acres of land for setting up the fire station. At present, Fire tenders go from Gurugram in connection with fire incident in this area so far. In such a situation, they are not able to reach on time.

Due to which many times there is a lot of damage from fire. The establishment of a fire

station in Manesar will also benefit the people from the surrounding 81 to 92 sectors. Not only this, there will also be benefits in Pataudi and Farrukh Nagar area.

"There are four fire stations in the city which are located at Sector-29, Udyog Vihar, Bhimnagar and Sector-37. With the construction of fire stations in Sector-92, fire incidents in new sectors and nearby villages and warehouses will be controlled timely," Isham Singh Kashyap, Assistant Divisional Fire Officer said..

Amid Covid, AAP indulging in petty politics: Delhi BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Adesh Gupta on Sunday said that in Covid crisis era the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is indulging in petty letter and allegation politics against Centre.

"Today when Centre is supporting all States its regretful that AAP is indulging in petty political allegation game to divert attention from its failures," Gupta said.

People of Delhi very well know that the three biggest

Central Government hospitals AIIMS, Safdarjung and RML are the city's biggest support banks and by setting up a huge temporary hospital near Chatarpur through DRDO in a record 4 days Centre has contributed to its might.

Gupta has said this is no time for politics but people today realise that during the last 3 months when Covid crisis had subsided, the Kejriwal Government instead of concentrating on developing health infrastructure wasted time on new Liquor policy.

954 challaned by SDMC in last 3 days for violating Covid protocols

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has issued 954 challans in the last three days for violating Covid-19 protocol.

SDMC Mayor Anamika said that the civic body has taken various important steps to contain the spread of Coronavirus. "Stern action is being taken against those not following Covid related guidelines. Challans are being slapped for not maintaining social physical distancing and not wearing masks," she said.

Anamika further said that the SDMC during the weekend curfew has intensified its sanitization drive and has sanitized nearly 2,000 places including public places, markets, bus stops/stands, banks premises, hospitals, health centres/units, police stations, vacant lands, etc. The drive was carried out with the help of Safai Sainiks, field staff and other front line workers.

"The corporation has already started lifting bio-medical waste from the homes of positive patients. Dozens of auto tippers have been deployed in all wards for this purpose. To remove the bio-medical waste, the Civic Agency has also issued helpline numbers for each zone," she said..

Member of fake Indian currency note syndicate held near Anand Vihar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested a 29-year-old man, alleged to be a key member of a Malda based fake Indian currency note syndicate, near Delhi's Anand Vihar railway station.

The accused identified as Abdul Rahim, a resident of West Bengal's Malda has been smuggling Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICNs) from Bangladesh for long time.

According to Sanjeev Kumar Yadav, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Special Cell since the last few months, they had been receiving information about the Malda based syndicates, involved in smuggling of FICNs through Indo-Bangladesh border, to Delhi and adjoining states.

"Based on a specific input, a trap was laid and our team nabbed Abdul Rahim from near Anand Vihar railway station on April 16, where he was waiting to deliver a huge consignment of FICNs to his Delhi based contact. On cursory search of his bag, FICNs of face value worth Rs. eight lakhs in the denomination of Rs.2000 and Rs.500 were recovered and seized from his possession," said the DCP.

Interrogation revealed that in 2018, while working as mason at a person named

Nasruddin's house, he offered him to deliver fake Indian currency notes to make easy money. He initially earned Rs. 3,000 per delivery, he said.

"Nasruddin used to collect FICNs from suppliers based near Indo-Bangladesh border, who smuggled FICN from Bangladesh through cross-border smugglers. After some time, Rahim also accompanied Nasruddin to collect FICN from the Indo-Bangladesh border based suppliers. They both collected several consignments of FICN from there and further supplied to their associates based in different parts of India during past three years. For past some months, Rahim was getting Rs. One lakh of FICN as his share on delivery of Rs. eight Lakhs or more to their different contacts," said the DCP.

During his visit to Bangladesh, Rahim also came in contact with one Tiku and started smuggling FICNs from him, he said. During lockdown period, Nasruddin, Rahim and the members of their network could not smuggle FICNs but after the lockdown was over, Rahim and Nasruddin collected huge amount of FICN and supplied to their different contacts with the help of their contacts in Bihar, UP and other parts of India, the DCP added.

City cops provide oxygen cylinders to hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Displaying a humane face during the weekend curfew, the Delhi Police helped several needy across the national Capital. On Sunday afternoon, Delhi Police personnel provided 20 oxygen cylinders to a hospital where 35 covid patients are admitted. The hospital was running low on oxygen cylinders.

"Around 1.30 pm, a distress call was received from Mansa Ram Hospital in Nangloi in Outer district where 35 covid patients are admitted. The caller stated that their oxygen supply has run out and the existing stock won't last for more than an hour. The Hospital had tried all their sources but oxygen cylinders were not available," said



Chinmoy Biswal, the Public Relation Officer (PRO) of Delhi Police.

"In this momentous anxious situation, the outer district police team under coordinated with several places to get the cylinders. Two teams of Nihal Vihar police stations immediately rushed to Mundka and Bawana to arrange Oxygen

cylinders from suppliers. SHO of Nihal Vihar police station was tasked to coordinate with supplier at Bawana facility who stated that there is scarcity of oxygen cylinders due to the ongoing pandemic," said the PRO.

"However, the supplier was requested to provide at least 10 Oxygen cylinders immediately and 10 more after half an hour. He considered the request and provided 20 oxygen gas cylinders immediately," said Biswal.

"The police team from Nihal Vihar police station escorted the vehicle carrying 20 Oxygen cylinders to Mansa Ram hospital and delivered to the hospital in the nick of time, in a timely demonstration of Delhi Police as #DilKiPolice," said Biswal.

In another instance, police action went beyond the boundaries of Delhi when SHO Bharat Nagar Mohar Singh provided the most needed medicine Remidisvir injection to an elderly patient Bhopal.

"It came to the notice of Inspector Mohar Singh Meena that one covid patient Karan Singh (67) was admitted in ICU of Silver Line hospital, Bhopal. Doctors prescribed that he is in dire need of Remidisvir injection. During this emergency situation, they tried everywhere but to no avail. Then, Singh got arranged 5 vials of Remidisvir injection and immediately got it airlifted to Bhopal. The condition of the patient is now stable," said Biswal.

In North district, for an old sick woman, the police pro-

vided medical help and got her treatment through a professional doctor. "On Sunday afternoon at around 12:00 PM, one person Mohammad Vakil, who along with his wife Samina Khatoun works as labourers in Red Fort parking lot, came to police," said Biswal.

"He informed that his wife was not well and need help. The couple has been living in a cluster behind Red Fort for the last 14 - 15 years. Immediately, Constable, Than Singh visited his Jhuggi. His wife was feeling weak and suffocated inside the Jhuggi. She was shifted to an open area and a doctor was called by the police team, who gave her treatment. The doctor told them that the woman did not have any COVID-19 symptoms but she was very weak," said Biswal.



Red Fort wears a deserted look during weekend lockdown on Sunday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

PSUs told to spare hosp beds for Covid patients



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of shortage of beds reported from some States, the Centre has written to all Central Ministries and public sector undertakings (PSU) to dedicate their hospital beds for Covid-19 management in States/Union Territories (UTs). According to the Health Ministry, the dedicated hospital wards/blocks have to be equipped with supportive/ancillary services including oxygen supported beds, ICU beds, ventilators, specialised CCUs (wherever available), lab/imaging services, kitchen etc., with a dedicated health workforce. These hospitals/blocks should have separate entry and exit points for the management of Covid-19 cases, to provide treatment services including specialised care for the con-

firmed cases. In a letter to the Ministries, the Union Health Secretary has said that the surge in Covid-19 cases across the country calls for similar supportive action as last year from all such Central Ministries or departments and their PSUs and hospitals under their control. The Central Ministries have also been advised that details of such dedicated hospital wards or blocks should be provided to the public, duly coordinating with the respective health departments of State and UTs and the district health administration of States and districts wherever these hospitals are located. It has further been suggested that a nodal officer may be nominated from the ministry or department for necessary coordination with respective States and UTs and their

contact details be shared with States and UTs as well as the Union Health Ministry. Many States and UTs across the country have been reporting a surge since the past few weeks in the cases and deaths caused by COVID-19, the ministry said. The move comes as India battles a massive surge in coronavirus cases. The active number of cases in the country stands at 18,01,316. In the last 24 hours with 1,38,423 people having recovered from the disease. With this, the total recoveries reached 1,28,09,643. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 15,66,394 samples were tested on Saturday. And, as many as 26,65,38,416 samples have been tested across the country till April 17. The cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country stands at 12,26,22,590 till today.

162 Pressure Swing Adsorption plants OK'd to raise oxygen capacity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least, 162 Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants have been sanctioned for installation in public health facilities in all States to augment the medical oxygen capacity by over 154 Metric Tonnes, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

In a series of tweets, the Ministry said, out of 162 PSA plants sanctioned by the Centre, 33 have already been installed of which five are in Madhya Pradesh, four in Himachal Pradesh, three each in Chandigarh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand, two each in Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana and one each in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

The Ministry further said that in addition to 162 plants already sanctioned, the States have requested the Centre for more than 100 such additional plants which are also being sanctioned. Out of 162 PSA Oxygen plants, 33 have been installed.

By the end of this month, 59 will be installed and by the end of next month 80 will be installed. The Ministry said, the entire cost of 162 PSA Oxygen plants amounting to over 201 crore rupees has been borne by the Central Government.

The PSA plants manufacture oxygen and help hospitals



become self-sufficient in their requirement for medical oxygen, while also reducing the burden on the national grid for its supply of medical oxygen.

A total of 162 PSA oxygen plants have been sanctioned by the Government for installation in public health facilities in all states, the Ministry tweeted. "These will augment medical oxygen capacity by 154.19 MT."

"The entire cost of 162 PSA oxygen plants amounting to ₹201.58 crore has been borne by the central government. This also includes a 7-year maintenance cost to start from 4th year onwards after three years of warranty," the ministry said in a series of tweets.

India reported a record 2,61,500 new coronavirus cases and 1,501 deaths on Sunday, while active cases have surpassed the 18-lakh mark, the Ministry data stated.

Earlier, the ministry had decided to float a tender for import of 50,000 MT of medical oxygen. It has been directed to finalise the tender for the same and also explore possible sources for import identified by the missions of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Modi reviews Covid-19 status in his constituency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday turned his attention to his home constituency. He reviewed the Covid-19 situation in Varanasi through video conferencing and sought rapid vaccination of all above the age of 45 in the district.

The Prime Minister said the expansion and modernisation of medical infrastructure and facilities in Varanasi in the last 5 to 6 years have helped the city cope with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The holy city has been witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases like other major cities of Uttar Pradesh. On Saturday, Varanasi accounted for 1,664 of the 27,357 infections reported in Uttar Pradesh.

According to a statement issued by the PMO, during the meeting with the top officials of district administration, health department and area MLA, MLC and other public representatives, the Prime Minister was apprised about testing, the availability of beds, medicines, vaccines, and manpower, etc. for the prevention of coronavirus and proper treatment of infected patients.

Modi directed the officers to provide all possible assistance to the public at the earliest, said the statement.

The Prime Minister, during the meeting, specifically stressed upon adherence to "Do Gaj Doori Mask Hai Zaroori" by all the people.

over the virus. He also stressed on making contact tracing and test reports of infected persons available at the earliest. Modi asked the officials to discharge all the responsibilities towards patients living in home isolation and their families in a sensitive manner. Lauding the role played by Varanasi NGOs, the prime minister said that the way they worked with the government should be encouraged.

Modi said there was a need for greater vigilance and caution in view of the situation. Public representatives and officials of Varanasi informed the Prime Minister about the preparations made in the district for the protection and treatment of COVID-19, according to the statement.

The Prime Minister was informed about the control room set up for contact tracing, command and control centre for home isolation, dedicated phone line ambulance, telemedicine arrangement from the control room and deployment of the additional rapid response team in urban areas, said the statement.

Amid a rise in the number of Covid cases, the Varanasi district administration has made it mandatory to present a negative RT-PCR test report for people coming to three prominent temples - Vishwanath Temple, Sankatmochan Temple, and Annapurna Temple - in the city.

West Bengal Poll: 2 candidates face EC's 24-hour campaign ban

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Sunday imposed a 24-hour campaign ban on two candidates - one each from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP. The ban on campaigning by the leaders will be in force from 7 PM on April 18 to 7 PM on April 19.

The EC banned TMC candidate Sujata Mondal for her "SC voters are beggars" comment. Mondal is BJP MP Saumitra Khan's wife.

The Election Commission had earlier served a notice to Mondal after they received a complaint from a BJP delegation, which had accused Mondal of making the comment during an interview to a news channel.

Mondal was asked to explain her comment to the EC. The EC observed that Mondal violated the Model Code of Conduct with her statement denigrating the Scheduled Caste community in West Bengal and could



have caused tensions between different communities in the state.

"The Commission hereby sternly warns Sujata Mondal and advises her to desist from using such statement while making public utterances during the period when Model Code of Conduct is in force," the EC's ban order stated.

In her defence, Mondal had asserted that she had made the contentious statements in good faith and denied violating the MCC. EC's action was based on a

complaint by Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi.

TMC has fielded Mondal from the Arambagh assembly constituency. Mondal had joined the TMC in December 2020.

The EC also imposed a ban on BJP Bengal general secretary and party candidate Sayantan Basu from campaigning for 24 hours for his comment in connection with the Sitalkuchi incident.

The electoral watchdog had issued showcause notice to Basu for his "inflammato-



ry statement" while addressing a public rally in Bengal. Basu had expressed regret for his remarks and submitted that he had never intended to make any statement contravening the MCC.

Basu was alleged to have said: "Don't play the game too much, we will play the game of Sitalkuchi. If you kill one, we will kill four of you. Sitalkuchi has witnessed it."

The Commission has carefully considered his reply and is of the considered view that he has violated the 'General Conduct of Model Code of Conduct for the Guidance of Political Parties and Candidates' and made highly provocative remarks which could have a very serious consequence on the general maintenance of Law and Order thereby adversely affecting the election process, the EC said in its order imposing a 24-hour ban on Basu.

Five persons were killed in Sitalkuchi in firing by the CISE, which alleged the mob had attacked the force. Politics has since been in full play over the deaths.

Ban supply of oxygen for industrial purpose: Home Secy to States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Sunday has written to Chief Secretaries of States and Administrators of Union Territories reiterating that they should issue necessary instructions to all authorities concerned in their States and Union Territories to take necessary measures to prohibit supply of oxygen for industrial purpose, except in nine industries as allowed by Union Health Ministry.

"This is keeping in view the rapid rise in Covid-19 cases in various parts of the country and the resultant rapid demand for medical oxygen, particularly in high-burden States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, etc.

"The letter of the Union Home Secretary follows the

Nine industries have been excluded from order

decision taken by the Central Government today, on the recommendations of the Empowered Group-II, that the supply of oxygen for industrial purposes by manufacturers and suppliers is prohibited (except in nine industries) forthwith from 22.04.2021 till further orders, so as to augment supply for medical oxygen in the country and to save precious lives," said Home Ministry in a statement.

The nine sectors allowed for industrial oxygen production are medical, pharma, petro, nuclear, steel and food and water purification sectors. Union Health Ministry wrote a separate letter to the States on this regard on Sunday on the exemption of sectors in industrial oxygen production.

CBI busts recruitment racket, seizes ₹35 lakh in cash

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Sunday busted a recruitment racket allegedly involving public servants of Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) in collusion with private persons, who manipulated and influenced the members of Interview Board for ensuring qualification of certain candidates in Oral Examination in lieu of huge amount of bribery and recovered bribe amount of ₹35 lakh in cash in a trap operation.

The agency also conducted searches at 12 locations including Lakhisarai, Dhanbad, Ranchi, Nagpur, Udaipur, Shahdol, Hyderabad, Bilaspur which led to recovery of incriminating documents and articles.

The CBI has registered a case against Deputy Director General (Central Zone), DGMS, Head Office, Dhanbad, Arvind Kumar; two private persons—Kailash Mandal and Triloki Nath Singh besides other unknown persons on the allegations that Kumar along with the accused private persons and others had entered

into conspiracy for showing undue favours to some of the candidates appearing for the oral examination after qualifying Computer Based Examinations for Managers, Certificate of Competency (Restricted & Unrestricted), conducted by DGMS. They also allegedly manipulated and influenced the members of interview board for qualifying such candidates in lieu of huge amount of illegal gratification.

The Oral Examination was conducted by DGMS between March 8 and March 20, 2021.

"It was further alleged that the Dy. Director General (Central Zone) had got 48 candidates qualified in the said interview who were referred to him by the said private person," the CBI said in a statement.

For each such candidate, Kumar allegedly agreed to accept an amount of Rs 1.5 Lakh, totaling to Rs 72 lakh, it said.

It was alleged that the said amount was to be delivered in two instalments to another private person (relative of Kumar), at Lakhisarai (Bihar), it further said.

'Physically conceal LAN, other cables in ATM premises to stop fraud'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid an emerging trend of ATM frauds, the security agencies have advised the banks to bolster security measures like physically concealing of LAN and other cables in the ATM premises as also ensure proper encryption of the network and the messages relayed by the ATM switch or backend authorisation machines for banking transactions.

This comes amid increasing incidents of Man in the Middle

(MiTM) attacks on ATMs wherein the fraudsters seek to infiltrate the computer networks of the ATM, compromise it and withdraw cash fraudulently.

The advisory has warned that the MiTM attacks have been increasing under which messages sent by "ATM Switch" to "ATM Host" are altered by attackers to withdraw cash fraudulently.

Security agencies have discovered that cyber fraud gangs are adopting the new modus

operandi to withdraw money from ATMs, sources said.

As per the latest trend, the fraudsters first tamper with the Internet network (LAN) cable of the ATM. ATM cards are then inserted in the cash dispensing machine and "payment declined" messages from ATM Switch are altered to "successful cash withdrawal transactions" and subsequently cash is withdrawn from the machines.

Such attackers first insert a device between the ATM

machine and the router or data switch in the ATM premises.

This device has the capability to modify the responses from the authorization host (ATM Switch) which is connected to the ATM through LAN. The fraudster then uses restricted cards (or blocked cards) to submit a withdrawal request.

When the "ATM Switch" sends a declined message, the attacker, through the device inserted by him in the network, alters the response to approve the transaction and cash is withdrawn successfully, the sources said.

In view of this threat, the agencies have advised the banks to ensure end-to-end encryption in the communication network from the "ATM Terminal" or the computer and the "ATM Switch" which authorises the transaction from the backend, they said.

The banks have been advised to physically secure the network cables, input/output port within the ATM premises.

The Reserve Bank of India has also issued a similar advisory following the security agencies' alert.

According to the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), as many as 1,59,761 cyber security incidents relating to digital banking were reported in 2018 followed by 2,46,514 incidents in 2019 and 2,90,445 cases in 2020.

Nadda asks BJP members to start campaign to rid their booth of Covid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda on Sunday asked party functionaries to launch "apna booth corona mukt" (Our booth is free of corona) campaign amid a huge surge in the COVID-19 cases across the country.

Addressing BJP's national office-bearers and its state unit chiefs in a virtual meeting, Nadda asked state units to set up help desks and put out a helpline number for the people.

They should take measures to help COVID patients admitted in hospitals, he said.

According to a party statement, he said BJP members should distribute masks and sanitisers and also coordinate with local administration to launch campaign for plasma donation.

Party units should also launch preventive measures like cleanliness drive and campaign to raise awareness in people about following COVID-19 guidelines. Nadda said party members across the country should undertake these measures to help curb the pandemic.

Think about consequences of holding large public rallies: Rahul to parties



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday cancelled all his public rallies in poll-bound West Bengal following a rapid rise in COVID-19 cases in the country.

He also advised all other politicians to think about the consequences of holding large public rallies.

"In view of the Covid situation, I am suspending all my public rallies in West Bengal. I would advise all political leaders to think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances," he said on Twitter.

The Congress has been critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home

Minister Amit Shah for holding political rallies amid the rise in coronavirus cases in the country.

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram has accused the prime minister of shocking callousness in holding big political rallies in poll-bound Bengal amid the rise in COVID-19 cases.

He said the Prime Minister should be at his job, sitting at his desk and coordinating with chief ministers in handling the Covid pandemic.

Prime Minister Modi has been addressing public rallies in West Bengal for the eighth phase assembly elections in the state.

India has been witnessing a massive surge in coronavirus cases.

A record single-day rise of 2,61,500 coronavirus infections has taken the country's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,47,88,109, while active cases surpassed the 18-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

Chidambaram's dig at Modi for sparing time from Bengal to review Covid



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, thanking him for sparing "a little time" amidst the "urgent war to conquer West Bengal", to review the coronavirus situation in the country.

He also criticised the prime minister for his "Didi-O-Didi" remark, asking if this is the manner in which the prime minister should refer to a chief minister.

"Thank you Prime Minister for sparing a little time for Covid amidst the urgent war to conquer WEST BENGAL and annex it to the BJP's empire," Chidambaram said on Twitter.

His remarks came after Modi chaired a Covid-19 review meeting with government officials on Saturday.

Didi: Modi must resign for mishandling Covid situation

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In tandem with writing a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking express assistance in handling the rising corona cases in Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday demanded his resignation for preferring election rallies over pandemic management.

"Narendra Modi must resign as the Prime Minister for mishandling the COVID-19 situation," Banerjee said, holding him primarily "responsible for the present situation" because "he did not make any administrative planning for 2021."

Pointing towards the "terrifying situation" in Gujarat she said "the BJP has failed to handle the pandemic in Gujarat ... and now they have spread this to the entire country including Bengal."

Accusing the Prime

Minister of exporting vaccines to 80 countries, Banerjee said, "we have no problem if you help others, but first give it to Maharashtra, UP, Bengal, and other states. But you ignored that duty," which implied that "you are only concerned about your image-building exercise across the world."

Later in a press briefing her senior Cabinet colleague Bratya Basu too said that the official view of the Trinamool Congress was that the Prime Minister had "betrayed the Indians" alleging he exported corona vaccine out of India when there was a shortage of the medicine in the country. "Instead of addressing election rallies in Bengal the Prime Minister should have stayed put in Delhi," monitoring and streamlining the situation, he said.

The attack notwithstanding Banerjee on Sunday wrote an express letter to the Prime

Minister seeking urgent help to fight the pandemic situation.

The medical urgency expressed in the letter seemed to bear political underpinnings even as the Chief Minister requested "your urgent intervention to ensure that the State gets its requirement of vaccine doses fulfilled at the earliest," considering a sharp rise in corona cases in particularly view of "coming of large number of outsiders to the State for election campaign and other purposes at the behest of some political parties."

Banerjee had been accusing Modi and Amit Shah of "brining large number of 'outsiders' for election campaign without knowing whether they were carrying the disease or not, thereby putting the lives of the people in danger."

Banerjee who referred to her previous letter written in February seeking permission -

Mamata says PM responsible for present Covid situation in country

-- that the Centre would not give --- to purchase vaccines directly, wrote in Sunday's letter that Bengal needed 5.4 crores vaccines, 6,000 vials of Remdesivir and other drugs.

"We need around 6,000 vials of Remdesivir and 1,000 vials of Tocilizumab daily. However, at present only 1,000 vials of Remdesivir is available daily and no fresh supply of Tocilizumab is coming," she wrote requesting the Prime Minister to instruct SAIL a public sector undertaking to ensure a steady supply of medical oxygen too.

Daily of rate Bengal's corona cases have gone up from a few hundred the last fortnight to about 10,000 per day with the State Health Department on Sunday complaining of shortage of hospital beds and instructing the health facilities to admit only seriously infected patients and send the rest to "safe homes."

BJP will win 122 of 180 seats that went to polls, says Shah

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was a demoralised person today as she knew that she was going out of power and that the BJP was winning with huge margin.

Addressing a huge rally at Burdwan East Shah said asserted that out of 180 seats that went to polls in the first five phases till Saturday the BJP was sure to win 122.

"Didi looks demoralized these days as she knows the outcome of the elections ... she knows that she is losing," Shah said advising the Chief Minister to "please do not get angry and please remain cool as you have to walk back home after May 2" when the result would come out.

Referring to the polling in high-profile Nandigram seat Shah said that BJP nominee and former lieutenant of the Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari would win from that seat. "Take

it from me, Suwendu Adhikari will win the elections from Nandigram," he said.

Taking a dig at the Chief Minister for campaigning in the elections with a plastered leg -- following an alleged fracture that she received while campaigning at Nandigram on March 10 --- Shah urged "Didi please make sure that your plaster comes out by May 2 when the result comes out so that you can walk up to the Governor's house on your own to tender your resignation."

The BJP had been of the view that the Chief Minister was making a mountain of a mole hill insofar as her leg injury was concerned so that she could derive sympathy votes.

Meanwhile post-poll violence continued in various parts of the State with on BJP booth president Dilip Kirtaniya being murdered by alleged Trinamool Congress goons at Simurali in Nadia district.

The angry BJP supporters blocked NH 34 and the Railway

route demanding immediate arrest of the accused Dulal and Dilip Mondal local TMC leaders who had allegedly threatened the victim with dire consequences for resisting the Trinamool bid to capture the booth on Saturday's fifth phase polling. The BJP later gheraoed Chakdaha police station. The accused had yet to be arrested.

Elsewhere, BJP and TMC workers fought a pitched battle at Lakhimpur Maath at Burdwan where many houses of the rival party members were shattered. Similarly many people were injured as street fight ensued between BJP and TMC workers in many places at Krishnagar, sources said.

Back in Kolkata BJP candidate Kalyan Chowbey was attacked by the TMC supporters at Sinthi More near Rabindra Bharati University and he had to be rescued by the police men. At Duttabad in Bidhannagar area the BJP and TMC men fought each other and vandalized local shops.

Yogi's helpline comes to aid of Covid patients

IAN S ■ LUCKNOW

With the Integrated Command Control Centre (ICCC) failing to respond to the needs of Covid patients, it is now the Chief Minister's helpline which is coming to the aid of Covid infected persons.

Out of the 8,16,962 people who have contacted the CM Helpline through its toll free number 1076 for different kinds of support, it has addressed issues of 8,13,930 people to date.

According to the government spokesman, the CM Helpline has also contacted 13,526 corona positive patients living in home, or hospital isolation so far to enquire about their health and offer them appropriate medical advice regarding doses of medicines and quarantine rules.

Similarly, the helpline has called 2,477 Covid positive patients to get details of their treatment and condition.

Besides, the helpline has contacted a total of 6,100 Covid positive individuals to date to offer them advice on home isolation, to get information from them on any other suspected case in their families and also making arrangements for sending them medicines.

The helpline is receiving a large number of calls on a daily basis from those seeking information on how to fight the virus.

Around 500 employees work in three shifts at the helpline's headquarters to listen to corona related problems of people and help them find ways to resolve them.

Apart from this, the helpline has called 2,115 village heads and 1,638 councilors to seek information from them on the status of the special cleanliness and communicable disease control campaign in their areas.

A total of 2,14,140 people have been contacted in this regard so far.

The CM Helpline has also contacted several patients in seven major Covid hospitals to get their feedback on the provision of medical facilities, sanitation and toilets and apprised the superintendents of the concerned hospitals and the district magistrates of the concerned districts about it.

The helpline also informs people about the sample testing facilities in the state, and how to treat Covid patients.

Kalyan Singh's mother-in-law to enter fray in UP

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

In the panchayat elections, not the granddaughter of former CM Kalyan Singh, but the mother-in-law will enter the ground. On the other hand, in the ward from which granddaughter Purnima Singh was in the ticket line, the party has fielded Khushboo, daughter-in-law of BJP leader Rajesh Bhardwaj. On Saturday evening, the party declared the two candidates and ended the suspense.

The BJP had released the list of 45 district Panchayat members late on Friday night. In which the most prominent candidate was not fielded from Ward-8. Before this ward, Purnima Singh, grand daughter of former CM and daughter Rajvir Singh, was in the line of contenders. So from this ward, senior BJP leader Rajesh Bhardwaj's daughter-in-law Khushboo Bhardwaj had also claimed. A lot of reconciliation efforts were made by the party to declare candidates in this ward but the matter could not be solved.

The talk of dynasticism rose to the top. After which the top leaders of the party came into action.

CPM has harrowing time in Kerala despite favourable poll forecasts

KOCHI: The Kerala Government led by Pinarayi Vijayan of the CPI(M) which is in the last days of its five-year tenure is suffering setbacks after setbacks from the judiciary as well as Lok Ayukta which has forced the party commissars to press the panic button.

On Friday, the Kerala High Court quashed two FIRs registered by the Crime Branch of the State Police against 'unnamed officials' of the Enforcement Directorate for allegedly coercing the accused in gold smuggling case to give false and incriminating statements implicating the chief minister and other functionaries in the party.

The FIR stated that the ED officials forced Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair, the gold smuggling kingpins to give statements blaming chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan as the ultimate beneficiary of the illegal operations executed with the connivance of the UAE Consulate General office at Thiruvananthapuram. Interestingly, the Centre ordered the probe into the smuggling operations as demanded by Vijayan in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Judge V G Arun held that the proper remedy would have been for the police to approach the special court that has taken cognizance of the ED's final report with the complaint that the ED officials were fabricating evidence.

The FIR filed by the Kerala Police

against ED was termed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as an attempt to delay and subvert the probe into gold smuggling and hawala transactions masterminded from the Chief Minister's Office.

Last week also saw Lok Ayukta of Kerala pronouncing that K T Jaleel, minister of higher education who was also the chief of the outlawed SIMI has committed impropriety in appointing his close relation as the general manager of the State Government owned financial institution set up to offer help to people belonging to the Muslim community.

Though the CPI(M) leaders declared unanimously that Jaleel need not resign based on Lak Ayukta verdict the party leaders dropped the minister like a hot potato when it was disclosed further that Abeeel, the relation was appointed based on the orders of Vijayan. Jaleel resigned as minister within hours and left for his home town.

The Kerala Government has already suffered loss of face when its opposition to a demand for CBI probe into the butchering of two Congress activists at Kasaragod and rape and murder of two teenaged sisters at Walayar where overruled by the High Court and asked the CBI to conduct the investigation. The Pinarayi Vijayan administration had spent crores of rupees to hire leading advocates of the

Supreme Court to fight the cases.

The murder of Muslim League leader Manzoor in Kannur district on April 6 too has embarrassed the party. Rathish, one of the prime accused, a CPI(M) activist, was found dead under mysterious conditions after three days and the police announced on Saturday that it was a case of murder. Rathish was murdered by the other accused in the case to silence him from disclosing sensitive materials.

Hands of a 23-year-old youth at Kathirur in Kannur was blown off on April 14 as he was assembling a 'country bomb' to be used in a murder planned by party leaders. The victim, a CPI(M) activist, was a specialist in assembling lethal and crude bombs.

On Saturday, G Sudhakaran, minister for public works, came out with allegations that some "political criminals" were scheming to finish him off. Though he did not name any leaders, it was clear that Sudhakaran was targeting his rivals in the party. Sudhakaran, a leading poet in Kerala, is being seen as an honest politician. But he was denied party ticket in the April 6 election which according to his close aides was the handiwork of chief minister Vijayan and his new Man Friday, A Vijayaraghavan.

The CPI(M) is undergoing a harrowing time as none other than chief minister is seen with a smiling face.

As new Covid cases near 20K-mark, medical fraternity cautions Kerala Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI/KOCHI

Situation in Kerala has become alarming as the Department of Health on Sunday diagnosed 18,257 persons with Covid-19. The State has 1.23 million Covid-19 patients as on Sunday evening, according to a press release issued by the Health Department of Kerala. The day also saw 25 persons succumbing to the pandemic taking the death toll till date to 4,929.

Details release by the State administration belied the claims made by Chief Minister and Health Minister that everything was under control in Kerala. "Today's data proves that the Government has lost control and direction of the preventive mechanism in the State. Since day one the Kerala Government failed to convince the people to regulate and alter the life style to check the spread of the pandemic.

Wearing masks and maintaining social distance alone would not prevent Covid 19," said Dr B Rajeev, a physician specialising in Indian System of Medicine to control the pandemic.

A Government physician told The Pioneer that the health department was manipulating figures to suit the convenience of the political masters. "Though the release says Ernakulam district has 2,835

patients as on Sunday evening, the district had registered more than 3,000 cases by 11 am itself," said the doctor.

Both Dr Rajeev and the Government physicians were more bothered about the post-covid syndrome which is expected to hit the people in the 15 to 45 age group. "They are the one that sustains the nation. If they suffer any physiological changes because of Covid-29, we are in for major trouble, economically and socially," said both the doctors.

Meanwhile Tamil Nadu too continued to test increased cases on Sunday. The State diagnosed 10,723 new cases on Sunday while 42 fatalities were registered in the State. The administration tightened the restrictions and regulations to take Covid-19 head on. A release by the Government of Tamil Nadu said the entire State would be put under curfew from 10 pm to 4 am. No vehicles will be allowed during the curfew hours.

While Sundays would see total lock down, tourism operations have been suspended fully in hill stations like Nilgiris, Kodaikanal and Yercaud. Only on-line classes are allowed in colleges and universities.

While the Government postponed the 12th Board Examination, parks, beaches, museums will remain out of bound for all till further orders.

A total of 2,14,140 people have been contacted in this regard so far.

The CM Helpline has also contacted several patients in seven major Covid hospitals to get their feedback on the provision of medical facilities, sanitation and toilets and apprised the superintendents of the concerned hospitals and the district magistrates of the concerned districts about it.

The helpline also informs people about the sample testing facilities in the state, and how to treat Covid patients.

University exams in Kerala postponed

Thiruvananthapuram: Amid Covid surge in the state, the universities in Kerala have postponed all offline exams scheduled from Monday onwards following a communique from the Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan.

Calicut University, MG University, Kannur University, Health University and Malayalam University have announced that all exams scheduled for Monday have been postponed.

The Governor has directed the universities that it would be ideal to postpone the examinations owing to the safety of the students and teachers with the Covid cases mounting in the state.

Students and parents had earlier petitioned the universities to postpone the examinations. Senior Congress leader and opposition leader of the state Ramesh Chennithala and Member of Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram Shashi Tharoor had also requested the Governor to postpone the examinations.

Maha mid-night drama: BJP leaders may face action over interference in probe into Remdesivir hoarding

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After a mid-night drama at the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) Police station in north-central Mumbai over the detention of a director of a pharmaceutical company for allegedly hoarding 60,000 Remdesivir vials, State Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil on Sunday indicated that the State Government might initiate action against leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis and other BJP leaders for "interfering" in the investigations by the police.

Hours after a major controversy broke out over Fadnavis and other State BJP leaders' visit to the BKC Police station shortly before midnight ostensibly to "enquire" about the detention of the director of Bruck Pharma, the State

Home Minister confirmed that he had taken cognizance of the incident at the police station and hinted at the possibility of initiating action against Fadnavis and other BJP.

"I will talk to my colleagues and take a decision on the nature of action to be taken in this regard," Walse-Patil said, when he was asked whether the state government would take action against Fadnavis and other BJP leaders for allegedly "interfering" in the police investigations.

Earlier in the day, Maharashtra NCP president and State Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil and State Congress president Nana Patole hit out at Fadnavis and other BJP leaders for "interfering" in the investigations over the alleged hoarding of Remdesivir vials by a

pharmaceutical company.

In a letter written to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Patole alleged that Fadnavis, leader of the Opposition in the State Legislative Council Pravin Derekar and party leader Prasad Lad had put pressure on the BKC police and got the detained Bruck Pharma director released.

"The three BJP leaders and hundreds of party workers interfered in the investigations in a Remdesivir hoarding case and got the firm's director released. They claimed that the pharma owner had got stocks of Remdesivir for them after obtaining permission from a Union Minister. Since Remdesivir stocks cannot be obtained and distributed by private people, how did Fadnavis obtain permission for the

same from the Centre?" Patole asked in his letter to the chief minister. Demanding to know under what law the BJP leaders purchased Remdesivir vials from the pharmaceutical company, Jayant Patil wondered: "How could the State BJP leaders purchase Remdesivir vials without informing the state government and the local police? Is there change in law with regard to Remdesivir?"

In post-mid night tweets put out after his and other BJP leaders' visit to the BKC police station, Fadnavis had claimed that the police had detained an official of Bruck Pharma who was supposed to supply #Remdesivir to Maharashtra.

"As we all are fighting against #COVID19 pandemic in such a difficult times, in an extremely

shameful act, MVA Government suddenly detained official of Bruck Pharma who was supposed to supply #Remdesivir to Maharashtra," Fadnavis had tweeted, while defending the pharmaceutical company accused of hoarding 60,000 Remdesivir vials.

"He took all permissions from Maharashtra & Daman administration, even Union Minister himself asked him to supply maximum Remdesivir to Maharashtra. And if still MVA is busy doing such cheap politics, it is a matter of utter shame!," Fadnavis had tweeted.

Meanwhile, Mumbai's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operations) and police spokesperson Chaitanya S issued a detailed statement on the incident that took place at the BKC police station on Saturday night.

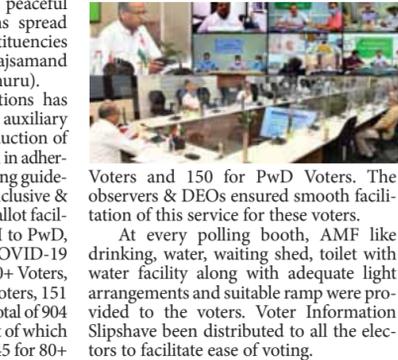
"Mumbai Police had specific information about stocking of a large quantity (60,000 vials) of Remdesivir medicine by a pharmaceutical company. This stock of Remdesivir could not be exported due to an existing ban by the Government of India on the export of Remdesivir. Remdesivir is considered a life saving medicine for Covid-19 positive patients," Chaitanya said.

"Acting on specific information, on 17th April, a director of this pharmaceutical company was called by BKC Police Station for inquiry. A team from the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) was also there at BKC Police Station. The Commissioner and Joint Commissioner, FDA, were also aware of this," the police spokesperson said.

Rajasthan bypolls: Polling in 3 Assembly constituencies of Sujargarh, Rajsamand and Sahara peaceful

Jaipur: Rajasthan witnessed a peaceful polling in 1145 polling stations spread across the three Assembly Constituencies today in Sahara (Bhilwara), Rajsamand (Rajsamand) and Sujargarh (Churu).

The number of polling stations has increased due to an increase in auxiliary polling booths on account of reduction of voters from 1500 to 1000 per booth in adherence with COVID Social Distancing guidelines. With complete thrust on Inclusive & Accessible elections, the Postal Ballot facility has been extended by the ECI to PwD, Senior citizens of 80+ age and COVID-19 suspect or affected persons. For 80+ Voters, 753 Postal Ballots and for PwD Voters, 151 Postal Ballots were issued. Thus, a total of 904 Postal Ballots had been issued out of which 895 have voted which sums up 745 for 80+



Voters and 150 for PwD Voters. The observers & DEOs ensured smooth facilitation of this service for these voters.

At every polling booth, AMF like drinking, water, waiting shed, toilet with water facility along with adequate light arrangements and suitable ramp were provided to the voters. Voter Information Slip have been distributed to all the electors to facilitate ease of voting.

Arrangements for the video guide for hearing and visually impaired voters on Poll day had been made. Public Address Systems were working to guide the blind and infirm voters who turned up at the booths. Also, Volunteers were placed at every Polling Booth to assist PwD and Senior Citizens. 925 Wheel chairs and 137 Vehicles were pressed into service for the physically disabled voters.

Following the standard protocol for EVM-VVPAT, First Level Checking, Randomization & Commissioning was done in presence of political parties/ candidates. Mock polls had been conducted earlier and the result of EVM & VVPAT slips were correlated for complete drill.

As a hallmark of free & fair elections, live monitoring and webcasting of more than 10 % polling stations which also included critical & vulnerable polling booths, in compliance of ECI norms was done. It was a live streaming session wherein the CEO, DEOs, Observers could watch it & ensure a close watch on these specific polling booths. Various instructions for COVID compliance and resolution of poll related complaints were carried out with the use of Webcasting and Booth App technology.



Lohiya Path wears a deserted look during weekend lockdown, imposed to curb the surge in coronavirus cases in Lucknow on Sunday


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PAPER WITH PASSION

Fighting blindfolded

New findings reveal that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted predominantly through air

It's not easy to fight an enemy of whom we know little and, that too, not with surety. Call it awareness or the fear of being penalised, but we have been following (or, trying to follow) the Government's directives — wear face masks, sanitise hands frequently and maintain physical distance — like obedient children to a teacher. But what if the teacher herself/himself is clueless about how to solve a problem? The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is one such question that has puzzled our scientific community as no other in the recent history. Even though the Governments and peoples across the world had started coming to terms with the pandemic when it first struck, the pesky virus has again pounced upon humanity with greater ferocity — mutant strains that are more virulent than the parent. Now, according to a new assessment carried in the medical journal *Lancet*, scientists have found that the virus is transmitted predominantly through air, with little or no evidence that it spreads via large droplets which fall quickly through air and contaminate surfaces. The findings reveal that the silent (asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic) transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from people who are not coughing or sneezing accounts for at least 40 per cent of all transmissions. The question that jumps to mind is whether our overemphasis on sanitisation and washing of hands is of any help, really? Well, if the study is to be believed, washing hands and cleaning surfaces should be given less emphasis than airborne measures — ventilation, air filtration and wearing masks indoors, too (even if not within six feet or two metres of others).

The pandemic has changed everything and now outdoors is not about breathing freely in the open. Rather, most people now heave a sigh of relief when they return home as it is the only place where they can remove their masks without any fear. But it seems that this small relief will also go away soon and people will have to wear masks even indoors so as to mitigate the airborne transmission. Further, a study by the IIT, Bhubaneswar, shows that aerosol droplets leak through the gap between the face and the mask and hence physical distancing is still pertinent. The study strongly recommends not using a surgical mask during normal conversations as the leakage of droplets is noticeable in such cases. An N-95 mask completely impedes the leakage of the droplets in the forward direction, it says. Last year, the Centre had written to all States and Union Territories against the use of N-95 masks with valved respirators, saying these do not prevent the virus from spreading out and are "detrimental" to the measures adopted. Whether there was any scientific finding or empirical evidence behind this warning, only the Government knows. Even as millions have died and more have been infected, we are still beating around the bush as the virus is nothing short of a mystery. We, as well as the Governments and the scientific community, are struggling hard to pin down the virus and the pandemic.

PICTALK



Tourists enjoy fresh snowfall in Gulmarg

End of an era for an aviation marvel

The largest civilian transport aircraft ever built, the Airbus A380 has ended its production run. Why did this giant plane not succeed?



KUSHAN MITRA

On March 19, 2021, an Airbus A380 emerged from the final assembly line in Toulouse, France. Like 250 similar aircraft before it, it took to the air comfortably, its gigantic wings lifting 350 tonnes of weight off the ground. The Airbus A380 may not be the prettiest flying machine ever made, but just like champion weightlifters, this aircraft does it effortlessly. In fact, fully loaded and fuelled up, the Airbus A380 can lift a massive 575 tonnes and fly for 14-15 hours, as it regularly does in service with the Dubai-based Emirates between the Arab Emirates and west coast cities in the US. But this flight was special not because it was travelling a short distance to the northern German city of Hamburg to be painted and kitted out, but because it was the last Airbus A380 to leave the Toulouse factory.

Twenty-one years since the Airbus A3XX project was launched and after 255 aircraft were built, not including the one that was built for ground-testing only, the manufacturing story of the world's largest passenger aircraft came to an end. Thanks to the plane forming the backbone of Emirates, which ordered almost half the production run, and to which this final aircraft will also eventually go, the Airbus A380 is likely to remain in service for at least 10-15 more years. However, some of the earliest built A380s for first operator Singapore Airlines and one of Emirates' oldest aircraft are already being scrapped.

Ironically, both Air France and Lufthansa, the flag carriers of France and Germany, the nations that build most of the plane, have withdrawn from service 10 and 14 aircraft, respectively; some of the German carrier's planes being just six years old. Of course, this is more due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is likely that the A380 might not return to service with many airlines, for example Thai Airways — which is in a financial pickle thanks to tourism dropping off a cliff — is mulling selling some of its fleet of six A380s. Other airlines that operate



its small fleets, like Australia's Qantas and British Airways, have given a vote of confidence to the aircraft and plan to bring it back into service once demand picks up.

Airbus had in 2000 predicted the need for over 1,000 new "Very Large Aircraft". This market survey was the basis for the European company spending billions of euros developing the aircraft along with both direct and indirect subsidies by European Governments, including the UK, where the massive plane's wings are manufactured. It is estimated that over the lifetime of the aircraft, developmental costs crossed 14 billion euros, or \$16.75 billion. Rival American manufacturer Boeing was more pragmatic, having once considered a full twin-deck aircraft like the A380 that could have been based on the 747 or developing a design study called the MD-12 from McDonnell Douglas, a rival firm that it had acquired. Boeing's survey around the same time predicted the demand for just 320 such aircraft and while the American firm did a quick update on the venerable 747, calling it the 747-8 with an updated wing, modern engines and a longer fuselage, this passenger version of the aircraft did not even top



MAYBE IN THE FUTURE, A VERY LARGE AIRCRAFT WILL AGAIN BE NEEDED TO COPE WITH RISING PASSENGER NUMBERS AND THE NEED TO BALANCE TRAVEL WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS. THE A380 IS A GREAT PIECE OF ENGINEERING AND AN AVIATION FEAT THAT WE SHOULD MARVEL AT

50 sales, although Lufthansa is keeping the 747-8 around while retiring the A380. But with Airbus cancelling the A380's freighter version, Boeing dominated this segment with the 747-8 version. While demand has tapered off, it is a twist of fate that the Boeing 747 production line will actually continue till 2022, 53 years after the "Queen of the Skies" had her first flight.

Besides, several other issues doomed the A380 as a commercially viable project. For one, there was a monumental software cock-up where different versions of software used at different production facilities led to huge complications in wiring. With over 350 km of wiring cable on the A380, the inability to connect on different segments led to workers hand-wiring the first few aircraft, starting a cascading series of delays in the first flight and production. The aircraft's first flight took place in 2005 and the first delivery in late 2007 to Singapore Airlines, just before the 2008 meltdown dealt a body blow to world travel.

However, the 2010s were a golden era for international travel. While Emirates most notably took the A380 to new heights, even fitting a shower cubicle in the First Class, most other airlines took a pass

on the giant jet. As Boeing had predicted, it was the "middle market" aircraft, planes seating 250-350 passengers, that drove the market. These aircraft were smaller, had only two engines and with incredible ranges they managed to create a host of new routes that bypassed traditional hubs such as Heathrow, Frankfurt and Paris. Direct flights between India and the US finally became possible, thanks to the Boeing 777 and 787. Even Airbus joined in the revolution with the Airbus A350, despite backing the A380 for years.

Cities like Dubai are a natural hub and the A380 will not go out of service anytime soon. At some major airports like Heathrow, which have limited slots, the A380 will continue to make sense. But as designed it belonged to a different era, an era when large jets between major airports were the norm. Maybe in the future, a very large aircraft will again be needed to cope with rising passenger numbers and the need to balance travel with environmental concerns. It is a great piece of engineering and an aviation feat that we should marvel at, but it was not a plane of its time.

(The author is Managing Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DENUCLEARISATION FOR PEACE

Sir —Recently, US President Joe Biden answered in the affirmative when asked whether North Korea was high on his global diplomatic list. No one would dispute the overriding importance of denuclearisation for fostering peace in northeast Asia. Kim Jong-un, the supreme leader of North Korea, cannot be expected to bow to anybody's diktat. Even if denuclearisation happens, it is going to be a long drawn process. If Biden has taken a step forward to meet with the US' bugbear, he needs to be complimented because he looks determined to strike a different note than his predecessors.

Kim is wary of the US because of Washington's closeness to Seoul. The military exercises between the US and South Korea have ensured there is no love lost between the two. But the greatest strength of North Korea is undoubtedly China. Beijing is the big brother of Pyongyang for all practical purposes. Not that Kim is ever ready to dance to Xi Jinping's tune. Nowhere near that, but considering the sanctions imposed against North Korea by other nations, Kim may not mind the seemingly unpleasant task of leaning on Jinping's shoulder. It is true that Beijing had not opposed sanctions on Pyongyang but, sometimes, international relations warrant two friendly countries taking a joint course in interpersonal equations notwithstanding the global stance. In the battle for the world 'strongman' status, both the US and China have preferred to take sides without making it too obvious. Jinping's shrewd diplomatic brain knows his country can at least hope to count on the US in embarrassing scenarios with regard to contentious issues.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

JUDICIARY NEEDS MORE WOMEN

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Good omen' (April 17). Verily speaking, Chief Justice of India SA Bobde's observation, in response to a plea filed by a women lawyers' body calling for the appointment of meritorious women judges in the High Courts, that the time has come when a woman should head

Hard time for Indian economy



The wholesale price index inflation rate for March 2021 stood at 7.39 per cent, which is the highest since October 2012 when it was 7.4 per cent, according to the provisional data released by the Commerce Ministry. Besides the inflation touching a 96-month-high, the manufactured products inflation was at a nine-year high of 7.3 per cent. We are aware how the surge in COVID cases is adversely impacting our economy and due to this reason, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rating has been downgraded by international agencies. Rupee is also turning into Asia's worst performing currency and is poised for more losses as localised lockdowns and restric-

tions have begun hitting the economy. As per the Ministry's statement, the prices of crude oil, petroleum products and basic metal substantially increased last month as compared to the corresponding month of last year.

The latest available economic indicator which captures this, is the Nomura India Business Resumption Index (NBRI) which fell to 90.4 in the week ending April 1, registering its biggest week-on-week fall and it will not be surprising if this downward trend continues. Even more worrying is the fact that the economic recovery was losing momentum even before the second wave hit India as we saw contraction in the index of industrial production (IIP) in January and February. Indicators such as Purchasing Managers' Index have been warning that the employment levels have been going down even when production was increasing. The only effective way to safeguard the economy from another massive disruption is to relax both the demand and supply for vaccines.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

COVID IS HARD TO HANDLE

Sir — It is dangerous warning that the number of Corona-affected patients in a day

crossed 2.16 lakh throughout the country. On the one side, the Central Government advises people to get vaccinated and, on the other, vaccination centres and private hospitals claim that they have not yet received vaccine stocks from the Centre. This is further contributing to a tremendous spike in the number of COVID cases in the country. Vaccination cannot be the only solution for curbing the spread but following all safety protocols — such as wearing masks, sanitising hands and maintaining social distancing — is more important. It is in this context that both the Telugu States are ignoring to enforce safety protocols in gatherings, political assemblies and other market-places, which is a cause for worry.

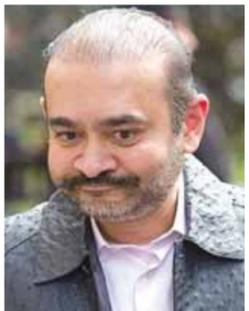
Katuru Rao | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A step forward

The UK Govt's nod to Nirav Modi's extradition is happy news, but don't just pop the bubbly yet

In what is being considered a major victory for India's External Affairs Ministry and the legal team, the UK Government has finally cleared the extradition of scam accused billionaire Nirav Modi. The UK Home Secretary, Priti Patel, signed the order on April 15 after the Westminster court allowed the extradition plea in February and sent the decision to Patel for ratification. Giving the Indian Government and the Central agencies great cause to celebrate, the UK Magistrate found Modi guilty on all charges levelled by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate, who have been investigating the ₹14,000 crore scam involving the Punjab National Bank. This latest move by the UK Government comes on the heels of another bad boy billionaire Vijay Mallya's extradition to India being given the green light by a UK court last year. The maverick tycoon is on bail in the UK and is facing charges of cheating and defrauding Indian banks involving his now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines.



However, the mandarins need not pat themselves on the back too soon: Modi still has two chances to appeal to the UK's higher courts and to apply for political asylum. In all likelihood, he will do that as he has been opposing his extradition every inch of the way. He might take a page out of Mallya's book and use his battery of lawyers to ensure that he stays out of the clutches of the Indian law enforcement agencies as long as possible. Because despite the UK court's order last year, Mallya is as far from coming back home as the current pandemic is from leaving it. The liquor baron's latest move has been applying for "another route" before Patel in a last-ditch effort to delay his extradition. It is a crying shame that India has a poor record of bringing its major economic offenders to book once they flee the country. India has a long list of such white collar criminals who have defrauded our banks of the taxpayers' hard-earned money and are now leading lavish lives abroad. But the list of such crooks that it has been able to bring back to face punishment is woefully short. It is a travesty of justice when a poor man who stole something out of a desperate need for survival has to languish in overcrowded and filthy jails for years as an undertrial while major scammers who emptied our careless banks of billions continue to dally with the law.

SOUNDBITE

The truth is that Didi thought of her own political gains from the death of people in Cooch Behar; she has an old habit of doing politics with dead bodies.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



As long as I live, I will be ready with my foot on the stirrup to defend the homeland, the revolution and socialism with more strength than ever.

Cuban leader — Raul Castro



I'm travelling to Ludhiana from the Capital. I heard our farmers are still on a protest. I feel worried about them as COVID-19 cases are increasing.

Actor — Arshi Khan



When you play for your country, you fight for each point and that was seen in the match. I felt that I could have done a bit better in the first set.

Tennis player — Ankit Raina



Currently, the State is in dire need of oxygen, and currently the entire production is being utilised for medical purposes.

Maharashtra CM — Uddhav Thackeray



FIRST COLUMN

WHEN WORDS HAVE NO MEANING

Putin is naughty, but a big-time invader? This is just the media stirring things up, with help from politicians



GWYNNE DYER

If they go, we'll all have to go. That's the reality of it," said a British source about US President Joe Biden's announcement that the last American troops would be out of Afghanistan by September 11, the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. (What can possibly have possessed him to choose that date?) Not only the remaining 2,500 US troops will go but also the 7,000 British and other NATO troops in Afghanistan. Actually, they were ready to go long ago. They were just waiting for the US to reach the same conclusion, because abandoning your main ally in the middle of a war is not a good idea. Once they are all gone, the Taliban will take back power in Afghanistan. They will close girls' schools again, ban music, hang people with the wrong haircuts and all the other stuff they did before. Over 20 years of being chased around the hills by gunships has probably not moderated their views. And when journalists asked Biden the inevitable question — doesn't he feel any responsibility for Afghan human rights, and especially women's rights? — he said: "The responsibility I have is to protect America's self-interests and not to put our women and men in harm's way to try to solve every problem in the world by the use of force."



Finally, a senior US politician using words as if they mean something. But it didn't last. Soon enough a "senior official" was talking twaddle on Biden's behalf: "We went to Afghanistan to deliver justice to those who attacked us on September 11th and to disrupt terrorists seeking to use Afghanistan as a safe haven to attack (from)." Ridiculous! Justice could have been delivered by a single assassin or one mass bombing raid on the camp of Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda's leader, tucked away deep in the Afghan hills. The invasion was just show business. The 9/11 attacks were plotted by al-Qaeda members in Germany and all 19 hijackers were Arabs, not Afghans. They were trained in Afghanistan because bin Laden was given refuge there by the Taliban when the US forced Sudan to expel him.

Some of the brighter people in the US Intelligence services would have known that. However, President George Bush needed to invade somewhere to discharge US rage about the attack (which he had failed to prevent), and where else could it be than Afghanistan? A stealthy assassination or a single bombing raid wouldn't do the job. As it happened, the invasion of Afghanistan was so easy that it didn't provide enough catharsis for vengeance-seeking Americans, so Bush ended up adding an invasion of Iraq to the list as well. Saddam Hussein certainly had nothing to do with 9/11, but a spectacular invasion plus Saddam's capture and execution gave Americans "closure." That psychodrama was actually played out by 2004, but then US troops were mired hip-deep in both countries, and it has taken all this time to get them out.

And now on to Ukraine, which Russia is allegedly getting ready to invade: Daily reports of the Russian military build-up, and veiled hints that Russian President Vladimir Putin is the new Hitler. You know, "Today Ukraine, tomorrow the world!" After all, he's a proven aggressor: Georgia, Crimea, eastern Ukraine. But, stupid as it seems, it was Georgia that started the war with Russia in 2008, hoping to seize South Ossetia and seal the tunnel under the Caucasus range. Crimea was settled by Russians after its previous rulers, Turkic-speaking Muslims were conquered in 1783. It remained Russian until Nikita Khrushchev gave it to Ukraine on a whim in 1954. Putin took it back non-violently 60 years later, although that was illegal. So is Russia's support for Russian-speaking rebels in two eastern provinces of Ukraine, which is just like Ronald Reagan's military backing for 'Contra' rebels against the Nicaraguan Government in the 1980s. Putin is definitely a naughty boy, but a big-time invader of important places? This is just the media stirring things up, with some help from politicians.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)

The genders of nationalism

Why do some nations refer to their countries as their 'fatherland' and some as their 'motherland'? And does it make a difference in their patriotism?

On social media sites, one occasionally comes across Pakistanis using the term "motherland" for their country. Interestingly though, this term is not used as frequently in Pakistan as it is in India or Russia. It does not figure in Pakistan's national anthem either. The usage of the term "motherland" is infrequent outside the patriotic literature and rhetoric emerging from the country's armed forces. The masculine flip of this term is "fatherland", which is largely used in European nations. Both the terms are often associated with the institutionalisation of the idea of nationalism and the forms of patriotism that it encourages. This should mean that the terms "motherland" and "fatherland" began to appear from the 18th century onwards, when groups of people started to define themselves as nations that shared cultural histories and geography. But according to an 1882 book, 'Notes and Queries', the word "fatherland" first appeared as an English term in the early 13th century.

According to Clay Thompson in the February 10, 2015 issue of 'The Arizona Republic', the English term is derived from the Latin word, "patria." Its English translation is father. The word "patriotism" also comes from "patria." So, even though originally the word "fatherland" simply meant a region of birth of one's father, it eventually became an expression of patriotism towards one's nation.

The origins of the term "motherland" are even more obscure. The American scholar Charles Anthon writes in his 1867 book 'Aeneid of Virgil', that ancient Romans saw Italy, the seat of the Roman Empire, as "motherland."

In a January 2010 article, the American author Maeva Maddox writes that terms such as "mother country" were in use in the 16th century, but "motherland" was most prominent in Russian fairy tales. It quickly came to mean love for the mother country, Russia (Matushka Rossiya or Mother Russia). It was adopted as is by the communists even after they overthrew the Russian monarchy in 1917.

In the 19th century, the term "Bharat Mata" emerged in India. According to the historian DN Jha in an April 5, 2016 essay, the term "Bharat Mata" started to appear from the late 19th century onwards, but wasn't fully established until 1906. It soon became associated with anti-colonial movements spearheaded by the Indian National Congress (INC). The term also became part of the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists, who began to imagine India as a Hindu goddess.

In Europe, using the terms "motherland" and "fatherland" to express one's patriotism towards one's country has gradually receded. But these terms are still part of the national anthems of some European countries and are often used by Right-wing nationalist groups.

On the other hand, Americans mostly refer to their country as "homeland", even though "motherland" and "fatherland" first appeared in the 'American Dictionary of the English Language' in 1847. The term "homeland" gained more currency after the 9/11 episode, which triggered the creation of the national security term, 'Homeland Security.'

However, Peggy Noonan, in the June 14,



YET, THERE ARE NOW ALSO THOSE WHO, JUST LIKE MANY IN EUROPE, BELIEVE THAT NOT ONLY HAVE THE TERMS 'MOTHERLAND' AND 'FATHERLAND' RUN THEIR COURSE, BUT THE KIND OF NATIONALISM THAT THEY EVOKE CAN BE NARROW, CHAUVINISTIC AND NON-INCLUSIVE, INSTEAD OF BEING CIVIL

The writer is a journalist and columnist of international repute. The views expressed are personal. Courtesy: Dawn



2002 issue of the 'Wall Street Journal', writes that the term had a fascistic ring to it and that Americans hardly ever used the word "homeland" to describe their country of birth.

To Clay Thompson, however, compared to "motherland" and "fatherland", "homeland" was gender-neutral. He also informs us that it was entered in the US edition of the 'Webster's Eighth Collegiate Dictionary' in 1973.

So what's the difference between "fatherland" and "motherland"? Apparently none. Both are regions where one's parents or ancestors were born. But given the manner in which the idea of nationalism has evolved in the last 200 years or so, both the terms have gained a lot of ideological weight. However, it is also true that their usage has gradually eroded in most Western countries. According to Maeva Maddox, "Fatherland suggests Government and order. Motherland connotes birth and nurturing."

When German nationalism began to assert itself, from the early 19th century onwards, and especially when it came into full fruition — rather mutation — during the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, the idea of Germany as a fatherland firmly rooted itself in the German national psyche.

In this context, the word "fatherland" came to be associated with a State that behaves like a stern, authoritative and disciplinary father, but one that is also benevolent. On the other hand, "motherland" is associated with a State that is nurturing and organic, yet fiercely protective of its citizens that are portrayed as its children.

In India, Russia and the Philippines, for example, the State is imagined as a mother. Curiously, recently this idea of a mother-State has been given masculine characteristics in India and Russia, so that it can fit the paradigm of the more assertive nature of nationalism emerging in both the countries.

In most nations in Europe, the State is imagined as a father, even though, as mentioned earlier, this idea has largely eroded in many European countries, especially after the horrors of the World War II were unleashed and lived through. But a Right-wing resurgence in some of these countries is rekindling and romanticising it.

The founders of Pakistan did not use any of the two terms. However, when Rahmat Ali, one of the earliest Indian Muslims to demand a separate Muslim country in the region, detailed his idea of such a country in a 1933 book, he called it fatherland. The title of

the book was 'Pakistan: The Fatherland of Pak Nation.'

One of the overriding reasons for this was that the Congress Party and Hindu nationalists were explaining India as a "motherland." So Ali had to go the other way. Second, Arabs had traditionally described their regions as the "lands of our fathers and forefathers", even though Ali was South Asian and the Arabs had done so even before they adopted Islam.

Nevertheless, in a January 19, 1940 article for the British magazine 'Time and Tide', the future founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, explains India as a "common motherland of Hindus and Muslims." But he never referred to Pakistan as a "motherland" or "fatherland."

The reason some Pakistanis use the term "motherland" is mainly because the State in Pakistan is imagined as a mother figure. One can, therefore, often come across statements such as "riyasat toh maa ki tarha hoti hai (the State is like a mother)."

Yet, there are now also those who, just like many in Europe, believe that not only have the terms "motherland" and "fatherland" run their course, but the kind of nationalism that they evoke can be narrow, chauvinistic and non-inclusive, instead of being civil.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE BJP WILL FORM THE GOVERNMENT IN WEST BENGAL WITH MORE THAN 200 SEATS.
—UNION HOME MINISTER
AMIT SHAH



WHAT IS HIS TRACK RECORD? IN 11 STATES, AMIT SHAH GOT HIS NUMBERS WRONG. IN 13 STATES, THE BJP HAS UNDERPERFORMED SINCE 2019.
—WEST BENGAL FINANCE MINISTER
AMIT MITRA

A multi-pronged approach is needed to tackle Naxals

There is a need for strong political will to dispel the fear created by the Naxalites in the minds of people and instil confidence among them that the State is by their side

The gruesome incident, in which 22 security personnel were killed by the Naxalites in Chhattisgarh recently, deserves the harshest condemnation. This incident is not the first-of-its-kind and there have been numerous such targeted attacks by the outlaws on our security forces. A few days ago, eight Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in a landmine ambush at Sukma. Last year as many as 300 Naxals attacked the 74th battalion of the CRPF. In 2014 more than 26 paramilitary personnel and in 2010 more than 70 CRPF jawans were killed in the same area by these outlaws.

The recent incidents have once again confirmed that Maoists have not been wiped out, though they were down for a while. Chhattisgarh



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The writer is a professor and expert on strategic affairs. The views expressed are personal.

appears to have become the epicentre of such attacks. The Government is concerned about how to eradicate the menace of Naxalism which is posing a grave challenge to the entire security apparatus. The recent attacks that were carried out using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and the kind of modus-operandi the Naxal cadres have adopted, speak volumes about the unprecedented violence and ruthlessness that have engulfed their minds. The current state of affairs does not offer any hope of reconciliation and negotiation with them.

The attacks were carried out despite repeated warnings by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which shows the audacity of the present breed of Maoists and also that they are undeterred by such warnings. The brutal

killing of our jawans reminds us of the cold-blooded murder of Inspector Francis Induwar by Maoist guerrillas in 2009 which sent the message that it is difficult to persuade the outlaws to change their mind, by reason or by threat.

In the last few years, the simmering discontent and prevailing unrest among the rural population in States like Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha has been expressed in the form of naked violence. The Naxals plan their attack in such a way that people see justice and fulfillment of a cause in these inhuman killings. Attacks on important Government buildings, telephone exchanges, railway stations, villages and police pickets have become quite common. In some areas



where there was a lull for long, the recurrence of Naxal activities has disturbed the peace. Bihar witnessed a phase of Naxal activities in earlier days as there were various extremist organisations operating in the State, including the Indian People's Front (IPF), the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). There have

been a number of attacks on police pickets by them. In some areas of central Bihar their underground operations are on the rise. The Naxals raise funds by means of extortion from the contractors, corrupt officials and powerful landlords. The MCC is very active in central Bihar districts such as Patna, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nalanda and Navada. In Jehanabad, the mobilisation of weaker sections of society by the IPF and the MKSS has been mainly on the basis of a common concern for equitable distribution of land and payment of minimum wages, among other things.

Over the years, Andhra Pradesh has suffered heavy losses because of the upsurge in Naxalite activities. In the last two decades the People's War Group (PWG) has continued with its activities

which include bank robberies, murder of policemen, kidnapping of businessmen, officials and attempts at political assassinations.

Despite the repeated attempts by States and the Centre to control the menace of Naxalism, the problem has only amplified. These outlaws are misled by some powerful syndicates for political gains. The common people living in the Red Corridor are caught between the Naxals and the security forces, as they can neither dare to go against the former nor can they support the latter. Taking sides, means facing the wrath of either group. There is a need for strong political will to dispel the psychological fear created by the Naxalites in the minds of the people and instil confidence among the citizens that the State is by

their side. There is also a need to strengthen the Intelligence system and work upon achieving greater coordination among the security forces, including the local police. It is time we devise a multifaceted approach, including the support of the media, in order to change the sympathetic attitude of people towards the Maoists.

Naxalites, through their guerrilla warfare have cornered them, though the latter are much superior in their training, number, equipment and potential. Hence, it's time to understand and work with a comprehensive vision to counter the Naxal-psyche while simultaneously generating confidence among the masses — which can play a decisive role in this battle against the Naxalism.

GOP White House hopefuls move forward as Trump considers run

WASHINGTON : Less than three months after former President Donald Trump left the White House, the race to succeed him atop the Republican Party is already beginning.

Trump's former secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, has launched an aggressive schedule, visiting States that will play a pivotal role in the 2024 primaries, and he has signed a contract with Fox News Channel. Mike Pence, Trump's former vice president, has started

a political advocacy group, finalized a book deal and later this month will give his first speech since leaving office in South Carolina. And Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has been courting donors, including in Trump's backyard, with a prominent speaking slot before the former president at a GOP fundraising retreat dinner this month at Mar-a-Lago, the Florida resort where Trump now lives.

Trump ended his presidency with such a firm grip on the reality that mounting a modern presidential campaign is a years-long endeavor.

"You build the ark before it rains," said Michael Steel, a Republican strategist who worked for Jeb Bush's presidential 2016 campaign, among others. "They're going to do the things they need to do if he decides not to run."

Trump, at least for now, is giving them plenty of leeway, convinced they pose little threat to his own ambitions.

It's a free country. Folks can do what they want," Trump adviser Jason Miller said in response to the moves.

"But," he added, "if President Trump does decide to run in 2024, the nomination will be his if you're paying any attention to public polling of Republican voters."

China, US to cooperate on climate

Beijing/Washington: Following talks between US climate envoy John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua, the world's two largest producers of greenhouse gases issued a joint statement saying they would cooperate on mitigating climate change.

The talks were took place from Thursday to Friday in Shanghai.

China and the US are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands.

"This includes both enhancing their respective actions and cooperating in multilateral processes, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement."

Both countries recall their historic contribution to the development, adoption, signature, and entry into force of the Paris Agreement through their leadership and collaboration.

Xinhua news agency quoted the statement as saying

Under the Paris deal, the nearly 200 signatory states agreed to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, if possible even to 1.5 degrees, in comparison with the pre-industrial times of 1850-1900, reports dpa news agency.

By that measure, the Earth has already warmed by about 1 degree.

Israel lifts public mask mandate, opens schools

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel has lifted a public mask mandate and fully reopened its education system in the latest easing of coronavirus restrictions following its mass vaccination drive.

All primary and secondary school grades returned to classrooms on Sunday, and health officials ended a year-long requirement to wear a mask in public spaces.

Masks are still required indoors and in large gatherings.

Israel has speedily inoculated a majority of its population against the coronavirus in a world-leading vaccination campaign.

It has lifted most of its coronavirus restrictions and announced last week that it would be reopening the country to vaccinated foreign tourists starting in May.

Israel's coronavirus czar, Nachman Ash, told Israeli public radio on Sunday that removing the mask requirement outdoors and reintituting in-class studies was a "calculated risk."

Since the start of the pandemic last year, Israel has recorded over 836,000 cases of the coronavirus and at least 6,331 deaths, according to the Health Ministry.

Germany unsure of holidaying this year

Berlin: A new poll has revealed that about a third of Germans were unsure whether a holiday will be an option this year given the lingering coronavirus restrictions.

The poll conducted by consulting company PwC revealed that 31 per cent of the surveyed were unsure whether a trip is an option this year, while 28 per cent have ruled it out entirely.

dpa news agency reported on Sunday.

Germany's tourism industry is still reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic.

Travel agencies are reporting a decline in bookings for the coming year.

Some are predicting a recovery in 2022, but others are more pessimistic.

The industry is hoping for a return to normalcy as vaccination rates rise.

However, the lingering effects of the pandemic are still being felt.

Top Hefazati terrorist arrested in B'Desh

Dhaka: The Detective Branch of the Bangladesh Police on Sunday arrested Mamunul Haque, Joint Secretary of the Hefazati-e-Islam militant outfit.

The militant preacher is in Teigaon police station now. He will be sent to the DB headquarters in Dhaka after which Haque will be produced before the court.

Deputy Commissioner of Teigaon division, said.

Haque was a prominent figure in the Hefazati-e-Islam movement.

He was accused of leading several violent protests.

The arrest is part of a crackdown on militant groups.

Authorities are monitoring the situation closely.

The move is seen as a significant step towards curbing militancy.

8 family members killed in mosque shooting

Kabul: At least eight members of a family were killed after unknown gunmen opened fire on them at a mosque in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, officials said on Sunday.

The shooting occurred during a prayer session.

The victims included men, women and children.

Authorities are investigating the motive behind the attack.

The mosque was a place of worship for the community.

There were no reports of any injuries to the survivors.

The incident has caused widespread concern.

Local authorities are providing support to the affected families.

3 Afghan policemen killed in insider attack

Kabul: Three police constables were killed when one of their colleagues turned his gun against them in Afghanistan's Badghis province, the latest in a string of insider attacks, an official confirmed on Sunday.

The attack occurred during a patrol.

The police were on their way to a village.

Authorities are investigating the incident.

The police are a key force in maintaining security.

Such attacks are a major concern for the government.

Efforts are being made to improve police training.

The government is committed to ensuring the safety of its citizens.

Czech Republic expels 18 Russian embassy staff

Prague: The Czech Republic is expelling 18 employees of the Russian embassy in Prague, who were allegedly "identified as members of the Russian secret services", Foreign Minister Jan Hamacek said.

The move is part of a diplomatic row between the two countries.

The Russian embassy has expressed its protest.

The Czech government is standing by its decision.

The incident has strained relations between the two nations.

Both sides are calling for a diplomatic solution.

The Russian government has also expelled Czech diplomats.

The situation remains tense as negotiations continue.

Germany to mourn COVID deaths in NTL service

Berlin: German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will lead a commemorative event in Berlin on Sunday in the presence of country's leaders for all those who have died due to the novel coronavirus.

The event will be held at the Reichstag building.

It is a somber occasion for the country.

The government is honoring the sacrifices made.

The service will be broadcasted nationwide.

The event is a testament to the resilience of the German people.

The government is committed to supporting the bereaved.

The service is a reminder of the impact of the pandemic.

Experimental antiviral drug effective against Covid: Study

IAN S ■ NEW YORK

An experimental oral antiviral drug has shown potential in prevention and treatment of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing Covid-19 infections, say researchers.

The antiviral -- MK-4482 -- significantly decreased levels of virus and disease damage in the lungs of hamsters treated for SARS-CoV-2 infection, according to a new study from the US National Institutes of Health scientists.

MK-4482 treatment potentially could mitigate high-risk exposures to SARS-CoV-2, and might be used to treat established SARS-CoV-2 infection alone or possibly in combination with other agents, said Heinz Feldmann and team from the NIH.

The project involved three groups of hamsters: a pre-infection treatment group; a post-infection treatment group; and an untreated control group.

For the two treatment groups, scientists administered MK-4482 orally every 12 hours for three days.

At the end of the study, the animals in each of the treatment groups had 100 times less infectious virus in their lungs than the control group.

Animals in the two treatment groups also had significantly fewer lesions in the lungs than the control group.

Iran sees highest daily death toll in months as virus surges

Tehran: Iran's daily coronavirus death toll climbed over 400 for the first time in months on Sunday, as the country, which has long had the region's largest outbreak, battles a post-holiday infection surge.

Iranian health authorities recorded 405 fatalities from the virus, pushing the total death toll to 66,732.

Officials increasingly have warned about the impact of trends seen nationwide during the Persian New Year, or Nowruz.

The two-week holiday last month brought increased travel, relaxed restrictions and large gatherings without precautions.

After COVID-19 cases broke record after record earlier this month, the Health Ministry reported 21,644 infections on Sunday, bringing the total count over 2.2 million.

Hospitals are rapidly filling across the country, particularly in the capital.

Authorities reported 130 deaths in Tehran alone, according to Mohsen Hashemi, head of the Tehran municipal council.

The single-day death toll nationwide reached a peak of over 480 last November.

Ukraine expels Russian diplomat in retaliation

Kyiv: In a retaliatory move, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry has asked a Russian diplomat in Kyiv to leave the country within 72 hours starting from April 19 in response to Moscow's expulsion of a Ukrainian consul.

The Russian diplomat was expelled from the country.

The move is part of a diplomatic row between the two countries.

The Russian government has expressed its protest.

The Ukrainian government is standing by its decision.

The incident has strained relations between the two nations.

Both sides are calling for a diplomatic solution.

The situation remains tense as negotiations continue.

Banned TLP, police clashes leave 'few' dead in Lahore

Lahore: Clashes erupted between members of the banned Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and police at Multan road in Lahore, leaving "a few" group supporters killed and more than 100 injured, sources said.

The TLP is a religious extremist group.

The police are trying to maintain order.

The incident has caused widespread concern.

Authorities are investigating the clashes.

The TLP has been banned for its extremist views.

The police are committed to maintaining law and order.

The situation in Lahore remains volatile.

Covid vax 'less effective' in people with some blood cancer: Study

JERUSALEM

The two-dose mRNA Covid-19 vaccine may be less effective in people undergoing treatment for certain types of blood cancers, researchers have claimed in two new studies.

The studies, published in the journal Blood, suggest that the mRNA Covid-19 vaccine may have reduced efficacy in people with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) and multiple myeloma.

Two types of blood cancer -- compared to healthy people.

However, vaccination against Covid-19 is strongly recommended in both groups, the researchers said.

The researchers are studying the reasons for the reduced efficacy.

The findings are important for healthcare providers.

Patients with blood cancer should discuss their vaccination options with their doctors.

China's population to enter -ve growth after 2025: Official

BEIJING

The demographics of the world's most populous country is set to change as China will experience a negative growth after 2025, which will result in shortage of consumer demand, a Chinese economist has cautioned.

China's population is set to peak in just four years' time and the milestone will be marked by a significant downturn in consumer demand, said Cai Fang, a member of the monetary policy committee of the People's Bank of China, the central bank.

"When the total population enters negative growth (after 2025), there will be a shortage of demand," Cai was quoted as saying by Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post on Sunday.

"We need to pay attention to the impact of demographics on future consumption," he said. Cai's comments came as China is due to release its latest census later this month.

According to a PBOC study released a few days ago, China should immediately liberalise its birth policies or face a scenario in which it has a lower share of workers and higher burden of elderly care than the United States by 2050.

In a rare frank appraisal, four researchers from the PBOC said the country should not interfere with people's ability to have children or it will be too late to reverse the economic impact of a declining population.

Since 2016, Chinese couples have been allowed to have two children.

"We should not wait for the effects of existing birth policies," the researchers said in a working paper published early this week.

"The birth liberalisation should happen now when there are some residents who still want to have children but can't. It's useless to liberalise it when no one wants to have children," it said.

After implementing the controversial one-child policy for over three decades, China is facing a demographic crisis with a rapidly ageing population over 60 years, which according to official figures, has increased to 420 million in 2019.

Drying FII inflows on rising Covid cases to weaken rupee

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Drying FII inflows on the back of rising Covid cases is expected to weaken the Indian rupee further during the upcoming trade week.

Lately, rising Covid cases have heavily dented equity indices and dampened investors' hopes of an early economic recovery.

This was reflected in rupee's trajectory. The currency had made a year high of 72.25 to a greenback on March 25 and an eight month low of 75.30 on last Monday.

"This was despite no big changes in global factors or domestic macros. Some of it can be attributed to liquidity enhancement measures," Sajal Gupta, Head, Forex and Rates at Edelweiss Securities told IANS.

"Expect next week to be volatile amidst rising Corona cases and hopes of early vaccine delivery from Sputnik and others."

Last week, the rupee closed at 74.40 to a USD.

"The coronavirus-led regional lockdown and rapid increase in cases will continue



to weigh on the rupee," said Rahul Gupta, Head of Research- Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services.

"However, a fall in the dollar index will act as a respite. Also, RBI is not letting the rupee depreciate beyond the 75.40 zones. So we expect USDINR spot to trade in between 74-75.50."

The increase in infections has forced many state governments to implement fresh Covid-19 restrictions during last two-three weeks, fasting hopes of an early economic recovery.

On the bright side, it said that vaccinations are gradually beginning to accelerate.

"Next week, we expect that the rupee could again start to

weaken as the pace of fund inflows by the FIIs remains slow. At the same time, recent economic numbers released from the US have been better-than-estimates that could strengthen the dollar," said Gaurang Somaiya, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"For the week, the USD-INR (Spot) is expected to trade with a positive bias and quote in the range of 74.20 and 75.20."

According to Devarsh Vakil- Deputy Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities: "Spot USDINR has support at 73.7, the 200 days simple moving average, and continues to face resistance beyond 75 mark."

Commerce Min to meet exporters on Apr 20 to discuss export scenario

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce and industry Ministry has convened a meeting of exporters on April 20 to discuss export situation against the backdrop of surging coronavirus cases and healthy growth in overseas shipments in recent months.



Department of Commerce Ministry of Commerce and Industry Government of India

The meeting will be chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Confirming the meeting, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said that the ministry holds these meetings regularly to discuss issues of exporters and ways to further increase outbound shipments.

Chairman of the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) Colin Shah said that these meetings are helpful as exporters get a platform to raise their issues.

The meeting also assumes significance as certain exporters are of the view that

restrictions, imposed by different states to contain the rising coronavirus cases, for long time could have a bearing on industry.

It surged by 60.29 per cent to a monthly record high of USD 34.45 billion in March on growth in sectors such as engineering, gems and jewellery and pharmaceuticals, even as the outbound shipments contracted by 7.26 per cent during the full 2020-21 fiscal to USD 290.63 billion.

The exports have increased to USD 13.72 billion during April 1-14 this year, according to the provisional data of the Commerce Ministry.

AirAsia announces free rescheduling of bookings till May 15

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

AirAsia India has announced free rescheduling on all flights for bookings till May 15, 2021.

In a statement, the airline said that guests can now make unlimited changes for all bookings and changes made till May 15, irrespective of the travel dates, without incurring any flight change fees.

"To ensure that its customers continue to have the greatest flexibility if their travel plans change with increased uncertainty and travel restrictions, the airline has extended this offer on its new website www.airasia.co.in as well as other major booking channels," it said. The airline said that it left no stone unturned in adopting a multi-layered approach to offering safe and seamless travel for guests from booking to check-in and arrival. All aircraft undergo deep cleaning and sanitation, while cabin disinfection takes place before each flight, it said.



Future Retail board, lenders approve debt restructuring plan

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

The board of Future Retail along and its lenders have approved a resolution plan to restructure the existing secured financial debt from the banks under the resolution framework for Covid-19 related stress.

In a regulatory filing, the company said that the board approved the plan in its meeting on Saturday.

It now requires the approval of the expert committee, under the chairmanship of the KV Kamath constituted by the Reserve Bank of India.

"As part of the resolution plan, the debt raised through the non-convertible debentures issued by the Company under Series IA, IB and II ("NCDs") are also part of the Existing Debt and are proposed to be restructured," it said.

The company has received the written consent of 100 per cent of the holders of the NCDs to amend the terms and conditions of the NCDs as per the resolution plan approved by the other lenders

of the existing debt.

"The Board took these cosents on record, in the aforementioned Board meeting, and approved the restructuring of the NCDs, in line with the resolution plan approved by the other lenders of the Existing Debt," the filing said.

Further, the company shall, prior to undertaking the restructuring of the NCDs as per the resolution plan, obtain the approval of the relevant stock exchanges where the NCDs are listed, under the applicable provisions of the LODR Regulations.

The resolution plan shall be implemented after execution of necessary agreements, deeds, undertaking and other relevant documents between the company and the lenders which shall be executed on or before April 26, 2021, said the filing.

It further said that pursuant to the implementation of resolution plan of the existing debt the board expects that the company would recover from the financial stress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, within the resolution timeframe.

FPIs pull out ₹ 4,643 cr from Indian equities so far in April

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Amid resurgent Covid cases, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have pulled out net investments of ₹4,643 crore from the Indian equities.

This is a reversal from the bullish sentiments among the foreign investors over the past one year.

So far in 2021, net FPI investments into the equity market have stood at ₹ 51,099 crore, with net investments in January, February and March at ₹19,473 crore, ₹25,787 crore and ₹10,482 crore, respectively.

The sell-off in April comes amid the rising cases of Covid-19 and the possibilities of partial localised lockdowns, which may bring a halt to the reviving economic and business activities, market experts said.

Weakness in the Indian rupee also has led to the outflow of foreign funds, analysts said.

FIDC seeks extension of MSME restructuring scheme till March 2022

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) has urged the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to extend the one-time restructuring scheme for loans to MSMEs till March next year due to the severe second wave of Covid-19.

The RBI had, on February 11, 2020, allowed one-time restructuring of existing MSME advances, classified as "standard", without downgrade in the asset classification subject to certain additional provisioning and compliance with the conditions as prescribed in the said notification. The time limit for implementation of the said restructuring was till December 31, 2020.

In a letter to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, FIDC Director General Mahesh Thakkar said that owing to the severe second wave of Covid-19, the MSMEs, as also the retail and wholesale trader industry, have not been able to revive their economic activities and therefore, are in urgent need of support from the

lenders.

He noted that various surveys and reports are forewarning that the operating environment for banks will most likely remain challenging, as the second wave could dent the sluggish recovery in consumer and corporate confidence, and further, suppress banks' prospects for new business.

"Considering the challenging environment for MSMEs and lenders, it will be helpful, if the RBI extends the said notification till at least March 31, 2022," the letter said.

The NBFC body also requested that the benefit of PSL (priority sector lending) classification for lending by banks to NBFCs for on-lending be regularised as part of the overall PSL policy.

The RBI on April 7, 2021, extended PSL classification for lending by banks to NBFCs for on-lending by six months, till September 30, 2021, which is a welcome step, it noted.

The FIDC further said that NBFCs are important drivers of credit to MSME sector and therefore, improve the out-

VIT-AP School Of Business inks MoU with Master Minds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the VIT-AP School of Business, VIT-AP University and Master Minds CA Academy was held VIT-AP University, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh on the Friday of 16th April 2021.

Dr. S.V. Kota Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, VIT-AP University after signing the MoU with Master Minds, told that this collaboration will help faculty and students to get CA integrated Curriculum, Optional additional training for CA, ideally student can finish CA Foundation and Inter by the time they pass B.Com. Graduates of B.Com in Finance have a wide range of job opportunities like Banks, Business Schools, Credit Organizations, Consultancies, Economic consulting jobs, Indian civil services, health departments, Insurance industry, securities industry and investments, Mortgage agencies etc.

The opportunities are not limited to the said fields.



Once completed, the graduate may pursue further studies or may take up said job opportunities associated. VIT-AP University is most ideal for those who wish to pursue Chartered Accountancy, Cost and Management Accounting and Company Secretaryship as our B. Com (Finance) curriculum is blended to meet the standards and requirements of Professional Accounting and Finance Certifications.

The programme is spread over six semesters and is compatible with CA Syllabus. CA. M.S.S. Prakash, Director, Master Minds said that the partnership between VIT-AP and MASTERMINDS will be a game changer in Commerce Education. With this partnership large number of VIT-AP students will be benefited and will be able to pursue B. Com and CA simultaneously and will be able to save their valuable time.

Dr. C.L.V. Sivakumar, Registrar, VIT-AP University, Dr. S. Jayavelu, Dean VIT-AP School of Business, Dr. Ravindhar Vadapalli, Program chair witnessed the MoU ceremony.

Petrol prices unchanged across metros

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMC) kept petrol and diesel prices unchanged for the third straight day across four metro cities.

In the national capital, petrol was sold for ₹90.40 per litre on Sunday.

Similarly, price of the fuel in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata was ₹96.83, ₹92.43 and ₹90.62 per litre, respectively.

In line with petrol, prices of diesel also were same for the third straight day.

Price of the fuel in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata was ₹80.73, ₹87.81, ₹85.75 and ₹83.61 per litre, respectively.

Fuel prices have been unchanged after declining on April 15.

Fuel prices in the country have been unchanged as OMCs decided to go on a pause mode and analyse the global developments on oil prices before effecting a revision.

Airtel Payments Bank increases day-end balance limit to ₹2 lakh

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) guidelines, Airtel Payments Bank on Sunday announced that it has become the first payments bank in the country to enable ₹2 lakh day-end balance account limit.

The bank has increased the day-end balance limit to ₹ 2 lakh from ₹1 lakh.

"The RBI's decision to increase the balance limit is an endorsement of the role Payments Banks have in furthering financial and digital inclusion in India.

We are glad to enable this increased day-end balance limit for our customers," Anubrata Biswas, MD and CEO, Airtel Payments Bank, said in a statement.

"At Airtel Payments Bank, we have always believed that higher balance limits would enhance consumer usage of

payments banks, as well as enable large sections of informal India, such as small merchants and traders, to access formal banking easily," Biswas added.

The bank deposits are insured under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RBI.

Airtel Payments Bank has 55 million engaged users and serves them through technology and a retail-based distribution network.

The bank has built a strong network of over 500,000 neighbourhood banking points, which is bigger than the total number of bank branches and ATMs in India.

These neighbourhood banking points take services closer to the customer and have even reached deep rural pockets that never had access to banking services.



Modern retail severely dented due to 2nd wave of Covid: SCAI

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The second wave has severely impacted the modern retail industry, said a statement by the Shopping Centres Association of India (SCAI).

In a statement, the industry body noted that it has been urging the government to support the industry with financial waivers and allow shopping malls to operate once they reopen the other markets.

In order to supplement the government's effort in carrying out an extensive vaccination drive, SCAI has also approached the state governments to conduct the vaccination camps at malls.

"The industry body has also urged to treat mall employees as frontline workers and should be vaccinated on priority irrespective of their age," it said.

As a public infrastructure, with ample parking space, training rooms, among others, malls do have the requisite space to help the local administration to carry out such an exercise that will likely benefit the larger cause of carrying out an extensive vaccination drive, as per SCAI.

With the situation turning grim, SCAI has reached out to all its members and has asked them to further strengthen all the SoPs and protocols, it added.

It also said that the local restrictions, closure of malls in few states, weekend curfews have impacted business, recovery, and employment associated with organised retail. Malls across India had recovered



close to 90 per cent of their business and 75 per cent of their footfalls which drop drastically due to the local restrictions.

On an average during pre-covid days, the industry was clocking Rs 15,000 crore per month and had reached the same during mid of March 2021, but, with the local restrictions, almost 50 per cent revenue slashed, it said.

The shopping centre industry is supporting nearly 1.2 crore livelihoods directly and indirectly who are associated with malls, retail, and manufacturing retail. Most of the employees working in this sector are coming from other states.

Nearly 80 per cent of employees working at retail stores and restaurants belong to an economically weaker section and their livelihood will be impacted the most.

During the last lockdown, the industry saw 25-30 per cent of jobs getting impacted, SCAI said, adding that by mid of March 2021, nearly 70-75 per cent of employees had rejoined.

"The industry in its efforts retained the jobs which were lost due to the pandemic and will continue to bring back employment in the sector," it said.

NBFCs seek extension of MSME restructuring scheme till March 2022

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) have requested the Reserve Bank to extend the one-time restructuring scheme of MSME advances till March 31, 2022, as these players are unable to revive their businesses.

In February last year, the Reserve Bank had permitted one-time restructuring of existing MSME advances, classified as 'standard' without downgrade in the asset classification subject to certain additional provisioning and other compliances. The time limit for implementation of the scheme was till December 31, 2020.

In a recent letter written to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, FIDC, an industry body of NBFCs, said due to the severe second wave of COVID-19, the

micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have not been able to revive their economic activities and are in urgent need of support from the lenders.

"Considering the challenging environment for MSMEs and lenders, it will be helpful, if the RBI extends the restructuring scheme till at least March 31, 2022," the Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) wrote.

NBFCs primarily cater to the funding needs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), including retail and wholesale traders. The industry body also urged the RBI to allow restructuring of certain MSMEs loans that already have got the similar relief under the same scheme during the first wave of COVID-19, but are now facing challenges.

Gold imports rise by 22.58% to \$34.6 bn in 2020-21

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), rose by 22.58 per cent to USD 34.6 billion (about ₹2.54 lakh crore) during 2020-21 due to increased domestic demand, according to the Commerce Ministry data.

Silver imports during the last fiscal, however, dipped by 71 per cent to about USD 791 million. Imports of the yellow metal stood at USD 28.23 billion (about ₹2 lakh crore) in 2019-20, the data showed.

Despite growth in gold imports, the country's trade deficit narrowed to USD 98.56 billion during 2020-21 as against USD 161.3 billion in 2019-20.

Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) Chairman Colin Shah said that increasing domestic demand is pushing up imports of gold.

The demand for gold would further increase on

account of forthcoming auspicious Akshaya Tritiya and marriage season which could increase the CAD.

The CAD is the difference between inflow and outflow of foreign exchange. India's current account swung to a deficit for the first time in the current fiscal, with the gap coming at USD 1.7 billion or 0.2 per cent of the GDP in the December quarter.

India is the largest importer of gold, which mainly caters to the demand of jewellery industry. Gems and jewellery exports declined by 27.5 per cent to USD 26 billion in April-March 2020-21.

In volume terms, the country imports 800-900 tonnes of gold annually.

The government in the Budget reduced the import duty on the yellow metal from 12.5 per cent to 10 per cent (7.5 per cent customs duty plus 2.5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess).



M3M repays debt worth ₹418 cr in Jan-March

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate developer M3M has repaid debt worth ₹418 crore during the fourth quarter of financial year 2020-2021.

The group had earlier set a target of repaying ₹200 crore till March 2021 but the fast collection of sold receivables enabled it pay the existing inventory funding facilities as an advance till December 2021.

"M3M has delivered record 12 projects in a short span of 8 months and by easing the burden on operational cash flow, the group will streamline its efforts to deliver unparalleled experiences to customers," said a statement. M3M Director Pankaj Bansal said: "In less than a decade, M3M has emerged as an illustrious real estate developer with speed, class and innovation being at the core of its vision. With the strategy, we plan to retire the entire existing debt by March 2022.

micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have not been able to revive their economic activities and are in urgent need of support from the lenders.

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THE CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Architects are increasingly faced with the dilemma of building something that answers the immediate fanciful demands of their clients or orchestrate responsible end-user behaviour for generations at the inhabitant's end, says SHALINI CHANGRASHEKHAR

The proposition of taking contemplative pauses that yield intimacy and delight often seems unattainable in modern-day living. Resisting the temptation to get caught up in the frantic rush of everyday life doesn't come naturally to any of us these days. But acknowledging the psychological distress that fast-paced lifestyles are posing on our physical and mental well-being has become crucial.

Back in the day, when people weren't so blinded by the allure of modernity and took time to unwind themselves in the lap of nature and the arms of their loved ones, daily routines did not turn exhaustive as quickly as they do now. With the electronic skein rapidly winding around us, there is a pressing need to identify the importance of hosting built environments that iterate a harmonious lifestyle.

Throughout humanity's life history, evolution has been central to its synergy with nature. We, as human beings, are inextricably bound to the well-being of our environment. We thrive when our natural surrounding thrives. Since its prevalence, architecture has helped humans to devise this affiliation with its context through tangible curations.

But amid the prevalent technocratic paradigm, where we have resourcefully restructured all aspects of earthly life; it becomes an architect's social responsibility to identify with the urge to express affinity towards nature where an environmental disaster seems to be pending.

Seeking the well-being of current and future generations within the limits of the natural world, architects are now trying to strike a balance between how short-term interests at the individual and organisational levels are at odds with the global systems and communities in the longer run.

Today's conscious design behaviour at the architect's end can orchestrate responsible end-user behaviour for generations at the inhabitant's end. Whereas end-use behaviour can determine what happens in a situation, design behaviour often determines the case itself. While the end-user is an office worker deciding whether to put on a sweater or turn up the air conditioning device, the architect decides whether to heat that office with renew-



able solar energy or with mechanical systems powered by fossil fuels.

An architectural design that does not contemplate its local and global repercussions and fails to adapt to the ever-evolving future dynamics becomes infeasible for subsequent generations.

Individual comfort can only be endured if achieved collectively with a sustainable consciousness on a larger scale.

Design practices worldwide, have started feeling accountable for devising socially equitable development that is respectful of nature now more than ever

and, have started resorting to new approaches towards more sustainable energy usage in buildings. While technological advances pose some challenges in creating contextually sound built forms, its progressive attributes in terms of modern innovations ease the

desperation to rely on natural resources. Contemporary practices like opting for solar panels, incorporating automation systems, or imbibing something as fundamentally classic as rainwater harvesting can contribute a fair share in taking care of our atmosphere.

But the pursuit of sustainability doesn't come easy. It is a layered and interdependent network of judgments and decisions shaped by specific socio-economic contexts and must consider both existing and preferred states of complex Anthropocene situations. Along with which architects also face challenges while narrating their environmental concerns to the clients who, on most days, are inspired by the fanciful ideas and foreign concepts for their dream abodes that might not sanction a contextually inclusive design intervention. Working on tight schedules and a decline in skilled labour further this dilemma on the creator's side when, as a designer, all he aspires for are meaningful and appropriate design solutions.

We, as architects, hustle with the situational impositions and invest all our will in crafting architectural volumes that strike equilibrium amid the user, nature and the context. We identify with the moral sense of safeguarding the environment and composing poetic architectural vocabulary derived from human behaviours in response to its habitat.

Spaces rooted in the landscape and inspired by the local vernacular have been apparent in introducing a healthy living experience and motivating productivity in the work-life. Tethered to user experience and sustainability, these spatial identities offer a deeper resonance with harmonious life patterns by inducing a contextually inclusive built environment.

Conclusively, in today's time when chronic modifications to the environment have registered a direct impact on our quality of life and health, holistically curated sustainable built forms willingly induce a sense of calmness among its inhibitors by offering them a contemplative pause they rightfully deserve amid their fast-paced lifestyles.

(The writer is the principal designer and co-founder of Taliersyn - Design & Architecture.)

WEBBED



SHADOW AND BONE

Dark forces conspire against orphan mapmaker Alina Starkov when she unleashes an extraordinary power that could change the fate of her war-torn world. Starring Jessie Mei Li, Archie Renaux and Ben Barnes, season one releases on April 23 on Netflix.



STOWAWAY

A three-person crew on a mission to Mars faces an impossible choice when an unplanned passenger jeopardizes the lives of everyone on board. Starring Anna Kendrick, Toni Collette and Daniel Dae Kim, the film releases on April 22 on Netflix.



THINGS HEARD AND SEEN

A young woman discovers that both her husband and their new home harbor sinister secrets after they leave Manhattan for small-town life. Starring Amanda Seyfried, James Norton and Natalia Dyer, the film releases on April 29 on Netflix.

Virtual ways to find a life partner is now a reality, or better yet, the new normal, suggests a new survey.

With the second wave of COVID-19, Jeevansathi.com, a matrimony platform, rolled out a survey to understand how this impacts the search for a life partner.

Results show that half of the respondents feel that virtual meetings will become the norm very soon; completely replacing physical meetings during one's search for a life partner. In contrast, in August 2020, only 40 per cent respondents confirmed the same. When digital transformation is the in-thing across industries, finding soulmates has also found its safe haven online.

Rohan Mathur, Business Head, Jeevansathi.com said, "Pandemic has changed the way people search for a life partner. We have witnessed the increasing affinity among our users towards virtual ways of connecting with prospective matches. While we saw a spike in usage of voice and video-calling on our platform as soon as COVID hit, the trend has continued even after relaxations in government restrictions and a drop in cases. At the onset of the pandemic, we had seen the volume of calls on the platform go up 1.6X. This year, the number of voice/video calls is a whopping 11X of what it was pre-COVID. Total time spent on calls has also gone up 10 times."

As many as 38 per cent of the respondents are comfortable taking a decision based on virtual meetings alone. While digital has its own ease, it has not completely banished the importance of in-person meetings. Around 44 per cent respondents are happy to connect over video calls to know each other but meeting in-person is still required for the final decision. Only 18 per cent said that they still prefer meeting matches face-to-face over virtually.

It is interesting to see the newfound appreciation for small weddings with limited guest lists. While it was understandably the most

Find love online

A survey reveals that matchmaking on video calls rises to 50 per cent amid the pandemic



popular choice when cases in the country had peaked, even after the vaccine rollout, 55 per cent of respondents have expressed their preference for smaller weddings. The second wave of COVID-19 could be one of the reasons for the same. However, in this wave, people are relatively more relaxed and want to go back to a world where big fat Indian weddings were common. Twenty seven per cent respondents

said they would readily have a regular wedding now, albeit with safety precautions vs only 11 per cent respondents willing in August'20. While searching for a partner has moved online in the wake of the lockdown, virtual weddings are completely eliminated. No respondent opted for a virtual wedding in the survey, as compared to 11 per cent who did in August'20.

That said, safety and sanitisation have become the top priority in Indian weddings since the pandemic hit. Over 50 per cent respondents chose a COVID-safe wedding over the perfect outfits, pictures, food, etc. Sixty nine per cent respondents said they are now comfortable attending a pandemic wedding with the requisite precautions.

—IANS

Kumbh shouldn't have taken place: Sonu

Noted singer Sonu Nigam on Sunday reacted to the Kumbh Mela being made symbolic for this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The singer feels, the religious gathering shouldn't have been permitted to happen amid the pandemic.

With reports of a huge number of COVID positive cases from Kumbh Mela area in Haridwar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday appealed to observe the event 'symbolic' to strengthen fight against the deadly virus. Sonu Nigam posted a video on Instagram on Sunday reacting to the same.

In his Instagram video, Sonu Nigam said in Hindi: "I can't comment about anything else, I'm born a Hindu and as a Hindu, I feel the Kumbh Mela shouldn't have taken place in the first place. Thank god good sense prevailed on everyone and it has been made symbolic. I understand it is a matter of faith but considering the present situation of the world, nothing can be more important than the lives of people."

The singer in his video also expressed that live shows should not be arranged amid the second wave of the pandemic which has badly affected India.

He said, "As a singer I feel live shows should not be conducted right now. Shows can be done maintaining social distance and taking precautions



but not now, at a later time. We have to be very careful, the situation is very bad."

Further in his video, the singer informed that he will return to Mumbai from Goa on Monday and isolate himself as a precautionary measure. He said, "I'll return to Mumbai from Goa and isolate in my room for a couple of days because I have to meet my father. Once I feel it is right, then I'll go and meet my father."

TRENDBLAZER

SOHA SHARES SHADES OF LOCKDOWN

Actor **SOHA ALI KHAN** has shared her weekend mood on Sunday. She posted a string of monochrome pictures on Instagram. In the images, Soha is seen posing for the lens as she looks away from the camera.

"Shades of lockdown @kunalkemmu #lockdown #sunday #weekendmood," Soha wrote alongside the images.

Speaking about her work, Soha was last seen in the 2018 film *Saheb Biwi Aur Gangster 3*, a crime thriller film, directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia.

fairtalk

ALAYA F



'I really enjoy social media, I try to keep it real. But I make sure not to take it more seriously. It brings in a lot of good and bad. You have to focus on the good and if it gets overwhelming, take a break. If I see myself getting overwhelmed with social media, I just put my phone aside until I am ready to deal with it again.'

dailytalk

JAAVED JAAFERI



'When it comes to home entertainment, especially cinema that caters to the mass audience, after the theatre, the best medium is TV. So, when a family entertainer film releases on TV, it gets a better mileage. OTT platforms are great but it is subscription-based and our good old practice of watching films on TV is part of daily culture.'

PRIYANKA TO LAUNCH KABIR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Actor **KABIR BEDI** announced that **PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS** would launch his autobiography *Stories I Must Tell: The Emotional Life Of An Actor*.

The launch will take place virtually as Priyanka will join Kabir from London. Kabir made the announcement on Instagram, uploading a launch poster.

"Thrilled to bits! @PriyankaChopra is officially launching my book on April 19 at 6:30 pm IST," he captioned the poster.





WATER WOES

Despite the multiple reserves in Uttarakhand, the uneven distribution has led to scarcity in several districts, says PANKAJ SINGH BISHT

Unustainable development at the cost of the environment has created this mess in the mountains. The lush green forests are now being turned into concrete jungles with unchecked construction taking place in the most vulnerable regions. One can spot giant construction machines in the most fragile areas. The entire ecosystem is at the receiving end as several rivers are being damaged by the rapid construction. In tribal areas, sale of agricultural land is at its peak. The demand for water at these construction sites is being fulfilled through illegal actions. The private builders drill an underground bore to pump water to these sites using motors. This activity obstructs the underground streams leading to drying of the nat-

ural water bodies. As a result, there is a severe water crisis looming large over the state. The drinking water is not available to fulfill the needs of the locals. In Dhari and Ramgarh Development Blocks of Nainital district, there is a huge public outrage. The unavailability of water in most of the drinking water pipelines operated through Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan has made the situation worse. The Dadoligad Drinking Water Supply Scheme was launched to cater to the needs of five villages in the region — Parbada, Majhera, Chokhuta, Gajar and Bana in block Dhari. The residents of these villages, however, allege that the staff of Jal Sansthan instead of supplying water to

their villages, sell it illegally to the hotels and builders of the area. The locals get only 50 to 60 liters of water in 15 to 20 days despite having access to water connection legally. "A total of 44 drinking water projects are being operated in 41 villages of the Dhari Development block. The Jal Sansthan has offered 2,100 individual connections as part of these schemes which supplies drinking water to about 3,000 families. All this water is pumped from the local rivers which are fed by rain. These rivers will not be able to meet the needs of the locals if there will be no rain in the next 15 days. The pipelines will be completely shut," informed Assistant Engineer-in-Charge, Harish Chandra Dwivedi. The alternative, he suggest-

ed, is to provide water through tankers to people residing in areas connected via roads.

What about communities residing in areas tucked away in the mountains with no access through roads? To understand how the government is planning to address the issue of water scarcity in Dhari block, the writer came across the proposed 'Jal Jeevan Mission' by the Central Government. The scheme is envisioned to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India. As part of it, the State Water Department has planned to upgrade the same old 44 drinking water schemes of which 15 are already on the verge of closure.

As per the records received from Jal Sansthan, till date, around 500 new applications for connections have been received and accepted under the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' mission in Dhari block. This connection, available for only ₹1 to the public, is to be mandatorily provided by the department. To fulfill the demand, these new connections are being provided through the existing lines which are already overburdened. Since there is no or little water left in these pipes, this scheme is being run successfully only on papers.

The locals, owing to their limited knowledge and awareness, believe that nature is to be blamed for insufficient rainfall. They had limited or absolutely zero knowledge about the existing schemes aimed at increasing ground water levels, rainwater harvesting, etc.

The current situation is a result of years of negligence towards the root causes of the issue. Instead of strategic planning and aiming for sustainable development, we are merely replacing older schemes with newer ones. The water woes of the residents of the Dhari block is only the tip of the iceberg. The situation is alarming at the state level and the role of locals cannot be denied.

The locals should contribute to the ongoing efforts of both the government and non-government organisations by becoming more responsible than ever. Saving water should be the motto of each and every villager. They should take initiatives like harvesting rainwater using traditional knowledge. By taking such initiatives, they will be in a better position to provide solutions to the government.

—Charkha Features



Building a crimeless society

The Indian Penal Code punishes a person for the crime s/he commits. However, in complete contrast, the approach of spiritual prudence is to reform the criminal, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

The IPC (The Indian Penal Code) has many sections to deal with cognisable and non-cognisable offences and also some attempts to commit offences. These crimes are grouped under various heads viz: offences affecting the human body, against property, relating to marriage, criminal breach of contracts of service, defamation, criminal intimidation, insult and annoyance... to name a few. If we analyse the factors leading to committal of crimes, we will find that a flaw or a weakness in the character of the person has been responsible for his committing that crime. So, either the tendencies, the habits and the urge in a person compel him/her to commit a crime or the circumstances are tempting, alluring, provocative or enervating and he/she falls prey to them. He cannot control himself, cannot withstand the adverse circumstances and is, thus, carried away by his emotions. Sometimes, he labours under some kind of misunderstanding and gets infuriated and loses his balance of mind. At times, he thinks that the whole society consists of criminals — some small and others big — and if he also commits a crime then how does it matter? In other words, frustration or the vicious environment also instigates him to commit crime.



In addition to these, we find that, when a person sees that people give more respect to a rich person, howsoever, dishonest, hypocrite and exploitative he might be and, on the other hand, they do not consider a poor or a middle class man as worthy of respect even if that person be honest, sincere, truthful and of sterling character, then he also thinks of adopting a short cut to money or status even by grossly dishonest means. Thus, the deformed and distorted value-system, prevalent in the society, also leads a person to crime by giving him a faulty outlook and wrong attitudes. Further, it is observed that it is the belief system of a person that determines his behaviour. So if a person thinks that it is just, proper and wise to give sound beating to a person who insults him or intimidates him, then he will always be prone to attack that person and will commit violence, conveniently forgetting the consequences. He will take law in his hands because he believes that there is nothing wrong in taking revenge even if it is by violent means.

It is well known to all that the approach of IPC is to punish a person for the crime he/she commits. However, in complete contrast to this, the approach of spiritual prudence, is not to punish but to reform the crim-

inal. There is, however, one point which to some extent is common to both but which is not given due cognisance at times in criminal law. The criminal jurisprudence recognises that if a person, who commits crime is of unsound mind or is incapable of judgement by reason of intoxication or is a minor, then his action, even if violative of a law, will not be considered as an offence and the person will not be subjected to harsh punishment. But in spiritual prudence, it is thought that even if a person is not a minor but is still of unsound mind when he commits a crime. Another difference between the criminal jurisprudence and spiritual prudence is that, according to the latter, a murder, theft, etc, committed by anyone, of whatever age or whatever state of mind, is a sin even though its severity and the punishment it would attract in course of time, may vary according to the age, state of mind or intent of the person. A sin is a sin even if it is not a crime. The divine law will take its course; it has its own procedure code. That is why even if a person may escape punishment for crime by any means, he cannot escape punishment for his sins. So, the efforts of spiritual prudence are addressed to changing a person's belief systems, applying corrective measures to his outlook so that he/she may be able to stand the whirlwind of hard and adverse circumstances. It should be noted that spiritual prudence does not say that a person be not given punishment by authority of law and through due legal process, however it has compassion for the sinner and takes the said steps. One, however, wonders why they, who are doing great service to the society through jurisprudence, do not recommend, advocate or promote this kind of process in jails, remand homes, reform centres and also in schools and colleges so that we can gradually move towards the new paradigm of a crimeless society.

Silence is your worst enemy

We, as a society, have made some progress in the realms of mental health. But is it as rosy as they say? GIRISH DUTT SHUKLA shares that talking to a person you trust is the first step to recovery

Depression seems to be the word of the day. You hear about it in pop culture, read about it in books and even may have made comments about it yourself online. But do we understand the gravity and the intricacies surrounding it? How does it feel to be trapped inside your head? To see the world in all its glory but somehow, for some reason not being able to take part in it? If only you could feel all the colours in the rainbow. But is that what depression is? To not be able to see all the colours of life? How about we toss the coin and discover the other spectrum of it? How about when you are way too aware of yourself and your surroundings what then? Is it possible that too much feeling can also push you down the hole? Whatever may be the case but the result sadly is common; withdrawal from oneself and the world and over-reaching coldness that can leave you in an abyss.



rosy, as they say? Can we talk about it?

The world can go light-years ahead but that doesn't accelerate your own growth. You may be in a middle of healthy conversation about mental health but may feel ashamed or simply too vulnerable to open about your own demons. It is hard to talk about what is eating you. There is no timeline or a simple roadmap to understand how long you have been suffering. For some it is just what they have to live with as they don't know any other way. Can you feel happy and be in the moment at all times and not fall in this invisible rabbit hole that only exists for you? Can it be better? Can you tell someone how it feels? That you feel like you are alone in this world, even when you are surrounded by all the people you love. It is hard to open up, to show your emotional scars. To lay it out in the open

and show your inner suffering. For some, it is the sharing part that restrains them to talk. To some it is simply the matter of coherence, of not being able to describe how it feels. For some, it is the fear of being labeled as a 'sad person' but that's not who they are. How do you open up and will that help? More often than not, these are the crippling fears that make you stay silent but silence is the only thing that will not help. It is essential to look within and find the strength to talk about it, to find a person you believe and trust and just explain how you are feeling. There are no right words here, the essence of healing lies in being vulnerable. People who are suffering from depression for a long period of time may feel that is the only way to live and this feeling can cast a shadow in any hope for a bright and happier future. You may feel life is too hard.

What is the purpose of keep going on? The perpetual tiredness that comes with it can be hard to bear but it is incredibly important to reach out at times like these. It is essential to understand that it is a disease that needs to be treated like any other ailment and yes, there is light at the end of the tunnel. However, the first step towards the journey is to open up and talk.

You may think how will talking help? Well suppose you are going to a friend's house and get lost and your phone isn't working. What to do now? Someone in the area might be able to help you with the right directions. Depression is exactly like that. Here you are lost within yourself, tangled between questions about your own life's worth. You need to have a broader perspective and talk about it.

When you talk, people would listen and help you. Talking is acceptance. Acceptance that you are suffering, acceptance that it is not the way of life, acceptance that yes life is worth living and your life is important. Silence is your worst enemy. Talking to a person you trust is the first step to recovery.

(The writer is a computer engineer and author of the book — Maroon In A Sky Of Blue.)

Aspire to inspire

Eight-year-old Krishna Vaidhya has not only made her banker parents proud by bagging the prestigious award for designing a futuristic chair for Mars under a competition hosted by the acclaimed Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation, but also brought laurels for India too as the youngest participant to be bestowed the honour. As part of the award, she won 3,000 dirham and a visit to a state-of-the-art prototyping lab in Dubai. Her model of the futuristic chair, fabricated from recyclable household items, has legs that double as a levitation device (with boosters) to keep it aloft in the high gravitational pull of the Mars while manoeuvring in the harsh volcanic Mar's surface. Enclosed in a globe-like module with a protective cover of ash proof glass, the chair is featured to provide a 360 degree view to the rider.



Krishna named her prototype Krishna's Kursi, for the latter means 'chair' both in Hindi and Arabic, honouring her birthland (UAE) and motherland (India). Her mother, Navita Gupta Hakim, a banker turned chef, shared, "Krishna is extremely proud of her Indian roots. Watching Mission Mangal left an indelible mark on her. She was further fuelled by the UAE's Hope Probe. On coming across the contest — Chair of the Future — she sought to participate in it, celebrating UAE's entry as a proud nation into the elite space club." As part of the competition, the participants had to create a prototype of a chair and make a short video presentation explaining about it. She was competing with approximately 250 design personnels from all over UAE and across all age groups. Krishna won her prize in the 'future' category. She has had a multicultural experience, thus, shaping her view of the world. She has persevered and has an attitude to find innovative ways to accomplish tasks. She is also fascinated by the Bhagwad Geeta with her belief in the power of a 'guru'. Her mother shared that during the lockdown, Krishna amazed every one with her resilience. While most struggled with the 'new normal', she readily adapted to technology and was also recognised by her school. She has created another frugal invention on her YouTube channel based on Newton's 3rd law. A self-moving tray that can be used for quarantined people. Hope her story inspires more youngsters to show the world their true potential.

—By Rakesh K Singh

Don't watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going.
 —Sam Levenson

COVID DOES NOT INFECT BRAIN

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, likely does not directly infect the brain but can still inflict significant neurological damage, a new study suggests.

The findings, published in the journal *Brain*, suggest that the neurological changes often seen in these patients may result from inflammation triggered by the virus in other parts of the body or the brain's blood vessels.



"We've looked at more brains than other studies and we have used more techniques to search for the virus. The bottom line is that we find no evidence of viral RNA or protein in brain cells," said researcher James E. Goldman from Columbia University. The tests were conducted on more than two dozen brain regions, including the olfactory bulb, which was searched because some reports have speculated that the coronavirus can travel from the nasal cavity into the brain via the olfactory nerve.

"Even there, we didn't find any viral protein or RNA," Goldman said.

ORAL HYGIENE TO PREVENT HEART INFECTION

Maintaining good oral health is more important than use of antibiotics in dental procedures, according to a new American Heart Association (AHA) scientific statement.

Oral hygiene may be key in preventing a heart infection caused by bacteria around the teeth, affirmed the statement, published in the journal *Circulation*.

Infective endocarditis (IE), also called bacterial endocarditis, is a heart infection caused by bacteria that enter the bloodstream and settle in the heart lining, a heart valve or a blood vessel.

Intravenous drug use increases risk for IE. There's been concern that certain dental procedures may increase the risk of developing Viridans group streptococcal infective endocarditis (VGS IE) in vulnerable patients.

VGS IE is caused by bacteria that collect in plaque on the tooth surface and cause inflammation and swelling of the gums.



ML CAN HELP SLOW DOWN FUTURE PANDEMICS

Machine Learning (ML) can be used to find effective testing methods during epidemic outbreaks, thereby helping to better control the outbreaks, a new study said. ML is a type of Artificial Intelligence and can be described as a mathematical model where computers are trained to learn to see connections and solve problems using different data sets.

The team from the University of Gothenburg in Sweden developed a method to improve testing strategies during epidemic outbreaks and to predict which individuals require the need for testing, even with relatively limited information. In the study, data about the infected individual's network of contacts and other information were used: Who they have been in close contact with, where and for how long.

The researchers found that the outbreak can quickly be brought under control when the method is used, while random testing leads to uncontrolled spread of the outbreak with many more infected individuals.



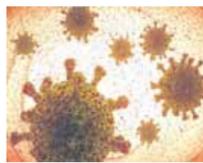
COVID CAN PERSIST IN DUST FOR A MONTH

Some genetic material of the Coronavirus can persist up to a month in dust in the rooms where COVID-19 patients were isolated, finds a study.

The study, published in the journal *mSystems*, did not evaluate whether the dust can transmit the virus to humans. But, it offers another option for monitoring COVID-19 outbreaks in specific buildings, including nursing homes, offices or schools.

Researchers from the Ohio State University in the US, worked with the crews responsible for cleaning the rooms at the university where students who tested positive for COVID-19 were isolated.

They found RNA — part of the genetic material inside a virus — in 97 per cent of the bulk dust samples and in 55 per cent of the surface swabs. The samples were tested weekly. Even after four weeks, the virus's RNA did not significantly decay in the vacuum bags.



BP PILLS MAY CAUSE SKIN CANCERS

Common medications used to treat hypertension (high blood pressure) may adversely raise the risk of skin cancers in people aged 66 and above, claims a new study.

Long-term intake of antihypertensive medications called thiazide diuretics, including hydrochlorothiazide, are linked with higher rates of non-melanoma and melanoma — the two major types of skin cancers, *globalnews.ca* reported.

The findings have been published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ). However, other common blood pressure drugs such as angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, calcium channel blockers and beta-blockers, did not raise this risk, the study showed.



GAME N 2021

CAPTAIN'S CALL

I THOUGHT 150 WAS A GOOD SCORE ON CHEPAUK TRACK AND THE WAY WE CAME OUT AND BOWLED AND SHOWED THAT ATTITUDE ON THE FIELD WAS VERY IMPORTANT.

— ROHIT SHARMA



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Glenn Maxwell was good but AB de Villiers was better as Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 38 runs in their IPL match here on Sunday.

Batting first, De Villiers' master class and Maxwell's counter-attacking half-century propelled RCB to an imposing 204 for four. In reply, KKR were stopped at 166 for eight as RCB regained the top spot in the pecking order.

RCB smashed 56 runs in the last three overs, including 21 in the final six deliveries, thanks to de Villiers 34-ball 76 not out.

Maxwell blazed away to 78 off 49 deliveries, hitting nine boundaries and three maximums before the genius from South Africa strode in and struck the same number of fours and sixes as his teammate from Australia.

The Knight Riders were off to a brilliant start with leg-break bowler Varun Chakravarthy leaving RCB in early trouble at 9/2 with the big wickets of skipper Virat Kohli (5) and Rajat Patidar (1) in the second over.

Opening the bowling for KKR, veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh bowled a tight line and length to stifle the RCB batsmen in his first two overs.

After Chakravarthy lured Kohli to go over cover with a tossed-up delivery that drifted away from the right-hander, Rahul Tripathi pulled off a sensational catch running back from extra-cover. The top batsman was nowhere close to the ball.

Chakravarthy then went through the defence of Patidar with one that darted back on landing.

Mixing aggression with caution, Maxwell and Devdutt Padikkal (25) revived the RCB innings after the early blows at the MAMChidambaram Stadium.

While the young Indian seemed content playing the



BIG SHOW

RCB win three in a row as AB, Maxi fire them to 38 run win against KKR

second fiddle, the swashbuckling Australian counter-attacked in fine fashion and played the big shots with consummate ease.

The in-form Maxwell upped the ante when he cleared his front leg to plonk Shakib Al Hasan over long-on for his first maximum in the sixth over.

The one bowled by Shakib turned out to be a productive

over for RCB as they got 17 runs off it.

Morgan's decision to take out both Chakravarthy and Harbhajan at a time when they were bowling well was baffling, but RCB didn't mind at all as they capitalised on the surprising move.

After reaching 45 for two at the end of the six powerplay overs, Maxwell shifted gears and raced to his half-century in

RCB pacer Harshal Patel celebrates with teammates Ab de Villiers, Devdutt Padikkal, Yuzvendra Chahal and skipper Virat Kohli after he takes wicket of KKR captain Eoin Morgan

just 28 balls. Even Chakravarthy, who was on fire some time ago, was not spared by Maxwell as he smashed him for a six and four off successive balls.

Prasidh Krishna ended the third-wicket partnership of 86 runs by sending back Padikkal, which signalled the arrival of De Villiers in the middle.

Joining forces, the dazzling duo of Maxwell and De Villiers did not allow the KKR bowlers to settle into any sort of rhythm until premier pacer Pat Cummins ended their 53-run association.

After that, the show belonged to De Villiers as he toyed with KKR bowlers.

He finished it off in style,

pummeling Andre Russell for three fours and a six in the last of the innings.

The last-over onslaught was preceded by 4, 4, 6 as de Villiers left poor Russell bruised and battered.

The extremely-talented Shubman Gill and in-form Nitish Rana struck a few fours and sixes before the former got out for a nine-ball 21.

KKR kept losing wickets at regular intervals and were tottering at 114 for five in the 14th over when purple cap holder Harshal Patel dismissed captain Eoin Morgan (29).

Russell (31 off 20 balls) provided some entertainment by collecting 20 runs off Yuzvendra Chahal in the 17th

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

Virat Kohli (c)	Tripathi b Chakravarthy	5
Devidutt Padikkal	c Tripathi b Prasidh	25
Rajat Patidar	b Chakravarthy	1
Glenn Maxwell	c Harbhajan b Cummins	78
AB de Villiers (wk)	not out	76
Kyle Jamieson	not out	11
Extras (b 0, lb 0, w 5, nb 3, p 0)		8
Total (4 wickets, 20 Ov)		204

Did not bat: Washington Sundar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Harshal Patel, Mohammed Siraj, Yuzvendra Chahal

Fall of Wickets: 6-1 (Virat Kohli, 1.2), 9-2 (Rajat Patidar, 1.6), 95-3 (Devidutt Padikkal, 11.1), 148-4 (Maxwell, 16.6)

Bowling

Harbhajan Singh	4-1-38-0
Varun Chakravarthy	4-0-39-2
Shakib Al Hasan	2-0-24-0
Pat Cummins	4-0-34-1
Prasidh Krishna	4-0-31-1
Andre Russell	2-0-38-0

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Nitish Rana	c Devdutt Padikkal b Chahal	18
Shubman Gill	c (sub) Christian b Jamieson	21
Rahul Tripathi	c Siraj b Washington Sundar	25
Eoin Morgan (c)	c Kohli b Harshal Patel	29
Dinesh Karthik (wk)	lbw b Chahal	2
Shakib Al Hasan	b Jamieson	26
Andre Russell	b Harshal Patel	31
Pat Cummins	c de Villiers b Jamieson	6
Harbhajan Singh	not out	2
Varun Chakravarthy	not out	2
Extras (b 0, lb 0, w 4, nb 0, p 0)		4
Total (8 wickets, 20 Ov)		166

Did not bat: Prasidh Krishna

Fall of Wickets: 23-1 (Shubman Gill, 1.5), 57-2 (Rahul Tripathi, 5.6), 66-3 (Nitish Rana, 6.5), 74-4 (Dinesh Karthik, 8.3), 114-5 (Eoin Morgan, 13.4), 155-6 (Shakib Al Hasan, 17.4), 161-7 (Pat Cummins, 17.6), 162-8 (Andre Russell, 19.1)

Bowling

Mohammed Siraj	3-0-17-0
Kyle Jamieson	3-0-41-3
Yuzvendra Chahal	4-0-34-2
Washington Sundar	4-0-33-1
Glenn Maxwell	2-0-24-0
Harshal Patel	4-0-17-2

boundarymeter

4s	334
6s	137

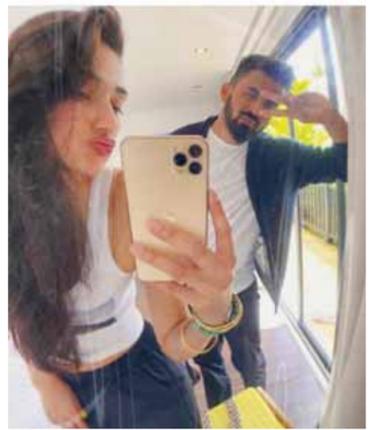
PLAYER	RUNS
1. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	186
2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	176
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	157

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	9
2. Rahul Chahar (MI)	7
3. Avesh Khan (DC)	6

PLAYER	MOST SIXES
1. Glenn Maxwell (RR)	8
2. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	8
3. Sanju Samson (RR)	7

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Bollywood actor Althiya Shetty wishes her rumoured boyfriend Punjab Kings captain KL Rahul on his 29th Birthday @althiyashettyInstagram



Rajasthan Royals wicket keeper batsman Jos Buttler plays with his daughter Georgia Rose during team's training session @josbuttlerInstagram

'BUMRAH MAKES MY JOB EASIER'
Jasprit Bumrah is "one of the best death bowlers" in the game, gushed star New Zealand seamer Trent Boult after the Indian pace spearhead yet again played a key role in Mumbai Indians' triumph against Sunrisers Hyderabad. "It's great to see a guy (Bumrah) like that operate. How clear he is with what he is doing with the ball throughout his whole spell," Boult said after MI beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by 13 runs on Saturday. "But at the death, I personally believe, he is one of the best death bowlers in the world. He makes my job a heck of a lot easier," he added.

'CAN'T RELY ON JUST BOUNDARIES'
Sunrisers Hyderabad mentor VVS Laxman rued that his batsmen could not rotate the strike when getting boundaries was tough against Mumbai Indians bowlers on a tough Chepuk wicket. Chasing a modest 151-run target, SRH could manage only 137 in 19.4 overs as their batsmen struggled to score runs in the middle overs on Saturday. "That's (taking singles and twos) a very important skill especially on these kind of wickets because it is not easy to hit through the line. You can't rely on just boundaries and sixes," Laxman said at the post-match press conference.

'MAXWELL'S KNOCK MADE DIFFERENCE'
Glenn Maxwell has taken his new team to "like duck to water" and AB de Villiers' "love" for the franchise too has helped in putting Royal Challengers Bangalore on the right track this season, captain Virat Kohli said on Sunday. "Maxi has taken to this team like duck to water. AB loves the team and they were the difference today," Kohli said at the post-match presentation. "I said at the halfway mark we have 200 because of two genius innings back-to-back. Maxwell was outstanding and AB to follow. When he gets in with that kind of form and flow, it's impossible to stop him. We got 40 extra runs on that pitch which slowed down."

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS	
1	RCB	3	3	0	+0.750	6
2	DC	3	2	1	+0.453	4
3	MI	3	1	1	+0.367	4
4	CSK	2	1	1	+0.616	2
5	RR	2	1	1	+0.052	2
6	KKR	3	1	2	-0.633	2
7	PBKS	3	1	2	-0.967	2
8	SRH	3	0	3	-0.483	0

Royal test awaits CSK

KEY PLAYERS

DEEPAK CHAHAR
The CSK pacer was at it his best against PBKS and will be looking to build on that performance
CHRIS MORRIS
The most expensive IPL player ever played his part to perfection vs DC and RR will aim similar things from him again

VENUE: WANKHEDE STADIUM, MUMBAI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches	23
Chennai Super Kings	14
Rajasthan Royals	09

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Rajasthan Royals defeated Chennai Super Kings by 16 runs in Sharjah
- Rajasthan Royals beat Chennai Super Kings by 7 wickets in Abu Dhabi

2

Deepak Chahar who claimed 48 wickets at an average of 25.10 in 45 innings of as many matches, needs just two wickets to become the sixth bowler to complete a half century of wickets for CSK in IPL.

609

Suresh Raina's 609 runs at an average of 29.00 in 21 innings of as many matches is the second most against RR in IPL after Abraham de Villiers who made 648 runs at an average of 46.28 in 19 innings of 20 matches for Delhi Capitals and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Dhawan spoils KL party

Shikhar's 92 helps Delhi beat Punjab by 6 wickets on skipper Rahul's birthday



Delhi Capitals player Shikhar Dhawan plays a pull shot

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Shikhar Dhawan struck a swashbuckling 92 as Delhi Capitals made short work of a 196-run target for a six-wicket win over Punjab Kings in the IPL here on Sunday.

Dhawan looked in sublime form during his 49-ball knock that was studded with 13 fours and two sixes.

Dhawan was ably supported by Prithvi Shaw (32 off 15) first up and then skipper Rishabh Pant (15) and Marcus Stoinis (27 not out) as DC chased down 196 in 18.2 overs.

Put in to bat, Mayank

Agarwal and captain K L Rahul stitched a century-run opening stand to guide Punjab to a challenging 195 for four.

Agarwal made 69 off 36 balls, while Rahul scored 61 off 51 deliveries as Punjab made a flying start to their innings.

Chasing 196, Dhawan and Shaw made a quick start, sharing 59 runs in just 33 balls for the opening wicket.

Shaw continued his fine form and smashed a 17-ball 32 before being holed out to Chris Gayle off Arshdeep Singh.

Steve Smith, playing his first match for DC, looked a pale shadow of himself before becoming Riley Meredith's first victim

of the day. But the wickets hardly had any impact on Dhawan, who continued his attacking stroke-play to bring up his fifty off 31 balls.

Needing 71 off 42 balls, DC struck gold by picking up 18 runs off the 14th over. Dhawan hit Meredith for a hat-trick of fours, besides the bowler gave away another boundary off a wide ball as DC brought down the margin to 53 off 36 balls.

Dhawan, however, fell eight short of a brilliant century when he was cleaned up by Jhye Richardson (2/41) in the 16th over.

Earlier, Pant's decision to bowl after winning the toss backfired as the opening duo of Agarwal and Rahul took the attack to the opposition bowlers from the onset, hitting boundaries and sixes at will.

While Agarwal was the aggressor of the two initially, Rahul upped the ante after a relatively sedate start.

Agarwal and Rahul adopted an aggressive approach against debutant Lukeman Meriwala and Kagiso Rabada, taking their team to 94 for no loss in 10 overs.

Agarwal was looking dangerous during his 36-ball knock and ended up hitting seven boundaries and four hits over the fence.

But DC dismissed both the batsmen in quick succession to make a comeback into the match.

While Agarwal was the first to depart, slicing a Meriwala delivery straight to Shikhar Dhawan at sweeper cover in the 13th over, Rahul handed a simple catch to Marcus Stoinis at midwicket off Rabada.

Rahul's knock was laced with seven boundaries and two sixes.

Big-hitting Chris Gayle (11) failed to make a mark, perishing soon in search of a maximum.

Nicholas Pooran (9) failed yet again but Deepak Hooda (22 not out off 13) and Shahrukh Khan (15 not out off five) provided the much needed big hits towards the end.

For DC, Ravichandran Ashwin (0/28) was economical, while Avesh Khan (1/33), Meriwala (1/32), Chris Woakes (1/42) and Rabada (1/43) picked up a wicket each.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Three-time champion Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals would look to build on their first wins and gain momentum when they clash in the Indian Premier League, here on Today.

The two sides bounced back after losing their opening fixtures with wins, albeit in contrasting styles.

While the MS Dhoni-led CSK had it easy against Punjab Kings, the Royals scraped through against Delhi Capitals in the final over. Both teams would be eyeing a second win to give their campaign a boost.

CSK hit back superbly after a chastening defeat to Capitals with Deepak Chahar putting his hand up with a four-wicket haul to break the back of the Punjab batting line-up, setting up a six-wicket victory.

The Super Kings will expect Chahar to continue the good work while also hoping that Sam Curran, Shardul Thakur and the others also step up. Also, Lungi Ngidi is out of quarantine and could be drafted into the playing XI to give more teeth to the CSK pace attack.

Moeen Ali was in the thick of action in the win over Punjab and that should please the CSK think-tank. He picked up a wicket with his off-spin and batted fluently.

Faf du Plessis made an unbeaten 36 despite not being at his fluent best and would hope to build on the knock while the likes of Ruturaj Gaikwad and Ambati Rayudu need runs to get their confidence back.

Meanwhile, Royals will be keen to build on the win over Capitals after a dramatic four-run loss to Punjab.

Skipper Sanju Samson hit a magnificent ton which a most single-handedly won the opener for them and his form along with that of Jos Buttler and David Miller will be

crucial to their chances in the tournament.

Royals would like to see their batsmen fire in unison as the top-order collapsed against Delhi before Miller and Chris Morris pulled them past the line.

The experienced pacer Jaydev Unadkat underscored his value with a superb spell against Delhi while the young Chetan Sakariya has shown promise. The experience of Morris and Mustafizur Rahman could be crucial in tight situations.

Faisal Features

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