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PRIME MINISTER TAKES STOCK; HARSH VARDHAN SPEAKS TO 11 STATES/UT OF CONCERN

Alarming rise in cases, infection rate faster than recoveries: Govt

6,303 ventilators for 6 states, 1 lakh oxygen cylinders soon; Remdesivir prices revised

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

UNDERLINING THE "alarming rise in daily number of active cases which currently stand at 16,79,000" and "a sharp growth of 10.2% in the number of deaths", Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan Saturday said "the widening gap between daily new cases and daily new recoveries reflects that the infection is spreading at a much faster rate than recoveries with consistently growing active cases".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
E What states seek

THE surge in 11 states/UT of concern has prompted urgent review of the ground situation. The states have flagged four issues: augmenting supply of oxygen cylinders; stepping up supply of Remdesivir in hospitals; adding to the ventilator stock; and enhanced supply of vaccine doses.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Migrant workers board buses for their home states in Gurgaon, which recorded over 2,000 cases on Saturday. PTI

As PM appeals, *akhadas* opt for 'symbolic' Kumbh dip

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DEHRADUN, APRIL 17

THE LAST *shahi snan* at the Kumbh Mela is likely to be "symbolic", with minimum participation by *akhadas*, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday said he had appealed to the *akhadas* to minimise the numbers amidst rising Covid cases in Uttarakhand.

"Today I had a telephonic conversation with Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Poojya Swamy Avdheshanand Giri Ji. I asked about the health of all the Sants. I thanked the Sant Samaj for their full cooperation with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

OVER 24,000 NEW CASES IN DELHI
Kejriwal sounds alarm: Oxygen & drugs running out, situation very serious

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

WITH DELHI reporting 24,000-plus new cases on Saturday, marking a new high for the Capital and the highest daily number for any city in the country so far, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the situation had become "very serious and worrisome", with oxygen stock, remdesivir and tocilizumab drugs in short supply. "The rate at which Covid is spreading, there is no telling when the peak will be reached," the CM said.

The increasing caseload has strained the health infrastruc-

THE SECOND SURGE
4 COVID PATIENTS KILLED IN FIRE AT RAIPUR HOSPITAL
UDDHAV: CALLED PM, TOLD HE WAS BUSY IN BENGAL; GOYAL HITS BACK PAGE 5

ture, with hospitals now reporting a shortage of beds, oxygen, remdesivir and tocilizumab. Kejriwal said in a webcast as Delhi figures rose by 24,375 cases and 167 deaths. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SUNDAY STORY
PAGE 10

Covid 2.0

Oxygen shortage in Maharashtra, rising toll in Chhattisgarh, lack of beds in Lucknow



which, along with Depsang Plains, remain the friction points between the two sides – Indian and Chinese troops and armoured columns had disengaged on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso and the Kailash range in February.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WORLD

POLICE: FOUR OF EIGHT INDIANAPOLIS SHOOTING VICTIMS WERE SIKHS

WORLDWIDE COVID TOLL TOUCHES 3 MILLION PAGE 12

China refuses to leave Hot Springs, Gogra: 'India should be happy with what has been achieved'

China never raised DSDBO road at talks; Depsang predates standoff, India added it to resolve issue, says top source

KRISHN KAUSHIK

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

IN A little over a fortnight from now, the standoff between Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh will be a year old. Eleven rounds of military discussions later, it is still to be resolved, with the Chinese reluctant to return to troop locations before the start of the standoff.

The *Sunday Express* has learnt that on April 9, during the last round of talks at the Corps Commander-level, China refused to pull back its troops from Hot Springs and Gogra Post



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80,000 MEN AND WOMEN IN FORCE, MANY POSTED AT HOSPITALS

Almost 400 personnel on frontlines infected, Delhi Police makes push to vaccinate force

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

AMID RISING Covid cases among the force, the Delhi Police is set to vaccinate all its personnel by the end of the month, officials said Saturday. Police have deployed a number of officers at government and private hospitals to oversee Covid testing and treatment and ensure there are no gatherings outside the hospital.

Senior officers said they are planning to get everyone vaccinated soon to ensure safety of their staff, many of whom work more than 12 hours a day at Covid hospitals and testing and isolation centres.

Chinmoy Biswal, the Delhi Police PRO, said the first dose of the vaccine has been administered to 72,677 personnel. "Out of the total 80,000 police personnel registered for vaccination drive, more than 90% have



An empty Connaught Place on Saturday. Praveen Khanna

taken the first dose. The second dose has also been administered to 56,113 personnel. We want everyone to get vaccinated soon since a majority of the force is deployed to curb violations in the city and ensure curfew," said Biswal.

The Delhi Police said there are at least 388 police personnel who are infected with Covid at present. More than 15 officers are admitted to hospitals and are undergoing treatment.

Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava Friday said the rise in cases is "worrysome" and that police personnel must follow social distancing and Covid norms at all times while on duty.

At the AIIMS Trauma Centre on Saturday, 43-year-old constable Pawan Kumar looks after Covid patients and their families every day.

Kumar, who now works at the hospital for 12-16 hours every day, said, "We are only do-

ing our duty. I never knew I was going to do this but now I help Covid patients get admitted every day. We take care of them, talk to their families and even provide them with luggage or essentials. I usually go home at 8 pm but these days we are called at 10 or 11 pm to help families and patients. We have to ensure that families don't violate social distancing. I wear a mask and gloves all the time and stay in a different room at my house. I don't want to infect my wife and children."

Given the crunch in hospital beds, police personnel also help doctors and patients by keeping a tab on the availability and communicating it to patients.

Sub-inspector Narendra Singh Rawat (52) is posted at Ram Manohar Hospital for around 15 hours a day.

"There are patients who come in ambulances and want a bed but there's no vacancy. We

talk to doctors and refer patients to other hospitals. I have to ensure the families and other people maintain law and order. Sometimes, people gather in huge crowds and create a ruckus... I intervene in such cases and stop them. I have also helped people in getting Covid tests. I'm lucky that I haven't been infected with the virus so far. Our work is difficult because the cases are increasing every day and more and more families come here," he said.

At Lok Nayak Hospital, a sub-inspector said he has to make hundreds of calls to patients, doctors and government officials every day while overseeing Covid ward arrangements.

"We also have to help Covid patients whose families don't live in Delhi. It's a difficult job because I get calls at midnight about emergency duty outside mortuaries and emergency wards," he said.

For the first time in Gurgaon, cases cross 2,000 in a day

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, APRIL 17

FOR THE first time since the Covid pandemic broke out last year, Gurgaon on Saturday recorded more than 2,000 new cases of the infection. The number of people testing positive, 2,549, is significantly higher than a day earlier, when 1,919 new cases had emerged.

According to the district health department, there are now 10,691 active cases of which 10,085 are in home isolation. Two people also succumbed to the infection on Saturday, bringing the total fatalities to 376.

With the pandemic wreaking havoc in the National Capital Region over the last few days, Gurgaon's health department has increased its focus on testing – a strategy the civil surgeon had stated last week they would be adopting, along with increasing micro-containment, in an effort to contain the spread of infection.

According to data compiled from daily bulletins, between 8,500 and 11,000 tests have been conducted in Gurgaon on each day this week so far, with more than 10,000 tests being con-



The health dept has increased focus on testing. PTI

ducted for the last four days in a row. In total, more than 58,000 tests have been conducted in the first six days of this week alone.

In comparison, in the preceding week, a total of 52,781 tests had been conducted over the entire seven days. This rise in testing, officials said, could also partially be responsible for the surge in Covid numbers, as the health department has been reaching a larger section of the infected population. While 5,188 new cases had emerged last week, the number has already crossed 9,000 this week.

We have consciously increased testing over the last few days. Between 14 and 16 testing camps, both RT-PCR and antigen, are being set up across the dis-

trict daily. This could be partially responsible for the rise in cases as well," said Dr Virender Yadav, Chief Medical Officer (CMO).

"Our effort has been to carry out as much testing as we can with the manpower and infrastructure that we have. However, we have reached a kind of saturation point in this regard. The aim now is to maintain these numbers and continue extensive testing," he said.

Micro containment – the second strategy that the health department is adopting – has also been increased this week, with the number of containment zones being increased from 94 at the start of week to 119 in fresh orders issued on Friday evening.

Empty roads, markets as Capital is locked down for weekend to stem Covid surge

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

ROADS, MARKETS and buses across Delhi were largely empty from Saturday morning, as the weekend curfew began in the city. Apart from essential service providers working in pharmacies, grocery shops, hospitals, some restaurants, police stations, and banks, a majority of the national capital's residents appeared to have stayed at home.

There were few passengers onboard public transport vehicles, including buses, in most parts of the city. The only exception was near major hospitals like AIIMS and Safdarjung, where more people were seen

taking public transport. All major markets – Sarojini Nagar, Connaught Place, Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Chandni Chowk – closed their shutters.

Many daily wagers, such as rickshaw pullers, who were on the road, expressed their discontent over losing their livelihood. Near Jangpura, Mohammad Sultan (40), a rickshaw puller from Bihar, said, "Everyone is dying of the illness but the poor are dying more – we have no form of stable sustenance during the Covid-19 period, our local food outlets have closed, and we will have no work this weekend. It is very difficult for us, as we come to the city only to earn; no one wants to leave their families but we must."

At various points in central and south Delhi, the Delhi Police set up checkpoints, often stopping vehicles and asking them for proof to show that their movement qualifies as 'essential'.

One police officer at Jangpura said, "We are stopping those without a pass, and asking people to show proof of where they are going. There are many people who are roaming around aimlessly and are not able to provide any proof, and we are taking action against them. But we have not been able to stop everyone."

Major parks such as Nehru Park and Lodhi Garden remain open to public at the normal timings. S Chellaiah, director of the horticulture department of

the New Delhi Municipal Council, said, "We are not stopping anyone from entering the parks, nor putting any time restrictions, as these are nature parks and not amusement-entertainment parks. But fewer people were there at these parks today."

Municipal services, such as the collection of garbage, watering of plants, and sweeping of roads, continued as well. Even food delivery service agents were spotted on the roads as restaurants have been given permission for continuing home delivery services.

In some areas, some vegetable vendors were also present, as some people flocked to them for essential supplies.

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Applications are invited from general public for booking of Residential Apartments in the Affordable Group Housing Project proposed to be developed as per terms and conditions of the policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide notification no. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendment thereof (details available at the Department website, i.e. tchpharyana.gov.in).

PROJECT DETAILS

1. Coloniser/Developer	Signature Infrabuild Private Limited				
2. Project Approval	Licence No. 73 of 2019 dated 04.07.2019. Building Plan Approved on 30.09.2019 Memo No. ZP-1339/AD(RA)/2019/24562 Haryana RERA Registered No. 69 of 2019 Dated 14.11.2019				
3. Location	Sector 95, Gurugram, Haryana				
4. Provisions: Project Area	269 no. of apartments available out of total 738 number of units in the housing scheme spread over 5.1125 acres. As per Policy, 5% of total apartments are available for management quota and 95% of total apartments are for public. Community Facilities: One Community Hall of 2000 sq.ft, and One Anganwadi-cum-creche of 2000 sq.ft.				
5. Apartment Details, Allotment Rates & Payment Terms					

Apartment details	Category (Type)	No of Units	Carpet Area sqft(approx)	Balcony Area sqft(approx)	Allotment Rate of Apartment (all inclusive)*	With application Booking amount 5%	on allotment 20%
2BHK TYPE-01	82	585.551	83.701	23,84,055	1,19,203	4,76,811	
2BHK TYPE-02	30	594.065	82.151	24,17,336	1,20,867	4,83,467	
2BHK TYPE-03	99	594.829	74.401	24,16,517	1,20,826	4,83,303	
2BHK TYPE-04	21	592.86	85.703	24,14,292	1,20,715	4,82,858	
2BHK TYPE-05	34	586.573	83.055	23,87,820	1,19,391	4,77,564	
2BHK TYPE-07	3	548.889	99.589	22,45,351	1,12,268	4,49,070	

(ii) Balance 75% of the amount in six equated 6 monthly installments spanning over a period of three years. However, the maximum amount recoverable at the time of allotment shall be equivalent to the amount payable by other allottees of 1st Draw in the project at that stage as per amendment notification NO. PF-27/15922 05, July, 2019. No interest shall fall due before the due date of payment. Any default in payment will bear penal interest as provided in Rule 15 of the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Rules, 2017.

6. Parking Two-wheeler parking with each apartment

7. Broad Specifications of the Apartment • Flooring: Rooms Vitrified Tiles, Kitchen Vitrified Ceramic Tiles, Balcony Anti-Skid / Matt Finish Ceramic Tiles, • Windows: M.S. Sections as per IS Codes / Aluminium Powder Coated / UPVC • Doors Frame: Red Merandi / Mild Steel / Aluminium Powder Coated / UPVC • Wall Tile: Ceramic Tiles till 4 Feet / 7 feet high & Oil Bound Distemper Above.

• Kitchen Counter: Top Green Marble / Granite • Wall: Oil Bond Distemper • Sanitary fitting: ISI marked CP Fittings, W.C & Washbasin • Electric Fitting: ISI Marked. Structure: RCC Frames Structure designed for SEISMIC forces as per latest IS code and NBC Recommendations.

(ii) Applications can be procured & submitted at: Signature Infrabuild Pvt. Ltd., Corp. Office - Ground Floor, Tower A, Signature Tower, South City-1, Gurugram, Haryana-122001, 0124-4908200 by paying an application form fee of Rs 1,000/- starting from date 19.03.2021. For more information, call 7053-121-121 (ii) Last Date of submission of Applications is 18.04.2021. The project had been opened for general public on 19.03.2021 & closing date for the submission of application form was 18.04.2021, Which is further extended up to 17.05.2021. (iii) The list of Distribution and Collection centers is available on www.signatureglobal.in

(iv) Application Forms & Facility of applying Online is also available at www.signatureglobal.in

Eligibility: 1. The applicant should not be debarred from entering into legally binding contract under any prevailing law.

2. Any person can apply, however, the PMAY beneficiaries, which include their spouse or dependent children, identified by the Urban Local Bodies Department, Haryana under "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Housing for All" programme shall be granted preference in allotment. First priority shall be given to the identified beneficiaries of the said town followed by other PMAY beneficiaries of the State of Haryana. Thereafter, for the remaining flats, persons which include their spouse or dependent children who do not own any flat/plot in any HUDA developed colony/sector or any licensed colony in any of the Urban areas in Haryana, UT of Chandigarh and NCT Delhi shall be given next preference in allotment of flats.

3. An applicant can make only one application. Any successful applicant under this policy shall not be eligible for allotment of any other flat under this policy in any other colony. In case, he/she is successful in more than one colony, he/she will have choice of retaining only one flat.

4. Allotment Criteria: 1. The allotment of apartments shall be done through draw of lots in the presence of a committee consisting of Deputy Commissioner or his representative (at least of the cadre of Haryana Civil Services), Senior Town Planner (Circle office), DTP of the concerned district and the representative of coloniser concerned.

2. After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicants about the details regarding date/time and venue of the draw of lots in the same newspapers in which the original advertisement was issued.

3. For detailed criteria and time-frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Group Housing Policy 2013 vide no. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendment thereof (available at the Department website, i.e., tchpharyana.gov.in).



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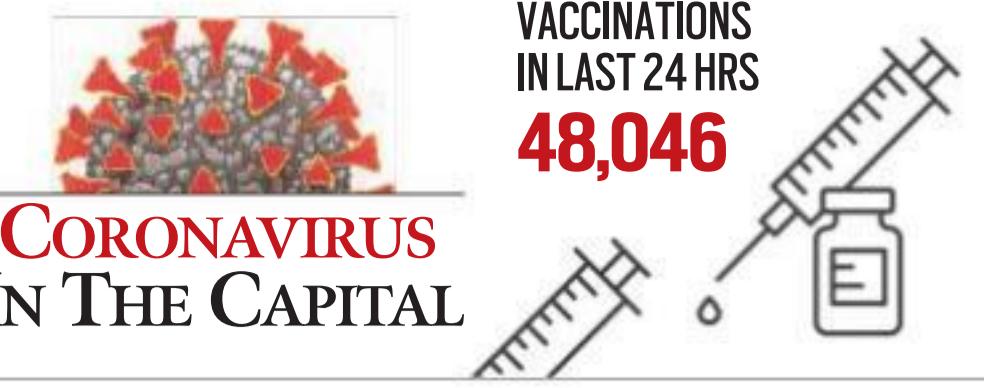
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TOTAL CASES		Total	Vacant
8,27,998		17,322	3,922
VENTILATORS		4,062	268
Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Apr 16	19,486	12,649	141
Apr 17	24,375	15,414	167
Total	69,799*	7,46,239	98,957
		11,960	1,61,42,390

AMID SPIKE IN COVID DEATHS

East MCD will run crematorium 24x7, North asks hospitals to stagger release of bodies

ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

THE EAST MCD will run the Karkardooma cremation ground for 24 hours from Monday onwards because of an increase in the number of Covid deaths, while the North Corporation has asked hospitals to send bodies in a staggered manner to reduce waiting time at the crematorium.

"We were getting reports

about people having to wait the entire night to get bodies of Covid victims cremated, as the timings are 8 am to 9 pm. To make sure people do not have to wait, we will in all likelihood be running the crematorium 24x7," said Dr Ajay Handa, additional medical health officer of the EDMC.

The number of bodies arriving at the Karkardooma crematorium has increased since April 1. From January 1 till the end of March this year, nine bodies were

cremated here as per Covid protocol, while this month the number has already touched 20. At the Seemapuri burial ground under EDMC, the last rites of 134 people were performed as per Covid protocol since April 1, as compared to 35 from January 1 to March-end this year. Overall, since April 1, crematoriums at Karkardooma, Ghazipur, and the burial grounds of Seemapuri, Shastri Park and Mayur Vihar Phase 3 saw the last rites of 207 bodies as per Covid

protocol, as compared to 67 from January 1–March 31. Last year, from April 1 to December 12, this number stood at 1,891.

Various hospitals under the East and North MCDs have been

directed to send bodies only to specified crematoriums/burial grounds, as per a directive issued on Saturday by the NDMC.

A senior official from the civic body said, "We have created a system wherein hospitals have been asked to send bodies of



(left) At the Shehnai banquet hall Covid isolation facility; (top) Outside Lok Nayak hospital. The capital recorded 167 deaths on Saturday, the highest so far since the pandemic started. Praveen Khanna

Covid patients in a staggered manner to specified grounds. This is to reduce waiting time."

The number of bodies received at North MCD's grounds have also increased in comparison to the same period last year – April 1 to April 15. Last year, there were 12 bodies whose last rites were performed as per Covid protocol, while this year the number stands at 224.

At the eight grounds under the South body, there is no such

issue of crowding, said Leader of the House, SDMC, Narendra Chawla. "The only issue is that because these are Covid patients, only dedicated staff has to do various rituals, which was earlier being done by families. Otherwise, we have space," he said. South MCD has cremation grounds at Punjabi Bagh, Hartsal, Subhash Nagar, Lodhi Road, Sarai Kale Khan, Dwarka Sector 24, and Lal Kuan, and a burial ground at ITO.

In the bail order, Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen said it would "violate and infringe the fundamental right to life and liberty as guaranteed to the accused-applicant" if he is denied bail on the nature of accusations and material alone, with the police yet to identify the 1,000-plus people who had been part of the mob at Red Fort. Sidhu has been under arrest since February 9.

None of the acts of violence reported in the case had been attributed to him, the court added.

Judge Perveen said the prosecution "seeks to make an example out of the case of the accused-applicant, he being a popular public figure... Such an endeavour however hazards a failure of justice as a result of compromised objectivity".

The court added that the police have seized clothes and a vehicle used by Sidhu to reach the spot, and "further incarceration for the sole purpose of voice sampling is not justifiable".

Noting that the prosecution case rests largely on contents of video recordings on social media, the court said there was only a "remote possibility" that Sidhu would tamper with the content.

Soon after the court order, a team of the Delhi Police Crime Branch arrested Sidhu from Tihar

Jail, where he is lodged, in connection with an FIR lodged late in January by the Archaeological Survey of India, under Sections of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, Prevention of Insults to National Honours Act and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, Arms, Act, rioting etc. He will be produced before a judge on Sunday.

The FIR, that doesn't name Sidhu or any other protester, has an archaeologist with the ASI as the complainant. The FIR states that on January 26, a mob of 200-300 protesters had come to the Red Fort. "The mob turned to damage the ticket counters, door frame metal detectors and the baggage scanners... The huge iron door within Lahori Gate was firmly secured with an iron chain and lock. The mob climbed over this iron door and jumped inside and thereafter broke the chain lock with the help of iron tools... Once inside, some of the protesters broke the electrical fittings of the illumination lights and the stone casing around them... Three tractors also managed to make their entry into the Red Fort premises. A section of the mob then charged towards the ramparts and forcefully hoisted a flag on the pole where the Hon'ble PM hoists the National Flag on Independence Day... In the process... two of the seven small burjis (domes) were removed," reads the FIR.

Sidhu's lawyer Abhishek Gupta called the "need and timing of the arrest extremely questionable" and said it is "a grave affront to personal liberty of an individual and runs foul of rights guaranteed under Article 21".

The court added that the police have seized clothes and a vehicle used by Sidhu to reach the spot, and "further incarceration for the sole purpose of voice sampling is not justifiable".

Noting that the prosecution case rests largely on contents of video recordings on social media, the court said there was only a "remote possibility" that Sidhu would tamper with the content.

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Water supply to be hit in parts of city for a week

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

WATER SUPPLY is likely to be impacted for about a week Saturday evening onwards, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) said, due to a reduction in water availability from the Upper Ganga Canal. In a statement, the DJB said supply will remain affected in parts of east, north east, south Delhi and New Delhi Municipal Council areas till the situation improves.

The Upper Ganga Canal, which begins from UP's Muradnagar, supplies about 240 million gallons per day of water to Delhi – accounting for more than a quarter of its potable water sources. A DJB official said, "The reason behind reduction in water availability in the canal, as informed by UP authorities, is that there has been less rainfall and snow melt this past year, which has decreased water level in the Ganga."

Delhi was receiving about 200 MGD on Saturday morning. The DJB said in a statement that production at two water treatment plants that rely on the Ganga canal – Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi – has been affected by 25%-30% due to low water availability. Officials said authorities in the neighbouring state are making efforts to restore normal flow in the canal, however, water levels are expected to fluctuate over the next few days.

Areas that will likely see water supply affected include Babarpur, Dilshad Garden, Shahdara, Laxmi Nagar, Sarita Vihar, Vasant Kunj, Greater Kailash, Lajpat Nagar, Lodhi Road, Kaka Nagar and other nearby areas, the statement said.

Deep Sidhu gets bail as court frowns on continued jail, rearrested later

ANAND MOHAN J & JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

A DELHI court Saturday granted bail to Punjabi actor-activist Deep Sidhu, arrested in connection with the violence at Red Fort on Republic Day, saying that the prosecution had sought to make an example of him since he was popular, but that this "hazards a failure of justice", and that his continued detention was infringement of his right to life and liberty. Hours later, the Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested Sidhu over the charge of damaging the monument.

In the bail order, Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen said it would "violate and infringe the fundamental right to life and liberty as guaranteed to the accused-applicant" if he is denied bail on the nature of accusations and material alone, with the police yet to identify the 1,000-plus people who had been part of the mob at Red Fort. "The mob turned to damage the ticket counters, door frame metal detectors and the baggage scanners... The huge iron door within Lahori Gate was firmly secured with an iron chain and lock. The mob climbed over this iron door and jumped inside and thereafter broke the chain lock with the help of iron tools... Once inside, some of the protesters broke the electrical fittings of the illumination lights and the stone casing around them... Three tractors also managed to make their entry into the Red Fort premises. A section of the mob then charged towards the ramparts and forcefully hoisted a flag on the pole where the Hon'ble PM hoists the National Flag on Independence Day... In the process... two of the seven small burjis (domes) were removed," reads the FIR.

Sidhu's lawyer Abhishek Gupta called the "need and timing of the arrest extremely questionable" and said it is "a grave affront to personal liberty of an individual and runs foul of rights guaranteed under Article 21".

The court added that the police have seized clothes and a vehicle used by Sidhu to reach the spot, and "further incarceration for the sole purpose of voice sampling is not justifiable".

Noting that the prosecution case rests largely on contents of video recordings on social media, the court said there was only a "remote possibility" that Sidhu would tamper with the content.

Soon after the court order, a team of the Delhi Police Crime Branch arrested Sidhu from Tihar

Police Covid helpline gets 1,500 calls less than a day after launch

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

IN LESS than 24 hours of its launch, the Delhi Police Covid helpline attended to 1,500 calls from people across the city enquiring about the weekend lockdown and night curfew.

Police said the 24x7 helpline was set up at the Delhi Police Headquarters on Friday to resolve issues faced by the public. A senior police officer said, "Despite public guidelines and announcements, we noticed a lot of people had doubts about the curfew. We thought it's best if we set up a helpline and resolve such issues."

The helpline number – 011-23469900 – has 10 lines that connect people to police personnel from "specialised" units like Operation, PHQ and district officials.

Chinmoy Biswas, the Delhi Police PRO, said the helpline was launched around 8 pm on Friday and they had received over 1,500 calls till Saturday afternoon. "All the calls were attended to. A majority of the calls were related to what's allowed and what's not allowed during the day and night curfew.

Some people also wanted to know about how to get to hospitals and testing centres while some had issues in getting e-passes. Complaints that were serious in nature were forwarded to district officers," he said.

In addition to the Covid helpline, personnel are helping people from Delhi and other states get access to vaccines and other medical services. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Preet Vihar) Virender Punj helped admit a man to Shanti Mukund Hospital in East Delhi and also provided the patient with Remedsivir. "The patient, Paras Chand, was in dire need of the medicine but it wasn't available at the hospital. ACP Punj, who worked as a chemist shop in his childhood, called up his friends and arranged two injections for the patient," said an officer.

In Central Delhi's Rajinder Nagar, a student, Partiksha, who lived alone and contracted Covid this week, was also helped by police. "She was unable to walk. She sent messages to the ACP in Karol Bagh to help her. We sent our beat constable Narendra and provided her with medicines and food. The beat staff is looking after her now," said police.

As Covid cases spike, IIT-Delhi tells students: Safer to go home to family



25 students have tested positive on campus. Archive

In an email sent to all "research Scholars and students not doing laboratory courses/projects", IIT-D Deputy Director (Strategy & Planning) Ashok K Ganguli said a meeting was held with "key administrative personnel (part of the Covid Committee)"

and Director to review the alarming situation arising out of increasing Covid cases in the country, Delhi as well as our campus".

"Several students have tested positive today and several mess staff members have called in sick. The Gulmohar facility for home quarantine of students is full to capacity now. In addition, there are many cases amongst faculty and their family members as well as staff and their family members," he wrote Friday.

"While faculty members and staff members are isolating within their homes, this option is not available to hostel residents. As per government regulation they have to be shifted to government isolation centres anywhere in Delhi. These centres are also getting fast overwhelmed," Ganguli said.

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and free him from police custody on March 25," he added. Chandra said the arrested criminals have ventured into extortion, illicit liquor supply, especially in dry states, and firearm peddling.

"After the arrests of major criminals in Delhi over the last one year, criminals and gangsters from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan have been trying to make inroads into the capital to occupy the vacuum. But recently, after the encounter of Fajja, Tiger-Alpha-Docitor directed all the six arrested accused to shift to different states – Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar.

They directed them to 'cool down' and focus on businesses of illicit liquor and firearms for some time," Chandra said, adding that they arrested the six accused after conducting raids at three different locations in three states.

Delhi, Punjab gangsters shift base abroad

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

GANGSTERS FROM Delhi, Haryana and Punjab have reportedly moved to locations such as Dubai, Thailand and Canada from where they are operating gangs in India. Their intention, police sources say, is underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's D-Company.

A team of the Special Cell's Counter Intelligence Unit said the trend became apparent after arresting and questioning six criminals associated with the Kala Jathdi-Lawrence Bishnoi gang over the last six months. Police said 15 murders have been executed by gang members on orders of gangster Kala Jathdi.

DCP (Special Cell) Manishi

Chandra told *The Indian Express* that they have arrested Ankit Lagarpur (23), Ravi Jaggi (29), Rajan Jaat (24), Sumit Bichpuri (24), Amit (35) and Sudhir Mann (29). "Our team led by inspectors Vikram Dahiya and Sandeep Dabas came to know after arresting the accused that they were recently involved in gruesome crimes and were acting on the directions of gang leaders operating from three different countries. Gang leaders Virender Pratap alias Kala Rana is suspected to be operating from Thailand; Satenderjeet Singh alias Goldy Brar is suspected to be operating from Canada; and Sandeep alias Kala Jathdi is suspected to have left India to an unknown foreign destination," he said.

Sources said close associates of these three criminals told police that they were inspired by Dawood Ibrahim and his D-Company and decided to operate from outside. "They only talk over Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls and use numbers procured from different IDs," police sources added.

Chandra said the accused used code language to address their bosses. After they were arrested, it came to light that the "masterminds" are addressed as "Tiger" (for Kala Rana), "Alpha" (for Kala Jathdi) and "Doctor" (for Goldy Brar). "Tiger is the communication hub for all gang members, Doctor manages finances and logistics and Alpha decides the targets to be pursued. One of the arrested criminals, Ravi Jaggi, was also involved in helping gangster Kuldeep alias Fajja escape from Delhi's GTB Hospital

and free him from police custody

on March 25," he added. Chandra said the arrested criminals have ventured into extortion, illicit liquor supply, especially in dry states, and firearm peddling.

"After the arrests of major criminals in Delhi over the last one year, criminals and gangsters from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan have been trying to make inroads into the capital to occupy the vacuum. But recently, after the encounter of Fajja, Tiger-Alpha-Docitor directed all the six arrested accused to shift to different states – Gujarat, Maharashtra and Bihar.

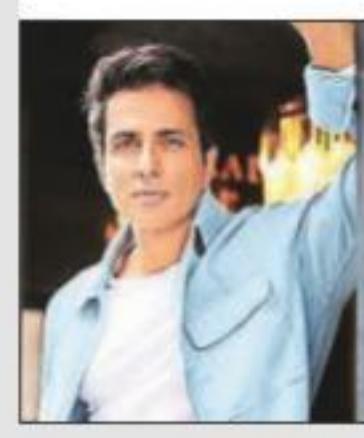
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Areas that will likely see water supply affected include Babarpur, Dilshad Garden, Shahdara, Laxmi Nagar, Sarita Vihar, Vasant Kunj, Greater Kailash, Lajpat Nagar, Lodhi Road, Kaka Nagar and other nearby areas, the statement said.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

was self admitted in RML Hospital vide MLC No. 72717/21. During the treatment he expired on 14.04.2021. In this regard a DD No. 40A, dated 14.04.2021, has been lodged at P.S. DBG Road, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about the deceased family may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHORT STORIES



The actor tested positive 10 days after vaccination. PTI

Sonu Sood tests positive, in isolation

Mumbai: Actor Sonu Sood on Saturday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently under quarantine, nearly 10 days after receiving the vaccine. The actor was recently made the brand ambassador for Punjab's anti-coronavirus vaccination programme. Sood had also met Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, on April 10. The 47-year-old actor said he will continue his work for those in need. "This is to inform you that I have tested positive this morning for Covid-19. As a part of precautions, I have already quarantined myself and taking utmost care. But don't worry, this gives me ample time to solve your problems," Sood tweeted. PTI

Goa bans export of oxygen cylinders

Panaji: The Goa government on Saturday decided to ban the export of oxygen cylinders; a day after the state recorded its highest-ever single day increase in the number of active Covid-19 cases. On Saturday, the number of active cases in Goa stood at 6,643. "In the view of rising Covid cases in the state of Goa, the requirement for oxygen has gone up. Export of oxygen cylinders outside the state therefore been banned with immediate effect. All industrial oxygen requirements will be diverted towards the health services, GMC (Goa Medical College) & Covid Hospitals (sic)," Vishwajit Rane, Health Minister of Goa, said in a social media post on Saturday. PTI

Blaze at office with vaccine stock

Barasat: A fire broke out at the office of a health official on Saturday morning at Barasat in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, where a large stock of Covid-19 vaccines was stored. The blaze erupted inside the office of the deputy chief medical officer of health, a senior official said. At least 12 fire tenders managed to douse the flames after four hours, he said. "Huge quantity of Covid-19 vaccines was stored in the office. We are assessing the condition of the medicines," the official said. PTI

Covid situation dangerous: Gehlot

Jajpur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot Saturday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should cancel his political rallies in wake of the increasing number of cases. "The virus is now rapidly spreading among the youth and kids as well. The Prime Minister should now completely cancel his political events, rallies and road shows," Gehlot tweeted in Hindi on Saturday. Gehlot added that the Prime Minister should regularly interact with Chief Ministers like he did before. ENS

In Bengal booths, voters queue up, Covid protocols absent

DIPANKAR GHOSH

KAMARHATI, BASIRHAT, APRIL 17

IN BOOTH after booth, a lack of social distancing, no temperature checks, incomplete mask compliance, and barely any seriousness on compliance. That was the scene as West Bengal voted on Saturday.

If the Assembly polls in Bihar held in October 2020 were in the middle of a previous wave of the pandemic, across booths, The Sunday Express found that the measures in place on Saturday were weaker.

At 9.30 am at Sagar Dutt High School booth in Kamarhati, a

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Uddhav says called PM, told busy in Bengal; Goyal hits back

VISHWAS WAGHMODE

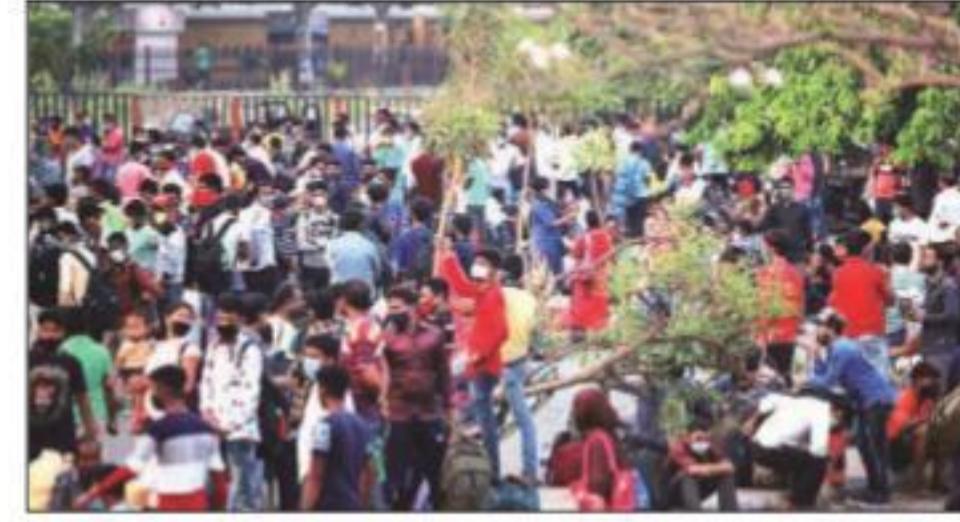
MUMBAI, APRIL 17

TRIGGERING A new row with the Centre at a time when Maharashtra is grappling with the surge in Covid-19 cases and shortage of essential medical supplies, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray Saturday said he had called Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday evening, seeking his intervention for the supply of medical oxygen and Remdesivir, but was told that he was busy with the election in West Bengal.

Thackeray said this during a meeting with industry leaders Saturday morning.

A statement from the CMO quoted Thackeray saying: "Considering the number of Covid patients, more oxygen is required and we have informed the Prime Minister as well. Yesterday evening also, I contacted him but was not able to speak as he was busy with the West Bengal elections. But we are getting all cooperation from the Centre."

Later Saturday, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said he



Outside the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus in Mumbai, as migrant workers waited to catch a train ride home amid Covid-related restrictions in the state capital. Pradip Das

had spoken to Thackeray and reassured him that his concerns are being addressed.

In a Twitter post tagging Thackeray, Harsh Vardhan said: "Spoke to Maharashtra CM Sh Uddhav Thackeray Ji. Reassured @OfficeOfUT of adequate & uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen & all possible support w.r.t healthcare infra, medicines & therapeutics. Additional 1,121 ventilators are also being rushed to them given the surge in cases."

In another tweet, he said he discussed with Thackeray about the stringent actions to be taken for containment, surveillance and treatment of Covid-19 cases.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal accused Thackeray of playing "petty politics". In a series of tweets, Goyal said: "Saddened to see @OfficeOfUT's gimmicks on oxygen. Gol, with all stakeholders, is ensuring maximum oxygen production in India. We are currently producing 110% of Oxygen gener-

ating capacity and diverting all available Oxygen from industrial use to medical use. Maharashtra has so far received the highest quantity of Oxygen in India."

"Centre is in daily touch with State Governments to assess their needs & help them in best possible manner. Just yesterday, PM in his review told that centre & states should work with synergy in this crisis. With this background, shocked and saddened to see petty politics being played by @OfficeOfUT. He needs to stop his daily dose of shameless politics and take responsibility," he said. "Maharashtra is suffering from an inept & corrupt government & the Centre is doing its best for the people..."

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope Saturday said the state should get permission to access oxygen from other states via the rail network.

This measure, he said, is necessary considering the acute shortage of oxygen and rising cases in the state. "The state has set a target of eight lakh Covid vaccination daily. To meet this target, the Centre will have to ensure sustained supply," he said.

RAIPUR COPS HINT 'CASE OF NEGLIGENCE'

Blaze at pvt hospital leaves five Covid patients dead

GARGIVERMA

RAIPUR, APRIL 17

FOUR COVID patients died of suffocation and another due to burn injuries when a fire broke out on the third floor of a private hospital in Raipur.

Nine patients were inside Rajdhani Hospital's Covid ward where the fire broke out on Saturday afternoon, allegedly due to a short circuit. Raipur SP Ajay Yadav said: "There were 34 patients in the hospital... We are investigating further." Sources in the police said prima facie it looked like a case of negligence, as the hospital premises didn't have up-graded fire safety gear.

While Ramesh Sahu died of burn injuries, L Ishwar Rao, Vandana Gajamala, Bhagyashree and Devaki Sonkar died due to suffocation and lack of oxygen. "These patients were Covid-positive and some were on oxygen support, which would have been disrupted due to the fire," an official said.

Patients were rushed out of



There were 34 patients at the hospital in Raipur.

the building by staff members wearing PPE kits and were transferred to other hospitals. At the time of going to the press, police and fire brigade teams were inside the hospital to investigate and assess the cause and damage.

District and police officials were kept in the dark, sources said, by the hospital authority regarding the number of deaths. Senior district officials said the hospital initially claimed the fifth death took place before the incident but "only when we visited the spot did the doctors confirm that the fifth patient had died of suffocation".

According to the family members of one of the deceased, they were informed hours after the incident by the hospital staff.

Hospital authorities did not respond to requests for a comment.

Calling the incident "unfortunate", CM Bhupesh Baghel announced Rs 4 lakh compensation for families of the deceased.

According to the family members of one of the deceased, they were informed hours after the incident by the hospital staff. Requesting anonymity, a close relative of one of the deceased said, "We are made to pay enormous amounts of money for the facilities, and now we find out that even the fire alarm and fire fighting system in the hospital were not working."

Rijiju tests positive; several leaders infected

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

SEVERAL POLITICIANS and bureaucrats have tested positive for the virus over the last few days, including at least two chief ministers, a Union Minister, leaders of the opposition and the Chief Election Commissioner, among others.

Union Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. "I'm taking the advice of the Doctors. I request all those who have come in my contact recently to be observant, exercise self-quarantine and get themselves tested. I'm physically fit and fine," he tweeted.

On Friday, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa announced he had tested positive -- he had been diagnosed with Covid in August last year.

On Friday, Union minister Prakash Javadekar and SAD

leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal had also tested positive on Friday.

From the opposition, Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and party leader Digvijaya Singh announced Friday that they had both tested positive.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had tested positive on Wednesday. His political rival in the state, SP leader Akhilesh Yadav, had also declared that he had tested positive for Covid-19 on the same day.

On April 9, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had tested positive and had been hospitalised in Nagpur. He was discharged on Friday.

Earlier this month, the husband of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Robert Vadra too had tested positive, so had Left leader D Raja, who is still hospitalised.

Sushil Chandra, who had assumed charge as the CEC on April 13, had tested positive in the first week of the month.

FEARING A spurt in Covid-19 cases, multiple states have announced restrictions on those returning from the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar. The Sunday Express takes a look at the announcements:

DELHI: The Delhi Disaster Management Authority has directed all residents who visited the mela to upload their details on the Delhi government website. Returnees must undergo 14-day home quarantine. An order issued by Chief Secretary Vijay Dev said: "If it is found/reported that any such resident of Delhi, who has returned to Delhi after visiting Kumbh, has not uploaded the requisite details/information, he/she will be sent to the institutional government quarantine centers."

GUJARAT: Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said all returnees from the mela will have to take RT-PCR tests before they are allowed to enter cities and villages. Rupani

said district collectors have been asked to isolate those returnees.

MAHARASHTRA: Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar said Saturday that people returning from the Kumbh Mela should be traced and quarantined as they would spread Covid-19 "like prasad" to others. No state-specific order has been passed.

MADHYA PRADESH: The

government has asked district administrations to ensure all returnees are quarantined or isolated.

ODISHA: The state has told

Collectors and Municipal Commissioners to contact all people who went to the mela and find out their location and travel plans.

"All such persons must be personally tracked, their health condition monitored," an official directive said.

Uttar Pradesh: The

state has sought 50 lakh doses of vaccine from the Centre as its stock has come down to 5.5 lakh. Currently, there is no shortage of medicine and oxygen in the state. In the event of active cases going up, however, the state has urged the Centre to extend support, said the minister.

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78% turnout in Bengal despite Covid surge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 17

AMID AN alarming surge in coronavirus cases, at least 78.36 per cent of voters turned out to exercise their franchise during the fifth phase of polling in 45 Assembly constituencies spread in six districts of West Bengal till 5 pm on Thursday.

Jalpaiguri (7 seats) recorded 81.73% turnout, followed by Purba Bardhaman (8 seats) at 81.72%, Nadia (8 seats) 81.57%,

Darjeeling (5 seats) 74.31%, and

North 24 Parganas (16 seats) with 74.83%. Kalimpong district with one Assembly seat recorded the lowest turnout at 69.56% till 5 pm. The figures will be revised on Sunday.

The Election Commission said it received 2,241 complaints and 123 people were arrested. "Twenty-three people were arrested in specific cases and another 100 were arrested as preventive measures," said Chief Electoral Officer Aariz Aftab. The EC also rejected allegations of firing by Central forces in Deganga constituency of South 24 Parganas during voting.

Amid anger over middlemen, Bengal rice bowl keeps ear out for farm stir

ATRI MITRA
BARDHAMAN, APRIL 17



PM Modi at a rally in Purba Bardhaman on Saturday. PTI

AMID MUCH fanfare, in January this year, BJP president J P Nadda visited Moshali here to have lunch at the house of a marginal farmer. Following the meal, he announced the launch of the BJP's 'Krishak Suraksha Abhiyan' and 'Ek Mutho Chal' campaign, asking households to give the party a handful of foodgrains each.

With 2.5 crore metric tonnes of paddy a year, and almost every family engaged in farming, Purba Bardhaman district is the rice bowl of West Bengal. Politics here has long revolved around the land, helping the CPM gain a foothold following its government's land reforms in 1977, and the TMC to make its way in with its *Ma, Maati, Manush* campaign. In the 2016 polls, the TMC won 13 of Purba Bardhaman's 16 seats, and retained support in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

However, in this election, the TMC is fighting allegations of corruption by local leaders even as it sits Purba Bardhaman Lok Sabha MP Sunil Mondal, and

two of its MLAs, Biswajit Kundu from Kalna and Saikat Panja from Manteswar, are contesting on BJP tickets.

Eight of the 16 seats vote on Saturday, with the remaining going to polls on April 22.

Struggling to make ends meet, paddy farmers allege irregularities in distribution of coupons through which they sell rice to mills and low remuneration for their crops. The BJP's refrain that the Mamata Banerjee government delayed the benefits of the

Centre's PM-KISAN scheme in the state, raised by Nadda during his January visit, has gained traction, though farmers are uncertain due to the bits and pieces they have heard about the protests at Delhi's borders against the farm laws.

Anwar Hossain Mondol (55)

years ago, he says, "We fix this ceiling

every year so that the maximum

number of farmers can sell at least

some of their paddy to rice millers

at the MSP or higher rates."

Ali is among those who has

heard of the Punjab and Haryana farmers' protest.

FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com

BENGAL VOTES FOR 5TH PHASE

Modi, Mamata trade charges over tape, Sitalkuchi bodies

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, APRIL 17

ON THE sidelines of the fifth phase of polling in West Bengal, marked by sporadic violence, the Trinamool and BJP on Saturday clashed over an audio tape purportedly featuring Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee talking about taking out rallies with bodies of those killed in firing by security forces during the previous phase.

Both Banerjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue in their poll rallies, while the TMC and BJP filed complaints with the Election Commission on the matter.

Burdwan, accusing the BJP of tapping TMC phones with the help of central forces. "They are even eavesdropping on our conversations... I will order a CID probe into the issue. I will not spare anyone involved in such snooping... It is clear the BJP is behind it although they claim they have no role in it," she said.

In the audio clip released by the BJP, a person identified by the party as Banerjee is heard talking to her party's Sitalkuchi candidate, Partha Pratim Ray. "Partha, matha thanda kore vota ka koro tarpor er bicchar amra korbo. Sob kota CRPF ke arrest korbo. Dead body gulo ekhon rekhre dalo. Kaal ke dead body gulo ke niye rally hobe. Poribaar gulo ke bolbe, kiu dead body gulo nebe na (Partha, keep your cool and focus on the polling, we will do justice... We will make sure all CRPF personnel involved are arrested. Keep the dead bodies for now. Tomorrow there will be a rally with the dead bodies. Tell the families not to collect the bodies today.)"

Addressing a public meeting in Asansol on Saturday, Modi said the tape showed Banerjee was playing politics over the Sitalkuchi incident. "You saw what happened in Cooch Behar. Now you must have heard the audio tape. It makes it very clear how, after the painful deaths of five people, Didi is playing politics. A Cooch Behar TMC leader is being advised to take out a rally with dead bodies," he said.

Modi added, "Didi, o, Didi, to what extent will you go in for vote bank politics? The truth is that Didi thought of political mileage even out of dead bodies. Playing politics over dead bodies is an old habit of hers." Banerjee hit back at a public meeting in Galsi, East

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Following the incident, the Election Commission had banned entry of parties in Cooch Behar for 72 hours. The bodies were buried by the families on April 11.

Banerjee reportedly goes on to say in the tape, whose authenticity could not be confirmed by The Sunday Express, "You do one thing, file an FIR. Take the help of a lawyer. I will tell you when the family lodges the FIR after the election. Don't give a statement to police now. File an FIR after consulting a lawyer so that everyone starting from their commander to the SP faces action."

In Kolkata, a BJP delegation led by Swapan Dasgupta met West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer, Ariz Aftab and urged him to constitute a special investigation team to probe the matter. "Mamata Banerjee is trying to divide people on religious lines. These kind of statements could lead to more tension in the state amid the elections," Dasgupta said.

The TMC delegation, including Yashwant Sinha, Derek O'Brien and Purnendu Basu, complained to the CEO about the "illegal" recording of the conversation between Banerjee and her party leader and sought an inquiry. Pointing out that the tape had been released a day before polling, the TMC said, "It is clear that this is the result of the BJP's dirty tricks department."

The party also asked the EC to determine who was taping Banerjee's conversations, noting that it was unthinkable that the audio tape of a CM could be released thus. Its letter said, "The BJP has not only illegally recorded and/or caused it to be recorded, but also played it at a press conference out of context. The entire exercise by the BJP is an illegal act and is a direct assault on legal rights, including the Right to Privacy of Mamata Banerjee and Partha Pratim Ray."

The CEO said they had sent the footage of the tape to the EC for further action.



Mamata Banerjee at a rally in Purba Bardhaman on Saturday. Express

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CWC says 'colossal mismanagement' of Covid fight by govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

ACCUSING THE BJP government of "colossal mismanagement" of the fight against the pandemic, the Congress on Saturday said the Centre has failed on multiple fronts, including in creating public awareness that a waning pandemic could be precursor to a deadlier second wave and rapidly scaling up the production and supply of the two approved vaccines by providing sufficient funds and other concessions.

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee warned the nation will face an "unprecedented catastrophe" unless "urgent corrective measures are taken".

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Congress said, will write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday putting forward a set of suggestions from the party. For instance, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, at the meeting, said the government must reduce the immunisation age to 25 years and above as well as younger people with health disorders.

Arguing that experts had warned that a second wave was possible and perhaps imminent, the Congress said the Centre failed to put in measures

ures and paved the way for the havoc that is being caused by the second wave. "Despite a year to prepare, we have, regrettably, been caught off guard again," Gandhi said.

The Congress said the government failed to universalise vaccination, get rid of pre-registration and bureaucratic control over the programme, leave the vaccine roll-out to the state governments and public and private hospitals, and minimise vaccine wastage.

At a press conference after the meeting, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said it is "shocking callousness" on Prime Minister part to be addressing rallies in West Bengal instead of staying in Delhi and coordinating among the ministers.

"We all know that this is a one-person government. All decisions are taken by the Prime Minister or his name by the Prime Minister's office. He should be there in Delhi fighting this war," he said.

Chidambaram also backed the Trinamool Congress's demand for clapping the remaining phases of the Bengal elections and argued the Prime Minister's appeal to keep the Kumbh Mela "symbolic" was too late. "How many days has the Kumbh mela gone on already?... So, this is again locking the stable after the horses have bolted," he said.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
CENTRAL CIRCLE, RURAL WORKS, BHUBANESWAR

No. /Date.
"e" Procurement Notice for Roads Works under Periodical Maintenance for the year

2021-22 & Improvement to existing RD roads and State Plan for the year 2020-21

1. Name of the work : Road Works under Periodical Maintenance for the year 2020-21 and Impvt. to existing RD road & State Plan for the year 2021-22

2. Total no. of Packages : 19(Nineteen) No. of Road Works

3. Estimated Cost of individual packages : Varies from Rs. 90.10 lakhs to Rs. 176.79 lakhs

4. Period of completion : a) Estimated cost more than Rs. 40.00 lakhs & up to Rs. 3.00 Crores. B Class & A class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities

5. Period of completion : As mentioned in Column-7 of the Annexure

6. Offered rates by bidder : The offered rate by the contractor shall be excluding GST.

7. Other details : /

Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender on-line for bidding

From To

1 2 3 4 5

Superintending Engineer, Rural Works, Northern Circle, Angul PMGSY Online AGL-01/2021-22 19.04.2021 up to 10.00 A.M. 10.05.2021 up to 3.00 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the web site "www.pmgstenders.gov.in"

Sd/- P. Padhi Superintending Engineer, N.C., Rural Works, Angul. OIPR-25049/11/0001/2122

PR 245730 Cabinet(21-22)D

Government of Odisha
Office of the Superintending Engineer
Northern Circle, Rural Works, Angul
Bid Identification No. PMGSY Online AGL-01/2021-22

No. 1111 // Dt. 13.04.2021 //

1. Name of the work : Construction of road & CD works under PMGSY Programme.

2. Total No. of Package : 02 No. individual Packages

3. Estimated Cost of individual packages : Varies from Rs. 581.54 Lakhs to Rs. 1255.19 Lakhs

4. Period of completion : As per Annexure

5. Other details : /

Procurement Officer Bid Identification No. Availability of Tender on-line for bidding

From To

1 2 3 4 5

Superintending Engineer, Rural Works, Northern Circle, Angul PMGSY Online AGL-01/2021-22 19.04.2021 up to 10.00 A.M. 10.05.2021 up to 3.00 P.M.

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5. Period of Completion : As mentioned in Column-7 of the Annexure

6. Offered rates by bidder : The offered rate by the contractor shall be excluding GST.

7. Other details : /</

Over 800
Remdesivir vials
stolen from
Bhopal hospital

IRAM SIDIQUE
BHOPAL, APRIL 17

EVEN AS THE Madhya Pradesh is reeling under a shortage of anti-viral drug Remdesivir, 850 vials of the injection were stolen from Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College on Friday. Police said the grill of the storage unit, situated on the first floor of the hospital building, was cut open to steal the vials.

A case has been registered at the Koh-e-fiza police station against unidentified persons.

The stolen stock also included vials that were to be supplied to neighbouring districts.

The matter came to light on Friday night at around 11:30 pm when the store keeper found 17 boxes of Remdesivir — air-lifted from Indore by the state government and delivered to the hospital two days ago — were missing.

The hospital management informed the police and the FIR was registered on Saturday.

Senior officials from the government said the theft appeared to be an inside job as no other drug was missing from the stores.

Bhopal Divisional Commissioner Kavindra Kiyawat told *The Indian Express*: "A case has been registered and the matter is being investigated. Action will be taken against whoever is responsible."

Bhopal is among the cities with the highest Covid-19 case-load in the state. On Saturday, the city recorded 1,656 cases, second only to Indore (1,669 cases). Overall, the state recorded 11,269 cases on Saturday.



Himanta Biswa Sarma

Covid-negative reports from other states not valid for Assam entry: Himanta

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, APRIL 17

HEALTH AND Family Welfare Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Saturday that Covid-negative certificates from other states will not be valid to enter Assam and people will have to undergo tests upon arrival at airports and railway stations.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Sarma said the previous order allowed travellers to display Covid-negative reports from other states conducted within 72 hours of their arrival. "But now, they will have to mandatorily test on arrival," he said.

Health Secretary Samir Sinha said so far, the mandatory testing is for those travelling by air or rail and that soon, the rule will be extended to those entering by road.

Upon arrival, if the RAT test result is positive, the passenger will have to go into home isolation or get admitted to a Covid-19 facility, depending on the medical condition.

If the result is negative, they have to undergo the RT-PCR test at the cost of Rs 500. Also, the person will have to undergo home quarantine till the results of the RT-PCR are received.

Sarma said cases reported in Assam during the second wave were mostly among those who were from outside the state.

"They have come from airports and railway stations, mostly those with travel history. [They] have tested positive," said the minister.

However, he ruled out a lockdown and other stringent measures to curb the spread saying: "Only when and if it starts spreading, then the government will take other necessary steps to address it."

Voting for the three-phase Assembly elections in the state ended on April 6. Sarma said new Covid cases were reported from urban centres, and not from places where they had held major election rallies. "We had studied whether Covid cases were linked to elections and found that out of the 126 Assembly constituencies in the state, there are no cases in around 100 of them," he said.

MP says Maharashtra scuttling supply of oxygen concentrators

IRAM SIDIQUE
BHOPAL, APRIL 17

THE MADHYA Pradesh government has accused Maharashtra of delaying its order of oxygen concentrators it had placed to a Mumbai-based firm.

The matter came to light after MP government received a communication from a Vasai-based oxygen concentrator manufacturer, stating that supply of 1,350 concentrators to MP will not be possible in the stipulated time due to restrictions imposed by Maharashtra government.

Commissioner for FDA, P Narahari, who is looking after MP's oxygen needs, said, "We are trying to generate alternate sources of oxygen as there might be some issue that might crop up in regular supply of oxygen during transportation or otherwise. As a part of this, oxygen concentrators are being procured."

He added that it is an additional measure to ramp up its supply. MP has seen a steep rise in oxygen consumption, with 64 metric ton consumed on March 22, which increased to 179 metric ton on April 7, and to 234 metric ton the following day. With 63,889 active cases, the state's demand was 330 metric ton on Saturday, and is expected to go up to 440 metric ton by April 20.

With no in-house production of oxygen, MP relies largely on procurement of liquid medical oxygen from INOX through its plants in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh — along with it MP has

also tied up with Bhilai Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh for supply of oxygen.

MP had first placed an order for 1,350 oxygen concentrators on Government e-Marketing (GeM) portal in which the order was placed to 'Akshar Marketing', a Vasai-based firm. But according to a senior government official, while 1,350 concentrators were to be delivered in the next seven days, the firm, in an email sent two days ago, stated that it will only be able to supply the machines in the next 60 days.

The firm's email stated, "...the pandemic situation in Maharashtra is worse compared to the rest of India, in Maharashtra there is a shortage of oxygen supply. The officials of the government of Maharashtra have visited our parent company (Ventsox) and booked all material available and the production for next 30 days."

The email pointed out that the first lot of 450 machines will only be delivered in the next 60 days and the next installment a month later. A senior official from MP health department said, "The Maharashtra government had delayed our order, despite us placing the order before them. We are following up with the firm and if they will not honour our order, we'll move to blacklist them."

Besides, MP has also suffered a setback in its order of 600 oxygen concentrators from a Chandigarh-based firm — after supplying 150 oxygen concentrators, this firm had informed the state that the production of remaining units will take at least another month.

MAHARASHTRA

Haffkine fails to find Remdesivir bidder, state to face shortage

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, APRIL 17

MAHARASHTRA IS staring at an acute shortage of Remdesivir across all district government hospitals and medical colleges with Haffkine Biopharma Private Limited, the nodal agency for its procurement in the state, unable to find a bidder to supply the anti-viral drug.

With demand high across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi, the stock with most manufacturers are running dry. Haffkine had floated a tender to procure 6 lakh vials of Remdesivir on April 15 but got no bidder. On April 16, it floated a new tender for 2 lakh vials with hopes that manufacturers would entertain smaller tenders.

Sandip Rathod, managing director in Haffkine, told *The Sunday Express*: "We are ready to pay Rs 10,000 per vial. There is a delay in production, but we are reaching out to all sources."

Across India, there are seven manufacturers with marketing license of Remdesivir. Maharashtra mainly relies on three — Cipla, Zydus Cadila and Hetero Healthcare.

Until Thursday, Maharashtra had a stock of over 40,000 vials in

the market and in hospitals. State Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials said the daily demand for the anti-viral is over 50,000 vials. With Maharashtra's active case load being around 64.7 lakh, even though the protocols on the drug's use are strict, the demand is expected to further rise in the coming days. But the stock is expected to stabilise only after April 30.

NCP leader and Minister Navab Malik on Saturday blamed the Union government over the delay in Remdesivir supply to Maharashtra. He alleged that the 16 export companies of Remdesivir, which are prohibited from exporting the drug or its active pharmaceutical ingredients, are not being allowed to sell the anti-viral to Maharashtra but have been allowed to sell to Gujarat.

"This is step-motherly treatment," Malik tweeted, sharing a copy of the order of Gujarat FDA to BDR Lifesciences to supply 1.42 lakh vials. BDR Lifesciences did not respond to queries.

Later on Saturday, Mansukh Mandaviya, MoS for Chemicals and Fertilizers, tweeted that Malik's allegations are "half truths and lies". "We are doubling the production in the country and have given express permission to 20 more plants since 12-4-2021 to manufacturers..." he said.

I didn't lose hope, says CRPF commando abducted by Maoists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU, APRIL 17

FOR CRPF commando Rakeshwar Manhas, patience was the key to his survival as he spent five days in a Chhattisgarh jungle after being taken captive by Maoists following an ambush that killed 22 members of his team.

"I did not lose hope in the most difficult situation and I maintained my cool," said the 35-year-old who returned to his home here on Friday.

Manhas had gone missing during a deadly encounter with Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on April 3. The gunfight left 22 security forces personnel dead and several others injured. He was released from captivity by the Maoists on April 8.

Manhas was accorded a rousing reception by his family and villagers after he reached his native Barni village on the outskirts of the city. He said his mother's

prayers kept him alive while in enemy's custody.

"I was not even sure if I would be released. I owe my second life to my mother. Her prayers gave me the fresh lease of life, as no one so far has come back alive from the captivity of Naxals," Manhas said. His mother Kunti Devi said, "I pray to Mata Vaishno Devi for the release of my son. My prayers were heard and he came back to me safe and sound. It was a blessing of Mata that he is alive today," she said.

As Manhas reached home, his family heaved a sigh of relief. His Daughter Raghvi was seen hugging him. His wife Muni said the "bad phase" of their life has ended. "I am happy that my husband is back. It is because of the prayers of the family and hundreds of countrymen that he is with us today. I thank all of them," she said.

The villagers expressed admiration for the soldier for his grit and determination while in the enemy's captivity.

1

DAYS AFTER UAE DIPLOMAT'S OFFER OF MEDIATION

India, Pak Foreign ministers in UAE on separate bilateral visits

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

DAYS AFTER a top diplomat from the United Arab Emirates confirmed that the country was playing a role in bringing Delhi and Islamabad to the talks table, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi are visiting the UAE for what is being described as separate bilateral visits.



External affairs minister S Jaishankar; (right) Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi

Abu Dhabi by UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

"At the invitation of his counterpart, EAM@DrJaishankar will be visiting Abu Dhabi on 18th April 2021. His discussions will focus on economic cooperation and community welfare," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted Saturday.

Qureshi tweeted, "Good to be in the #UAE and to have met the Pakistan Business Council Dubai for a constructive session on #EconomicDiplomacy. The Pakistani community in UAE continue to play a positive role across

all echelons of business & work with great contributions to the development" of Pakistan-UAE ties.

Jaishankar and Qureshi will both meet their UAE counterpart.

Earlier this week, the UAE's envoy to the US had said that his country is mediating between India and Pakistan to help the neighbours reach a "healthy and functional" relationship. Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba said: "We try to be helpful, where we have influence with two different countries, so India-Pakistan was the most recent one."

He cited media reports which he said "highlighted the role the UAE played in bringing the Kashmir escalation down and sort of created a ceasefire, hopefully, ultimately leading to restoring diplomats and getting the relationship back to a healthy level".

In a conversation on Wednesday with former US National Security Advisor H R McMaster under the aegis of Stanford University's Hoover Institution, the UAE envoy, in re-

sponse to question whether his country was trying to help the two countries have a better relationship, said: "Absolutely. They might not sort of become best friends, but at least we want to get to it at a level where it's functional, where it's operational...that's our goal."

Officials say India and Pakistan have been "carefully optimistic" of the steps taken in recent months. The February announcement to adhere to the ceasefire pact, the Indus Water Treaty talks in March after over two years, and demands within Pakistan to import cotton and sugar from India have made the two sides look at the next steps of engagement.

This official confirmation from the UAE came the day Reuters reported that top intelligence officers from India's R&A and Pakistan's ISI held secret talks in Dubai in January in fresh effort to calm military tensions over Jammu and Kashmir.

FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com

Amul



Butterscotch Bliss Cup
₹20* | 100 mL



Rabdi Kulfi
₹10* | 45 mL



Duetz Mango
₹15* | 60 mL



Sundae Khatta Meetha Mango
₹25* | 125 mL



Combo Chocolate
750 mL+ 750 mL Free



Butterscotch Bliss Tub
₹190* | 1 L

ACTOR VIVEKH DIES AT 59

Police personnel pay tribute to actor Vivekh before his funeral in Chennai on Saturday. The 59-year-old was admitted to the hospital on Friday and underwent surgery for a complete block in a critical blood vessel of the heart. He died early Saturday morning. PTI

Court directs Centre to pay the family of missing BRO engineer

Lucknow: The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to pay "whatever amount it deems appropriate" to the family of Subhan Ali, a 27-year-old Indian Engineering Services (IES) officer with the BRO who went missing in June.

On June 22 last year, Ali, a native of Balrampur district in UP, had gone missing after the vehicle in which he was travelling with a driver fell into the Drass river from the Zozila-Kargil-Leh road. After working as a Junior Engineer at DDA, Subhan joined the BRO in January 2020. Leh was his first posting.

Justice Mamnoon and Justice Asha Menon on Thursday directed the Centre to file a counter affidavit within four weeks.

Chamoli disaster: One more body found, 124 still missing

ter management officer NK Joshi said that the body was recovered during removal of debris near the barrage site. He added that another body was recovered from the tunnel of NTPC's hydro power project site in Tapovan on Thursday.

Around 124 people are still missing in the incident.

Joshi said that clearing of slush in tunnel was continuing.

REGIONAL OFFICE

EMPLOYEES' STATE INSURANCE CORPORATION (MINISTRY OF LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)

3rd and 4th Floor, Rajendra Bhawan, Rajendra Place, New Delhi - 110008

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ADDL. COMMISSIONER & REGIONAL DIRECTOR ESIC, Delhi Region

SL. No. Name of the Post Direct / Deputation No. of Posts Reservation for Direct Recruitment as per roster Scale of Pay / Pay in Pay Matrix (7* CPC)

1 Scientific Officer (Residue & New Molecular Analysis) Direct / Deputation* 01 OBC Level-07 (Rs. 44,900-1,42,400)

2 Upper Division Clerk Direct / Deputation* 01 OBC Level-04 (Rs. 25,500 - 81,100)

3 Black Smith (Junior Technician) Direct

Crests of the Second Wave

With the coronavirus seeing a surge in new and active cases, *The Sunday Express* reports from three states with the highest number of active cases and a health system breaking at every stage — from oxygen shortage in a Maharashtra satellite town to mounting deaths in Chhattisgarh's capital and a shortage of beds in Lucknow's biggest hospital



EXPLAINED

The top 3 states

WHILE MAHARASHTRA has always been the leading contributor of Covid cases, in relative terms, UP and Chhattisgarh have shown bigger jumps in the second wave. Their second peaks are three to four times higher than the previous one. In the case of Chhattisgarh, the death count has also been alarming. More than 20 per cent of the 5,500 deaths have been recorded just in April.

A Covid facility set up in Delhi, as existing resources are stretched. *Praveen Khanna*

MAHARASHTRA

In race against galloping Covid, the state is scrambling to draw oxygen

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA

THE FIRST alarm bell rang on the afternoon of April 12 at Shree Ashirwad Hospital, a Covid-19 nursing home in Badlapur, a satellite town 50 km east of Mumbai. For over a month, six giant oxygen cylinders have been stationed on the footpath outside the hospital entrance, and many smaller ones have been jostling for space in the narrow corridors of the hospital. That day, most were empty, awaiting replacement, but the vendor had no stock to supply. The hospital had 47 Covid-19 patients, all on oxygen support, and six hours of oxygen left.

One doctor began making frantic calls to families of six ICU patients, asking them to find another hospital, and another began calling hospitals to check if they had spare cylinders or beds. As it turned out, 50 hospitals in Badlapur, Ambernath, Ulhasnagar, Kalyan and Dombivali (all municipal corporations in Thane) were fast running out of oxygen. Their common supplier, S K Agencies, was making desperate calls to his vendors for liquid medical oxygen (LMO).

"We were under stress for hours. Patients could die without oxygen and no other hospital had bed or oxygen to take our patients," said Dr Datta Baikare.

By late evening, the hospital found a vendor after agreeing to a higher price — Rs 21-25 per cubic metre, instead of the usual Rs 17-18 — but at that point, little else mattered.

That day passed, but amid a rising Covid curve, fear of oxygen shortage looms over private and government Covid hospitals in Maharashtra, specially rural areas, where nursing homes and smaller government hospitals are now scrambling to create space for oxygen cylinders.

Vicky Punjabi, owner of S K Agencies that supplies oxygen in Thane, said daily demand has gone up from 6 MT a month ago to 21 MT in the 50 hospitals that he supplies to.

With a capacity to produce over 7,000 MT oxygen per day across the country, the Centre plans to float a tender to import 50,000 MT to meet the surge in oxygen demand in 12 high-burden states: Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.

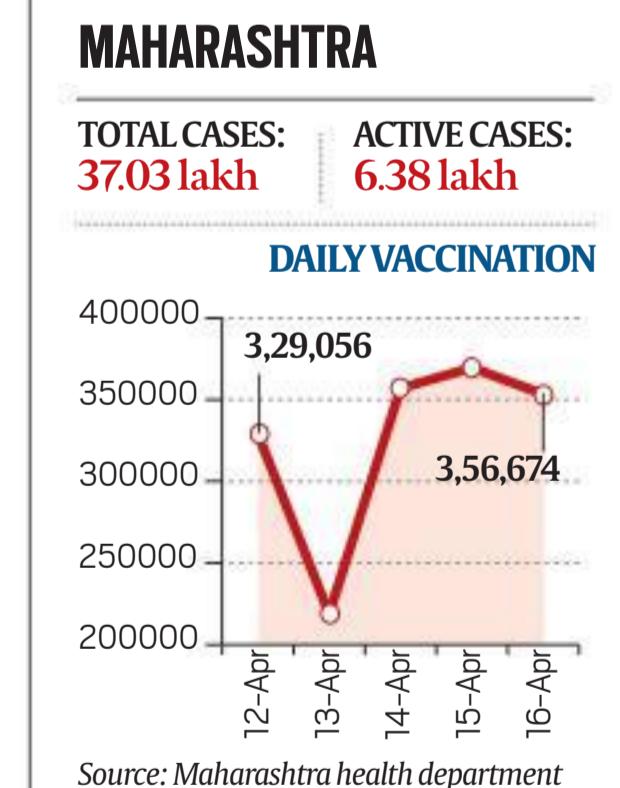
In Maharashtra, the worst-hit state in the second wave, with over 6.38 lakh active cases (40% of India's Covid disease burden), demand for medical oxygen far exceeds the state's production capacity of 1,250 MT per day. Despite the entire production now diverted for medical use, it is still not enough, with the demand 1,200-1,300 MT a day and rising.

Maharashtra has over 60,000 people on oxygen support in hospitals and many others on oxygen support at home. The state is getting 50 MT a day of liquid medical oxygen from Chhattisgarh, and another 50 MT a day from Gujarat.

D R Gahane, Joint Commissioner (Drug), Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA), says, "If cases don't dip, we may need



02 cylinders at Shree Ashirwad Hospital in Badlapur. Maharashtra has over 60,000 people on oxygen support in hospitals and more at home. *Tabassum Barnagarwala*



to totally depend on other states for oxygen."

"We need restraint (in oxygen use) to avoid panic. Panic and anxiety increase demand," said Maharashtra Health Secretary Dr Pradeep Vyas.

Oxygen shortage has forced Siddhivinayak Multispecialty Hospital in Badlapur to stop new admissions since April 12. Until January, the hospital could easily sustain 10 jumbo cylinders over two days, but now the 10 cylinders barely last five hours.

Doctors say Covid patients in ICU require 10-50 litres of oxygen per minute. A jumbo cylinder with 7 cubic metre oxygen can run out in 30-40 minutes. A dura cylinder, 22 times larger than jumbo, is the new alternative for smaller hospitals.

In an attempt to plug the shortage, the Centre's Empowered Group-2 has decided to divert over 17,000 MT of LMO to the 12 surge states in three phases between April 20-30. But the oxygen supply chain has many more knots to untangle.

"Logistics of transport is the biggest challenge," says Saket Tiku, president of the All India Industrial Gases Manufacturers'

Association.

Vicky Punjabi of S K Agencies says that with demand going up, he needs more drivers, vehicles and cylinders. "We don't have that kind of resources."

An industry official said oxygen is transported in liquid form in cryogenic tankers, before being converted into gas and stored in jumbo or dura cylinders.

An official from Inox Air Products, one of India's top oxygen manufacturers, that caters to 60 per cent of the country's LMO demand, said the company has 550 tankers, each with a capacity of 5,000-10,000 litres. The company has diverted its resources from nitrogen and argon gas production to oxygen, the official said. "There are enough suppliers in urban areas. The challenge is in satellite towns and rural areas where there are no storage tankers," he added.

Maharashtra has over 100 cryogenic tankers to transport oxygen. In an ideal situation, it takes 3-5 days for oxygen to journey from a manufacturer to the patient's bed. But with resources stretched, rural hospitals are having to wait 6-7 days before they get their supplies. On Maharashtra's request, the Ministry of Railways is formulating a plan to transport cryogenic tankers in trains to speed up delivery.

At the Kulgano-Badlapur Municipal Corporation Hospital in Thane, administrator Deepak Pujari said that with 400 Covid-19 patients on oxygen support, he needs 5 MT oxygen daily. "Supply is prioritised to big cities and bigger centres. That is why smaller centres like ours face issues. It will be sorted soon, our collector is working on it," he said.

In each district, a team with members of the FDA, collectorate and health department has been tasked to assess the needs of hospitals and track down suppliers to monitor the flow.

Back in Badlapur, on April 14, two days after hospitals ran out of oxygen, a truck full of dura cylinders stops outside Shree Ashirwad Hospital. Three doctors rush outside to monitor the unloading. "Oxygen is the most prized commodity right now," says one of them.

UTTAR PRADESH

More than 50 patients in queue for a bed

AVANEESH MISHRA

OUTSIDE THE trauma centre of King George's Medical University in Lucknow is a triage area of sorts with around 20 beds and some basic medical equipment. This is where every Covid protocol in the book vanishes the minute a patient is wheeled in — there is no restriction on movement, no one is questioned or scanned for temperature, and social distancing is rendered meaningless.

With 1,50,676 active cases, the second highest in the country, behind only Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh's already frail health infrastructure is stretched further. Most hospitals in Lucknow are reporting acute shortage of ICU and ventilator beds.

Sitting on one of the beds at the triage is Lucknow resident Vikas Verma, 38. Having tested positive for the coronavirus, Verma says he has been waiting for two days for a bed in the hospital's Covid ward that has around 520 beds — 427 ICU and 133 with ventilators.

"After I developed breathing problems, I came here. Since then, I have only got an oxygen mask. The hospital authorities say they will shift me when a bed is available," he says.

On the bed next to him is Sarla Awasthi, 70, who has tested positive. Her son Vaibhav Awasthi, a farmer from Lucknow's Mohalalganj, says, "After my mother started developing breathing problems, I took her to five different private hospitals but they all said that they had no ventilators to spare. I finally

UTTAR PRADESH

TOTAL CASES: 7,93,720 ACTIVE CASES: 1,50,676

DAILY VACCINATION

Source: UP state health department * as on April 16

for the last couple of days, there have been more than 50 patients queuing up for a bed.

While Lucknow had 3,138 active cases at the end of March this year, by Friday, April 16, that number had shot up to 40,753, which is more than 27 per cent of the state's caseload. Moreover, out of the 1.33 lakh people who tested positive in the district since the start of the pandemic, 48,014 tested positive in the first 16 days of the present month.

When asked about the surge in numbers in Lucknow, a government official said the high testing rate was one of the reasons, along with the fact that several Covid positive patients come here from other parts of the state.

On Thursday, CM Adityanath directed authorities to increase the number of dedicated Covid hospitals in Lucknow, and declare KGMU and Balrampur hospital as Covid-only set-ups. With that, Lucknow will now have more than 10 dedicated Covid hospitals. The CM also announced the setting up of a new 1,000-bed Covid hospital in Lucknow.

KGMU spokesperson Sudhir Singh confirmed that the number of Covid beds is expected to go up from 520 to 3,000 beds by Monday.

The CM has also ordered that a case under the Pandemic Act be registered against those turning away patients sent on the recommendations of district magistrates and chief medical officers.

However, with Lucknow reporting more than 5,000 daily cases on an average, around half of them symptomatic, and patients coming from several neighbouring districts, the situation is unlikely to get better any time soon.

CHHATTISGARH

Second wave hits much harder: 100 deaths a day, space running out

GARGI VERMA

A NIL MAHANAND says that in his five years as caretaker of the Marwadi muktidham (crematorium) in Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur, he hasn't seen so many lonely pyres burning at once. "In most cases, family members either don't come or don't stay for long. Everyone's scared for their lives," says the 30-year-old.

With around 100 Covid deaths being recorded every day since April 10, with Raipur and Durg districts seeing the highest toll, Chhattisgarh has been reeling under the second wave of the pandemic.

Since March 2020, the state has recorded 5,442 deaths. But the fatality rate of 1.54 per cent in April is much higher than the 0.75 per cent recorded during last year's peak in October. The state is the third highest in terms of active cases (1,21,769 cases as of April 15), only behind Maharashtra and UP. So far, most of the deaths have been concentrated in the major district headquarters, since severe patients get referred to hospitals here.

In an attempt to plug the shortage, the Centre's Empowered Group-2 has decided to divert over 17,000 MT of LMO to the 12 surge states in three phases between April 20-30. But the oxygen supply chain has many more knots to untangle.

"Logistics of transport is the biggest challenge," says Saket Tiku, president of the All India Industrial Gases Manufacturers'

CHHATTISGARH

TOTAL CASES: 5,16,412 ACTIVE CASES: 1,24,303

DAILY VACCINATION

Source: Chhattisgarh state health department * as on April 16

Covid patient has remained unidentified for more than two months, officials said.

"We have had cases of bodies being dumped at the premises. We test all bodies for Covid, and most of them have tested positive. Not only does it become a medico-legal case, we also have to wait for at least a week before disposing of the bodies," said a morgue staff.

The municipal corporation stepped in on Monday, launching 15 new crematoriums and enhancing the capacity and efficiency of existing burial grounds and crematoriums.

Deputy Municipal Commissioner Pulak Bhattacharya said they have also had to deal with protests from residents who don't want bodies of Covid victims to be cremated or buried in their areas.

"We have had to cajole, counsel, and even threaten several resident groups with action. There have been instances of people creating a ruckus if they even saw a medical vehicle. The bodies are cremated with all precautions and in contained spaces," said Bhattacharya, adding that they have set up SOPs to handle burials and cremations.

"We have set up channels with hospitals in the city, who alert us as soon as a death is recorded. The deceased is then allotted a crematorium or a burial ground, and the family is informed. After that, the body is taken to the crematorium, where family members can come if they want to," he said.

Mahanand, the caretaker of the Marwadi muktidham, says that in the case of a loss as sudden as in Covid, it's hard to convince the bereaved to follow protocol. "Family members plead with us to let them touch the body, or see the body one last time. It's difficult, but we have to firmly say no," he says.

Across THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.inTwitter: [@Pchidambaram_IN](https://twitter.com/Pchidambaram_IN)

The most egregious action of the EC was spreading the election calendar in West Bengal over 8 phases and 33 days. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry have, together, 404 seats and elections could be held on one day, April 6. Why does West Bengal with 294 seats require 8 days? The suspicion is that it was done to enable the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to campaign on more days in West Bengal

WHEN I first campaigned in an election in 1977, the situation was not ugly. There were some undesirable things in that election but not the ugly things that we see today.

Year: 1977. State: Tamil Nadu. Indira Gandhi had called an election, freed the leaders detained during the Emergency, and faced a resurgent Opposition. M G Ramachandran had broken away from the DMK in 1972, formed his own party (AIADMK), won a crucial Lok Sabha by-election, and was riding an unprecedented wave of popularity and adulation. The Congress (I) had joined hands with the AIADMK and faced the DMK that was in the forefront of opposing the Emergency. Surprising most people, the anti-Emergency wave that swept across the northern states could not cross the Vindhyas.

GOOD AND UGLY SIDES

That election was a decent, fair and free election. The Election Commission (EC) was fiercely independent: for instance, it acknowledged the logic of allotting a common symbol to all the candidates of the AIADMK (though it was not a recognised party and had won only one by-election). Candidates spent money on vehicles for campaigning, posters, leaflets, meetings — and on noth-

ing else. It was truly campaign and canvassing for votes. There were not even rumours of bribing voters.

The ugly side was the elections were determined by the dominant castes, usually the land-owning class. The very poor, the Dalits and the tribals had little choice but to vote according to the wishes of the dominant castes and the landlords. The minorities were silent — but not afraid — and voted as directed by the leaders of their communities. Legally, it was a free election, but not as free as it should be in a true democracy.

Fast forward to 2021. Elections are certainly more democratic in the sense that no section of the people fears any other section. Caste plays a key role, but not as much as in the past. Class is largely irrelevant: the poor do not fear the rich, and vote freely.

DISTRESSING TRENDS

The new ugliness are money and the widely-shared perception that the EC is no longer truly independent. Both are body blows to democracy. For example, in Tamil Nadu, the EC has not been able to stop the distribution of money. Money is offered to — and accepted by — practically every voter.

Humongous sums of money are spent on every rally of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. A giant stage is erected, LED screens are installed, hun-

dreds of vehicles are hired to bring people to the rally, and money and food are given to them. Crores of rupees are spent on advertising, on social media outlets, on short messages, on telephone calls and on paid news (popularly called 'packages'). No one denies that crores of rupees are spent by political parties, but it is not reflected on the expenditure side or receipt side of either the parties or the candidates.

Old-style campaigning and canvassing for votes are out. I wonder if they will ever return. An election is no longer a festival of democracy but a staged event.

The other distressing feature is the suspected bias of the EC. I will command the work and the honesty of the presiding officers in the polling stations, the technicians who maintain the EVMs and VVPATs, and the counting officers on counting day. However, I have serious reservations about the general superintendence and control exercised by the EC.

SCALES ARE TILTED

Mr A Raja of the DMK was banned from campaigning for 48 hours for an ill-thought and derogatory remark but, in the case of Mr Himanta Biswa Sarma of the BJP who made an equally derogatory remark, the initial ban of 48 hours was scaled down to 24 hours. Why?

Every speech of Ms Mamata Banerjee was seized upon to warn her, to issue no-

tices to her, and finally to ban her from campaigning for 24 hours. Did the EC find nothing wrong in the speeches of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister? What about the PM's remark that if the minorities are exhorted not to split their votes, the majority should consider what they should do in such a situation? What about the street-level, cat-call-like jibe of 'Didi-o-Didi'? Is that the manner in which a prime minister should refer to a chief minister? I cannot imagine a Jawaharlal Nehru or a Moraji Desai or a Vajpayee speaking that language.

The most egregious action of the EC was spreading the election calendar in West Bengal over eight phases and 33 days. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry have, together, 404 seats and elections could be held on one day, April 6. Why does West Bengal with 294 seats require eight days? The suspicion is that it was done to enable the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to campaign on more days in West Bengal.

What the EC needs is a TN Seshan. He was described as a bull dog, but he was a bull dog that did not fear or oblige his master. I would still give the benefit of doubt to the EC, but we will watch their conduct between now and May 2.

The survival of democracy depends upon the free exercise of the will of the people. The free exercise of the will of the people depends on the independence of the Election Commission.

Fifth COLUMN
TAVLEEN SINGH
Twitter: [@tavleen_singh](https://twitter.com/tavleen_singh)



Is there a vaccination strategy?

TWO QUESTIONS first. Who is to blame for our alarming shortage of vaccines? Why have they not already been sacked for criminal negligence? Having said this, let me honestly admit that in this very space a month ago, I wrote that our government had helped us deal with the pandemic painlessly. *Mea culpa.* Not just for speaking too soon but also for being among those who never urged our scientists and epidemiologists to seriously analyse why the mortality rate had remained so low in India when countries with much better public health services had seen such high death tolls.

It was this low mortality rate that caused an insane complacency to settle over us and it gave Narendra Modi's devotees a chance to sing paeans to him and give him credit for 'saving India'. Had he not been prime minister, they said, we would not have been able to stop Covid-19 from killing millions of Indians. Modi accepted the tributes as he always does and became so complacent himself that he declared before last week's Vaccine Festival that we had 'defeated' the pandemic last year without vaccinations. We did this, he boasted, when there was not even the flicker of a vaccine on the horizon. He spoke too soon and seems not to have noticed that in the United States and the United Kingdom the return to almost full normalcy has begun because nearly half the population has already been vaccinated.

His government instead showed such disdain for vaccinations that it did not bother even to order sufficient supplies to get close to having enough for at least half of India's population to be vaccinated. In a very perceptive article last week, Naushad Forbes, former President of the CII (Confederation of Indian Industries), said this. "In January 2021 India approved its first vaccines for use. The Ken Nutgraf tells us that between July 2020 (before any vaccines had passed testing) and January 2021, the US ordered (and paid for) over 600 million doses. That's for a population of 300 million. In the same period, India ordered 11 million doses, for a country of 1300 million."

If the men who make up the Government of India's vaccination task force have the smallest sense of honour, they should accept blame and resign. Since they have not shown any sign of doing this, they must be sacked and replaced by people who can help India catch up. It is shameful that a country that is believed to produce more than 60 per cent of the world's vaccines should be so short of them. It will take us many, many months before we can catch up with countries which realised wisely long ago that the only way to win against this awful pandemic is by vaccinating as many people as possible. This will need to start happening now on a war-footing.

What is worrying is that despite the queues outside hospitals, vaccination centres, crematoriums and graveyards, the horror of what is happening seems not to have affected the Modi government. Why are millions still being allowed to attend election rallies in the unending Bengal election? Why are pilgrims being allowed to travel in huge numbers to Vaishno Devi? Why was the Kumbh Mela allowed to go ahead? And, why are municipal elections going ahead in Uttar Pradesh when the most populous of our states is showing signs of a scary surge? Pictures of rows of funeral pyres that went viral on social media last week are terrifying.

In Maharashtra, from where I write this piece, there is now a lockdown which is euphemistically called a 'janata curfew', and by the time it is lifted at the end of this month, many small businesses will have closed for good. Mercifully, this time around, migrant workers who have yet again lost their jobs in towns and cities are able at least to get trains to return to their villages. But, the damage that this lockdown is doing to the economy is incalculable. Lockdowns always harm the economy more than the pandemic, but this desperate measure seems to have been taken because hospitals ran out of oxygen, medicine, doctors and beds.

There are signs of this happening in Delhi and in cities across the country. Who should we blame for things having come to this pass? Should those high officials in the Government of India who we trusted with our lives not come forward and accept responsibility? Why is the Prime Minister silent at a time when he should be leading from the front? His government has lifted restrictions on the import of foreign vaccines, but someone needs to take charge of ensuring that they are made easily available to those who are ready to pay for them, and for those who cannot afford expensive vaccinations, the government can help out by dipping into the Prime Minister's CARES Fund and the Rs 35,000 crore set aside for vaccinations in this year's national Budget.

Most important of all is for the Government of India to tell us when it expects enough supplies of vaccinations to be made available for every Indian who wants to take them. Only when this happens will the panic and hysteria that is spreading across the country begin to wane. One big reason for the current mood of anxiety and fear is because ordinary people sense that the Government has lost the plot.

Reviving Ambedkar through his writings

Dalitality
SURAJ YENGDETwitter: [@Surajyengde](https://twitter.com/Surajyengde)

IF THERE is any author in India who can sell his books at lightning speed, that too in multiple languages, he is Dr B R Ambedkar. But we live guided by a leadership that terribly lacks business acumen. The compilation of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in book form has been the subject of several controversies, from the very beginning in 1979.

One topic that has united scholars and activists across the board is the serious concern towards Dr Ambedkar's writings and speeches published by the Government of Maharashtra. Everyone is united in dismay at the publishing scandal.

Over the past decade, I have been closely monitoring the developments. Most of the time, I found myself frustrated at the air of irresponsibility.

Whenever I visited India, I would spend thousands of rupees across different government printing shops buying the blue books. But, one could not get all the volumes. I shipped these books overseas and gifted to many in India. Some collections of volumes lie in different locations across India, waiting to be airlifted. However, I am unable to do so because of the incomplete and disorganized set of volumes.

Thus, to remedy this, I initiated a process to digitise the books. I checked my email from August 2015 and noticed I had sent an email to Hari Narke, then the member of the editorial board, requesting him to consider digitising Ambedkar's and Jyotiba Phule's writings for wider dissemination.

Latest in the news is an extremely important investigation by *The Caravan*'s reporter Aathira Konikkara over two years. The report looks at the publication scandal in putting together Ambedkar's writings and speeches and the heartless complicity of governments in Maharashtra. Turns out that everyone despises Ambedkar yet wants to tokenise his life.

This report is troubling to anyone who is concerned about the story of the unwritten histories of a community that has not yet seen the light of acceptance. Ambedkar's writings are an ideal interface to grant the desired humanity to the dehumanised and excluded people declared untouchable and unseen — a group without history.

Suraj Yengde, author of Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column

life & WORK

THOMAS FENN



HERE WE go on the scary-go-round.

The year 2020 was a blur for most of us in the restaurant industry. So much so that there is a running inside joke that like the fabled table number 13 (a lot of restaurants skip 13 when numbering their tables, for good luck), 2020 does not exist. As much as we would like to believe this, 2020 happened and it was heartbreaking and back-breaking for pretty much all of us: a mix of adrenaline and sheer white-faced terror.

The sudden announcement of the nationwide lockdown in March 2020 had us scrambling to make sense of all the madness. We launched our quest to procure the golden tickets for the right to conduct our businesses (e-passes in common parlance) and massive measures to protect our employees. Cash flows came to a halt while supplies became hard to come by. Uncomfortable conversations were initiated to mitigate the issue of rent. A lot of restaurants were unable to weather this and went belly up in silence while a privileged few somehow managed to keep their ships steady and pulled through. Even in these grim circumstances, the industry that had already been dealt a body blow, came together in a heartening show of strength and purposeful intent to bolster relief efforts. Restaurants leveraged their kitchens and thin supplies to produce food for the thousands of labourers stranded in cities, caught in the crossfire of Covid-19, struggling to go home.

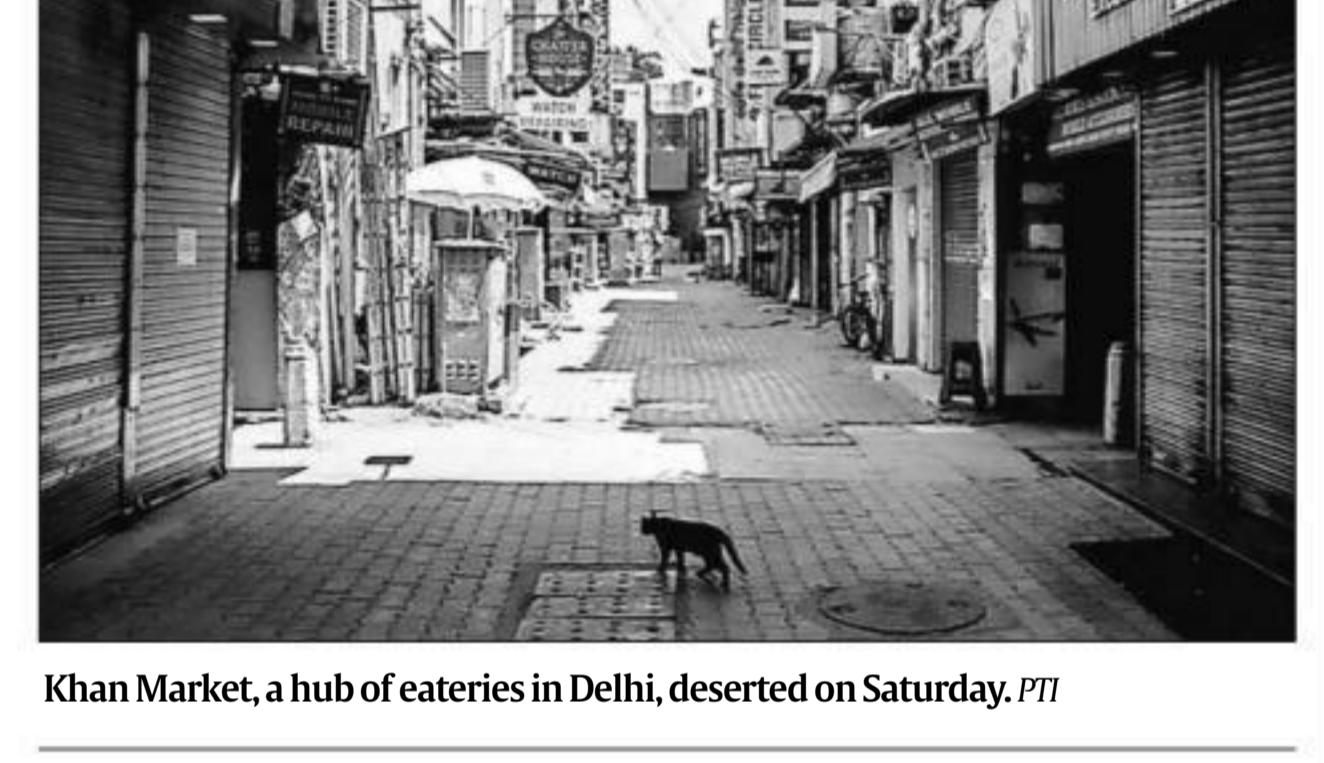
Recently, when the Maharashtra government announced its stringent controls on restaurant operations, the familiar taste of metal in the mouth was back. With the sharp resurgence of Covid-19 cases, other state governments, including Delhi, followed suit, progressively pulling the plug on an industry that was already on life support. The hospitality business, despite being one of the largest employers of labour (second only to agriculture) and a significant contributor to the country's GDP, has traditionally been viewed as one of the vices. It is criminally over-regulated as a result, with some states requiring as many as 20 clearances to sell a sandwich. Yet, the restaurant industry still remains mindbogglingly the only one not allowed to claim tax credits under the new GST regime, undermining the tax regime's stated objective of bringing more into the organised fold.

But the government time and again shows its infidelity towards Ambedkar's scholarship. If it cannot carry out its responsibilities, then it should hand it over to the community who is more than capable of publishing and buying the books. Like Gandhi received State sponsorship, Ambedkar needs similar attention.

The Ministry of External Affairs along with the Ministry of Culture should get Ambedkar's entire writings translated in different languages, including foreign, and ask missions and embassies to donate the same to local schools, colleges, universities and research institutes. This will be a legacy that Ambedkar would have liked.

The pattern has continued in view of the pandemic — the Covid-19-specific policies do not reflect the incredible level of safety protocol compliance that restaurants and

In restaurants, taste of metal in mouth is back



Khan Market, a hub of eateries in Delhi, deserted on Saturday. PTI

delivery kitchens were already ensuring. Rather than enforcing compliance of these protocols and consulting relevant stakeholders, the latest policies have been painted with a wide brush of selective prohibition suggesting that history is probably not the best tutor after all. This gross mis-

understanding of the ground realities and lack of representation is exactly why the NRAI (National Restaurant Association of India) has been pushing for a separate ministry to govern the food and beverage industry for many years now; the economic stakes and consequences to our country's stability are that high. This isn't an entirely fresh or unique idea either. During peak pandemic, almost all developed nations introduced aggressive stimulus packages for their respective restaurant industries, recognising the implicit need to support an ecosystem that feeds millions of families. In India sadly, we are completely on our own and have received none so far.

Small businesses have been particularly battered. There is only so much that a strong force of will coupled with a 'positive attitude' can achieve when saddled with the reality of rising debt, high rents, staff and compliance costs without deep pockets. We simply do not have the means or leverage to negotiate better terms (albeit temporary) with our landlords. Perceived as bad bets, lines of credit have shrivelled up for sustainable, independent enterprise while the funding pours into giant cash hemorrhaging companies like Zomato and Swiggy. Almost all of our time is spent studying the intricacies of the ever-changing policies and its impact on our livelihoods with zero con-

trol over our own destinies. We are already converging, thus, to the point of massive closures with no end in sight.

With a classic let-them-eat-cake attitude, home delivery has been declared the messiah of the food business. Except, dine-in and delivery business models are wildly different; one simply cannot be a rational substitute for another and the time has come for us to acknowledge this. Not to mention that the relationship between restaurants and aggregators such as Zomato and Swiggy (which cumulatively control 90% of the organised delivery market) are fraught with distrust due to their anti-competitive policies, predatory discounts and high commissions. In no universe can this be perceived as a fair fight, which a study commissioned by the Competition Commission of India in August 2019 all but confirmed.

There were green shoots of recovery around the third quarter of FY 20-21. However, with the return of curfews and limited lockdowns controlling the fate of restaurants, fear is gripping even the strongest among us. As a small restaurant owner, adversity comes with the job description. But for the first time, in the face of prolonged uncertainty, I'm worried for my employees, colleagues, and peers, for their emotional well-being as a direct consequence of enduring this constant state of fight or flight.

We need help. SOS.

Thomas Fenn is a partner in Delhi-based restaurant Mahabally, and Member, Managing Committee, NRAI

On the LOOSE



LEHER KALA

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MY IN-laws moved home after 50 years. An amazing assortment of stuff tumbled out of their cupboards. Shawls neatly packed away to be brought out for future 'special occasions' which lay forgotten for decades. A brand new 'hot plate', an old-fashioned device that predates the ubiquitous microwave to keep food hot on dining tables. Delicate fine china, faded in its packaging while they ate every meal on Melaware. During the shift, I sensed a hesitation to open entire cupboards for fear of facing the mangled remains of what lurked behind. Nevertheless, they determinedly carted their remaining belongings to their new home. The curse of hoarding, to some extent,

Of hoarders and their clutter

affects nearly everybody. The reasons are complex but, ultimately, an inability to let go lies central. No one likes admitting, even to themselves, that they wasted money on rubbish. Sometimes things carry emotions and memories. Preserving them provides an illusion of control in an unpredictable world. Previous generations of Indians who grew up in times of scarcity are less inclined to part with their stuff. Brought up on principles of scrimp and save to acquire and display, they valued everything and threw nothing; sea shells found at the beach became treasured knickknacks alongside expensive crystal and family photographs. Perhaps, those little bits of paraphernalia from different stages of life have an important esoteric value to connect us to our past or to a younger version of ourselves.

Clutter and what to do with it, is one of

the definitive quandaries brought forth by the pandemic. Forced indoors, people around the world have been re-evaluating their possessions, trying to make better use of objects and space. After a year of panicky seclusion, many are re-embracing their finer things, having reached the conclusion the sages have been saying forever; that life is now. As Walt Whitman observed, not another hour, but this hour — is the correct time to enjoy life. The anxiety of this moment has an element of magic realism but in these endless days of collapsing time, we are also thinking hard about the way we live. It's clear that change is imperative going forward. Items that are tender keepsakes of personal histories must be cherished, the rest must give way to new systems of order.

For example, my in-laws' vast and unnecessary accumulation of goods were

mostly gifts, which they had no use for but neither did they have the heart to junk. Covid is bound to influence gifting behaviour in the future. At a basic level, we give gifts because we are supposed to. Otherwise, who needs anything, really? Prettily packaged miniature soaps and lotions aren't going to change anyone's life. Books, considered a thoughtful gift, are slightly better, but tastes differ wildly. The most avid of readers haven't read the books sitting on their shelves, that they picked themselves. What are the chances they will get around to reading a gift? None, whatsoever. Yet, gift-giving is a ritual that serves a vital purpose: expressing appreciation. These social niceties bind us to our circles, so it's a pity that most of what we give and receive rarely sparks joy. On her website www.konmuri.com, the high priestess of clearing up, Marie Kondo,

says you shouldn't shove unwanted presents in the back of a closet, rather use them once. It makes it easier to bid them farewell.

The fact is that all those hampers, scarves and perfumes are just adding to the trash in the ocean. Unwanted gifts are the rule rather than the exception but modern etiquette requires that recipients keep up a charade of enthusiasm. It brings to mind the ironic conclusion of O Henry's



SpaceX's Starship prototype during a test flight. SpaceX

USA

SpaceX gets NASA contract for moon lander

ELON MUSK'S private space company is developing a giant rocket called Starship to one day take people to Mars. But first, it will drop off NASA astronauts at the moon. NASA announced on Friday that it had awarded a contract to SpaceX for \$2.9 billion to use Starship to take astronauts from lunar orbit to the surface of the moon. The contract extends NASA's trend of relying on private companies to ferry people, cargo and robotic explorers to space. But it also represents something of a triumph for Musk in a battle of space billionaires. One of the competitors for the NASA lunar contract was Blue Origin, created by Jeff Bezos of Amazon. **NYT**

RUSSIA

Moscow to expel Ukrainian diplomat as tensions simmer

RUSSIA ACCUSED a Ukrainian diplomat on Saturday of trying to obtain classified information and ordered him to leave the country by April 22, in the latest flare-up of tensions between the two neighbours. Russia's FSB security service earlier said Oleksandr Sosoniuk was taken into custody when he tried to access the information from Russian law enforcement databases during a meeting with a Russian citizen. **REUTERS**

SPAIN

Madrid to host charity bullfight for matadors left jobless by Covid

CROWDS WILL return to Madrid's Las Ventas bullring for the first time since the start of the coronavirus pandemic next month for a charity bullfight to raise money for matadors left jobless by Covid-19, officials said on Saturday. Almost all of Spain's bullrings, or plazas, have remained closed for the last year due to lockdown restrictions — plunging the controversial spectacle and its matadors into financial crisis. A maximum of 6,000 people will be allowed in to watch the May 2 bullfight. **REUTERS**

ISLAND NATION LEFT WITHOUT A CASTRO IN CHARGE OF RULING PARTY FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER SIX DECADES

End of an era as Raul Castro steps down as Cuban Communist Party chief**ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ**
HAVANA, APRIL 17

RAUL CASTRO said he is stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving the island without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades and handing control of the party to a younger generation.

The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech Friday at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island.

"I concluded my task as first secretary ... with the satisfaction of having fulfilled (my duty) and

epaper.indianexpress.com

4 Sikhs among 8 killed in Indianapolis shooting; Indian embassy reaches out**SHUBHAJIT ROY**
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

FOUR SIKHS, including three women, were among eight people killed in a mass shooting at a FedEx facility — staffed by a large number of Indian-American employees — in Indianapolis, the capital of the US state of Indiana.

The Indian embassy in the US has reached out to the local authorities, as India's Consul General in Chicago Amit Kumar spoke to the Mayor of Indianapolis, Joe Hogsett, who assured full support. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday morning expressed "deep shock" over the killings and offered to "render all possible assistance".

Late Friday night, the Marion County Coroner's Office and Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) released the

Investigators at the scene following a mass shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis. **Reuters**

names of the victims.

They are Amritjeet Johal (66), Jasvinder Kaur (64), Amarjeet Sekhon (48), Jaswinder Singh (68), Karli Smith (19), Samaria Blackwell (19), Matthew R. Alexander (32) and John Weisert (74).

One of the injured, Harpreet Singh Gill (45), was hit by a bullet near the eye and is in hospital.

"The Indianapolis police have identified the victims of the tragic

shooting incident, which include

persons from Indian-American Sikh community. Our consulate in Chicago is in touch with the local authorities in Indianapolis as well as the community leaders, and will render all possible assistance, as required," the Indian embassy in the US said.

The gunman was identified as 19-year-old Brandon Scott Hole, a former employee. He allegedly

died by suicide after the shooting on late Thursday night at the FedEx facility in Indianapolis. He was last employed by FedEx in 2020.

This is the worst Sikh massacre in the US after the Oak Creek Gurdwara mass shooting in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, where seven members of the community were killed.

About 90 per cent of the workers at this delivery service facility are said to be Indian-Americans, mostly from the Sikh community.

US President Joe Biden ordered the national flag to be flown half-staff at federal buildings. "Vice President Harris and I have been briefed by our homeland security team on the mass shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis, Indiana, where a lone gunman murdered eight people and wounded several more in the dark of night," Biden said. **(WITH PTI INPUT FROM WASHINGTON)**

THE VICTIMS: 'HE WAS GOING TO GET HIS FIRST CHEQUE'**JASWINDER SINGH**

He had just started working at the FedEx facility this week and had told everyone how excited he was to get his first pay cheque, according to family member Harjap Singh Dillon. He was working the night shift sorting mail. "He was going to get his first cheque," Dillon said. "He didn't get it." Singh lived with his son in the Indianapolis suburb of Homecoming. He was 68.

AMARJIT SEKHON

Sekhon moved to Indiana from Ohio to be closer to family. She leaves behind two sons, ages 14 and 19, according to Rimpal Giri, a niece. She began working at FedEx about six months ago on an overnight shift from 11 pm to 11 am. She was 48.

JASVINDER KAUR

Kaur was all set to cook for a large family celebration for her granddaughter's second birthday on Saturday. "And today we're gathering to plan a funeral," said Giri, who is also Kaur's daughter's sister-in-law. Kaur was 64.

AMARJEET JOHAL

Johal's granddaughter, Komal Chohan, said she had many relatives who worked at the FedEx facility. Johal was 66. **Source: NYT&PTI**

the outbreak that began in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019.

When the world back in January passed the bleak threshold of 2 million deaths, immunisation drives had just started in Europe and the United States. Today, they are underway in more than 190 countries, though progress in bringing the virus under control varies widely.

While the campaigns in the US and Britain have hit their stride and people and businesses there are beginning to contemplate life after the pandemic, other places, mostly poorer countries but some rich ones as well, are lagging behind in putting shots in arms and have imposed new lockdowns and other restrictions as virus cases soar.

Worldwide, deaths are on the rise again, running at around 12,000 per day on average, and new cases are climbing too, eclipsing 700,000 a day. **AP**

Worldwide Covid death toll tops 3 mn**DAVID BILLER, MARIA CHENG & JOSHUA GOODMAN**
RIO DE JANEIRO, APRIL 17

THE GLOBAL death toll from the coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv, Ukraine; Caracas, Venezuela; or metropolitan Lisbon, Portugal. It is bigger than Chicago (2.7 million) and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined.

And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment and the many cases overlooked in the early stages of

Iran, China say signs of progress at nuclear talks**FRANCOIS MURPHY**
VIENNA, APRIL 17

the deal's restrictions on its nuclear activities in response to the US withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions against Tehran under President Donald Trump.

Aracchi was quoted as saying that, while serious disagreements remained, "a new understanding appears to be emerging."

The second round of talks began on Thursday in a luxury Vienna hotel. The US, making a new diplomatic push in West Asia under Joe Biden's administration, is not present as Iran has declined face-to-face negotiation.

China's envoy to the talks earlier said all participants had agreed to accelerate work on issues including which sanctions the US would lift. **REUTERS**

5 workers killed in Bangladesh plant being built by Chinese firm**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**
DHAKA, APRIL 17

AT LEAST five people working at an under-construction coal power plant being built by a Chinese firm in Chittagong were killed, and 20 others injured, in a clash with police following a protest by the workers over wages and allowances, Bangladeshi media reports said on Saturday.

The incident happened when the protesting workers of the plant clashed with the police, prompting them to open fire in which five workers were killed, the *Dhaka Tribune* reported.

"The violence broke out around 10.30 am at the coal-fired power plant. Five have died while at least 20 others were injured in the clash, including police and local residents," a senior police officer was quoted as saying in the report.

"They attacked police who are on duty, forcing the police to retaliate. Four were killed during the incident while three policemen were injured," Chatogram Range Deputy Inspector General Anwar Hossain was quoted as saying by the *Daily Star* newspaper.

Queen Elizabeth II (left, seated) watches as pallbearers carry the coffin of Prince Philip at St George's Chapel in Windsor. **AP****Prince Philip laid to rest as sombre queen sits alone****DANICA KIRKA & JILL LAWLESS**
WINDSOR, APRIL 17

AS MILITARY bands played and a procession of royals escorted his coffin to the church, Prince Philip was laid to rest Saturday in a funeral ceremony that honoured his lifetime of service to the UK, the crown and his wife of 73 years, Queen Elizabeth II.

The widowed British monarch, setting an example amid the coronavirus pandemic, sat alone at the ceremony, dressed in black and with her head bowed in prayer.

Philip, who died April 9, two months shy of his 100th birthday, was honoured at Windsor Castle in a service that was steeped in military and royal tradition but also pared down and infused with his own personal

ity. The entire royal procession and funeral took place out of public view within the grounds of the castle, a 950-year-old royal residence 30 km west of London, but was shown live on television.

Coronavirus restrictions meant that only 30 people were allowed inside the castle's St. George's Chapel, including the queen, her four children and her eight grandchildren.

Prince Charles, the heir to the

throne, sat opposite the monarch alongside his wife, Camilla. Prince Andrew was two seats to the queen's left. Prince William and his wife, Kate, sat directly opposite from his brother, Prince Harry, who had travelled back from California without his pregnant wife, Meghan.

People across Britain observed one minute of silence in honour of Philip just before the funeral got underway. **AP**

Fidel Castro with brother Raul Castro. **Reuters file**

"confidence in the future of the fatherland," he said in a typically terse, to-the-point finale that contrasted with the impassioned verbal pyrotechnics of his brother Fidel, who died in 2016.

Castro didn't say who he would endorse as his successor as first secretary of the Communist Party. But he previously indicated he favors yielding control to 60-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who succeeded him as president in 2018 and is the standard bearer of a younger generation of loyalists who have been pushing an economic opening without touching Cuba's one-party system.

"All processes have a conti-

nuity and I think Diaz-Canel should be there now," said 58-year-old driver Miguel

Rodriguez.

Castro's retirement ends an era of formal leadership that be-

Looking to accelerate reforms

AFTER TAKING over from his brother Fidel, Raul Castro introduced a slew of economic reforms in a country that had, under the socialist model that Fidel championed, seen high literacy rates and health care for all Cubans as well as a struggling economy. Restrictions imposed by the US

and the Covid pandemic have made matters worse for the Cuban economy, which is facing its worst crisis since the fall of the Soviet Union. The handing over of the party leadership to a younger generation is expected to accelerate Raul's reforms and further open up Cuba's economy.

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Explained

and the Covid pandemic have made

SECTOR WATCH
AUTO FUEL

Concerns on low margins, BPCL sale: Post elections, fuel prices likely to rise

KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

OIL MARKETING companies (OMCs) cut the prices of petrol and diesel by 14-16 paise per litre across major cities on Thursday, after a 15-day halt in price revisions, amid election in four states — West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam.

The halt in price revision during elections could have an impact and consumers could end up paying higher prices for petrol and diesel once elections are over.

Why are there lower prices during elections?

Even though OMCs are notionally free to set the prices of petrol and diesel, as both the products have been deregulated, the companies often cut the price of these fuels or hold them constant around elections as fuel prices often become a political issue. In the latest instance, OMCs have revised the prices of petrol and diesel only four times in a 47-day period, which has witnessed significant volatility in the price of crude oil, the key input cost for auto fuels.

Experts said that in early March, OMCs faced negative marketing margins on petrol and diesel as Brent crude price rose to \$70 per barrel but OMCs kept prices constant.

A correction in crude oil prices to about \$62 per barrel in early April has allowed OMCs to cut petrol and diesel prices by about 75 paise per litre

OMCs may be slower to pass on the benefit of any fall in crude oil prices to customers to make up for lower margins during the elections.

How do price halts impact OMCs?

Experts said that investors had come to expect such moves during elections and subsequent reversions to normative margins post the election period.

The share price of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) has fallen by about 8 per cent since the beginning of February 27, when OMCs initially stopped revising prices, while that of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) has fallen by 10 per cent and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) by 14 per cent.

Analysts noted that such practices could impact long term valuations of OMCs, notably in the case of BPCL which is set to be privatised.

"Why would anyone give a high valuation (for BPCL) when the government can cut your marketing margins every time it is politically expedient to do so," said an analyst, adding that even after the privatisation, BPCL would have to match prices with the remaining state-owned refiners IOCL and HPCL if they cut prices during elections.

The analyst, who did not wish to be named, said OMCs may take the view that inventory gains from rising crude price can help boost earnings despite lower marketing margins, but noted that investors evaluate refiners on their marketing margins and not on factors outside the company's control such as global crude prices.

How will prices change post elections?

Experts noted that OMCs are likely to increase the prices of petrol and diesel to restore their marketing margins to normative levels. Experts noted that customers may have to shell out more later as

BRIEFLY

Glenmark
Pharma arm IPO

New Delhi: Glenmark Pharmaceuticals on Saturday said its wholly-owned arm Glenmark Life Sciences has filed preliminary papers for an initial public offer with market regulator Sebi.

ICICI Lombard
Q4 profit rises

New Delhi: ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company on Saturday reported 23 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 346 crore for March quarter 2020-21. PTI

Twitter services
hit temporarily

Bengaluru: Twitter Inc said late on Friday that it was working on fixing an access issue after thousands of users reported problems with the platform. REUTERS

New York: An electrical problem that led to dozens of Boeing 737 MAX jets being suspended from service has widened after engineers found similar grounding flaws elsewhere in the cockpit, industry sources said on Friday. Airlines pulled dozens of MAX jets from service a week ago after Boeing Co (BA) warned of a production-related electrical ground

ing problem in a backup power control unit situated in the cockpit on some recently built airplanes. Since then, suspected grounding problems have been found in two other places on the flight deck, the sources said.

Boeing had no immediate comment on the wider problem, which was first reported by *Aviation Week*. REUTERS

AT \$581.21 BN: FUELLED BY GAINS IN FOREIGN CURRENCY ASSETS

Forex reserves jump over \$4 bn amid high liquidity, fund flow

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

AFTER DECLINING for two consecutive weeks, the forex reserves jumped by \$4.34 billion to reach \$581.21 billion during the week ended April 9, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The rise in forex reserves comes alongside the continuing high global liquidity and fund flow into the economy, which is likely to see a relatively higher growth.

Earlier this month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) raised its growth forecast for the Indian economy by 100 basis points to 12.5 per cent for 2021-22.

In the previous week ended April 2, the reserves had fallen by \$2.42 billion to \$576.86 billion. During the week ended March 26, they had dropped by \$2.99 billion to \$579.28 billion. The foreign exchange, or forex, reserves had hit an all-time high of \$590.18 billion in the week ended January 29.

During the reporting week of

RESERVES GROW AS OF WEEK ENDED APRIL 9

Foreign currency assets	April 9	April 2
Gold	35,320	34,023
SDRs	1,492	1,486
Reserve tranche position	4,946	4,923
Total	581,213	576,869

(*in billion US dollars)

April 9, a rise in foreign currency assets (FCA) — a major component of the overall reserves — fuelled the rise in the forex kitty. FCA increased by \$3.02 billion to \$539.45 billion, the RBI data, released Friday, showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the FCA include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US currencies such as euro, pound and yen held in the overall reserves.

Gold reserves, meanwhile, rose by \$1.30 billion to \$35.32 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed. The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the IMF rose by

\$6 million to \$1.49 billion during the week ended April 9.

India's reserve position with the IMF increased \$24 million to \$4.95 billion in the reporting week, as per the data.

The rising forex reserves could bring some comfort to the government and the RBI in managing the nation's external and internal financial issues at a time when the economy is facing Covid stress once again and it could have an impact on the GDP growth rate in FY22 as states are announcing lockdowns. It is a big cushion in the event of any crisis on the eco-

nomic front and enough to cover India's import bill for a year.

The rising forex kitty could also help strengthen the rupee against the US dollar.

Higher reserves could bring confidence to markets that a country can meet its external obligations, demonstrate the backing of domestic currency by external assets, assist the government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations, and maintain a reserve for national disasters or emergencies.

The RBI functions as the custodian and manager of forex reserves, and operates within the overall policy framework agreed upon with the Centre. It allocates the dollars for specific purposes. For example, under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme, individuals are allowed to remit up to \$2,50,000 every year.

The central bank uses its forex kitty for the orderly movement of the rupee. It sells the dollar when the rupee weakens and buys dollar when the rupee strengthens.

OTHER DEAL CATEGORIES IN MARCH QUARTER:

Growth deals:

\$4.3 billion across 63 deals

Startup investments:

\$2 billion across 161 deals

Buyouts:

\$1.1 billion across 10 deals

Private investments in public equity:

\$385 million across 11 deals

Credit investments:

\$480 million

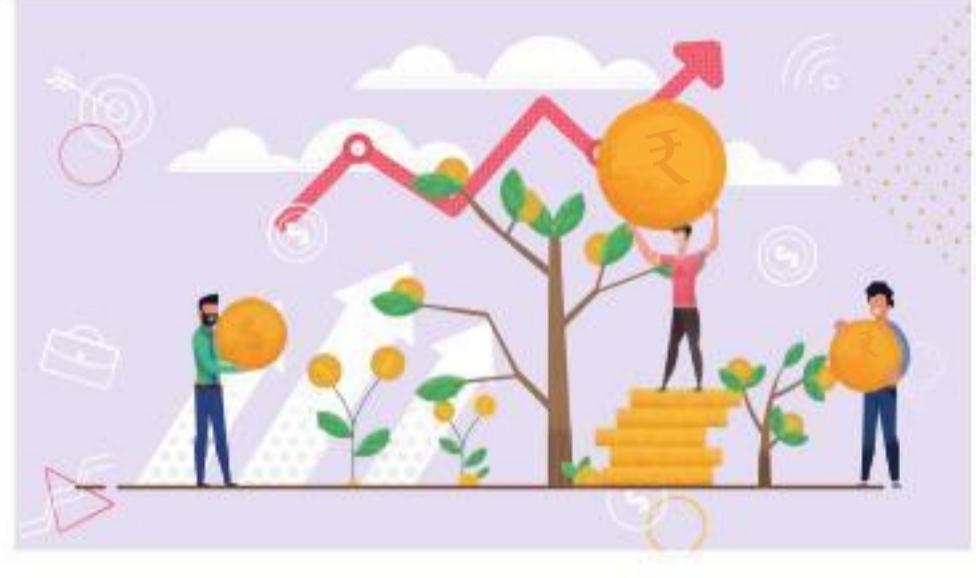
India-focused funds:

\$1.7 billion

55% Fall in PE/VC investments in March quarter when compared with December 2020 quarter's total of \$18.5 billion

'PE/VC investments rise 64% to \$8.3 bn in March quarter'

India saw a 64% rise in PE/VC investments in January-March at \$8.3 billion across 266 deals over a year ago, a report by EY and India Venture Capital Association (IVCA) said



\$1.8 billion Value of investments in e-commerce sector, highest in the past five quarters

\$4.8 billion Amount garnered by Indian companies in March quarter through 22 large deals; lower than \$16 billion in December 2020 quarter in investment through 30 such deals

\$4.2 billion Amount recorded in March quarter through exit deals, i.e. 70% of the entire exit activity of 2020

\$4.6 billion PE/VC investments recorded in March 2021

Why is it important: The second wave of Covid-19 infections, new variants of the virus and slow vaccine rollout are raising fresh concerns. Investors could turn cautious till more clarity emerges on government response to the second wave

Source: EY & IVCA/PTI

CERT-In: Multiple vulnerabilities reported in WhatsApp; remote attacker can access info

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

THE INDIAN Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has warned WhatsApp users in India of multiple vulnerabilities it detected in the instant messaging platform, which could lead to breach of sensitive user data and personal information.

In a "high" severity rating advisory, the CERT-In said that the vulnerabilities had been detected in a certain version of WhatsApp and WhatsApp Business for both Android and iOS platform.

"Multiple vulnerabilities have been reported in WhatsApp applications which could allow a remote attacker to execute arbitrary

code or access sensitive information on a targeted system," the advisory said.

The vulnerabilities, CERT-In said, exist in WhatsApp due to a cache configuration issue and missing audio decoding pipeline, which could give hackers the potential to "execute arbitrary code or access sensitive information on a targeted system".

To prevent the threat, the government's cybersecurity agency has asked users to update their WhatsApp on Android and iOS to the latest versions.

This is not the first time that CERT-In has issued a "high" severity rating advisory, warning users of the presence of multiple vulnerabilities in the instant messaging platform. In November last year, the cybersecurity agency had issued a similar warning to users, cautioning them that it had found two major vulnerabilities, namely improper access control and user-after-free vulnerability.

The improper access control vulnerability was found to be present in the screen lock feature of the instant messaging platform.

and could be used to communicate on WhatsApp by giving voice commands to Siri, an audio assistant in iOS phones. On the other hand, use-after-free vulnerability allowed attackers to target users by sending a specially crafted animated sticker during a video call.

Similarly, in November 2019, CERT-In had warned WhatsApp users about a buffer overflow vulnerability with the platform, which allowed an attacker to remotely target a system by sending a specially crafted MP4 audio or video file.

The CERT-In had then warned that successful exploitation of this vulnerability would allow an attacker to case remote code execution or denial of service condition for the users.

Earlier, the Chandigarh Bench of the National Company Law

CRUDE WATCH

OIL POSTS WEEKLY GAIN

New York: Oil settled modestly lower late Friday, but secured a weekly gain on a stronger demand outlook and signs of economic recovery in China and the US. Brent crude fell 17 cents, or 0.3%, to \$66.77 a barrel, while US WTI crude fell 33 cents, or 0.5%, to \$63.13. REUTERS

HDFC Bank Q4 net up 18.17%; no dividend for FY21

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 17

HDFC BANK on Saturday reported a 18.17 per cent year-on-year growth in standalone net profit for the quarter ended March 2021 (Q4FY21) at Rs 8,186.5 crore, as against Rs 6,927.6 crore a year-ago period.

However, on a sequential basis, the standalone net profit declined 6.5 per cent compared with Rs 8,758 crore in the December quarter (Q3FY21). The bank's board of directors decided against declaring any dividend for FY21, in wake of the second Covid wave.

NET PROFIT FOR FY21 RISES 18.5%

HDFC Bank's net profit for fiscal ended March 2021 was Rs 31,116.5 crore, rising 18.5% over the year ended March 2020. Meanwhile, the bank's board of directors decided against declaring any dividend for FY21, in wake of the second Covid wave.

16.3 per cent over March 2020.

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) were at Rs 15,086 crore, or 1.32 per cent of gross advances, as of March 2021, compared to 1.38 per cent (proforma approach) as of December last year and 1.26 per cent as of March 2020.

The bank said net interest income (NII) — the difference between interest earned through lending and interest paid to depositors — saw a 12.6 per cent rise to Rs 17,120 crore in the reporting quarter, compared to Rs 15,204 crore in the corresponding period last year.

According to the bank, total advances as of March 2021 were Rs 11,32,837 crore, an increase of 14.0 per cent over March 2020. Domestic advances grew by 14.1 per cent over March 2020.

As per regulatory segment classification, domestic retail loans grew by 6.7 per cent and domestic wholesale loans grew by 21.7 per cent. Total deposits as of March 2021 were Rs 13,35,060 crore, an increase of 15.2 per cent over March 2021.

NCLAT dismisses DVI plea over resolution plan for Amtek Auto

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

THE NCLAT has dismissed the petition by Deccan Value Investors challenging the NCLAT approval to its resolution plan for debt-ridden Amtek Auto without execution of a lease of a property.

A three-member National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) Bench also imposed a cost of Rs 1 lakh on the US-based hedge fund Deccan Value Investors (DVI) LLP, terming the petition as "frivolous".

It further said execution of the long term lease (20 years) of the Ace Complex Land was not a condition precedent in regard to approval of resolution plan.

"The appeal not only lacks merit but also is frivolous. We, while dismissing the appeal, impose costs to the tune of Rs one lakh on the Appellant (DVI) which shall be deposited in this Appellate Tribunal within 15 days," said NCLAT Bench headed by Acting Chairperson Justice B.L. Bhat.

Earlier, the Chandigarh Bench of the National Company Law

PLI scheme for ACs, LED lights notified

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

THE DEPARTMENT for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has notified the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for ACs and LED lights and said that selection of companies to avail the incentives would be done to support manufacturing of components that are not currently manufactured locally.

It said that mere assembly of finished goods would not be incentivised and companies investing in basic/core components would get a higher priority.

Earlier this month, the government approved a PLI scheme for white goods — air conditioners (ACs) and LED lights — with a budgetary outlay of Rs 6,



POINT OF VIEW

The Dhamma and the Dome

Buddhist imagery breathes life into the ceremonies at the Rashtrapati Bhavan

eye



POINT OF VIEW

The Elephant in the Brain

Where we need to be most mindful, we often display mindless insensitivity

Leher Kala

ON ONE OF Delhi Gymkhana Club's famed Thursday nights, I was unceremoniously evicted for wearing what were, in my opinion, charmingly frayed jeans. The buzzing dining area has hawk-eyed senior members permanently perched at the bar, waiting to pounce on people who flout their rules. The Gymkhana, like all institutions that trade on exclusivity, takes pride in being the last bastion of old-world tradition. Right or wrong, it functions on the premise that the public lacks a sense of decorum. Hence, they must be saved from themselves by a dress code. In my defence, I was clueless that my slightly-torn denims might merit an eviction. I also can't help contrast my hasty retreat that night with a very different evening in Tokyo, when I was denied entry into a club because my clothes weren't risqué enough.

No doubt, when in Rome... is a good motto to follow when it comes to deciding outfits. Style has a cultural context, especially in India, where there are people of widely different social and economic backgrounds. What's hard for people to wrap their heads around – it's not just Tirath Singh Rawat, the Uttarakhand chief minister, who thinks frayed jeans equals frayed morals – is that those who intentionally wear ripped jeans aren't always flamboyant non-conformists or the dregs of society. In the last month, women across age groups and all walks of life have posted pictures of themselves in ripped jeans on Twitter, in retaliation to Rawat's unfortunate remark that women dressed in distressed denims won't impart the right values to their offsprings. In a video, Rawat went on to blanket condemn Indian youth and bemoan their style, saying that when they go shopping and don't find torn jeans, "they cut them anyway".

What exactly is it about torn jeans that gets people so enraged in the 21st century? Sure, there was a time long ago when rips signified rebellion: early British punks wore them as an expression of anger against middle-class norms, along with pink hair, tattoos

and junk jewelry (think of the fashion of musicians David Bowie and Boy George). The music festival Woodstock, in 1969, championed the deadbeat look: images from there showcase a sea of faded jeans, slung low on the hip bone, worn to show off a midriff and belly button. And voila, hippie chic was born.

May the irony also not be lost that torn denims with flower motifs and handmade quirky embellishments came about as an alternative to mass consumerism. Now, torn jeans, far from being countercultural, are staidly mainstream, with big fashion brands like H&M, Zara, Calvin Klein and Abercrombie & Fitch bringing out lines every season, perhaps, pushing the rip a little more every time. In fact, distressed denims are so ubiquitous that the brand Next offers a ripped pair in their maternity section.

The latest style in shabby chic, the one Rawat is probably alluding to, is not merely threadbare; there are gaping holes on the knees and vicious tears on the thighs. And yes, they're very much on trend, much like paint-splattered jeans were in the late 1980s. So, maybe, we need to recognise that the world of fashion can be baffling to non-observers. If you think about it, it's kind of ridiculous to be walking around in tattered jeans, exposed knees and thighs protruding. After all, nobody wears torn dresses, T-shirts or pants, for that matter.

"I'm not certain it's the skin showing people find objectionable," says Samant Chauhan, a Delhi-based fashion designer,

who grew up in Bihar's Jamalpur before moving to Delhi to join the National Institute of Fashion Technology. "People still equate neatness with professionalism. Their opinion is why would a sane adult, who's doing well in life, have holes in his jeans," says Chauhan, who owns distressed denims but prefers to wear his jeans intact.

In a country like India, with its steep economic disparities, ripped clothes carry different implications for different people. In the interiors of India that have gone untouched by liberalisation, rips and tears symbolise something far removed from style. They signal a lack of



NOT A MORALITY TALE

Women protesting against the Uttarakhand CM's comments on ripped jeans last month

Is it a fashion statement or a faux pas? What is it about ripped jeans that divides fashionistas and politicians alike?

FIFTY SHADES OF BLUE



Over the years, especially since the liberalisation, the humble jeans has become a marker of style, independence, class and comfort for many women

A Pair for Everyone

The making of an enduring love story

Ankita Dwivedi Johri

LAST month, when Uttarakhand chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat questioned the "values" of a woman who wore ripped jeans while travelling with her two children, the comment triggered a storm on social media, with both women and men posting pictures of themselves in distressed jeans under the hashtag #FatiHuiJeans. The chief minister eventually apologised, but what was left unacknowledged was the enormous size of India's denim market and its growing consumption in the country. "India boasts of a denim manufacturing capacity of around 1.1 billion metre per annum with utilisation levels of 80-85 per cent. The denimwear market is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 12 per cent and be worth Rs 91,894 crore by 2028," says Gayatri Khanna, creative director of the ready-to-wear fashion label GAYA.

Denim has always had an element of expression, of personality, and, even of rebellion, says Manish Kapoor, chief executive officer, Pepe Jeans London. It emerged as a transition garment for the Indian woman in the '90s, eventually paving the way for shorts and dresses in the 2000s. "In the last decade, the penetration of denimwear into smaller

towns and cities, including tier-IV centres has been rapid. In the last five years, the sales in tier-II centres have crossed that of big cities. The segment has also got democratised, transitioning from casual wear to office wear and being available to all age groups," he says.

For Varsha Malvi in Indore, jeans was part of the "transition" that Kapoor mentions, when after years of staying at home, the 25-year-old took up the offer of a full-time job with an NGO. "I bought a pair of white capri (ankle-length) jeans from a neighbourhood shop for my first day at work. I wore it with a short kurti. I felt all eyes on me as I walked to the bus-stop... My neighbours told my mother my jeans were too tight. But at my office, everyone appreciated me. Many said I looked

smart," says the second of four siblings. Recently, she bought her sister a pair of ripped jeans and has been browsing the internet to look for styles for herself, too. "My father and brother were angry with me, but I don't agree with their views. I don't see anything wrong with the outfit. In fact, I like the tight (slim) fit jeans," she says.

Saurabh Srivastava, director, Amazon Fashion India, underlines the role of online shopping in driving growth in tier-II and tier-III towns. "The demand for denim on Amazon Fashion has increased two-fold in tier-II and tier-III centres when compared to metros. In the last few months, we have witnessed a faster growth in demand for denim between the age bracket of 18 and 24 for both men and women," he says, adding that while jogger-fit, slim-fit and stretchable

jeans are among the popular products, the slim fit (what Malvi refers to as "tight jeans") is among the most preferred on the platform.

Popular denim brand Numero Uno, which is "opening almost 30 new stores every year in tier-II and tier-III cities", also counts ankle-length, skinny-fit jeans among its "fast movers" in smaller centres, while bootcut fits are more popular in cities.

"Denims are practically seasonless... Availability of multiple fits, washes and price points ensures that there is a pair for everyone," says Manjula Gandhi, chief product officer, Numero Uno.

The spike in popularity and sales is also a "reflection of the times", says Umashan Naidoo, customer head at Westside. "Denims are sexy, has utility, it is casual and like second skin for some... It is the most democratic piece of clothing around.

There is a shape, style, fit for everyone and if that doesn't work you can add your twist with a bit of customisation," he says. Naidoo also believes that the "many functionalities" of denim which "no one retailer can cover" is also helping the market grow bigger.

For Jaipur-based Soni, as she takes small, anxious steps towards building a Westernwear wardrobe, factoring in her age has been crucial. "I am always conscious about it. When one is younger, it is easier to experiment, but not now... I stick to straight-cut jeans with long tops that cover the hips. The ankle-

length trousers are not for me," says the mother of two.

But the new design philosophies of the industry are breaking some of these barriers, says Parika Rawal, head of design at Madame clothing, which is celebrating April as "Denim Month". "Mom jeans, elasticated waistlines are all designed keeping the Indian body-type in mind... As tops are getting more cropped, jeans are getting more high-waisted and women are not refraining from trying these. Now, jeans have become a core category at our brand, like tops and dresses, because gone are the days when people had just two pairs. Now, people in all age groups want to own one in every style," she says.

The pandemic has also pushed companies to focus on comfort, with brands such as Uniqlo coming up with denim-like fabrics to meet the demand. "Now more than ever, people need everyday items that fit their lifestyles and we are trying to deliver on these through a combination of design, fabric and technology," says a brand representative.

In the future, the focus, these brands say, will be on sustainability. "In the past one year, with people forced to stay indoors, the athleisure segment has boomed. But the consumer now also wants to know what impact the product has on the environment, and that is why the denim sector is also moving towards that," says Pepe Jeans's Kapoor.

Soni's denim collection has seen a small expansion recently. "I now have a suitcase ready with my western wear. It has three pairs of jeans in basic colours, seven tops and two jackets. When I visited my son and daughter-in-law in the US, they helped me buy everything. But I still can't wear these clothes in Jaipur. I might in the future...." she smiles.

Meanwhile, Malvi has already started saving up for a new pair for herself. "maybe like the ripped ones I got my sister," she says. "Last year, a leading portal launched its regional search option. 'Fati hui (torn) jeans' was the most searched option on it. So, we know what people are looking for," says Kapoor.

GETTY IMAGES

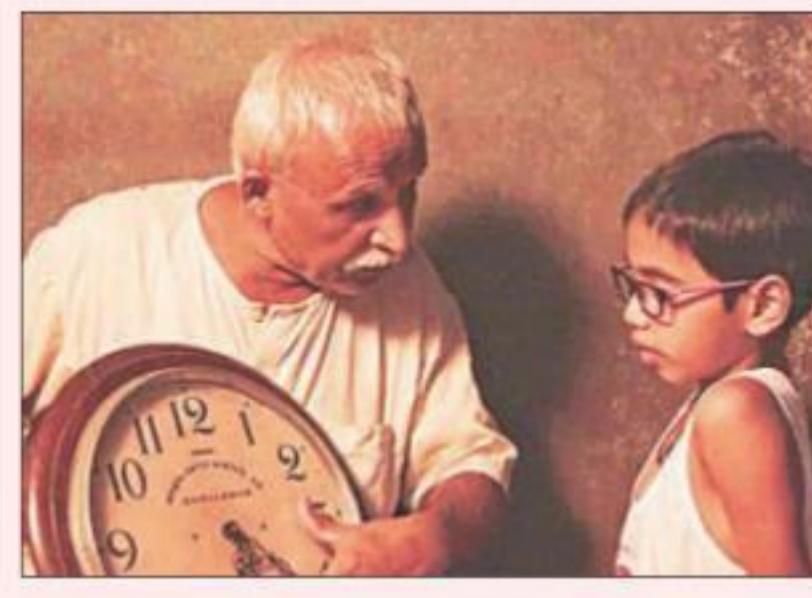


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EYE SPY
EVERY FORTNIGHT, WE PICK, YOU WATCH

Other Worlds



SEEING BEYOND

Childhood can be full of pain and pleasure

Akshay Indikar's *Sthalpuran* gives the child and his world a rare primacy

Shubhra Gupta

SEEING THE world through the eyes of a child can yield to some of the most sublime moments in cinema. The wonder, the bursting-with-excitement expression on a child's face, is priceless. We may have seen that particular object so often that it's become part of the scenery. A child's gaze makes it fresh. Creates it anew. Gives us a new way of looking.

Remember the scene which has Apu and Durga in Satyajit Ray's classic *Pather Panchali* (1955) looking at a train for the very first time? That's my go-to reference when I think of a filmmaker using a child to map an emotion, a feeling, without using words. The framing of the children, as they add a sight to their visual vocabulary, is done in the most lifelike manner. And, we receive it as it is meant, a commentary on the children, and their lives.

Mainstream Hindi cinema has not covered itself with glory in its portrayal of children. They are mostly cutesy moppets lisping cute dialogues or preternaturally wise beyond-their-years tykes, very quickly setting our teeth on edge. For the most part, it is films from other parts of India that have used children to tell stories with universal resonance.

The hero in Akshay Indikar's *Sthalpuran: Chronicle Of Space* is eight-year-old Dighu, part child, part growing-up-uncomfortably-fast into an adult. The film opens with the lad's pensive face resting on a train window, as it takes him and his family away from Pune to a small Konkan town. The film's gorgeous frames are moist with not just the monsoon's bounties but unshed tears: Dighu now has only his mother and sister, and wonders what has become of the father. The absence is never specifically explained. But the consequence of that absence is clear in the boy's wanderings, and in the way he is left searching for answers.

Sthalpuran, which premiered at the Berlinale 2020 and won Indikar two awards at this year's IFFK, is a Marathi film. But we don't need any language to read the boy's face, as he notes things happening around him: of a mother being "too friendly" with a man in the factory she is works in, of a sister's "coming of age", or of a day that just passes by.

Indikar, 29, knows how to use silence and sound, without either cluttering our vision. The sea shore where the boy sits, or the bridge he uses to walk over an overflowing-with-rain culvert, or the ledge where he spots a man who looks familiar, are all part of his world. Did he really see someone, or was it the result of wishful thinking?

Just like two earlier wonderful Marathi films, Umesh Vinayak Kulkarni's *Vhir* (2009) and Avinash Arun's *Killa* (2014), Indikar's *Sthalpuran* gives the child and his world a rare primacy. Both *Vhir* and *Killa* are strongly bound by a narrative; Indikar's film is much more observational. But just like we did in those two films, we immerse ourselves in Dighu's world, a lovely, delicate evocation of how childhood can be full of pain and pleasure.



COURTESY: RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN PHOTO ARCHIVES

The Dhamma and the Dome

From statues to design, Buddhist imagery breathes life into ceremonies here

Praveen Siddharth

ON APRIL 14, the nation celebrated the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar. There is a tradition in the Rashtrapati Bhavan where the President offers floral tributes to a photograph of Ambedkar placed in the Durbar Hall on this occasion. As we gather under the majestic dome, one can't help but notice the coincidences and connections across the fabric of time.

Ambedkar had long deliberated on leaving the Hindu fold. In 1956, while working on his treatise *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, which would soon form the basis for Navayana Buddhism, he took the step of converting to Buddhism. He chose October 14, since this was the date that emperor Ashoka supposedly converted to Buddhism, sometime around 265 BC. However, Ambedkar's life as a Buddhist was short-lived as he died soon after, on December 6, 1956, owing to complications from diabetes.

As a philosophy and religion, Ambedkar gave Buddhism an enormous fillip in our country. Census data shows that from around 1,50,000 in 1951 the number of Buddhists rose to over 3 million in 1961. However, Buddhism did not merely provide an alternative avenue for social progress. It also influenced art and architecture tremendously. One such place to see it is the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The Viceroy House was never intended to have anything Indian. Edwin Lutyens, who was selected as the chief architect in 1912, until then, had been designing Palladian structures such as war memorials in Europe, the British embassy in Washington, DC and extravagant British country homes across

England. Lord Hardinge, who was the viceroy from 1910 to 1916, strongly felt that the Viceroy House had to incorporate elements of Indian architecture and be a synthesis of architectural styles.

The dome of the Rashtrapati Bhavan today is its most striking aspect. While it is visible from a distance, even up close, the enormous dome, which is more than twice the height of the rest of the building, never ceases to impress. This, most recognisable part of the building, came to be designed in a distinctly Indian style. It was modelled on the Sanchi Stupa all the way down to the balustrade railings that surround it. Built by emperor Ashoka, in the third century BC to house the relics of Gautam Buddha, the Sanchi Stupa is considered one of the best surviving examples of Buddhist architecture. Coincidentally, just as the Viceroy House was being designed and built, the Archaeological Survey of India was excavating and restoring the Sanchi Stupa, from 1912 to 1919. A dome is emblematic as a crown over the room where some of our nation's most sacred ceremonies are held.

Lutyens never really admitted the influence of the Sanchi Stupa in his design of the dome. Part of his reluctance could also be due to the peculiar impact of Buddhism in his personal life. His wife Emily (daughter of Lord Lytton, viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880) was a devout follower of Annie Besant. She joined the Theosophical Society preparing eagerly for the next incarnation of Lord Buddha as Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. When the Theosophical Society "discovered" J Krishnamurti as a young boy, on a beach, and saw in him the promised incarnation, Emily took him under her wings and brought him into their home in England, where he lived between 1911 and 1914, much to the chagrin of her husband.



SACRED PLACE

(Top) The dome, modelled on the Sanchi Stupa, is the most striking feature of the Rashtrapati Bhavan; the standing Buddha statue takes centre stage in the Durbar Hall

The Rashtrapati Bhavan's tryst with Buddhism did not start and end with the dome. Earlier used as the throne room, the Durbar Hall now holds the President's ceremonial high chair from where he performs his constitutional duties. A red velvet curtain hangs behind his chair, and here is a fourth century AD statue of a standing Buddha. Sculpted during the Gupta period and belonging to the Mathura School of Art, this sculpture, with elongated earlobes and a halo around the head, breaks the tradition of not depicting the Buddha in anthropomorphic form. The Buddha, although with both hands broken, appears to be in *abhaya mudra* (fearless gesture) presiding over all our state functions, with his blessings on our President and the nation.

Just outside the Durbar Hall, on the front porch of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, is another Buddhist connection. A third century BC example of Mauryan Art — the Rampurva Bull statue is mounted on a pedestal at the entrance. The bull was one of the two Ashokan pillars excavated from Rampurva, Champaran, Bihar. One of the pillars had a lion capital, along with the inscription of his edicts extolling the Buddhist way of life, and the other was mounted with the bull capital. Both, the standing Buddha sculpture and the Rampurva Bull capital, were part of the India exhibition in Burlington House in London in 1948. On their return to India, the other artefacts of the exhibition were shifted to a museum. At the behest of Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru, these two pieces were retained at the Rashtrapati Bhavan as they were "too valuable and precious" and could not be "immersed in the darkness of the Asian antiquities museum".

Inside the Rashtrapati Bhavan, there are numerous other examples of Buddhist art. sadharmma, Buddha had said. It must provide learning to all without discrimination, promote *maitri* (compassion and universal brotherhood) and break down all social barriers.

With the floral tributes, a final piece of connection comes to mind. This practise of remembering the deceased, on his or her birth anniversary or *janayanti*, is also a Buddhist tradition. Birth marks one stage in the ever-turning wheel of life. The *karma* of a person determines his next birth and, on this *janayanti*, it would do well to remember once again the good deeds and words of a noble soul.

Praveen Siddharth is private secretary to the President of India

Living History
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COLLABORATION WITH
THE RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

The Elephant in the Brain

Where we need the most mindful care, we can be quite mindless

SLICE OF LIFE



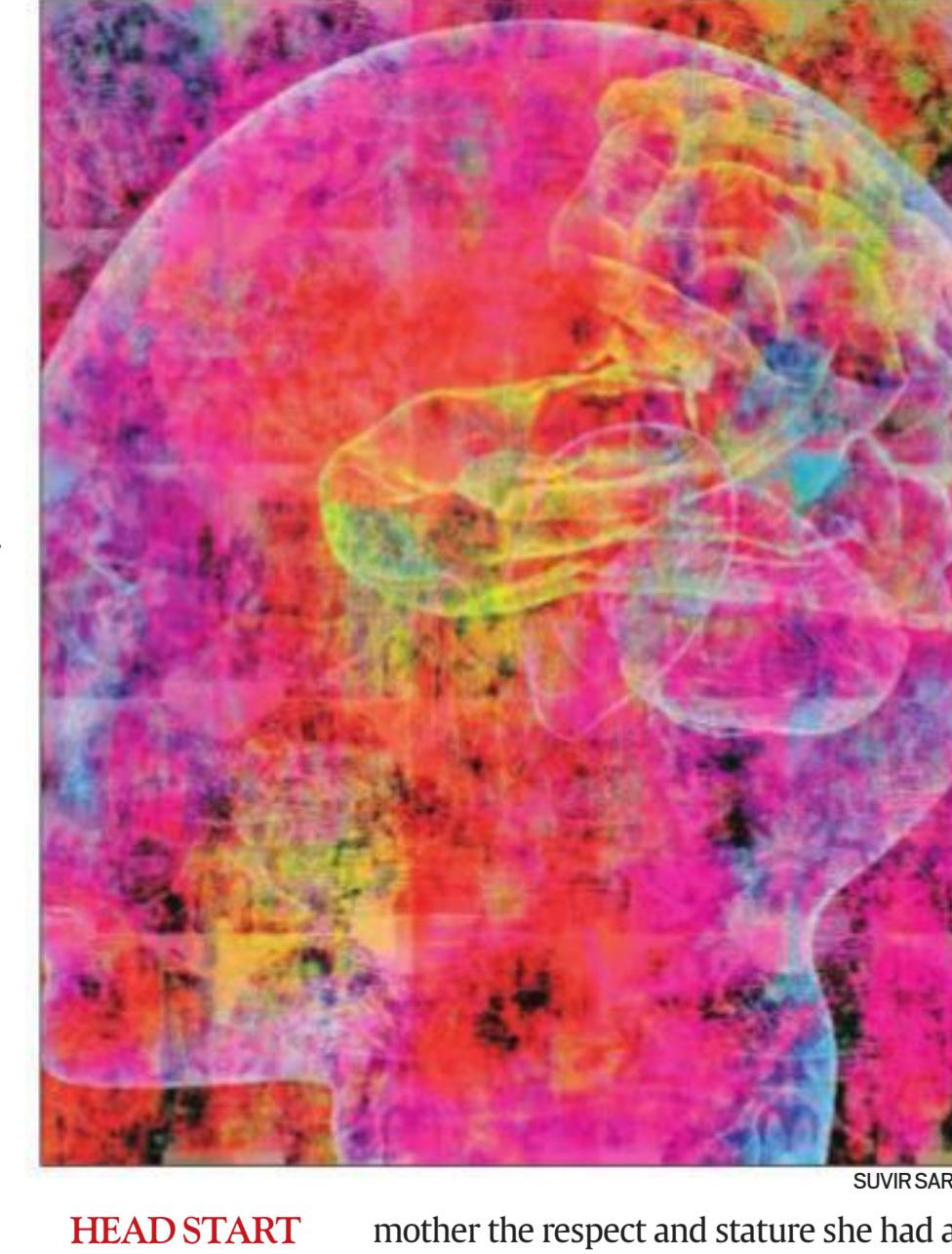
Suvir Saran is a chef, author, educator and world traveller

adapted to my needs and necessities, thereby becoming bigger and richer versions of themselves, growing personally as they set about creating a safe space for me to feel comfortable, and brave my own struggle of adapting to new realities and dealing with disabilities. These people were my angels, going out of their way to be empathetic and caring, generous and magnanimous, in a world where fiscal success and instant gratification are the measures of fulfillment.

But it was my mother who nourished me back to health, who brought me back slowly and surely to life, a new life, with countless interminable stops in places darker than hell and scarier than the most terrifying of horror movies. Surviving that roller-coaster ride and living to tell the story of my emotional state in those times serves to reinforce my awareness of our human collective. We are all but one accident or misfired neuron away from becoming those people we feel pity for and hardly find time to even notice.

Gratitude towards my mother takes me on a flashback to when she took on the role of nurse and caregiver to my father's mother, her mother-in-law, my *dadi*. Those were long, arduously hard years, filled with unending tasks that she could have easily relegated to hired staff. But my mother felt obligated to care for *dadi*'s most private needs herself, to maintain a certain sense of dignity for the brassy and commanding matriarch of our family.

In doing so, mom not only gave my grand-



HEAD START

Millions around the world are afflicted by brain-related ailments, yet these problems are mostly kept hidden

Many years later, mom cared for me as selflessly as she had for my *dadi*. Tears fill my eyes when I think of how this incredible woman, who spent the better part of her youth and middle-age caring for children and elders, somehow found miraculously impossible reserves of will, strength, stamina, dedication, patience and focus to care for a helpless, hopeless grown-up son.

Nearly 44 million people around the world suffer from Alzheimer's. Millions more are afflicted by other diseases related to the brain. Yet, these problems are mostly kept hidden. They have had very little invested in them for research, cure and understanding. We are happier thinking of those who are mentally challenged as less than deserving of their fair share of medical care and breakthroughs of societal care and infrastructure. There is always something else more pressing, someone else more deserving. Even the words used to speak of issues pertaining to our mental well-being are harsher than those used for other maladies. Shame and disgrace abandon sufferers to ignominy and long, lonely passages of time — time where a tired and bruised brain breaks both the spirit and the body.

The brain is the most prized part of the central nervous system. Yet, when it needs our maximum and most mindful care and attention, we find it easier to ignore, avoid and be mindless in our reactions. Having been on the receiving end of obdurate pity and callously misguided sympathy, I write and speak out in hope that we will bring out the mother that resides inside all of us, who is capable of finding will and stamina, determination and drive, to ensure that none in our collective have to ever be neglected, ignored or left out because we wrongfully believe that they cannot feel, think, see, hear or react.

‘Is Tagore an outsider in UP? For Tamil Nadu, is Subhash Chandra Bose an outsider? Everyone knows (our) CM will be from here... people have decided’

As he criss-crossed Kolkata, Tehatta, Krishnanagar, Barrackpore and Khardaha in rallies and roadshows on Friday, Union Home Minister AMIT SHAH spoke to Deputy Political Editor LIZ MATHEW in the final burst of a high-octane campaign where the stakes for his party and incumbent TMC couldn't have been higher. Excerpts:

You have been working on West Bengal since 2016. What has changed since then?

When I started in 2016, we did not have an organisation here. We worked hard from 2016 to 2019 to build up an organisation. I started seeing glimpses of the people's adulation and following for (Narendra) Modi, his popularity and the people's confidence that if someone can remove the problems of West Bengal, it is Narendra Modi. Now, I am seeing that it is turning into a wave in favour of the BJP.

Over these last three years, what are your learnings about Bengal, its culture?

I have learnt this: One should not get carried away by the so-called myths about a region, but should understand the ground realities and form one's strategies. If you are carried away by the myths that are known about a place and culture, you will not be able to connect with the people.

So, what surprised you here?

(There was) no surprise, not really. Since 2015, I began to sense that there will be a time the BJP will win more than 200 seats. I have been saying since November 2017, that we will win this election with more than 200 seats.

Someone says Dushasan... someone talks about wearing Bermudas (shorts). Yeh sab nahi kehna chahiye. Magar dono or se ho gayi. (These things should not have been said... but they were said on both sides)

What will surprise you on May 2?

I am sure we are going to form the government in West Bengal.

The BJP has had its strongholds in North Bengal, in Jangalmahal. Since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections where you won 18 of 42 seats, which districts do you think you have turned?

In areas like Howrah, 24 Parganas, Kolkata, where the voting has already taken place in the first four phases, the BJP has improved. From this, I can say with certainty that we are marching much ahead (of the TMC). We continue our grip in North Bengal and in Jangalmahal areas, so, naturally, our position is going to be strong.

One visible factor is how women support Mamata Banerjee; her TMC government launched a number of schemes for them. What has the BJP done to reach out to them?

One segment from which the BJP is going to get maximum votes is women. Mamata Banerjee blocked two of Modi's programmes – Kisan Samman Nidhi and the Ayushman Bharat. There is strong anger among women against her move. Along with this, the Prime Minister's schemes, like tap water for every household, have been a great attraction for women. I have seen how women are happy they got cooking gas and electricity at home. On top of all these, violence by illegal intruders in the state has affected women the worst, so they want to get rid of them. Everyone in Bengal knows that in *Didi* (Banerjee's) time, there will be no respite from this. So, the women want to see this regime out.

During the campaign, there have been personal attacks against her. After she was injured, your party leader Dilip Ghosh talked about how her sari covers one leg and shows the other... that she should wear Bermudas (shorts)... What do you think about such remarks?

Look, such remarks should not have been made. Someone says Dushasan, someone says Duryodhan, someone calls the other a goonda, someone talks about wearing Bermudas. *Yeh sab nahi kehna chahiye. Magar dono or se ho gayi* (These things should not have been said... but they were said on both sides).

Did you warn your leader?

Generally, I told *Didi* and Dilip Ghosh that such remarks should not be made.

The TMC has been using the 'outsider' plank against the BJP, that the state will slip into the hands of those who don't have any connection with it.

We don't have to do anything about it. People of Bengal have already decided on it. *Agar yehi concept hai toh, Rabindranath Tagore Uttar Pradesh ke liye bahari hain kya* (If this is the concept, will Rabindranath Tagore be an outsider for Uttar Pradesh)? For Telangana and Tamil Nadu, is Subhash Chandra Bose an outsider? Everybody knows the chief minister of Bengal will be from here. We are an All-India party and we are campaigning here. Modiji is



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

the Prime Minister of this country. Can't he talk to the people in Bengal? I am the Home Minister of India. Can't I place my views before the people of Bengal? What kind of a democracy are they talking about?

You said the chief minister will be from here. Have you decided on who?

The Parliamentary Board will decide.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Kolkata stopped the BJP's momentum, the party could not meet its target of 22 seats. What's different now?

It was not like that. Of the 22 seats, our performance was good in 21 and some seats we lost with a margin of less than 5,000 votes. I don't think that we missed our target. The concern about intruders is most intense among the *bhadralok* in Kolkata. We did not have to do anything. In 2019, they had some apprehension if the BJP would be able to pick up or not. They have seen that the BJP can make the change. That gives us a huge advantage in 2021.

Critics say the BJP is introducing caste politics in West Bengal to get votes.

When the results come, *Didi* will realise that everyone has defeated her. Not just one caste, entire Bengal has defeated her, irrespective of gender, irrespective of caste.

The BJP candidate list has many who shifted from the TMC. If, as you say, the TMC is unpopular, how does this work for you?

People who come from the TMC are those who do not agree with *Didi*'s policies. People who join the BJP agree with the BJP's policies. Some people have come from the TMC but a large number of candidates are from the BJP. I don't think it makes a lot of difference to the BJP because our policies are made by the party and the government just implements them.

Has the delay in the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) affected your prospects in Assam?

No, the CAA is the law of the land now and it has to be implemented. I consider the CAA a law that's good for the country and was made for the good of the country. It's (about) issues that affect millions and we should not keep them in the dark about it. It will be implemented.

During the campaign in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister talked about love jihad and promised to make anti-Romeo squads here. Will the BJP, if it comes to power here, bring the 'love-jihad' law it has brought in other states?

We have placed our party manifesto before the people. The government will work on the basis of the manifesto. (The BJP manifesto for West Bengal does not mention the 'love-jihad' law). Once the government is formed, we will look into the suggestions made by various leaders.

Switching from the elections, the most important fear on the minds of people today is COVID-19. The numbers are increasing daily and you are addressing huge public rallies.

Dekhiye, Maharashtra mein chunav hai kya? Udar 60,000 cases hain, idhar 4,000 hain. Maharashtra ke liye bhi mujhe anukampa hai aur iske liye bhi anukampa hai. Isko chunav ke saath jodna theek nahi hai. Kin kin rajyon me chunav hua? Jahan chunav nahi hua hai, udhar zyada badhe. Ab aap kya kehenge? [Is there an

election in Maharashtra? It has 60,000 cases, while here (in Bengal) it is 4,000. I care for Maharashtra and I care for Bengal. But linking (the COVID-19 surge) with the election is not right. Which are the states where elections took place? Those that didn't have any election have witnessed the surge. How do you explain that? You asked about CAA. Tell me should there be protests against CAA during COVID?

At your rallies and roadshows, when you see large crowds and no one has a mask, there is no social distancing, what comes to your mind?

Everyone should take precautions and they are taking them, too. Elections are a vital part of democracy. When elections are announced, we do not have any option.

When the results come, *Didi* will realise that everyone has defeated her. Not just one caste, entire Bengal has defeated her, irrespective of gender, irrespective of caste

of this country has taken three-four decisions. For speeding up vaccination, foreign vaccines have been granted permission. COVID-19 vaccines cleared for use in the US, the UK, the European Union and Japan are to get fast-track approval here. Steps have been taken to ramp up vaccine production. We are taking steps to improve the facilities. This pandemic (by its very nature) spreads fast. The government is ready, fighting against it on every front. We are sending ventilators, new COVID hospitals are being set up.

Earlier, the Prime Minister addressed the nation, there were many initiatives during the first wave. That sense of urgency, emergency, is missing now. Why?

That's not true. There were two meetings with chief ministers and I was also present. Just now, there was a meeting with state governors. We have had a meeting to push stakeholders in the social sector to support the governments. Consultations have happened with scientists on the vaccination front and there was a meeting for improving medical protocols. Preparations to fight this are full-fledged. The pace (of spread) this time is so high that it is (a) bit difficult to fight. But I am confident that we will have a victory over this.

The new variant is said to be more infectious. Are you worried about it?

Everyone is. I am also concerned about it. Our scientists are working to fight it. I am confident that we will win.

Do you think both the Centre and the states let their guard down when the COVID-19 curve began falling? That policymakers didn't factor in that the virus was very much there. Also, people lost their sense of fear. Did that contribute to the surge?

I think the surge is mainly because of the new mutants of the virus. Many countries are seeing the surge. Scientists are studying it and a conclusion on this will be premature.

Like last year, is a lockdown an option to control the number of cases?

We are in discussions with a number of stakeholders. Initially, the purpose of the lockdown was different. We wanted to prepare infrastructure and the line of treatment. We did not have any medicines or a vaccine. The situation is different now. Still, we are into discussions with chief ministers. Whatever the consensus, we shall move forward accordingly. *Magar jadbaazi mein lockdown karna, aisi stithi nahi dikhi rahi hai.* (To impose a lockdown in a hurry, we don't see such a situation)

India has sent (over 6.5 crore) vaccines abroad and many states are complaining they are not getting enough vaccines. Why did this happen?

Our vaccination programme was the fastest in the world. In the first 10 days, the number of people who got vaccinated was the highest in India. After the first shot, there has to be a gap and the second one cannot be expedited. I do not agree that there's a shortage.

The Serum Institute of India has said that it will require Rs 3,000 crore to ramp up vaccine production. Is the government doing anything about it?

Did it tell you that it has sought the government's assistance?

Has it not written to the government?

It is in discussions with the government. We will see what is to be done.

We are an all-India party and we are campaigning here. Modiji is the Prime Minister of this country. Can't he talk to the people in Bengal?

Uttar Pradesh is going to polls next year. There is now a petition in court on the Kashi-Mathura issue; the court has asked for a probe. Will the demand for reclaiming a Hindu temple be an issue in the next elections?

Someone has gone to court and the court has given an order. Progress on that will be on the basis of what the court does. The party has not taken a stand on it. When the court gives a notice to the Central government, we will place our views.

The ongoing farmers' agitation had drawn a lot of criticism for the BJP. There's an impression in Punjab that the Central government does not listen to the Sikhs.

Are these laws only for Sikhs? Are they not for farmers across the country? Whatever campaign is made on it, the fact remains that it's a law for the entire country.

Has it not affected the BJP's prospects in Punjab?

Kuch dikkatein ho gayin hain (There are some challenges for the party). But we are working on it. We will convince the people that it is good for the farmers and I am confident that people will realise it.

One of your alliance partners, the Shiromani Akali Dal, left you over this issue. Have you tried to talk to them, especially to Parkash Singh Badal?

We had talked to him also. But they left us. What can I do? We have been talking to all parties.

On the farmers' protests, the Delhi Police (which comes under the Home Ministry) arrested Disha Ravi under sedition charges in the toolkit conspiracy case... you backed the Delhi Police on it. The court granted her bail, it granted the government.

Bail does not mean that there is nothing against her. Bail is just a legal provision.

The BJP recently faced a setback in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.

The BJP has not lost seats. (It won nine of the 16 seats it contested, an Independent, backed by the BJP, won). Our alliance partner Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) lost some seats. (IPFT drew a blank in the 16 seats it contested).

Recently, the BJP leadership had to change Trivendra Singh Rawat following pressure from the state unit. The BJP earlier had strong regional satraps – Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh; Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh and Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan. But since 2014, the BJP leadership at the Centre has picked leaders to lead party governments in Jharkhand, Haryana etc. They could not build on the party's electoral success.

It was an experiment. We have picked a non-tribal for Jharkhand, non-Jat for Haryana and non-Maratha for Maharashtra. It was an experiment to break the caste barriers and strengthen democracy. Yes, there were some setbacks, but I won't say it was a failure. We have to make efforts to break such barriers.

BRIDGE

NORTH		WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♠ AQ2		1H			
♥ J6					
♦ 94					
♣ KQJ1072		2D	3C	Pass	3H
WEST		Pass	4H	Pass	Pass
♠ KJ					
♥ A82					
♦ AK8732					
♣ 43					

South plays in H after your diamond overcall. These diamonds are worth leading and you do that. East showing interest by playing the ten. You continue with the king and lead a third round but discard ruffs with the jack. East is not able to top that and discards a small spade. Are you ready to give up?

The South Hand: S-8 H-6 K-10 7 5 3 D-9 4 C-6 10 5-8 6 5

South leads a heart to his king. Do you take it? Do you duck? Do you think that East might have the ace of clubs? What do you do and what are your intentions?

You can be positive that East does not have the ace of clubs. South did open the bidding. It is not that he has the ace of clubs. Leading a spade might seem to have a psychological chance but South knows you have a good hand and if he needs the spade finesse, he will take it. Is there anything you can reasonably hope to achieve here?

Indeed there is. You began with the A82 of hearts. The jack has already been played and now the king and ace will be gone after you take this trick.

The important missing hearts are the queen and ten. South probably has them and will use them to draw your trump if given the chance. The wish you need to make is that your partner have the nine of hearts (or the ten). If you lead a diamond and East ruffs with the nine, South will have to overruff with the ten and your eight will become the setting trick. This is a defensive plan when appropriate.

Dealer: South; Vulnerable: None

NORTH		WEST
♣ 104		♠ J952
♥ KQJ		♦ 62
♦ Q83		♣ KJ95
♣ QJ1082		♣ K5
WEST		
INT		
Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass		Pass

North-South reached 3NT on a straight notrump sequence. West led the five of spades and regrettably it, as the ten in dummy won the first trick. Dummy led the queen of clubs, which was finessed into West's king. It is safe enough to lead the jack of spades, but is it wise? If not the jack of spades, what should West lead?

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given query.

I used to sell furniture for a living. The trouble was, _____ - Les Dawson (2,3,2,3)

DSAIO

AFIRMY

ADNST

AAPPWW

Answer: I used to sell furniture for a living. The trouble was, it was my own. - Les Dawson

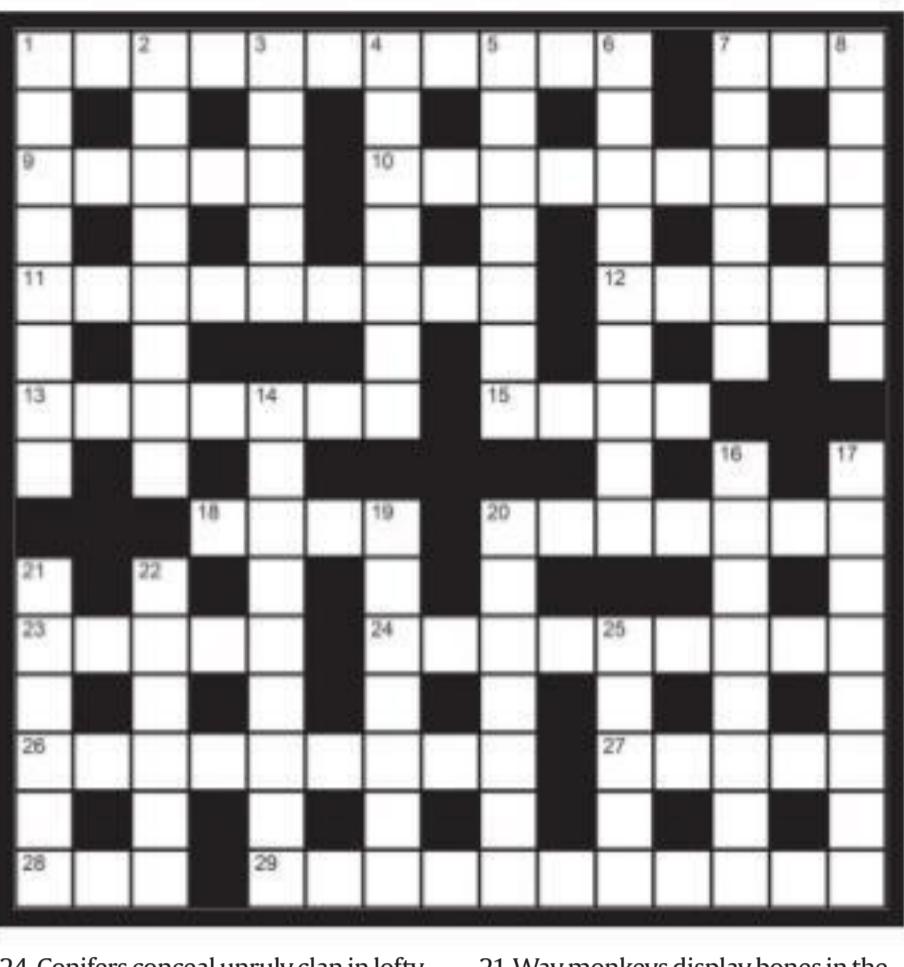
SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2317

QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS
1. Spending too much money (11)
7. Enemy (3)
9. Unabridged (5)
10. Endorse (9)
11. Fundamental law (9)
12. Leave alone (5)
13. Harvest store (7)
15. Side (4)
18. Flowers to be (4)
20. Occurring during the daytime, daily (7)
23. Bollywood actress _____ Koechlin (5)
24. Depreciating, diminishing or downgrading (9)
26. Chucked out, booted out or threw out? (9)
27. Nocturnal tropical lizard (5)
28. Up to now (3)
29. A work of art (11)
DOWN
1. Equipment (8)
2. Of _____ importance : of strategic value (8)
3. Garret (5)
4. Wasting away (7)
5. Very old (7)
6. South Indian state (5,4)
7. Armadas (6)
8. Entailed or necessitated (6)
14. A very light weight metal (9)
16. Surround (8)
17. Support for banner (8)
19. Those who find sexual delight in cruelty? (7)
20. Become gradually lesser and lesser (7)
21. Tending to skid (6)
22. Enclosed recess (6)
25. Excavated or unearthed? (3,2)

CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS
1. Sides for change? (4,3,4)
7. Appeal in order to go on a bender (3)
9. Internet (essentially internet) composer (5)
10. Person of some spirit (9)
11. These sorts of integrals have three sides (9)
12. Men must start with drinks (5)
13. Inflrates about fifty of the sportsmen (7)
15. Place it in the heart of the Home Counties (4)
18. Soldier writing a few lines (4)
20. Floating bird ended inside her! (7)
23. Thanks less than half a million in an eastern language (5)



24. Conifers conceal unruly clan in lofty positions (9)
26. Clip out in unaccustomed formality (9)
27. Opening of correspondence with Flanders pitched just right (5)
28. Sibling any way? (3)
29. Flexible binder used extensively in offices (7,4)

DOWN

1. Why Lord's appeal? (4,4)
2. Archers here getting a first from university? (8)
3. Does this preserve your unsotted reputation? (5)
4. Cheats and wastes time? (7)
5. Is in the way in a ship, but helps? (7)
6. Recurring theme disrupts veto limit (4,5)
7. Only Solomon absorbs energy (6)
8. Put weight on, which is an anxiety (6)
14. Worn on the shoulder, it's starting early Miss Goddard! (9)
16. Larks in a strange land (3,5)
17. Took charge, was not impartial (8)
19. Medical body has influence in making old wine vessel (7)
20. Charity publicity material? (7)

Solutions to 2316

- QUICK CLUES Across: 1. Populace, 5. Consul, 9. Neglects, 10. Geneva, 12. Overstate, 13. Trifle, 14. Gall, 16. Purview, 19. Trapping, 21. Caves, 24. Inside, 25. Runnymede, 27. Whimsy, 28. Judgment, 29. Yearly, 30. Dressage. Down: 1. Pennon, 2. Pegleg, 3. Leers, 4. Cattail, 6. Overthrow, 7. Specific, 8. Leave out, 11. Peep, 15. Universal, 17. Stainway, 18. Basilia, 20. Gyre, 21. Conquer, 22. Seneca, 23. Mettle, 26. Yogi. CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1. Back down, 5. Jigsaw, 9. Aurore, 10. 12. Time-lapse, 13. Izard, 4. Ebor, 16. Engrain, 19. One-step, 21. Word, 24. Kohli, 25. Confirmed, 27. Isobel, 28. Abu Dhabi, 29. Ever so, 30. Tree-frog. Down: 1. Beauty, 2. Chrome, 3. Devil, 4. Whisper, 5. In-swing, 7. Calawing, 8. Welldone, 11. Pepe, 15. Obtainers, 17. Hookline, 18. Dethrone, 20. Pict, 21. Wine-bar, 22. Impair, 23. Adding, 26. Indue.

If it's your Birthday

Sunday April 18

Jupiter is now approaching a benevolent position. It indicates the beginning of both a new twelve-month and a twelve-year cycle of good fortune.

Monday April 19

You're entering a fascinating new cycle. You'll be working behind the scenes, keeping many of your actions secret. You have too much to do to waste your time.

Tuesday April 20

You can have your cake and eat it. Planetary alignments suggest that you can either keep your life exactly as it is, or make huge changes. Hang on to everything that is familiar, reassuring and comfortable.

Wednesday April 21

Your emotional confidence should grow, but with caution. It may be difficult to practise restraint. Eventually, a partner will agree that you were right all along.

Thursday April 22

It's a variable sort of a day - you could be in for a variable sort of a year. You could lock horns with employers or authority figures, but take a sensitive approach. Or concentrate on life's pleasures.

Friday April 23

You've earned a break, try to make some space for yourself. There are indications that you'll be giving up bad habits, shuffling your relationships, changing your job and making a fresh start.

Saturday April 24

There is a huge amount you can do to improve relationships with others, actions which should have profoundly beneficial consequences for your quality of life. Relax and enjoy what life throws at you.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Venus, planet of love, is shifting its position. And that's a fair enough indication that working relationships will become increasingly important. You know that efficiency is of the essence, and that there is absolutely no excuse for letting down people who have come to rely on you. And for some good news, Mercury will help you make the right decisions.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Continue with your plans, dealing with difficulties as they arise. Keep an eye on Venus, if you wish to discover more about your romantic possibilities. This wonderful planet's residency in an intense region of your chart is the most perfect indication that a close relationship is destined to thrive.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Romantically and emotionally you are on the up, and you must get things moving while so many decisive influences are going your way. Every aspect of your home life will benefit from your clever and delightful personality. You can see that this is to be positive and optimistic.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Mercury, the planet which represents your mind, is making it necessary for you to get all your affairs in order sooner rather than later. Hold discussions, share your ideas and arrange any important interviews. People will be open to whatever you propose, so invite partners to join you in teamwork.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Workwise, it's still a question of following through decisions already taken and continuing with your routine. This may not be terribly exciting, but at least you are putting down firm foundations for the future, a commendable exercise which will attract admiration and respect from people in authority.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

Friends and colleagues - and even people you don't know so well - will be much more important to your morale than close partners, so this will be a time to mix widely and make new contacts.

Remember, you never know which one of the people you meet now will be important to you in later years.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 19)

You may be feeling rather emotionally exhausted at the moment, you can't accept a settlement or situation which doesn't fulfil all your requirements. You've done well so far, so carry on with your current path. You're receiving abundant support from both Mars and Venus, indicating an upsurge of romance and passion.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

Your latest lunar alignments are challenging you to make the most of your professional skills and experience, perhaps working with hopes which are still some way from realisation. Romantic trends are due to blossom around the middle of the week under the wonderful influence of Mars and Venus.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Nothing less than the best will do, and failure to live up to high standards could result in a confrontation. Your salvation lies in maintaining friendly contacts with those on your side, especially people who have developed a romantic connection! This is no time to compromise your principles.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

Financial affairs are still on your mind, more so even than in past weeks and months, if that is possible. Domestic spending seems to figure highly in your plans and there is no reason why you should not push ahead with confidence. Your romantic possibilities continue to benefit from Venus' helpful presence, so that's good news.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Thanks to Mercury's sparkling position, this looks like an excellent time to get all your affairs in order sooner rather than later. Hold discussions, share your ideas and arrange any important interviews. People will be open to whatever you propose, so invite partners to join you in a hobby or leisure activity. You'll achieve so much more if you seek genuine help.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The best feature of the current picture is that other people will be ready to hear what you have to say. However, there will be times when reason gives way and sheer passion rules the day. At such times, you must take a laid-back approach and compromise if need be.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 19)

You may be feeling rather emotionally exhausted at the moment, you can't accept a settlement or situation which doesn't fulfil all your requirements. You've done well so far, so carry on with your current path. You're receiving abundant support from both Mars and Venus, indicating an upsurge of romance and passion.

SUDOKU 4445

Difficulty Level 3s

Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4444



Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, JANG BAHADUR SINGH/S/O AMAR SINGH R/O K-4/3, MODEL TOWN-2, DELHI-110009. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO JUNG BAHADUR SINGH.

0040569912-2

I, Twinkle Khurana alias Gonjan D/o Sh. Om Prakash Khurana R/O R-221/18, Tughlakabad Extn., New Delhi-110019 have changed my name to Twinkle Khurana for all purposes.

0040569895-11

I, ANMOL SINGH S/D JUNG BAHADUR SINGH, R/O K-4/3, MODEL TOWN-2, DELHI-110009. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ANMOL SINGH KALRA.

0040569912-5

I, Jitendra Thakre S/o Sahebrao Thakre R/o C-249, Gamma-1, Greater Noida U.P. have changed my Son name from Sanskar Jit

Mumbai turn the tables

Rahul Chahar, Trent Boult shine as MI once again defend a low total, this time against SRH

SYNOPSIS

■ Sunrisers implode on a pitch of two halves.

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

APRIL 17

YET AGAIN, Sunrisers Hyderabad batting imploded from a position of strength, twice on the spin now. Yet again, Mumbai Indians snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. Against Royal Challengers Bangalore three days ago, Sunrisers had slipped from 115/2 at one stage, chasing 150 for victory. Against Mumbai Indians today, they were 67/0 after seven overs, against a victory target of 151.

In the end, MI won the match by 13 runs, bowling out their opponents in 19.4 overs.

The defending champions had bounced back in their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders when they looked almost dead and buried. Today, on a pitch of two halves, they made steady inroads once Jonny Bairstow was out. Rahul Chahar and Trent Boult took three wickets apiece. The excellent Jasprit Bumrah gave away just 14 runs in his four overs for a wicket. Hardik Pandya effected the run-outs of David Warner and Abdul Samad through direct hits. Yet again, MI played like five-time champions. Sunrisers, meanwhile, went deeper in the mire after three consecutive losses.

Sunrisers implode

They made four changes for this game, which suggested desperation. Another batting capitulation might make them panic-stricken. All the while, Sunrisers missed Kane Williamson, almost back to his full fitness from an elbow injury but still not 100 per cent.

Bairstow and David Warner had started off the chase brilliantly. Sunrisers were 57/0 at the end of Powerplay and when Bairstow was out hit wicket for a 22-ball 43, they were well ahead in the game. But Manish Pandey played a poor shot to be



In his four overs, Rahul Chahar delivered 13 dot balls and took three wickets, including Manish Pandey's. IPL20.com/BCCI

dismissed off Chahar in the next over and his team started to surrender the initiative.

Warner was still there and was growing into his innings. Hardik's direct hit from cover sent him packing and the collapse started. Sunrisers middle-order didn't have the wherewithal to get over the line after that, Vijay Shankar's fight notwithstanding.

A pitch of two halves

Chepauk so far has offered pitches of two halves in this IPL. When the ball is new and hard, batsmen can hit through the line, like Quinton de Kock drove Bhuvneshwar Kumar to the straight boundary to start off today's proceedings. But it's a different ball game, when the ball gets a little older. Even well-set batsmen have been struggling to stroke freely. The ball is not coming on to the bat and the bowlers have been revelling in taking

The defending champions had bounced back in their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders when they looked almost dead and buried.

pace off it.

MI's Powerplay score was 53/0, a nice platform to press the accelerator. But even with some finest and classy hitters in their ranks, they struggled, once the ball started to grip on the surface.

Rohit Sharma was the aggressor to start with. A four off a Mujeeb Ur Rahman's carnage ball followed by a six off a googly next delivery was elegance personified. But there were some uncharacteristic slogs as well. The MI skipper rightly wanted to

make the most of the Powerplay. But Shankar dismissed him with a delivery that almost didn't arrive. Rohit cleared the front leg and attempted a slog, but the ball hit the lower half of the bat and went to deep mid-wicket.

Suryakumar Yadav hit a gorgeous four over extra cover against Shankar but chipped the next ball straight back to the bowler. Shankar knows Chepauk like the back of his hand. He wasn't giving the batsmen any pace to play with. On the night when he was economical and getting wickets, Sunrisers captain probably missed a trick by not completing his quota.

As the game changed, MI's chances of posting a big total depended on de Kock. He was the set batsman and had a life on 34. Also, the left-hander was using his 360-degree cricket well, scoring some cheeky boundaries. But trying to up the ante against Mujeeb, he, too, was holed out at deep mid-

wicket. The spinner's second spell was far better than his first, when conditions assisted him.

Rashid Khan was keeping the batsmen quiet at the other end, but MI still had Kieron Pollard and Suryakumar Yadav. Yet, Shankar barely celebrated those wickets. Alright, the two balls were nothing special, Sharma mistimed a whip to be caught in the deep while Yadav misread a staple slower ball, which stopped at him and lobbed back to the bowler. But potentially match-winning wickets, you celebrate, often instinctively. When Rohit held out, he just wore a half-smile and applauded the fielder; but after Yadav's wicket, he didn't even bother to smile, even as his teammates swarmed around him. No fist-pumps, no high-fives, no stares, no smiles, as if he did not even deserve the outcome. As if he were indifferent to the fruits of his labour.

SANDIP

Boult's blues

INDIFFERENCE: Vijay Shankar terminated arguably the two most vital Mumbai Indians' wickets— captain Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav. Yet, Shankar barely celebrated those wickets. Alright, the two balls were nothing special,

Sharma mistimed a whip to be caught in the deep while Yadav misread a staple slower ball, which stopped at him and lobbed back to the bowler. But potentially match-winning wickets, you celebrate, often instinctively. When Rohit held out, he just wore a half-smile and applauded the fielder; but after Yadav's wicket, he didn't even bother to smile, even as his teammates swarmed around him. No fist-pumps, no high-fives, no stares, no smiles, as if he did not even deserve the outcome. As if he were indifferent to the fruits of his labour.

SHIVANI NAIK

FLAILING: Swimmers training on their beds for their stroke out of water, in lockdown. Or a treadmill fall scrambling desperately to grip the controls. An octopus with hind limbs caught in a hook. Or Charlie Chaplin looking to flee with coat tails jammed into the door. **Trent Boult** was all of that while trying to get his hands onto a ball whistling away from him to the boundary in the 5th over. He started like Bolt tends to - almighty. Then came the tumble - Usain only has to run straight, Trent has to bend right and stop David Warner's screamers - however mistimed. After losing his footing and flailing his arms while spread-eagled, he would've expected sympathy from the bowler, if not a laugh. Krunal Pandya wasn't amused though with the shot reaching the fence and gave Boult the death stare.

Chanu's 205-kg lift puts her in line for Tokyo podium

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, APRIL 17

DILNIKAL diya tha mera.

Jeremy Lalrinnunga was so emotionally invested that every moment of Mirababu Chanu's 'double century' at the Asian Championship, including a world record lift in clean and jerk, was peppered with delightful insights, a few jokes and some melodrama.

The weightlifter's live feed on Instagram, accompanied by his unfiltered narration, sounded more like the passionate Latin American or Arabic football commentary that often goes viral on social media. Then again, Chanu's match was no less than a last-minute winner in a football game.

The heart-in-mouth moment,

as Jeremy described it, came in the beginning of Chanu's bronze medal-winning performance. The 26-year-old had failed to nail a lift in the first two of her three total

attempts. A third 'no-lift' and her Championship would be over: The debacle of the Rio Olympics, where she crashed out after being unable to complete her event, loomed large in Tashkent on Saturday.

But this time Chanu did not fumble. In her final attempt in snatch, she lifted 86kg and after she signed off with an incredible 119kg lift in clean and jerk, bettering the world record by 1kg, Jeremy whooped from the stands.

Chanu joined him from the platform, grinning ear to ear as she cemented her reputation as one of India's biggest hopes at the Tokyo Games in July.

The combined total of 205kg is the best she has ever lifted.

The two lifters who finished above her are both Chinese. Hou Zhihui won the gold with a total score of 213 (96 in snatch and 117 in clean and jerk) and her compatriot Jiang Huihua got the silver with a lift of 207kg (89 and 118).



Chanu broke the WR with a 119 kg lift in clean and jerk. PTT

Olympic rules however allow just one competitor per country. Ri-Song Gum, the only other weightlifter to have lifted more than 200kg, is already out of contention after North Korea withdrew from the Games. Thus all Chanu really needs to do is repeat Saturday's performance. Still, it won't be straightforward.

Chanu's biggest opponent now is her own body.

After the 2018 Commonwealth Games, where she comfortably clinched the gold, Chanu complained of lower back pain. The injury was as mysterious as it was severe. Top doctors across the country examined her but were unable to diagnose the problem.

For nine months she was out of action, missing the Asian Games and the World Championships. When she returned, the Imphal-native could not even lift 50kg in training. Somehow, she overcame the phase where she doubted if she could ever compete again.

Since then, there has been gradual progress in her totals. At the continental championships in 2019, she bettered her CWG tally by three kilos to lift a total of 199kg. At the World Championship in Pattaya last year, she crossed the 200kg-mark for

the first time by totalling 201kg.

As she set her sights on a bigger total, the pandemic struck and training stopped. When she returned, so did the back pain. It did not appear to be as bad as the previous occasion but Saturday was the first time in almost 18 months that Chanu competed.

Chanu 2.0 is stronger and more resilient, as was evident from her heroic lift in the clean and jerk section. National coach Vijay Sharma has emphasised previously the need to improve Chanu's tally in snatch, where the barbell has to be lifted in one smooth motion. And if Saturday was anything to go by, Chanu's lifting in this event remains a concern.

A bigger worry, though, will be to keep her from getting injured. As long as that will be taken care of, and Chanu continues her form, India can hope to open its medal tally on the opening day of the Tokyo Games.

YOU ARE FAILING ENTIRE SPORTS COMMUNITY: BINDRA TO YOGESHWAR

Beijing Games gold winner, shooter Abhinav Bindra, criticised current BJP member and Olympic medalist in wrestling Yogeshwar Dutt, who on April 14 tweeted in support of the continuance of the Kumbh Mela.

"No one in the Kumbh Mela is reaching there illegally, people are following all protocols, no one is spitting at the security and medical staff, no one is running away after hiding from the administration. Stop defaming the peaceful devotees at Kumbh. #ThankuTirathji" - **Yogeshwar Dutt** @DuttYogi

"Athletes know to keep their eye on the ball, their focus unwavering & to not get distracted by what is most important at this time—saving lives, finding cures THAT can work & showing compassion & empathy for those who are losing loved ones. If failing the entire sports community with this."

"Should the Kumbh mela even be held while an infectious pandemic lays waste to India? A virus does not discriminate between religions."

-Abhinav A. Bindra OLY @Abhinav_Bindra



Adams did not have any prior criminal records. PNT

too far away from his residence.

Any explanations?

Investigators have not identified any motive to the murders yet. Adams had no prior criminal record. "We have probably more questions than you do right now," York county sheriff Kevin Tolson told reporters. However, Adams' father argued that his son's sporting past had something to do with the events. Alonzo Adams reasoned the shooting rampage was the result of injuries his son sustained during his football career. "I think the football messed him up," he told WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Are the investigators taking this angle seriously?

Adams shot himself dead after a stand-off with police at his home. He had been identified as the person who had opened fire the previous day, eventually killing six people - two senior citizens including a doctor, their two grandchildren, and two air-conditioning technicians - not

who play contact sports - such as boxers and football players - as well as military veterans, likely due to their increased chances of enduring repeated blows to the head.

How can forensic science help in the investigation of Adams' case?

According to The Washington Post, forensic autopsies typically do not identify CTE, but York County Coroner Sabrina Gast said her office will work with Boston University, whose CTE centre has studied the disease for more than a decade, to determine whether Adams had the disease.

Is there any legal options available for NFL players?

There was no testing to assess any brain damage as Adams would not have been eligible for it as part of a broad settlement between the league and former players over such injuries, because he hadn't retired by 2014.

FC Goa play out second consecutive 0-0 in AFC CL

ENS
APRIL 17

HENK TEN Cate, a former Barcelona and Chelsea assistant coach who is now the manager of UAE's Al Wahda, admitted he was surprised at the level of football FC Goa played in the opening Group E match of the AFC Champions League against Qatar's Al Rayyan.

On Saturday, Goa surprised

many more. The Champions

League debutants eked out another hard-fought point at the Nehru Stadium in Margao, frustrating their much-superior opponents to play out a goalless draw, just like they did against Al Rayyan.

But unlike their previous match, Goa would feel the

squandered an opportunity to

earn all three points instead of settling for just one.

Al Wahda were clearly the better of the two sides. Emirati leg-

end Ismail Matar, who has led Al

Wahda to three UAE Football League titles, controlled the play with his wide range of passing skills. Along with Khalil Ibrahim, the 38-year-old came close to scoring on a couple of occasions.

Although on the back foot, Goa never slipped into the ultra-defensive mode and stuck to their ethos: hold on to the ball, fight for possession and pass their way out of trouble. This mindset helped them frustrate Al Wahda and claw

their way into the match, especially in the second half. Goa now

have two points from two games in their maiden Champions League and are placed third in their group, ahead of Al Wahda.

They are yet to score, but haven't conceded either. Their resolve will be tested further on Tuesday, when they take on Persepolis.

The Iranian giants remain firm favourites to win that match. But Juan Ferrando's Goa have shown they are no pushovers on Asia's biggest stage.

Al Wahda were clearly the better of the two sides. Emirati leg-

end Ismail Matar, who has led Al

Ivory Coast Origin 55% Dark Chocolate 125 g | ₹ 150*

Amul Choco Poco 10 g | ₹ 5*

11568041

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Amul Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*

BEST WISHES
Amul Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*

I LOVE YOU
Fruit 'N' Nut 55% Dark Chocolate 500 g | ₹ 200*

Milk Cooking Chocolate 500 g | ₹ 200*

Choco Immuno Chocolate 150 g | ₹ 100*

Amul Choco Poco 10 g | ₹ 5*