

ANALYSIS 7
EXPORT SUBSIDIES
FACE WTO CHALLENGE

MONEY 8
SENSEX TANKS 883 POINTS AS COVID
SPOOKS MARKET; NIFTY BELOW 14,400

SPORTS 12
BRAVO TAKES
CSK TO 188

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY APRIL 20, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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'I'M VERY CRITICAL ABOUT MYSELF'

Page 11

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Chaitra & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam:
Tithi: Ashtami: 12:42 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Punarvasu: 06:52 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 03:22 pm - 04:56 pm
Yamagandam: 09:07 am - 10:41 am
Varjyam: 03:14 pm - 04:55 pm
Gulika: 12:15 pm - 01:48 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 01:17 am - 02:57 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:50 am - 12:40 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 36
Humidity: 42%
Sunrise: 05:56 am
Sunset: 06:33 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated April 19, 2021 5:00 PM

Navy seizes drugs worth Rs 3,000 cr

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Indian Navy has busted an international smuggling racket operating through Arabian sea, seizing narcotics worth Rs 3,000 crore from a Sri Lankan fishing vessel which originated from Pakistan, a Defence spokesman said here on Monday. The Indian Naval Ship "Suvarna", which was on surveillance patrol in the Arabian Sea, also arrested five Sri Lankan nationals on board the vessel, he said.

HC ultimatum to Govt: Curfew or Lockdown!

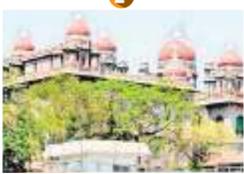
■ Is the state contending for the position of Covid-19 topper in the country, asks HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the government to decide on imposing a lockdown or curfew in the state to contain the spread of Covid-19. "If the government does not act on this in the next 48 hours, we will pass orders," the court said.

A bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B Vijaysen Reddy sought to know if the state was contending for the position of Covid-19 topper state in the country. Describing the affidavit filed by the State government on Covid-19 PIL as "wishy-washy and disappointing", the bench said: "We are unhappy".

Responding to Advocate-General BS Prasad's reply, the CJ remarked "What are you going to make of the people of the State...sitting ducks?"



Centre in control, but states blamed for Covid crisis

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The handling of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by the Central Government, especially its refusal to allow the State Governments to take some specific decisions is causing immense heartburn among the latter, and the anger is building up.

State Governments feel that the Centre has centralised all the issues relating to Coronavirus control, resulting in them appearing to be mere puppets, acting only on the directions of the Union Government, in the eyes of the general public.

State governments complain of not being allowed a free hand to take any decision.

TRS senior leaders say that though the failure of the Central government in controlling the coronavirus pandemic is glaring, it is the State Governments that are getting a bad name.

They point to the fact that

across the country, it is the state governments that are busy with vaccination and the Central Government is responsible for supply of the vaccine doses.

There is huge demand for Covaxin and Covishield in the country. Bharat Biotech, that manufactures Covaxin is located in Hyderabad while Covishield is manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), located in Pune of Maharashtra State.

The fact is that the Government of Telangana state cannot purchase Covaxin from Bharat Biotech directly, nor does the Government of Maharashtra buy Covishield from the SII.

"The Central Government alone is the buyer and supplier of all vaccines to the states. The State governments cannot purchase the vaccines from the companies directly as required by them.



KCR tests positive for Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasehar Rao has tested positive for Covid-19.

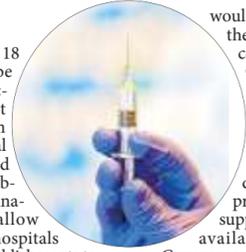
According to Chief Secretary Suresh Kumar, the Chief Minister exhibited mild symptoms and has been advised isolation. He is staying at his farmhouse in Gajwel where a team of doctors is monitoring his health.

All above 18 eligible for vaccine from May 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Everyone above 18 years of age will be eligible to get vaccinated against Covid-19 from May 1, the Central government said on Monday as it liberalised the vaccination drive to allow states, private hospitals and industrial establishments to procure the doses directly from manufacturers.

Under the third phase of the vaccination drive commencing next month, the vaccine manufacturers would supply 50 per cent of their monthly Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) released doses to the Central government and



would be free to supply the remaining 50 per cent doses to State Governments and in the open market.

Manufacturers would have to make an advance declaration of the price for 50 per cent supply that would be available to the State Governments and in the open market before May 1, 2021, an official statement said.

Based on this price, State Governments, private hospitals, industrial establishments, etc would be able to procure vaccine doses from the manufacturers.

Put your money where your mouth is!

■ Bring one national project if you can, KTR challenges Bandi Sanjay

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Challenging Telangana BJP leaders to strive to get national status to at least one project, IT, Industry and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao on Monday said that the saffron party leaders should compete in development of the State instead of indulging in cheap rhetoric.

Addressing a public meeting after initiating various development works in Illantakunda mandal headquarters



in Rajanna Sircilla district here, KTR said that it was not proper for the BJP to provoke people in the name of religion and play cheap politics.

"Did you bring a single paisa, especially to Karimnagar, in the last two years after getting elected as Karimnagar MP? If you have guts, compete with us in development by bringing funds and projects to the State from the Centre. Try to get national project status to either Kaleshwaram or Palamuru-RangaReddy Lift Irrigation projects. Bring more Navodaya schools, national highways," KTR challenged BJP state president Bandi Sanjay.

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Oppn allegations baseless, Modi leading war on Covid efficiently

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the second major war on Coronavirus with the Tika Utsav - beginning from the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar to conclude on that of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule.

Whether one agrees or not, the country is armed with more experience and resources to tackle the virus when compared to last year.

Vaccination is going on at a brisk pace in India compared to other countries. China took 109 days to administer the vaccine to 10 crore people, the USA 89 days but India took only 85 days.

The PM has gone on record hundreds of times that everyone in the country should receive their vaccine and should take precautions till the vaccination programme is

through.

The domestic drug companies are producing the vaccine according to their capacity. The Centre has supplied over 14.5 crore vaccines to states. Another 10 crore vaccines are under transportation.

The Centre states that there is no shortage of vaccine and is supplying it to states according to a plan. However, the states being ruled by opposition parties are politicising the issue complaining of shortage.

Last year, the Centre launched a decisive battle against the pandemic. Under Modi's leadership, everyone, right from Chief Ministers to the common man, endured difficulties to keep the virus at bay. They endured the lockdown clamped on the country for months together.

The Centre announced a series of decisions to support all sectors of activity to face

Last year, the Centre launched a decisive battle against the pandemic. Under Modi's leadership, everyone, right from Chief Ministers to the common man, endured difficulties to keep the virus at bay. They endured the lockdown clamped on the country for months together.

the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic. These measures helped the economy recover.

Today, the economic growth of other nations has slumped to 3.3 percent, while the IMF and World Bank declare that India is poised to achieve a growth of 12.5 per cent.

No one could ignore the leadership of Modi in declaring a decisive war against the virus, encouraging scientists to manufacture the vaccine, cautioning the people to observe

precautions besides receiving the vaccine and taking crucial decisions to help the economy recover.

In spite of the low death rate due to Covid, the Centre did not neglect putting in place precautions.

The Opposition parties are singing a new tune blaming Modi for taking part in rallies extensively in West Bengal and for allowing Kumbh Mela. They blame Modi for rapid spreading of the virus in the country.



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

dared not step on the soil of West Bengal gave up the fight in the middle on the pretext of Covid.

If the wind is favourable to them, Opposition parties harp on one thing, if not, they sing a different tune.

What is the reason for Maharashtra achieving the dubious distinction of reporting the highest number of Covid cases and over 60,000 deaths due to the virus? Are there any elections going on there? Is there Kumbh Mela in Rajasthan which reported over four lakh Covid cases and more than 3,000 deaths due to the virus?

In fact, is there any day when Modi ignored the severity of the pandemic or the people's problems? It is true that he might have addressed

over 20 rallies in West Bengal. Despite his hectic election schedule, he returned to Delhi and reviewed the Covid situation many times in April.

On April 4, he addressed a high-level meeting of officials and reviewed vaccine availability. In connection with the World Health Day on April 7, Modi called upon the people to take precautions to improve their immunity. At the CMS' conference on April 8, he called for a united attack on the virus and made it clear that the people and administrative machinery cannot afford to be lackadaisical.

Launching the Tika Utsav on April 11, he said that the second major war has been declared against the Coronavirus. He called on Governors of various states on

the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar. At another high-level meeting on April 17, Modi reviewed the preparedness of states to face the virus.

He enquired about scaling up the vaccine production, oxygen plants in hospitals, availability of Remdesivir injections and so on. On April 18, he reviewed the Covid situation in his Lok Sabha constituency and on April 19, he reviewed the Covid situation in the country again with officials.

Can anyone say that the PM is not paying attention to Covid in view of the series of review meetings chaired by him and guiding the country to implement remedial measures on a war-footing?

Winning elections is important for Modi but, what is more important is winning the hearts of people.



Vax resumes, but in reduced numbers

ML MELLY MAITREY
HYDERABAD

Administering of Covid vaccination has resumed in government vaccine centres on Monday, but in reduced numbers after government had to give a break for a day on Sunday as the existing vaccines stocks got over by Saturday.

It was not clear whether Telangana government received the expected 2.7 lakh doses on Sunday as announced by the Health Minister Eatela Rajender, but some of those, who were above 45 years of age received the vaccine on Monday in several centres.

However, doctors in a government hospital said that they could administer Covishield to only 130 persons as they received only few. Earlier, the centre used to get 200 doses per day while the number of persons coming to the centre was much less.

Now, more number of people were coming to centres but the quantum of vaccine received by the centres decreased by 35 to 40 per cent due to shortage of supplies from the Centre, hospital sources said.



The Health Minister reiterated that the state has capacity to inoculate 10 lakh persons in the state per a day if the Centre could supply that many vaccine doses.

Meanwhile, many private and corporate hospitals which used ask the people above 45 years of age to register in advance were now asking people to check with the hospitals

on the morning of the day about the availability of the vaccine doses.

In the first phase of vaccination, those who got the first dose of vaccine would get a reminder to come for the second dose after the stipulated interval but now hospitals discontinued that practice because of the uncertainty of the vaccine stocks available with them.

A senior couple, who registered in advance and were given a time slot for the second dose of vaccine had to return home without taking the job as the corporate hospital said the doses supplied for the day were over.

Now one has to go and stand in the queue and the hospital will issue only that many tokens based on the vaccine

doses available with them and other have to try their luck the next day.

Gated communities opting for self-lockdown

Meanwhile, several gated communities and apartment complexes were resorting to self lockdown measures and some restricted the outdoor activities in the open areas and play grounds. This has reduced the outdoor traffic considerably as the residents have been adhering to the guidelines of not using the outdoor facilities.

Lanco Hills, a gated community in Manikonda reported 37 active cases and much more than recorded during the first wave.

Few gated communities in Hi-Tech City, Gachibowli like My Home Jewel, MyHome Avatar etc, the cases are in triple digits and they went for far steeper self imposed restrictions as the Telangana Government was not for imposing lockdown so far.

The managing committee of a gated community sent a communication directing the residents to continue to limit all social interactions, stay put at home unless it was absolutely necessary to go out.

Lengthy queues under hot sun for Remdesivir

ANUSHA PUPPALA
HYDERABAD



With doctors prescribing Remdesivir to every patient with mild to severe symptoms due to sudden spike in Covid cases across Telangana, there's high demand for Remdesivir in city. Several residents were seen in long queues since Monday morning at a unit near Kukatpally Y Junction waiting to get Remdesivir.

Doctors treating Covid patients say that majority of them are rushing to buy Remdesivir, due to anxiety as there is no specific treatment to Covid. For many patients and their families, Remdesivir has become a hope. However, the doctors recommend that the government should keep a strict vigil on the sale and black marketing of Remdesivir.

An activist Sai Teja who witnessed long queues in Kukatpally for Remdesivir on Monday said, "Hundreds of people were seen standing in long queues to buy Remdesivir as five vials are being sold here for Rs 15,000, where as in black market one vial is being sold for Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000. So people are rushing to buy Remdesivir for lesser price."

Dr Jahangir, Vice President, Health Care Reformers Doctors Association (HRDA) said, "In the peak of second wave, there is an increasing demand for Remdesivir. So far, four randomised control trials were conducted on Remdesivir. According to the trails, Remdesivir was not able to reduce mortality. The drug should be used in moderate to severe cases only, as it will only shorten the time for recovery in adults with respiratory infection. Also, it should not be

Two booked for selling Remdesivir for Rs 16K

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With high demand for Remdesivir, city police officials are receiving several complaints against black marketing of Covid emergency medicine in the city.

In one of the cases handled by the Rachakonda police, Remdesivir was sold at Rs 16,000 per vial.

On April 18, 2021 sub-inspector Chaitanya Kumar of Vanasthalipuram received credible information that some persons are selling COVIFOR at higher prices to the needy patients at Raja Rajeshwari Medical shop at BN Reddy Nagar to earn quick buck.

The same was informed to drug inspectors, who con-

ducted raids on the shop. Two persons, who were found to be suspicious near the medical shop were taken into custody. On further inquiry, they admitted that they were illegally selling the Covid emergency injections to the needy patients, for exorbitant prices. The police immediately recorded their confession and seized ten doses of COVIFOR injections.

According to their confessions, the accused Rajesh Kumar used to get COVIFOR medicine from unknown person with an amount of Rs 10,000 and sell it to Gangadri Mahesh for Rs 14,000 and Mahesh used to sell each injection for Rs 16,000.

prescribed over the counter for mild cases and monitoring is required after injection as adverse effects of drug are seen." Dr Naresh, senior resident at Chest Hospital said, "Covid have no specific treatment but some medications like Remdesivir are working with minimal effect, so people

are rushing to get the injection due to anxiety. But it's not a game changer." He further added, "Government should form one action team for Remdesivir injection for genuine supply and should create more awareness among people to not panic and rush to buy the medicine."

KCR tests positive for Covid

Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, TRS working president KT Rama Rao in a tweet said that they have been receiving a lot of messages with concern for KCR wellbeing.

"KCR is a gritty man and a fighter. Am sure he will recover soon with all of your prayers," KTR said about his father.

Put your money where your mouth is!

Continued from page 1

BJP leaders should note that people do not tolerate abusive language. At least now BJP leaders should maintain decorum, KTR said.

Predicting a TRS win in Nagarjuna Sagar and that the BJP candidate would not even retain his deposit, the TRS working president said the TRS would also win elections to Warangal, Khammam municipal corporations and five municipalities. "There should be a healthy competition between political parties for development once elections are done," he said.

Earlier KTR said that a 30-bed hospital would be set up in

Illantakunta and a four-lane road from Siddipet to Illantakunta would be developed. "Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao was determined to sanction funds for development works. New ration cards and pensions would also be sanctioned soon," he said.

The Minister also inaugurated Paddy purchase centre, Central lighting system, mahila sangham building near the bus stand, new building of Tahsildar, rythu vedika, vegetable market at the mandal headquarters.

He expressed happiness at inaugurating works, saying that after KCR became the Chief Minister, many projects that were thought to be impossible

were made possible. "Tanks are brimming with water even in the summer season. The groundwater table went up by 6 metres in Rajanna Sircilla district and Telangana has become a model for the entire country in water conservation," KTR said.

He said he respected all those farmers who gave up lands for Rajarajwara Sagar, Anantagiri reservoirs and said that the Chief Minister was well aware of the problems of displaced people and good compensation was being given to them.

He said that KCR was striving for a State where there are no farmer suicides and all streams, canals and tanks are filled with Kaleshwaram water. "The government is giving Rythu

Bandhu, Rythu Bima and in spite of the financial crisis, Rs 5,250 crore was provided in the Budget for loan waiver. Every hereditary profession, community that depended on tanks is happy today with abundant fish," he said.

In Yasangi season, Telangana would be the leading State in food grain production and last year, the maximum number of paddy purchase centres were set up to buy grain. Even this Yasangi, 6,700 paddy purchase centres were being set up for the benefit of farmers. A Rythu Vedika was set up for every 5,000 acres, Agricultural extension officers were appointed and agriculture was being turned into a festival, KTR said.

All above 18 eligible...

Continued from page 1

Private hospitals would have to procure their supplies of Covid-19 vaccine exclusively from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for entities other than those coming through the Central government channel.

The private vaccination providers would need to transparently declare their self-set vaccination price and the eligibility through this channel would be opened up to all adults, that is everyone above the age of 18, the statement added.

Vaccination will continue as before in the government of India vaccination centres free of cost to the eligible population - healthcare and frontline workers and all people above 45 years of age.

The Union Health Ministry said the important decision to allow vaccination to everyone above the age of 18 from May 1 was taken in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Navy seizes drugs worth...

Continued from page 1

"This is a major catch, not only in terms of the quantity and cost, but also from the perspective of disruption of the illegal narcotics smuggling routes, which emanate from the Makran coast in Pakistan and flow towards the Indian, Maldivian and Sri Lankan destinations," the spokesman said.

Navy sources said the fishing vessel was brought to Kochi on Monday morning. The crew are being jointly interrogated by officials from various agencies, including the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), at the Southern Naval Command (SNC), sources told.

They will be handed over to the NCB for further investigation, they said.

Earlier, the spokesman said INS 'Suvarna' encountered the fishing vessel moving around in a suspicious manner in the Arabian sea.

"To investigate the vessel, the ship's team conducted a boarding and search operation, which led to the seizure of more than 300 kg of narcotics substances," he said.

The approximate value of the seizure in the international market is estimated to be Rs 3,000 crore, he said.

He, however, did not disclose the exact location from where the seizure was effected, or the day.

Apart from the human costs from drug addiction, the spoils of the narcotics trade feed syndicates involved in terrorism, radicalisation and criminal activities, the spokesman added.

HC ultimatum to Govt: Curfew or Lockdown!

Continued from page 1

Stating that "desperate situations" require "desperate actions", the court sought details on how the government is keeping a check on the influx of people entering through other states via bus stations, railway stations and private vehicles.

Court also pulled up the TS government for inadequate measures to contain footfalls in public places like malls, cinema halls, bars, restaurants, pubs, and wine shops, among others.

The court has directed the state government to announce with 48 hours restrictions on footfalls at bars, restaurants, pubs, cinema theatres, marriages, functions, and gatherings, political and religious rallies among others in public places. Justice Kohli said that the court needs to be tough because "it is a question

of life and death of the people."

When the A-G said that the state was following guidelines issued by the Central government, the CJ corrected him stating that the Centre had said States can formulate their own instructions on the issue. The HC directed the government to submit cases registered in GHMC on ward-by-ward basis. The court also sought to know who was appointed the nodal officer to give advice to hospitals and directed the state government to immediately establish a task force for Covid-19 and appoint nodal officers from state-level to village level.

Directing the State Government to post details of Covid cases online, the High Court sought a comprehensive report on the steps taken to contain the spread of the virus and adjourned the case till April 23.

Centre in control, but states...

Continued from page 1

Due to the shortage of vaccines, it is the state governments that are being blamed by the common public, while the Central government is also blaming the State Government for the shortage," said a senior TRS leader on condition of anonymity.

While the state governments are blaming the Centre for inadequate supply of vaccines, the Centre accuses the State governments of mismanaging the administration of doses.

He said that the governments of both the Telugu states are in no position to speak out openly against the Central government on this

issue because of various reasons, including relations with the Centre.

A senior officer of the Telangana government said that the states don't have any free hand in combating the pandemic. "Whatever the Centre orders, the State governments have to act accordingly. Though Covaxin is being manufactured locally in Hyderabad, our Government has to look towards Delhi (centre) to get doses."

An official of AP government said the State governments cannot even take a decision on opening or closing of cinema theatres, bars and pubs. "We have to act as per the Centre's directions," he said.

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Name of Work: CC Road, SW Drain Footpath and Catch pit Works Estimate cost (Rs in lakhs):
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City dirty, officers under scanner

Slack officials not to be spared Covid control rooms to be set up in GHMC

ML MELLY MAITREY
HYDERABAD

In a stern warning to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation officials, Principal Secretary of Municipal Administration and Urban Development Arvind Kumar made it clear that those who failed to take measures to step up sanitation will not be spared.

With the continued dismal state of sanitation in the GHMC and piled up garbage on lanes and by-lanes, even as the coronavirus cases are surging, Arvind Kumar said the city should be rid of piled up garbage within the time frame given by the MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao.

The Minister held a review meeting on Saturday giving a piece of his mind to the commissioners and zonal commissioners of the GHMC and all other urban local bodies in the state and said that the garbage should be lifted as a daily activity and all places of public congregation, be sprayed with disinfectants. After that the city witnessed a flurry of activity on Sunday and Monday.

On Monday, Arvind Kumar held a review meeting at the



GHMC office, took stock of the work done so far and said lifting of garbage should be a daily activity. It was important to curb corona and other epidemics. Lifting of garbage is the primary responsibility of GHMC and the officers should be out on the field every day by 6 am to supervise sanitation work. Stern action would be initiated against officials who did not go on field visits. Any negligence in this responsibility would mean playing with the lives of people, he said.

He also said fines should be imposed on public who dumped garbage on the roads despite several warnings.

Covid Control Room to be set up in GHMC again

Arvind Kumar instructed the officials to start a Covid Control Room in the GHMC limits to inform the citizens about the steps being taken to curb the spread of corona. Senior officers should supervise the control room to make it work round the clock.

Every day large amount of bio-medical waste was being generated in the government and private hospitals every day and inspections be held to ensure that the hospital managements were disposing of biomedical waste as per the

Mayor's sustained efforts making Hyderabad clean

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi inspected the sanitation works on a second consecutive day on Monday. The City Mayor reviewed the Secunderabad zone as part of a special sanitation drive in the city on the instructions of Minister KT Rama Rao. The Mayor visited Musheerabad, Ramnagar Bholakpur, Kavadiyada, Sitaphal Mandi, Begumpet, Kachiguda divisions in Secunderabad zone and observed that garbage piled up on roads left unattended and reprimanded officials for working without dress code.

guidelines, he instructed the commissioners.

Citizens were discarding used masks which were also considered biomedical waste. The GHMC like in the first wave of coronavirus should work in a mission mode during the present second wave. A special nodal team be appointed to

The Mayor, who examined the biometric, was outraged to see that biometric machines are dysfunctional in many places. Vijayalakshmi inspected the roads from 6 am to 11 pm on Monday and urged locals to handover garbage to the garbage collectors of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation who come on Swachh auto tippers instead of throwing them on roads. Finally, the DRF team visited several places where hydro chloride was being sprayed with a jetting machine and the Mayor asked the workers to spray not only on the main roads but also in the local areas.

give suggestions, advice and to meet the requirements of citizens. GHMC Commissioner informed that they were taking measures to lift the garbage from 310 big garbage dumps and 700 temporary garbage transfer centres and vehicles were being pressed into service to lift the garbage before 5 am.

Builders gear up with safety measures for onsite workers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the last year's experiences, builders have been implementing various measures, such as, sanitising the quarters of workers, getting the workers vaccinated, conducting regular health check-ups, providing essential commodities and vegetables at their door step and so on, to protect workers of other states from the pandemic.

In fact, people of 250 sectors are dependent on Hyderabad reality sector for their sustenance. Those who are likely affected are casual workers, masons, marble cutting workers, electricians, painters, site supervisors, civil engineers, builders, developers, sand quarrying workers, sand traders, real estate agents, architects and big industrialists and the list runs long.

There are over 2500 builders in the city providing direct employment to over five lakh people and indirect employment to another five lakh in ancillary sectors. Besides, the realtors provide employment to over 25 lakh families indirectly.

As the skilled workers from Bihar have to be replaced,



Telangana has shortage of skilled labourers. Masons from Bihar, centring workers from Chhattisgarh, UP and MP, plumbers from Odisha, marble, tiles, flooring and false ceiling workers from Rajasthan, elevation workers from West Bengal work in realty projects here.

CREDAI General Secretary Rajasekar Reddy said that the CREDAI will protect the workers from the pandemic. Builders have been providing essential commodities, vegetables to them on site. Provision has been made for thermal screening and medical check ups. In case anyone tests positive for the virus, builders have been asked to provide isolation rooms.

KV Rama Rao, vice-chairman of Sumadhura group, has appealed to Centre to take up permanent measures to guarantee work to the realty workers. He urged it to bring out a policy on migration for skilled workers in case they are not available locally. He suggested giving them all-India ration card, unique labour ID number, insurance cover and other facilities.

Giridhari Homes Chairman Indrasena Reddy said that wearing of masks, sanitising hands and other precautions are being implemented. Some of the workers want to go back to their native places. They have been convinced to observe precautions and sustain their livelihoods.

GO GREEN

Developing Palle Prkruthi Vanams in the villages is one of the best initiatives taken up by the state government. Hitherto, parks were seen only in towns and cities but with the government's innovative thinking, villagers will be able to enjoy the luxury of green parks. Every village must have a beautiful park to cater the morning and evening refreshment for villagers. This one is from Kanha Village in Ranga Reddy district. As many as 1,000 saplings of different varieties such as fruit-bearing and shade-providing plants have been planted in the park along with flower plants. A walking track with benches has also been laid in the part for the convenience of the locals. The park is also secured with link fencing to prevent stray dogs and other domestic animals from entering the park.



4,009 new virus cases, 14 deaths in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana logged 4,009 new Covid-19 cases and 14 deaths during the 24-hour period.

The number of cases dropped from 5,093 as the authorities conducted fewer tests over the week-end.

During the 24-hour period that ended 8 pm Sunday, 83,089 tests were conducted while 1,29,637 samples were tested the previous day.

The fresh cases pushed the state's cumulative tally to 3,55,433 while 14 deaths have taken the fatality toll to 1,838.

According to a bulletin by the state health department, the case fatality remained at 0.51 per cent against the national average of 1.2 per cent. Almost all parts of the state continue to see a surge in the cases. Greater Hyderabad and surrounding districts remained the worst affected along with the districts bor-



dering Maharashtra. The state capital reported 705 new cases. Medchal Malkajgiri and Rangareddy district adjoining Hyderabad reported 363 and 336 cases respectively.

As many as 13 out of total 33 districts in the state added more than 100 cases during the last 24-hours. Nizamabad district bordering Maharashtra saw 360 new cases followed by 264 in Sangareddy, 175 in Jagtial, 146 in Warangal Urban, 135 in Karimnagar, 129 in Mahaboobnagar, 125 in Siddipet and 115 in Kamareddy.

CITY LIGHTS

Free 'last ride service' resumes in Cyberabad

With increasing number of calls for transportation of bodies of Covid victims to crematoriums, Feed the Needy team in Cyberabad on Monday resumed its free 'last ride service'. In view of increasing number of calls from families of the Covid victims during the ongoing second wave of the pandemic, Cyberabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar had sought resumption of the service. The vehicle was flagged off by the Commissioner on Monday. The 'last ride service' will cater to carry bodies of Covid or non-Covid deceased belonging to any caste or creed. The services will be available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The team will also take care of cremation of any deceased body where any near or dear ones are not available to take care of last rites. Citizens can avail the service by calling on 7995404040 or 9490617440. Feed the Needy is a team of 10 IT professionals, who has been in forefront in serving the society. The team helped in cremation of 210 people from July 4, 2020 to December 31, 2020. These included 150 Covid deaths.



Two policemen die due to Covid in Hyderabad limits

Two policemen working in different police stations in the Hyderabad City Police limits passed away due to Covid. An Assistant Sub-inspector Radhakrishna working at Bowenpally Police Station passed away on Monday at a private hospital while undergoing treatment. The ASI was admitted on April 8 at the hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19. He was also fighting other health issues as well, officials said. In the second incident, a head constable attached to the Daberpura Police Station passed away due to COVID-19 at a private hospital. T Jitender was admitted to hospital after he tested positive earlier this month and died while undergoing treatment early on Monday.

SCR adds record 308.8 km track to its railway network

Despite Covid pandemic, South Central Railway (SCR) has added a record 308.8 km track to its railway network, which is perhaps the highest in the financial year history of the zone. The achievement also includes commissioning of 42.5 km of new railway lines, 161.5 km of double lines, 60.4 km of third lines and 44.4 km of gauge conversion works. That's not all, 750 track km of railway lines were also electrified. The maximum permissible speed across 3,593 track km has been enhanced, while golden quadrilateral and high density network routes were sanctioned for 130 kmph. In addition, provision of double distant signals for length of 100 route km was taken up zone according to SCR officials, during the last financial year, the zone witnessed unprecedented challenges in lockdown and also in operation of special trains. However, with efforts put by staff, the zone has recorded major achievements. The zone came up with a variety of new services such as exclusive milk special trains, parcel express to Bangladesh, which led to registering the best ever parcel revenue of Rs. 108 crores.



Hyd has more Aadhaar cards than population

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The city created a record in issuing the Aadhaar cards. It issued more cards than the local population. This is attributed to migrant workers and students registering their names for Aadhaar cards from Hyderabad, leading to issuing more cards than the local population.

According to the UIDAI statistics, over 1.21 crore received Aadhaar card in Hyderabad. The metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai occupied the next two places because of very high migrant population there too.

People from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Jarkhand, Bihar, MP, Odisha, Rajasthan and those from the North-East migrate to here because of educational and employment opportunities here. Moreover, the city has become IT, health and industrial hub. Students who

arrive here for education live here for years altogether. As a result, several civic services, banking and other activities Aadhaar serves as a valid identity. The population growth in city has come down. The growth rate was 28.91 per cent during 1991-2001 period, while it came down to 26 per cent by 2011 and further down to 17 per cent by 2017. According to 2011 census, the city population is 74.04 lakh, but it reached 93.06 lakh by 2017. Currently, the population stands at 1.10 crore. The UIDAI has set up its regional office and the first of its direct Aadhaar Service Centre at Reliance Cyber Ville in Madhapur. Daily at least 1000 people register for Aadhaar cards and update the information on the card. To do this, they have to book a slot in the UIDAI portal and visit the office at the scheduled day and time. The centre serves people from morning to evening on all seven days in a week.

Toddler sold by father rescued by Hyderabad cops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rajendranagar police on Monday rescued a two-month-old boy, who was sold by his father last week.

According to the police, Syed Hyder had sold the child to a relative a few days ago to make money to clear a loan. The relative then sold the baby to another couple, police said. Based on a complaint from the child's mother, Shahana Begum, the police registered a case and took Hyder into custody. Following the hints he gave, police tracked the couple and rescued the child.

Self-prescription could be dangerous, warn doctors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Covid surge across the country has not just led to a scramble for hospital beds but has also resulted in people opting for self-prescribed treatment models which could prove dangerous.

Liver, one of the most vital organs of the human body could get impacted due to self-administered medications, warned doctors on the eve of World Liver Day on April 19.

"Use of self-prescribed antibiotics is a common practice by many individuals, to fight ailments like fever, cough,

cold, which are also considered common symptoms of Covid. However, it is important to note that antibiotics do not work against viruses; and they only work on bacterial infections," said Dr NY Prashanth Chandra, Consultant - Internal Medicine, Gleneagles Global Hospitals.

"Covid is caused by a virus, so antibiotics do not work, and antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment of Covid-19. It is important people understand this fundamental difference before opting for any self-prescribed treatment protocols,"

he said.

According to Dr Anusha Karra, Internal Medicine, Western Plains Hospital, Dodge City, the US, physicians at hospitals might sometimes use antibiotics to prevent or treat secondary bacterial infections which can be a complication of Covid, and that too among severely ill patients. "This medication should only be used under supervision of a physician to treat a bacterial infection. Instead, using antibiotics as immunity boosters could lead to arrhythmias and complicate the health condition," he added.

MP frontliner airlifted to Hyd for Covid treatment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Satyendra Mishra, a frontline doctor of Bundelkhand Medical College in Madhya Pradesh, was airlifted to Hyderabad for Covid treatment.

The air ambulance carrying Dr Mishra from Bhopal landed at Begumpet Airport and from there he was shifted to Yashoda Hospital.

Dr Mishra had been treating Covid patients for more than

a year. He recently contracted the virus and after his condition turned critical, health authorities in Madhya Pradesh decided to airlift him to Hyderabad for advanced treatment.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had assured all help for Dr Mishra's treatment after his colleagues at Bundelkhand Medical College appealed for help to save him.

Metro rail connectivity to RGIA to take shape soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For so many years Shamshabad has by far been the only focal point for an international airport, but from now on, it will become a hub not only for the aviation sector but also for various business and commercial activities with the new metro rail to the airport from IT corridor coming up.

With the recent allocation of Rs 1,000 crore initial funds to the Hyderabad Metro Rail Corporation in the state budget, metro officials are preparing to start the works on the second phase of the metro rail for another 80 km of the metro



corridor. As part of the second phase of the Metro, proposals have already been drawn up for the construction of a 31 km Metro Corridor from Rayadurgam Metro Station in the IT Corridor to Shamshabad

Airport via the Gachibowli Outer Ring Road.

Metro officials are planning to start the work with the DPR prepared by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. Meanwhile, the newly set up 'Aero City' at Shamshabad Airport on 1,500

acres is set to become a hub for new business and commercial complexes in that area. With this, Shamshabad will become another business district centre, similar to Gachibowli Financial District, which has become a hub for IT and IT-

based services.

By now, with the first phase of metro rail works, 69 km long-range metro services are being provided to the public in the corridors. While in the second phase, another 80 km of the metro corridor will be constructed. In this second phase, the most important corridor is the 31 km route from the IT corridor to Shamshabad Airport.

For this purpose, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) has been set up under the name of Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited. In addition to the Hyderabad Metro Rail, it has been decided to build the

Airport Metro Corridor in collaboration with the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), TSIC and GMR Airport.

The project, which is being undertaken jointly by the four companies, will expedite the completion of an improved, state-of-the-art public transport system from the city to the airport.

Metro officials are of the view that the land acquisition in the Shamshabad Airport Metro Corridor, which is 31 km long, will not be required and this route would cost around Rs 4,000 crore only.

TSIC-INDUSTRIAL AREA LOCAL AUTHORITY
AEP GUNDLAPACHAMPALLY

SHORT TENDER NOTICE NO.01/C/MINR/TSIC-IALA/AEP/OPP/2021-22, Dated: 20-04-2021

Tender Schedule is invited for the Sealed Quotations Tender by the undersigned for the following work of lumpsum contract basis and to be received by the officers indicated below from all DWACRA / SHG groups who have ESI & EPF and labour registration in Medchal Circle / Local Contractors and who have experience in the works of similar kind below. The applicants should invariably have valid EPF/ESI and Solvency Certificate, PAN, GST Registration, Experience Certificate and Labour Registration are enclosed in the Tender Schedule (Request for Proposal). (1) Process Fee (RFP) along with Tender Schedule (Non Refundable) - Rs.5000.00 in the shape of DD on any Nationalised Bank in favour of TSIC-IALA A/c (Revenue) (2) Tender Schedule Cost - Rs.5000.00 in the shape of DD on any Nationalised Bank in favour of TSIC-IALA A/c (Revenue) (3) Security Deposit (RFP Successor) - Rs.1,00,000.00 in the shape of DD on any Nationalised Bank in favour of TSIC-IALA A/c (Revenue). (4) Tender Schedule (RFP) issued from: 22-04-2021 (5) Last Date of issue of Tender Schedule (RFP): 28-04-2021 at Zonal Office. (6) Last Date & Time of receipt of Tenders (RFP): on or before 29-04-2021 upto 12:00 Noon (7) Date and Time of Opening Tenders (RFP): 29-04-2021 at 03:00pm at Zonal Office. Name of the Works: (1) Sweeping and Clearing of all roads and Door to Door collection of Garbage, Maintenance of Drains in IALA/AEP Gundlapachampally. Approx value of work put to tender (11 months): Rs.13,80,755.75. Tender Schedule (RFP) Process Fee Rs.5000/- (2) Providing Security Services at AEP Gundlapachampally: Approx value of work put to tender (11 months): Rs.5,61,836.20. Tender Schedule (RFP) Process Fee - Rs.5000/-. Officer authorized to receive the Tender Schedule and issue Tender Schedule: Commissioner, TSIC-IALA, Gundlapachampally. DD to be obtained in favour of TSIC-IALA (REVENUE). Period of Completion: 11 Months (i.e., from 01-05-2021 to 31-03-2022). Conditions of Tender Notice may be obtained from office of the Zonal Manager, Jeedimetla on all working days from 10:30 a.m to 05:00 pm.

54/ COMMISSIONER TSIC-IALA
Gundlapachampally

OFFR No:1722P/AGC/NDV/11/2021-22, Dt:19-04-2021

Ministers foresee clean sweep for TRS in Warangal civic polls

PNS ■ WARANGAL

All surveys indicated the TRS would make a clean sweep in 66 divisions in Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation elections, asserted Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development and Rural Water Supply Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

However, he suggested to party workers to put in hard work and take it as a challenge to win the elections, he said.

He conducted a review meeting with TRS party in-charges of 66 divisions under GWMC in Hanmakonda on Monday. Ministers Eatala Rajender, Koppala Eshwar and Satyavathi Rathod gave inputs on elections.

State Government Planning Commission vice-president B Vinod Kumar, Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, several MLAs and other public representatives were present at the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, the ministers said that the TRS will win the GWMC elections with a huge majority. They called upon the party cadre to work unitedly to ensure the victory of candidates in all the



divisions with a bumper majority.

"They exhorted the party workers to work in a mission mode and said that there was no place for the opposition in this election and they would lose their deposits.

"Let us explain to the people the progress we have made and repel the false propaganda of lies and untruths of the BJP."

MLC and former Deputy Chief Minister Kadiam Srihari, MLAs Peddi Sudarshan Reddy, Nannapaneni Narendar, Satish Kumar, Gandra Venkataramana Reddy, Sunke Ravishankar, Desari Manohar Reddy, TSIC Chairman G Balamallu, GHMC ex-Mayor Bonthu Rammoohan and other leaders spoke.

Election observer inspects polling stations in WGL

PNS ■ WARANGAL URBAN

Christina Z Chongthu, Commissioner, Tribal Welfare Department, who has been appointed General Election Observer for Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), inspected the polling stations here on Monday.

Warangal Urban District Collector Rajivgandhi Hanumanth, along with Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation Commissioner Pamela Satpathi, accompanied the General Election Observer.

Christina Z Chongthu inspected the facilities provided to voters at the polling stations at Warangal Public School and Government Kakatiya Degree College in the city. Elaborate arrangements will be made in all polling stations for the convenience of voters to exercise their franchise sans any problems, she said.

District Election Officer and Urban District Collector Rajivgandhi Hanumanth said that 878 polling stations have been identified for all the 66 wards under the GWMC and all arrangements are being made as directed by the Election Commission.

Each polling station will have a capacity of not more than 800 voters. The polling stations will be equipped with ramps, wheelchairs, volunteers, summer shelters and drinking water facilities, along with basic amenities.

"We are taking steps to ensure that the elections are held peacefully," GWMC General Election Observer said. They are accompanied by municipal, revenue and other officials.

GWMC polls: 55 nominations rejected

PNS ■ WARANGAL

A total of 55 nominations were rejected due to insufficient information by the candidates on Monday. The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) authorities have taken up the scrutiny of the nominations. In all, 1,765 nominations were filed by the candidates for 66 wards in the GWMC. After the scrutiny, 1,710 sets of nominations were approved and 1,066 candidates are on the list. According to authorities, 688 candidates from the TRS, 286 from the BJP, 240 from the Congress, 19 from the TDP, 12 from the CPM, one from CPI, 410 Independents and two candidates claiming themselves as the YSRCP. Till date, no political party has given B forms to the candidates. April 22 is the last date for the withdrawal of nominations.

21 test positive for virus in tests done in Collectorate

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

District Collector I Sarman on Monday has appealed to people of the district to remain alert in the wake of increasing Covid cases in the district.

He inspected the progress of rapid antigen tests conducted on the premises of district collectorate on Monday and gathered statistics. He said that daily 4000 people are being vaccinated against the virus, while 3000 diagnostic tests are being conducted.

Health officials told the District Collector that out of 122 tested on Monday, 21 villagers who arrived here to lodge their grievances with the collectorate tested positive for the virus.

The Collector exhorted the people to give no room for any complacency as far as the Corona virus is concerned. The number of Covid-19 cases is increasing daily at the rate of 9.73%.

He asked officials to take fail proof measures to rein in the virus and conduct 3000 tests per day without fail.

He advised people against coming out of their homes unless it is absolutely essential. He suggested wearing masks to them. The people's participation is necessary, in spite of the governmental measures to rein in the virus.



CONTRADICTION ON COVID

CPI finds fault with Health Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPI state secretary Chada Venkat Reddy found fault with the contradictory statements of Minister for Health Eatala Rajender and Health and Medical director Srinivasa Rao. Srinivasa Rao stated that the Corona will spread through the air, however, Eatala stated that Corona will not spread through the air, Chada pointed out and alleged that the controversial statements show that the government has no understanding of Corona.

He alleged that the government heads are busy in election campaigns instead of initiating steps to control the Coronavirus.

In a statement issued on Monday, Chada said that these different statements will mislead the people. The government has the responsibility of creating awareness among the people, he exhorted. He said that the poor and daily wage workers were facing a lot of troubles with the Corona protocol.

He alleged that there is a shortage of vaccines as the Central government exported the vaccines to other countries. The Central government would not have exported vaccines till the completion of vaccination drive in the country, however, the government did against it to gain praise from other nations.

Postpone municipal polls, demands Sravan Dasoju

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC National Spokesperson Sravan Dasoju on Monday demanded that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao postpone the municipal elections immediately considering the prevailing Covid second wave.

The senior Congress leader while referring to the High Court's serious warnings in which it had asked the government whether 'bar and beer' shops are important, or the lives of the people, who are severely suffering from the deadly virus, he asked to declare a health emergency in Telangana to protect the citizens from being ruined with poor health infrastructure and lack of basic facilities like beds, oxygen, ventilators and medicines such as Remdesivir,

Vitamin C, Zinc and Calcium tablets.

According to him, even the Covid-19 special emergency responsive system 104 is not working and one-third of the health care staff positions are lying vacant. Sravan slammed KCR for favouring a few private hospitals by allowing them to loot innocent people with exorbitant and irrational charges while treating Covid-19 patients.

The AICC leader lamented that the vaccine is not available although it's being manufactured in Hyderabad itself amplifies the negligent behaviour of the government.

"With political greed, KCR is behaving like a Nero emperor, who fiddled while Rome was burning and he is playing dirty politics on the dead bod-

ies like a witch. Even after a year of the pandemic attack, the Chief Minister has miserably failed to prepare well in advance to face the situation. There are no beds available in government hospitals, no oxygen is available and even the basic medicine like Remdesivir injections, Vitamin C, Zinc and Calcium tablets. KCR is busy guiding TRS leaders on how to win the elections and forgetting to review the prevailing pathetic conditions in the state," Sravan fired.

He demanded for an immediate postponement of municipal elections in two Municipal Corporations and five municipalities to focus on curtailing the virus spread and making necessary arrangements to protect the citizens of Telangana.

Shabbir files plea urging HC to postpone municipal polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The High Court made it clear that it will not stop the ongoing local bodies' elections and the State Election Commission has to take a decision on it. The court made it clear that the State Election Commission has to take a final decision on the conduct of elections. The court posted the case to June 7, however, the court served notices on the State government and State Election Commission to examine the issues raised by the petitioner.

Congress senior leader and former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir filed a petition in the High Court seeking the postponement of the ongoing two municipal corporations and

- HC makes it clear that SEC has to take a final decision
- HC serves notices on SEC and govt to examine the issue



five municipalities' elections. He filed a Lunch Motion petition urging the court to direct the State Election Commission to postpone the corporation and municipal elections in view of the intensity of Corona in the state.

BJP, TRS left people to God's Mercy: Saleem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC secretary Mohammad Saleem alleged that the TRS and the BJP are not worried of the people, who are suffering from the deadliest pandemic of the century. BJP leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were campaigning in elections in West Bengal and Assam ignoring all the constitutional responsibilities towards the people.

The casualties are increasing day by day as there is a shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines for the Covid patients.

But, the PM is busy in public meetings ignoring all Covid protocols whereas Rahul Gandhi has cancelled all the election meetings and appealed to parties to do the same in the larger interest of public, he pointed out.

In a statement here on Monday, Saleem alleged that TRS Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao left the people to the mercy of God. Both the BJP and TRS have shown their anti-minority policies by declaring elections in the month of Ramazan for five states and urban local bodies in Telangana.

Manickam's wishes for KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress Affairs In-charge and Congress Working Committee (CWC) permanent invitee Manickam Tagore has tweeted stating "Wishes for the speedy recovery of Telangana CM K Chandrasekhar Rao Garu", after learning that KCR has tested Corona positive.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has released a statement on Monday stating that the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao tested positive for Covid.

He has mild symptoms and has been advised isolation and a team of doctors is monitoring his condition.

Officials asked to start paddy procurement centre in Bhupalapalli

PNS ■ BHUPALAPALLI

Bhupalapalli district collector Krishna Aditya on Monday directed authorities to immediately start paddy procurement centres as paddy harvesting has begun in some parts of the district and procure paddy at MSP.

He asked the officials to give tokens to the farmers and ensure that the farmers bring their paddy on the date mentioned in the tokens. He asked them to ensure that the moisture content of paddy should not exceed the limit prescribed.

He asked the civil supplies district manager Raghavender to ensure availability of electronic weighing machines, paddy cleaners, gunny bags and tarpaulins at the pro-

curement centres.

He asked officials to take steps to administer vaccine to the people of Garmillapalli village in Tekumetla mandal where the Covid cases are on the rise. He asked the DRDA official Purushottam to take steps to provide benefit to the physically challenged unemployed under various schemes. He asked Mission Bhagiradha engineers to register cases against those who steal water from mission bhagiradha water pipelines.

District welfare officer Sridevi, district animal husbandry officer Dr Kumaraswamy, district industries centre manager Srinivas, district fisheries department official Bhaskar and others took part in the meeting.

MLA inaugurates paddy procurement centres

PNS ■ NARSAPUR

Narsapur MLA Madan Reddy on Monday exhorted farmers to make good use of the paddy procurement centres and get MSP for their paddy.

Speaking after inaugurating the paddy procurement centre at market yard along with the market committee chairman Ashok Goud, he said the government set up procurement centres to save farmers from middlemen and offering MSP for their produce.

Later, he inaugurated the procurement centre at Kagaz Maddur.

Telangana Labour Welfare



Chairman Devender Reddy, TRS leader Ashok Goud, ZPTC Babya Naik, municipal vice chairman Nayeem, ATMA committee chairman Siva Kumar and others were present on the occasion.

DEVELOPMENT AT ITS BEST



Minister for IT and Municipal Administration KT Rama Rao inaugurated Paddy Procurement Centre in Ilanthakunta mandal headquarters in Rajanna Sircilla district on Monday. A vegetable vendor tying a talisman to the Minister.

Stage set for electoral battle in Siddipet

A CHANDRASHEKHAR ■ SANGAREDDY

The battle has begun for the Siddipet municipal elections with TRS leaders exuding confidence over the party victory. However, the BJP, too, leaving no stone unturned to repeat the Dubbak bypoll victory. The contest in the Siddipet municipality elections was mainly between the TRS and the BJP. Elections will be held on April 30. Notably, the number of wards has been increased from 34 to 43. In all, 1,00,653 voters are there in the municipality.

The scrutiny of nominations took place on Monday. A total of 575 nominations were received for 43 wards. Nominations filed from hopefuls as the major parties did not finalise their candidatures. This created tension among the candidates over who would get the ticket. So far TRS has announced the names of 24 candidates while the exercise is underway on the remaining wards. Over 210 nominations filed by the TRS, BJP 119, Congress 56, MIM 10 and independents 177. With the possibility of submitting B-forms till April 21, parties are stepping in



TRS releases fourth list

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao released the fourth list of party candidates here on Monday. Nayini Chandram Madiga from 2nd ward, Srinivas Yadav from 12th ward, Rapelli Vithoba from 13th ward, Bandaram Sriharsha Raju from 32nd ward, Deepthi Nagaraju from 39th ward and Gundla Yogi from 25th ward.

on the selection of candidates. A total of 575 nominations were filed, of which the number of those whose tickets would be officially finalised did not exceed 50. The TRS has so far announced 24 names while the BJP has announced 21. All parties are expected to announce their candidates on Monday or Tuesday. Doubts have been expressed as to whether the BJP will continue its winning streak

in the Siddipet municipal war or not. The BJP, which tasted success with the Dubbak byelections and the GHMC polls, is trying to repeat it. However, TRS leaders believe that development work will ensure victory for them. TRS activists are of the view that under the leadership of Minister Harish Rao, Siddipet will be the best district in the state and the TRS flag will fly over the municipality yet again.

Gangula receives first dose, terms vaccine '100 percent' safe

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar on Monday inspected the vaccination centre being run at the RTC workshop here and enquired from doctors there the progress and received the first shot of the vaccine.

Speaking in this connection, he appealed to the people to not to entertain any qualms about the vaccine and termed the vaccine as 100 per cent safe. It would protect the people from the pandemic without any doubt.

He interacted with the vaccination centre personnel and amenities being provided there. He spoke to officials there on availability of vaccine and ordered availability of the vaccine round the clock there. To protect oneself from the virus, one has to wear mask and observe physical distance in spite of receiving the vaccine shot, he said.

The Covid virus impact on some is very severe; he said adding that the virus as it is not fatal.

Curb illegal mining, demands Kisan Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Kisan Congress demanded that the Department of Mines and Geology director stop the sand mafia's illegal activities in the state. It urged the director to punish the sand mafia, which is resorting to attacks on farmers. The Kisan Congress also asked the director to initiate action against those persons for transporting the sand more than the permissible limit. It said that there is a danger of groundwater level depletion if they do mining as they wished.

Kisan Congress national vice-president M Kodanda Reddy and state president Anvesh Reddy and others met the director of the department of Mines and Geology at the temporary Secretariat on Monday and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

They demanded in their memorandum that the Department of Mines and Geology has to take stringent action on criminal attacks by sand mining operators and drivers on farmers and citizens.

The prevailing atmosphere of threat by the sand mining

mafia has to be tackled head-on by the government and police. Undertake a survey of all streams, rivulets and other water bodies to mark them dangerous for sand mining, similar to 'dark zones' declared with groundwater depletion.

"A set of criteria can be developed for such declaration, wherein protection of farmers and agricultural production gets priority. Farmers have to be involved in monitoring and oversight of sand mining, in all streams, tanks and rivers, including agricultural lands. Constitute mandal, district and state-level committees with officials of revenue, agriculture, mining and water resources departments and police to curb the illegal sand mining and transportation in the State, they said.

"Appoint district-level sand mining impact assessment committees, which should be mandated to review sand mining leases from environmental perspectives. Take stringent action on illegal sand mining leases, and impose punitive royalty payments on them, along with initiation of criminal procedures," they stated.



Covid: India logs record surge of 2,73,810 new cases, 1,619 fatalities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

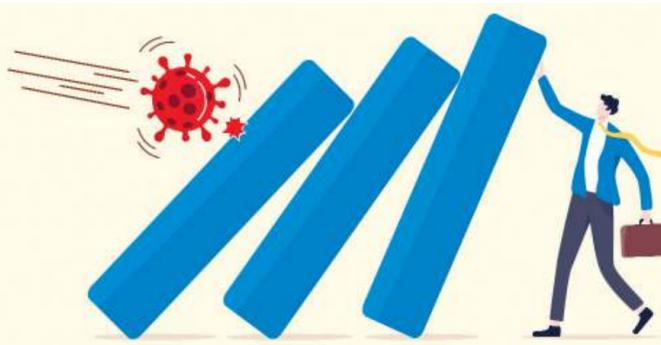
India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed the 1.50-crore mark with around 25 lakh cases being added in just 15 days, while active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The nationwide tally of COVID-19 cases mounted to 1,50,61,919 with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 coronavirus infections.

The death toll increased to 1,78,769 with a record 1,619 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The country's total COVID-19 infections had surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19 after which it took 107 days to cross the 1.25 crore on April 5. However, it only took 15 days for the cases to cross the 1.50-crore mark.

Registering a steady increase for the 40th day in a row, the



active cases increased to 19,29,329, comprising 12.81 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has dropped to 86 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,29,53,821 and the case fatality rate has further

dropped to 1.19 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on

November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. According to the ICMR, 26,78,94,549 samples have been tested up to April 18 with 13,56,133 samples being tested on Sunday.

The 1,619 new fatalities include 503 from Maharashtra, 170 from Chhattisgarh, 161

from Delhi, 127 from Uttar Pradesh, 110 from Gujarat, 81 from Karnataka, 68 from Punjab, 66 from Madhya Pradesh, 50 from Jharkhand, 42 each from Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, 29 from Haryana, 28 from West Bengal and 25 from Kerala.

A total of 1,78,769 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 60,473 from Maharashtra, 13,351 from Karnataka, 13,113 from Tamil Nadu, 12,121 from West Bengal, 9,830 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,902 from Punjab and 7,410 from Andhra Pradesh.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

'Congress-ruled states busy raising doubts about vaccines'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hitting back at senior Congress leader Manmohan Singh for his critique of the government's COVID-19 management, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Monday alleged the second wave of the pandemic was instead fuelled by Congress ruled states as they were busy raising doubts about vaccines rather than vaccinating people.

Responding to Singh's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vardhan also said that the letter drafters of the senior Congress leader have done a great disservice to his standing.

Acknowledging that while Singh understands the importance of vaccination as an important method of fighting the COVID-19 battle, Vardhan said in his letter that "irresponsible" public pronouncements made by some Congress leaders have resulted in a below national average vaccination coverage of senior citizens and even front-line workers in some of the Congress-ruled states.



Tweeting the letter to Singh, the health minister said, "History shall be kinder to you Dr Manmohan Singh ji if your offer of 'constructive cooperation' and valuable advice was followed by your @INCIndia leaders as well in such extraordinary times!"

Singh on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Modi suggesting five measures to battle the COVID-19 crisis, including ramping up vaccination and boosting supply of medicines. Vardhan said, "People in responsible positions in your party as well as in the state governments formed by your party do

not seem to share your view."

He expressed shock that senior members of the Congress party are yet to utter a single word of gratitude towards scientists and vaccine manufacturers for innovating under trying circumstances and empowering the world with vaccines.

"Let alone thanking our scientists, many Congress members and Congress ruled state governments have taken extraordinary interest in spreading falsehoods regarding the efficacy of these vaccines, thereby fuelling vaccine hesitancy, and playing with the lives of our countrymen."

INDIA CORNER

Over 1.22 crore people vaccinated in Maharashtra so far

A total of 1,22,83,050 people have so far received COVID-19 vaccine in Maharashtra, the state government said on Monday. On Sunday, 1,27,079 beneficiaries received the jobs in 1,515 sessions, an official statement said. So far, 10,67,486 health care workers have received their first dose of vaccine, it said, adding that 5,42,627 health care workers have got their second dose. Similarly, 11,13,691 frontline workers have till now taken the first dose and 3,67,965 of them have been administered the second dose, it said. So far, 87,86,940 aged above 45 have received their first dose and 4,04,341 have taken their second dose, the statement said.



Summer vacation in Bengal schools to start from April 20

The West Bengal government on Monday said summer vacation in schools will begin from as early as Tuesday in view of rising COVID-19 cases in the state. The summer break usually starts from the first week of May. "Classes for 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th standard had resumed from mid-February (in state-aided and state-run schools). "But, due to the present COVID-19 situation, we are forced to prepone the summer vacation. The education department will issue necessary notifications today," Education Minister Partha Chatterjee said. Chatterjee said he would also urge private schools to follow suit. The decision comes amid reports of many teachers in schools testing positive in the past two months. The headmaster of a state-run school in Jadavpur, however, told PTI that online classes will continue for students of Class 10 and 12 during the vacation "or the early phase of the vacation".



Odisha reports record 14,445 new Covid cases

Odisha reports record 4,445 new COVID-19 cases, interstate bus services Odisha on Monday reported the highest ever single-day rise in COVID-19 cases as 4,445 people tested positive, pushing the coastal state's tally to over 3.72 lakh, a senior official said. Four more people died in the state, following which the toll rose to 1,948, he said. The previous daily high was recorded on September 25 last year when the state reported 4,356 cases. All 30 districts in the state reported new cases, the official said. Of the new cases, 2,574 were reported from the quarantine centres, while the rest 1,871 were local contacts. Sundergarh, bordering Chhattisgarh, reported the highest 722 new cases. Khurda reported 587 cases, followed by Nuapada (437), Kailashandi (273), Cuttack (251) and Sambalpur (241).



Take up only urgent matters via video conference: Delhi HC

In view of an exponential rise in COVID-19 cases in the national capital, the Delhi High Court on Monday ordered district courts to take up only urgent matters and that too through video conferencing. Delhi on Sunday recorded the biggest jump in its daily COVID-19 tally with 25,462 fresh cases, while the positivity rate shot up to 29.74 per cent — meaning almost every third sample being tested in the city is turning out to be positive. The direction by the high court comes a day after it decided that from April 19 onwards it will only take up "extremely urgent matters" filed this year. In the office order issued in respect of the subordinate courts, the high court said, "In view of the alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, in continuation of this court's office order dated April 8, 2021, it is ordered that all the judicial officers of district courts in Delhi shall take up only urgent cases of their respective courts, through video-conferencing mode." It is further ordered that all other matters listed before Delhi district courts be adjourned en bloc by respective courts and information in this regard be uploaded on the website(s) of Delhi district courts," the order, issued by the office of the Delhi High Court Registrar General, Manoj Jain, said.



Delhi court judge dies of COVID-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 47-year-old district court judge succumbed to COVID-19 at a government hospital here on Monday.

Kovai Venugopal, who was a judge at the Saket Family Court, died at 11 am at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Naryana Hospital. According to the court sources, he was admitted to the hospital on Sunday and was being treated in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward.

Saket Bar Association secretary Dhir Singh Kasana alleged that the incident was a result of 'negligence on the part of the government'.

Cabinet secy to discuss on medical oxygen with states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba has convened a meeting of chief secretaries and senior officials of 10 states and Delhi on Monday to discuss the issue of medical oxygen, officials said.

There have been reports of shortage of the medical oxygen for COVID-19 patients in different parts of the country in the last few days due to a surge in cases.

The meeting is scheduled at 3 pm and it will be held virtually. The cabinet secretary has convened a video conference for Monday on the issue of medical oxygen with chief secretaries and senior officials of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh,



Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi, a government official said.

The Centre on Friday had directed states to ensure uninterrupted movement of medical oxygen carrying vehicles borders and said

that they must not impose any curb on production and supply of the essential public health commodity anywhere. On Sunday, the government banned supply of oxygen to industrial units, except in nine specified categories.

NGT fiat to Jal Shakti Ministry on groundwater

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Ministry of Jal Shakti to consider the extent to which groundwater extraction can be allowed for swimming pools in water deficit areas.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice A K Goel said since drinking water is first priority, reckless extraction of groundwater to the detriment of environment could not be allowed so that needy persons can access drinking water.

The NGT said that extraction of groundwater in water scarcity areas also affects the flow of the rivers and the potential for recharge of the groundwater

sources. Thus, the supply and demand of groundwater were required to be balanced for sustainable development, it said.

"Ministry of Jal Shakti may consider the extent to which groundwater extraction can be allowed for swimming pools in water deficit areas, as per data available with it. The applicant is at liberty to make any further representation to the Ministry of Jal Shakti," the bench said.

The tribunal was hearing a plea filed by Neha Singh against reckless extraction of ground water for commercial purposes at the cost of causing further shortage of drinking water in violation of Sustainable Development Rules.

'Bengal shouldn't be a party to national degeneration'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Bengal should not be a party to the "national degeneration" by choosing to be governed by central leaders instead of the local ones as that would strengthen the concentration of power in the hands of those whose record on economic policy and social justice are "seriously defective", Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said.

Lauding the Mamata Banerjee government for its welfare programmes, especially the ones meant for girls, the beneficial expansion of rural infrastructure and assurance of food security, the renowned economist, however, stressed that corruption issues in the state have to be addressed.

In an interview with PTI, Sen rued the fact that identity politics has reared its ugly head in Bengal's political landscape and blamed the flag-bearers of Hindutva for sharpening the communal divisions some-



thing that Bengali luminaries - from Rabindranath Tagore to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose - had "worked hard to replace with peaceful understanding".

"If Bengal ends up being governed by central rulers, not local leaders, it will vastly strengthen the concentration of power in India in the hands of those whose conception of minority rights is extremely limited and whose record on economic policy and social justice seems seriously defective."

"Bengal should not have to be a party to that national degeneration," Sen said when asked whether the outcome of the

assembly elections will have a bearing on national politics.

He emphasised that Bengal wants unity, not divisions.

"It is not surprising that identity issues will tend to come into electoral propaganda. However, the focus has often been much narrower than the Indian identity or the Bengali identity. It has gone further than Bengali sub-nationalism."

The fanning of the dangerous flames of communal divisions has not occurred as strongly in Bengal since 1946, as it is happening now."

Sen, a fierce critic of the Narendra Modi government, further said, "What Mahatma Gandhi did in the 1940s can be undone with a huge cost and sacrifice in Bengal, and this evil negation has unfortunately received much encouragement in this election. Bengal wants unity, not divisions -- as Gandhiji so clearly explained."

Remdesivir row: Sena alleges bid to disturb law & health order

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Monday slammed BJP leaders Devendra Fadnis and Pravin Darekar for objecting to Mumbai police's grilling of a pharma firm's top executive over alleged stocking of Remdesivir vials, and wondered if there was a conspiracy to disturb the law and health order.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' accused the BJP of having a clear agenda that the Maharashtra government should fail in handling the COVID-19 situation, and charged it with making persistent efforts in that direction with the help of the Centre.

It said the Maharashtra government and the opposition should be unanimous at least on the issue of saving

lives of people and no one should seek political mileage out of pyres of people dying for want of the drug, which is in high demand for treating COVID-19 patients. Mumbai police questioned a pharma company director on Saturday following information that thousands of vials of Remdesivir were to be flown out of the country, despite a ban on its export.

On learning that the company director was being questioned, former chief minister Fadnis and another state BJP leader Darekar had rushed to the police station.

They said the BJP was reaching out to pharma companies due to the shortage of Remdesivir in the state. Fadnis said it was their sincere attempt to get Remdesivir for Maharashtra.

Bengal: BJP candidate's house attacked

PNS ■ BARRACKPORE

A BJP candidate's house was attacked with crude bombs in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, police said on Monday.

The house of Sanmoy Bandopadhyay, BJP's Panihati candidate, was attacked late on Sunday, they said.

The incident happened in the Khardaha police station area where Bandopadhyay lives, they added.

A person was arrested in connection with the incident, a senior officer of the Barrackpore Police said.

There was no report of any injury to anyone, he said.

Raut for special Parliament session to discuss Covid

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Monday called for convening a special session of Parliament for at least two days to discuss the COVID-19 situation in the country.

Terming the COVID-19 situation as "unprecedented and almost war-like", Raut said he held discussions with some key leaders from across the country on Sunday over the issue and all of them were of the view that the situation is "serious".

"It's an unprecedented & almost a war like situation. Utmost confusion & tension everywhere! No beds, no oxy-



gen & no vaccination as well! It's nothing but TOTAL CHAOS! A Spl session of the Parliament for at least 2 days should be called to discuss the situation!" the Rajya Sabha member tweeted.

'Double protection with fitted mask'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing two tightly-fitted face masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2-sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing COVID-19, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, shows that the reason for the enhanced filtration is not so much adding layers of cloth, but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

"The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect," said Emily Sickbert-Bennett, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in the US, and lead author of the study.



port attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask.

A second tube measured the ambient concentration of particles in the chamber.

The researchers determined the FFE by measuring particle concentration in the breathing space compared to that in the chamber.

"We also had the researchers in the chamber undergo a series of range-of-motion activities to simulate the typical motions a person may do throughout their day -- bending at the waist, talking, and looking left, right, up and down," said Phillip Clapp from the UNC School of Medicine.

According to their findings, the baseline FFE of a mask differs from person to person,

due to each individual's unique face and mask fit.

Generally, a procedure mask without altering the fit, is about 40-60 per cent effective at keeping COVID-19-sized particles out, the researchers said.

A cloth mask is about 40 per cent effective, they said.

Their latest findings on doubling of face masks shows that when a cloth mask is placed over a surgical mask, the FFE improved by about 20 per cent.

The filtration efficiency improved even more with a snug-fitting, sleeve-type mask, such as a gaiter, according to the researchers.

When layered over procedure masks, cloth masks improve fit by eliminating gaps and holding the procedure mask closer to the face, consistently covering the nose and mouth.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Faith put to test?

The seers' response to the PM's Kumbh appeal must not be seen as weak-willed or forced

The ongoing pandemic has ravaged everyone alike. It doesn't matter if one is a common citizen, a bureaucrat, politician or a sadhu (seer) or belongs to which gender, the Coronavirus just doesn't discriminate. The virus is spreading like a wildfire and has put to test not only the economies, Governments and the healthcare infrastructure, but also faith and religion. The Maha Kumbh Mela at Haridwar, earlier slated to close on April 30, now wears a deserted look — after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to keep the remaining part of the Mela "symbolic" in the backdrop of the surging COVID-19 cases. With the pilgrims and seers leaving Haridwar, the skeptics may view it any way they like but no one should see it as a defeat of faith. Here, the matter of faith and religiosity needs to be seen through the prism of science — the philosophy as followed and professed by the great Indian monk Swami Vivekananda. The silent exodus from Haridwar proves yet again that for the flag-bearers and followers of the world's most ancient or primordial religious order — the 'Sanatan dharma' — science is as sacrosanct as faith. This is what our seers have done and this is exactly what they have been doing since ages. We should be thankful to the seers for heeding the PM's appeal and deciding to vacate the site. For thousands of 'batuks' (new inductees) and numerous others who must have



been waiting to participate in the major religious event, giving up on the *Shahi Snan* (royal bath) or cutting short their stay is no mean sacrifice.

But they have done so willingly to serve the greater cause of humanity by helping to break the transmission chain. The Kumbh is not only about 'Snan' (holy bath); it is in fact like a universe in microcosm — representing the very idea and soul of existence. But it's always good to surrender one's interests willingly when it's a question of the greater good of humankind. This behaviour is in sharp contrast to the Tablighi Jamaat members — spitting on policemen and volunteers, urinating/defecating openly inside their quarantine centres and abusing doctors and nurses. It's really for the reader to decide for herself/himself which behaviour is close to fundamentalism and which one is sympathetic, accommodative and humane. After the Prime Minister's appeal, Juna *akhada's* Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Avdhesanand Giri announced the formal conclusion of the Maha Kumbh Mela for their followers, saying that the remaining *Shahi Snan* should be observed symbolically on April 27. Many people assert that COVID-19 is here, and maybe will stay for long, but the Kumbh — which represents the primeval culture and its ethos in a nutshell — certainly has been around much longer. It's a good time to remember the famous lines by poet Iqbal: "Kuchh baat hai ki hasti mit-ti nahi hamaari, sadiyon raha hai dushman daur-e-zamaan hamara." It doesn't matter if that *dushman* (enemy) be as mighty as the Coronavirus. With faith by our side, we shall surely win.

PICTALK



Passengers at the Anand Vihar terminal after the Delhi Government announced a six-day lockdown

What Modi really means to people



PRAFULL GORADIA

Even before becoming the Prime Minister, and ever since, Modi has scaled newer peaks of popularity, both at home and abroad

Member of Parliament from Arunachal Pradesh Tapir Gao, speaking in Parliament on April 1, described Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi as an avatar of God who is taking the country in the right direction. Gao said that Modi's work for tea plantation workers in West Bengal and Assam is "like an avatar of *Bhagwan*". Ladakh's MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal hailed the PM as a *yug purush* (man of the era) for realising BJP ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee's dream. Mookerjee had opposed the special status to Jammu & Kashmir.



An ordinary mortal, I am unable to either corroborate or contradict these opinions. All I can do is to quote from the *Gita*. Chapter 4 of the *Bhagwad Gita*, delivered by Krishna to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, states: "Whenever and wherever there is a decline of the practice of *dharma*, O Bharat (Arjuna), and a predominant rise of *adharm* (evil) — I incarnate Myself. To deliver the pious and annihilate the evildoers, as well as to re-establish *dharma*, I appear, era after era."

From the time I first met Modi by chance at the Vadodara airport in 1991 and had a 15-minute chat, I feel I met someone extraordinary. He was then the general secretary of the Gujarat BJP — the party had yet to come to power in the State. We remained in touch after that and until he became the PM, when I realised that he had flown to another planet and I had remained where I was.

In his first term as the Gujarat Chief Minister, his name and fame had spread across the State to West Bengal and as far as Assam. The Bengali elite, which generally looked down on the BJP as communal, invited Modi to the Calcutta Club for a seminar on the Uniform Civil Code. Years later, in 2006, at Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall, Modi addressed a packed audience, speaking about his introduction of new technologies for agriculture in Gujarat. He revealed that earlier, at a

party rally in Guwahati, he had been interrupted by the audience who said they would rather hear about how he was tackling infiltrators from Bangladesh. Modi told the Mumbai audience to tumultuous applause that his reply was that in Assam, people were oppressed by Bangladeshis but, in Gujarat, it was the Bangladeshis who felt oppressed by Modi.

In 2013, Modi was chosen as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate by the RSS without consulting the party's bigwigs; the ambitions of the latter would come in his way. It had never happened before. This was the measure of his popularity having spread throughout the country while he was busy with Gujarat. I was flabbergasted when I saw him on television as the PM for an exclusive lunch with Queen Elizabeth II at the Buckingham Palace and, on the same visit, addressing the British Parliament. Such honour has not been showered on any Indian leader — not even Jawaharlal Nehru. Soon thereafter, Modi addressed the US Congress, which only PV Narasimha Rao had done before. All this for a man who only until a few years ago had been denied a visa by Washington, with London



MODI'S CHARISMA HAS NOT BEEN CIRCUMSCRIBED BY THE BORDERS AND SHORES OF INDIA. THE COUNTRY HAS RISEN IN THE EYES AND MINDS OF THE WORLD. A TELLING EXAMPLE IS INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE LATEST ROUND OF CHINESE REVANCHISM, PARTICULARLY THE GALWAN INCIDENT

being hesitant. This denotes that Modi has a rare charisma that travels electronically, not merely electrically.

The flash of his charisma has not halted here. As the PM, he made friends with President Barack Obama. The next American President, Donald Trump, went gaga over him, sumptuously demonstrated at the 'Howdy Modi' rally at Houston, Texas, in September 2020. Earlier, Modi had commanded a similar performance in London, when then British PM David Cameron was present and delighted.

Modi's charisma has not been circumscribed by the borders and shores of India. The country has risen in the eyes and minds of the world. A telling example is India's response to the latest round of Chinese revanchism, particularly the Galwan incident on the Ladakh border, wherein China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) stealthily intruded and killed 20 Indian soldiers. Not only did the Indian Army hit back to inflict 40 or more casualties on the Chinese, it also occupied several strategic peaks along the Ladakh border, signalling its intent to escalate the conflict. More importantly, Modi did not issue mere protests from

Delhi, as the previous PMs had done, but landed in Ladakh at our Army's forward base, barely miles from where the PLA is stationed across the Line of Actual Control, sounding India's determination to roll back any Chinese adventurism. Beijing is now talking about the benefits of bonhomie and peace with India.

Pakistan remained a bogey until Modi came to power. Educated Indians would generally caution why New Delhi couldn't be too tough with Pakistan because of the 20 crore Muslims in India! Without harming a single hair of any Indian, Modi has silenced Islamabad to the extent that General Bajwa, Pakistan's *de facto* ruler, has started singing paeans of peace.

Prior to Modi, the behaviour of India's political class made our people equate themselves with Pakistan. India's image in the world alternated between that of a cat and a rat. Modi has made the world believe that India is truly a lion. Readers may assess what this gentleman truly is — a human being, a superhuman or an avatar.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CREMATORIUMS CAN BECOME HOTSPOTS

Sir — It is time to set up makeshift crematoriums and designate more burial grounds for the COVID casualties. With the second wave, the spectre of COVID has become even more frightening for all of us. The catastrophic spike in cases is coupled with a high death toll. The crematoriums and burial grounds are struggling to keep up, as the bodies pile up.

Why are crematoriums and morgues not considered a priority in our country by the policymakers? How many more pandemics do we need to understand the importance of such places? The non-functional morgues and crematoriums in Mumbai were in a pathetic and deplorable condition even before COVID-19 invaded our lives. The tender for the reconstruction of a morgue at St Georges Hospital is yet to be floated. The urgent need for a functional crematorium and morgue in Mumbai is being felt now more than ever, so that every citizen who ends up there can have a semblance of dignity in death.

No less weightage should be given to the dignity of those who have died as compared to the safety of the living. We are facing a shortage of crematoriums and burial grounds. As a result the dead, both COVID and non-COVID victims, and their loved ones have to wait a long time for the last rites. The overcrowding and long wait could turn these locations into virus hotspots. There is also the question of the safety of crematorium and burial ground workers. Is anyone listening?

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE ONSLAUGHT OF PANDEMIC

Sir — To say that India is in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic is to state the obvious. The Lancet's COVID-19 Commission forecasts that at the current rate of the runaway infection, there could be 2,300 deaths every day by the first week of June. The situation is so grave that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has again deferred his visit to India. The pandemic has brought about a profound change in our thinking and

Distribute the vaccine fairly



This refers to the editorial 'Fighting blindfolded' (April 19). I concur with the editorial view that the Governments and the scientific community are struggling hard to pin down the virus and the pandemic, but to no avail. However, it has been noticed that Indian vaccine manufacturers are unable to comply with the contractual terms and conditions laid down by the UK — the country that has given the license and technology to manufacture Covishield.

Since the stocks of the domestic vaccine supplies are limited, the imports of vaccines approved by the European Medical Agency (EMA) and US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA)

should be managed accordingly. The Centre and State Governments are not focussing on the percentage of the population that has not been vaccinated yet. It is important to increase the vaccination efforts. Some school teachers, bus, taxi and three-wheeler drivers, municipal and panchayat workers and advocates should be considered for vaccination irrespective of their age.

The Government should also explain how it will ensure the distribution of vaccines among different States in a fair and transparent manner. Since the last one year, COVID-19 has posed a serious challenge to the world and India and has drastically changed our behaviour and the way of life. In the meantime, the lockdown announced by the Delhi Government is a welcome step. Such restrictions are needed in Haryana and other neighbouring States as well. We all have a collective responsibility in our fight against the pandemic. The insouciance on part of any one State can weaken our fight against the Coronavirus.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

understanding of life. The second wave is having a devastating effect on lives and livelihood and is pushing people to live in the shadow of death and despair. The anxiety and suffering caused by the pandemic is a reality for us. Lockdown-like curbs have exacerbated hardships in many parts of the country. The general feeling is that no one can predict what will happen next.

The healthcare system is teetering on the edge of collapse as evidenced by the shortage of medical oxygen cylinders, hospital beds and antiviral drug Remdesivir (its sale in the black market is a shame) and vaccination doses. The Government appears to be floundering helplessly in the face of the inexorable surge in cases. It is difficult to say that it has risen to the challenge.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

attacked our country and we are its helpless victims. It is spreading like wildfire. Many State Governments have imposed restrictions on the movement of people, including night curfews. Vaccination, oxygen and hospital bed scarcity continue to haunt people. They are unable to get vaccinated in the Government facilities due to the shortage of shots. People are reeling under fear. At this point, night curfew seems to be meaningless and does not serve the desired purpose since most of the people are already locked in their houses during night. It should rather have been in the afternoon. Also, police should not deal with people who come out during curfew hours in a high-handed manner.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

POLICE MUST ACT SENSITIVELY

Sir — The double mutant Coronavirus has

SOUNDBITE

The production of Remdesivir is adequate. We have banned exports as a precaution but in panic people are buying in bulk, which is leading to a shortage.

Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

I am in the UAE for a bilateral visit and not an India-specific agenda. My agenda is UAE-Pakistan and not India-Pakistan.

Pakistan Foreign Minister — Shah Mahmood Qureshi

If your script is not good, your acting won't come off well, and I say this even for theatrical releases. Why should you have weaker scripts just because it is in the theatrical space?

Actor — Boman Irani

Hardik Pandya, who hasn't bowled at all in the first three matches of Mumbai Indians, could be bowling in this Indian Premier League (IPL).

Head coach of Mumbai Indians — Mahela Jayawardene

When people are pleading for Remdesivir and struggling for each vial, one BJP leader is hoarding the injection.

Congress leader — Priyanka Gandhi

The guides

Rahul and Mamata show the way, curb election rallies in view of the explosion in COVID cases

As the number of COVID-19 cases rises exponentially, in West Bengal that is currently witnessing the Assembly elections as well as elsewhere in the country, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee have taken a major decision in the larger interest of the State's population. While the Congress scion has cancelled all his public meetings in West Bengal, the TMC chief will not campaign in Kolkata anymore. Both the leaders have reportedly taken this decision in view of the rising COVID-19 infections in the State. While voting in three of the eight-phase Assembly elections is yet to be held, the State on Saturday registered its highest single-day spike of 7,713 new COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 6,51,508. The death toll rose to 10,540 after 34 fresh fatalities were reported. Around the same time, 2.6 lakh new COVID-19 patients were detected across India in a single day. While Mamata will hold only one "symbolic" meeting in the State capital on the last day of campaigning, which is April 26, her election rallies in all other districts of the State will not be longer than 30 minutes.

For his part, Rahul — who had only recently reached the State to campaign for the Congress candidates — has suspended all his public rallies there and advised all political leaders to "think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances", understandably inviting plaudits from senior leaders of his party. The Congress leader had earlier taken a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the BJP's star campaigner praised the people of West Bengal for turning up in large numbers for his political rally on Saturday. Rahul's move is certain to create pressure on the other main players in the fray, most notably the BJP and the TMC. While one is free to align with any political party or ideology, nobody is entitled to put the lives of anybody else on the line simply for the sake of amassing votes, especially in these sordid times. In this light, the decision by Rahul and Mamata deserves unregulated praise as, if nothing else, it puts the lives of the people of the State at greater premium than the lust for votes to form the next Government in West Bengal. Needless to say, other leaders would do well to take a leaf out of this sensible development.



Passengers at the Anand Vihar terminal after the Delhi Government announced a six-day lockdown





FIRST COLUMN

GIVE JUSTICE TO WOMEN LAWYERS



KALYANI SHANKAR

Justice has always been represented in a feminine form. Everyone has seen the statue of Lady Justice wearing a blindfold and holding a beam balance and a sword. But unfortunately, women are far from being adequately represented in the judiciary and do not have much of a role to play in our judicial system. Women have become the country's President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers and Governors. They have occupied other constitutional positions but a woman has never graced the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI). There have been voices calling for the better representation of women in the judiciary. Recently, CJI SA Bobde lamented this gap, just days ahead of his slated retirement on April 23. Let alone being elevated to the post of CJI, many women judges cross their retirement age even before reaching the Supreme Court. In India as in other countries, including the US and Britain, the number of women judges is dismal. It was only in 1981 that US President Ronald Reagan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor as the first-ever woman judge of the Supreme Court, to fulfil his campaign promise.



The International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), a non-governmental organisation with approximately 4,000 members in 100 countries, believes that women judges are unique in advancing women's rights throughout the world. Attorney-General KK Venugopal had also observed that "improving the representation of women in the judiciary could go a long way towards a more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence." In its plea to the Supreme Court, the Women Lawyers Association has said that the representation of women in the apex court was "abysmally low" as it brought to the court's notice that the top court had seen only eight women judges and only one out of 25 High Courts (HC) in the country has a woman Chief Justice (CJ Himra Kohli of Telangana HC). There are only 73 women out of total 661 judges in HCs while there is no single woman judge in five HCs, namely, Manipur, Meghalaya, Patna, Tripura and Uttarakhand. Further, only 12 women have been designated as senior counsels by the top court so far.

The judiciary is a male-dominated field. More importantly, the seniority tradition plays a significant role in choosing the Chief Justice. Naturally, when the number of designated senior women lawyers is disproportionately low, the chances of women becoming judges also remain minimal. There are many reasons for women not getting the top slot. CJI Bobde observed that many women lawyers had declined judgeship citing domestic responsibilities. But women lawyers counter that point saying that many successful men lawyers had also declined to become judges. Further, the income of a successful lawyer is much more than the perks and the salary of a judge, though there is prestige attached to the position.

The problem also trickles down to the lower courts where there are fewer women judges despite no shortage of women entering the legal profession. Some States have a reservation policy for women lawyers in the lower courts but it is missing in the HCs and the Supreme Court. Women comprised 44 per cent of candidates who have qualified the 2019 Common Law Admission Test for National Law Universities. After Justice Indu Malhotra's superannuation from the top court recently, Justice Indira Banerjee is the only woman judge in the apex court, which has the sanctioned strength of 34 judges.

Currently, the Supreme Court has five vacancies. Up till now, only eight women judges have graced the apex court. There is no shortage of brilliant women HC judges and lawyers in the country who, if elevated to the top court on time, can become the CJI. The timely appointment of more women judges is the way forward. For this, the Supreme Court collegium should take the initiative.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Export subsidies face WTO challenge

The leeway to withdraw subsidies was meant for those developing nations which in 1995 had GNI in excess of \$1,000 per capita. It can't be availed by India, which is in a different category



UTTAM GUPTA

The Coronavirus pandemic played havoc with the economy of the country during the first half of last year. However, exports were beginning to look up in March — touching a record \$34 billion which was higher than \$33 billion in March 2019 — and signalling a sharp increase during the current fiscal. But now, the exporters face a triple whammy. First, they have not received export benefits worth approximately ₹35,000 crore under the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS). Under the MEIS, which was withdrawn on January 1 this year, exporters were eligible for duty credit scrip — a jargon to compensate for their loss on payment of duties — amounting to two-five per cent of the freight-on-board value of the shipment. Against a total approved amount of ₹55,000 crore, the Union Government has released just about ₹20,000 crore (mostly claims for 2019-20) thereby leaving a gap of ₹35,000 crore.

This has led to a liquidity crunch. And, with the Budget provision for export subsidy during 2021-22 being just ₹13,000 crore, the situation is unlikely to improve and will seriously impede the exporters' capacity to ramp up supplies to meet the resurgent demand from key global markets, particularly the US and EU.

Second, the Government has not yet notified the refund rates under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme, which replaced the MEIS in January. Under the RoDTEP, exporters are eligible for reimbursement of various embedded taxes and levies paid on inputs consumed in exports — but not subsumed by the Goods and Services Tax (GST). A committee headed by former Commerce Secretary GK Pillai tasked with determining the refund rates, after an exhaustive exercise involving scrutiny of embedded levies on 8,000-9,000 tariff lines, had submitted its recommendations in March.

However, it will be some time before the Finance Ministry's Revenue Department — currently vetting the recommended tax remission rates — notifies them. The exporters need to factor in these while firming up contracts for supplies to importers. Although, eventually they will get the refunds retrospectively (from January 1) once the rates are notified, not knowing them in advance creates uncertainty with regard to their ability to decide what price to charge. If, the notified rate turns out to be lower than what the exporter has actually built into the offer price, he will be subjected to a loss.

The above two factors i.e. the delay in release of pending dues under the erstwhile MEIS and the delay in notification of refund rates under the RoDTEP, make for a deadly combination hampering the ability of exporters to sustain the tempo of revival in exports, buoyant demand conditions notwithstanding. Add to this a third factor which relates to the vulnerability of the Indian export subsidy regime to challenge at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In early 2018, the US had challenged at least half a dozen of India's export subsidy schemes, including the MEIS. The US Trade Representative (USTR) argued that the schemes provide financial benefits to Indian exporters, creating an "uneven playing field", thereby enabling them to sell goods



MEANWHILE, INDIA HAS ABOLISHED THE MEIS AND LAUNCHED RODTEP. THE OFFICIAL THINK TANK MAY FEEL THAT THE NEW SCHEME IS 'COMPLIANT' WITH THE WTO'S NORMS, BUT DAMOCLES' SWORD STILL HANGS OVER US AS THE US HAS ALREADY ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPLAIN THIS SCHEME AND ITS STRUCTURE, AND MAY EVEN FOLLOW THIS UP BY CHALLENGING IT AT THE WTO

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at a cheaper rate, which was detrimental to the interests of US manufacturers and workers. Even as export subsidies violate the WTO's rules, a limited exception was made for specified developing countries that may continue to provide export subsidies temporarily until they reach a defined economic benchmark of \$1,000 per capita gross national income (GNI). Further, developing countries that had a GNI of over \$1,000 per capita at the time when the WTO was set up in 1995, were allowed eight years to wind up their export promotion schemes. India's GNI being below the \$1,000 per capita-mark, it initially availed of the exemption from no export subsidy obligation. But in 2015, it surpassed the threshold, thereby pushing it into the "no-exemption" zone. The USTR has accused India of not just continuing with subsidies, but further expanding their scope (the MEIS launched in 2015 was rapidly expanded to include more than 8,000 eligible products, nearly double the number of products covered at its inception).

Accordingly, it wanted India to withdraw the subsidies. But the latter insisted on a transition period of eight years that, too, from 2017 when the WTO notified the fact of its crossing the threshold. The Indian stance is anomalous.

India had ample opportunity to plan. It had 20 years available (1995 to 2015) to get adjusted to

a WTO-compatible scenario. That was not done and when the D-day arrived, it wanted more time, which was a totally illogical move. The leeway to withdraw subsisting export subsidies within the eight-year time frame was meant for those developing countries which in 1995 had GNI in excess of \$1,000 per capita. It can't be availed by India which falls in a different category.

The Indian position being untenable, the decision of the WTO Dispute Settlement Panel (DSP) has gone against New Delhi. We appealed against the DSP decision before the appellate authority of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) and a verdict is yet to come. Meanwhile, India has abolished the MEIS and launched RoDTEP. The official think tank may feel that the new scheme is "compliant" with the WTO's norms. But Damocles' sword still hangs over us as the US has already asked the Government to explain this scheme and its structure, and may even follow this up by challenging it at the WTO.

The confidence of Team Modi stems from the fact that the RoDTEP is a scheme only for the reimbursement of duties on exported products; hence, there is no financial support from the Government. The duties considered in fixing the refund rates include all the levies that are not subsumed by the GST. These are taxes on crude oil, natural gas,

petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, ATF, electricity, mandi tax, stamp duty, besides embedded central GST and compensation cess (under GST, the cess is levied on the so-called demerit products in the highest slab of 28 per cent and the proceeds thereof to be used for compensating the States for the shortfall in revenue).

Given the highly complex nature of these duties and the wide variations between the Centre and the States, it may not be easy to justify giving remission for each one of them. A better way of ensuring that exports are not hamstrung is to bring all the aforementioned products under the GST, besides abolishing all local taxes. The compensation cess will anyway go on March 31, 2022 — as per the extant law. As for the embedded central GST, mechanisms are available for its refund under the GST scheme which treats exports as zero rated. This will require a fundamental change in the extant approach of "first burdening exporters with taxes, then refunding" to one whereby "taxes are not levied in the first place or their burden is kept at a bare minimum." While, this transition may take some time, in the interregnum, remission rates under the RoDTEP should be notified without any further delay. All outstanding dues to exporters should be promptly cleared to enable them to ramp up supplies for catering to the resurgent demand.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE MUST RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO LOOK AT THE NUMBERS BEING VACCINATED, AND FOCUS ON THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION VACCINATED.

—FORMER PRIME MINISTER
MANMOHAN SINGH



WHILE YOU UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF VACCINATION... PEOPLE IN RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN YOUR PARTY DO NOT SEEM TO SHARE YOUR VIEW.

—UNION HEALTH MINISTER
HARSH VARDHAN

Women's participation missing in water resource management

To encourage female participation, the Govt has made it obligatory for each water committee to have 50 per cent women members

Globally, women are increasingly being recognised for their important role in the management of water resources. Every International Women's Day, there is much noise about the inclusion of women in water programmes and the heart-breaking statistics regarding drudgery, school absenteeism and so on. Many platitudes are offered but before the end of March, everything fizzles out, until the next year. The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 ranked India at 112 out of 153 countries, with an overall unemployment rate of 9.1 per cent. Urban unemployment was at 8.8 per cent and unemployment among women was 18 per cent.

Any water supply hurdles lead to a substantial economic and social impact that disproportionately affects females. For instance, the time and



POONAM SEWAK

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effort spent in water collection hits women's income-generation ability, impacts attendance of girls in schools and interferes with the time required to tend to the sick at home. Therefore, women quickly see the advantages of investing in water treatment infrastructure and often play a crucial role in convincing the community to undertake its construction, operation, maintenance and management.

For decades, studies have examined the role of women in the water sector. They have found substantial improvements in the governance, transparency and sustainability of water supplies when men and women are involved in equal measure than when women are involved only marginally or not at all. Water projects that involve women in design planning and operations are more sustainable than those that do not. Yet, women make up less

than 17 per cent of the water, sanitation and hygiene labour force and only a fraction of policymakers, regulators, management and technical experts.

The participation of women in the water sector is often assumed to be a rural issue. Women are significantly missing in utilities which can draw benefits such as lower levels of non-revenue water losses, improved cash flow and more resources for investment in infrastructure and increasing service quality. This will lead to the engagement of fewer Government subsidies which can be utilised for other essential services. The key to driving user-centred design improvements and reforms across the urban water sector in developing countries is to create conditions that can attract, retain, and promote women in roles in which they can shape the design, construction and reha-



bilitation of new and existing water supply systems.

India has set an ambitious goal, as part of the Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural) to provide functional household tap connections, piped water services to its entire population at an outlay of \$90 billion by 2025. To bridge the gender gap, the Government has tied up with the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendra to train women in masonry and impart them skills to become electrical and motor mechanics. To encourage

women's participation, the Government has made it obligatory for each paani samiti (water committee) constituted for water supply management to have 50 per cent women members. Through the situation is changing, the Government should put greater emphasis on building Self-Help Groups into a competitive alternative to private operators. Providing safe drinking water to 1.35 billion people in urban and rural India is a huge challenge. The emergence of COVID-19 has further accentuated the need for clean water. Prioritising women's engagement to regulate water programmes will ensure effective usage of water resources.

In India, where women have been trained and licenced as hand pump mechanics, customers rate female mechanics as more accessible and responsive than their male counter-

parts. As a result, in areas served by women mechanics, there is more preventative maintenance and fewer breakdowns. Many of these women understand that a broken hand pump results in girls/women having to travel greater distances to collect water, losing productive time and increasing risks to their safety.

Initially, society found it futile to train women, but with repeated success, the female workforce not only became active participants but also modified the entire management of community water systems. The work-life balance for women has been significantly disturbed in these challenging times.

However, it has taught women to multitask and manage the household while diligently working from home. With a male-dominated Indian economic system, there is an

urgent need to rectify the gender imbalance by driving awareness, through knowledge-sharing and developing a sense of decision-making and entrepreneurship among women. With successful revenue streams driven by women-led businesses, the Government has also started focusing on promoting women entrepreneurship covering rural, semi and urban geographies.

To bring down the patriarchal barriers and make significant progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, it is essential to create a successful Private-Public-Partnership (PPP) model for upskilling and teaching women groups especially regarding post-work gaps, mentoring and feedback process. Through the bottom-up approach of the PPP model, economic opportunities need to be created to promote the well-being of women.

Sensex tanks 883 points as Covid spooks market; Nifty below 14,400

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex plummeted 883 points on Monday following a massive across-the-board selloff as mounting COVID-19 cases spooked domestic investors. After crashing over 1,469 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE index pared some initial losses but still ended 882.61 points or 1.81 per cent lower at 47,949.42. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 258.40 points or 1.77 per cent to 14,359.45. PowerGrid was the top loser in the Sensex pack, slumping over 4 per cent, followed by ONGC, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Bank, L&T, Asian Paints and Bajaj Auto. On the other hand, Dr Reddy's and a n d

Infosys were the only gainers. Domestic equities, which were looking resilient for last couple of days, fell sharply on sharp spike in COVID-19 cases across the country and enhanced economic restrictions imposed by several states. Announcements of wider mobility restriction by Rajasthan and Delhi governments dented investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities. Barring pharma and IT, which remained resilient, all key sectoral indices witnessed sharp correction. Financials and automobiles witnessed steeper correction. Notably, volatility index soared by over 11 per cent, which does not augur well. Investors' wealth got eroded by over Rs 3 trillion today, he added. India's total tally of

COVID-19 cases crossed 1.50 crore with a record single-day rise of 2,73,810 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown from 10 pm on Monday till 5 am on April 26 which he said was necessary as the city's health system was stretched to its limits. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended on a positive note. Stock exchanges in Europe were also largely trading with gains in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.25 per cent lower at USD 66.60 per barrel.



India will become top EV maker in the world: Nitin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, recently said that India will soon become the number one manufacturer of electric vehicles in the world. Addressing Amazon's Smbhav Summit virtually, Gadkari said he is confident that lithium-ion batteries would be fully manufactured in the country as early as in the next six months, giving the much-needed push to India's EV agenda. Speaking at the summit, Gadkari said, "India is moving ahead towards making electric vehicles. In due course of time, we will be the number one electric vehicle (EV) maker in the world. All reputed brands are present in India." The Union Minister highlighted the fact that the government is also working to launch hydrogen fuel cell technology, which uses chemical reactions between hydrogen and oxygen to generate electrical energy, eliminating the use of fossil fuels.

Gadkari also said that the government wants to encourage automakers to introduce flex-fuel engines in the country and that he is in the final stages of discussion with manufacturers in India. Earlier this month, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas announced a partnership between state-run oil company IndianOil and Phinergy, an Israeli start-up company to build Aluminium-Air systems in India. The Union Minister believes that in the next two years, the cost of electric vehicles will come down and will be as competitive as petrol and diesel vehicles. He expressed the need for the quality of EVs manufactured in India to be of international standard, as he wants to make the Indian automobile industry the number one manufacturing hub in the world. For that purpose, the Government of India is now encouraging the use of ethanol, methanol, bio-CNG, electric and hydrogen fuel cell.

Govt working to save lives: FM tells India Inc amid Covid surge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said she has taken inputs from various industry chambers on concerns of India Inc with regard to the management of COVID pandemic and the centre would continue to work with state governments to save lives and livelihoods. She sought feedback from businesses to deal with the impact of the second COVID-19 wave on the country's economy. "Spoke on telephone with each of the following business/Chamber leaders. Took their inputs on industry/Association related matters. Informed them that GoI at various levels from @PMOIndia is responding to #Covidmanagement. Working together with states for lives



and livelihoods," she said in a tweet. The Finance Minister had interactions with heads of industry chambers including CII president Uday Kotak, Uday Shankar, president Ficci, and Vineet Agarwal president Assocham. She also spoke to many business leaders like Tata Steel managing director T V Narendran, L&T chairman A M Naik, TCS managing director Rajesh Gopinathan, Maruti Suzuki chairman R C Bhargava, TVS Group chair-

man Venu Srinivasan and Hero Moto Corp managing director Pawan Munjal to take their feedback on situation arising out of surging COVID-19 cases and local containments. Last week, the Finance Minister made it clear that the government would not go for lockdowns in a big way and only resort to local containment to break the COVID-19 chain. "Even with the second wave, we are very clear that we are not going in for lockdowns in a big way. We don't want to totally arrest the economy. The local level isolation of patients, or households which have people in quarantines are the methods through which the crisis will be handled, the second wave will be handled. There shall not be lockdown," Sitharaman had said.

Macrotech shares tumble over 10 pc in debut trade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Macrotech Developers on Monday made a tepid market debut, listing with a discount of over 10 per cent from the issue price of Rs 486. The stock listed at Rs 439, registering a decline of 9.67 per cent from the issue price on BSE. It further tumbled 13.34 per cent to Rs 421.15. On NSE, it debuted at Rs 436, lower by 10.28 per cent from the issue price. The initial public offer of realty major Macrotech Developers was subscribed 1.36 times earlier this month.

MONEY MATTERS

HDFC Bank embarks on tech transformation agenda: MD

Having faced multiple episodes of digital banking glitches in the last two years, HDFC Bank has embarked on a 'Technology Transformation Agenda' to provide safe and secure banking services to its customers. HDFC Bank managing director Sashi Jagdishan in a letter to employees said the bank has faced five instances of downtime in last 28 months and every instance has hardened the bank's resolve to do better, keeping customers in mind. It is to be noted that the RBI temporarily barred HDFC Bank in December 2020, from launching new digital banking initiatives and issuing new credit cards after taking a serious note of service outages at the lender over the last two years. The bank was penalised by the RBI for two major outages, one in November 2018, and the other in December 2019.

Gold jumps Rs 411; silver gains Rs 338

Gold rallied by Rs 411 to Rs 47,291 per 10 gram in the national capital on Monday reflecting strong buying in the global precious metal and rupee depreciation, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 46,880 per 10 gram. Silver also gained Rs 338 to Rs 68,335 per kilogram from Rs 67,997 per kilogram in the previous trade. The Indian rupee slumped 52 paise to 74.87 against the US dollar in opening trade on Monday. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,787 per ounce and silver was quoting marginally higher at USD 26.08 per ounce. "Gold prices rallied on weaker dollar and fall in US bond yields," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel.

Rupee drops by 52 paise to 74.87 against US dollar

The rupee plunged by 52 paise to close at 74.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid a lacklustre trend in the domestic equities as investors fretted over the prospects of lockdown in some parts of the country amid a surge in COVID-19 cases. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.80 against the greenback and traded in the range of 74.79 to 75.05 during the day. The rupee finally ended at 74.87 against the American currency, registering a fall of 52 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 74.35 a dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.49 per cent to 91.11. Forex traders said the surge in coronavirus infections over the weekend increased the risk of more broadbased lockdowns. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a lockdown from 10 pm on Monday night till 5 am next Monday in view of an exponential rise in coronavirus cases and the city's health system being stretched to its limits.

Internshala, Nestlé bring 350 internships for Ind students

The recruitment and training platform, Internshala is hosting Nestlé India's Nesternship. The internship program offers 1000 virtual internships in 2021 in various fields including finance, human resources, sales, e-commerce, marketing, legal, corporate affairs, engineering, food technology, IT, and supply chain. For the summer batch, interested students can apply to 350 virtual internships from 22nd April 2021 to 24th April 2021. The initiative aims at enhancing the competence and employability of the youth in India. These internships will offer experiential learning to empower students with skills and to make them future-ready. Each intern will be assigned a mentor from Nestlé to guide them during the course of their internship. Additionally, each intern will be provided with Amazon vouchers worth Rs 5,000 per month.

Sebi to auction PVP Global Ventures property on May 12

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday said it will auction a property of PVP Global Ventures at a reserve price of Rs 22.55 crore on May 12, to recover dues. The property to be put on sale is a vacant land situated in Telangana, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice. "The said properties standing in the names of Arete Real Estate Developers Private

Limited and Expressions Real Estates Private Limited were attached in the recovery proceedings, as offered by the said entities along with no objection for realisation of the dues from Shri Prasad V Potluri and PVP Global Ventures Private Limited, through sale thereof," Sebi noted. The regulator has engaged Quirk Realty Ltd to assist it for the sale of the property, through e-auction platform, C1 India.

Razorpay raises \$160 mn funding from Sequoia Capital, GIC, others

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Razorpay on Monday said it has raised USD 160 million (about Rs 1,192.6 crore) in funding from Sequoia Capital, GIC and others with the valuation of the payment solutions provider tripling to USD 3 billion. The Series E funding round was co-led by Sequoia Capital and GIC, along with participation from Ribbit Capital and Matrix Partners. "We will use the capital to scale up our Business Banking suite, invest in new acquisitions and launch in International markets, including South-East Asian countries," Razorpay CEO and co-founder Harshil Mathur said. He added that the company also continues to hire aggressively to fuel its growth plans. Bengaluru-based Razorpay provides intelligent automated payment and busi-

ness banking solutions to help businesses manage their money flow end-to-end. With this funding, Razorpay has raised a total of USD 366.5 million in funding since its inception in 2014. The company had entered the Unicorn Club (companies with valuation of over USD 1 billion) in October last year, when it had raised USD 100 million. The pandemic has provided a major boost to tech-led startups with a sharp increase in consumers opting for e-services like online classes, e-commerce and digital banking. This is also driving

greater investor interest in these businesses. In the past few weeks, a number of startups in the country including Meesho, Groww, ShareChat and Cred have raised funding and entered the Unicorn Club. "But there is more work to be done, we believe there is a dire need to develop new banking technologies that meet the rising demand. So, we plan to use these funds to further expand our banking and lending product suite so that we not only provide a better experience to businesses and their customers but significantly contribute to the growth of our partner businesses," he added. Mathur noted that the company's neo-banking platform, RazorpayX, saw 400 per cent growth in transaction volume in the last 12 months.

Prestige Estates forms JV with Century group

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects has formed a joint venture with Century group to develop an office park in Bengaluru with an estimated construction cost of around Rs 900 crore. Prestige Estates, one of the leading real estate firm in the country, plans to develop around 2.5 million sq ft of space in this park. "We have formed a joint venture with Century group for the development of office park in Bengaluru," Prestige Office Ventures CEO Juggy Marwaha said. Century group owns around 16 acre of land through two special purpose vehicles (SPVs), he said.

Complete closure not a solution: RAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Delhi government announcing a six-day lockdown, Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Monday said a complete closure is not a solution, while calling for a balance between lives and livelihood. The retailers' body asked the state government to allow all sizes and formats of non-food retail to take orders over phone and other electronic means for home deliveries. Further, store premises can be allowed to be opened to the limited extent of fulfilling only home delivery orders, it said. "We appreciate Delhi government's efforts to curb the surge of the pandemic in the Capital city. However, we believe that complete closure is not a solution. There has to



be a balance between lives and livelihood to ensure that while lives are saved livelihoods are not lost," RAI CEO Kumar Rajagopalan said in a statement. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a lockdown from 10 pm on Monday night till 5 am next Monday, in view of an exponential rise in coronavirus cases and the city's health system being stretched to its limits. Rajagopalan asked the state government to permit all sizes and formats of non-food retail to take orders over phone and other electronic means for home deliveries.

Top-500 cos' cash cycles stretched by 6 days: EY

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The pandemic has impacted the working capital management for companies and stretched top-500 listed companies' cash cycles by six days, a study by a consultancy firm said on Monday. In the 12 months ended September 30, 2020, businesses in India saw an increase in the cash-to-cash cycle by 6 days year-on-year, the study of top-500 listed companies by EY, said. Businesses in India have an opportunity to free up to Rs 5.2 lakh crore tied up in working capital, which can help businesses rebound much strongly from the crisis, it added. The study said 69 per cent of companies extended their payables to offset the effects of the pandemic on working capital.



It explained that the pandemic-induced lockdowns resulted in increased inventory balances and reduced collections for companies. Prudent companies resorted to the strategy of extending payables. Large and medium enterprises continue to be more efficient in managing their working capital requirements. Higher bargaining power combined with effective business processes to manage working capital for large businesses resulted in a working capital cycle of 29 days shorter than the small enterprises, it added.

Automakers fear dent in sales in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leading automobile companies like Maruti Suzuki India (MSI), Toyota Kirloskar Motor and Honda Cars fear dent in sales as COVID-19 cases surged across the country. The country's largest carmaker MSI stated that the auto sales were correlated closely with economic growth and also (being a discretionary purchase) with the consumer sentiment. "The COVID-19 situation deterioration is obviously a negative for customer sentiment and thus has a negative impact on sales," MSI Executive Director (Sales and Marketing) Shashank Srivastava told PTI when asked about the impact of second wave of the pandemic on the company's sales. Lockdowns make it physically not possible to deliver cars but even the deterioration in



COVID-19 situation without lockdown also psychologically dents consumer propensity to buy, he noted. Similarly, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) Senior Vice President Naveen Soni acknowledged that localised restrictions have impacted order flow and delivery schedules. "We will be able access trends and define numbers

only by the end of the month depending on the severity and extension of the restrictions. As of date, we have had a good number of pending orders that had to be carried forward from the month of February and March to April. Therefore, we are striving to meet the customer demand in spite of the local restrictions and lockdowns," he noted. On manufacturing opera-

tions, Soni said the company continues to cautiously proceed with vehicle production. "Our immediate focus is to fasten and streamline the demand and supply processes with more accuracy and manage production, along with faster deliveries making it easier and convenient for customers by reducing the delivery time," he added. Well-being of the employees as well as dealer and supplier staff are sacrosanct and the automaker has already reintroduced monitoring systems which were in place including submission of a self-declaration health form, Soni said. "As responsible corporates, we are continuously monitoring the situation carefully and will take accurate actions, as and when required. More importantly, this time we have precious lessons from last year to learn, unlearn and reflect upon," he noted.

'CAN BE A BAHU AND A BEACH BABE AT THE SAME TIME'



Actress Poulomi Das is ruling the OTT scene and the internet too. The *Dil Hi Toh Hai* actress talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about how she manages to stand strong with her head held high, schools trolls like a boss and lives a wholesome life.

She's fearless, and embraced her imperfections by flaunting them widely on OTT screens! Without caring about what the world thinks about her skin colour, actress Poulomi Das went on to participate in *India's Next Top Model* garnering praises from Malaika Arora and Anusha Dandekar. This South Asian beauty hailing from Kolkata is here to tell us that we don't have to hide our so-called flaws but rather celebrate those with pride. She never needed any

beauty filter and is adamant about sharing words of encouragement to her followers bringing in skin positivity and bring in a revolution in the glamour world. Breaking stereotypes of the country which was once obsessed with milky skin and fairness, Poulomi Das has become the face of the relaunched product 'Glow and Lovely' and we can't help but love her for advocating for women of colour. To prepare for her recent role — Poulomi read up works by a lot of authors, worked on her appearance, and pursued an appropriate diet, however, there was a time when people wondered earlier if they would ever see a dark-skinned actress on television screens. Ever since the interview of Meghan Markle and

Prince Harry with Oprah Winfrey was televised across the globe — conversation on racism broke the internet. Recently, the former First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama reacted to the colourism debate by saying, "It wasn't a complete surprise to hear Meghan's feelings." Closer home, fashion designer Masaba took to her social media to write, "What if I told you that no matter where you come from, the colour of your skin or the hook of your nose, or the scar from 7th grade is amazing. You must always keep your chin up."

Poulomi states, "It never mattered to me the way I looked because my audiences always accepted me as I was. To some extent, showbiz is addressing the issues of representation and now normalising it. There were always two ways for me to look at criticism — either it taught me a lesson or was distressing! The ones who have the capability of teaching us are the set of people who come from a well-informed background while those who speak utter nonsense are the anonymous cowards without any identities online. This is, unfortunately, a part of our jobs now and I prefer paying attention to the former set of people, you'll see I tried changing accordingly. I don't give a damn about faceless accounts online!" A lawyer-turned-actress

is filled with stories of triumph and hardships based on her colour at times, yet it was her pride that allowed her to fight all the stereotypes and humiliation down the lane. "I lucked out, I was happily pursuing my law profession and suddenly the door towards the world of enchantment — modeling opened for me. I wondered at first if I would be able to act further on if I get a chance because I succumbed to stage phobia often. The obsession with deeply 'gora rang' is at least not concerned when I work today and that gave me so much confidence to add acting as an ornament to my portfolio. I got my first show for my colour, and things snowballed around me and the way I look," she chortled.

With as many appearances as she can on OTT, Poulomi Das can be thought about as the Radhika Apte for the digital entertainment platforms currently finding it immensely vital to speak about colorism issues. "We have more content to watch now, there are 'originals' been made catering to local languages as well. It lets you have a good time in the comfort of your home. We still are eager to watch new movies on screen but it's just that the screens have changed to either mobile, television, or tablets. Everyone's willing to wait whenever the next web series is releasing! Many producers are choosing to release their small-budget films or web shows directly on OTT platforms only due to its popularity. Even a less familiar name has some screen presence now!" she added.

She talks about the kind of summons she had to face, "There are bold scenes as per the requirement of the script at times. Being bold and sensuous sells the most on the web! We should not be bound by saying we will only

work in certain kinds of films and series. I am really happy that such bold shows are being made and people are loving them. I am an actress who can be a *sanskari bahu* and a bikini babe at the same time because that's my job! However, I do have my set of boundaries."

Poulomi doesn't believe that nepotism thwarts the chances of other talented artists because she says you can't blame all the ills on nepotism. Like she struck gold with many of her performances on OTT and proved her mettle, there are many others too. Talking more about it, she says, "You'll find a star kid everywhere and this prevailing issue of hierarchy is present in every other fraternity, not just the movie business. Ours is more prominent because it's on camera! Hereafter, I am going to be a privileged mother too in the coming times that doesn't mean I'll abstain my kids from those advantages. Nonetheless, those who have it all in the silver spoon mustn't scorn it either. I'll constantly pester them about my struggles."

Sharing her cavernous camaraderie with Indian television's heartthrob Karan Kundra, Poulomi tells that Karan is a compassionate co-star, a second family that she's got in Mumbai and a proper *theth* Punjabi who taught her Punjabi slang. He's that brother from another mother who's just a phone call away, she informs. Working seven days a week without taking an off, some days, she has suffered depression and some have been the most jolly-good days! The word *Kaali* has never been an insult to her and she strongly believes online comments represent how people actually feel about themselves. *The Pioneer* wishes Poulomi Das success for her latest OTT venture *Bekaboo 2!*

'Fan'ning IPL mania

K RAMYA SREE

Fans are the most important and integral part of the VIVO IPL 2021, considering the current times where the world has seen some difficult days due to Covid-19. From kids to the elderly, everyone is glued to their TV and smartphones, busy watching the IPL. The tournament brings families together, celebrating the season, wherein everyone sits together and enjoys the match. *The Pioneer* catches up with some of the ardent fans who make IPL happen, and chats to understand their mantra for this season.

Harman Kaur



An MS Dhoni fan for over 15 years now, Harman Kaur, doesn't miss a single CSK game in Punjab. In 2018, a bandage on one of her legs didn't stop her from going to watch CSK vs

Punjab match at Mohali. She had gone to meet him in the hotel but she could only see him sitting on the bus and waved at him. She has also done up her house with Dhoni's poster.

In the virtual era, how is she celebrating IPL this year? She tells us, "My family and I never miss a game of CSK and we will continue to keep that spirit going on. IPL will always be a celebration for my family whether at home or the stadium. This season, we planned special south Indian Chennai meals during CSK matches — for the first match, we had idli-vida and sambar special. We are also wearing CSK jerseys and rooting for the team from the first ball to the last one."

She has a passionate group of CSK fans where she lives. They play gully cricket on weekends wearing CSK jerseys to cheer the team and pass the message that they are with the team. CSK for them is like a family. And the team's performance leaves a deep impact on her.

Gargi Rastogi

A hardcore fan of Delhi Capitals, Gargi Rastogi, has composed a special song on DC's new skipper Rishabh Pant and she dedicates the song to all DC fans and the entire team of DC.

"IPL this year will be entertaining for fans, as all teams have come back with a winning spirit. I am a huge fan of Delhi Capitals,



and with Rishabh Pant leading the side and winning their first match against power-player team CSK — I'm sure DC is going to shine this year. I'm expecting IPL to be extremely competitive till the very end. DC's success mantra for the season is to play tough and be tough. The entire team has to show their strengths and come together as a 'tough' team to defeat," shares the youngster.

Yash Pathak



A 24-year-old up-coming cricketer at the highest level of Kanga League, a division Training under Pravin Amre, Yash Pathak has

been a fan of Punjab Kings. Yash Pathak got a chance to be a part of the Kings XI Punjab's development camp where he trained with the main team.

Being a cricketer himself and a huge fan of IPL, what are his expectations from this year's IPL? He shares, "Growing up, I started playing gully cricket for fun and eventually ended up being a fan of all forms of the sport. IPL introduced a new brand of cricket to me and I experienced this first-hand when I got selected for the Kings XI Punjab (Now Punjab Kings) development camp. At the camp, I trained with the main team for a couple of days and that made me fall in love with the team and ultimately become a fan. With every season, IPL sets a new benchmark for enthralling and nail-biting action. So, with IPL coming back to India, I am expecting a lot of cricketing action every evening. I am also hopeful that KL Rahul and the boys will continue with their form and help us lift the cup this year. With a new team and a new name, we are ought to grab the title in 2021."

"I am a person who enjoys community viewing and talking about cricket, but the pandemic has restricted us from organising an on-ground screening. With the virtual screening that my parents and I organise, we have devised new ways of staying together and enjoying cricket," adds he.

Saravanan

A six or a four, 'whistle podu', is a must, and whistle Podu happens to be one of the biggest fan pages of CSK and Dhoni, who are into charity and social work. They shared the plans about setting up screens/ projectors to watch the match and support the CSK team.

"Dhoni Anna has always been and will be our hero! Every year, we wait for MS Dhoni to don the yellow colour and lead the army to



a well-deserved title. Although we tried, 2020 was not our year. So, with a fresh perspective, CSK will return to India for its fourth title.

I am expecting CSK to unfurl the yellow flag in Ahmedabad on May 30, 2021," says Saravanan. "Covid can never dampen the spirits of cricket lovers. Fans will keep finding different ways to support the team. We prefer watching the game LIVE but we will watch it at home this year, but the yellow paint will always go on during all CSK games," he shares on virtual screenings of IPL.

Nikash Kanhar

Like many others, even Nikash is expecting a crazy comeback from RCB team of which he is a die-hard fan. "With a great start, I am certain players like Maxwell and Kohli will rain sixes on their opponents. We just want to see the outburst of RCB. We too want to live the cup and we are expecting to bring the cup home for the first time," he says.

Painting the body with tri-colors during the IPL games was the norm before Covid hit. "The only thing changes are the place where we will showcase our passion, the adrenaline will always be high, be it a stadium or in front of the TV at home.

We are excited about our first win against the best team, and we are sure there will be more wins this season," he adds.

Bollywood superstar and youth icon Ranveer Singh is a cultural phenomenon — an actor, a bona fide fashion icon, the face of Indian hip hop, an artist entrepreneur — he is a genuine disruptor and a true blue game-changer in the sphere of entertainment in India. Ranveer has carved his name in the history of Indian cinema over the span of a decade with his incredible erasing performances. He says he has achieved everything in life by believing in impossible is nothing. He chose to lead from the front in the music industry too by founding an artist collective Inc Ink — a platform that supports talented musicians across the country to shine bright on a global stage. We caught up with Ranveer Singh to discuss how he always believed in the possibility of achieving the impossible.

From multiple rejections at the start of your career to becoming people's superstar now. Tell us about the time when you stared at uncertainty as a struggler and how you kept your eyes on the prize and told yourself that impossible is nothing.

At different points and in several instances during my struggling years, I felt like there was no hope. Getting one's foot inside the door of a largely exclusive entertainment industry seemed unachievable. But I persisted — you could say I was both hungry and foolish, and More than anything believed in my abilities and in my potential. Even back then, when I had nothing, the same driven, tenacious and meticulous work ethic was characteristic of my hustle. I was well aware of what a long shot it was. But I was willing to take that leap of faith. When there wasn't a good lead in sight for long periods, the phone wouldn't ring for months, my faith was challenged, but I debunked the idea that what I was trying to achieve was impossible. I stayed focused in the most testing of times. I almost forced the universe into making it happen for me. My single-mindedness and determination eventually paid off and



Debunked the idea that what I try to achieve is impossible: Ranveer Singh

my dream became my reality. Ever since, every day feels like I am living a dream." **When you joined the film industry you were told that you didn't have the quintessential looks associated with an actor, nor did you have film lineage. You are now a global youth icon of India. What has been the biggest learnings on your journey to superstardom?**

"When young actors, especially 'outsiders', come up to me seeking advice on how to navigate their hustle — the first and most important thing I tell them is "do it for the right reasons. Do it simply because you love performing." I urge them to not be lured towards performing arts or the entertainment business because success in this field comes with fame and money. Those are transient, they are frills — just trappings. So I say, Be true to your craft and do it for the love of, and for the joy of performing. Another thing I learned along the way, is that authenticity has the most resonance. If you try being something that you are inherently not, you are doing a disservice to yourself. If you stay true to who you are, if you lose the fear of being judged, only then will you vibrate at a high fre-

quency. 'You do you', I tell them. Be original, be your unique self. And another important thing I've learned is to keep taking risks. The bigger the risk, the bigger the reward. You may falter during that process, but I believe that there are no failures in life — there are only lessons." **While your career truly shows that impossible is nothing for you, you are now providing a huge platform to fellow dreamers who are rank outsiders in the music industry. Tell us about the moment when you decided that an outsider has to stand beside fellow outsiders.**

"One can have the passion and grit and can even prepare endlessly for the moment that one gets to shine. But often times the missing piece of the puzzle is 'opportunity'. My hustle was as difficult as it was because of the sheer lack of opportunities. That's what I wanted to create for fellow dreamers. To provide the opportunity to young creators who were burning with passion. To give them a platform to showcase their talent. It is my way of giving back. It is my way of paying forward the blessings I have received. It is my way of showing gratitude to the universe."

what's brewing?



● Adit Arun



● Ashu Reddy



● Nisha



● Arzun Redde



● Naina Ganguly



● Rohini



● Allu Sirish



● Tanish Alladi



● Ram Gopal Varma



● Raja Ravindra



● S Revanth

PARTY

BIRTHDAY BASH

Telugu Film Industry's favourite celebs turned up at the birthday party of Arzun Redde, Andhra Pradesh Kabaddi Association Chairman and politician. Director Ram Gopal Verma, actors Akkineni Sumanth, Allu Sirish, Tanish Alladi, Adit Arun, Music director Anup Rubens, singer Revanth and Ashu Reddy were some of the few stars who had a great time at the BLVD Nightclub in Jubilee Hills.

Photos by SV Chary

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

4	9	2		1	6			
		9		6	5			
								4
		8	5					2
7								3
1		9	2					
3								
	5	1	7					
9	1		6		8	4		

Yesterday's solution

2	1	6	4	5	7	3	8	9
7	8	3	9	2	1	4	5	6
4	9	5	8	3	6	7	2	1
3	6	9	2	4	8	1	7	5
1	2	8	3	7	5	6	9	4
5	4	7	6	1	9	2	3	8
9	3	2	1	8	4	5	6	7
8	7	1	5	6	2	9	4	3
6	5	4	7	9	3	8	1	2

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- Motion
- A spicy Indian food dish
- Similar
- Quit your job
- At this place
- Remedy
- Mother or father
- Of greater age
- A fruit with pips
- A place for sick or injured people
- Loud sounds
- A figure in a field to frighten birds
- One third of fifty-one
- With nobody in it
- A communication device
- Kick out of school
- Catch a mouse with this

DOWN

- Dirty stains
- A long journey by sea or in space
- Animal flesh for eating

SOLUTION

N	I	S	A	N	C	E			
I	T	U	P	W					
G	R	E	M	A	I	E			
T	A	B	L	E	G	O	T		
M	A	T	R		O	R			
A	T	L	A	S					
R	E	V	I	A	S				
E	Y	E	L	I	D	K	I	D	S
F	O	L	E						
T	R	E	L	E	A	S			

'I'M VERY CRITICAL ABOUT MYSELF'

Nivetha has been a force to be reckoned with, ever since her debut. The kind of roles and scripts she chose, at even nascent stages in her career, is commendable. K RAMYA SREE writes about the actress' recent success *Vakeel Saab*, how she prepped for the role, her upcoming projects, and more..



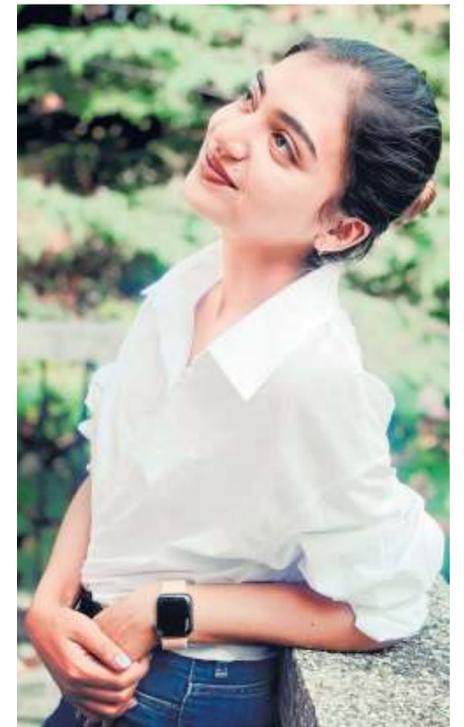
She was introduced to us as Catherine and entertained us as Pallavi. She was again seen as Pallavi in the recent blockbuster *Vakeel Saab*. Nivetha Thomas says, she is conscious about the roles she does and that she doesn't bother about the screen time, it's the impression her role will leave that she cares about. "When I choose a film, it should be character-driven. For me, there is no women-centric or men-centric film. It is always about the character," she says. Speaking of the biggest compliment she got after *Vakeel Saab*, she says it is being called "Pallavi". "Whenever I posted a picture or video, people started to call me Pallavi, and the comments section was filled with people calling me Pallavi. It felt nice and happy that Chiranjeevi *garu* went to theatres with his family to watch the film despite the rising Covid cases." Sharing her association with Pawan Kalyan and what she took from him, Nivetha explains, "Pawan Kalyan *garu* is a quiet person. I love the way he talks and the command he has over the Telugu language. He is so good with his fluency, that I want to watch him speak more and more. I always wanted to see him as a lawyer and I'm happy he

played a lawyer in this film. What Pawan sir did for this film, I don't think anybody could've done." "Pawan sir carried great responsibility in this film. Venu sir took proper care of it and I'm super proud of what he did. After I came out of the theatres, I straightaway wanted to go Venu sir and give him a big hug," adds the V actress. Nivetha says she consciously made a choice to not watch *Pink* after she signed *Vakeel Saab*. "I watched *Pink* twice in theatres when it was released. Because the film served the purpose and we started talking about it and had debates on it. I loved watching Tapsee and her performance. When I'm reprising the role of Tapsee Pannu, there are comparisons, because we are two different people, you cannot really compare the nuances of it. Personally from an actor's point of view, I made a decision to not watch *Pink* after I signed *Vakeel Saab*. Venu sir and I always said *Vakeel Saab* should have a soul of its own and not make the audience feel it's a remake of *Pink*," she explains. For Nivetha, the experience of working for a film will conclude only after she watches it in the theatres. As she was tested Covid positive, she couldn't watch the film in theatres right after its release, but when she watched it

later, she says it was just papers flying in the theatres. "I was quarantined when the film released. For me, the experience of a movie will complete only if I watch the film in theatres. After I tested negative, I immediately watched the film in theatres and that's when I started reading comments, reviews, and more. It was just papers flying around." When asked what made her come on board this film, Nivetha shares, "I always wondered if I am as strong as Pallavi, if I really am able to go to the police station and file a complaint multiple times. I would want to be like Pallavi, a strong fierce girl and that made me do this film." "I'm very critical about myself. I have never been taken myself or my work for granted. Whenever I listen to compliments about my work, it always feels like it's my debut work. Being in front of the camera is what makes me thrive," adds she. "Right now I am working on a Korean remake of *Midnight Runners* directed by Sudheer sir. I think I'm very open to seeing what kind of roles come my way and what people expect of me. I want people to approach me with any kind of role," concludes the actress.

NAZRIYA NAZIM JOINS NANI FOR ANTE SUNDARANIKI

Natural Star Nani's 28th film *Ante Sundaraniki* being, directed by Vivek Athreya under Mythri Movie banner, marks launchpad of Nazriya Nazim Fahadh in Telugu. The actress who is well-known to Telugu audiences with films like *Raja Rani*, has joined the shoot of *Ante Sundaraniki* on Monday. The team is presently canning scenes of Nazriya Nazim and others in Hyderabad. The actress is very excited to start the shooting of her first Telugu film. "Andarki Namaskaram. Today I started shooting for my first Telugu film. First is always special. *Ante Sundaraniki* will be special," tweeted the actress. *Ante Sundaraniki* is a musical rom-com with an original story. "Welcoming the actress, producers of Mythri Movie Makers specified, "Team #AnteSundaraniki welcomes you #NazriyaFahadh & yesss this movie will be special Natural star @nameisnani #VivekAthreya #VivekSagar #NikethBommi #NANI28," tweeted Mythri Movie Makers. Continuing their journey with Vivek Athreya after *Brochevarevarura*, Vivek Sagar is scoring music for the film, while Raviteja Girijala will work as editor, as Niketh Bommi cranks the camera.



VD, Sukumar's film will only get bigger

Rumours were rife that Arjun Reddy actor Vijay Deverakonda's film with director Sukumar, announced in September 2020, by Falcon Creations LLP as its debut production, has been shelved due to busy schedule of the actor and the director. The production house on Monday put a full stop to all these rumours. "Team Falcon urges everyone not to believe in misinformation and strongly condemns rumours. Director @aryasukku and Rowdy Star @TheDeverakonda combination is very much on. #Sukumar-VijayDeverakonda film is only going to GET BIGGER," tweeted Falcon, urging everyone to not believe in the unwanted rumours. "As per the schedule, Sukumar and Vijay film will hit the sets and this film will



only get bigger," said Falcon. Currently Vijay Deverakonda is doing pan-India film *Liger* while Sukumar is doing *Pushpa* will Stylish Star Allu Arjun. Once both Vijay and Sukumar wrap up their commitments, this combination will go floors.



Sam's generous gift to auto-driver

Samantha wowed people with her generosity once again by helping a female auto driver Kavitha. The actress gifted her an expensive car and helped her to run a cab service. We all know that Samantha started her



own NGO, Pratyusha Support in 2012, which provides medical support to poor women and underprivileged children. Recently, the *Majili* actress came out in support of a female auto driver named Kavitha, by gifting her an expensive car worth Rs 12.5 lakh to help her start her own cab service. Kavitha visited the

sets of Samantha's talk show earlier this year and revealed that she was a victim of domestic violence. She is an auto driver who ekes out a living driving an auto from Miyapur to Bachupally. When Samantha came to know how Kavitha is struggling, she promised to gift her a car to help her run a cab service. On the work front, Samantha will be seen playing the lead role in an upcoming film Gunasekhar's mythological drama *Shakunthalam* and she is also waiting for the release of the web show *The Family Man 2*.

Not worried if my films work or not, says Fahadh

Malayalam actor Fahadh Faasil who is making his Tollywood debut with *Pushpa* was recently seen in *Joji* and the actor's performance is being appreciated since it dropped recently on Amazon Prime Video. The National Award-winning actor says he is never worried about the reactions his films might receive. "I am not worried about my films working or not. When it doesn't work it hurts, but for me it's the process which is exciting, to identify a film and work on it. You like an idea, you go to the shoot and then you improvise and finish shooting, and your fight is whether you have done justice to what you initially conceived. It is a constant fight," Fahadh tells.

The actor, who made his presence felt in films like *Thondimuthalum Driksakshiyum*, *Bangalore Days*, and *Kumbalangi Nights*, says he is always thinking about how to make his work be better. "Even when your film works, you think that there are so many things you could have done and there are so many things that you missed out on. This process is never complete, and I am in love with the process, which you are exploring. You are dealing with human emotions, you are trying to understand people better. I like love this aspect of my job and I want to do this as long as I can," he says. So what are the qualities he looks for in a script? "I want it to be as real as looking out of the window. I need that connection and need to believe that it happened somewhere,



and to approach it honestly. What I have constantly tried to do is to do real stuff," says the actor.

Bravo takes CSK to 188

DJ impresses in his late cameo which includes six off final ball as others fail to convert good start into big score

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A cameo from Dwayne Bravo towards the end of the innings helped Chennai Super Kings post 188 for nine against Rajasthan Royals at Wankhede Stadium on Monday.

CSK lost wickets towards the end with the batsmen going for big hits and also in the face of some good bowling by Royals.

Bravo (20 not out off 8 balls) smashed a huge six off the last ball of the innings from Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) to ensure the Super Kings got close to 190.

Faf du Plessis post scored with 33 off 17 balls as the CSK batsmen got starts but couldn't capitalise on them after being put in to bat.

Young Chetan Sakariya (3/36 from 4 overs) was the best bowler for Rajasthan while Chris Morris finished with 2/33 despite conceding 15 runs in his final over.

Dhoni, in his 200th match as CSK captain, came in to bat at No 7 but could not get going as quickly as he would have liked. He, however, managed two boundaries in his 17-ball 18 before being beaten by an off-cutter by Sakariya only to give a catch to Jos Buttler. He survived a run-out chance and a few anxious moments in his brief knock.

Ambati Rayudu (27, 17 balls, 3 sixes) and Suresh Raina (18, 15 balls, 1 four, 1 six) added 45 runs in quick time for the fourth wicket before the former perished going for an attacking shot on the off-side off Sakariya.

Sakariya struck again a few balls later, getting Raina to hit one straight to Morris at mid-off as CSK slipped to 125 for five in 15th over.

Rayudu hit sixes off successive deliveries in Tewatia's second over, scoring 14 runs as he and Raina attempted to take advantage of the



Chennai Super Kings batsman Dwayne Bravo attempts to hit ball for a six during his unbeaten 20 run innings against Rajasthan Royals at Wankhede Stadium

IT WAS ON APRIL 19 IN 2008 THAT CSK PLAYED THEIR FIRST-EVER IPL GAME, HERALDING MS DHONI'S CAPTAINCY DEBUT IN YELLOW AND 13 YEARS LATER ON MONDAY, HE CAPTAINED CHENNAI SUPER KINGS FOR 200TH TIME

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (188-9)

Ruturaj Gaikwad c Dube b Mustafizur	10
Faf du Plessis c Parag b Morris	33
Moeen Ali c Parag b Tewatia	26
Suresh Raina c Morris b Sakariya	18
Ambati Rayudu c Parag b Sakariya	27
Ravindra Jadeja c Samson b Morris	8
MS Dhoni c Buttler b Sakariya	18
Sam Curran run out (Mustafizur/Samson)	13
Dwayne Bravo not out	20
Shardul Thakur run out (Samson/Mustafizur)	1
Deepak Chahar not out	0
Extras (b 1, lb 4, w 8, nb 1, p 0)	14
Total (9 wks, 20 Overs)	188
Fall of Wickets: 25-1 (Ruturaj Gaikwad, 3.5), 45-2 (Faf du Plessis, 5.4), 78-3 (Moeen Ali, 9.2), 123-4 (Ambati Rayudu, 13.2), 125-5 (Suresh Raina, 13.5), 147-6 (MS Dhoni, 17.2), 163-7 (Ravindra Jadeja, 18.3), 174-8 (Sam Curran, 19.1), 180-9 (Shardul Thakur, 19.4)	

Bowling

Jaydev Unadkat	4-0-40-0
Chetan Sakariya	4-0-36-3
Mustafizur Rahman	4-0-37-1
Chris Morris	4-0-33-2
Rahul Tewatia	3-0-21-1
Riyun Parag	1-0-16-0

fifth and sixth bowlers (Tewatia and Riyun Parag) employed by Royals skipper Samson.

Tewatia had begun well by conceding only five runs in his opening over and got ride of Moeen Ali (26 off 20).

Opener Ruturaj Gaikwad's struggles continued as his attempt to hit his way out saw him miscue a pull only to see it lob to Shivam Dube off Rahman. He fell for 10 (13 balls, 1 four) after adding 25 runs for the first wicket with fellow opener du Plessis.

Faf showed intent and waded into Unadkat in the fifth over, hammering three fours and one six before an ambitious shot brought his downfall off Morris' bowling.

Mayank wasn't stressed about low scores



PBKs batsman Mayank Agarwal plays a shot during his innings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Back in form with a scintillating half-century, Punjab Kings' Mayank Agarwal says he wasn't too stressed about not firing in the first couple of IPL matches and tried to stick to the things that worked for him in the last edition.

Mayank, who had amassed 424 runs in the last season in the UAE, had scored 14 and 0 against Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings to make a dismal start to the ongoing season.

However, the 30-year-old from Bangalore found his touch on Sunday as he smashed a sizzling 36-ball 69 to help Punjab post 195 for four against Delhi Capitals.

"I wasn't thinking too much, I planned to do and keep the mindset that worked for me last year. I thought last match I had a good ball, I didn't want to stress too much about it and wanted to look forward and so stuck to what worked for me," he said during a virtual press-conference.

"I was batting well in the nets, I was getting into good positions, it was about holding shape and I don't want to live in the previous games and I am happy how I batted."

The total, however, didn't prove enough as last year's runners-up Delhi Capitals romped home in 18.2 overs, riding on opener Shikhar Dhawan's 49-ball 92.

"I thought it was a good total. It wasn't as easy in the first innings and I thought dew played a factor coming in the second innings," Mayank said.

"I thought Delhi Capitals batted exceedingly well, also there was a dew factor. Credited to Delhi bowlers how they executed after the 12 overs, they went into death bowling and executed it beautifully."

Asked how can dew be countered to make it an even contest, Mayank said: "I don't think we can do much about it as players. It boils down to execution under pressure and practising that. Those are the things which are under our control."

boundarymeter

4s **346**

6s **147**

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	186
2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	176
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	157

PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	9
2. Rahul Chahar (MI)	7
3. Avesh Khan (DC)	6

MOST SIXES	COUNT
1. Deepak Hooda (PBKS)	8
2. Glenn Maxwell (RCB)	8
3. Sanju Samson (RR)	7

SUMMER SLAM



Kolkata Knight Riders teammates Prasidh Krishna, left, and Kuldeep Yadav wearing PPE kits pose for photo in flight as the team travel to Chennai for upcoming IPL matches

MURALITHARAN DISCHARGED

Sri Lankan legend Muttiah Muralitharan was discharged on Monday after undergoing a coronary angioplasty at a city hospital in Chennai. The former spinner, who is part of the Sunrisers Hyderabad support staff, went for the planned procedure on Sunday. Muralitharan would rejoin the SRH squad after undergoing the mandatory seven-day quarantine period.

PLAY WITH POSITIVE MINDSET: DHAWAN

DC batsman Shikhar Dhawan, who played match winning 92 against Punjab Kings says Delhi Capitals will have to play with a positive mindset against Mumbai Indians. "They (MI) have played three games in Chennai, so they know the conditions there. For us the challenge will be to switch on mentally according to the wicket and prepare our plan. Then we just have to go out there and implement the plan and play with a positive mindset and look to win the game."

'WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY TECHNIQUE'

Prithvi Shaw says he had started "worrying" about his technique after being dropped in Australia before roaring back to form in domestic cricket, thanks to a few technical changes he made in his game. "After getting dropped from the Test side after the first Test in Australia, I started worrying about my technique on why I was getting bowled. Even if it was a minor mistake, I wanted to minimize that. I started working on it there itself," said Shaw.

POINTS TABLE

	P	W	L	NRR	PTS	
1	RCB	3	3	0	+0.750	6
2	CSK	3	2	1	+1.194	4
3	DC	3	2	1	+0.453	4
4	MI	3	2	1	+0.367	4
5	KKR	3	1	2	-0.633	2
6	RR	3	1	2	-0.719	2
7	PBKS	3	1	2	-0.967	2
8	SRH	3	0	3	-0.483	0

Delhi eye revenge against MI Chennai wickets not unplayable: Mahela

KEY PLAYERS

SHIKHAR DHAWAN
Gabbar is in good form and was the highest run scorer in both the matches Delhi's won this season

RAHUL CHAHAR
Rahul was the wrecker-in-chief against KKR and SRH helping MI defend 150 run target with ease

VENUE: CHIDAMBARAM STADIUM, CHENNAI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches	28
Delhi Capitals	12
Mumbai Indians	16

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- MI beat Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Abu Dhabi
- Mumbai Indians won by 9 wickets against DC in Dubai
- Mumbai Indians defeated Delhi Capitals by 57 runs in Dubai (Qualifier 1)
- Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets in Dubai (Final)

The wickets in Chennai are not unplayable but challenging being on slower side, insisted Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene as teams batting first have dominated the matches played at the Chepauk stadium, so far.

Out of six matches played here, thrice teams managed 150-plus score and five times the team that has batted first won the match.

"They are not unplayable wickets. They are good, competitive wickets. And adapting to challenges is always the key for any batsmen or any team. We have been consistent with that approach, it is challenging, but our bowlers have adapted pretty well," Jayawardene said ahead of the team's game against Delhi Capitals.

The 43-year-old former Sri Lanka batsman also said all-rounder Hardik Pandya



Mumbai Indians head coach Mahela Jayawardene during team's nets session

has not yet bowled this season due to the niggle he picked up during the ODI series against England.

"We were looking forward for him to be bowling this season but after those matches against England, the last ODI, I believe he picked up niggle, so that is something that we are nursing at the moment."

Jayawardene however exuded confidence that the team would be able to use Hardik's services as a bowler.

"We don't want to risk it, because it is important that we make sure that he (Hardik) is in a position to comfortably come in and bowl. So hopefully in the next few weeks, with a bit of work and all that, we might see him bowling."

"It is not that we are deliberately trying to not bowl him, we would love to have him bowling, but as soon as the niggle is off and he is comfortable, we should be able to use that asset as well," he said.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

A battle royale is in the offing as heavyweights Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals cross swords, looking to outsmart each other here on Tuesday.

Up against a resurgent side, defending champions MI will need to address their middle-order woes if they are to go for a third consecutive win.

Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma has got starts and he would be keen to convert it into a big one and so would be Quinton de Kock.

MI have the likes of Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan, Kieron Pollard, Hardik Pandya and his brother Krunal, who can pummel any attack into submission on their day, but they are yet to fire on all cylinders.

The Mumbai bowlers, led by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, have been splendid in the last two games when they successfully defended low scores of 150 and 152 respectively. Strike bowlers Bumrah (3 wickets) and New Zealander Trent Boult (6 wickets) have been exceptional at the death.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar, whom bowling coach Shane Bond described as a "wicket-taking bowler", has grabbed seven wickets in last two games.

Meanwhile, for Delhi Capitals, the biggest positive has been the form of Shikhar Dhawan, who is the leading scorer so far in the tournament with 186 runs.

Dhawan and young Prithvi Shaw form a lethal opening combination, but the Mumbai skipper needs to convert his starts into big scores.

Delhi opted for Australian Steve Smith on Sunday but, as they are next playing on the slow Chepauk track, they might go back to Ajinkya Rahane, who is looking better suited for such tracks.

Skipper Rishabh Pant has the ability to take any attack to the

201

Kieron Pollard with 201 sixes in 150 innings of 167 matches, is the only MI batsman to smash 200 or more sixes in IPL

194

Rishabh Pant who hit 194 fours in 71 innings of as many matches, needs just six fours to become only second batsman after Virender Sehwag (266 fours in 79 innings) to complete a double century of fours for Delhi Capitals in IPL

Faisal Features

cleaners. The DC team management would be hoping that the top-order fires in unison against the defending champions, to whom they had lost in the final last year.

Their pace attack is led by South African Kagiso Rabada and Chris Woakes, and the two have been impressive so far. They have an additional option in Anrich Nortje, who has also joined the squad.

Delhi played four pacers in the game against Punjab, but in Chennai, they could play more spinners as the track is conducive for the slower bowlers.

shortpasses

INDIA OPEN POSTPONED

NEW DELHI: The India Open Super 500 tournament was on Monday postponed due to the raging Covid-19 cases. The \$400,000 India Open was scheduled to be held behind closed doors in Delhi from May 11 to 16.

INDIA ASSURED OF 4 MEDALS

NEW DELHI: Asian champion Vinka and Aliyfa Pathan were among the four Indian boxers who progressed to the semifinals of the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland. Gitika and Poonam are the other two boxers.

NAPOLI END INTER STREAK

NAPLES: Christian Eriksen claimed a point for Serie A leaders Inter Milan whose 11-match winning streak ended with a 1-1 draw at Napoli on Sunday. But Inter still have a comfortable margin (9 pts) at the top of the table.

REAL HELD BY GETAFE

MADRID: A depleted Real Madrid delivered a major boost to Atletico Madrid's title hopes on Sunday by drawing 0-0 with Getafe in La Liga. Atletico had thrashed Elbar 5-0 to reignite their own fading challenge and their victory proved even more valuable after Real's goalless draw.

UEFA DELAY FINAL DECISION

MONTREUX: UEFA will announce the final decision over the host cities for this year's delayed Euro 2020 on Friday, with Munich, Bilbao and Dublin in danger of being dropped from the list if the trio cannot welcome spectators to stadiums.

Spurs sack Mourinho



Jose Mourinho

Jose Mourinho was sacked by Tottenham on Monday just six days before they play Manchester City in the League Cup final as the Portuguese boss paid the price for a turbulent campaign.

Mourinho, 58, was dismissed after only 17 months in charge, even though he could have led the club to their first silverware since 2008.

Tottenham have been struggling in their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish in the Premier League. They are currently seventh, five points behind fourth placed West Ham, and suffered a shock Europa League last-16 exit against Dinamo Zagreb.

"The club can today announce that Jose Mourinho and his coaching staff have been relieved of their duties," a Spurs statement said.

Tottenham's academy coach Ryan Mason will take first-team training this week and is set to pick the team for Wednesday's Premier League clash with Southampton and the League Cup final.

UEFA confirm 36 team CL reform

UEFA has given the green light for a 36-team Champions League reform which will include a single league format to replace the group stage.

European football's main governing body announced a number of changes to the competition on Monday amid reports of a rival Super League formation which could see 12 of the biggest clubs on the continent breakaway.

The changes are slated to come into effect in 2024, with fixtures set to be played on Thursdays instead of Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and a play-off round added to the first stage.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has outlined the main reasons behind the reform in an official statement, which reads: "This new format supports the status and future of the domestic game throughout Europe as well. It retains the principle that domestic performance should

be the key to qualification and reconfirms the principles of solidarity.

The traditional group stage concept which has seen four teams compete in eight pools with the top two qualifying for the last 16 will be scrapped in favour of a single league including 36 teams.

Each team will play a total of 10 games home and away, with the top eight automatically qualifying for the last 16 and those finishing between ninth and 24th to compete in two-legged play-offs to decide who else makes the knockout stage.

The teams that finish lower than 24th will exit European competition completely, and the last 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals and final will all continue with their original format.

The calendar has yet to be worked out to accommodate four additional matches but they will be played between September and January, while France have been handed a fifth qualifying spot from Ligue 1.