

OPINION 6
OF SRI LANKA AND
THE ANDAMANS**WORLD 8**
'SUSPICIOUS' BLACKOUT STRIKES
IRAN'S NATANZ NUCLEAR SITE**SPORT 12**
PUNJAB VS ROYALS
IN IPL TODAY

RANCHI, MONDAY APRIL 12, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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5 new vaccines by year end: Govt

Record over 1.57 lakh cases in a day as Covid 2nd wave grips India



A policeman tries to ensure people wear face masks as a precaution against the coronavirus at a Sunday market in Jammu on Sunday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India celebrated the beginning of three-day Tika utsav (vaccination festival) on Sunday amid reports of a massive shortage of vaccine in several States and indication that by the end of the third quarter of this year India will receive Covid-19 vaccines from five additional manufacturers.

Meanwhile, India recorded a new all-time high daily Covid-19 count at 1,57,028 cases with Maharashtra contributing maximum at 63,294. "India currently has 2 Covid-19 vaccines being manufactured locally: Covishield

and Covaxin, and we can expect five more vaccines by Q3 2021. These vaccines are Sputnik V vaccine (in collaboration with Dr Reddy's), Johnson & Johnson vaccine (in collaboration with Biological E), Novavax vaccine (in collaboration with Serum India), Zydus Cadila's vaccine, and Bharat Biotech's Intranasal Vaccine. Safety and efficacy are the Union Government's primary concerns while granting emergency use authorisation (EUA) to any Covid-19 vaccine in the country," news agency ANI reported, citing top Government sources.

The report said out of the

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	1,35,12,493 (+1,57,028)
DEATHS:	1,70,066 (+761)
RECOVERED:	1,21,47,081 (+68,748)
ACTIVE:	11,89,856
MAHARASHTRA:	34,07,245
KERALA:	11,67,191
KARNATAKA:	10,65,290
TAMIL NADU:	9,33,434
DELHI:	7,25,197 (+10,774)

UP schools shut, social gathering restricted to 50 in closed space

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Government on Sunday ordered the closure of all schools till April 30 and directed the imposition of a night curfew in the districts, which report 100 new infections in a day or have 500 active cases.

The Government ordered that not more than 100 people be allowed to assemble at an open space, and 50 in closed spaces.

Detailed report on P5

almost 20 vaccines in various clinical and pre-clinical stages, Sputnik V vaccine would receive approval first, within the next ten days.

For the manufacturing of vaccine doses, the Russian Direct Investment Fund has partnered with a number of Indian pharmaceutical companies, including Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hetero Biopharma, Gland Pharma, Stelis Biopharma, and Vichrow Biotech. Sputnik V will provide a big boost in the war against Covid-19, with a production capacity of 850 million doses in the country.

"Sputnik is expected to be

available latest by June if all goes well Johnson and Johnson (Bio E) will be available by August, Cadilla Zydus will also be available by August, Novavax (Serum) by September, and Nasal Vaccine (Bharat) by October," the source said, on when the vaccines would be available for use.

The country is facing a huge shortage of vaccines and several vaccination centres have closed down in Maharashtra due to this. Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana and Punjab have complained of a shortage of vaccines.

India bans virus drug Remdesivir's export

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anticipating increase in the demand for Remdesivir injection in the coming days in the wake of a spike in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday took a string of measures from prohibition of the export of the anti-viral drug as well as that of Remdesivir.

The Centre's decision to ban the export of Remdesivir comes in the wake of reports of its shortage and hoarding resulting in inflated prices of the drug in black market. There have been reports of Remdesivir shortage in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The Government has asked

authorities to cap the price of Remdesivir between ₹1,100 and ₹1,400 per vial and urged about a dozen pharmaceutical companies, including Mylan, Hetero Healthcare, Jubilant Life Sciences, Cipla, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Zydus Cadila and Sun Pharmaceuticals — to scale up to their maximum capacity of 31.6 lakh vials per month and lower its MRP (maximum retail price).

The Government has also advised all domestic manufacturers of Remdesivir to display details of their stockists/distributors on their website.

In order to facilitate access to the drug while the Department of Pharmaceuticals has been in contact with domestic manufacturers to ramp up the production.

Negative report must for travelling to Himachal from seven worst-hit States

Shimla: The Himachal Pradesh Government on Sunday made it mandatory for people coming from seven States which

have witnessed a spike in coronavirus cases to show a Covid-19 negative test report on entering the State.

Opp seeks cancellation of CBSE, ICSE Board exams X, XII exams scheduled from May 4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Weeks ahead of the CBSE and ICSE Board examinations, political parties have expressed serious concern over the Centre's go-ahead to conduct the examinations amid the corona pandemic.

While the Congress has sought cancellation of the Board exams, saying it will be impossible to ensure safety of students at crowded exam centres, Shiv Sena appealed to the Centre to take a uniform decision on the board exams of Classes 10 and 12 across the country in the wake of different States and Boards having different opinions on the issues.

While former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the decision to conduct the CBSE exams from May 4 should be reconsidered in view of the ris-



ing number of Covid-19 cases across the country, party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi wrote to Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank seeking cancellation of the Board exams. She also pointed out that it is our responsibility as political leaders to protect and guide the youth.

According to the revised date sheet for CBSE Board exams 2021, the Class 10 exams would be held between May 4 and June 7 and those for Class 12 would be held between May 4 and June 15. CBSE officials have said exam centres across the country have been increased by 40-50 per cent to ensure social distancing among examinees. ICSE Board examinations as well as several States have also scheduled the Board examinations during the next two months.

"In the light of the devastating corona second wave, conducting CBSE exams must be reconsidered. All stakeholders must be consulted before making sweeping decisions. On how many counts does GOI intend to play with the future of India's youth?" Rahul asked through social media platform.

In her letter to the Education Minister, Priyanka said by forcing children to sit for these exams during a raging pandemic, the Government and the CBSE board will be held responsible if any exam centre becomes a hotspot with a large numbers of children becoming infected. "The Government and the CBSE board might want to consider whether they are prepared to own the legal liability for students or others who might be severely affected by the disease in this manner," she said.

She said with over one lakh cases of Covid-19 being reported across the country, lakh of children and parents have expressed fear of getting infected with coronavirus.

Didi, Shah lock horns over election violence, deaths

Mamata terms deaths genocide, Shah raps her for asking supporters to gherao force

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ NADIA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday termed the death of four persons in Central forces firing at Sitalkuchi a "genocide" demanding the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah, who hit back faulting her for "playing appeasement politics even with deaths."

Talking to the media men in Siliguri, Mamata, who put on a black cloth around her as a mark of protest against what she called a "pre-planned murder of innocent people", said, "This is genocide... I have seen the pictures... that they (central forces) had simply sprayed the bullets instead of shooting at foot and thigh only goes on to prove that they were firing to kill... how is it that all the victims bore injuries to their neck or chest... It is a



genocide."

The Chief Minister had decided to immediately visit Sitalkuchi in Cooch Behar district — where four persons died on Saturday after Central forces fired at a crowd of 300-400 people who had attacked a polling booth. But she had to postpone her journey by three days after the Election Commission put a 72-hours-ban on all politicians from entering the district.

At Shantipur in Nadia district where the Home Minister led a massive roadshow, he hit back at the Chief Minister wondering why she referred to four deaths only though there was another death this time of a BJP supporter who was shot dead by Trinamool Congress miscreants in the same constituency.



"Every death is sad but why is it that Mamata Didi has to play politics of appeasement with every death... in referring to the firing deaths on Saturday she forgot to mention the name of Ananda Barman a Rajbangshi boy who was a first-time voter and who was shot dead by the TMC goons in the same constituency... Is Didi not referring to him because he comes from Rajbangshi community... and does not fit into her vote bank politics," Shah said.

Holding Mamata responsible for the firing deaths, Shah said, "Her advice to the people to gherao the Central forces and then vote had instigated them which is why the villagers at Sitalkuchi tried to attack them and the forces had to open fire in self-defence."

2 kids die, 150 shanties gutted in fire in Noida

PTI ■ NOIDA/LUCKNOW

A major fire broke out in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on Sunday, leaving two children dead and around 150 shanties destroyed, police said.

The fire broke out around 1 pm in the JJ cluster near Behlolpur village under Phase 3 police station limits, according to officials.

Experts fear Kumbh can be Covid super-spreader

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As tens of thousands of devotees get ready to take part in the Shahi Snan on Monday in the Ganga at Mahakumbh in Haridwar amid a raging Covid-19 pandemic, health experts fear that the mega event might turn into a super spreader, adding to the country's massive caseload which is already breaking records each passing day.

They said that a dip in the water is not the problem but usually it has been seen that in such events where a large number of people congregate, social

distancing norms are mostly overlooked while there are always chances of one person infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus infecting many others.

"That person will not only infect at the gathering but also when he comes back to his native place, he/she will be the reason for infecting his family members or with whomsoever, he/she comes in contact. More, so when the new variant of the Covid-19 is more infectious," asserted Dr Jugal Kishore, head of the depart-



ment of community medicine at Safdarjung Hospital. This year, Kumbh Mela which started on April 1 is expected to be attended by nearly 150 million visitors.

Dr Kishor said that just like all kinds of human interactions and big gatherings, Mahakumbh in Haridwar too can become a reason for spreading the virus. "Usually, in such events people forget social norms as they chant and jostle with each other to take a dip," he added.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, a hematologist from Fortis

Hospital in Gurugram in Haryana, agreed, "There have been various reports along with the snaps of the events appearing daily and one can easily see that the Covid-19 safety distancing norms are being hardly followed.

A few are using masks and are not maintaining social distancing. "People from across the country particularly from Northern India are participating in the event. This time the virus is more infectious. Those returning from the Mahakumbh will be the potential spreader of the disease," he said.

CAPSULE

FIRMS FEAR ANOTHER EXODUS OF MIGRANTS

Coimbatore: With the second wave of Covid-19 sweeping across various parts of Tamil Nadu, some of the industrialists in the State are apprehensive of migrant workers leaving for their hometowns considering the health conditions.

PAWAR'S GALL BLADDER SURGERY TODAY: NCP

Mumbai: NCP chief Sharad Pawar was on Sunday admitted to a hospital here for the gall bladder surgery scheduled on Monday, party leader Nawab Malik said.

SANSKRIT REMAINS POPULAR IN CHINA

Beijing: Sanskrit studies are flourishing in China, over 2,000 years after the ancient Indian language was brought to this country along with Buddhism, making a profound impact on Chinese monarchs and scholars over the centuries, according to a distinguished professor here.

Body blow to Pak ultras in J&K, 12 killed in 3 days

Eliminated Ansar chief had planned to attack Amarnath pilgrims

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Pakistan-based terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Al-Badr, and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind have suffered the worst blow this year so far with the elimination of one dozen terrorists in four back-to-back encounters in the South Kashmir districts of Shopian, Pulwama and Anantnag in the last 72 hours.

Among those killed in the Shopian gunfight early Sunday morning was one of the youngest terrorists identified as Faisal Gulzar Ganai.

According to police records, he had joined the



Villagers gather near a car and a house damaged during a gun battle between security forces and terrorists in Bijbehara, south of Srinagar, on Sunday

ranks of a terror outfit on Tuesday itself, the day he reportedly went missing from his home. During the encounter, the security forces and his parents tried to persuade him to surrender, but the other terrorists did not allow him to do so.

The security forces had launched these anti-terrorist operations to neutralise terrorists and create a conducive atmosphere ahead of the beginning of the annual Amarnath pilgrimage that is scheduled to start on June 28.

Bokaro zoo gets 3 new inmates from Ranchi

PNS ■ BOKARO

Jawaharlal Nehru Biological Park (JNB), popularly known as Bokaro Zoo, has welcomed three new inmates from Bhagwan Birsa Biological Park, Ranchi, as a part of the animal exchange programme of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA).

The new inmates include a male Himalayan bear and a pair of Porcupine that arrived at the biological park from Lord Birsa Biological Park at Ranchi late in the evening of 7 April, informed MK Dhan, Chief of Communication Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL). "All arrived animals are safe and have been kept in their enclosures," he added.

JNB at Bokaro is maintained by Bokaro Steel Plant's



management.

"The zoo already has a female Himalayan bear whose pair was being searched. After getting approval from the Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi, a male Himalayan bear and a pair of porcupines have been brought from the Biological Park, Ranchi under the Animal Exchange Programme," said Dhan.

Aiming education, conservation, captive breeding, and research including entertainment, this zoo was set up on 14 January 1989 and spread over 127 acres of land. This zoo has more than 437 animals and birds with more than 75,000 trees and medicinal plants.

"The Park is a centre of excellence which is also imparting education silently within a radius of 50 km," said an official.

The central zoo authorities branded this zoo, as one of eastern India's best parks for its uniqueness in cleanliness and beautiful landscape.

The animals at the park include Bengal tiger, Indian tiger, white tiger, lions, spotted deer, leopard, spotted deer, sambhar, blackbuck, hippopotamus, hyena, monkeys, peacock, civets, reptiles and dozens of varieties of beautiful birds.

The zoo is the only place where one can study a lot about nature, plants and animals within two hours of the visit.

Police bust gang of burglars, nab 4 CASES OF COVID DEATHS ON THE RISE

SURESH NIKHAR ■ GIRIDIH

The Giridih police on Saturday evening busted a gang of dacoits and arrested its four members.

Two country-made pistols, four cartridges of 3.15 bore, four bombs, one blood cotted strict, one motorcycle (JH-11W- 6713) and other items were recovered from their possession.

Giridih Dy SP HQ -2 Santosh Kumar Mishra said those arrested are in the age group of 33 to 55 years and were involved in a case of dacoity in the house of Tahlu Ravidash at Nayatard within Tisari police limits.

Circle Inspector Parmeshwar Leyangi said another member of the gang

Giridih Dy SP HQ -2 Santosh Kumar Mishra said those arrested are in the age group of 33 to 55 years and were involved in a case of dacoity in the house of Tahlu Ravidash at Nayatard within Tisari police limits

managed to escape and efforts are on to nab him. The arrested members of the gang have been identified as Rajendra Singh alias Munna Singh 33, of Purandaha lalkothi in Deoghar, Jethha Murmu 55 belonging to Dhudhpania Bhelwaghati, Md Eslam Ansari, 41, of Jamua in Giridih and 41 year old Kuwar Hembram of Jamdar, Gawwan in Giridih.

The Dy SP HQ-2 said the arrested dacoits were involved in a burglary case at Nayatard

on March 18. In the case, 10 to 12 members of the gang barged into the house of Tahlu Ravidas, who runs the Customer Service Center, and decamped with cash of Rs 1 lakh and four mobiles.

In the incident, all 12 gang members entered the residence of Tahlu Ravidas, at Nayatard, and took away mobiles and cash. All the arrested persons were forwarded to court, the DySP informed. According to SP, Amit Renu, they allegedly barged into the house of one Tahlu Ravidas in Nsyatard area and escaped with Rs 1 lakh on March 18 this year.

The arrested persons came on motorcycles, hit on his head with iron rods and escaped with the bag carrying cash, added the SP.

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

There has been a sudden spike in the Covid-19 cases in East Singhbhum district, especially at the steel city during the past 24 hours. More than 300 positive cases have been reported.

Moreover, during the past 24 hours nine persons died in two city-based hospitals, six of them since the wee hours.

A total of 256 new cases were detected in Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) of 3,110 samples carried out by the health department, making the total number of Covid cases to 20,164 in the district.

"Cases of deaths are on the rise. Three Covid patients have died at Tata Main Hospital since the wee hours. As there



a process is followed before declaring a death officially, the health department is expected to declare about the six deaths late in the night only," said a senior official posted at the civic body, Jamshedpur Notified Area Committee (NAC).

The official on condition of anonymity pointed out that as the JNAC does carry out the work of disposal of Covid-infected bodies, they get the information about a Covid death soon after it takes place.

Meanwhile, district civil surgeon, AK Lal said that his department makes official announcement of Covid deaths after following a protocol and hence they can not say anything before the process is followed.

Cong opposes shifting SBI administrative office

PNS ■ DHANBAD

District Congress president Brajendra Prasad Singh has condemned the decision of the union government to shift the administrative office of SBI from Dhanbad to Deoghar.

In a statement Singh said, its step-motherly treatment with the economic capital of Jharkhand.

"We have important institutions like CIMFR, divisional railway headquarters, IIT, BCCL, DVC, SAIL and other institutions of government besides hundreds of hard coke plants and other industries in Dhanbad and neighbouring Bokaro but by shifting the office government has ignored Importance of coal capital," he said.

Singh demanded rollback of the decision in larger interest of business houses.

Bata CEO to receive Jehangir Ghandy Medal for Peace on XLRI Convocation

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

XLRI- Xavier School of Management, one of premier B-School, is all set to hold its 65th Annual Convocation on 24 April. The virtual convocation ceremony will be held to bid a final farewell to the 2019-21 batch.

On this significant day, 509 XLRI students will receive their graduating diploma including - 178 & 181 students of Postgraduate Programmes in Management - BM, and HRM; 101 students of 15-months PGDM (General Management) Programme; 06 students of Fellow Program in Management (FPM) and 43 students of the 2018-2021 batch of PGDM-BM Programme (Evening).

Speaking about this



momentous occasion, P Christie, director, XLRI, said, "Convocation is a significant milestone event in the academic journey of every student, faculty and staff as it is the culmination of all the efforts put in by an individual during their time at the XLRI campus."

This year XLRI would confer the prestigious 'Sir Jehangir Ghandy Medal for Industrial and Social Peace' to Sandeep Kataria, Global CEO, Bata. He will also deliver the convocation address to the graduating stu-

dents at the event.

Sandeep Kataria is the global CEO of Bata Limited. He became the first Indian to hold the position in the company's 126-year history. Sandeep with 24 years of experience at Unilever, Yum Brands, and Vodafone in India & Europe before joining Bata India as CEO in 2017.

At Bata India Ltd, Mr. Kataria has been tasked with transforming the footwear giant into a modern, contemporary brand for generations to come. In July 2019, Sandeep was appointed President of the newly-formed India region and was a member of the Executive Committee. Sandeep Kataria is an alumnus of IIT-Delhi and XLRI-Jamshedpur (BM-1993).

Sir Jehangir Ghandy Medal

for Industrial and Social Peace, instituted by XLRI in 1966, in honor of the Late Sir Jehangir Ghandy, former Chairman of the Board of Governors- XLRI is awarded to Heroic Leaders who have contributed towards the growth of their respective organizations and also impacted the growth of our nation in a significant way.

The medal was instituted by XLRI in gratitude for Sir Jehangir Ghandy's yeoman contribution to XLRI and the society at large. One of the oldest medals instituted by a higher education institution, the medal is awarded during XLRI's Annual Convocation Ceremony to recognize outstanding contributions in the field of industrial and social peace in the country.

Man threatens self-immolation after wife's death post delivery

PANKAJ KUMAR ■ DHANBAD

A 30-year-old Dhanbad man threatened to self-immolate after his wife died in a nursing home despite having normal delivery late on Saturday night.

The man, Bhola Tiwari claimed that the doctor and the nursing kept him in dark and asked him to bring blood twice within an hour and when he returned with blood both the nursing staff and the lady doctor escaped from nursing home leaving behind the body of his wife, Kritika Tiwari, and a newly born son in the delivery room.

Kritika was admitted to nursing home around midnight on Saturday and had delivered son after over an hour but was found dead by family members around morning when they forced the

authorities to see both mother and son.

It all happened at Raj Nursing home of Dr Sabita Sukla Das, the gyconocologist who had conducted the delivery procedure.

On Sunday morning Bhola called his friends and family members and also informed police.

Entire staff of nursing home and the doctors were missing when police reached the nursing home.

Bhola has demanded arrest of the doctor and staff for allegedly murdering his wife. Attempts to contact Dr Sukladas and her husband Dr US PRASAD failed on the day. The doctor couple happen to be senior doctors and have retired from SNM-MMCH. Police have assured appropriate legal action on the complaint filed by Bhola.

Yogi to provide employment to youth through fish farming

Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is planning to provide employment opportunities to the youth in fish farming.

The state government sees considerable employment potential in this sector and believes that it can play an important role in rural development and the economy.

This easy-to-start business can be started with low capital.

According to the government spokesman, the chief minister plans to launch many beneficial schemes through the Department of Fisheries, which will not only promote fisheries business but will also provide jobs to the needy that will help them become self-reliant once again.

This will also help in increasing the income of the village panchayat from the ponds built on the barren Panchayati land in the village.

"Along with imparting training on fisheries, efforts are being made by the government to expand this business on a larger scale. Now farmers can increase their income by farming as well as fisheries," the spokesman said.

It may be recalled that the

state government has already increased the duration of fishery reservoirs from 3 years to 10 years. This is the reason that the state has produced 26.44 lakh MT of fish during the last four years.

As many as 1,191.27 crore fishery seeds were produced in four years and 5,902 fish farmers were provided Kisan Credit Cards.

The state government has also provided the benefit of free fishermen accident insurance scheme to the farmers by implementing the 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana' under the Atmanirbhar campaign.

The state government has also allotted 2,215 fishermen, houses in the state in the last four years.

Along with this, the facilities for fishermen of Uttar Pradesh are now available through the fish farmer app.

Farmers are directly being benefitted from the construction of 57 fish seed hatcheries and 385 fish seed rearing units in the state.

Recently, Uttar Pradesh has also received the first prize of the best state of inland fisheries under the leadership of the chief minister Yogi Adityanath.

Pawan Kalyan opts for quarantine as team members test Covid positive

IAN5 ■ HYDERABAD

JanaSena Party founder and Tollywood film star Pawan Kalyan has gone into self-imposed quarantine, a statement issued by the party said on Sunday.

According to the statement, several members of the JanaSena Party president's personal team, and security team have tested Covid positive. Moreover, with several members of his family also found to be Covid positive, doctors have advised Pawan Kalyan to self-quarantine as a precautionary measure.

He will, however, continue his routine party activities during quarantine, and interact with party colleagues through video conferencing, the statement said.

As an ally of the BJP, Pawan Kalyan has been actively campaigning for the BJP candidate Ratnamala in the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll scheduled for April 17.

Pawan Kalyan was scheduled to participate in an election campaign meeting in Tirupati along with BJP national President J.P. Nadda on April 12.

Pawan Kalyan is also currently riding high on the response to his latest movie 'Vakeel Saab' -- a remake of Amitabh Bachchan starrer "Pink" -- released this week to packed houses.

Telangana also hit by Covid vaccine shortage

IAN5 ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has also joined the states facing shortage of Covid-19 vaccines as the state government has urged the Centre to immediately provide at least 30 lakh doses.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar wrote to the Union Health Secretary that the state was left with only 5.66 lakh doses of vaccine which would last for three days at maximum.

"Covid-19 vaccination has been ramped up in the state. Due to concerted efforts, the number of vaccinations in the state, in one day, crossed 1.15 lakh yesterday. In the coming days this will be enhanced to over two lakh per day," Somesh Kumar wrote in a letter dated April 10.

"Therefore, I would like to request you to urgently provide at least 30 lakh doses of vaccine to Telangana for the next 15 days," reads the letter.

The chief secretary sent the letter a day after state health officials claimed that there was no shortage of vaccines in the state.

Meanwhile, the state health authorities administered 1,62,385 doses on Saturday. This is the highest number of doses given in a single day so far. They include 9,090 beneficiaries who received second dose.

According to the director of public health, the cumulative doses given rose to 20,61,395 including 2,99,742 second doses.

Those given vaccines on Saturday include 781 health-care workers, 22,578 frontline workers and 1,39,026 beneficiaries who are 45 years and above.

The health department has ramped up vaccination over the last one week and announced that vaccination will be conducted in all government and private vaccination centres on all days including Sundays and public holidays.

The number of vaccination centres has gone up to 1,176 including 944 government-run centres.

Himachal makes Covid -ve report mandatory for entry

Shimla: Amid the spike in Covid-19 cases around the country, Himachal Pradesh on Sunday made it mandatory for people coming from seven high load states to produce a RT-PCR negative report obtained within 72 hours of entry, from April 16 onwards.

The high load states are Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

This was part of the state government's fresh guidelines issued by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur following a spike in Covid-19 cases across the state.

As of now, the government has decided to allow the tourists to visit the state, but at the same time, hotel owners and tourists should strictly adhere to the standard operating procedures (SoPs) issued by the government, he said.

Laying stress on twin strategy for testing, tracing and treatment with effective surveillance of micro containment zones, the Chief Minister said greater emphasis must also be laid on RT-PCR tests to achieve the target of 70 per cent tests.

He said the state Health Department must also take steps to increase bed capacity in order to meet any eventuality. Also, it must ensure minimum wastage of the vaccine. During the last 45 days, the state has reported 10,690 new Covid-19 cases, while the number of deaths have also increased rapidly, a matter of concern, he said. A total of 120 deaths were reported during this period.

Thakur said the state has allowed the devotees to visit temples during the Navratri festival, but at the same time, organising 'langars' or community kitchens and 'jagran' have been banned.

He said the devotees were allowed to visit the temple to perform 'puja' and 'darshan' by maintaining social distancing and using face masks.

The Chief Minister also said no overcrowding would be allowed in buses and public transport vehicles.

Covid spike sees pubs, restaurants' business dip 40%

Gurugram: The increasing Covid cases and the enforcement of the night curfew across Delhi-NCR has witnessed a 40 per cent dip in the pubs, bars and restaurants business in Gurugram.

Gurugram's nightlife hotspot CyberHub has taken a massive hit. Besides, most of the pubs, bars and restaurants are grappling with a few customers.

Even the tourism and hospitality industry is finding it difficult to attract visitors amid the pandemic.

Last week, the number of customers came down by 50 per cent in Gurugram's pubs, bars and restaurants. Sources said that the pandemic has affected the estimated daily turnover of Rs 80 crore.

Gurugram has 350 pub-bars located at CyberHub, Sector-29 Market, MG Road, Sohna Road, Palam Vihar and Golf Course Road and 10 per cent of inn is closed since the imposition of lockdown while 90 per cent are open.

These have only 60 per cent of the working employees while the remaining 40 per cent are not been hired.

The outlets owners said, "Increasing number of Covid-19 cases and night curfew in Delhi have had a major impact on business."

"The national capital's crowd come here in Gurugram to enjoy the nightlife at pubs, bars, hotels and restaurants but the pandemic has brought down the business as people have stopped visiting here due to the enforcement of the night curfew amid surging Covid cases," said a restaurant owner on condition of anonymity.

BJP, JMM engage in battle of nerves in minority-dominated Madhupur

CM Soren, senior BJP leaders camp there

PNS ■ RANCHI

With election dates nearing for Madhupur bypoll, campaigning has gained momentum in Madhupur. The ruling JMM and its arch-rival the BJP are engaged in a battle of nerves in this minority dominated constituency.

On one hand, former Chief Minister and BJP legislative party leader Babulal Marandi is leading the campaign of NDA camp to ensure victory of BJP candidate. On the other hand, Chief Minister and Grand Alliance star campaigner Hemant Soren is leading the campaign of UPA camp for victory of JMM candidate Hafizul Hassan Ansari.

On Sunday, the Chief Minister addressed a public

meeting at several places of Madhupur constituency. At Devipur area of Madhupur, Soren met people seeking support for JMM candidate. Targeting BJP, Soren said that Saffron party politics rely on spreading lies. Soren, on the occasion also highlighted the various welfare schemes initiated by his Government including waiving farmers' loan, providing ration cards to 15 lakh beneficiaries, providing saari dhoti and lungi to BPL people at cheap rate among others.

Soren will stay put till April 14 and lead the joint campaign of Mahagathbandhan constituents for Hassan. Not only Soren, but his cabinet colleagues too are burning midnight oil ensuring victory for the JMM candidate. State Health Minister Banna Gupta who is camping in Madhupur said, "Despite corona pan-



Chief Minister Hemant Soren addresses a gathering during an election campaign rally in support of JMM candidate Hafizul Ansari ahead of the Madhupur bypoll at Madhupur on Sunday

demically Hemant Soren government has tried its best to reach out to masses, because our intention is clear."

Targeting BJP, Gupta said that BJP politics revolves around forming BJP government state-by-state many a

times through undemocratic process. He said, "The Grand Alliance Government is strong and efforts by BJP to topple



He said, "BJP is the only democratic party in the country. In BJP even junior cadre can

aspire to become Chief Minister, Prime Minister, BJP president and holding top organization posts unlike JMM, Congress and others which are dynastic politics."

The battle of Madhupur is a prestige issue for both the camps and they are focusing on caste equations too. In Madhupur there are six candi-

dates in the fray out of which there are four Independents, but the direct contest is between BJP and JMM. The Madhupur constituency has sizeable population of minority followed by tribal, Brahmin, Bhumihar, Rajput, Vaishya and Scheduled Caste voters. The NDA and UPA camp is leaving no stone unturned to cash in on these votes.

Sources said that the Madhupur bypoll will be litmus test for State Government as elections are being held after one and half year of Soren government coming to power.

The battle of Madhupur is different from two others by polls as the seat has been held by both BJP and JMM on earlier occasions. In 2005 and 2014, BJP candidate Raj Paliwar won the seat while JMM Haji Hussan Ansari had won the seat in 2009 and 2019.

RT PCR reports delayed as Ranchi labs get flooded with swab samples

Prioritise people with comorbid conditions, Covid symptoms, says Govt



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

Ranchi: Covid testing labs in Ranchi are flooded with swab samples, many of which are pending for tests, causing a delay of 48 hours or even more in the final report, staff working at private labs in the state capital said on Sunday.

Owing to the sudden rise in the demand for Covid tests, very few private labs are being able to deliver the Covid test results to the people tested on the day their swab samples are collected, claim swab collection staff, adding that RT PCR test reports, which were earlier being given to people within four hours, are usually taking more than 48 hours now due to the high demand.

As per government records, around 7000 swab samples are collected for Covid test in Ranchi every day. In the wake of the growing cases of infection in the state capital, the government has set up new testing centres in urban as well as rural areas of the district.

From Monday onwards, Covid testing booths will also be set up at Marwari Bhavan, Kokar Industrial Area, Morhabadi OP, Doranda, Station Road, Health Centre Dhurwa, Risaldar, CMPDI and Hatia, a press communique from the health department stated. So far, free Covid tests were conducted at Sadar Hospital, Ranchi Railway Station, Hatia Railway Station, ITI Bus Stand, Khadga Bus Stand, Zila School and Sainik Market on MG Road.

Besides increasing the number of Covid testing booths in the city, the health department has also directed the Ranchi district administration to send Covid testing teams to areas with a high-positivity rate and set up free Covid testing camps there.

As per government data, Ranchi accounts for almost half of the over 12,000 active cases of Covid-19 infection in Jharkhand. The district, as per data with NHM, has 5,927 active cases of infection, the highest among the 24 districts in the state. The district has also reported 46 of the 99 Covid deaths in Jharkhand during the past one month.

In the wake of the sudden rise in the demand for Covid tests, the health department has directed private labs to prioritise those with comorbid conditions and symptoms while conducting tests. In a recent meeting with private laboratories, health secretary KK Soan asked the labs to provide test results to people with comorbid conditions and Covid symptoms as early as possible.



Students belonging to the Christian community participate in 'White Sunday' and receive their first prasada during a special mass at Harmu Church, in Ranchi on Sunday

Fear of lockdown worries traders in State capital

Chamber creates awareness on Covid guidelines

PNS ■ RANCHI

Announcement of restrictions during night with shops and business establishments to close after 8 pm has worried people, especially the business community, as they fear that more restrictions must be imposed if Covid-19 cases continue to rise.

The business community, however, feels that if the duration of curfew is extended or there is a decision for lockdown due to further increase in the number of infections it would not be a welcome step. "Businesses have just started to return to normalcy. The night curfew is fine as most of the businesses are already closed by the time but any further restrictions would spill trouble for shopkeepers," said Vikram Sharma, a shopkeeper in the Upper Bazaar area.



An aerial view of Albert Ekka Chowk, amid the coronavirus pandemic, in Ranchi on Sunday

Sharma said, "We are following all safety measures such as ban on entry of customers without wearing masks, use of sanitizers, maintaining social distance among others, but any other restrictions will surely hamper our business."

Meanwhile, in order to make people aware of the corona infection, the Jharkhand Chamber of Commerce's efforts are moving the No Mask No Entry campaign, and on Friday the Jharkhand Wholesale Clothing Dealers Association went to the textile shops located in the Upper Market and put a sticker of No Mask No Entry and in the shop. Motivated to follow all safety standards issued by the district administration.

Chamber President Praveen Jain Chhabra said that the collective efforts of business entities to break the chain of infection are very important. We have an obligation to provide all possible support to the district administration in controlling this epidemic. Glad that the business world is playing its role in this direction. During this period, apart from Prakash Arora, president of the Wholesale Clothing Dealers Association, many members of the union were involved.

Even vegetable sellers are worried of corona infection as at vegetable markets it is people who don't follow corona guidelines. Mahavir Mahto, a vegetable seller at Naga Baba Khatal vegetable market said,

"We are following all corona guidelines, but the people coming for purchasing vegetables are not following guidelines properly. In such a situation the government should ensure that all follow corona guidelines."

Buddha's idols may draw pilgrims, tourists to Hazaribag

Ranchi: Bahoranpur in Hazaribag district may fast transform into a new Buddhist pilgrimage following excavation of several Buddha idols by the Archaeological Department of India.

Idols of Avalokiteshwara image of Lord Buddha have been found recently. The discovery of new statues has made the tourism potential of the place evident, say experts.

Director of the Archaeological Department of India, Dr Rajendra Dehuri said that the statue of Abhiloakeshwara had already been found at the location. He said that there is a need to study it. In every religion, different images of God and Aaradha Dev are presented. In this case, a lot will be clear after studying about it.

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

Khan said that many times he has tried to attract the attention of social and political parties as well as administrative officials and the Government to the site in the past. With Buddhist sculptures and ancient relics constantly being found in Baharanpur, the villagers of Gadokhar have also started demanding an excavation in this area.

On Saturday, a team of intellectuals from Hazaribag reached Gadokhar, which 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.

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Rift between BJP, AJSU in Madhupur: Congress

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) on Sunday said that the rift between the opposition coalition BJP-AJSU party has once again come to light in the Madhupur Assembly by-election and this by-election result will prove to be an increasing step towards making Jharkhand BJP-free.



Congress leaders address press conference in Ranchi on Sunday

JPCC Spokesperson Alok Kumar Dubey, Lal Kishorenath Shahdev and Rajesh Gupta said that before the by-election, the main opposition parties in the State-BJP and AJSU Party were talking that they will win with a huge margin and making a pompous statement. But the mutual support in the NDA alliance in the by-elections was seen to be completely out of date, the AJSU Party has left the BJP candidate who betrayed the organization on their own, while the BJP candidate also left hope of help from the AJSU Party in the election, they added.

JPCC Spokesperson Lal Kishorenath Shahdeo said that even though the ticket was

obtained from the BJP on the basis of in the Madhupur Assembly by-election, the party's discord has also come to light in the entire by-election.

The way BJP's big state level leaders are facing hooting in Madhupur and hearing Go Back slogans, there is more outrage among BJP workers, which is why former Minister Raj Paliwar and his supporters are completely absent from the election campaign who has won BJP many times in Madhupur.

State Spokesperson Rajesh

Gupta said that BJP State president Deepak Prakash and MP Nishikant Dubey, who are in discussion for bigotry, were dreaming like Mungerilal about the change of guard in the State after the by election results, but now these leaders too is missing from the election campaign, one leader is going to another State to hide his face and is worshipping in temple and pretending to be busy in election campaign, while other leaders are trying to stay in the news only by making rhetoric in social media.

TAMARIND PROVIDING LIVELIHOOD TO RURAL WOMEN

CM's push for income through forest resources shows results

Ranchi: On the instructions of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, efforts are being made to increase the income of the people living in remote villages through the available forest produce in Jharkhand. And the abundance of tamarind trees in the forest areas of the state is now becoming a source of employment.

Susheela Munda of Shillada

village in Khunti is happy doing the work of collecting tamarind. Last year, Sushila earned Rs. 40,000 by collecting one tonne of tamarind. Sushila says, "I never thought that the tamarind available for free in the jungles can give such returns."

Lolen Samad of Kesra village, typical of Simdega, Etangar, is also doing the collection and processing of tamarind. Samad has seven tamarind trees, which give him a yield of about three tonnes of tamarind every year. Lollen earns up to Rs.1 lakh a year through tamarind production, which enables her to give high-

er education to her children. In such a situation, it can be said that the rural women of the state are adding the sweetness of livelihood in their lives with the sourness of tamarind.

Women Farmer Empowerment Project under Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society under Rural Development Department is becoming helpful in providing good income for rural women by performing tamarind collection and processing. Through the collection of tamarind, women are making good profits at a nominal cost. At present 14,731 farmers are involved in the production and



processing of tamarind under the Women Farmer Empowerment Project in five districts of Simdega, Ranchi, Gumla, West Singhbhum and Khunti. Through the Women Farmer Empowerment Project, farmers have been imparted training and processing through modern equipment. Last year, 11,000 women farm-

ers of the state collected 112 metric tons of tamarind and traded more than 39 lakh. Currently, a total of 14,731 women farmers have set a target to collect and trade 309 metric tons of tamarind, out of which 86 metric tons of tamarind are being collected and processed. It is expected to earn more in the coming days through this initiative.

The collection and sale of tamarind is being carried out through the producer group under the project, says Samad. "Earlier, we had to sell tamarind by going to the haat-bazaar, profit was reduced due to increase in cost and not get-

ting the right price. But now it is not so. Now the right price of the crop is also available and one does not even have to go far from the village to sell the crop.

We harvest crops using modern equipment such as Secure and also use the weighing machine easily. Through the Grameen Sewa Kendra, we are processing and selling tamarind seeds by making tamarind cake, which is in great demand in the market."

Under the Mahila Kisan Project, women farmers associated with tamarind production are also making tamarind cakes through the tamarind

processing unit. In these processing units, the rural women are doing all the work from making seeds from tamarind to preparing pulp and making cakes of tamarind through modern machines. Women working in processing units also receive a daily honorarium, which leads to their additional earnings. Tamarind Cake is being made available in the market under the Palash brand, which is earning a good amount for women farmers. Naturally available tamarinds are being processed and sold under the Palash brand at various Palash Marts and Cell counters in the state through

the Grameen Seva Kendra. Through the Palash brand, products manufactured by women entrepreneurs from remote rural areas of Jharkhand are gaining a new identity and popularity in the market.

Community based tamarind collection and processing is being done through 11 Gramin Seva Kendras at various places in the state. These rural service centers are operated by the Organization of Rural Women. At the same time, the price of tamarind is also getting good by doing good packaging and marketing under the Palash brand. **PNS**

India should cherish peace process on LAC, says China

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI BEIJING

With both sides unable to firm up a plan to withdraw from the flash-points during the latest round of talks, China on Sunday said India should cherish the current positive trend of de-escalation and peace on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

This statement came two days after the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks on Friday at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point at the LAC in Ladakh failed to show any tangible movement forward. Both the sides, however, agreed to continue holding regular dialogue at the military and diplomatic levels to restore peace.

In the talks lasting more than 12 hours, China dilly dalled on pulling back troops from the friction points at Patrolling Points 15, 17 and 17A at the Hot Springs and Gogra, sources said.

The Indian delegation led by Leh-based 14 Corps chief Lt General P G K Menon reiterated the country's stand that disengagement from Hot Springs and Gogra will go a long way in bringing down tension at the LAC. The proposed pull back will ensure peace and stability in the region besides ensuring tranquility, the Indian team insisted.

China, however, did not give any commitment on a plan to disengage and continues to maintain large number of troops at the face-off sites. This led to concern in the Indian security establishment, sources said. The Chinese team was led by Major General Liu Lin.

Faced with the stalling tactics by China in Depsang valley where it advanced into Indian territory in 2013 and continued to remain there, the two Corps Commanders will meet again shortly to continue the momentum of dialogue,



they said.

In this backdrop, the Chinese military said on Sunday India should cherish the "current positive trend" of de-escalation and cooling down of tensions in the border area. A day after the 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks, the Indian army is a statement said on Saturday both sides held a detailed deliberation on the disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points of Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh.

Both the sides agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and resolve the outstanding issues in an "expedient manner".

There was no visible forward movement at the latest round of military talks between the two countries as the Chinese delegation came to the talks with a "premeditated mindset" and did not show any flexibility in moving forward on the disengagement process at the remaining friction points.

In its press release on the latest round of talks between two militaries held on April 9, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said India should cherish the de-escalation and cooling in the border area, in an apparent reference to the disengagement of troops from the most contentious area of the Pangong Lake in February.

Both sides should also adhere to the consensus reached in the previous talks, the state-run China Global Television Network (CGTN) on Sunday quoted the press release by a PLA spokesperson on the talks held at the Chushul border point on the Indian side of the LAC.

"We hope the Indian side could cherish the current positive trend of de-escalation and cooling in the border area, adhere to the relevant agreements between the two armies and the consensus of the previous talks and move towards the same direction as the Chinese side to jointly maintain peace and tranquility in the border area," a spokesperson for the Western Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) said in a statement.

The Indian Army statement said it was highlighted at the talks that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for considering "de-escalation of forces" and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility in the region.

The two sides agreed on the need to resolve the outstanding issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with the existing agreement and protocols, the statement said.

The two sides agreed that it was important to take guidance from the consensus of

Both the sides agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents

their leaders, continue their communication and dialogue and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest, it said.

"They also agreed to jointly maintain stability on the ground, avoid any new incidents and jointly maintain peace in the border areas," the statement said.

Army Chief General M M Naravane had said last month the threat to India has only "abated" following the disengagement in the Pangong lake area, but it has not gone away altogether. He said China still maintained considerable number of troops in the "rear areas." It means the Chinese troops though pulled back from the eyeball to eyeball confrontation but continued to have heavy armour and troops close by thereby posing threat to Indian interests. Naravane also observed peace will be restored once these additional troops return to their barracks from the forward areas.

Not willing to take any chances, the Army in the last few months substantially bolstered its troop strength besides weaponry. Moreover, the troops remained deployed on the LAC throughout the harsh winter months when the temperature dipped to minus 30 degrees.

The standoff between the two armies started on May 5 last year when the troops from both the sides exchanged blows at the Pangong Tso. Soon, the face-offs commenced at some other places on the LAC.

The border saw massive troop build up by India and China after a bloody brawl on June 15 in the Galwan valley. Twenty Indian soldiers including the Commanding Officer were killed. At least 40 Chinese were also killed by China was yet to officially announce the number of casualties.

Traders' body asks Modi not to impose night curfew, lockdown



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to impose night curfew or lockdown amid rising Covid-19 in the country and instead adopt staggered working time for different sectors. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the traders' association said it would be more appropriate if alternate measures may be adopted at district levels all over the country.

"Instead of night curfew or lockdown which have not proved a worthy step so far to combat escalation of COVID-19, it would be more appropriate if alternate easy measures may be adopted at district levels and staggered working time for different sectors," said CAIT.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that a closer analysis of the COVID-19 statistics over the last one week have made it ample clear that night curfew and lockdown in different states have not brought the desired results of bringing down the cases. It suggested that working hours of different verticals of trade and commerce should be revised.

"We suggest that government offices, private offices and other all kinds of offices may work from 8 am to 2 pm whereas the markets and shops may be allowed to work from 11 am to 5 pm," said CAIT.

Best mango? Jury is out on social media

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Social media on Sunday debated which variety of mango-Alphonso, Dushehri, Langda, Maldah or Totapari is the best. The hashtag #Alphonso has gone viral on Twitter and it was trending at 13 numbers with many tweeting which variety of the king of fruit is the best in the country.

It all started when a Twitter user claimed that 'Alphonso' mangoes are the best, while responding to this tweet, a twitter user wrote no mango can aspire to come even within sniffing distance of the Langda/Maldah, no competition, Langda is King. One twitter user wrote "Alphonso is the most overrated stuff" ever and that only "brand conscious babalog" have a taste for it. Several people tweeted for Alphonso mangoes. Twitterati from Bihar, Eastern UP and West Bengal tweeted Maldah is the best.

A twitter user Joey@DrJoyeeta claimed that Alphonso mangoes are the best! Specially packed by my dear brother for calling me a loser. PS: Let's start the mango war. Repeating in capitals: ALPHONSO MANGOES ARE THE BEST!

Responding to the tweet, Sankarshan Thakur tweeted: "No mango can aspire to come even within sniffing distance of the #Langda / #Maldah No competition. #Langda is King. Yashwant deshमुख responded to Thakur saying 'Alphonso



is the most overrated stuff you will ever come across. The brand-conscious Alphonso Babalog has no idea what real mango is. Try Dashahari, Chausa, Safeda and ultimate Langda/Malda".

Another twitter user tweeted "Dashehri, Malgova and Sappattai for me. A little known variety called Panjavarnam from my home town is also very good, but sadly not available freely outside of that region. And yes, Alphonso is hella overrated". Another twitter user wrote 'One twitter user tweeted "Alphonso is overrated; Kesari is underrated".

Dubbed the 'King of fruits' in India, mangoes have an almost cult fanbase in India. With its puply, juicy flesh wrapped around a delightfully hardcore, the fruit comes in many shapes, sizes, flavours and varieties across the states of India. A large variety of mangoes are grown across India. Maharashtra is famous for Alphonso mangoes, Uttar

Pradesh is known for Dushehri. West Bengal is popular for growing Himsagar mangoes while Andhra Pradesh is known for the lighter coloured Safeda mangoes. Other popular varieties of mangoes in India include Chausa, Lengra, Kesari, Totapuri, Neelam and much more. Another netizen wrote: "Agree, Langra is just awesome..... although I have developed a taste for Banganapalli in recent years. Alphonso has a bad hit rate, but the odd one can be brilliant".

According to the agriculture ministry, mango production is estimated to increase 4.24 per cent to 21.12 million tonnes in the crop year 2020-21 ending June. The output of mango, the 'king of fruits', stood at 20.26 million tonnes during the 2019-20 crop year (July-June). The arrival of mangoes from southern and western India has started, while the season in the northern states like Uttar Pradesh will begin from mid-June onwards.

Active Covid cases in India breach 11-L mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The active Covid-19 cases in India crossed the 11 lakh mark for the first time after a record high of 1.52 lakh new infections on Saturday. The active caseload till now was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020.

Amid an unprecedented burden on health infrastructure in 15 States and Delhi, which are witnessing an upward trajectory, authorities have started reserving more COVID hospitals and taking steps to address any shortage of medical supplies, besides enhancing curbs on the movement of people.

The Centre announced a ban on export of Remdesivir, used in coronavirus treatment and its Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, and asked all domestic manufacturers to display on their website details of their stockists and distributors. India's COVID-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,33,58,805, and the death toll increased to 1,69,275 with 839 daily new fatalities, the highest since October 18, 2020, the data updated by Health Ministry on Sunday morning showed.

While the cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 10 crore after 85 days, the 'Tika Utsav' or a special 'vaccination festival' was started till April 14.

"Anyone eligible for the vaccine should get the jab, and for this the society and administration have to make full efforts," Prime Minister Modi



said pitching for "zero vaccine waste" and urging the people to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour.

"This festival is, in a way, the beginning of another major war against corona. We have to lay special emphasis on personal hygiene as well as social hygiene," he said.

Five states — Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala -- cumulatively account for 70.82 per cent of India's active COVID-19 cases, while Maharashtra alone accounts for 48.57 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said.

Besides these states, Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal are displaying an upward graph in daily new cases.

Most of these states have reimposed restrictions, including the closure of schools, night curfew, weekend and local shutdowns, while ruling out a total lockdown, but as the latest wave of patients

continues to flood hospitals, there are some signs of a rethink.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal have said that a lockdown will be the only option if the infections don't abate and the health system shows signs of collapsing. Kejriwal on Sunday said the COVID-19 situation in the national capital is "very serious".

The city recorded 10,774 fresh COVID-19 cases on Sunday, the highest single-day spike so far, with 48 more fatalities. "The fourth wave is more dangerous than the previous wave," he told a press conference, and urged the people not to step out unless there is urgent work.

Speaking at an all-party meeting held virtually to discuss the COVID-19 situation in the State on Saturday, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had indicated the imposition of a strict lockdown in the State given the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases.

Focus on micro containment zones to curb Covid march: Modi to K'taka CM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday suggested to Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on focusing on "micro containment zones" to contain the spread of Covid-19 infection in the State.

Karnataka has seen a surge in COVID19 cases since the beginning of this month and is reporting nearly 7,000 fresh cases per day for the last couple of days.

The Chief Minister who spoke to the Prime Minister said that the latter also appreciated the state government's efforts to counter the second wave of Coronavirus pandemic.

"Spoke to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji and apprised him about the measures being taken in the state to mitigate second wave of pandemic. PM appreciated the Government's efforts and suggested to focus on micro containment zones to contain the spread of infection," Yediyurappa tweeted.

After the video conference with Modi, Yediyurappa on Thursday had announced a corona curfew between 10 PM to 5 AM in seven district centres of the state along with Manipal, from April 10 to 20, targeted to controlling the fast spread of COVID-19.

Until Saturday the total number of active cases in the

state stood at 61,653.

The Chief Minister also appealed to the people, those eligible, to get vaccinated.

"Vaccine is the biggest weapon available to us in this battle against Covid-19. I urge all eligible citizens to get vaccinated and also encourage people around you to get vaccinated. Let us continue to stay protected by wearing masks and following social distance," he said in another tweet.

As suggested by the Prime Minister at Thursday's video-conferencing with various Chief Ministers, the State Government is organising vaccination drives from April 11-Jyotiba Phule's birthday till April 14- Ambedkar's birthday.

Modi pays tribute to social reformer Jyotirao Phule

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to noted social reformer Jyotirao Phule on his birth anniversary, and said his commitment to reforming the society will continue to inspire future generations.

In a tweet, Modi also hailed him as a great thinker, philosopher and writer and noted that he was committed to women's education and empowerment throughout his life.

Born in an extremely

backward caste in 1827 in Maharashtra, Phule fought against social discrimination and strove to promote education among the most deprived communities.

He and his wife, Savitribai Phule, are considered pioneers for their efforts to promote education among women.

Modi had recently suggested a "vaccination festival" from April 11 to April 14, birth anniversary of Dalit icon Bhim Rao Ambedkar, to push inoculation against the coronavirus among the people eligible for the shots.

CBI to probe cheating, misappropriation of funds case against ex-MP KD Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has taken over a case of cheating and misappropriation of funds against former Rajya Sabha MP KD Singh from Uttar Pradesh Police following a reference from the State Government and further notification from the Centre for probe into the case by the Central agency.

The case was originally registered at Kotwali Kanpur Nagar police station in Kanpur as Crime No. 234/2019 on a complaint from one Pawan Mishra alleging cheating and misappropriation of funds invested by the complainant and other investors in Alchemist Infra Realty Ltd and Alchemist Township Ltd promoted by the former MP.

The investors were promised plots/villas/apart-



ments against their investments. However, they were neither given the promised plots, flats, or villas. They were not even refunded the funds despite the plots or flats not being allotted to them.

Besides Singh, six directors of the two firms have also been

Air purifiers in lifts, poorly ventilated spaces helpful in Covid spread: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air purifiers in lifts (elevators) and other poorly ventilated confined spaces could actually increase the spread of airborne virus droplets, according to researchers who have called upon the health authorities to look for such places which might be turning out to be super spreader for Coronavirus which is spreading like a raging fire.

When people infected with the Cov-SARS-2 virus, responsible for the current Covid-19 pandemic, sneeze, talk or simply breathe, they expel thousands of contaminated saliva droplets.

These droplets are now recognized as being the main way in which the virus spreads to other individuals and people are being advised to wear masks to curb contamination. Regularly airing indoor spaces to reduce the concentration of viral particles is also important.

Since the quality of air in a small space can quickly deteriorate even when there is just one person in that space (mainly because of the increased CO2 levels produced as we breathe



out), lift manufacturers routinely include ventilator systems. These can, however, increase the rate at which air — possibly laden with bacteria and viruses — circulates. While adding an air purifier to the lift in addition to the ventilator should help in theory, the way in which the purifier affects air circulation, and thus transmission of airborne viruses is unclear, said the researchers.

Air purifiers work by sucking in stale air and exhausting cleansed air, but this adds to the overall circulation of air — an aspect that previous studies, or indeed air purifier manufacturers themselves, have not considered.

To investigate this issue, Dimitris Drikakis and Talib Dbouk of the University of Nicosia analysed air circulation

and found that the air purifier actually increases the spread of saliva droplets in the cabin.

"This is because the air intake integrated inside the purifier equipment induces flow circulation that can add to the transport of these droplets," explains Drikakis.

They also found that the risk of airborne virus transmission is lowest for low ventilation rates. This is due to reduced flow mixing inside the lift, says Dbouk.

"The broader implications of the present findings are that health and safety authorities must revise guidelines accordingly by considering the flow circulation and droplet dispersion effects arising from air purifiers and sanitisers in confined spaces," say Drikakis and Dbouk.

Enhance peacekeeping budget: Army chief to UN

PTI ■ DHAKA

Indian Army chief Gen MM Naravane on Sunday urged the United Nations to enhance the budget for its peacekeeping missions and emphasised the need to provide appropriate logistics and improved technological support for the blue helmet missions in view of the emerging challenges.

Gen Naravane, who is here on a five-day official tour, delivered a keynote address on “Changing Nature of Global Conflicts: Role of UN Peacekeepers” during the “Army Chiefs Conclave” hosted by his Bangladeshi counterpart General Aziz Ahmed, the Indian Army’s Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADG PI) tweeted.

Gen Naravane laid emphasis on enhanced budget for UN peacekeeping activities, Bangladesh defence ministry’s Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) directorate quoted him as saying at the conclave. Bangladesh Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen was the chief guest at the event.

The Indian Army chief also called for providing appropriate logistics and improved technological support for the UN blue helmet missions, pointing out their emerging challenges. He said the

UN peacekeeping missions should run on a participatory basis.

The Bangladesh Army hosted the conclave coinciding with the celebrations of the birth centenary of the country’s ‘Father of the Nation’ Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of its 1971 independence.

Force commander of UN multidimensional integrated stabilisation mission in Mali Lieutenant General Dennis Gyllensporree, force commander of UN multidimensional integrated stabilisation mission in the Central African region Lieutenant General Sidki Daniel Traore and Bhutan army’s deputy chief of operation Brigadier General Darji Rinchen, among others attended the conclave.

Senior diplomats, security strategists and police officers also attended the seminar.

During the event, the Indian Army chief interacted with the senior officers of the participating nations and military observers from the other nations.

Momen told the conclave that the nature of peacekeeping operations in recent periods transformed both in terms of scale and scope for what “peacekeeping missions today are more than truce supervising operation”.

The changing situation further expanded the missions’ responsibility

taking into account “other dimensions of peace, such as establishing rule of law, protection of human rights, protection of women and children, support to political process, managing elections, reintegration and socio-economic development,” he said.

The conclave was held as part of a multilateral UN-mandated counter-terrorism exercise, Shantir Ogroshena (Frontrunners of Peace) that commenced on April 4. An Indian Army contingent of 30 personnel are participating along with the Royal Bhutan Army, Sri Lankan Army and Bangladesh Army in the exercise that will conclude on Monday.

Military observers from the US, UK, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Singapore are also attending the exercise. The aim of the exercise is to strengthen the procedures and enhance interoperability amongst neighbourhood countries to ensure robust peacekeeping operations in the region. The armies of all the participating nations shared their valuable experiences and refined their drills and procedures in peacekeeping operations.

The visit of Gen Naravane, who is here at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Gen Aziz Ahmed, comes less than two weeks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to the neighbouring country.

EXPLOSIVE-LADEN SUV-HIRAN MURDER CASES

NIA arrests Vaze’s associate Kazi, suspects he destroyed evidence

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In the fourth arrest in the twin explosive laden SUV planting and alleged Mansukh Hiran murder cases, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday took Assistant Police Inspector (API) Riyazuddin Kazi, a close associate and colleague of incarcerated police officer Sachin Vaze, into custody.

Shortly after he was arrested on Sunday, Kazi was produced before a special NIA court, which remanded him to the custody of the agency till April 16.

Kazi’s arrest came after several rounds of questioning by the NIA over the past three weeks.

Kazi was directly working under Vaze, an API heading the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Crime Branch-CID of Mumbai Police.

The NIA is looking into Kazi’s role in the planning of a Gelatin sticks’ laden Scorpio and a threatening letter inside the vehicle, in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani’s 27-storey residence ‘Antilia’ on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25 and the subsequent alleged murder of Thane businessman Mansukh Huran. Hiran’s body was recovered from the marshy Reti-Bunder creek Mumbra in the neighbouring Thane district on March 5.

The NIA suspects that acting allegedly at the behest of Vaze, Kazi might have destroyed evidence in the case and procured fake vehicle number plates number plates Vaze was the first accused to have been arrested by the NIA which registered an FIR in the explosive-laden SUV recovery case on March 8.

Vaze had earlier this week created a sensation by making a written submission before the social NIA Court accusing Deshmukh and another Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab of asking him to Indulge in extortion for them.

Vaze, who was arrested on March 13 in connection with the gelatine sticks laden Scorpion recovery

case, was earlier booked under sections 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) 286 (negligent conduct with respect to explosive substance), 465 (forgery) 473 (making or possessing counterfeit seal) and 506 -2 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 4 (a)(b)(i) of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

Vaze was subsequently booked under sections 16 (Punishment for Terror act) and 18 (Punishment for conspiracy etc) of the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

On its part, Maharashtra’s Anti Terrorism – which initially investigated the circumstances leading to the alleged murder of Hiran -- had on March 21 arrested convicted Mumbai Police constable Vinayak B. Shinde (51) and a cricket bookie Naresh R. Gaur (31) in connection with Hiran’s alleged murder. The arrest of Shinde and Gaur came a day after the Union Home Ministry asking the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to take over the investigations into the murder of Hiran.

Shinde and Gaur are said to be accomplices of Vaze. Shinde is a dismissed policeman, who has been convicted in the case involving the fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakhan Bhaiya. Bhaiya was killed in a fake encounter on November 11, 2006. In 2013, a Mumbai sessions court had awarded life sentences to 21 people, including Shinde and 12 other Mumbai Police personnel, convicted in the case.

Shinde has been on parole. The investigations by the ATIs have revealed that Shinde was in regular touch with Vaze and helped the latter in his activities.

During the investigations that followed, the NIA seized from Shinde and Gaur two mobile, one iPhone, 7 SIM cards, a blank cover of SIM card, a note with 14 mobile numbers mentioned including 5 in the name of arrested-suspected cop and prime accused Sachin Vaze with ‘Ok’ written (for activation) beside them.

UP man held for announcing reward on priest’s head

IANs ■ MEERUT

The Meerut police have arrested a youth for allegedly announcing a reward for killing a controversial priest of a temple in Ghaziabad’s Dasma area.

The man, Danish Ali, a resident of Meerut, had uploaded a video on a social media platform saying that anyone who beheads the controversial priest, will get a reward of Rs 51 lakh.

The priest, Yati Narsinghanand Saraswati, recently made a controversial statement against the Prophet, for which the Delhi Police booked him for hurting religious sentiments.

The statements were made at a press conference at Delhi Press Club.

Danish is heard in the video purportedly saying, “I will sell my property, jewellery, everything I have and will arrange Rs 51 lakh.”

Though Danish did not name Saraswati, he referred to him as the ‘priest of the Dasma temple in Ghaziabad’.

Meerut’s Superintendent of Police (SP) Vineet Bhatnagar said, “We have arrested Danish Ali. We have also seized the mobile phone through which he had made the controversial announcement.”

World’s richest Malayali, wife escape unhurt as their chopper crash-lands

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

MA Yusuff Ali, the richest Malayali in the world, (net worth \$4.8 billion) and his wife had a miraculous escape from an air crash on Sunday morning at Kochi. The helicopter ferrying them to a hospital owned by Yusuff Ali made a force landing in the marshy area along the Kochi-Thiruvananthapuram National Highway.

There were five persons in the chopper including the Alis and all were brought out of the sleeky flying machine once the rotors came to a standstill.

The pilot and Ali suffered some minor injuries and were rushed to the Lakeshore Hospital for first-aid. All are safe and hearty, according to sources in the hospital. According to eye witnesses who watched the low flying chopper force landing in the

marshy stretch, there was heavy wind and rains when the incident happened.

An enquiry has been ordered into the incident.

Yusuff Ali who owns the Lulu Group business empire is a close friend of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and other top CPI(M) leaders in the country. The business tycoon enjoys cordial ties with leaders of all political parties, though the Marxists in the State visit the oil kingdoms in West Asia as the guests of Ali who have built up a vast business empire across the Arab nations in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Yusuff Ali, who owns a fleet of executive jets and helicopters, had been awarded Abu Dhabi Prize, the country’s highest civilian honours, on Friday by crown prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Sayed Al Nahyan.

Navreh celebration in J&K from today

Jammu: Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, Bohri, Jammu in association with more than one hundred and twenty five Kashmiri Hindu organisations globally has formulated a three-day programme from 12 th to 14 th April, 2021 with the intention to celebrate Tyaag, Sankalp and Shaurya Divas in the memory of the Shriya Bhat. The Indian history records the great contribution in saving Hindu culture by a Kashmiri Pandit Shriya Bhat, as early as the 15 th century.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

admitted in the hospital in Nagpur after he tested positive for Covid-19.

According to a press statement issued by the Sanjeevani Sharda Kendra, “the Navreh celebrations will commence on 12 th April- the Tyaag (Sacrifice) Divas in the memory of the Shriya Bhat. The Indian history records the great contribution in saving Hindu culture by a Kashmiri Pandit Shriya Bhat, as early as the 15 th century.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

Shriya Bhat was able to cure a dreadful disease of Sultan Zainulab-ud-Din and was offered enormous wealth and property. But Shriya Bhat instead negotiated for the safety and security of Kashmiri Hindus and their religious places.

gious places.

On April 13, Navreh (first day of New Year) is being celebrated as Navreh Sankalp Divas. Globally all Kashmiri Hindus shall take a solemn pledge.

On 14th April, 2021 the Shaurya Divas will be celebrated in the honour of the great 8th century King of Kashmir, Lalitaditya Muktapada for his valour and victory over Turks.

Sanjeevni Sharda Kendra has already released an audio and video of a song on Navreh Celebrations composed by Dr. Kuldeep Raina Sudeshi, written by Sunita Raina Pandit, sung by Lovely Chandra and Vishal Pandita and video edited by Pardeep Pandita.

Departmental probe against Param Bir

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than a fortnight after it constituted a judicial probe under retired High Court Judge Kailash U Chandiwal into allegations of corruption against former State Home Minister Anil Deshmuh, the Maharashtra Government has initiated a departmental probe against Mumbai’s former police commissioner Param Bir Singh under senior IPS officer Sanjay Pandey for alleged breach of service rules and dereliction of duty.

In a development that has come in the midst of a Preliminary Inquiry (PE) launched by the CBI into Singh’s allegations of corruption made against Deshmukh, Pandey—who has been entrusted with additional charge as the State General Police – has begun the probe against the former city police commissioner.

The Maharashtra government has ordered the probe against Singh on the basis of a report submitted by Mumbai’s new Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale to it on matters relating to suspended and incarcerated police officer Sachin Vaze.

Among other things, Pandey will look into the charge about Singh’s alleged dereliction of duty arising out of his failure to keep the state government about his personal investigations into the alleged malpractices by Deshmukh, whether his charge of corruption made against the former state Home Minister had any substance, why had not only given so much importance to Vaze but also asked him report to him directly to him and whether he assigned Vaze to investigate the explosi8ve laden SUV recovery case.

In a report submitted to the State Home department on April 3, Nagrale also stated that Vaze was posted as the in-

charge of the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) of the Mumbai police as per the orders of former Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

“API Sachin Vaze never reported to any officer of the Crime Branch during his tenure of nine months from 10/06/2020 to 12/03/2020. No officers of the Crime branch gaver any review/opinion/direction in the investigation handled by Sachin Vaze because he directly reported to the then Commissioner of Police,” the report stated.

“As per oral orders of the then commissioner of police, the then joint commissioner of police (crime) transferred police inspector Vinay Gorphade and Sudhakar Deshmukh to Unit 10 and Unit 1, respectively and Vaze was posted in-charge of CIU,” the report stated.

“Vaze has not followed the rules and he directly and independently reported to the then CoP (Singh) and he investigated under his guidance... was following the guidelines of (Singh) about raid on illegal activities, whom to arrest or not, to call whom as witness and accused of sensitive crimes,” stated the report.

Vaze, who jumped on his own into the investigations involving the recovery of explosive laden SUV near industrialist Mukesh Ambani’s sky-scraper mansion in south Mumbai on February 25, also took up points of the CIU in remands, bail, anticipatory bail pleas and other critical decisions, and if he required manpower for various investigations, it was given as per Singh’s directions.

As the in-charge of CIU, Vaze handled sensational cases like TRP rigging scam, the Anvay Naik suicide case and the death of her mother Kumud Naik.

TN logs 6,618 fresh cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

With 6,618 new persons getting diagnosed with Covid-19 on Sunday, situation in Tamil Nadu has turned grave all over the State. The State saw 22 persons succumbing to the pandemic till 7 pm on Sunday.

On Saturday, 5,989 persons tested positive throughout the State while the death toll on the single day stood at 23.

Chennai has to bear the brunt as the Metropolis registered 2,124 new cases on Sunday while the number of new persons diagnosed with the pandemic on Saturday stood at 1,977. As on Sunday, Chengalpet, the neighboring district saw 631 new cases getting admitted to the hospital.

Dr C V Krishnaswamy, eminent physician, boldly stated that situation was critical and grave in both Tamil Nadu and Kerala. “The ever increasing number of Covid-19 patients in these States are matters of concern. Both the State administrations should discuss with the medical fraternity and evolve a mechanism to prevent the spread of this pandemic,” said Dr Krishnaswamy.

He also cautioned the doctors and policy makers about the impact the disease could cause in youngsters. “You forget all those who are above 60 years of age.

Their good days are over. What is of concern is the complaints from youth who were afflicted with Covid-19. Those who came out of the ordeal have started complaining about weakness, loss of memory and stamina. Many persons who had the harrowing experience of Covid-19 are likely to face a series of medical issues,” said the doctor. Dr Rajeev, ayurvedic physician, from Kerala, too echoed the concerns of Dr Krishnaswamy. “Many persons, especially youth, are complaining loss of memory and stamina after attack by the Covid virus. This is an issue which has to be studied in detail because it is becoming detrimental to the future of the country,” said Dr Rajeev.

Maha CM meets Covid task force, asks to prepare SOPs for lockdown

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid clear indications that it might go in for a full-fledged lockdown to break the chain of the rapid infections across Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday met the members of the Covid 19 Task Force, his Cabinet colleagues and senior bureaucrats to make full-fledged preparations for the proposed lockdown.

At the meeting, the chief minister discussed with those present about the need for increasing vaccination, setting up oxygen plants, increasing Covid-19 beds, increased availability of Remdesivir injections and ensuring early vaccination of health workers across the state.

The chief minister said that he would make one more request to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to increase availability of vaccines to Maharashtra.

During the course of the meeting, the chief minister asked the Task Force members and senior bureaucrats to prepare what he called “all inclusive” Standard-Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be followed during the proposed lockdown. In the SOPs, the factors stemming from experiences the state government had

gained from handling the Covid-19 in the state during the past one year.

Among other things, the chief minister asked the state administration to explore ways to bring Oxygen cylinders in big way from the states like Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, where there is abundant availability of Oxygen.

At the meeting, the task force members stressed on the need for reducing the excessive use of Remdesivir injections by Covid-19 patients in the state. “Nine five per cent of Covid patients get well by being in home quarantine. Only serious patients should get themselves admitted to hospitals. In housing societies, the authorities can create isolation centres and make available Oxygen concentrators and covid-19 beds so that patients can be looked after at the local levels,” one of the task force members suggested at the meeting.

Earlier at the meeting, Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunde said that of the 1,200 metric tonnes of Oxygen available, 980 metric tonnes of Oxygen was being used for medical purposes. “In consultation with the Centre, we are looking at ways to bring additional oxygen to the state,” Kunte said.

UP schools shut till Apr 30, Govt orders night curfew in districts logging 100 new cases/day

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Government on Sunday ordered the closure of all schools till April 30 and directed the imposition of a night curfew in the districts, which report 100 new infections in a day or have 500 active cases.

According to a government statement, the government also ordered that not more than 100 people be allowed to assemble at an open space for an event while the number has been put at 50 for closed spaces.

The fresh government directives have come on a day the state reported its highest single-day spike of 15,353 cases since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Earlier, a night curfew was imposed in Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Allahabad, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Bareilly, Muzaffarnagar districts and the Lucknow civic body area.

On April 2, the UP government had extended till April 11 the closure of all schools for stu-

dents of Classes 1 to 8.

According to the statement issued on Sunday, all government and private schools will remain closed till April 30 while pre-scheduled examinations can be held.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said a night curfew be imposed from 9 pm to 6 am in the districts that report 100 fresh cases in a day or have 500 active COVID-19 cases.

Stressing the need to focus on the “test, trace and treat” approach, the government said the daily count of RT-PCR tests should be taken to one lakh.

Tracing of at least 30-35 persons who have come in contact with a COVID-19 patient should be done, the directives said.

The UP chief minister said an effective COVID-19 vaccination drive should be carried out as a four-day “Tika Utsav” began in the state on Sunday.The four-day vaccination programme, which began on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Jyotibha Phule, will continue till April 14, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar.

PTI

UP man, sister booked for ‘forcing conversion’ 2 years after marriage

IANs ■ ALIGARH (UP)

Two years after marriage, a woman has accused her husband and his two sisters of “forcibly converting” her.

The woman said, she never realized that her husband was a Muslim and had never met her in-laws. She had retained her maiden name after marriage.

The Muslim man, 25, and his sisters have now been booked under the anti-conversion law.

According to reports, the woman, Puja Soni, 23, is from Chhattisgarh. She said she had married a man named Ashok Rajput in March 2019 in Delhi, where she works at a hospital.

She got to know the man,

who worked as a plumber, when they started talking over the phone.

They met and fell in love. “We got married in a temple,” she said. The couple started living in Noida.

In her complaint to police, she said, “On February 7 this year, we had a daughter. On March 22, he took me to his home at the Rait village in Aligarh. There, I found out his name was Afzal Khan. I was forced to read the namaz’ and stopped from offering my prayers.”

She further said, “On April 8, they took my daughter away from me. Then, they converted me forcefully and renamed me ‘Alna’.”

She alleged her in-laws drove her out of the house and

dropped her off at Mathura.

SHO Abhay Kumar Sharma of the Lodha police station, where the FIR was registered, said, “Ashok Rajput a.k.a Afzal Khan has been booked under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance and Section 323 of the IPC (voluntarily causing hurt) along with his sisters.”

No arrest has been made so far.

The woman’s statement will be registered in court under Section 164 of the CrPC on Monday.

So far, 32 FIRs have been registered under the state’s anti-conversion law since it came into effect in November last year.

Shot shortage

Amid a plethora of issues, from safety to availability, the second wave of pandemic has hit India hard

India seems to be back to square one where fighting the pandemic is concerned, with more than 70 vaccination centres in Mumbai having shut down after running out of the COVID doses. Other parts of the country, too, like Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, are facing a shortage of the coveted shots. And this shortage is being faced despite there being major vaccine hesitancy in the country and the inoculation drive still not open to all. How massive the shortage would become if the Government decides to vaccinate all citizens is anybody's guess. When the pandemic began over a year ago, India was faced with the harsh reality of a poor healthcare infrastructure, shortage of hospital beds, ventilators, healthcare professionals, sanitisers, drugs and the know-how regarding the handling of the contagion. However, to the Government's and India Inc's credit, our "jugaadu" spirit kicked in and we overcame all these shortages by manufacturing everything in India and even reached a point where we began exporting PPEs, sanitisers and so on. Even where the vaccine was concerned, we surprised the world by coming out with two vaccines; in fact, India began gifting or selling vaccines to countries around the world. All this was done parallel to our own ambitious countrywide vaccination drive. As the first wave of the outbreak seemed to subside, it gave the Centre's vaccine diplomacy a shot in the arm. It looked like we had it all under control, till the second wave hit.

Now, it seems that we have not learnt any lessons from the first wave and prepared ourselves better to handle the inevitable second wave, which empirical evidence suggests is always worse than the first one. So not only are we again facing a bed and oxygen shortage, we are beginning to fall short of the vaccines as well. A political slugfest has broken out over the issue with Maharashtra alleging that the Centre was "discriminating" against the non-BJP ruled States and the Government, for its part, accusing the States of having a lackadaisical attitude. A hectic debate is also on within the country whether charity should begin at home and the Government should have ensured that all of its citizens were covered first before exporting the shots. After all, even the US, the leader of the free world, has banned all exports until it vaccinates its own citizens. Be that as it may, the fact that we were not prepared to handle the inevitable second wave is a collective failure: Of the healthcare system, the policy planners, the bureaucracy, the Centre, States and the people as a whole. To make matters worse, some European regulators are talking about a possible link between the AstraZeneca vaccine (available in India under the brand name Covishield) and some rare occurrences of blood clots. Though the Indian panel on 'adverse event following immunisation' is studying the safety of Covishield, it will be some time before it gives its verdict. So, for now, it remains to be seen how our ingenuity gets us out of this jam.



A 3,000-year-old lost city in Luxor, Egypt, which was unearthed recently

Deliverance

Uttarakhand has decided to free 51 shrines from the Govt's control and hand these back to the priests

In a politically sensitive development ahead of the Uttarakhand Assembly elections in February 2022, Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat-led BJP Government has overturned his predecessor Trivendra Singh Rawat's decision enabling the Government to take over the management of 51 prominent temples and shrines. Trivendra's argument had been that the new Act would help in the professional management of these shrines. The Act paved the way for setting up the Devasthanam Board, which was chaired by the Chief Minister. The Board was meant to control the management of renowned temples such as Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri; the annual pilgrimage to these temples is popularly called the Char Dham Yatra and is a money-spinner not only for the temples but also for allied businesses like the travel, hotel and tourism industries. In 2019, over three million people visited the four shrines, though 2020 was a damp squib owing to the COVID outbreak. Most worryingly for the seers, the Act had the provision to sack a priest found involved in any "wrongdoing". It had been a long-pending demand of these *teerth purohits* (pilgrimage priests) that the Government roll back its decision as, they pointed out, they have been managing for generations the affairs of these temples, which were set up by their ancestors.

Now, though it can't be truthfully claimed that everything was hunky-dory at these religious establishments when their affairs were being managed by the respective *teerth purohits*, there's also no denying the fact that the State Government's move must not have spawned from any idea of piouness or welfare for the pilgrims, who descend on the hill State from across the length and breadth of the country. It is true that the infrastructure at the halting places leading to these places of worship is in a dilapidated condition and excessive commercialisation there has massively added to the nature's burden, the result of which we all saw in the tragic Kedarnath flash floods of 2013. However, the Government didn't stir all along to ameliorate the pathetic conditions. We would suggest that rather than taking extreme positions, let the temple management remain with the *teerth purohits* but, at the same time, the Government should keep an eye on them and the way they run the temple affairs and oversee the upkeep, facilities and amenities there.

Of Sri Lanka and the Andamans

The issues between Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sinhalas may be resolved if India concurs to transfer the former to the Andamans

Two communities not being able to coexist is a perennial problem in the Indian subcontinent. An old saying goes, "Ek myaan mein do talwarein nahi reh sakti", meaning two swords cannot fit into one scabbard. The problem began by being underscored in our own India, which was divided into Pakistan for Muslims and Hindustan for the rest. MA Jinnah argued that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations and could not coexist. The first leader to push this two-nation thesis was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh fame.

Some UP Muslims believed their new country, Pakistan, was a new Medina. Muslims in the western wing despised easterner Bengalis as inferior, short and dark. Their economy was exploited from day one. Jinnah visited Dacca early in 1948 and peremptorily told university students that Urdu alone would be Pakistan's national language. Bengali, which they are proud of, was not in the reckoning. The two wings were daggers drawn from 1948; the clash came in 1971, in less than 24 years of the new Medina's birth. In December that year, they separated; Bangladesh was born.

Thus, India was divided into three. Now we hear that the people of Sindh wish to separate. This separatist movement is called "Jio Sindh". They are unable to exist under the yoke of the dominant Punjabis. Baluchistan is another unhappy province which was partly British India and partly the princely State of Kalat. It had an Embassy in Karachi until 1948 when Pakistan forcibly took it over. The Pathans of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) with their main city, Peshawar, have always wished to unite with all Pathans in Afghanistan, though this demand is dormant now.

With Sri Lanka, it is an old problem. I visited my in-laws-to-be in Colombo in 1964 as they wanted to introduce me to their society in the city where they had lived and worked for 32 years. In the course of my four-day stay,



there arose the question of who would be the next managing director of the British Ceylon Corporation, a British firm similar to the one we had in Kanpur, the British India Corporation, until the early 1960s. My father-in-law said that one Ramaswamy, a local Tamil, was the ablest choice but was unlikely to get the promotion. The prize was likely to go to DM Pereira as he was a Sinhala. The existing Board of directors was largely British, headed by a distinguished gentleman called Singleton-Salmon. There was no partiality in the company but the emerging milieu in Colombo was such. Ramaswamy was likely to emigrate to Australia.

My father-in-law explained that the Sinhalas were an overwhelming majority, an easy-going, fun-loving Buddhist people. They were jealous of the Tamils who were serious at work, and more efficient. There had developed a wedge between the two groups as far back as then. Their differences were bound to explode sooner or later. The fact that the people of Tamil Nadu have a soft corner in their hearts for their Sri Lankan brethren is natural but



IF WE CAN OFFER A TRANSFER OF WILLING SRI LANKAN TAMILS TO THE ANDAMANS, INDIA'S ADVANTAGE WOULD BE POPULATING THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS, WHICH MAKES TAMILS' SURVIVAL SAFER, TAMIL NADU HAPPIER AND THE INDO-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS PERMANENTLY SUSPICION-FREE

that makes the Sinhalas suspect Indian intentions from time to time. When Rajiv Gandhi was India's Prime Minister and President JR Jayewardene headed Sri Lanka, we sent the IPKF military to help the Tamils. Instead of helping them, we only killed them and left the Sinhalas alone. This indicates that our Governments have mostly not understood Sri Lankan affairs.

Colombo's rulers smile at New Delhi and pretend to be friendly although they feel that the faraway yellow giant is less dangerous than the Indian giant, only 40 km to the north. They did appreciate the IPKF's help for some time; thereafter it became a distant memory. Lanka appears to have erred in owing China all the money for upgrading the Hambantota port as well as a highway from Colombo to Galle and further south. If Sri Lanka cannot repay the loan in time, these may be taken over as Chinese property. Yet Colombo would rather deal with Beijing than New Delhi. This mentality is likely to continue indefinitely until India takes a drastic stop to relieve the Sinhalas of their Tamil



PRAFULL GORADIA

suspensions. From the Indian point of view, there is the fear, however remote, that one day the Chinese may convert Sri Lanka into a yellow colony.

What should New Delhi do? Consider whether we can offer a transfer of willing Sri Lankan Tamils to the Andaman Islands. They are a community of four million people, mainly in the Jaffna area in the northeast of Sri Lanka and some scattered across the east of the island. The Andamans occupy about 9,000 sq km with only about four lakh people. Not all Sri Lankan Tamils are likely to accept the transfer. For those willing, Sri Lanka should pay a total ₹2 lakh per head towards resettlement, convenience costs and compensation. This means several billion rupees for Sri Lanka to borrow or somehow fork out, but a small cost for solving their greatest problem. India's advantage would be populating the Andaman Islands, which makes Tamils' survival safer, Tamil Nadu happier and the Indo-Sri Lankan relations permanently suspicion-free.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AMP UP VACCINE PRODUCTION

Sir — In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has rightly questioned the Centre's decision to export COVID-19 vaccines. It seems that the export was also an oversight, like many other decisions of the NDA Government. It also cannot be denied that it was an effort to garner publicity at the cost of our own citizens.

The Government, before launching the world's largest vaccination drive should have calculated the domestic demand and supply. As several States are now alleging shortage of vaccines, it is time for the Centre to completely stop their export. India played the vaccine diplomacy card thinking that it was close to developing herd immunity. New Delhi wasn't granting or exporting vaccines to only the poor nations but also to the UK, Saudi Arabia and Canada. Despite India's stupendous efforts to vaccinate at a large scale, majority of the people are outside its purview. This is situation when there exists an age criteria to get vaccinated. It's not hard to imagine the situation if this age bar is removed and everybody is allowed to get vaccinated.

The current situation might lead to an increase in the prices of vaccines or, if the pharmaceutical companies ramp up production without increasing the prices, the quality will definitely get compromised. The Centre and State Governments must give up politics and find an amicable solution to this problem which will likely aggravate in the coming days if viable answers are not explored and worked upon.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

NEED TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

Sir — It should be a cause of worry for New Delhi that the US Navy recently carried out a Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) without its prior consent to challenge India's "excessive" maritime claims. According to the statement issued by the Commander of the US' Seventh

Nix the corruption in Maharashtra



It refers to the editorial 'Tightening the screws' (April 10). I fully concur with the editorial view that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) should work in tandem to unravel the Anil Deshmukh and Sachin Vaze maze. If tainted police officials and politicians can work hand-in-glove, then why not our sleuths? The revelations made by arrested police officer Vaze are disturbing. It shows

how rotten our whole system is and there is an open loot of public money. It seems that things like extortion, killings, transfer of honest officials, nepotism or using political influence to get Government contracts have become the order of the day in Maharashtra. Not only this, it can also not be denied that the links of corrupt police officials like Vaze and politicians like Deshmukh must be with Maoists or terrorists, else from where the gelatin sticks used in Antilia bomb scare case came?

Both the agencies must also focus their investigation on these lines. Corrupt politicians when in power at the State or the Centre give patronage to criminals and anti-social elements in a *quid pro quo* so that they may use them as and when required. Nothing could be more shameful for the Maharashtra Government than the recent happenings and the alleged involvement of Deshmukh in grave corruption. It must be investigated properly and the accused should not be spared.

Abhishek Singh | Varanasi

the Coronavirus cases as we have lowered our guard and are not following the guidelines. People must understand that it is necessary to break the chain of transmissions to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.

The vaccines are no panacea. Not following the appropriate COVID-19 behaviour is not just laxity but is a criminal act as it is a major reason for the surge. After the vaccination programme kickstarted, people felt they should not wear masks. Many people hang their masks around their neck, some keep it in their pocket and some do not use it at all. It is only after such gross negligence and laxity on the part of people that Coronavirus cases have started increasing.

Jubel D'Cruz | Mumbai

NO REASON TO LOWER GUARD

Sir — We are responsible for the rise in

SOUNDBITE

COVID is surging and it is our responsibility to push the Government to move away from PR tactics and act in the interest of the people.



Congress interim president

— Sonia Gandhi

Iran proposes the logical path to full Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action compliance. The US, which caused this crisis, should return to full compliance first.

Iranian Foreign Minister

— Mohammad Javad Zarif

My parents organised a celebration on the eve of my birthday in advance as a surprise! I'm the luckiest person in the world to have such parents.



Actor

— Swara Bhasker

The Opposition gets nervous about AB de Villiers. We have depth in batting which we want to utilise. AB is probably the only one in the team who is so versatile.



Cricketer

— Virat Kohli

Lockdown is not an option. However, we will be putting some restrictions in place to contain the spread of the virus.



Delhi CM

— Arvind Kejriwal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

This can give the impetus to meet climate commitments while making contributions to post-COVID recovery



RIYA RAHIMAN

Countries have been grappling with the impact of climate change and extreme events as they pose various risks to people, infrastructure, economies and future development. A significant proportion of the economic losses due to extreme events is attributed to the loss and damage to infrastructure systems, thereby stressing the need for integrating disaster and climate resilience for infrastructure development. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed an unprecedented impact on infrastructure sectors worldwide. Even though it has not led to direct damages to physical infrastructure, it led to interruptions in infrastructure services, with significant implications on economies. The outbreak is the latest reminder of the need to invest in resilient infrastructure. It exposed systemic risks across various sectors and underlying drivers such as poverty, poor health systems and limited social welfare schemes that perpetuated them. The risks cut across different sectors and strongly brought out the imperative to understand and address systemic and cascading dangers and fragilities.



As part of global recovery, infrastructure investments are being looked at as an indispensable part of stimulus packages aimed at restarting economic activities. Countries are expected to invest heavily in infrastructure sectors as an attempt to mitigate the impacts of the economic fallouts as well as create employment and improve competitiveness simultaneously. While the health and economic implications take centre stage when planning for COVID-19 recovery, the urgency of the climate emergency cannot be ignored. The pandemic has clearly brought out the need to focus on managing systems risks for strengthening resilience, a lesson one must heed, to make headway against climate change as well. With countries submitting their national climate action plans as part of the Paris Agreement, this is a crucial year for climate action as well. It is vital that the post-COVID recovery and climate action plans complement each other. Studies show that infrastructure construction and operations account for 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and the provision of quality infrastructure underpins the achievement of 92 per cent of targets across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) also highlights the role of resilient infrastructure as a cornerstone for sustainable development. The four specific targets relate to loss reduction in SFDRR, focus on cutting global disaster mortality, the number of affected people, economic loss and damage to infrastructure. However, the SFDRR target on reducing damage to critical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for achieving the three other targets on loss reduction. In view of this, infrastructure investments and policies to bolster economies should be leveraged as an opportunity to deliver on global commitments such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, SDGs and the SFDRR targets. Though some progress has been made on the SDGs and the SFDRR target, the overall action to meet them has not advanced at the required pace. The pandemic has further pushed back their progress. The COVID-19 recovery can be utilised as an opportunity to progress on these global goals and build a healthy, inclusive and climate-friendly future. Investing in disaster and climate-resilient infrastructure can provide the much-needed impetus in meeting global commitments while also making contributions to post-COVID recovery.

(The writer is Senior Specialist for Infrastructure Resilience, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. The views expressed are personal.)

The big tent of the PPP decoded

Pragmatic centrism and the need to remain a bridge between Sindh’s electorate and the political fruits of federalism may help explain why the PPP made a grab for the Senate

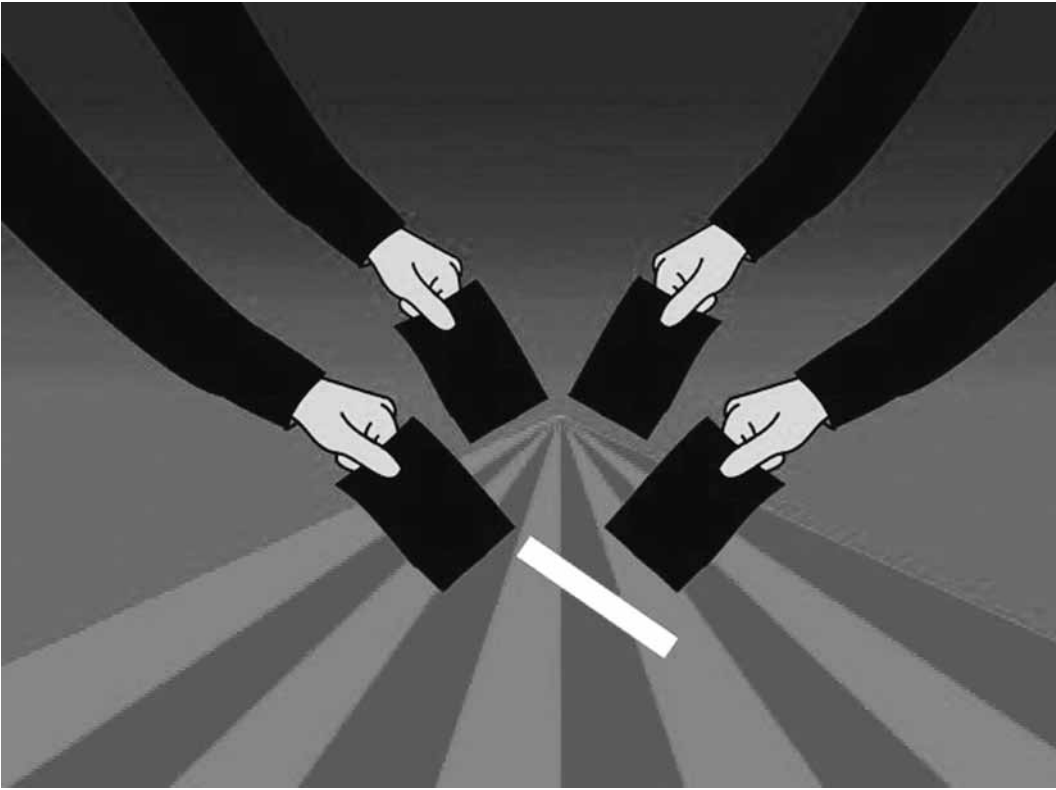


NADEEM PARACHA



IN PAKISTAN, BECAUSE OF CERTAIN OVERARCHING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS, THE MOOD WAS CLEARLY SHIFTING TO THE RIGHT. IN THE SECOND HALF OF BHUTTO'S TENURE, THE REGIME TRIED TO APPROPRIATE THIS MOOD AND, BY THE TIME THE GOVERNMENT FELL IN 1977, THE PARTY BELIEVED IT HAD UPSTAGED THE FAR-RIGHT ISLAMIST GROUPS THAT WERE OPPOSING IT

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist. The views expressed are personal. Courtesy: Dawn



A reading of the PPP’s Foundation Papers makes it clear that, right from the onset, its founders saw the PPP as a “big tent” party modelled on established Social Democratic parties of Europe. Rahim believed that the country’s bourgeoisie had begun their march towards a revolutionary phase, just as the European middle classes had done in the 19th century. Yet, at the time, a majority of Pakistanis lived in rural areas and the process of industrialisation, though rapid during the Ayub era, was still concentrated in just a few urban centres.

When the party was launched, it exhibited three main groupings: On the Left were Marxist student leaders, socialist intellectuals, trade unionists and peasant leaders. On the Right were “progressive” landed elite and in the Centre were what became to be known as “Islamic socialists”, or those who appropriated Islam as a welfareist and socialist doctrine, as opposed to a theological expression of politics (*à la Jamaat-i-Islami*).

During the 1970 elections, the party’s “big tent” tactics were a success, aiding it to attract the majority of middle and lower-middle class votes, and the votes of small farmers and peasants in (West) Pakistan’s two largest provinces, Punjab and Sindh.

In December 1971, the party suddenly found itself in power after the acrimonious departure of East Pakistan. The party’s Left wing was more assertive during Bhutto’s first year in power. But this assertion was stalled when Bhutto began perceiving the party’s radical Left as agents of anarchy with a juvenile understanding of Marxism.

According to Gunther and Diamond, in an effort to expand their electoral appeal to a wide variety of groups, the policy orientations of “big tent” parties were eclectic and shifted with the public mood. In Pakistan, because of certain overarching international economic shifts, the mood was clearly shifting to the Right. In the second half of Bhutto’s tenure, the regime tried to appropriate this mood and, by the time the Government fell in 1977, the party believed it had upstaged the far-Right Islamist groups that were opposing it.

But it seems that the party did not go far enough and was toppled by an Islamist General. With its leader hanged in 1979, and its other major players either in exile or in prison, the reins of the party fell in the hands of its lower-tier leadership. Bhutto’s daughter Benazir was at the helm, but she was under arrest. This was also when the party’s leftist militant tendencies, which had been subdued by Bhutto, resurfaced. In 1986, however, fearing that the US would stall the party’s return to power for being “too Left-wing”, Benazir began to gradually push the party back towards the Centre.

This push continued through the 1990s, especially with the appearance of the Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) as the “big tent” party of the Right. Under Asif Ali Zardari, the PPP has dug its heels deep in pragmatist centrism. Its electoral appeal in Punjab was neutralised by the PML-N and then the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). This has blocked its path to Islamabad as a ruling party.

The PPP continues to enjoy power and electoral traction in Sindh. But this traction is largely based on the fact that the Sindhi speakers perceive the PPP as a bridge between them and the economic and political fruits of federalism. For this, the PPP needs to continue having a strong presence in federal institutions.

This is why it was important for Zardari to recently bag a majority in the Senate, even if he ended up upsetting his allies in the anti-Government Pakistan Democratic Movement.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE CRPF HAS SHOT FOUR PEOPLE IN COOCH BEHAR. THERE’S A CONSPIRACY UNDER THE HOME MINISTER’S ORDER AND THIS INCIDENT IS PROOF. —WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE



DIDI AND HER GOONS ARE PERTURBED, SEEING THE PEOPLE’S SUPPORT FOR THE BJP. SHE HAS STOOPED TO THIS LEVEL AS SHE CAN SEE HERSELF LOSING. —PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Quaking over Iran’s phantom nuclear weapons

There are many countries that already had nukes when they signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They have obligations, too. How are they doing?

First, the good news. The US and Iran had talks in Vienna on Tuesday, and the nuclear deal they and all the other great powers signed in 2015, is coming back.

It’s not exactly back yet. After then US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the treaty in 2018 and re-imposed harsh sanctions on Iran, the Iranians retaliated by slowly deviating from their own commitments under the deal one baby step at a time. So now there has to be an agreement on a timetable for unwinding those steps as well as cancelling the US sanctions.

On a better run planet, the US special envoy for Iran, Rob Malloy, would just declare that all the US sanctions on Iran wrongly put in place by the discredited Trump Administration are



GWYNNE DYER

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

cancelled as of today. The Iranian delegation, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, a veteran of the 2015 talks, would reply that Iran will immediately return to compliance with all the terms of the treaty and invite UN inspectors to verify that all its temporary deviations from treaty obligations over the past three years have been reversed. And we would all live happily ever after.

However, in the real world it is not so. The negotiators in Vienna are not even in the same hotel. All the countries that are still observing the treaty (China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia and the UK) are in one hotel, and the American mission is in another, with messages going back and forth between the two parties. Porcupines mate with less difficulty, but there



has already been some progress.

“The United States knows that, in order to get back into compliance, it’s going to have to lift those sanctions that are inconsistent with the deal that was reached with Iran,” said Rob Malloy. The Iranian Government’s spokesman Ali Rabiei replied that he “saluted” Malloy’s remarks. “We find this position realistic and promising,” he added.

Two working groups have been set up that include American representatives, with the task of choreographing reciprocal moves by the US and Iran to return to the treaty and a target of full compliance by both sides within two months. Just in time for Iranian moderates to claim credit for ending the US sanctions a week or so before the June election.

So that’s probably sorted,

ment aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.” But it has been a long pursuit and 50 years later not one of them’ has actually managed to catch the damn thing.

The US has got turned around somehow and is pursuing in the wrong direction. It’s in the midst of a trillion-dollar-plus “upgrade” of its nuclear forces, including a new generation of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and new submarine-launched cruise missiles.

According to President Vladimir Putin, Russia has developed nuclear-powered cruise missiles and torpedos with unlimited range, a hypersonic vehicle called Avangard to deliver nuclear weapons at a low level and ultra-high speed, and a new ultra-heavy ICBM called

‘Sarmat’ that is able to carry even more and bigger warheads (10-15) over a longer range (18,000 km.) There have also been reports of a new nuclear-powered drone torpedo that is capable of delivering a 100-megaton warhead (biggest ever tested was 50 megatons) over a range of 10,000 km. Then it would explode off an enemy’s coast to create a tsunami wave 500 metres tall to inundate the coastal regions with highly radioactive water. But maybe this one is fiction.

Then there’s Little Britain with its four submarines that carry nuclear-tipped missiles. Prime Minister Boris Johnson recently announced that he was increasing the number of warheads they carry from 180 to 240, but it doesn’t really make much of a difference.

Traditionally the UK’s strategy is “no first use”, which

means Britain’s retaliation would be on cities, not on empty silos. So you’re just bouncing the rubble after the first few dozen warheads explode. That’s probably why Johnson broke with tradition and said that Britain might use nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks, including even cyber attacks. One way to compensate for not really being very dangerous is to sound very reckless.

Then there’s France (mostly harmless, despite some 280 nuclear weapons) and China (320 but still talking about expansion). Plus India (150), Israel (90), North Korea (30-40) and Pakistan (160), all countries that “unsigned” or never signed the NPT. But at least we’re safe from Iran’s nuclear weapons, which never existed and still don’t.

Myanmar forces kill 82 in single day

AP ■ YANGON

At least 82 people were killed in one day in a crackdown by Myanmar security forces on pro-democracy protesters, according to reports on Saturday from independent local media and an organisation that keeps track of casualties since the February coup. Friday's death toll in Bago was the biggest one-day total for a single city since March 14, when just over 100 people were killed in Yangon, the country's biggest city. Bago is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Yangon. The Associated Press is unable to independently verify the number of deaths.

The death toll of 82 was a preliminary one compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which issues daily counts of casualties and arrests from the crackdown in the aftermath of the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Their tallies are widely accepted as highly credible because cases are not added until they have been confirmed,



with the details published on their website.

In its Saturday report, the group said that it expected the number of dead in Bago to rise as more cases were verified.

The online news site Myanmar Now also reported that 82 people had been killed, citing an unnamed source involved with charity rescue work. Myanmar Now and other local media said the bodies had been collected by the military and dumped on the grounds of a Buddhist pagoda.

At least 701 protesters and

bystanders have been killed by security forces since the army's takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

The attack on Bago was the third in the past week involving the massive use of force to try to crush the persistent opposition to the ruling junta.

Attacks were launched Wednesday on hardcore opponents of military rule who had set up strongholds in the towns of Kalay and Taze in the country's north. In both places, at least 11 people — possibly

The death toll of 82 was a preliminary one compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which issues daily counts of casualties and arrests from the crackdown in the aftermath of the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi

including some bystanders — were reported killed.

The security forces were accused of using heavy weapons in their attacks, including rocket-propelled grenades and mortars, though such allegations could not be independently confirmed by The Associated Press. Photos posted on social media from Bago appeared to show fragments of mortar shells.

Most protests in cities and town around the country are carried out by nonviolent

demonstrators who consider themselves part of a civil disobedience movement.

But as the police and military escalated the use of lethal force, a hardcore faction of protesters armed themselves with homemade weapons such as firebombs in the name of self-defense. In Kalay, activists dubbed themselves a "civil army" and some equipped themselves with rudimentary hunting rifles that are traditional in the remote area.

A report by Myanmar Now said residents of Tamu, a town in the same region as Kalay, used hunting rifles Saturday to ambush a military convoy, and claimed to kill three soldiers.

The junta has taken other measures as well to discourage resistance. It recently published a wanted list of 140 people active in the arts and journalism charged with spreading information that undermines the stability of the country and the rule of law. The penalty for the offense is up to three years' imprisonment. Arrests of those on the list have been highly publicised in state media.

‘Suspicious’ blackout strikes Iran’s Natanz nuclear site



This satellite photo from Planet Labs Inc. shows Iran's Natanz nuclear facility

Dubai: Iran's underground Natanz nuclear facility lost power Sunday just hours after starting up new advanced centrifuges capable of enriching uranium faster, the latest incident to strike the site amid negotiations over the tattered atomic accord with world powers.

As Iranian officials investigated the outage, many Israeli media outlets offered the similar assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges. While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies.

If Israel caused the blackout, it further heightens the tensions between the two nations already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East.

It also complicates efforts by the US, Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it couldn't pursue a nuclear

nuclear program spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi told Iranian state television.

"We still do not know the reason for this electricity outage and have to look into it further," Kamalvandi said. "Fortunately, there was no casualty or damage and there is no particular contamination or problem."

Asked by the state TV correspondent if it was a "technical defect or sabotage," Kamalvandi declined to comment. Malek Shariati Niasar, a Tehran-based lawmaker who serves as spokesman for the Iranian parliament's energy committee, wrote on Twitter that the incident was "very suspicious," raising concerns about possible "sabotage and infiltration." He said lawmakers were pursuing details of the incident as well. **AP**

Iran calls blackout ‘nuclear terrorism’

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran on Sunday described a blackout at its underground Natanz atomic facility an act of "nuclear terrorism," raising regional tensions.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, stopped short of directly blaming anyone for the incident. Details remained few about what happened early Sunday morning at the facility, which initially was described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding the site.

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"To thwart the goals of this terrorist movement, the Islamic Republic of Iran will

continue to seriously improve nuclear technology on the one hand and to lift oppressive sanctions on the other hand," Salehi said, according to state TV.

He added: "While condemning this desperate move, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasises the need for a confrontation by the international bodies and the (International Atomic Energy Agency) against this nuclear terrorism."

Sunday's developments also complicate efforts by the U.S., Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it can't pursue a nuclear weapon. As news of the blackout emerged, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin landed Sunday in Israel for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz.

Power at Natanz was cut across the facility, which is comprised of above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls, civilian nuclear programme spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi earlier told Iranian state TV.

GLOBE TROTTING

EX-B'DESH PM KHALEDA TESTS COVID POSITIVE

Dhaka: Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tested positive for Covid-19 on Sunday, a year after she was released from jail temporarily amidst the pandemic, according to media reports.

RESCUERS FIND 4 DEAD FROM VESSEL IN ATLANTIC

Madrid: Spanish authorities said on Sunday that they had recovered the bodies of four migrants from a boat along with 19 survivors who had taken the treacherous route from West Africa to the Canary Islands. Spain's maritime rescue service said that its crews had responded to an alarm call by a fishing boat that had located the migrants in a flimsy craft unfit for the high seas.

ECUADOR, PERU HEAD TO POLLS UNDER COVID NORMS

Lima, Peru: Ecuador and Peru choose new presidents Sunday under strict public health measures prompted by the coronavirus pandemic, which has recently strengthened in the neighboring South American nations. Ecuadoreans face a runoff between a conservative businessman and a protégé of former leftist President Rafael Correa, while Peruvians have 18 options to pick from in the first round.

IRAN REPORTS HIGHEST DAILY DEATH TOLL OF 2021

Tehran: Iran on Sunday reported its highest single-day death toll from Covid-19 this year, bringing the country's total deaths in the pandemic to nearly 64,500, state TV reported. The report said 258 new deaths were recorded in 24 hours. Iran's deadliest day of the pandemic was in mid-Nov, when over 480 deaths were tallied.

20 HURT AS CHARIOT FALLS IN NEPAL

Kathmandu: Twenty people have sustained injuries after a chariot fell and clashes erupted during a religious festival in Nepal's Bhaktapur. 'Bisket jatra', a chariot-pulling festival, started in Bhaktapur municipality, 16 km east of Kathmandu, on Saturday morning. Soon after the festival was declared open a chariot fell and clashes erupted.

UK: Shops, pubs gear up for easing of lockdown

London: Non-essential retail shops, including shopping malls, pubs and restaurants and hairdressers are among the businesses gearing up to reopen their doors to customers from Monday, when England enters its next stage of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions being eased.

Indoor gyms, swimming pools, libraries, zoos and nail salons are also among the establishments now allowed to reopen, with pubs and restaurants required to strictly follow outdoor dining rules.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson had declared that he would be among the first people to order a pint of beer in a beer garden when the rules are relaxed. **AP**

Trump: The key to Republican success is more Trumpism

AP ■ PALM BEACH

Staking his claim to the Republican Party, former President Donald Trump is casting his populist policies and attack-dog politics as the key to future GOP success.

In a closed-door speech Saturday night to donors at his Mar-a-Lago resort, Trump also reinforced his commitment to the party, according to prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

His appearance came as Republican officials are trying to play down an internal feud over Trump's role in the party, his commitment to GOP fundraising and his plans for 2024.

While Trump's advisers report he will emphasize party unity, he rarely sticks to script.

"The key to this triumphant future will be to build on the gains our amazing movement has made over the past four years," Trump told hundreds of leading Republican donors, according to the prepared remarks.

"Under our leadership, we welcomed millions upon millions of new voters into the Republican coalition. We transformed the Republican Party into a party that truly fights for all Americans."

It was the final address of the Republican National Committee's weekend donor summit in Palm Beach. Most of the RNC's invitation-only gathering was held at a luxury hotel a few miles away; attendees were bused to Trump's club for his remarks.

Jordanian prince makes first public appearance since arrest

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Jordan's Prince Hamzah on Sunday made his first public appearance since he was placed under house arrest last week, attending a ceremony with King Abdullah II in what appeared to be an attempted show of unity on a major Jordanian holiday.

But it remained unclear whether the king and his popular half brother had put aside the differences that escalated last week into the most serious public rift in the ruling family in decades. Hamzah joined members of the Jordanian royal family marking the centenary of the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan, a British protectorate that preceded the kingdom.

The royal palace released a photo and video with Abdullah, Hamzah, Crown Prince Hussein and other dignitaries at the grave of King Talal in Amman, Jordan's capital.



This photo from the Royal Court twitter account, shows Jordan's King Abdullah II, centre, Prince Hamzah bin Al Hussein, second left, and others during a visit to the tomb of the late King Hussein, in Amman Jordan on Sunday **AP**

It was the first time that Hamzah was seen in public since he was placed under a form of house arrest on April 3 following accusations that he was involved in a "malicious plot" to destabilise the kingdom.

In statements leaked to the media, Hamzah denied the accusations and accused the country's government of corruption and incompetence.

Abdullah subsequently said authorities had thwarted an attempt at sedition involving his half brother and some 18 suspects, while saying he was angry and in shock. Abdullah also suggested there was continued control over Hamzah's movements, saying the prince was "with his family at his palace, under my care."

Prince's death a 'huge void' for Queen: Andrew

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has described the death of her husband of 73 years, Prince Philip, as having left a "huge void in her life", their son Prince Andrew said on Sunday.

As he left a memorial service for his late father, the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away aged 99 on Friday, Prince Andrew said his passing was a "terrible loss" and the family was grateful for all the messages of support and condolence.

"It's a great loss. We've lost almost the grandfather of the nation," Prince Andrew, also the Duke of York, told reporters.

"I feel very sorry and supportive of my mother, who's feeling it more than everybody else. The Queen, as you would expect, is an incredibly stoic person and she described his passing as a miracle, and she's contemplating. She



Britain's Prince Edward, Sophie Countess of Wessex and their daughter Lady Louise Windsor, attend the Sunday service at the Royal Chapel of All Saints at Royal Lodge, Windsor, in England on Sunday **AP**

described it as having left a huge void in her life. We as a family are rallying around to support her," he said, on being asked about his mother's emotions.

About his late father, he added: "He was a remarkable man. I loved him as a father. He was always somebody you could go to and he would always listen."

Religious leaders recall Philip's spiritual curiosity

AP ■ LONDON

Churches in Britain held services Sunday to remember Prince Philip as people of many religions reflected on a man whose gruff exterior hid a strong personal faith and deep curiosity about others' beliefs.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby led a service of remembrance at Canterbury Cathedral in southeast England for the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, who died Friday at the age of 99.

Welby, who is set to preside at Philip's funeral on Saturday at Windsor Castle, led prayers for Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, and contemplated "a very long life, remarkably led."

OVER 2,000 YEARS ON Sanskrit remains popular in China: Chinese Professor

PTI ■ BEIJING

Sanskrit studies are flourishing in China, over 2,000 years after the ancient Indian language was brought to this country along with Buddhism, making a profound impact on Chinese monarchs and scholars over the centuries, according to a distinguished professor here.

Wang Bangwei, a well-known Chinese scholar in Sanskrit and Director of Sino-Indian Buddhist Studies, Institute of Oriental and Indian Studies at the Peking University, said Sanskrit which is the root of Indian culture continues to remain popular in China, contrary to its modest progress in modern India.

Wang said the Peking University is one of the oldest in China and this year marks

the completion of 100 years of teaching Sanskrit at the leading varsity. Wang credited 4th Century AD Indian scholar Kumarajiva for spreading Sanskrit in China.

Kumarajiva was instrumental in translating Buddhist sutras into Chinese language during his stay in China over 2,000 years ago, earning the royal title of "National Teacher of China". He was the first among numerous scholars who laid a firm foundation for civilisational links between the two countries.

Kumarajiva, hailing from a Kashmiri Brahmin family from the then Kucha Kingdom, spent about 23 years in China in the 4th century AD both as a prisoner and as a most revered scholar.

Sanskrit, its associated culture and its development was

kept alive by numerous Chinese scholars, like Fa Xian and Xuan Zang and others, who visited India, Wang said, while launching the Sanskrit learning application "Little Guru" of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, (ICCR) at the Indian Embassy here on Friday, along with Indian Ambassador, Vikram Misri.

Sanskrit teaching programme started at the Peking University a century ago but Sanskrit research and teaching in China has a history of over 2,000 years, Wang said.

When Buddhism came to China from India, Chinese Buddhist monks started translating Indian texts into Chinese.

From that moment, Sanskrit study and research started. China has a long history of Sanskrit tradition, till that time outside of India,

China has the longest and strongest scholarship in the world," he said. Over 100 Chinese scholars studied in Nalanda University until it began to decline in 11th Century, Wang said.

"Sanskrit is a major language of Indian culture. More and more people in China are interested in Indian culture and Sanskrit is a good way to learn more about Indian culture," he said.

He said Sanskrit was the most important language through which Chinese learned about Hinduism, Buddhism, ancient Indian medicine, astronomy and mathematics.

"While Buddhism declined in India, it became very strong in China and has become part of Chinese culture," he told **PTI**. Once the language became strong in China, the need to go to India

to learn it declined, he said.

"China gradually became centre of Buddhism in Asia. In India, Buddhism has declined and in China it grew," he said, adding that thanks to numerous scholars who visited India over the centuries, China has some rare Sanskrit scriptures brought by them, which may not be available in India.

Y.E. Shaoyong, Associate Prof of Sanskrit in Peking University, said the Sanskrit studies in China are booming. His department now has 10 scholars specialising in the language while 200 others studied as part of the subject for their graduate programme.

The job prospects of the Sanskrit learning students are also good as most of them pursue academic career in Buddhist studies, specially its history, he said.

US-Philippines officials discuss concerns over China's ships

AP ■ ABOARD A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday discussed with his Philippine counterpart China's recent positioning of "militia vessels" near the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Austin spoke by phone with Philippine Secretary of National Defence Delfin Lorenzana while Austin was flying from Washington to Israel to begin an international trip.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Austin and Lorenzana discussed the situation in the South China Sea and the recent massing of Chinese vessels at Whitsun Reef, which has drawn criticism from Manila.

SBI collects ₹300 cr from zero balance a/cs: Study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Several banks, including State Bank of India (SBI), have been imposing excessive charges on certain services provided to poor persons having zero-balance or Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA), a study by the IIT-Bombay has revealed.

The study observed that the SBI's decision to levy a charge of ₹17.70 for every debit transaction beyond four by the BSBDA account holders cannot be considered as "reasonable."

It highlighted that the imposition of service charges resulted in undue collections to the tune of over ₹300 crore from among nearly 12 crore Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA) holders of SBI during the period 2015-20.

India's second-largest public sector lender Punjab National Bank, which has 3.9 crore BSBD accounts, collected ₹9.9 crore during the same period.

"There had been systematic breach in the RBI regulations on BSBDA's by few banks, most notably by the SBI that hosts the maximum number of BSBDA's, when it charged @ Rs 17.70 for every debit transac-

tion (even via digital means) beyond four a month.

"This imposition of service charges resulted in undue collections to the tune of over ₹300 crore from among nearly 12 crore BSBDA holders of SBI during the period 2015-20, of which the period 2018-19 alone saw a collection of ₹72 crore and the period 2019-20, Rs 158 crore," the study by IIT Bombay professor Ashish Das stated.

Levying of charges on BSBDA is guided by September 2013 RBI guidelines. As per the direction these accounts holders are 'allowed more than four withdrawals' in a month, at the bank's discretion provided the bank does not charge for the same.

"While defining the features of a BSBDA, the regulatory requirements made it amply clear that in addition to mandatory free banking services (that included four withdrawals per month), as long as the savings deposit account is a BSBDA, banks cannot impose any charge even for value-added banking services that a bank may like to offer at their discretion," the study said.

The RBI considers a withdrawal, beyond four a month,

a value-added service, it said.

"We assess the dereliction in SBI's duty towards the PMJDY when the BSBDA users were unduly (and against the extant regulations) forced to part with such high charges for their day-to-day (noncash) digital debit transactions that the bank allowed in a BSBDA," it said.

SBI, in breach of RBI regulations set forth as early as 2013, had been charging the BSBDA holders for every debit transaction beyond four a month, it said, adding, the charges were as high as

Rs 17.70 even for digital transactions like NEFT, IMPS, UPI, BHIM-UPI and debit cards for merchant payments.

"On the one hand, the country strongly promoted digital means of payments, while on the other hand, SBI discouraged these very people, to transact digitally for their day-to-day expenditures, by charging an exploitative Rs 17.70 per digital transaction. This dwarfed the spirit of financial inclusion," it said.

The RBI's nonchalant attitude to supervise its own regulations encouraged other banks to become unreasonable towards charges beyond four debits a month, it said.

Some industrialists fear another exodus of migrant workers



PTI ■ COIMBATORE

With the second wave of Covid-19 sweeping across various parts of Tamil Nadu, some of the industrialists in the State are apprehensive of migrant workers leaving for their hometowns considering the health conditions.

The industries recovered from the jolt of the first wave of coronavirus when over one lakh migrant workers from both Coimbatore and Tirupur industries rushed back to their home towns in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha by special trains.

Even as the business started picking up, the 30 per cent increase in the raw materials has affected the industries, sources from different industrial associations said.

A few workers reportedly left for their natives early last week as they feared the availability of transport like trains to reach their towns.

However, there was no major exodus from the industries as the workers working on weekly payment basis had taken their wages Saturday last, the sources said.

Coimbatore and Tirupur reported increased infection cases and a correct picture of workers returning would emerge only after another week, they said.

No worker left the city till Saturday from nearby Tirupur, a major hub of knitwear garments where 80 per cent of over three lakh workers hailed from the North, said sources in the Tirupur Exporters Association.

CAIT urges PM for staggered working time for different sectors to control Covid-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic traders' body CAIT on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to impose night curfew or lockdown amid rising Covid-19 in the country and instead adopt staggered working time for different sectors.

In a communication to the prime minister, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said it would be more appropriate if alternate measures may be adopted at district levels all over the country.

"Instead of night curfew or lockdown which have not proved a worthy step so far to combat escalation of COVID-19, it would be more appropriate if alternate easy measures

may be adopted at district levels and staggered working time for different sectors," it said.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that a closer analysis of the COVID-19 statistics over the last one week have made it ample clear that night curfew and lockdown in different states have not brought the desired results of bringing down the cases.

It suggested that working hours of different verticals of trade and commerce should be revised.

"We suggest that government offices, private offices and other all kinds of offices may work from 8 am to 2 pm whereas the markets and shops may be allowed to work from 11 am to 5 pm," it said.



'E-commerce growth in tier-2, 3 cities outpace tier-1 Indian cities'

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

The growth of e-commerce volumes in tier 2 and 3 cities in India is outpacing that in tier-1 cities, according to a recent report. "Smaller Indian cities are now accounting for a bigger volume of e-commerce sales. E-commerce growth in tier 2 and tier 3 cities in India is outpacing that of tier 1 cities," said an ICICI Securities report. Volume share of these smaller cities in India's e-commerce market increased to 46 per cent in Q4CY20 from 32 per cent YoY. Also, online spending per customer in tier 2 and tier 3 cities has also improved as these cities held a 43 per cent share of the e-commerce sales value last quarter, up from 26 per cent YoY.

"This has raised hopes of a sustainable last mile delivery economics emerging for the industry - yet hyperlocal last mile small parcel deliveries remain economically as challenging as ever," it said.

"We continue to see emergence of end-to-end logistics contracts with Bajaj Electricals and Flipkart with Mahindra Logistics," it said, adding that the trend, while accretive value to the service provider, also gains currency as emergence of multiple channels is increasing supply chain challenge and risks.

Rise in Covid cases to delay demand recovery in global oil market



FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Fresh surge in Covid-19 cases, eventual lockdowns is likely to delay the demand recovery in the global oil market, said an ICICI Securities report.

It however, noted that with 'OPEC+' capping supply to ensure supply deficit, impact on oil prices is likely to be muted.

"Fresh surge in Covid cases, consequent lockdowns and slow rollout of vaccines, especially in Europe, are likely to delay demand recovery to pre-Covid levels," the report said. However, delay in demand recovery may delay gross margin recovery for refineries.

The ICICI Securities report also noted that vaccine-driven

recovery in global oil demand and permanent closure of refineries is estimated to boost global refinery utilisation to 77.8 per cent in CY21E from 37-year low of 72.5 per cent in CY20E.

"We estimate global refinery utilisation to gradually rise from 79.1 per cent in CY22E to 80 per cent in CY26E. IEA estimates permanent closure of 3.6m b/d (barrels per day) of refining capacity, but believes 6m b/d is required to ensure global refinery utilisation is sustainably above 80 per cent."

It noted that in CY07-CY18, 16.5 million b/d of refining capacity was added globally, but 8 million b/d was shut implying net capacity addition of just 8.5 million b/d.

Nobel laureate trashes theory of limited Govt intervention to uplift poor

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Renowned economist and Nobel laureate Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee has trashed the ideology that calls for lesser or limited government interventions towards uplifting the poor arguing that such freebies make the poor lazy, saying there is no evidence whatsoever proving so.

He said his own research on the subject across diverse economies in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the past decade and more does not support this ideology, rather it proves that those who have benefited from public and non-governmental interventions wherein they were given free assets did in fact became more productive and creative.

Addressing the 20th foundation day of Bandhan Bank, the non-profit-turned-MFI-turned-small finance bank, on Sunday, Banerjee said there is no data and no empirical evidence anywhere to establish the ideology that getting freebies or getting free assets make the poor people lazy.

This ideology has been pushing successive governments to give less to the poor so that they don't become lazy. But we have seen no evidence



to this effect anywhere, not even in India, instead we have seen everywhere improvements, he said.

The economist also partly blamed those people hawking this ideology for the large number of the poor here and elsewhere as this had successive governments leaving poverty reduction and other socio-economic impactful measures to non-profits and private sector till about the middle of the first decade of the new millennium when Manmohan Singh-led government unveiled the rural jobs guarantee scheme.

This and many other affirmative actions has lifted a few tens of millions out of poverty in five years after the implementation.

He said an analysis of a decadal data from Bandhan when it was an NGO, clearly established the impact of its

work on the poor who have seen on average 25 per cent income growth helping them consume 18 per cent more.

This is a great data-driven lesson, gained from his randomised

control trials, in fighting poverty over a long period, Banerjee

said, adding the first lesson in this is that when the poor become better off, they become more creative in generating more wealth and leading better lives including by sending their kids to better schools far away from their villages.

Data from my randomised control trials clearly showed that they're those people who benefited from public/non-government help have seen income increasing by 25 per cent leading to an 18 per cent jump in consumption he said.

While calling for more globalisation and free trade, he however admitted that fight against poverty has become more complicated in a globalised world as globalisation has created new forms of risks - the now raging pandemic is one of the best examples of such new risks - especially for the poor as they suffered the most from the lockdowns across the world.

BRIEFS

INVESTORS OF FRANKLIN TEMPLETON'S SHUT SCHEMES

New Delhi: The investors of the six shut schemes of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund are set to receive ₹2,962 crore in the coming week. This would be the second tranche of disbursement to the investors after the distribution of ₹9,122 crore across five schemes in February. "We are pleased to inform you that SBI MF would be distributing the next tranche of ₹2,962 crore to unitholders across all 6 schemes. The payment to all investors whose accounts are KYC compliant with all details available will be made during the week of 12 April 2021," said a company spokesperson. The distributable amount as a percentage of the asset under management (AUM) would be 28.42 per cent in Franklin Ultra Short Bond Fund, 14.18 per cent in Franklin India Low Duration Fund, 13.37% in Short Term Income Fund, 6.67% in Income Opportunities Fund, 11.22% in Credit Risk Fund and 11.23% in Dynamic Accrual Fund.

TATA COMMS, BIX EXTEND PARTNERSHIP FOR HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IN BAHRAIN

Mumbai: Tata Communications and Bahrain Internet Exchange (BIX) have extended their partnership to offer high speed internet connectivity with very low latency for a superior quality and seamless viewing, gaming and download experience for customers in Bahrain. Equipped with OTU-4, a next-generation optical technology, TGN-Gulf cable system will enable customers with a robust, consistent, and manageable data transport infrastructure with the capability to scale up beyond 100 Gbps, said a company statement. With this, Tata Communications and BIX bring the power of high-speed connectivity and digital transformation to the Middle East region, it said.

S KOREAN MOBILE CARRIERS TIPPED FOR ROBUST Q1 EARNINGS

Seoul: South Korean wireless carriers are estimated to have logged robust earnings in the first quarter on the back of sharp growth in 5G users and their non-telecom businesses, a poll showed on Sunday. The combined operating profits of the country's three major mobile carriers -- SK Telecom Co., KT Corp. and LG Uplus Corp. -- are expected to have reached 966.5 billion won (\$66.3 million) in the January-March period, up 6.8 per cent from the previous year, according to the poll on six local brokerage houses by Yonhap Infomax, the financial arm of Yonhap News Agency. SK Telecom, the biggest of the three in terms of mobile users, is estimated to have posted an operating profit of 339.5 billion won for the first quarter, up 12.42 percent on-year, while its revenue probably rose 6.57 percent on-year to 4.74 trillion won. Telecom giant KT is expected to have logged 386.3 billion won in operating profit, up 0.84 percent on-year, while the operating profit of LG Uplus is estimated to have risen 9.51 percent to 240.7 billion won.



It again reduced the price on March 30.

Thereafter, fuel prices have

remained unchanged. Earlier, petrol and diesel prices increased 26 times in 2021.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the Public that Auctioning of pledged Gold Ornaments will be conducted by SBFC Finance Pvt. Ltd. on **20 April 2021** or thereafter at 10 AM at O – 7, 1st Floor, above Look Sal on , Lajpat Nagar 2, New Delhi-110042, Faridabad branch - D-2, First Floor N.I.T., Near 1-2 Chowk , Faridabad, Haryana- 121001 and Gurgaon branch First Floor, Property No. 342/9, Subhash Nagar, 1st floor New Railway Road Gurgaon-122001, Ghaziabad – 28 RDC Raj Nagar Ghaziabad Near SBI branch, Hawar – First floor, above P C Jeweller, garh gargana pakia bagh, garh road nagar-245101.

The Gold Ornaments to be auctioned belong to Loan Accounts of our various Customers who have failed to pay their dues. Our notices of auction have been duly issued to these customers.

The Gold Ornaments to be auctioned belong to Overdue Loan Accounts of our various Customers mentioned below with branch name.

Faridabad: PR00844677, PR00848800, PR00843513, PR00836423, PR00737407, PR00855008, PR00848835, PR00849307, PR00836712, PR00735646, PR00856383, PR00849527, PR00844022, PR00836730, PR00758149, PR00859417, PR00849374, PR00839842, PR00837683, PR00779649, PR00837937, PR00851080, PR00841391, PR00837595, PR00777264, PR00801346, PR00850598, PR00844433, PR00837435, PR00779875, PR00809709, PR00850107, PR00844605, PR00837960, PR00783087, PR00810173, PR00845289, PR00837925, PR00781431, PR00838806, PR00787336, PR00839601, PR00821097, PR00846453, PR00838478, PR00787102, PR00814249, PR00846134, PR00838785, PR00778596, PR00818187, PR00809893, PR00846193, PR00838744, PR00778692, PR00818458, PR00812971, PR00846248, PR00838636, PR00769680, PR00815317, PR00841412, PR00846340, PR00838806, PR00787336, PR00839601, PR00821097, PR00846453, PR00838478, PR00787102, PR00814249, PR00846134, PR00838785, PR00778596, PR00818187, PR00809893, PR00846193, PR00838744, PR00778692, PR00818458, PR00812971, PR00846248, 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EDUCATION: A POWERFUL WEAPON

While there are schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* that aim to educate girls but continuous awareness and persistent effort are needed to enable them to benefit at the ground level, says RAMA SHARMA

There are several powerful women, who have shattered the patriarchal norms and have shown the rest of the world what women can do if they have equal rights. Chhavi Rajawat is one such name that has done exactly that and more. India's first woman sarpanch with an MBA degree, Chhavi was the sarpanch of her village Soda in Malpura block, Tonk district in Rajasthan. She had left her lucrative corporate job to serve as a sarpanch. Her ardour to work for the community has not just touched lives but has led the way for several girls and women who have set their hearts on serving the community.

One such life that Chhavi has inspired is that of 25-year-old Radha Rajawat. A resident of Lalwari village in Niwai block of Tonk district in Rajasthan, Radha has not only educated herself but made a huge difference in the lives of girls in and around her village by fighting for their rights to education. Her journey, however, has been a tough one. She had to put up a fight against her parents first and then, against the entire Rajput community of her village to reach where she is today.

"Initially, we were against her idea of pursuing education after Class 8th as that would have meant sending her outside the village," shared her parents who had to eventually give up in front of their daughter's perseverance. Their support was faced by the opposition not just from their extended families but from the Rajput community as well. The pressure forced Radha's parents to withdraw their support, but Radha was adamant. She put up a brave fight against everyone, worked as a laborer, and managed to complete Class 12 with a good score of 70 per cent.

Radha's journey had started while she was still in Class 8th. Under the Sakshar Bharat Mission — a centrally sponsored nationwide literacy scheme of



the Indian Department for School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Radha was selected as a child reporter. This provided her a platform to raise issues concerning her village and panchayat through newspapers. Slowly, she started mobilising the villagers.

In 2013, she led the girls and women from the panchayat to address the issue of corruption. "Led by Radha, the group submitted a memorandum not only to the District Collector but also to the Chief Minister requesting solution the challenge of negligence and corruption at the panchayat level," informed

Poonam Rajawat, a member of Kishori Manch — an adolescent group run by a local non-profit organisation in the region.

One of the most important transformations that Radha brought to this panchayat was setting up a school till Class 12. Her persistent efforts to address the concerns of thousands of girls who had to give up education due to lack of a higher secondary school in their village led to this impact. The girls of the village, now, do not have to compromise on their dreams of completing school education.

Not just for girls, she soon started working towards the

education of the entire village. "In 2014, as a panchayat motivator, she took the initiative to educate 1,800 illiterate people of the village and encouraged them to sit for the examinations," said Panchayat Assistant, Hemraj Singh.

Shashi Kanwar, who was tutored by Radha, shared that there wasn't a single educated woman in the village. "It is a result of her hard work and efforts of the other adolescent girls associated with her that today, nearly 70 per cent of women in the village are literate." As far as the education of adolescent girls is concerned,

prior to 2013, only 30 per cent of girls in Lalwari panchayat were educated, while today, more than 80 per cent are linked with mainstream education. Not only this, 30 to 40 per cent of the girls are stepping out of the village boundary to pursue their dream of higher education.

"Overwhelmed by Radha's zeal to work for the better future of her community, she was requested by the girls, women and other responsible people of the village to contest the panchayat elections," said Maina Rana, a colleague of Radha's. She obliged their

request and contested the election but couldn't win. She, however, continued to support the winner, Devalal Gurjar, who is also her colleague, to serve the community with sincerity.

Babulal Sharma, a local teacher, said, "Radha has tried to raise social issues, problems and challenges not only at the panchayat level but also at the district and state level from time to time. It is the result of her dedication towards the society that she had the opportunity to meet the former Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari. Taking note of her confidence and her ability to lead the youth, local political groups had also offered her to join them. Radha, a true social worker, showed her will to rise above politics and work for all the sections of society.

Her life, however, is not only occupied with social responsibilities but is equally dedicated to her family. "I am a cancer patient. Radha, as responsible as she is, has taken the entire charge into her hands. Along with pursuing further education, she is working in a private firm. Currently, I am receiving free treatment with the help of Dr Prahlad Dhakad, a Senior Doctor working in Jaipuria Hospital. It is because of her that I am able to get this free treatment. I was completely against her education but now I realise my mistake and understood the importance of girls' education," said Radha's father.

Her struggle and passion for social awareness is an outstanding example of women's empowerment. While there are schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* that aim to educate girls but continuous awareness and persistent effort are needed to enable them to benefit at the ground level. For women to become self-reliant and courageous, they should have equal right and opportunities to educate themselves.

—Charkha Features



LEARN AND UNLEARN

One should give up self-conceit and accept changes if one wants to do better in life, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

There is hardly any human being in the world who is not inclined to improve himself/herself. Of course, some aspire for improvement in their relationship with whom they have to live and work, whereas others work for improvement in their economic status. Some want to improve or enhance their personality, whereas others are more concerned about their spiritual progress. In any case, the will to make some progress is basic to all normal beings and the efforts to improve are a sign of life. And, the volition, under-lying all efforts of man to bring about improvement is mainly one's aspiration to be happier. If one ponders over this question of attainment of true happiness, one would come to the conclusion that man's happiness ultimately depends upon his behaviour or his reaction to the external stimuli and his ways of thinking which, in turn, depends upon his inner urges, his tendencies and the training he had. So, in order to have any other kind of improvement, man has to bring about improvement in his outlook, habits, mannerism and ways. For this, he has to pick up and learn certain things and unlearn others. If man's process of learning (or unlearning wrong things) stops and his effort to put into practice what he has learned already ceases or his capacity and will to make efforts are exhausted, his improvement and progress also come to a halt.

Not many are aware of the fact that the path to progress is paved with some obstacles which are mostly of man's own making. One of these is man's pride and arrogance about his own knowledge. It is easy to teach him who has no pride in his own intelligence. But he who regards himself as perfectly wise would say to others, "There is nothing that I do not know." It is difficult to offer correction to such a man, for he assumes air in such a manner that people would stutter in his presence; he loses temper no sooner than anyone would start informing him on any subject. So, if one wants to improve and, for that purpose, is inclined to accept some changes, one should give up self-conceit because it precludes the possibility of learning good things of life and unlearning wrong things.

Another major hurdle in man's path to progress is his attachment to worldly objects, his lust for sensual pleasures, his sense of deep involvement, and his attachment to his body. Little does man realise that, at this fag-end of iron age, when a man has lost his morals, the worldly things are devoid of their original essence. One who wants spiritual improvement should know that the present unrighteous world has no substance. Is the bark of a sugar cane worth anything when the juice has been squeezed out of it? So has the world lost all its sap and truth because it has become debased. This body of ours is assailed by several different diseases and is made of debased matter. So one who aspires for self-improvement should push out attachment to objects of senses or thirst for these, with only one determined effort, as, otherwise, it would mean that one has lost or is losing one's precious life over a mere trifle.

Knowing all this, one should get rid of body consciousness. The first step for this is to withdraw one's attachment from 'religions' of the body, which rob one's life of its essence, and to devote one's mind and body and possessions towards the welfare of the world. This will bring in man qualities such as service, dedication, sacrifice, meekness, fellow-feeling, tolerance, and hundred-and-one other noble traits of high character. It will quicken his efforts for self-improvement.



Whether working from home or office, toiling away for long hours without breaks and physical activity can begin to damage your body, vitality and even without tell-tale signs.

"It is important to achieve a healthy work-life balance in order to live a fulfilled life. But there are moments in life when you have to finish certain deadlines and cannot avoid spending a lot of time on your desk," says Beenu Rajpoot, noted filmmaker and a Fit India Champion.

The fitness expert has these suggestions for those busy hours that will not only nourish your body and mind, but also increase overall productivity:

Between emails, meetings and calls, try to take a stroll even for a few minutes to reset your body and brain. A little bit of movement during those long sitting hours will go a long way to ensure that your body and joints do not become too stiff by sitting.

Check your breath during intervals. Take a few long breaths engaging your abdominals to ensure that your body is getting enough oxygen. Learn some *Pranayama* techniques to recreate yourself quickly so that you can maintain a constant energy level throughout the long span of desk sitting.

Remember to do a few neck and shoulder stretches while on your desk to avoid neck pain or back pain later. It will also help in keeping your posture upright. Add useful stretches from your yoga class to these intervals.

Choose the appropriate ergonomic chair and table in order to maintain a good posture while sitting for long hours. Some of the important factors

Working long hours can damage your vitality even without tell-tale signs

to be considered are — shape of the chair, its height, height of the table, lumbar support in the chair, among others. Ensure that your chair has some kind of lumbar support. Lumbar support will protect your lumbar spine from pressures of excessive flexion during long sitting hours. It is also important to choose a chair where you can adjust the height of the chair so that you can adjust its height vis-a-vis your table. It will be good for your mid-upper back and shoulders. Often people who ignore this advice can develop health conditions like scoliosis and rounded shoulders.

Keep drinking water during a long shift. It's quite common that people under pressure keep suppressing their thirst subconsciously that makes them dehydrated. Remember to keep sipping the water every hour or so to keep your body rich in fluids that will improve the circulation and will keep your blood pressure in check, apart from many other benefits of drinking water.

Decorate your space nicely and keep it clean, organised and minimal. Avoid too much clutter around in your space. Too much physical clutter affects



the states of your mind, too. Practice the yogic principle of *Aparigraha* or minimalism to keep your space, physical as well as mental, free.

Ensure that you are getting some sun during the day. It will not only enrich your Vitamin D levels but also give a big

boost to your immune system. It is very common among the big cities in India that people don't get enough Vitamin D as they are not exposed to the sunlight often. Lack of exposure to the sunlight leads to Vitamin D deficiency that is often linked to other health issues.

Gives your eyes some rest in between after every half an hour or so by doing a simple yoga technique of palming. Rub your palms together and just cover your eyes with your warm palms. Your eyes will feel energised immediately.

—JANS

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Invest in your dreams. Grind now. Shine later.

—Unknown

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TREATING SLEEP APNEA MAY REDUCE DEMENTIA

Older adults who received positive airway pressure therapy prescribed for obstructive sleep apnea may be less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia, new research suggests.

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is a condition in which the upper airway collapses repeatedly throughout the night, preventing normal breathing during sleep.

OSA is associated with a variety of other neurological and cardiovascular conditions, and many older adults are at high risk for OSA.

"We found a significant association between positive airway pressure use and lower risk of Alzheimer's and other types of dementia over three years, suggesting that positive airway pressure may be protective against dementia risk in people with OSA," said lead author Galit Levi Duniets, Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan.

CHILDHOOD DIET LINKED TO LESS ANXIETY LATER

Exercise and a healthy diet in childhood leads to adults with bigger brains and lower levels of anxiety, a new study suggests.

The mouse-model study determined that early-life exercise generally reduced anxious behaviors in adults. It also led to an increase in adult muscle and brain mass.

"During the COVID-19 lockdowns, particularly in the early months, kids got very little exercise. For many without access to a park or a backyard, school was their only source of physical activity," said researcher Marcell Cadney from the University of California - Riverside. "It is important we find solutions for these kids, possibly including extra attention as they grow into adults," Cadney added.

The researchers determined that early-life exercise generally reduced anxious behaviours in adults. It also led to an increase in adult muscle and brain mass. When fed "Western" style diets high in fat and sugar, the mice not only became fatter, but also grew into adults that preferred unhealthy foods.

OBESITY LINKED TO HEAVY PERIODS

Ladies, here is one more reason to reduce your body weight. Obesity is linked to greater menstrual blood loss, which may result from increased inflammation in the womb lining, delaying its repair, according to a study conducted both on women and mice.

The study, led by researchers from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, UK, found a weak but statistically significant association between increasing body mass index (BMI) — the deadliest type of blood cancer in adults and children.

In the mouse study, the team found that after shedding their womb lining, the mice on a high-fat diet showed delayed repair of the remaining womb lining in comparison to mice on a normal diet.

Further examination of womb tissue from the mice indicated that inflammatory factors were also higher in mice with greater body weight. The findings are detailed in the Journal of Endocrinology.

'JUMPING' GENES CAN PREVENT BLOOD CANCER

US scientists have found that transposons, also known as jumping genes, can protect against certain blood cancers and help develop new therapeutic targets.

Transposons are DNA sequences that can move, or jump, from one location in the genome to another when activated. These "jumping" genes are a source of genetic mutations responsible for a number of human diseases.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Genetics, can help predict how patients will respond to cancer therapies and find new therapeutic targets for acute myeloid leukemia (AML) — the deadliest type of blood cancer in adults and children.

"Our initial finding was a surprise because it's been long thought that activated transposons promote cancer development by generating genetic mutations. We found it was the opposite for blood cancers, and that decreased L1 activity was associated with worse clinical outcomes and therapy resistance in patients," said Jian Xu, Associate Professor in the CRI.

NEW DRUG CAN STOP TUMOURS FROM GROWING

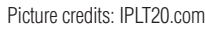
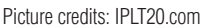
US researchers have found that an oral drug can be effective in stopping tumours from growing. The team from the University of Colorado Cancer Center found that slowing down NLRP3 can reduce inflammation and curb tumour growth and progression.

"NLRP3 is a member of a larger family that is involved in sensing danger signals," said Carlo Marchetti, from the varsity's School of Medicine.

It is a receptor that surveils the intercellular compartment of a cell, looking for danger molecules or pathogens.

"When NLRP3 recognises these signals, it leads to the activation of caspase-1, a protein involved in the processing and maturation of interleukin-1-beta into its biological active form, causing an intense inflammatory response. We found that in melanoma, this process is dysregulated, resulting in tumour growth," Marchetti said.





His strokes on the off-side —

Mohammed Nabi (2/32) got rid of Rana and Eoin Morgan (2) off successive balls in the 18th

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming said losing Josh Hazlewood was a big blow ahead of the new season's start as it left the team without the overseas pace bowling options with his replacement Jason Behrendorff and South African Lungi Ngidi still not available for team's next game said. Australia pacer Hazlewood had withdrawn at the last moment to keep himself fit for upcoming international assignments. Behrendorff was named his replacement last Friday and is yet to arrive, while Ngidi is serving his quarantine after returning midway from South Africa's ODI series against Pakistan.

Samson has gone slightly off the radar as far as the national team is concerned after having failed to grab even a single opportunity. However, Sangakkara believes that both the captain and Rahul Tewatia, who recently was in