

## WORLD 6

IRAN TESTS ADVANCED  
NUCLEAR CENTRIFUGES

## MONEY 7

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

## SPORT 8

SUNRISERS TO FACE  
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RANCHI, SUNDAY APRIL 11, 2021; PAGES 8-4 ₹3



# Violence mars Bengal polls

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

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

Four persons Hamidul,



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

PTI

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

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

Incidentally this is the same block where the convoy of Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh was attacked with bombs, brickbats and rods a couple of days ago barely an

hour after a meeting addressed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee where she asked the people, particularly the women to enforce their voting rights by gheraoing the Central Forces.

## Politicians' entry in Cooch Behar banned for 72 hr

**New Delhi:** The Election Commission on Saturday barred the entry of politicians in Cooch Behar district for the next 72 hours to prevent any possible law and order flare-up. The decision came after four people were killed in the district as Central Forces opened fire allegedly when they were attacked by locals who "attempted to snatch their rifles" during voting on Saturday.

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

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

PTI

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

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

## Daily Covid cases cross 1.5L mark, and counting

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

India on Saturday logged 1,52,383 cases with Maharashtra registering 55,000 plus cases and 309 deaths, Chhattisgarh 14,098 cases and 81 deaths, and Uttar Pradesh 12,748 cases and 46 deaths.

Kerala (6,194 new cases), Karnataka (6,955) Tamil Nadu (5,989) and poll-bound west Bengal reported 4,043 new cases during the last 24 hours.

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



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

PTI

of the virus in the State.

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

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

take note of," he said.

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

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

## Stick to Covid behaviour or face campaign ban: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

the protocols so that all the Covid guidelines are adhered to by all the participants including organisers in the electioneering.

In cases of breach, the EC said it will "not hesitate in banning public meetings, rallies of defaulting candidates, star campaigners or political leaders without any further reference". The poll panel said it has taken a "serious view of the laxity" in following norms, particularly not wearing masks and not maintaining social distancing by political leaders on the dais or stage.

It asked parties to follow its guidelines with all seriousness. The two-page letter said it is advisable that political leaders and candidates, who have the incumbent duty to control the spread of Covid-19, lead by example.

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

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

It said colleges and coach-



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

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

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

## CAPSULE

### 10 DIE AS TRUCK FALLS INTO GORGE IN ETAWAH

**Lucknow/Etawah:** Ten people were killed and 40 injured as a truck on which they were travelling fell into a 30-foot-deep gorge in UP's Etawah district on Saturday evening. They all were going to a temple in the district when the accident took place on the Udi-Chakar Nagar road.

### FARMERS BLOCK KMP E-WAY IN HARYANA

**Chandigarh:** Intensifying their stir against the Centre's three contentious agriculture laws, farmers on Saturday blocked the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal expressway in Haryana.

### 100M JABS! INDIA FASTEST VACCINATING COUNTRY

**New Delhi:** With the total number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossing 10 crore, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday said that India is the fastest nation to administer 100 million doses in 85 days. The Prime Minister's Office also tweeted a chart showing India as the fastest country to reach this vaccination milestone.

## Air bubble opens Lanka for tourists

### Now, India has such pacts with 28 nations, says Aviation Ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has formed an air bubble with Sri Lanka, opening yet another overseas tourist destination for those itching to travel after a year of being at home. The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Saturday said India has established a bilateral air bubble arrangement with Sri Lanka for operation of special international passenger flights between the two countries.

Besides, Thailand is also in talks with India for creating an air bubble so that flights can resume between two countries. With this, India now has such pacts with 28 countries,

including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Canada, France, Germany, Iraq, Japan, the Maldives, Nigeria, Qatar, the UAE, the UK and the USA.

Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international passenger flights can be operated by their airlines into each other's territories under restrictive conditions.

"India has finalised an air bubble agreement with Sri Lanka, making it the 6th such arrangement in SAARC region and the 28th in total," the Civil Aviation Ministry tweeted.

Scheduled international flights have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, special international passenger flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May last year and under bilateral air bubble arrangements since July.

## 2,373 cases take active caseload above 12K

### Toll jumps to 1,192 as 17 die in 24 hrs

PNS ■ RANCHI

At least 2,373 cases of Covid-19 infection took the active caseload above 12,000 in Jharkhand on Saturday, while the Covid toll jumped to 1,192 as the state reported 17 casualties in 24 hours, figures compiled by the National Health Mission (NHM) highlighted.

Ranchi and East Singhbhum — the districts with high urban population — reported the bulk of the cases and fatalities on the day. While Ranchi reported 904 cases and five deaths, East Singhbhum reported 303 cases and four deaths on Saturday, stated a bulletin released by the NHM.

As per Government data, Dhanbad and Hazaribag also



A medic collects swab samples from a person for Covid-19 test at a camp in Ranchi on Saturday

Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

reported a triple-digit-spike for the first time in 2021 on Saturday. As many as 148 people were found infected in Dhanbad, while 167 Hazaribag residents tested positive for Covid-19 on the day. The state

reported 667 Covid recoveries on the day, including 201 in East Singhbhum and 194 in Ranchi.

With only 194 recoveries against the over 900 cases, the active caseload in Ranchi reached 5,927 on Saturday, the

highest among the 24 Jharkhand districts. As per NHM data, the active caseload in East Singhbhum was 1344, while that in Dhanbad was 487 by the end of Saturday. As many as 435 people were battling the viral infection in Hazaribag.

Bokaro in Dhanbad reported two Covid casualties each on the day, while Dumka, Giridih, Pakur and West Singhbhum reported one casualty each. So far, East Singhbhum has reported 367 Covid deaths, while Ranchi accounts for 295 of the 1,192 Covid fatalities in the state so far.

The growth rate of infection reached 1.07 per cent on Saturday against the national average of 0.69 per cent, while the doubling rate dropped down to 65.12 days against the national average of 101.42 days.

The figures indicate that it would take only 65-odd days for the Covid cases to double in Jharkhand.

As per Government data, as many as 1,37,088 people have been infected by the deadly virus in Jharkhand so far and 90.16 per cent of them have recovered.

The recovery rate has dropped from close to 99 per cent in mid-March, while the doubling rate in the state has dropped drastically from over 2,500 days in mid-March to less than 100 days in April.

Meanwhile, the State on Saturday administered the first dose of the vaccine against Covid-19 to 90,243 people, thereby achieving 75 per cent of the target for the day. The second dose was administered to only 6,613 people, hardly 3 per cent of the beneficiaries registered for the job on the day.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren waves to people during an election campaign rally in support of JMM candidate Hafizul Hassan ahead of the Madhupur bypoll in Deoghar district on Saturday

Pioneer photo

HOMETHEATRE

BEAR HUG OF FICTIONALISING  
A TRUE STORY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Where was the comedy?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stay away from this one. — Shalini Saksena

Slice of resilient life

MINARI  
Amazon VOD  
\*ing: Steven Yeun, Han Ye-ri, Alan Kim, Noel  
Kate Cho, Youn Yuh-jung, Will Patton  
Rated: 7/10

Minari may be a Korean plant in real meaning but the movie by this name is larger than life, a slice of life replete with dreams, aspirations, struggles, resilience and sunshine even in its deepest darkest moments.

It is surprising that the film got its Golden Globe nomination (it won the best foreign language film award eventually) in the foreign film category despite being directed by an American and unfolding in America, actually deep into rural America. That it did not meet the Globe guideline of at least 50 per cent of it being in English language explains it, even though it would stand tall in the Best Feature film, Best direction, Best musical score and many more categories.

A family of Korean immigrants moves from California to the rural pocket of Arkansas to “live once again”, as the main protagonist puts it. The couple Jacob and Monica and their son and his maternal grandmother move to a makeshift house in a trawler to get used to a new life full of firsts and struggles in rugged terrain far removed from the bright lights of California, only to find leaking roofs, a barren land to till and a farming community that is new and alien to them.

The story is as much about resilience as it is about hope with an underlying sense of gratitude to life itself, life despite all its challenges. The film is engaging though slow but when has life unfolded so beautifully and in such real terms on the big screen?



Pathos is aplenty, but lining it up well is humour, be it around the chubby child who is forced to sleep with his snoring granny or their conversations which depict the absolute contrast in local American and immigrant Korean cultures. For one, as the impudent child puts it, American grandmothers do not use cuss words or wear men's underwear — as his granny does.

The film is a must-watch not because of its reality bytes but because it is laid out so simply that it tugs at your heart from all quarters, it grows on you, it immerses you and it makes you laugh and cry at the same time.

The music is haunting as much as the story this award-winning director Lee Isaac Chung brings to you from the depth of his heart and craft.



The genius is on show

LEONARDO  
SonyLiv Drama Series  
Episodes 8  
Rated: 7/10

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

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

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

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

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

TELLY TALE

MIKA PROPOSES BHOOMI  
While the competition will heat up during the upcoming episode of Zee TV's *Indian Pro Music League* with all the



teams putting their best foot forward, it seems like Punjab Lions captain Mika Singh will steal the show. Last time around, young comedian Divyansh Trivedi had suggested that Mika Singh get married to Gujarat Rockers' captain Bhoomi Trivedi. While they both had laughed it off, this time around, Mika actually proposed Bhoomi for marriage!

During the shoot of the upcoming episode, the Punjab Lions trio of Mika Singh, Asees Kaur and Rupali Jagga performed on Sajid-Wajid's composition — *Mujhse Shaadi Karoge*. During the act, Mika surprised one and all when he went up to Bhoomi, brought her on stage and continued his performance, while asking her *Mujhse Shaadi Karoge?* After the act, host Karan Wahi also made Bhoomi and Mika dance together and that's when Mika went down on his knees and asked her once again.

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

While Mika, Bhoomi and everyone were obviously playing around, viewers will surely like watching the chemistry of these rival captains. You also cannot miss the musical battle between Gujarat Rockers, Bengal Tigers, Delhi Jammers, Mumbai Warriors, UP Dabblings and Punjab Lions

as they go all out to win the fourth super match.

74TH BAFTA AWARDS ON SONYLIV  
Lights! Camera! and a lot of Action is about to unfold as we gear up to watch one of the biggest award nights of the year. Celebrating excellence in filmmaking across the globe and bringing an enriching experience for movie lovers, SonyLIV will exclusively stream the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards, 2021 (BAFTA). The prestigious awards night will live stream today at 11:30 pm directly from the Royal Albert Hall in London. BAFTA 2021 will be hosted by Edith Bowman and Dermot O'Leary.

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

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

MANASI LEARNS A NEW CRAFT  
*Hindmata* recently released on Eros Now and Actor Manasi Rachh is glad with the response her character has garnered. The series is set in a fictitious women's prison called Hindmata where Manasi plays the character of Sudha Nath, who is in prison on charges of sedition.

Manasi has portrayed various shades of a woman from being a straightforward girl in *Mujhse Fraandship Karoge*, to a tomboy for student of the year, to a fearless hacker for *24 Season 2* and then a lesbian girl who musters courage to come out of the closet for *Its Not That Simple*



*Season 2*. She performs each character with passion and tries to give it her best. She never shies away from honing her talent and learning new things for the character; be it learning to cycle and swim for SOTY or learning to sew for *Hindmata*.

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

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

CEZANNE KHAN TO PLAY HARMAN  
COLORS' popular show *Shakti...Astitra Ke Ehsaas Kii* has been enjoying soaring popularity owing to its engaging and interesting storyline. Harman and Saumya's chemistry was something that the audience always enjoyed and rooted for the couple to come together. While they parted ways, destiny has once again brought them together and after Saumya, re-entering the show will be Harman. Essaying the character of Harman will be the popular actor Cezanne Khan.

Harman's entry in Saumya's life will mark the beginning of an extremely passionate love story that the viewers have been yearning for. Talking about playing Harman, Khan said, “Harman's character is extremely interesting. He wears his heart on his sleeves and loves Saumya unconditionally. I am excited to be back on screen and to once again breathe life into it with my style. A lot is set to unfold with Harman's return.”

‘The script left me in tears’

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

■ What does Justice Reloaded have on offer?

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

■ What made you come on board the project?

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

■ What difference do you aim to make?

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

# Govt doesn't work on the basis of caste, religion: CM

‘We have fought for Jharkhand; will die for Jharkhand’

PNS ■ RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren said on Saturday that the present government in the State does not work on the basis of caste or religion. “If the debt of the farmers is waived off, then there are Hindus, Muslims and tribals among the beneficiaries. No particular caste is getting the benefit of livestock scheme. People of all castes are benefiting from this. The people covered by 15 lakh new ration cards also belonged to all castes and religions,” he said.

“Everyone needs a roof, everyone needs food and this work cannot be done in the name of caste and religion. But, people will come to divide you in the name of caste and reli-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren addresses a gathering during an election campaign rally in support of JMM candidate Hafizul Hassan ahead of the Madhupur bypoll in Deoghar district on Saturday  
Pioneer photo

gion. You just have to become aware and give them a befitting answer through this mahaparva of democracy,” said the CM

cum Jharkhand Mukti Morcha executive president in a public meeting held in Lakhangarhia Maidan in Deoghar block while

campaigning for Madhupur bye-election.

Soren said that there are six candidates in Madhupur bye-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren, JMM candidate Hafizul Ansari alongwith party leaders join hands during an election campaign rally ahead of the Madhupur bypoll in Deoghar district on Saturday  
Pioneer photo

election.

“The BJP candidate has been imported and he has come to win the election being a defective leader. It is laughable that all the candidates, who were bought and are campaigning, have come from other parties. They do not

know the door of their home and one of them has been made a candidate of Madhupur. They are considering Madhupur as a pasture, so that, like Jharkhand, they could also ruin it. These are all agents who will take your vote and throw it in Goa,” he said.

The JMM executive president said, “All of you saw the BJP government sitting at the Center during the epidemic, how they left the workers to die on the roads and railway tracks. It is a group of capitalists, but as long as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha is there in this State they will not be allowed in any corner of Jharkhand. They have done the work of destroying Jharkhand for 20 years, but in the 2019 elections, people taught them a lesson and threw the double engine government into the river. During Corona period, the MLA cum minister of Madhupur lost his life and another minister is struggling with life and death. If these people also wanted, they would sit in a five-star hotel and rest in the Corona period. But the security of the people of Jharkhand was paramount for them,” he added.

Soren said that we have to develop the village and panchayats of Madhupur. Every

farm should have water, every house should have pure drinking water, all children should have education facility, health and employment for the youth.

This is the reason why many schemes were started giving priority to how the rural economy of Jharkhand should be strengthened even during the Corona period.

The JMM executive president said that in the Madhupur Assembly bye-election, Hafizul Hasan is among you from the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

“For the first time after the formation of the State, 24 District Sports Officers were appointed. We have given direct appointments to the players. After all, what did the government that ruled here do for 20 years? Why was it not able to directly appoint the players? There is a big difference between their words and his actions,” he said.

## Ranchi accounts for half of State's Covid deaths during 2nd wave

From 24% of total casualties to 50% since March 1

PNS ■ RANCHI

Ranchi district has reported exactly half of the 82 Covid deaths that occurred in Jharkhand since March 10, indicating that the state capital was accounting for more casualties during the second wave of Covid-19 in comparison with East Singhbhum, which reported the highest casualties during the first wave last year.

As per figures compiled by the National Health Mission (NHM), Ranchi accounts for 41 of the 82 Covid casualties reported in the state in the past one month. On the other hand, East Singhbhum, which con-



People stand in a queue at a Covid-19 sample collection centre in Ranchi on Saturday  
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

tinues to top among Jharkhand districts in terms of Covid casualties, has reported only seven Covid fatalities since March 10, reveals NHM data. The State Coordinator of

Indian Medical Association (IMA), Dr. Ajay Kumar Singh warned that the second wave of Covid-19 was more lethal than the first one as the virus was mutated and may behave in

mysterious ways. The higher number of deaths in Ranchi, he said, could also be attributed to the fact that most of the severely-ill patients visited the state capital for treatment.

“The second wave of a mutated virus was more lethal than the first one. Also, Ranchi was more likely to get exposed to the mutated virus due to high inflow of severely-ill patients and connectivity with almost all cities in India,” said Dr. Singh.

While many health experts attribute the higher count of casualties in Ranchi to the high number of cases here, NHM figures highlight that Ranchi reported the highest number of Covid cases last year as well, but fewer casualties as compared to East Singhbhum.

As per NHM data, Ranchi reported 7,017 of the 14,279

fresh Covid cases in Jharkhand since March 10. In totality, the district accounts for 40,407 of the 1,34,715 cases of Covid infection reported in Jharkhand so far. The figures indicate that Ranchi has reported 49 per cent of cases in the past one month and only 29 per cent of the total cases reported in Jharkhand so far.

As per figures with the NHM, Ranchi accounts for 290 of the 1175 Covid casualties — about 24 per cent — in Jharkhand so far.

However, in the past one month, the state reported 50 per cent of the casualties. East Singhbhum, on the other hand, accounts for 363 Covid deaths, which is the highest among the 24 districts in the state, and is about 30 per cent of the total Covid casualties.



Runway repair in progress at Birsa Munda International Airport in Ranchi on Saturday. Ranchi Airport will be inoperative flights every day for 7 hours for the next 2 months  
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

## More relics from Buddhist era found in Hazaribag's Gadokhar area



A representational picture of Buddhist era relics found in Hazaribag  
Pioneer photo

There are indications that several old relics along with ancient statues are being found near Karbala next to the Chhadwa Dam in Gadokhar in Hazaribagh district. Retired teacher Haji Uddin Khan gave this information while talking to media persons on Saturday.

Some days earlier Gadokhar was in the news for the same reason as some Buddhist sculpture belonging to the ancient era found in the area after excavation.

Khan said that many times he has been trying to attract the attention of social and political parties as well as administrative officials and the Government but these days, when Buddhist

sculptures and ancient relics are constantly being received in Baharanpur, the villagers of Gadokhar have also started demanding a dig in this area.

On Saturday, a team of intellectuals from Hazaribagh reached Gadokhar. They included Sajid Ali, Umesh Pratap, Dr RC Prasad Mehta, Jamshed Khan, Sanjay Paswan and others.

The ruins of an old building are visible on the five-acre plot. In such a situation, demand is being made, if excavation is done here then also the remains can be obtained from here.

The 75-year-old retired teacher of Balokand of Gadokhar Panchayat, Haji Mansooruddin Khan, said in this context that this place has been very historic.

“This place has a very old connection with history. During the Buddhist period, the road to go to Varanasi used to pass through Katkamsandi,” he added.

The Hazaribagh-Katkamasandi road was known as old Varanasi Road in ancient times. Pedestrians going from Cuttack to Varanasi used this route and Bahoranpur is also located on the old road.

It is noted that the tourism department of the State already developing neighbouring district Chatra as Buddhist pilgrimage now finding the relics in Hazaribagh is emerging as a new Buddhist pilgrimage in the State, which can invite foreign tourists in large numbers in the State.

## Hafizul Hassan's triumph certain from Madhupur, says Oraon

PNS ■ RANCHI

After returning from three days of rigorous tour of Madhupur State Assembly constituency, Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) Chief Rameshwar Oraon reached the State Capital on Saturday. He said that the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Congress' alliance candidate will definitely win the bypoll necessitated in Madhupur due to the former Minister and MLA, Hazi Hussain Ansari's death.

JMM fielded Ansari's son Hafizul Hassan from the seat against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate, Ganga Narayan Singh. Hafizul is Minister in the Chief Minister, Hemant Soren led coalition Government in the State and it is his maiden contest from the seat.

Various Congress leaders are camping in Madhupur to ensure victory of Ansari from the seat. Apart from Oraon Agriculture Minister, Badal is also frequently visiting Madhupur to maintain solidarity of the alliance in the State. Congress has constructed a war room to monitor campaigning in the seat.

After returning from Madhupur, Oraon talked to media persons. In response to a question asked by media persons about BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on the change of government in the State when the election results are out on May 2, Oraon said that Nishikant Dubey, who is known for the bigotry, should first think that he himself will win the election next time or not. He said that the coalition government is not formed by his grace, the people have given an absolute majority to the Congress-JMM-RJD for a full five years therefore and the State Government will complete its tenure comfortably.

JPCC Spokesperson Alok Kumar Dubey said that there is no doubt about the victory of JMM candidate and Minister Hafeezul



Congress interim President Sonia Gandhi talks with JPCC president and Finance Minister Rameshwar Oraon during a virtual meeting on COVID-19 situation, in Ranchi on Saturday  
Ratan Lal | Pioneer

Hasan in Madhupur. He said that the Chief Minister has made Hafizul a Minister without winning the election and the public has made up their mind that they will elect him as their MLA for the next four years.

JPCC Spokesperson Lal Kishorenath Shadoo said that in the course of his visit, JPCC Chief held dozens of meetings with all the block presidents, officials of Morcha organizations and senior leaders-workers of Madhupur assembly constituency, and also addressed many small and big electoral meetings. Oraon also addressed election meetings with Chief Minister Hemant Soren, participated in public relations campaigns along with many other leaders, MLAs and senior leaders, he added.

“The victory of the JMM-alliance candidate in the Madhupur by-election is now just a formality. On April 17, more and more voters will walk out of their homes and Hafeezul Hasan will win by a margin of record votes,” said Shadoo.

JPCC Spokesperson, Rajesh Gupta said that as the polling day draws near, the situation of BJP's candidate is getting worse; this effect was also seen in the public relations campaign of BJP leader Raghubar Das today, BJP workers have given a clear indication about the election result by raising slogans of Raghubar Go Back.

course coordinator, Dr Nibha Bada, the teachers of the Faculty of Agriculture evaluated the DPR of the students for five days and took an online interview. In this work, Dr MK Varnwal, Dr Vinay Kumar, Dr BK Jha, Dr Asha Sinha, Dr Poonam Horo, Dr Irfan Ansari, Dr Nayyar Ali, Dr Neha Pandey, Abhilasha Deepa Minj, Dr SK Singh, Dr Sarvesh Kumar and Dr Neeraj Kumar contributed. In the online interview conducted due to Covid-19, the students presented the experiences collected from the villages to the teachers.

In the survey report, the students have described the change in the agricultural scenario of the villages adjacent to the cities as very positive. The farmer is aware of advanced breed, pest and disease management and some farmers are associated with summer, kharif and rabi season cultivation in

## INBRIEF

### 90 % SPECIAL TRAINS FOR ECR STATIONS

For the convenience of the passengers, as on April 10, a total of 276 pairs of mail/express trains from various stations including Delhi, Mumbai, Howrah, Ahmedabad, Kota, Guwahati, Ranchi and other stations are passing through East Central Railway. Apart from this, 83 pairs of passenger special trains are also being run. It is to be noted that before Covid-19 308 trains were operated out of which 276 special trains are running at present. Thus, about 90 per cent of trains are still operational. It can be increased further as per requirement.

### DIST ADMIN REFUTES RUMOURS

Ranchi DC Chhavi Ranjan on Saturday rejected rumours that the market / shop / establishments will be closed on Sunday. As per the order of the state government, a directive has been issued to close shops / establishments after 8 pm from 8 April 2021 to 30 April 2021. No orders / instructions have been issued to close the market throughout the day. All gyms and parks will be completely closed from 8 April to 30 April 2021, but markets can remain open till 8 pm. The shops have been instructed to close only after 8 pm. It is an appeal to the people of Ranchi not to ignore the misleading news. The markets will remain open till 8 pm on Saturday or Sunday. Literally follow the guidelines issued by the state government.

### 15,765 CASES DISPOSED IN NATIONAL LOK ADALAT

A National Lok Adalat was organised by Jharkhand State Legal Services Authority across the State under the aegis of National Legal Services Authority on Saturday. The National Lok Adalat was in virtual mode, on all matters. As 15,765 matters were disposed of and an amount of Rs 24,96,35,395 was settled in the National Lok Adalat.



Migrants workers from different parts of country arrive at Hatia Railway station via Bhubaneswar and Raipur, amid the second wave of coronavirus pandemic, in Ranchi on Saturday  
Vinay Murmu | Pioneer

## BAU students visit villages to develop infield skills

PNS ■ RANCHI

In a bid to provide field knowledge to the students, a total of 204 students of four colleges under Birsa Agriculture University (BAU) studying undergraduate agricultural courses for the first time in the State under the uniform agricultural education model across the Country participated in the Student Ready Program for Skill Development.

BAU Vice Chancellor Dr Omkar Nath Singh said that this is an initiative towards upgrading the skills of the students. The main objective of this is to provide practical experience and employment-friendly training to agricultural graduate students, while making them skilled during

academic studies, he added.

After the three-year classroom course, the fourth year students have to gain practical knowledge in the field. Despite the coronary period, four agricultural college students of BAU have been successful in completing the Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAVE) course under this program in the 7th semester. This experience of the rural areas of 24 districts will prove to be helpful in boosting entrepreneurship development among the students and giving impetus to the agricultural development of the State.

Due to the lockdown, the students were instructed to complete the RAVE program in their nearest villages. For the first time agricultural graduate students made direct contact



A BAU student talks with farmers in Ranchi on Saturday  
Pioneer photo

with the farmers in the villages of all the districts of the State. To know the traditional and indigenous farming techniques of villages, the status and resources of agriculture, government planning, other agricultural enterprises, problems

and difficulties in agricultural work. The students shared experiences with the scientists of the local Krishi Vigyan Kendra located in the district. Individual detailed project report (DPR) of this survey has

been submitted by the students to the concerned college. Students have mentioned many information and experiences on agriculture related situations in rural areas in their report.

Under the guidance of the

a year. Are adopting advanced farming techniques. The area of Rabi crop has increased with crop production. Farmers are also doing commercial floriculture. Cultivation of off-season vegetables is also taking place on a large scale. Unbalanced amounts of vegetable farming and the use of indiscriminate fertilizers and chemicals are affecting sustainable farming. Income of farmers has also increased. Despite this, better results can be achieved by effective and concerted efforts in the field of beneficial agro-technical technology towards the demand and employment generation of the urban population. There is a lot of potential in these areas towards soil health management, drip irrigation, protected cultivation and innovation.

Students have indicated many possibilities in the remote

villages of the State with special focus in the field of agriculture. Efforts have been made at the district and block level to spread the reach of agricultural technology to village agriculture department, agricultural science centers, regional research centers and stakeholders associated with agricultural activity.

But the percentage of farmers adopting it is low. Farmers are unable to spend on advanced seed purchase, fertilizer purchase and pesticide medicine due to high cost in advanced farming and lack of funds, even if they are aware. Vegetables are cultivated in limited quantities in remote villages of the State. Similarly, there is also a shortage in improved variety and maintenance of animal wealth. Farmers are unable to bear the benefits of commercial and profitable farming.

# 46 students of XLRI tests Covid +ve, campus closed



PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

As the second wave of Covid-19 is becoming critical in the city, 46 students of leading B-school XLRI were tested positive for coronavirus. Sensing the situation, the campus has been closed till further notice.

An official of XLRI confirmed the development and informed that the students who tested positive have been isolated and quarantined within the campus and have been kept under observation by the doctor-in-residence.

“XLRI has been strictly adhering to all the COVID-19 directives and guidelines of the state government and complying with all the necessary precautionary steps and protective measures.

To contain the infection, contact tracing has been initiated, and all contact staff members and students will undergo a mandatory RT-PCR test. All the campus facilities, including the library, the computer lab, will remain closed until further notice,” he said.

XLRI administration has undertaken all required precautionary measures, and all

hostels, offices are being sanitised to contain the pandemic spread. However, the online classes will continue without any disruption.

It may be mentioned that XLRI was founded in 1949 by Fr Quinn Enright, S.J. in Jamshedpur. Fr. Enright visualised XLRI to be a partner in the liberation and development journey of independent India. Over many years XLRI has developed its own identity.

The hallmark of this identity is, not to walk on the beaten path but to strike new routes; not to benchmark but to be benchmarked, to be second to none but to be the first to respond to the needs of the people and the nation, by taking up the tasks which are bold but necessary which nobody has hitherto taken up.

The number of deaths in the East Sighbhum is also increasing in 10 days of April 13 deaths have been reported. On Saturday three persons died of Covid-19 at Tata Main Hospital. On average, every day a person is dying because of the deadly virus.

The district administration has asked all authorities to

focus on adopting extra preparedness measures ahead of festive season and to ensure that the COVID protocol is in place in all shops and establishments and markets where people are likely to congregate.

The city witnessed its first COVID death when a 71-year-old man who was a resident of Sonari died at the Tata Main Hospital on July 4 last year.

However, now deaths have started taking place of the persons hailing from very densely-populated localities of the city whereas asymptomatic COVID patients are present in an overwhelming number in the steel city. Health officials said testing would be ramped up, particularly among symptomatic people, irrespective of whether or not they had a travel history.

An official pointed out that those who are asymptomatic actually possess the most danger for the society. “As the asymptomatic patients do not have any symptom of COVID, they move in the public places, including marketplaces, banks and on the streets and thus spread the virus unknowingly,” he said.

## Diagnostic lab sealed after raids by DC

PNS ■ DHANBAD

One of the famous diagnostic labs of Dhanbad Clinical lab was sealed by district administration for violation of the disaster Management Act.

Deputy commissioner US Singh on Thursday had ordered closure of diagnostic centres in the district for three days in order to check spread of covid in the district.

It had come to fore that the diagnostic centres though were holding CT scan and xray of positive patients too but were not reporting to the health department. The order was given so that the centres may be sanitized and proper details of positive patients be collected.

The diagnostic centre was open in violation to the order.

The Deputy commissioner conducted raids with police and health officials and after initial checking ordered sealing of the lab immediately.

Talking to media persons, the DC said, the owner of the lab has been detained and FIR of violation of disaster Management act is to be filed against the owners of the diagnostic Centre. The bank More police took the owner of the diagnostic centre to bank more police station, following the directive of the DC.

Meanwhile , with the rise in the number of Covid cases in Dhanbad, there happens to be a day in conducting a corona test at the SNM-MMCH here.

Reports suggest over 5000 samples collected from different locations await tests here due to shortage of manpower at the lab.

SNM-MMCH principal Shailendra Kumar said, steps are on to arrange manpower for holding the RT-PCR tests . District administration and the government have been informed of the situation.

HE expected that backlogs would be cleared within the next two to three days .

# MRI — The Amazing Imaging modality which transformed Medical Science, and, Nobel Prize!

BY DR RAJENDRA KUMAR JHA

Few discoveries have truly transformed the modern medical science as much as imaging modalities , beginning from the discovery of “X - rays “in 1895 by Conrad Röntgen , followed by computer processed combination of ‘ X - rays , the Computed Tomography Scan(CT Scan ) , which produced cross sectional images as virtual “slices “of body , allowing us to visualise the internal structures without cut - opening it ie non- invasively , almost like imagining a fantasy !

CT Scan has been a remarkable discovery leading to the award of prestigious Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, in the year 1979 to South Africa born American Physicist Dr Allan Cormack and British electrical engineer, Dr Godfrey Hounsefield .

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) went further and completely transformed the imaging process as this is extremely safe and equally versatile in acquiring images because it uses safe - magnetic field gradients and radio waves instead of ionising radiation in CT scanner, to gather the pre requisite informations which is effectively converted into 2D and 3D images in any desired plane.

HISTORY OF MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING is very fascinating involving thirteen Nobel laureates which includes nine from physics , two each from chemistry and medicine with fair share of controversies ! This was one such discovery where the scientist holding the patent for MRI , Dr Raymond Damadian , was not found good enough for the award of coveted Nobel Prize , and who in protest ,brought out a full page advertisement justifying his claim in world famous newspaper ‘New York Times ‘ just before the Nobel prize award ceremony.

Dr Paul C Lauterbur and Sir Peter Mansfield, were awarded the Nobel prize in physiology or Medicine in 2003, for their seminal discovery in giving the ultimate concept and approximate design of modern MRI .

Dr Lauterbur , a chemist by training , postulated that Nuclear Magnetic Resonance ( NMR) property , first elucidated by Nobel laureate Dr Bloch and Dr Purcell , could be used for imaging by introduction of gradients in the magnetic field . He could for the first time take images of a cross section of tubes with ordinary water ( H2O ) surrounded by heavy water ( D2O) containing isotope of Hydrogen ,Deuterium, which has an additional neutron in its nucleus , making it heavier and distinct in its magnetic resonance property . This ushered in all together a new era of transformation in imaging.

Sir Peter Mansfield, son of a poor gas fitter , was a renowned physicist from United Kingdom , who could give a remarkable mathematical formula to help rapidly detect and analyse the humungous data obtained by different gradients making MRI , a much versatile and faster imaging tool , that it is today !

INDIA CONNECTION

Peter Mansfield, who was professor of physics at Nottingham, went to India to attend a conference on NMR where he heard Paul Lauterbur for the first time and got the much needed insight into the problem which eventually got him to share the Nobel prize by solving the mathematical puzzle brought forward by Dr Lauterbur .

PRINCIPLE BEHIND MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Water is the most abundant molecule in all creatures including human beings. This is made up of Hydrogen and oxygen atoms. The nuclei of hydrogen atoms act like microscopic compass needles. Under very strong magnetic field such as 0.5 to 20 Tesla (one Tesla is twenty thousand times of Earth’s magnetic field) , hydrogen atoms present in tissue- water get oriented to the magnetic field . These hydrogen atoms are subjected to radio waves which take them to a different high energy level and produce resonance. When these atoms return to their relaxation states they emit energy which is captured by the system. These are different for different tissues in health and disease states. Such emitted oscillations due to relaxation of resonant Hydrogen atoms, are turned into two or three dimensional image forms with the help of complex mathematical computation known as “Fourier Transform”.

### न्यायालय, अनुमण्डल दण्डाधिकारी, गुमला

(सामान्य न्यायालय)

क्रि०मि०से० नं०145/2021

झारखण्ड सरकार बनाम आम जनता, गुमला अनुमण्डल क्षेत्रान्तर्गत।  
द० प्र० संहिता की धारा-144 के अन्तर्गत सामान्य निषेधाज्ञा आदेश

सरकार के मुख्य सचिव, गुमला एवं आपदा प्रबंधन विभाग, झारखण्ड, सैदी के पत्रांक-12 दिनांक-08.04.2021 के द्वारा दिये गये निर्देश के आलोक में कोरोना वायरस के संक्रमण से बचाव एवं संभावित प्रसार की रोकथाम हेतु राज्य सरकार के निर्देशानुसार दिनांक- 30.04.2021 तक सम्पूर्ण राज्य में निषेधाज्ञा लागू किया गया है।

अतएव, उपरोक्त के आलोक में मैं रवि आनन्द, भा०प्र०से०, अनुमण्डल दण्डाधिकारी, गुमला दण्ड प्रक्रिया संहिता की धारा 144 के तहत प्रदत्त शक्तियों का प्रयोग करते हुए स्थिति से पूर्णतः संतुष्टि उपरांत धारा 144 दण्ड प्रक्रिया संहिता के तहत निम्नांकित शर्तों के अनुसार आदेश निर्गत की तिथि से दिनांक- 30.04.2021 तक गुमला अनुमण्डल क्षेत्र में सशर्त निषेधाज्ञा लागू करता हूँ:-

- शादी विवाह समारोह में 200 व्यक्ति एवं दाह-संस्कार में 50 व्यक्ति ही सम्मिलित हो सकते हैं।
- पांच या पांच से अधिक व्यक्ति किसी भी सार्वजनिक स्थान पर एकत्रित नहीं होंगे और न ही ना जाम जमा लगायेंगे।
- गुमला अनुमण्डल क्षेत्रान्तर्गत किसी प्रकार का जुलूस निकालना वर्जित रहेगा।
- 10वीं एवं 12वीं की कक्षा को छोड़कर शेष सभी कक्षाएँ बंद रहेगी। ऑनलाईन क्लास की अनुमति है।
- किसी भी तरह का मेला, प्रदर्शनी, जाम, स्वीमिंग पुल, पार्क, खेल आदि पर प्रतिबंध रहेगा।
- होटल रेस्टोरेन्ट में बैठने की क्षमता तक 50%से अधिक नहीं रहेंगे।
- सभी तरह के रेस्टोरेन्ट एवं दुकानें रात्रि 08.00 बजे तक ही खुला रहेगा। साथ ही सेनेटाइजर, मास्क एवं सामाजिक दुरी का पालन करेंगे।
- बैक्विट हॉल, कम्युनिटी हॉल, स्टेडियम एवं अन्य स्थलों को प्रयोग में नहीं लाया जाएगा तथा इसकी बुकिंग भी तत्काल प्रभाव से प्रतिबंधित की जाती है।
- सरकारी कार्यालयों, धार्मिक स्थलों, पूजा स्थलों, बस पड़ाव आदि सार्वजनिक स्थलों पर बिना मास्क का प्रवेशवर्जित रहेगा।
- इसके अतिरिक्त राज्य सरकार एवं केन्द्र सरकार के द्वारा समय-समय पर निर्गत आदेश स्वतः लागू रहेगा।

उपरोक्त आदेशों का उल्लंघन करने पर आपदा प्रबंधन अधिनियम 2005 की धारा-51, 52, 57, 58 एवं भा०द०वि० की धारा 188 के तहत कार्यवाही प्रारंभ की जायेगी।

सभी थाना प्रभारी / प्रखण्ड विकास पदाधिकारी / अंचल अधिकारी, गुमला अनुमण्डल क्षेत्र को आदेश दिया जाता है कि उपरोक्त निर्देशों का शख्ती से अनुपालन कराना सुनिश्चित करेंगे।

यह आदेश कार्यावधि के दौरान 05 (पाँच) या उससे अधिक सरकारी सेवक / चिकित्सा कर्मियों पर लागू नहीं होगा।

यह आदेश तत्कालिक प्रभाव से दिनांक-30.04.2021 तक लागू रहेगा।

लेखा वित्त एवं संशोधित।

**रवि आनन्द (भा०प्र०से०)**  
**अनुमण्डल दण्डाधिकारी, गुमला।**

PR 245470 District(21-22)D

## IIAB holds International Symposium on Plant Biotechnology

PNS ■ RANCHI

ICAR-Indian Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology (IIAB), Garhkhatanga, Ranchi successfully organized International Symposium on Advances in Plant Biotechnology and Genome Editing (APBGE-2021), held virtually. More than 450 delegates from 11 different countries participated in the three-day Symposium (Apr 8-10).

The inaugural session had Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) & Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Govt. of India and Prof. Sudhir K. Sopory, Former Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi as Chief Guest and Guest of Honour respectively.

Dr. TR Sharma, Deputy Director General (Crop Science), ICAR delivered the plenary lecture outlining the application of biotechnology for food and nutritional security of the country.

Nine scientific sessions were organized during these days with keynote lectures delivered by renowned national and international experts working in the domain.

There was a timely workshop on Genome Editing Technology, partnering with the industries, for the benefit of young researchers and students.

The convener of the



APBGE-2021, Dr. AK Singh told that it was an honour for the state Jharkhand in general and the organization IIAB in specific to organize the international symposium partnering with prestigious Plant Tissue Culture Association-India that pioneered application of tissue culture in plants in India for large benefits to the farmers of the subcontinent. Dr. Tilak Raj Sharma, Joint Director (Research) IIAB & Co-Chair APBGE-2021 told that the program of such scope and scale was very stimulating and timely.

Dr. Arunava Pattanayak, Director IIAB & Chair APBGE-2021 informed that mobilization of ready biotechnological tools for improved agronomic practices and exploring new advances such as genome editing are the open challenges to the researchers and policy planners alike for achieving the ambitious target of Doubling Farmers Income (DYI) set by Govt. of India.

The symposium extensively covered recent advances in plant tissue culture, system biology and biotechnology in plant sciences with focus on plant stress induced by impending climate changes.

## FIR against 75 for not wearing masks, ₹54K fine imposed

**Bokaro:** During the intensive mask checking drive, FIRs were lodged against 75 people under the Disaster Management Act in Bokaro. Also, Rs 54,000 recovered as fine from 108 people who were caught without a face mask.

An intensive mask checking and COVID protocol implementation drive is going on across the district, amidst a spike in COVID-19 cases. Around 61 new positive cases have been reported on Friday, the active case figure reached to 390, informed Sashi Prakash Singh SDO Chas.

On the directive of Deputy Commissioner Bokaro, an intensive mask checking drive is being carried out at various intersections of the Chas Municipal Corporation (CMC) area, too, he said.

The SDO appealed to masses, “Must wear a mask, follow social distancing and keep your hands constantly sanitized.” He has also appealed to the people 60 years and above and small children to remain at home to keep in mind their health security. “Do not go unnecessary in crowded markets and public areas,” he added.

PNS

# Active cases increase to 275 in Hazaribag

## No vaccine available in the store for three days

PNS ■ HAZARIBAG

Thirty five new cases of Corona have come in light in the district late on Friday night.

The total number of active cases has reached 275 in the district. Maximum number of cases is coming from the municipal area of the town. No vaccines are available in the store of Sadar hospital for the last three days.

The in-charge of the Covid center Dr Shyama Kant said that they have tested 1798 persons, out of them 275 cases found positive.

Due to non-availability of the vaccine in the store the vaccination center has been closed from 7th April.

He further said that they are hoping that they will get 48,800 Covishield vaccines within one or two days. He said

that 18,781 persons have taken the first dose in the Sadar Hospital vaccination center.

The district administration has issued several guidelines of epidemic in the whole district. We are also watching the activities of the different health centers regarding the Corona.

He said that they have started vaccination in the Sadar hospital Center from March 15 in the district. In Bishnugarh block five positive persons came to light.

They have been admitted to the isolation center. In Barhi block three positive cases came to light and one from Ichak block of the district.

Former union minister Yashwant Sinha and his wife Neelima Sinha have taken the vaccine in a private hospital.

### असैनिक शल्य चिकित्सक सह मुख्य चिकित्सा पदाधिकारी, सिमडेगा

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#### रुद्धि पत्र/संशोधित सूचना

**विज्ञापन संख्या – 02/2021 पीआर नम्बर – 244856**

विज्ञापन संख्या 02/2021 दिनांक 25.03.2021 के द्वारा नियुक्ति हेतु प्रकाशित विज्ञापन में आशिक संशोधन करते हुए जिला स्वास्थ्य समिति, सिमडेगा के अन्तर्गत राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन एवं ATF (Addiction Treatment facility) के तहत निम्नलिखित पदों पर अनुबंध के आधार पर नियुक्ति हेतु आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। अभ्यर्थियों का आवेदन निबंधित डाक/स्पीड पोस्ट/हाथों-हाथ के माध्यम से सिविल सर्जन कार्यालय, सिमडेगा में दिनांक 17.04.2021 के अपराह्न 5:00 बजे तक स्वीकार किये जायेंगे। निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय के उपरांत आवेदन स्वीकार नहीं किया जायेगा। उक्त विज्ञापन संबंधी विस्तृत जानकारी एवं आवेदन प्रपत्र सिमडेगा जिला के वेबसाइट <http://simdega.nic.in> पर भी देखा जा सकता है।

**असैनिक शल्य चिकित्सक सह मुख्य चिकित्सा पदाधिकारी, सिमडेगा।**

PR.NO.245476 Health Med Edu and Family Welfare(21-22):D

# Centre created Covid jab shortage: Sonia



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

nation above our own.”

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

Taking about the economic situation in the country due to the coronavirus pandemic, Sonia Gandhi asked the State Government to look for the impact of government schemes so far and the next course of action which could be helpful.

“Various packages had been announced by the Central government to help MSMEs and stimulate the economy. What impact have these packages had and what more should the Government be doing to deal with the continuing crisis? Do you see economic recovery happening in the manner that is being officially claimed?”

# Allegation to incite voters against Central forces unfounded: Didi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

# Tomar urges agitating farmers to call off strike amid Covid surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

In these meetings, the gov-

# Covid recovered patients not coming forward to donate plasma: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

“I have not lost hope, yet,” he said.

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

He echoed the views of Dr

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

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

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

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

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

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

# CRPF staff’s special children to get school bus facility

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Let reply be filed within three weeks,” the bench said in its order passed on Friday.

The apex court has posted the matter for hearing after three weeks.

The top court had in February sought a response from the Centre, and the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Bihar on the plea which has claimed that the sections of the statute criminalising begging are violative of constitutional rights.

The plea filed by Meerut resident Vishal Pathak was referred to the August 2018 verdict of the Delhi High Court which had decriminalised begging in the national capital and said that provisions of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which treats begging as an offence cannot sustain constitutional scrutiny.

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

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



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

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

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

# Myanmar junta attacks again

AP ■ YANGON

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

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

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

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



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

AP

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

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

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

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

Violence by security forces was also reported Friday in sev-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Iran tests advanced nuclear centrifuges

AP ■ TEHRAN

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

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

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

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



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

AP

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI

## Two Christian nurses booked under blasphemy charges in Pak

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

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

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

PTI

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

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

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

AP

## Harry expected to fly in for funeral of grandfather

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

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

AP

# Gun salutes honour Prince Philip

## UK enters 8 day mourning

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

"The tradition of Gun Salutes being fired throughout



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

AP

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

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

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

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

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

# US unveils new rules for Govt contacts with Taiwan

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP

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

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

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

AP

# Stalled at first jab: Vaccine shortages hit poor countries

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

Deliveries have all but halted since Monday.

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

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

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

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

avirus is spiking worldwide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI

## Saudi Arabia executes 3 soldiers for 'high treason'

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

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

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

AP

## Egyptian archaeologist reveals details of ancient city



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

AP

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

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

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

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

AP

## Iran enforces 10-day lockdown amid fourth wave of pandemic

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

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

AP

**JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
Indira Circle, Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302004

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

Date : 09.04.2021

**NOTICE INVITING BID**

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

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

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

Details are available at Procurement Portal website [www.sppp.rajabsthan.gov.in](http://www.sppp.rajabsthan.gov.in), [www.eproc.rajabsthan.gov.in](http://www.eproc.rajabsthan.gov.in) and [www.jda.urban.rajabsthan.gov.in](http://www.jda.urban.rajabsthan.gov.in)

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

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**राजस्थान राज्य पथ परिवहन निगम**  
मुख्यालय जयपुर

परिवहन मार्ग, जयपुर-302001 टेलीफोन : 0141-2374652 ईमेल : [pro.rsrtc@rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:pro.rsrtc@rajasthan.gov.in)

क्रमांक: विज्ञापन संख्या 05/2021-22

दिनांक : 08.04.2021

**ई-बोली सूचना**

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

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

राज. संवाच/सी/2021-22/404

कार्यकारी निदेशक ( प्रशासन )

**WESTERN RAILWAY**

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

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

Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and [www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in).

0013

For Principal Chief Materials Manager

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

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

“Technology-enabled innovations like secure digital

# Petrol, diesel prices remain unchanged

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Thereafter, fuel prices have remained unchanged.

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

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

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

PTI ■ JAIPUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The report said that top 10 stocks domination is dwin-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Strong bounce back witnessed for toll road assets: ICRA

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

run CGTN TV reported.

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

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

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

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

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

ter fulfill its social responsibilities, the CGTN report said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

# JioMart activity scaling up

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

“We found the delivery infrastructure to be a mix of bike-based delivery executives, similar to e-commerce/food O2O, and van-based batched delivery that peers use (e.g., Bigbasket, DMart Ready, Swiggy) that provide free publicity.

This is unlike the branded fleets maintained by peers (Bigbasket, DMart Ready, Swiggy) that provide free publicity. The report notes that the current infrastructure can support \$8-11 billion in annual gross merchandise value (GMV).

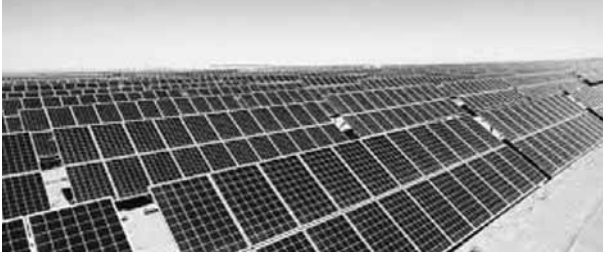
greater efficiency. Bike-based delivery ensures short turnaround times for lighter, low-value orders, improving customer experience,” JP Morgan said.

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

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

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

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



IANs ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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

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

# India’s OEMs accelerating shift towards EVs: HDFC Securities

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

# Apple likely to use 120Hz ProMotion display in ‘iPhone 13’ lineup

IANs ■ SAN FRANCISCO

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

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

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

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

## SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS

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

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

**Days of Run:** 04074 Ex New Delhi from 11.04.2021 (Sunday) & 15.04.2021 (Thursday)

**Accommodation:** Sleeper, Reserved 2<sup>nd</sup> seating, Chair Car

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

**Days of Run:** 04076 Ex New Delhi from 13.04.2021 (Tuesday)

**Accommodation:** Sleeper, Reserved 2<sup>nd</sup> seating

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

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

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# the pioneer agenda



**A rare Jugalbandi**  
A book that provides the political account of Vajpayee & Advani, and steers through the major events of right-wing politics

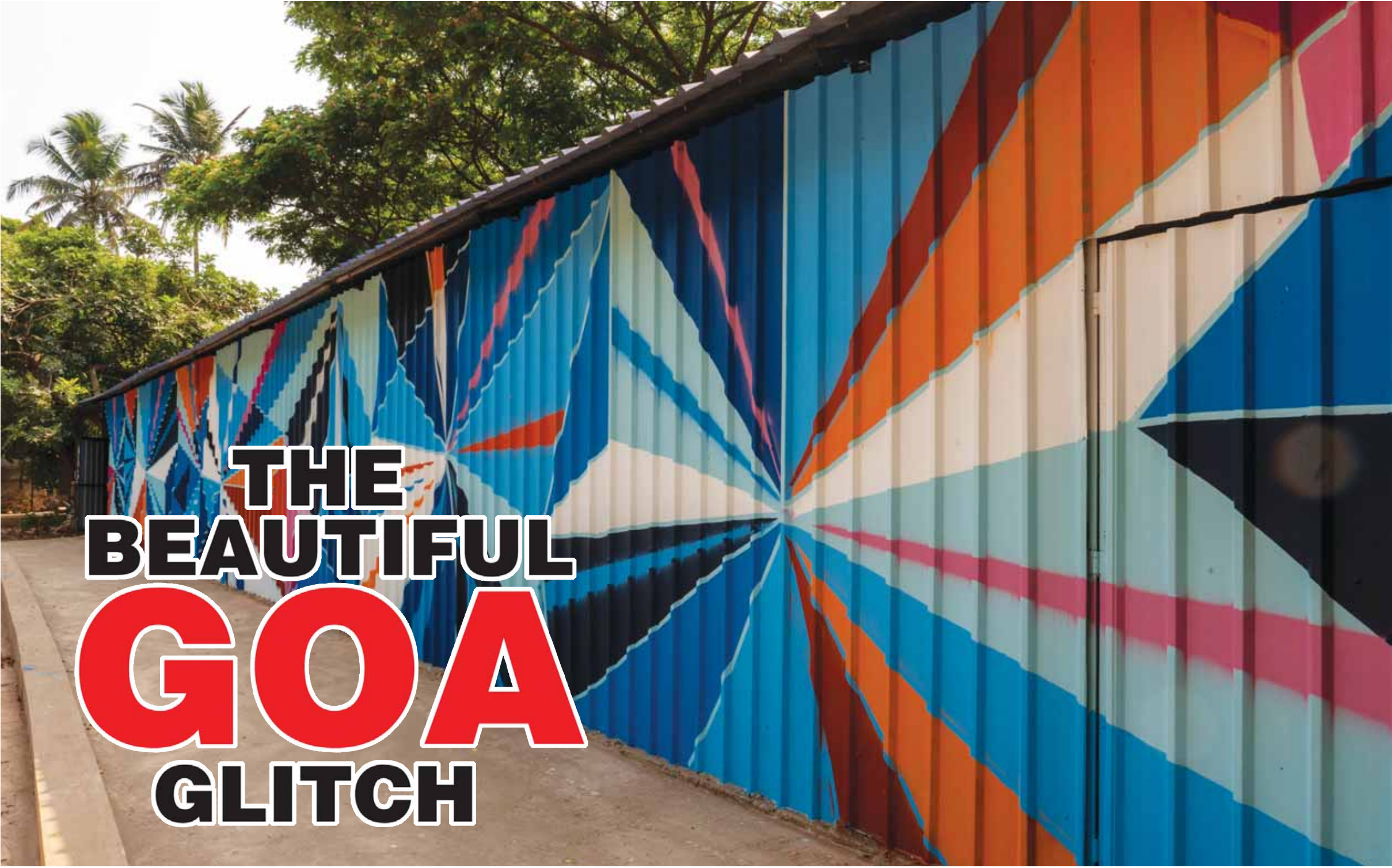
2



4

**Controlling monkey mind**  
Pursuing *Dhyana*, with focus on Lord Hanuman, would inspire the seeker to imbibe his spirit

I'm afraid of everything. But maybe when you're afraid of everything, it sort of seems like you're scared of nothing  
— Natalie Portman



Street artist and co-founder St+art India, Hanif Kureshi, Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity, Serendipity Arts Foundation and the Corporation of the City of Panaji join hands to paint Goa's dry waste sorting stations and turn them into works of art. NAVNEET MENDIRATTA speaks to the artist

You just cannot miss the beautiful mural painted in colours of Goa as you drive past the busy road in Dona Paula, Panjim, Goa. It's an unusual canvas. Painted in bright hues, mostly blue, this work of public art is painted on Goa's dry waste sorting stations, making for an attractive selfie point.

Called Goa Glitch, this mural is a joint initiative of Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity, Serendipity Arts Foundation, the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) and St+art India co-founder Hanif Kureshi. The idea being to tap into the imaginative spirit of those passing by. The mural features geometric visuals in beautiful hues of the Bombay Sapphire blue, representing the spirit of adventure and the openness of Goa, and bringing to life the endless coastlines, and the expansive blue skies of the city.

"The mural is about exploiting the colours of Goa, like a glitch," says Kureshi in a candid conversation post the unveiling of the mural. "I visualised it as glitching of the colours of Goan skies — in summer, monsoon, winter, morning, afternoon and noon... Different shades of blue that could also be interpreted as colours of water, more specifically the ocean. It's like the glitch of both skies and the ocean and that's why Goa Glitch," he says.

Kureshi has been working with Serendipity Arts for the last four years or since it started. In the first edition, Kureshi participated as an artist and then from the next edition onwards he worked as a curator, where he brought in St+art India and put together street art editions in Panjim. Bombay Sapphire's Stir Creativity platform aims to revive and enable creative self-expression amongst the audience. For over three decades, the

brand has collaborated with designers, artists, architects, and individuals from outside the creative industry to create artworks that reawaken creative potential.

"Each mural has a story. It's interesting when you work on the street, you find that there are so many stories that are waiting to be told. As for this, I am kind of familiar with Panjim's landscape and whenever a new structure comes up, we look at it as a possible canvas," he shares. This, or shall we say, these canvasses have been particularly interesting. "Not many are aware that these new structures are actually dry waste sorting stations. This is where CCP segregates the waste of dry kind such as paper, plastic, sharp objects, glass, steel and metal. These sheds play a very important role in the whole recycling scheme of things. Our idea was to bring attention to the process and promote recycling. We wanted to give it a new life and make it not look like a dustbin. And we thought what better than art to get the conversation started," he says, speaking of the collaboration.

Considering Dona Paula is one of the busiest public areas in Goa, the mural highlights the artist's message on the importance of sustainability and recycling very effectively. In India, Goa is one of the cities that recycles 80% of their waste with a strong model created for waste management and sustainability. In addition to stirring creativity among the community, the collaboration builds awareness for environmental sustainability and encourages people to be more conscious of their actions, he shares. Besides this shed, Kureshi is collaborating to paint at least three more in a year.

An alumni of Baroda School of Art, Kureshi started painting on streets in 2008. He began with Graffiti and gradually moved on to the world of street art which he says, he finds "more free". "The difference between Graffiti and Street Art, you could say, is the sense of style. While Graffiti can

NOT MANY ARE AWARE THAT THESE NEW STRUCTURES ARE ACTUALLY DRY WASTE SORTING STATIONS. THIS IS WHERE CCP SEGREGATES THE WASTE OF DRY KIND SUCH AS PAPER, PLASTIC, SHARP OBJECTS, GLASS, STEEL AND METAL. THESE SHEDS PLAY A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE WHOLE RECYCLING SCHEME OF THINGS. OUR IDEA WAS TO BRING ATTENTION TO THE PROCESS AND PROMOTE RECYCLING

be likened to vandalism, Street Art is more positively thought out and refined. So, yes, you could say that I sought an expression that is more positive and would provoke people to think," he shares.

From getting German street artist, Hendrick ECB to paint the 150 ft mural of Mahatma Gandhi at the Police Headquarters in New Delhi, as part of the St+Art Delhi street art festival in January 2014 to commemorate the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation, to putting together Street Art festival in Shahpur Jat and Hauz Khas in Delhi, the entire process evoked the idea on gentrification in the city. "The awareness regarding the street art grew as we moved towards Lodhi Colony and worked with the government properties. However, working at a central location like Lodhi Colony, we realised that there is no room for gentrification there. We have been doing similar work in Chennai and Mumbai," he shares.

While Kureshi shares that the response and reception to street art has grown in the past decade, the element of planning in the urban-scape continues to elude in the country. "There's no urban planning element to street art as of now. And that's why, I feel, it becomes more important for art to cover up for all that is not planned," he avers. Delhi's Lodhi Colony perhaps is a case in point but then there is a catch. "Maybe at some point, Lodhi Colony will be demolished and there would be high rises instead. But I still feel the art that found place there would leave a lasting impact. I think about the children growing up in Lodhi Colony and their imagination and what they would like think about art and perhaps, choosing art as a career option," he says.

On the subject of Street Art versus vandalism, Kureshi has a take: "There is a thin line between vandalism and street art. Personally, when I set out to do graffiti, I could have gone on to become a rebel. More so in principle, as there is a school that produces rebels and is more of a breeding ground where you adopt a bottom down approach. Street art, on the other hand, takes a top down approach where you get on the ground with more voices on the street to inspire more people to express themselves. You can be vocal about issues with the same amount of rights which any other company has in terms of putting in money and making an ad and

putting on the face. If carried out properly, with requisite permissions, even the people start owning street art. That's when the real change takes place."

This is also not the first time that Kureshi has lent his creativity to a cause. Kureshi has recently partnered with Art For Change, a virtual art challenge and exhibition, as one of the jury members. The initiative aims to change the narrative by turning the focus away from the victim and putting the spotlight on the perpetrator. Organised by Gordon Thomas Honeywell-GA & Ogilvy India in partnership with UN Women India, Girl Up (UN Foundation), reputed academic institutions like National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi (NIFT) and Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune (SIMB), this initiative seeks to unleash the power of creativity to transform the way our society deals with survivors of rape & sexual violence, shifting the accountability from the survivor to the perpetrator.

"Art for Change is a project all about violence against women, which includes domestic abuse. It is about inviting ideas about how we can change the situation so the project moves people to act instead of being mute spectators," he says.

Besides Delhi, Kureshi has been working a lot in Chennai. "We did a district called Kannagi Art District. I find cities in south India to be much more welcoming than the cities in north India. The art culture is there and people understand and respect the art as well as the artist," he shares.

Similarly, Kureshi-led St+art has worked on creating Mahim Art district in Mumbai; Ukkadam Art District in Coimbatore and Maqtha Art District in Hyderabad. "Different cities have different styles. So in Maqtha, which is predominantly a Muslim district, we try not to paint portraits. The focus is to be more abstract in that space, trying to be more sensitive to the surrounds. It is also about encouraging people to own the art and the space," he shares.

Ask him about the dream city to paint, Kureshi says: "We are okay with the metros that we are painting. There really is no dream city as such in our mind. The idea, however, is to go to cities where people are excited and reach out to the grassroots of India. For that is where the real artist would love to leave their mark.



# CHINA’S GAME ON NORTH KOREA

China has spread its tentacles across almost all corners of the world. With North Korea, China has employed a unique strategy both to support stability and to have a grip over the nuclear gear of this mysterious land.

Successive Chinese leaders have maintained three distinct strategies towards North Korea: first, not to provoke a war; second, to maintain the status quo; and finally, no to nuclear arsenal.

Succinctly, China is North Korea’s all-weather friend. Thus, though Beijing ostensibly condemns North Korea’s nuclear developments, it avowedly opposes harsh global sanctions on that mysterious nation. And China’s strategy is aimed at addressing two major critical concerns: to obviate massive refugee influx across 870-mile border area that it shares with North Korea and prevent an immediate collapse of the Kim rule.

The relationship between China and North Korea can aptly be described through this Chinese proverb: “Chun wang chi han” (If the lips are gone, teeth will be cold). It rightly indicates that both the countries are intimately interdependent. Beijing’s support for Pyongyang dates back to the historic 1950-53 Korean War. Those were the days, China under Chairman Mao, was more than eager to aid its northern Communist ally North Korea, against the capitalist South Korea. Its support to North Korea continues irrespective of whoever comes to power in Pyongyang.

Kim Il-sung from 1948-94, Kim Jon-il (1994-2011) and now Kim Jong-un since 2011 till date, China has been offering both political and economic support to various regimes of Kims.

On record, China is North Korea’s biggest trade partner till date. In fact, from 2000-2020, the bilateral trade between both the nations have increased almost ten-fold. Even amid tougher international trade

sanctions against North Korea, the long China-North Korea border is still open for established trade routes in commodities such as mobile phones, silkworms, fuel, seafood, etc.

Much beyond these regular economic activities, China has established a high-speed railway link between its border cities like Dandong and Shenyang so as to boost trade with North Korea. Both the nations have also opened a cargo and container shipping route to enhance the supply of coal from North Korea to China. China also offers aid to North Korea primarily in food and energy sectors.

Besides China, the US, Japan and South Korea provided more than 75 per cent of the food aid to North Korea since 1995. The country’s severe famine was caused by heavy floods and droughts that took lives of more than million people in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the country has not been able to come out of this prolonged food crisis till date. Thus, Pyongyang is fully dependent on China and its goodwill.

As per the estimates revealed by the UN agencies, more than 43 per cent of the country’s population is malnourished. Though Kim Jong-un is focusing on rapid economic development, the country has not been able to attract any foreign investment because of severe international sanctions. Its only hope is China and the country is looking for robust economic ties with the former.

However, China’s continued support to Pyongyang came under severe strain when the latter tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006. Subsequently, Beijing had to back a UN Security Council Resolution No. 1718 that led to the imposition of severe sanctions against North Korea. And for the first time, the international community witnessed transition of China’s tactics from sustained diplomatic support to outright punishment towards its Northern



Communist neighbour.

When in November 2017, Kim again tested a missile, Beijing called on Pyongyang to restrict all actions that create tensions in the Korean Peninsula. These all clearly

demonstrate that China is wary of North Korea’s belligerent moves that may militate against the mutual interests of both the countries.

Beijing has played the role of a powerbroker during all

high-profile global negotiations on North Korea. After two crucial summits between then US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, international policy makers have so far

focused mainly on denuclearisation steps, immediate measures towards peace in the Korean peninsula and finally, corresponding sanctions relief.

However, Pyongyang has been becoming an Asian tinder box. Kim’s madness and clandestine nuclear programme could turn the entire Korean peninsula into a serious war zone of the continent.

Probably, China knows best how to tackle Kim dynasty. But then at times some foundational questions arise as to whether North Korea is a strategic liability or an opportunity for China. The Communist leaders in Beijing must have realised the fact that its northern neighbour is to be tamed and to be used for all possible gains both domestically and internationally.

The world brands North Korea as a pariah state, but Beijing takes the Kim regime otherwise. Though apparently China has backed the UN sanctions against North Korea over its incessant efforts to become a formidable nuclear state, its financial and trade support directly and effectively facilitated Kim’s nuclear machine for long. This has also helped North Korean economically survive so far. Further, these Chinese efforts are indirectly dashed the hopes of the reunification of both the Koreas.

The US is literally pressuring North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme. Washington says once it is done, there could be a guarantee of trade, diplomatic relations, aid and normalisation of ties with the rogue state. Though the US and China both are interested in denuclearising North Korea, their approaches to the same goal are completely different. America wants China to use its economic leverage to pressure or convince Kim to abandon it nuclear ambition. Thus Washington officials look at China as a part of the solution but unfortunately Beijing is fast becoming part of the Korean conundrum only. For Xi, the

Chinese President, who is now a life-time leader, wants to use North Korea to win brownie points at the domestic front. US President Joe Biden is fully aware that only China can maintain stability in the region if not solve the Korean puzzle for now. Certainly, Beijing will use this opportunity to turn in his favour other vital issues that are constantly pestering Xi, like Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and South China Sea.

What is the problem with Kim? Kim wants to sustain his family rule. And for him, the nuclear button is the only guarantee for him to maintain both his hereditary regime and to threaten the neighbours and the world. Despite the leverage over North Korea, China and South Korea have failed to bring Kim to a negotiating table. Kim is totally against bringing reforms in his country. As such reform measures might bring down the curtain on his rule. The elites in North Korea know very well that its central problems lie within, not outside. Thus, they, along with Kim, ensure no reform takes place, in order to solidify their control over its impoverished populace.

Clearly, hollow summitry will not work with Kim. He demands serious negotiations on the nuclear front. It is better for Biden to extend grand gestures the way Trump did. At times, Beijing’s bosses have displayed stern attitudes towards Kim Jong-un. But Western nations, particularly, America will never ever believe the intentions of China. Because nowhere Chinese leadership has indicated its commitment towards implementing even the limited trade restrictions over this reclusive nation. And the whole world knows that only China keeps North Korea going and precisely surviving against all odds. Many in the West have accused China of circumventing global sanctions against North Korea.

(The writer an expert on international affairs)

**Though the US and China both have voiced concern over North Korea’s nuclear ambition, their approaches to the same goal are distinctly different. America wants China to use its economic leverage to pressure Kim to abandon nuclear ambitions. However, China under Xi, is willing to do only what suits its interests**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# No Olympic participation: Kim’s message for Biden

North Korea has become the world’s first country to drop out of the Tokyo Olympics, ostensibly because coronavirus has spread its deadly tentacles. It is true that the rogue nation is extremely sensitive about Covid-19, knowing that a widespread outbreak in a country with an already battered health system could be disaster.

However, North Korea also has previously used big sporting events to set up diplomacy with the United States meant to win it much-needed sanctions relief in return for nuclear disarmament pledges. Some see pulling out of the Olympics as the North sending Washington a message.

Purportedly, there is legitimate coronavirus fears. A state-run website has claimed that North Korea’s Olympic Committee has decided not to take part in the Tokyo Games slated to begin in July “to protect players from the world public health crisis caused by Covid-19.”

North Korea has previously boycotted Olympics and other international sports events for political reasons or failed to appear when none of its athletes or teams qualified. But this is the first time North Korea has pulled out of a major international sports event citing an infectious disease, according to Seoul’s Unification Ministry.

Pyongyang has developed a reputation for withdrawing from talks with Seoul and Washington before returning at the last minute to boost its bargaining power. But given that the country has been on high alert over Covid-19, experts say there is little chance that it will



In this Feb. 15, 2019, file photo, North Korea’s Olympic Committee President and Sports Minister Kim Il Guk, left, and South Korean Sports Minister Do Jong-hwan attend a meeting with the IOC for their bid to co-host the 2032 Summer Olympics, at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland

AP

reverse its Olympics decision.

North Korea has shown “a coronavirus-related neurosis since it declared an emergency anti-virus system in January last year,” said Park Won Gon, a professor of North Korea studies at Seoul’s Ewha

Womans University.

Park said it is highly unlikely that North Korea will secure enough vaccines for its 26 million people or report major progress in its anti-virus fight by July.

North Korean officials

know how disastrous a major virus outbreak would be in a nation with public healthcare infrastructure that has been in a shambles for decades. North Korea has so far taken some of the world’s most draconian anti-virus steps, including a 15-



month-long closure of its international borders and the departure of foreign nationals.

North Korea still officially claims to be coronavirus free, an assertion many foreign experts dispute.

North Korea’s decision to skip the Olympics shows that it “thinks contact with foreigners is the most dangerous thing now,” said Seo Yu-Seok at the Seoul-based Institute of North Korean Studies.

However, there is certainly a message for US President Joe Biden. The North Korean announcement, three months before the Games begin, could signal that Pyongyang is rejecting a repeated push by Seoul to use the Olympics to create a mood for dialogue. It could also show a determination to boost pressure on the new US administration of President Biden.

North Korea is sending the message that it wants to deal directly with the US now rather than using the Olympics as a venue to reach out to Washington for talks, said Kwak Gil Sup, head of One

Korea Center, a website specialising in North Korea affairs.

Now-deadlocked nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington began in 2018 after a reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula following North Korea’s participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Games in the South earlier that year.

During those Olympics, athletes from the Koreas marched together under a single unification flag during the opening ceremony and formed the Korea’s first-ever joint team in women’s ice hockey. Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, became the first member of the North’s ruling family to visit South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

There’s been little progress in nuclear talks the past two years. North Korea recently fired two ballistic missiles into the sea in the first such weapons tests in a year. Kim Yo Jong has warned Washington not to “cause a stink” and called South Korea’s president “a parrot raised by America.”

Experts say North Korea eventually wants talks with the Biden Administration to win sanctions relief and achieve better ties because its economy has been devastated by the pandemic, US-led sanctions and natural disasters last year.

Analyst Seo said North Korea likely wasn’t sure about the benefits of attending the Tokyo Games because Biden has made it clear that he won’t engage in made-for-TV summits with Kim Jong Un like his predecessor Donald Trump did.

“They knew that they would return home empty-handed from Tokyo,” Seo said.

But North Korea’s domestic difficulties may push it to pursue talks with the United States soon. Seo said North Korea could perform big weapons tests, such as an intercontinental ballistic missile launch, in coming months if it’s not satisfied with the Biden Government’s North Korea policy review expected to be completed soon.

(With inputs from AP)

